



SANTA BARBARA

YACHT CLUB

Kenneth Clements, 2002

Staff Commodore Ken Clements was born on a little island in the Gulf of Mexico called Galveston. Just six weeks later, his family moved to Santa Barbara where he grew up. He graduated from San Marcos High School in 1963 and “went to work for my dad, surveying for about a year. “He then worked for the County of Santa Barbara as a soils technician (for future SBYC Commodore Ed Marini) conducting lab and field tests.

Still a youngster with much energy to burn and excitement to experience, he left that job and accepted a position on an abalone boat in Morro Bay. “We’d go out to dive spots in all kinds of weather; it literally hailed on us one day. It was fun, just not what I wanted to do.” After several months, Ken decided to move back to Santa Barbara, where he returned to his previous profession. Over the next few years, which included promotions and transfers to various cities in California, including Lancaster—a cultural and climatic shock—he earned a business degree, got his civil engineering license, and opened his own firm, K-C Geotechnical in 1983. He was home.

Doctors and scientists tell us that some people are genetically predisposed to certain addictions and afflictions. Alas, Ken is no different. From his earliest days, he was unalterably addicted to the ocean, afflicted by boating. The poor guy didn’t have a chance. He surfed throughout childhood. His father and grandfather were both avid fishermen who brought Ken out onto the water in skiffs, on powerboats – even on sailboats. His memories of sailing began in the 1950s, when he crewed for his dad on a plywood Penguin cat boat.

The enjoyment of casual cruising and the riveting intensity of racing culminated when Santa Barbara hosted the regional Penguin fleet championships. Ken and his dad readied the single-sail cat boat, headed out into the wind against the fleet, filled with rapturous visions of bringing home a trophy, but “we came in DFL. We sold the boat.” The family did continue boating, though, with several cruising and racing sailboats, and in 1979 Ken’s dad became commodore of the SB Sailing Club.

But Ken’s story doesn’t end there. Two of his three children also have enjoyed the sport. In the mid-1980s, he and his daughter, Michele, sailed and raced their Capri 25, Defiant, and participated in several Capri 25 Nationals. In 1987, he traded the Capri 25 for a Capri 30, another Defiant. He and his middle child, David, raced the new boat and in 1989 and 1990 won the Capri 30 Nationals. It appears that only his youngest, Todd, dodged the family disease and never displayed any ocean-addictive symptoms.

In 1980, Ken joined SBYC. “It was, for me, the next progression.” Having been a member of the sailing club, he always wanted to be part of the yacht club but joining was delayed by all those professional promotions and transfers mentioned earlier. The SBYC racing program provided a welcome competitive outlet for Ken. He became involved in PHRF and was, for years, involved in the club’s racing, but not social, scene.

In late 1994, Ken was still racing Defiant and crewing on other boats. He needed additional crew aboard Defiant a particular Wet Wednesday, and a friend invited a woman named Elsbeth Kleen to join them. The woman more than held her own and became a regular crew member. The following year the couple began their transition from racing to cruising and CHRf. In 1996, they bought a Peterson 41, Kayak, and sold Defiant. It would take another 11 years before he took the next step and bought his stinkpot—I mean power boat—Casa Blanca, a 41-

foot CHB trawler. “There’s a significant amount of pleasure in sailing that I don’t get in a power boat. I really do miss sailing—the quiet, the challenge—but when you get to your destination, you want the comforts of a powerboat.”

Almost 10 years after joining SBYC, Ken accepted the position of race committee chair. The following year, he was asked to go through the chairs to become commodore. “I was honored to be asked and was happy to do it.” He had a great team to work with, too. “We were the three musketeers - three people with different talents working together toward a common good. Among us, we had all bases covered.”

Indeed, they did. Some of the well-executed decisions the team made included the hiring of Craig Wilberg, our club’s affable, creative, and very professional general manager; and Peng Chew Oon, our personable and precise bookkeeper. Jorge de Jesus was promoted to dining room manager extraordinaire, and the trio hired our first race director, Jeff Grange. The concept of our recently-completed downstairs remodel was presented by Ken to the general membership meeting back in 2001.

Ask any staff commodore, and he’ll agree that the process of becoming commodore includes involvement in all aspects of the club, not to mention a “commodorable” who will support your efforts to be the best commodore EVER! Previously involved mostly in racing, Commodore Ken was introduced to the social side of the club by Elsbeth. Because they both recognized that new members could benefit from learning about all the different aspects of SBYC, they organized the New Members’ Services Committee, which helps newly approved members get involved and feel comfortable quickly.

Ken feels that being a member of SBYC is “the best deal in town. The new members need to take advantage of what this place offers: sailing, racing, cruising, social, bridge. There’s something down here for everybody.” He enforces the point by summing up his own experiences. “The bottom line is the yacht club, and boating, is our social life. That’s really all we need. Most of our friends are here and I can work on the boat 24/7 and be happy. This is my community.”