



ESTABLISHED 1872

SANTA BARBARA YACHT CLUB

Roger Chrisman, Commodore 2010

If one were to ask Staff Commodore Roger Chrisman to explain what's so special about SBYC, he would probably say, "History and tradition are what this club is all about." I agree. For more than 150 years, our members have competed on the water, celebrated wins, consoled each other after losses, endured the wrath of Mother Nature on several occasions, and continued our tradition of camaraderie and Corinthian spirit. So, what brought this potential commodore to our particular shores?

Roger grew up Spokane. When he was 14 years old, his parents, both schoolteachers, helped him buy a Pumpkin Seed—an 8'-long, 1-person, 3-point hydroplane boat—in which he would race around during his summers at the family cabin on Rockford Bay, ID, about an hour away. By the time he was 16, he'd saved enough cash on his own to buy a 16' runabout, which came in handy when he wanted to meet up with girls on the other side of Lake Coeur d'Alene. Boys and girls and boats in the summertime—what could be better?

Roger graduated from the University of Washington, Seattle, where he was president of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, in 1968 with a BS in Electronic Engineering. He continued at UW and earned his MSEE in 1973.

He took a job at Tektronix in Portland, where he lived for about 4 years. From there, he moved to Maryland, to work for a contractor designing satellites for the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO).

In 1980, Roger moved to Cupertino and took a job at Tymnet, the communications division of Tymshare, a computer timeshare company. That's where he met Sarah, whom he married in 1982. As Tymnet director of engineering, something had been brewing in his mind. He and Sarah presented his concept of a telecommunications switch to Tymshare, but the company wasn't interested in pursuing it. Two weeks later, both Roger and Sarah quit. In a not-unheard-of manner, they launched Network Equipment Technologies (NET) out of their garage and, in 1987, took the company public. By that time, they had offices worldwide and more than 2,000 employees, with the founding team of 20 still together. The company per-share price increased dramatically and suddenly these twenty-somethings were living the good life.

But those years were not focused solely on work. Although Roger's initial boating consisted mostly of racing his "thunderboats" on the lake, he also appreciates sailing. "Just turning off the engine. There's nothing like sailing." Roger and Sarah raced extensively on the San Francisco Bay. In 1984, the couple sailed their 40' sailboat *Wild Goose* from San Francisco to Cabo San Lucas. In 1986, he raced *Obsession*, a 46' Swan from Newport to Cabo San Lucas with Kame Richards of Pineapple Sails. He and Sarah then sailed on to Acapulco for Christmas.

Roger also became a licensed pilot and had fun flying their Beechcraft King Air "all up and down the West Coast".

Roger and Sarah's daughter, Carolyn, was born in November 1988 and was aboard for all the ensuing cruising adventures.

In the late 1990s, the Chrismans decided to move south from Tiburon to be closer to Sarah's family in Pasadena. As members of both St. Francis and San Francisco Yacht Clubs, they had visited SBYC many times through the years.

For them, one of the necessities of moving to Southern California was to be near the ocean. Our little town and its yacht club fit the bill. “We got to the better weather and islands off the coast.”

Roger and Sarah became involved as soon as they joined, volunteering as Cruising Fleet Captains within a few years. Shortly thereafter, Roger was asked to join the board and in 2008 was asked to go through the chairs to become commodore. These were the years of discussions about creating an SBYC outpost on Santa Cruz Island (quashed by The Nature Conservancy) and our much-needed partial clubhouse remodel. That renovation began in 2008 and ended two years later, focusing on the kitchen, restrooms, and adding much-needed deck space. Manager Craig Wilberg and the commodores who presided over SBYC during those years had their hands full keeping the club open and the members coming. Looking back now, we went for weeks—or was it months—without one hot dish coming out of the kitchen. Sandwiches and salads became our temporary sustenance; good thing the bar was never shut down! One of the most important events that occurred during Roger’s commodore year was the long-awaited publishing of our second history book, a club-wide effort of around five years.

We have seen that Roger and Sarah have given a lot to the club, and I asked what they’ve gotten in return for all those years of volunteering? Without hesitating, Staff Commodore Chrisman had this to say, “All my friends are here—everybody!” In the years since he was commodore, he’s had time to reflect on what’s important in his life. “I ask myself, ‘What do you hope to do?’ I try to do one thing as I get older, and that is to set an example. Hopefully a good example.”

By Sabrina Papa