

*Carter Lake*

*Sailing Club*



LOG



3511 S. CR 31  
LOVELAND, CO 80537

WWW.SAILCARTER.ORG

*Sailing into our 54<sup>th</sup> year*

*May 2007*

## Commodore's Report

*From Duane Chaloupka*

The season is off to a great start. Participation in both the racing and pot lucks has been high. The shish-ka-bobs that Carrie and Raegan provided were delicious. The Spring Series is already over. Is that possible? The weather was fantastic, and the new racer/cruiser split of the fleets is working well. The results aren't all calculated yet but my guess is that the series was won by one of the Capri 22 sailors. If you haven't launched your boat yet, get it done. You are missing some great sailing. Several new people have been crewing and at least one of them has joined as a crewing member. If you know anyone else interested in crewing be sure to invite them to the club. We also have a new slip member. Check the membership report and be sure to make them feel welcome.

The new Parks Master Plan was approved by the planning task force at their April meeting. You can view it on line at [www.larimer.org/parks/masterplan/](http://www.larimer.org/parks/masterplan/) Physical changes that affect the sailing club include a realignment of the parking area above the slips, the addition of a tent camping area, and a foot trail to the marina. Of more importance is the new "Framework for a Exclusive and Special Use Policy". It includes 14 points that the county would like to apply to the

sailing club in the future. It is a little difficult to find in the plan, but it is worth the time to find and read. Remember that it is a ten year plan and implementation of any item is subject to change.



## 2007 Executive Board

### OFFICERS

Commodore

*Duane Chaloupka*

Vice Commodore

*Mary Homan*

Rear Commodore

*Paul Scherrer*

Treasurer

*Denise Moriarty*

Recording Secretary

*Doug McKnight*

Corresponding Secretary

*John Homan*

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership

*John & Lynda McGinley*

Education and Safety

*Don Waldburger*

Racing

*Tom Ruwitch*

Clubhouse and Grounds

*Randy Pierce*

Dock/Slips

*Rafe Ropek*

Social

*Mike & Jan Morgan*

Boats

*Steve Johnson*

Junior Sailing Program

*Marilyn Miller*

Government Liaison

*Dave Lock*

Webmaster

*Steve Undy*

Historian

*Jackie Gurley*

## Vice Commodore Report

*From Mary Homan*

Regatta Preparations are in Full Swing --

**VOLUNTEERS:** Thanks to everyone who has offered to help at the Regatta--the response has been great! We need 10 more volunteers to help with set up/clean up for Saturday's continental breakfast, Saturday dinner, and Sunday's pancake breakfast. So, those of you who enjoy the sunrise on the lake with a cup of hot coffee, come and help out from 6 a.m.-10 a.m.! As the morning wears on and the food is consumed, my plan is to let volunteers go before the shift ends. Likewise, with dinner shift on Saturday (4 p.m. - 8 p.m.).

**HEAD COUNT FOR DINNERS:** Planning on joining us for dinner at the Regatta, why not use it as another social opportunity to visit with club members and fellow sailors throughout Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico? One of the larger regatta expenses is the dinner--one way we can control costs is to have an idea of the number of meals we will serve. If you think you will be enjoying a wonderful meal prepared by Michael's Plum--send me an e-mail. This does not obligate you to eat, but gives me a better idea of meal count.

**TEE-SHIRTS** - Look for an e-mail in the next few days with a rendition of the 2007 Open Regatta tee-shirt. I'm taking pre-orders, and pre-pay, for the shirt (again, in order to control costs). The shirt features a new logo created by our very own, incredibly talented, artist--Rafe Ropek! The shirts are white, 50-50 cotton/poly blend (which means they will have some wicking & fast-drying capability), and the design is a gradient blue (Your computer screen will give you only an idea of the color--due to the pixilation of your screens). Short Sleeve Shirts are \$15, Long Sleeve Shirts \$20. Sizes S, M, L, XL. E-mail me your order request by Friday, May 18--you can pick up your shirts at the regatta .

Mary - [mhoman@frii.com](mailto:mhoman@frii.com), 970-213-0510

## Social Report

*From Mike and Jan Morgan*

It's hard to believe that we are already into the 2nd month of the new sailing season and we have already had two successful potlucks but we need people to sign up for the open dates. The potlucks scheduled for May 12th, 26th and June 9th are still open as is the one on July 9th. Please sign up to sponsor and potluck, this has to be the easiest way to earn work hours. If you are interested in hosting a potluck call or e-mail Mike or Jan Morgan. The Potluck sign up board will also be at the clubhouse.



## Docks & Slips Report

*From Rafe Ropek*

On April 27 Don called me to let me know that one of the cables had detached from the weight below. I decided to hire a diver to expedite the reattachment. The diver was quickly able to perform the task so it was decided to have him check all the connections while he was in the water. He found that half of all the connections were poorly attached.

This could have been a serious problem that was averted. Connections are what keeps us and the docks together. Let's make certain our connections are solid.

Watch your slip, your lines and your neighbors. Together we make it work.

## Membership Report

*From Lynda & John McGinley*

Please join us in welcoming our new members: Victor and Cheryl Hosington, Charles and Cathy Olmstead (regular members), Jodi Sprague, David Cunningham and the Hammond's (crewing). If you are looking for crew you can always check the roster and invite the crewing members to join you. We are hoping to launch our boat finally this week, so hope to see you all at the lake soon. Remember if you have any prospects be sure and let us know so we can make contact with them. Happy sailing.

## A Tumultuous First Offshore Passage

*By Marilyn Miller ©*

Winds from the west gusted to 55 mph through the rigging of the 46 foot wooden Venus Ketch. The seas in the mid-Atlantic Ocean, having over 300 miles of fetch to gather force, rose to over 40 feet. The troughs opened up like cavernous whale bellies, seemingly ready to envelop anything in their path, including our seaworthy, 40,000 pound sailboat. The interior of a wave was menacing green with white foam, and it slammed against the hull with the

force and sounds of a sledge hammer bent on destruction.

The owner, two other crew members, and I were delivering this sailboat in April 2007 from St. Croix to a boat yard in Annapolis to be sold. I, at 62, had just retired and was eager to begin accumulating sailing days towards a captain's license.

At the time we received the initial weather forecast of storm and gale warnings near Cape Hatteras, we had already traveled 800 miles and were directly east of the top of the Bahamas. It was Friday, and gale warnings (34-40 kt winds) were issued for Sunday and Tuesday, and storm warnings (48 to 55 kt winds) for Monday. We could have sought refuge in the Bahamas—two days away; but the same weather report predicted a storm track through the Bahamas. We were unclear if this was a separate storm or an alternative track for the “northern storm.” Caught between the two, we continued north, waiting on a more clarifying report the next day.

However, the next day's report wasn't any clearer, and we were then about 320 miles south of Cape Hatteras. Our skipper wasn't interested in seeking other weather advice either from the Coast Guard or from Herb Hilgenberg (the Canadian volunteer weatherman for mariners) or from any other sources that might have clarified the forecast. (Call me a female chauvinist sow, but is this akin to men not being willing to ask for driving directions?)

Again we continued north, with the skipper betting on the storm staying north and moving along the coastline toward New England. If that were the case, then following right behind it would provide a good opportunity to cross the Gulf Stream with favorable winds, he reasoned.

But, defying three of the five forecast models, the storm not only moved further south along the middle section of the east coast of the United States, it moved out to sea and stalled. Later the news would identify it as a 20-year storm. Blaming the storm for our predicament would be easy, but wrong. Disasters are almost always an accumulation of small errors.



We each had plenty of time in the three days of the storm to think about the adverse events and circumstances that culminated in this life-threatening situation. After about 14 hours hove-to (a storm maneuver to stay headed into the wind but not underway), the main and cutter sails were torn apart. At that point we contacted the Coast Guard via the satellite phone to tell them that we were adrift, parallel to the waves, with bare poles at about 32 degrees north latitude and about 73 degrees west longitude, or east of South Carolina.

We had lost our ability to generate power from the diesel engine two days prior to the storm and had been relying on the wind generator and the solar system. These were insufficient to support *all* of the electronics such as the radar, main VHF radio, computer (weather report), navigation lights, autopilot, bilge pump, etc. We had 2 hours of battery left on the satellite phone, and we had 80 hours of fuel remaining. At best, without headwinds or high seas, we could motor 360 miles.

Waiting out the storm was a psychological challenge. In between watches, I met the task through sleep in my “V-berth” (at the bow of the boat) — dream-filled sleep, intermittent sleep, almost-awake sleep, any kind of sleep. At times, I was aware I was trying to talk aloud from my sleep, or reach out with my hand — but it was as if through a gauze. The waking moment after an escaping nap was like a paper cut. Quick and painful was the realization that I was still at sea in a storm that hadn’t abated and was going to continue. My nerves were raw, and I was scared. I wasn’t seasick, but I had no appetite. I thought about my stated goals for retirement that included “taking risks.” I hadn’t meant for that goal to be realized so soon and all at once!

I didn’t presume I was going to die; I just didn’t know what would happen, or how long it would take to resolve itself or how to prepare myself. And so my prayers were to ask the Divine to help me prepare for whatever would be the outcome. The Divine and my body let me sleep.

On the fourth morning, Wednesday, when the storm subsided to 20-25 kt winds and 10-15 foot waves,

we started to motor-sail towards Moorhead City, N.C. This morning, the skipper contacted Herb to get a more specific forecast. He warned of bad weather to the north and told us to sail west. However, after only an hour, we lost steerage. The skipper and Mike verified that the steering column was responding to the wheel. So we had either lost the rudder completely or just the connection between the steering column and the rudder had severed. (The later turned out to be the case.) While we had been in periodic, regular communication with the USCG, the skipper now notified them that we needed to be rescued.

Mike and the skipper lashed the whisker pole onto the stern stanchions and attached through each end a 25 foot line that led from the cockpit back to the make-shift steering drogue. The rudimentary steering drogue was fashioned by tying the two lines to a bucket with a life jacket fastened about 3 feet in front of the bucket to serve as a line float.

This drogue failed to give us maneuverability — either because of the weight of the boat relative to the size of the drogue, or other proportions were incorrect. While motoring, however, the boat naturally steered into the wind, which miraculously was from the northwest. Tired as we were, we were content that at least we were moving toward shore and also shortening the distance between us and the Coast Guard cutter moving out toward us.

However, we had yet to face one last challenge. While on watch that night, Mike looked ahead to see a green *and* red light—the view you see of a ship’s navigational lights if it is moving straight toward you. First Mike blew five blasts on the horn—the signal to bring all of our crew on deck with life jackets. The main VHF did not have power, and so the skipper grabbed the portable VHF radio to make a *Sécurité* call (the least urgent distress call). After several attempts a foreign-accented voice from the freighter answered and, after determining our location and understanding our inability to maneuver, changed course.

The broadside shape of the 110 foot white Coast Guard Cutter about 500 yards off our port that fifth morning at the break of day seemed at first a



mirage, and then the biggest and best gift anyone could be given. The seas had subsided to 5 to 10 foot waves. The winds were about 15 kts. The CG radioed to our portable VHF radio that they would go upwind and assess the situation and develop a rescue plan. About 45 minutes later a rigid inflatable boat (RIB) arrived with 3 seamen. The sailboat was prepared for towing, and we were transferred to the cutter "Staten Island" via the RIB. It had taken the cutter about 20 hours to reach us; and, towing the sailboat at no more than its hull speed, it would take us another 26 hours to return to Beaufort, North Carolina. The captain and crew of the Staten Island were impressively professional, competent, careful, and caring. Once again I felt the fulfillment of that basic human need: to be safe.

The trip to port gave me more time to reflect back. I had signed on for this trip through a crew/skipper matching service to be the fourth crew member. The owner/skipper had asked a friend and life-time sailor to join the crew. Mike proved to be the most knowledgeable, most willing to take on life-threatening tasks on deck (despite a broken foot), and the most competent. The third person was a sailing club friend of Mike's. While we were all in our early sixties, we never coalesced as a team; and the skipper never emerged as a leader. These proved later to be factors in our fate.

I reexamined my own role and actions. I had investigated the type of boat, interviewed the skipper, and been willing to not embark on the trip if at St. Croix it didn't feel right. However, I didn't investigate the historic weather conditions for April along the East Coast to know what I might be getting into. The skipper had indicated to me that he and his wife had been sailing the boat in the Caribbean for the last three years—when in fact the boat had been in dry dock for the last 9 months. The skipper also had told me that we would sail a "crescent" course east of the Gulf Stream—staying within distance to duck into shore should a storm be predicted. Instead, he charted a straight-line/dog legged course that was a shorter distance but riskier—especially for April. It left us 2 to 3 days from land—outside a good weather prediction window. My concerns about this fell on deaf ears

of the captain and the other crew members. The fact that one of our members had to be home for his wedding anniversary put a false sense of deadline to the trip, especially since we had left 2 days after our planned departure date. Should I have turned tail and left at that point? I asked the other crew members if they had *any* reservations about taking the trip. Their answer was "no."

The first week lulled us into a false impression of the multi-faceted character of the Atlantic Ocean. The seas were 1-3 feet, winds were often below 10 kts, and it was sunny and balmy. We motor-sailed until the winds picked up to above 10 kts. At an average of 5 kts—the pace of a good runner—progress was slow, almost monotonous. Yet there was something about the sea that made me want to just sit and stare and ponder. I wondered, though, if I could ever stand to cross an entire ocean at that pace. Night watch was magical bubble -- a meditation of stars, solitude, and yet an alertness for any change in the boat or surroundings.

In retrospect, we should have responded to the loss of the alternator on Friday by reducing our distance from shore. We could have taken a more conservative heading northwest toward Georgia—or on Saturday, even gone southwest toward Georgia. We also could have sought additional information and advice about the weather forecast. What we did right was to contact the Coast Guard early in the storm to provide our location and predicament.

It's too soon to predict whether I will take on another offshore passage or stick to coastal and inland sailing. Carter Lake, Colorado, at 5,760 feet above sea level, looks pretty good right now—even though there are always risks with any body of water.



**Lessons I learned about crewing offshore or in any risky situation on another's boat:**

- Know your skipper and make sure he/she is a competent sailor as well as a leader who will unite and guide the crew
- Know the boat along with the inventory and working condition of the equipment aboard. (We had a SSB but when we wanted to use it the owner said he'd never been able to make it work! The satellite phone was literally a lifesaver.)
- Verify that the boat has monitoring devices on all of its resources—e.g. fuel, water, battery voltage.
- Use all informational resources at your disposal before hand and when at sea. Written weather reports should be supplemented with graphical reports.
- Be willing—and make sure the skipper is willing—to alter plans once underway if circumstances change.
- Don't sail if there is a deadline.

