



AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION

~Andy Slavinkas and Jenny Thompson

As we were preparing the September *Mainsheet*, the chapter had yet to select the topic or presenter for September's meeting. At one point Wendy Byar was scheduled to describe the construction of a ditty bag, a useful accessory on any boat, and at another Phil Maynard was going to talk about how he tuned the rig and made modifications to his Steve Redmond-designed Whisp in order to bring her up to a GPS-proven speed of 7.5 knots. The indecision ended with an unexpected invitation: John Brady and Rick Carrion offered the chapter an evening sail in Philadelphia harbor aboard ELF.

The Independence Seaport Museum is roughly a half hour drive from our usual meeting place in Edgewater Park, New Jersey, but despite the short notice many of

our members found their way into Philadelphia and secured parking spots in order to take advantage of the generous offer from Rick and John. ELF, an 1888 Lawley-built racing cutter, was the cover subject of the April 2008 *Mainsheet*. She was re-launched earlier this summer after a dedicated restoration that showcases the talents of many local craftsmen. Until Labor Day weekend she had been sailing without her topsail, but in early September she was back in Philadelphia to have her jackyard rigged by John Brady and his crew at the Workshop on the Water.

Eager members began lining the waterfront at the Museum well before the appointed

ELF sailing on the Delaware River with her newly-rigged jackyard topsail.





ELF gliding downstream with Penn's Landing and the Independence Seaport Museum in the background before making her way upstream to embarrass a local fleet of J Boats.

time of five o'clock. ELF was already out on the Delaware and rounding the southern bend near the Walt Whitman Bridge in light air. For those of us at the dock, losing sight of her was disheartening and left us wondering at our chances for a sail. A few sailors even decided to roam the waterfront instead.

Sailing on a tidal river like the Delaware has its quirks. I have watched a fleet of J Boats slide from bank to bank without making any headway against the tide and the river's natural flow. ELF is only marginally longer at her waterline than many of the sailing craft commonly seen on the Delaware, but we witnessed what all of that canvas is capable of in the light winds of a September evening. No more than a few salutations and laughs later did members ashore watch ELF reappear, confidently clawing her way against the current with her mainsail, three headsails, and new topsail flying. She appeared

before Penn's Landing so quickly that those who had decided to take a stroll were breaking into a sweat to make it onto the chase boat.

ELF's topsail is laced to both a jackyard and a topsail yard. The topsail alone has more square feet of canvas than most boats regularly sailed by our TSCA members. Tops'1 sails are not only visually impressive, but they are also some of the most difficult to raise and lower. A few of us joked that the invitation to sail was perhaps in part to delay as long as possible the chore of lowering the sails. The five sails now rigged on ELF make for an astonishing mass of lines that encircle the mast and spill onto the deck. Keeping track of the lines, easing the correct ones, and leaving the others alone is one of the challenges of sailing ELF, as we discovered shortly into our sail. Misidentification of lines aside, she is a surprisingly comfortable boat to sail with a crew of sixteen, as we had that evening. Rick reports that

a bare-bones crew of four can sail the boat, but that nearly a dozen are necessary for racing.

Sailing ELF was a lesson in 19th-century design and necessity. In an era of boating not yet dominated by the engine, extensive sail areas like those of ELF's nearly-square main were essential to her maneuverability as well as her racing capabilities. In the light evening air we handily presented a fleet of J 27's and a school of Lasers with our profile followed quickly by our stern. Rick confessed that it was not the first time this summer that she has sped by larger and far more modern 'performance' sailboats, much to their amusement and surprise.

With John Brady's gentle tutoring, we all learned a few of the nuances of tacking and fine-tuning the sails on this historic racing vessel. Rick, a genial host full of stories about past and current exploits on ELF, is both an enthusiastic sailor and a compelling advocate for the non-profit organization that he and others have created to restore and maintain ELF. He insists that the dozen or more coats of varnish on the spars and the endless hours that he will have to devote to sanding,

Rick Carrion beside the mast and John Brady balancing on the bobstay as they prepare to lower ELF's sails.



re-varnishing, and caring for the boat are all worth it, and it was easy to believe him as one drifted along in the rosy glow of the setting sun.



POSTSCRIPT: ELF will be in St. Michaels, Maryland for the Small Craft Festival in early October. Rick is the keynote speaker at MASCF on Saturday night, so don't miss the chance to see ELF sailing on the Chesapeake and to hear Rick talk about the many adventure-filled years restoring her. In the meantime, visit www.cyr.org to learn more about ELF's schedule and future events.

NEXT MEETING:

**Tuesday, October 7th at 7:30 pm,
Red Dragon Canoe Club**

The presenter of October's meeting will be Phil Maynard. He may offer his previously anticipated talk on how he achieved a speed of 7.5 knots in his Whisp by altering the rig, reconfiguring the leeboards and rudder, and learning where to sit (of all things). Phil also video-taped the Maine Boatbuilder's Show in March 2008 so his film of the event may feature at an upcoming meeting. At the time of press, the meeting topic had yet to be settled, but we do not anticipate a last-minute offer to sail on an extraordinary historic yacht this month, so come to the Red Dragon Canoe Club and prepare to admire Phil's creativity and resourcefulness.

BULLETIN BOARD

Save the Date: November 8, 2008
10am to 2pm

Our own Chuck Sutherland, in conjunction with Hidden River Outfitters, will give a free workshop on cold water boating at French Creek State Park in Elverson, PA. The workshop will address the hazards of cold water outings and discuss safety tips, gear, and precautions that you can take to enjoy safe boating in the off-season. Call 610-287-7401 or email ted@hiddenriveroutfitters for more information and workshop registration.

Tidal Delaware Kayak Race

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council invites everyone to celebrate the Tidal Delaware Water Trail with the Tidal Delaware Kayak Race on Sunday, October 26th at noon at Ridley Township Marina. Watch the action as kayakers race up Darby Creek and around Little Tinicum Island. Visit www.pecpa.org/news/events for more details.

The Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival will be held on October 3-5, 2008 in St. Michaels, Maryland. Even if you are not registered for the weekend, come visit for a few hours. It's worth the trip.

Celebrate the first-ever Calico Jack Adventure Weekend!

Where: Harrison's Chesapeake House on Tilghman Island

When: November 15-16

How Much: \$160/person (based on double occupancy; for single rooms add \$15)

The itinerary as proposed and organized by Jane Meneely:

Meet Saturday afternoon at the fabulous Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in downtown St. Michaels. After a leisurely tour of the museum, we will take a skipjack cruise along the Miles River aboard the H.M. Krentz, while Captain Ed Farley regales us with tales of oystering and the state of the industry today.

When we've had our fill of museums and skipjacks, we'll trundle down the road to Tilghman Island to check into our rooms and prepare for a specially arranged all-you-can-eat oyster buffet. Then we'll sing the night away in Harrison's cozy barroom. Come morning, we'll join the rest of Harrison's guests for the Sunday morning buffet before heading home. All tickets, two meals, tips, taxes, and incidentals are included in the price; you pay only for your liquor. Kids are welcome to come along and can share their parents' room.

Chesapeake House has a long history. Tilghman Island businessman Levin Harrison began taking in summer boarders shortly after the Civil War, feeding them fresh produce and seafood straight from the bay. Now Levin Harrison IV is in charge of day-to-day operations and oversees the Island's active charter fishing fleet. The place has expanded over the years, but it has never lost the country inn feel that has welcomed families for generations. It has long been one of Calico Jack's favorite places to visit, and we're happy to be able to include our friends in this package deal.

Contact Jane at 301-949-2980 or 443-786-0473 and at [janinemeneely@gmail.com](mailto:janiemeneely@gmail.com).

AWARDS

THE 2008 WAY OUT ISLAND REGATTA

In mid-August I received an email from Greg DeCowsky announcing that he had just received an award in the Bahama Dinghy class of the Way Out Island Regatta. The race is held in Sarasota, Florida in April so the photo of Roger Allen handing Greg the plaque on August 12th naturally raised a few questions. Greg explained: "I/we won the race on a technicality. We raced on Saturday in about 20 knots of wind. The WOI Regatta was to be Sunday, but it was rainy and squally so the race wasn't held. Accordingly, the first to finish in the Bahama Dinghy in Saturday's race (us, as the other one capsized) was declared the winner. I was nominally the skipper, with Roger the designated ringer sailing master, and Michelle and Cheri rounding out the crew."



THE UNION LAKE MELONSEED RACE

~Andy Slavinskis

Hurricane Hanna blew through the Northeast on September 6th, forcing the cancellation of the Annual Messabout which in turn cancelled the annual melonseed race. As if the loss of a day filled with traditional boats and camaraderie wasn't bad enough, for melonseed owners a trophy with a half-hull of a Crawford melonseed and a series of small plaques proclaiming past sailing glories was at stake. For four members of the Delaware River TSCA waiting until next year wasn't an option and they decided to reschedule the competition for Saturday, September 20th.

On Saturday morning a light breeze and gentle late summer sunlight promised a comfortable day. As it turned out, it was a





able to call out the play-by-play and heckle the contestants.

Phil Maynard led most of the way with Carl Weissinger and John Guidera trading places for second. The low wind conditions simply did not favor Mike Wick in his John Brady-designed melonseed. Although his boat carries more sail area, Mike's boat is the largest and heaviest of the fleet and requires a steady wind to maintain momentum. If it is any consolation to Mike, the lines of John Brady's melonseed are among the most attractive to my eye.

little too comfortable. A sailor's daydream is a perfect combination of natural forces: warm sun on the neck, a seat balanced on the rail, hands hard against the helm, and spray on the face. But on that perfect-seeming weekend day, darn-it, there simply wasn't much wind.

Tom Shephard and I came to watch, set the course, and officiate for the race. I had an ulterior motive: I wanted to collect more images for our chapter calendar. We decided, wind or no wind, to go ahead with the race. The course was a simple one with an upwind start. Mike Wick had brought along an unusual lung-powered horn to which Tom applied his talents for a 3-2-1 starting sequence. Due to the lack of wind, it took between 30 and 45 seconds for the first boat to cross the line.

Tom and I set up the course with plenty of racing buoys so that the committee boat wouldn't have to remain at the starting line. Tom graciously motored us alongside the melonseeds, which meant that I was able to gather a number of nice images and Tom was

Near the end Phil (the reigning melonseed trophy-holder) waited too long to tack toward the finish, and John was able to slip around the final mark and make a good course to the finish line. Although John won the trophy, everyone smiled and won another day on the water before summer's end. After the race an informal pot-luck dinner at the club rounded out a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.



MAINSHEET

Monthly newsletter of the
Delaware River Chapter TSCA
c/o 134 East Main Street
Moorestown, NJ 08057

How to get in touch with us:

Chapter President:

Mike Wick, mikewick55@yahoo.com,
856-222-1216

Chapter Vice President:

Wendy Byar, uubyar@gmail.com

Programming:

Pete Peters, lupinelady777@verizon.net,
215-493-8440

Treasurer:

Ron Gibbs, RNgibbs@snip.net or
ronald.gibbs@unisys.com,
610-296-9843

Editors:

Andy Slavinkas, andrewdarius@juno.com
Jenny Thompson, jthompson624@yahoo.com

Website:

www.tsca.net/delriver/index.html

