



SANTA BARBARA

YACHT CLUB

John Berryhill, 2005

John was born in San Francisco toward the end of the Second World War. Following the war, his dad moved the family back to his hometown of Tulare, where John and his two brothers grew up attending local schools. During his high school years, the family would often visit the boys' grandparents, who lived in Morro Bay. There, John learned to sail on a Seashell, Pinafore. John's mother, a music teacher and concert pianist, named the craft after the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.

John continued sailing during college in the UCSB sailing program, taught at the time by SBYC member Dr. Terry Dearborn. John, kiss-up that he is, became a teacher's assistant. It was his first exposure to yacht club life. [Note: The very first SBYC boat he crewed on was Staff Commodore Wiley Cole's *Lourita*, skippered by Cole.]

When he wasn't sailing, John pursued a degree in preparation for law school. Upon graduating, he headed back up north to UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, where he earned his Juris Doctorate (JD), and then east to Georgetown University for his Master of Laws (LLM) degree in taxation. Degrees in hand, he moved back to Santa Barbara, where he landed a position as an estate planning and tax attorney with a local law firm.

But since this article is about a yacht club commodore, let's turn the focus back on yachting! His father-in-law at the time had purchased club member Bob Grant's K-38, *Iguana*, so John returned to racing. He became active in *Salty Saturday* (the precursor to *Wet Wednesday*) and other club races, crewing in and out of town for yacht club members such as Bob Grant on his Cal 40, *Firebird*, formerly named *Blue Chip* by its previous owner, club member Claude Chipperfield. As John was light on his feet, his duties generally kept him on foredeck. In 1979, *Firebird* competed in the *Trans Pac* race with Bob at the helm, John, Staff Commodore Stan Darrow, Jr., and fellow SBYC member Rick Yabsley aboard.

In 1996, Llew Goodfield proposed John for membership at SBYC. He bought *Nepenthe*, a Fisher 30 pilot-house ketch, his transition boat from sail to power, and one of the most charming boats I have ever seen. Before long, John was involved in the cruising and social circles at the club. "My first cruise was to Catalina in 1996. John and Joan Brair were fleet captains. They took me under their wing and introduced me around; it was there that I met a lot of good cruising folk."

After several years of exploring the many aspects of yacht club life, the opportunity arose for John to work more closely with the people he enjoyed at a place he enjoyed. In 2002, he was asked to accept appointment as 2003 rear commodore, in charge of all things racing-related. Back then, club member Jeff Grange was employed by SBYC as race director. He helped John navigate through that first year in the chairs. "God bless him. Jeff was wonderful. He made me look good." He probably would have performed well enough on his own, but Jeff – thanks for guiding our commodore!

His following year in charge of house and grounds was fun and interesting, with "wonderful help all the way through. We dealt with the repair and rebuilt of the west end of the clubhouse, starting construction in January 2005."

When asked his favorite commodore year memory, John didn't hesitate. "The luau put on by Trish [Davis]. It was a 'South Pacific-World War II' theme. Caron and I were ushered into the Luau on a vintage World War II Jeep, waving a tremendous American flag. What a fantastic job she did."

Oh, yes. There was one other special event that took place while John was commodore: he and Caron married. Neither of them had mentioned anything about a specific date to any of their friends at the club, but they arrived at the annual black-tie New Year's Eve party sporting wedding bands! We were all stunned but thrilled for them. What a fun and positive way to begin a new year!

John is one of a kind (for which we are grateful) and he feels the same way about being a part of our unique club. "Prior to [becoming a member of] the yacht club, I never expected to have as many friends, and the kinds of friendship that I have, where you really feel connected to people. For me, that has been the most satisfying part of being a member of this club. I often reflect on that." He continued, "We have a wonderful, professional staff at this club, but the essence of our club remains in the willingness of our members to participate—in racing, cruising, socially, or in governance—without expecting anything in return. Just for the love of the club and for the members. What speaks most highly to me is the incredible level of member participation that we have. Our members just pour their time and effort into this club. Their willingness to do that is remarkable."

That might have something to do with the SBYC community at its core. The members of this club are down-to-earth people who appreciate spending time with and getting to know other members. They become involved in order to maximize every aspect of their time spent there, whether racing, reading or relaxing. Speaking of relaxing, the next time you're at the club on a Wednesday evening, stroll down Marina One until you reach a Grand Banks 32 trawler called Encore. There you'll likely see John reconnecting with some of those friends. You might even encounter an additional staff commodore or two.