

Islander 36 Newsletter

May 2003

Issue 2

Vallejo
Race Results
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Petaluma cruise
Memorial Weekend

4th of July
Benicia Cruise

Are You a Ham
with an I-36?- P. 5

**WE WANT YOUR
BOAT'S PHOTO!**

Rick Van Mell, Web Master, says our web site can use some new pictures of member boats for our home page.

Now that spring is here, get a nice picture and email to vanmells@ix.netcom.com or snail mail to Rick Van Mell, 1629 Begen Avenue, Mountain view, CA 94040

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RECORD ATTENDANCE AT SPRING MEETING 2003

Despite thunderstorm warnings, eight boats made the journey to San Francisco Yacht Club for the Spring Meeting Saturday, March 15th. Woodbine and Blockbuster arrived Friday night and endured a rain bashing, but emerged ok, although it got a bit wet below-decks on Blockbuster. Saturday morning cleared beautifully, and they were joined by Kindred Spirits, Solace, Mustang, Vivace, and Silver Shadow. Diana had arrived earlier and was docked separately.

The Race Clinic conducted by Race Chairs Mike and Daphne Dickson commenced at 10:00 a.m. and attracted 33 participants. Don Schumacher made a multimedia presentation on Bay currents, then Paul Tara, Measurer, outlined the Measurement Certificate process, followed by a measuring of Mustang.

People started checking in at 11:30 at the Cove House to meet, greet, and catch up. Lunch was served at noon, followed by our Spring Meeting. (See Meeting Minutes on page 3.) The tables were festive with Laurie Stover's colorfully wrapped candies.

Attendees: Robert Aston & Mary Gleim, Julian & Deborah Cohen, Dennis & Judy Bush, Ron & Karen Damsen, Daphne & Mike Dickson, Nancy & Al Farnum, Harry Farrell, Betsy & Art Fowler, Fred Freund, Tom Furlong, Arnie Gallegos & Louise Silverman, Don & Barbara Henderson, Bill & Jim Higdon, Charles & Kathryn Hodgkins, Travis Huff & Katie VanTrillo, Joseph Krensavage with Seth Migdail, Mike Loper and Jennifer Steinman; Walt Levison, Karen and Fred Loeser, John Melton, David and Trevor Morton, Steve Murphy, Noel O'Brien, Gary and Pat Salvo, Don Schumacher, Tim Shea, Kurt Smith, Richard Shoenhair, Barry and Sylvia Stompe, Jim and Laurie Stover, Paul Tara, Jack Thompson, Rick Van Mell, Skipper and Nancy Wall, Hank Williams, Kris Youngberg, and Lou and Diane Zevanov.

Tom List of List Marine was guest speaker. He described various engines that came with the Islander 36 and answered many questions ranging from water temperature and exhaust systems, to prop size, pitch and transmissions.



Karen Damsen on Woodbine welcomes sunshine Saturday



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San Francisco
Bay**

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May 2003

Commodore's Corner

Don Henderson

Welcome all to our 2003 Season of Fun in the Sun Racing and Cruising with your Islander 36.

We started the year with our Annual Spring Meeting at the San Francisco Yacht Club. Due to a rather negative weather forecast, some of the scheduled fleet opted to arrive via land cruiser in the 11th hour. In any event, we ended up with a record attendance for the luncheon.



The annual Race Clinic was a major magnet with some 33 participants, including a group of non-racers who found it interesting to see what the "other" half was up to. Some of these folks may well opt to become "racers" in the future! Our Racing Fleet Captains, Mike and Daphne Dickson, did an outstanding job in coordinating this session, with Don Schumacker, Paul Tara and Charles Hodgkins playing significant roles. The result was 14 Islanders showing up at the starting line for this year's two day Vallejo Race. Our largest Class participation ever!

We were very pleased to have this year as our guest speaker Tom List of List Marine Enterprises Inc., who deftly fielded a myriad of questions on engine maintenance and repowering issues.

On the Cruising front, we had a great turnout for Encinal Yacht Club in Alameda-- 7 boats and 32 people--with many participating in an exclusive "after hours" visit to Svendsen's Boatyard Chandlery to take advantage of special discounts, served up with wine and cheese. Hopefully many of you will have participated in the one-day "no host" 50 mile cruise to the Farralons and back, scheduled May 18th. Looking further ahead, be sure to mark your calendars for the Memorial Day trek to Petaluma, followed by the Benecia YC cruise over the 4th of July weekend with more to follow. Specifics are being worked out, so be sure to monitor our web site and your emails for periodic updates.

Speaking of cruising, thanks to all the folks (see Encinal Article) who gave Kindred Spirits a big assist when her electrical system got cranky.

For those of you who reside beyond the SF Bay area, and cannot participate in our cruise and race schedule, I encourage you to contact any officer or Committee chair if you should find yourself heading our way. We'd like to meet you and compare notes on our favorite boat and will make every effort to match you up with another member for a "day on the bay"! If you don't make it here, be sure to share your stories or boat projects with our Newsletter editor (my spouse Barbara). Send your boat pictures and items of interest to Rick Van Mell for our website. Both of them welcome your contributions re Islander adventures around the world, either by e-mail or snail mail. Don't forget the pictures.

Don Henderson

Spring Meeting Minutes

Commodore Don Henderson called the Islander 36 Spring Meeting to order approximately 1:15 p.m. on Saturday, March 15th, 2003 in the Cove House of San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere, California, and welcomed new members. A total of 60 people were in attendance.

Fall Meeting Minutes were not read because Secretary Brian Jacobs was needed at work since so many co-workers had been called to active military service. The Minutes were published to



Harry Farrell, Judy Bush, Charles Hodgkins, Ron Damsen, Gary and Pat Salvo, Betsy Fowler, Peter Wilhite and Art Fowler



Trevor with dad, new member David Morton



Race Clinic: Measurer Paul Tara in foreground

all members in the February, 2003, I-36 Newsletter.

Treasurer: Ron Damsen had placed copies of a Financial Statement on all the tables. He said the Association is solvent with a balance of \$8,443.20, and he was still waiting to receive late dues from about 30 members. He planned to

Our veteran sailer, Bill Higdon keeps jolly while keeping Blockbuster movin'

collect dock fees from boats overnighiting at SFYC. Also, he reminded members he has I-36 pennants for sale, small and large. Ron noted that membership dues received after the 2/28/03 report (distributed at meeting), put the account balance close to last year's figure.

Membership: Skipper Wall said he's been tracking membership since 1995, and in that time 274 different boats have signed up with I-36. Currently we have 193 members. He explained the "drop" process: after second notices (which went out a couple of weeks ago), the Commodore sends a letter out about mid-

April to anyone who has not renewed and the membership list is purged by mid-May, after which time Skipper will send out a current 2003 Membership List.

Web Site: Rick Van Mell reminded members to make use of the sign up capabilities on the web site for future events. He said the I-36 Web Site has received a lot of compliments on its breadth of coverage on issues of interest to owners, such as maintenance, etc.

Newsletter: Barbara Henderson urged members to send in their articles of interest, trips and maintenance for the remaining three issues this year: May, July and October.

Cruising: Charles Hodgkins announced that there are seven cruises scheduled this year, plus the fall meeting. Cruise coordinators are needed for the individual cruises and should contact him. He said the Petaluma cruise would be to the Marina (not the turning basin). Although Petaluma hopes to dredge before our cruise May 24-26, people should be prepared to wait for high tide to get out.

continued on page 4

Spring Meeting Minutes, cont'd from page 3

Charles emphasized that everyone would be on their own responsibility for the Farralon Run in May, as members are for any I-36 Cruise

Racing: Daphne Dickson said their Annual Race Clinic had 33 attendees earlier that morning and she thanked Don Schumacher for his talk on currents and Paul Tara for his hands on instruction on measurement details. There will be 9 races this year on 8 race days. For the first time, I-36 racers will participate in a second start on the same day (Olympic Circle, May 31st). They expect as many as 20 boats to race this season; 8 are currently signed up with the YRA. They are instituting a guest crew program, so if you are interested in racing and want to join someone else's boat as crew to see what it's like, contact Daphne. Jim Robinson is organizing a "Nationals" I-36 race October 4th, 5th. Everyone is welcome to race, even if their boat is not part of the regular racing season. This will be two days of racing on San Francisco Bay, two races per day, and results will not pertain to racing tallies of the regular season racing fleet. Rules especially for this race will be worked out and disseminated.

Measurer: Paul Tara announced that the first boat has been measured! Mustang got the honors, following the Race Clinic. He anticipates a system whereby a boat won't need to be measured annually after initial measurement.

New Business:

Dennis and Judy Bush are coordinating the Encinal Cruise April 26-27. Dennis advised that on Saturday night Svendsen's Boat Yard will open their chandlery after hours, provide refreshments and offer discounts. Members do not need to attend the cruise in order to participate in this evening at Svendsen's. Dennis will update members by posting information on the web site, and mailing flyers to locals.

Skipper Wall made a motion, since we have a substantial balance in the bank, that the Association consider a donation of \$500 towards maintenance of the U.S.S. Hornet, or otherwise make a contribution which would support sailing. The motion was seconded and passed by vote of hands. Dennis Bush suggested Angel Island could use the funds. Lou Zevanov thought youth sailing organizations could benefit. Suggestions should be forwarded to Commodore Henderson.

Skipper announced that he has blue I-36 bumper stickers available for \$1.50.

Adjournment: Don Henderson then adjourned the meeting and introduced Tom List of List Marine, Sausalito, as the guest speaker.



Rick Van Mell and Speaker Tom List



New members: Hank, Charlie and Pati Williams

Survey Results on Venue for Meetings

San Francisco Yacht Club, where we have traditionally held our Fall and Spring Meetings, has increased their dock fees from \$15/night to \$1/foot per night (an increase of \$21). Some members suggested we look into other meeting locations. At our March 15 Spring Meeting we distributed a survey to assess members' thoughts. Here are the results of the 33 responses received:

21 (64%) said "YES" - continue with SFYC;
8 (24%) said Let's find another spot; and
4 said they were "on the fence"

South Beach and Pier 39 have comparable day charges; Benicia recently went from \$15 to \$20/day for groups of 3 or more boats.

While some clubs "waive" the docking fee for group events (or credit it against bar usage), the perceived benefit of this is often offset in higher meal cost--as much as \$30/meal vs. \$20 in the past.

It's a tough call from a "trade-off" standpoint (venue-facilities-cost)! We are sensitive to the "cost" issues involved in cruising and are giving the matter careful consideration. ~ Don Henderson

The “Pooh” Rides High with Seasoned Crew in San Diego

by Eric and Judy Kroesche
Coronado Cays Yacht Club



“Pooh” leading the pack. Eric as Skipper, Jim Carrigan on mainsail

We learned to sail in Newport Bay forty plus years ago in a Lido 14, and purchased the Islander 36 in 1990 from the original owner. The “Pooh” is a 1975 I-36 with an Atomic 4 engine. It has had an engine rebuild, bottom job for blisters (twice), mast painting, rerigging and new keel bolts.

We sail in San Diego Bay, racing in the Non-Spinnaker division. The four crew members and skipper are all age 60 plus. The mainsail trimmer is 81!



“The Pooh” going to weather in San Diego Bay race

[*Ed. Note:* Congratulations Kroesches, The Pooh and Crew. Way to go!]

Because of the experience of the “old farts” the boat usually finishes in the top 3 in most regattas. We are not sailing as much due to the strain on the OLD BODS! So our racing scores are not as good and the competition is better than it used to be. [Eric served as Commodore there in 1995]

Race results Non-Spinnaker Class by Regatta PHRF Rating 144:							
1991-95	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
1st: 29x	1st: 3x*	1st: 3x**	1st: 3x	1st: 4x	1st: 2x	1st: 2x	1st: 3x
2nd: 24x	2nd: 3x	2nd: 4x	2nd: 5x	2nd: 1x	2nd: 1x		1nd: 2x
3rd: 17x				3rd: 3x	3rd: 2x	3rd: 3x	
TOTALS	1991-2002:						
	1st: 29x						
	2nd: 24x						
	3rd: 17x						
*hi pt.							
**hi pt. win							

I-36 and the Ham Radio

The common bond among Islander 36 owners is love of their boat and of sailing. It's evident at meetings and cruises. These events are a chance for members to seek information and to pass along tips about what they have done right--and done wrong! There is a wonderful depth of information among members. Since I became Treasurer, I have come to realize the geographic diversity of our membership. There are 177 members in 27 states, as well as Canada and the Caribbean.

The more we are able to communicate with each other, the better we are able to enjoy our boats and sailing. The internet has been the main reason for the tremendous growth in membership. Rick Van Mell has done a superb job in making islander36.org the place for information on the Islander 36 and its activities.

There is another way that owners, especially from distant locations, can keep in touch. My wife Karen (KG6LCZ) and I have gotten Ham radio licenses as a prelude to cruising. Since we talk with other Hams around the world, why not other I36 owners?

I wonder if there are enough members with a General class or higher amateur radio license who would like to set up a schedule to have an informal I36 net from time to time.

My boat is set up for HF radio. We could set up a schedule to coincide with one of the cruises. I will be making maritime mobile contacts on the upcoming Farralon cruise off the coast of California. If you have a license and are interested in pursuing this, email me at nb6x@arrl.net

~ Ron Damsen, NB6X, “Woodbine”

Islander 36 CRUISE SCHEDULE ~ 2003

CRUISE CAPTAINS: Charles Hodgkins and Kathryn Munn Hodgkins
charles@sailingmischief.com or kathryn@sailingmischief.com (510) 865-9045

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>Contact</u>
May 18 (Sun)	Extra Event - Farallons & back	No host
May 24-26 (Fri-Mon, Memor'1 Wkend)	Petaluma Marina (<u>not</u> turning basin)	Charles/Kathryn Hodgkins
July 4-6 (Fri/Sat/Sun - 4th of July)	Benicia Yacht Club - Fireworks	Don Henderson
August TBD	Coyote Point	Coordinator needed
Aug. 30-Sept. 2 (Fri-Mon, Labor Day)	Half Moon Bay	Charles/Kathryn Hodgkins
Sept. 20-21 (Sat/Sun)	Marin Yacht Club	Skippper Wall
Nov. 8 (Saturday)	FALL MEETING, SFYC, Belvedere	Charles/Kathryn Hodgkins
Dec. 6-7 (Sat/Sun)	Lighted Boat Parade, Oakland YC	Charles/Kathryn Hodgkins
Jan. 1, 2004 (Thurs)	Around Alameda Cruise	Charles/Kathryn Hodgkins

The Islander 36 Association establishes its annual Cruise schedule based on the general input of members, and may include destinations around the Bay, on river tributaries, and outside the Golden Gate. However, the Association assumes no liability for any event. It is the sole responsibility of each individual owner to decide if his or her boat and crew are suitable for a given event, and whether to participate, start or continue in any event.

Memorial Weekend, Petaluma May 24-26th (Friday/Saturday/Sun)

We'll need an early start to have enough water at Petaluma on arrival. So . . .

the rendezvous time is 0800
at Southampton Shoals
on Saturday morning 5/24
As usual Monitor Channel 72

Saturday evening will be a potluck. There will be a restaurant dinner on Sunday the 25th.

For more information, check our Website:
islander36.org (Upcoming Events) and
watch for emails

To sign up:
<http://www.islander36.org/events.html>
or contact
Cruise Chairs Charles Hodgkins
or Kathryn Munn Hodgkins
charles@sailingmischief.com or
kathryn@sailingmischief.com
(510) 865-9045

BENICIA 2003

Friday, July 4th & Saturday July 5th,
departing Sunday July 6th

An I-36 favorite cruise, so plan ahead!

Think Flags and singing and FIREWORKS!

The delta extension is not as yet firm.

Details will be posted on the web site and sent by email. Or contact Don Henderson after June 5th.



Debby & Julian Cohen enjoying the Encinal Cruise while Jim Stover takes a check on the weather

Encinal Cruise Attracts 32 for Fun Weekend

I-36ers Go On Shopping Spree at Svendsen's

by Barbara Henderson (Photos: Ron Damsen and Henderson)

Cruise Coordinators: Dennis & Judy Bush

This cruise, which is becoming an annual favorite, was again coordinated by Encinal YC members Dennis and Judy Bush, and attracted 32 Islander 36 members, 14 arriving in 7 boats (another 11 with boats berthed nearby) and 7 more arriving by car. Dennis, Judy and Cruise Chair Charles Hodgkins were on hand to direct the tie-ups in neat 3-row rafts. Later, despite cloudy skies, there was some fun catch up along the docks before congregating at cars around 5:30 for the short hop to Svendsen's Chandlery.

Sean Svendsen, who leaped up on the counter to welcome us, said Svendsen's identifies with the camaraderie and attitudes of I-36, and that they were hosting their first "fleet night" (after hours, complete with hors d'oeuvres, wine and discounts). It appears to have been a great idea--for both Svendsen's and Association members who could socialize while picking up necessities and gifts, and devouring the generous platters of cheese and vegetables while downing glasses of red and white wines. Thanks to Sandy Van Mell for passing on the offer and Dennis Bush for following through!

Attendees: Dennis, Judy & Matt Bush, Kathryn & Charles Hodgkins, the rarely seen but we're glad she came: Marge Higdon with Bill, Rick Van Mell, Nanci & John Melton, Barb, Don Henderson & friend Bruce Hope, Ron & Karen Damsen, Pat & Gary Salvo, Harry Farrell & Carol Williams, Julian & Debby Cohen, Hank & Pati Williams, Smokey Stover, Betsy & Art Fowler, Linda McClellan & daughter Annette, Lou & Diane Zevanov, Arnie Gallegos & Louise Silverman--and three delightful, well behaved dogs. Boats docked at Encinal: Natural High, Pacific High, Four C's, Vanishing Animal, Freedom Won, Kindred Spirits and Ophira.

On to dinner at the EYC Clubhouse around 7:00. Four or five big round tables brought everyone together. Salad was followed either by prime rib, chicken or pasta with prawns and was good. The Hodgkins rounded up ice cream lovers for a side trip to nearby



Socializing at Svendsen's: Karen Damsen, Linda McClellan, Marge and Bill Higdon



Vanishing Animal, Four C's & Pacific High

Tuckers while others drifted over to the bar to watch basketball on TV, but Sacramento bowed to Utah despite the rooting section. Others returned to boats to chat for awhile or turn in, or to their cars to head home.



Sean Svendsen Greetes Islanders

The dry weather held Sunday (Opening Day on the Bay!)

The Cohens and Denni Bush tried several remedies to get Kindred Spirits going despite an electrical problem, then Carol Williams' dug out a 2nd set of auto jumper cables to create an extension to Melton's Freedom Won (rafted adjacent), which ran its engine to get

Kindred Spirits revved up and on her way.



John Melton & Max, with Pat Salvo behind

Always a ready helping hand from this fleet.

ISLANDER 36 RACING NEWS

by Mike and Daphne Dickson, Race Fleet Captains



Email Race Chairs: Mike
or Daphne Dickson:
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(415) 563-7997

2003 Race Schedule remaining

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Categories</u>
May 17	City Front	Race for Spinnaker and Non-Spinnaker Division.
May 31	Olympic Circle x2	TWO (2) Races Today!
June 14	South Bay	Race for Spinnaker and Non-Spinnaker Division.
August 9	Olympic Circle	Race for Spinnaker and Non-Spinnaker Division.
August 23	South Bay	Race for Spinnaker and Non-Spinnaker Division.
Sept 6	Knox	Race for Spinnaker and Non-Spinnaker Division.

Both Divisions have 1 drop. Boats race 9 races and count the best of 8 scores. It is important to have 5+ I-36 starters in every race. Please work hard to arrange your schedule to make each race, or find an alternate helmsman to sail your boat for you.

These races are sponsored and conducted by individual yacht clubs under the general rules of the YRA. The Islander 36 Association simply has scheduled a start for Islanders in their races and assumes no liability for race events. It is the responsibility of each individual owner to decide if his or her boat and crew are suitable for a given event, and whether to participate, start or continue to race in any event.



Mustang and Company

Get Your Boat Measured!

See page 11!

Looks like Blue Streak, Tom Cat, Windwalker, Pilot and Tenacious out in front



Islander Fleet Puts Fourteen on the Line for Vallejo Race !

The Islander 36 fleet season started May 3-4 with the annual opener, The Vallejo Race. Participating boats: Tom Cat, Pacific High, Mustang, Mischief, Windwalker, Love It, Freedom Won, Pilot, Blue Streak, Pegasus, Razor, Lean Times, Tenacious, Nimbus. Rain was forecast throughout the weekend, but other than light showers on Sunday morning, the two days of racing was in sunshine and partly cloudy skies.

The 14-boat fleet assembled at the starting line north of Treasure Island on Saturday and after a short delay from lack of wind the race got under way. The first day's race was best summed up by fleet veteran Don Schumacher: "It was three races in one."

The "first race" was from the start in good winds and lasted about 45 minutes when calm air stopped the entire fleet. Any lead gained was lost and the leaders of the next leg would be decided by where the wind filled in first. The sun was out, so how about some lunch while we're waiting?

The second leg of the race: After about an hour the wind began to fill in. Boats to the west got wind first and it was a broad reach off to Vallejo. The Islanders fanned across the water around Richmond Bridge, then joined together at point Richmond for some close racing. Down wind racing was quickly stopped as the wind clocked around from the west to out of the east, and was on the nose of the fleet, bunching up the boats.

The third leg: The wind shifted to the north and then to the west building stronger as it shifted. The effect of the stronger wind building from the rear once again brought the boats from the rear up to the front of the race. The whole fleet was on one long line heading for the turn at the mouth of the Napa river. Once the fleet left the bay and turned into the river it was a sprint to the finish.

Sunday morning started with some light rain, but once underway the wind was building from the west. The race started down the Napa River and out into San Pablo Bay for the long upwind tacking leg to the finish.

Vallejo continued from page 8 . . .

When the fleet reached San Pablo Bay they fanned out looking for favorable winds and currents. There were several shifts on the way to the finish line and since the fleet was spread across the bay as each boat crossed the finish line, there were only several Islanders in sight for any finish.

The racing was close and the entire fleet finished within several minutes. To find out the winner, see right!

Thanks to everyone for making the first race of the year such a great one. ~ Daphne & Mike Dickson

preliminary
**RACE RESULTS from
Vallejo Opener May 3-4**

BOAT	Valejo5/3 Points	Valejo5/4 Points	Points to date	Place
Tom Cat	3	2	5	1st
Pacific High	2	5	7	2nd
Blue Streak	1	7	8	3rd
Mischief	5	4	9	4th
Tenacious	4	6	10	5th
Windwalker	7	3	10	5th
Lean Times	6	8	14	6th
Pilot	DNC	1	16	7th
Razor	9	9	18	8th
Nimbus	8	11	19	9th
Mustang	10	10	20	10th
Freedom Won	11	14	25	11th
Pegasus	13	12	25	11th
Love it	12	13	25	11th
Midnight Sun	DNC	DNC		
Woden	DNC	DNC		

**Don Schumacher Shares Strategy
for the Longest Race**
Tactics and Pilotage by Don Schumacher



Don charts a course for I-36

The photo shows the background visual aid for my discussion at the Race Clinic March 15th this year.

It was a montage of electronically developed charts.

The 2002 Encinal Race on July 27th - Day 1 of the Second Half Opener to Bonita (The Longest Day -- 22 tacks, 7 jibes, 23 nm and 4-1/2 hours on the race course and 48 nm and 7 hours away from the dock) provided the basis for the main theme. Specifically the value of the GPS, with its ability to give a skipper a minute by minute record of what the boat did on the race course (or trip), will secure in the skipper's mind for future reference what was successful and what was not. The chart provided the basis for a general discussion of the macro system which dominates currents on the Bay. This also covered the tougher piloting spots on the Bay: Getting out through the Golden Gate Strait, the South Tower, Bonita Channel, Blunt, and Alcatraz. In this manner the importance of learning from experience and the imperative of doing one's homework before the outing was underscored to maximize enjoyment of the boat and the Bay.

The Vallejo Race on May 4 and 5 of 2002 was the second topic and we utilized the Nobeltec program and Charles Hodgkins' Powerpoint hardware. Two main areas were put on the wall

screen: the first windward leg and the long run to Vallejo. Comments, questions and guesses followed as to which was the best way to go. The Nobeltec program shows at 15 minute intervals the current flow at thousands of points on the Bay. The Program covers the years 1900 to 2099, based on 100 years of collected data (absent the effect of rain runoff).

Snapshots of the conditions at estimated times were shown first and then a 24-hour animated projection using the 15 minute intervals was shown. Both Saturday and Sunday race days were covered.

A list of planning tools to help the skipper to think through an upcoming sail was distributed:

- Nobeltec for currents and charts (animated)
- USDC current charts
- California Coast helicopter views
- Goflow for currents • GPS functions
- Unisys weather visuals for the Gulf of Alaska and the West Coast (animated)

~~Don Schumacher, Blue Streak

What ABOUT That Gunk in Your Fuel Tank? ~ Fuel Tank Colonoscopy

Art Fowler (Zenith) wrote 3/8/03:

I don't know how many of you have taken a close look inside your fuel tank, but once you have, you'll wish you hadn't. Attached is a photo of the forward section of the inside of the tank on my '78 Islander 36. Access is through a six inch port cut in the starboard forward side of the tank. The photo was taken after I had spent considerable time cleaning it but shows that there remains considerable black deposits from residual algae buildup, particularly in the corners and in the weld seam irregularities along the edges. What it doesn't show is the rear half of the tank, inaccessible because of the baffle. If that section is like the front, it probably has deposits near the corners with an eighth inch of (algae skeletal)? gravelly-like material.



I guess this tank is typical of boats this age. In fact this tank may be cleaner than many since I have had the fuel polished 3 times over the past 6-7 years and hastily cleaned the dry tank through this access port 2 years ago. One concern is the rate of recurrence. I treat the fuel with a biocide, yet my Racor filter had such "mud" caked in the bowl after only eight or nine months, that I had to dismount the entire filter in order to clean it since the drain was fouled and wouldn't respond to inserting tools to free the debris. I could just refill the tank and get several years of use with a conscientious program of fuel treatment, filter replacement, and fuel polishing (though that process has disappointed me in the past with the amount of deposits left behind on the tank surfaces)

There is another problem of great concern. The aluminum tank bottom shows corrosion in the form of pitting and scaling. To what degree should that be tolerated? I imagine it could go several more years. On the other hand, the thought of the tank suddenly corroding through and allowing twenty-five gallons of diesel fuel to end up in the bilge and pumped over the side by the automatic pump is a nightmare. The fine makes tank replacement seem cheap by comparison.

The question is: Whether to maintain the old tank with some inconvenience and risk, or bear the greater expense of replacement. I'm interested in anyone's thoughts on the subject, particularly whether there is any non metallic material that has been used successfully for diesel tanks, or whether it's better to stick with th metallic. I'm also interested to know of any recommended manufacturers and installers. Can a tank of the same original dimensions be retrofitted since it appears the original tank was installed prior to the deck being added? Is there be any advantage to installing two tanks in the space of the former one, leaving one empty but available for long cruising situations? I use so little fuel in a season that a tank half the size would be plenty--think of the weight that would save.

Gail Bowdish writes from Michigan

The steel fuel tank on Aerie, my 1972 I-36, has to be replaced with a custom-built aluminum one because of severe corrosion. The sediment was terrible, and the fuel was contaminated. Is this a common problem?

Mike Dickson (Nimbus)

Yes this could become a problem. Our yard said that at some point ours would need to be replaced as well for the same problem, but thought we could hold off for a while (78 Islander). I would ask that when you get the new one see if you can get the plans, or something to help save the rest of us a headache when our time comes...

Julia & Kevin Novak (Hustler)

My '77 I36 is a gas engine (Universal) but after reading the emails about diesel, and since I previously owned and currently own diesel farm equipment, trucks and heavy equipment, I had to kick in my opinion: I don't think the fuel tank shown in the photos looks that bad either. The tank in the photos shows enameled residue - key word here is ENAMELED, meaning adhered residue, stuck solid, unmoving. The email doesn't address any possible 'floating' residue.

Sometimes a tank of fuel will last a year - and give you problems for a year and drive you to think (and drink) it may be other things causing the problem (and sometimes a mechanic will tell you you're right just to make a dollar). But it could be as simple as a bad tank of fuel; it could be evaporation of condensation watering down the fuel; it could be many other things.

You could save a bundle by simply pumping the tank and filling with a premium brand (hopefully not contaminated) of diesel - or trying some of the additives on the market to 'de-water' the fuel. The fuel exchange won't change performance immediately since you have to use all the fuel already in the system but spending an 8 hour day driving around the bay and running a half tank through it should show some improvement in performance. If not, look elsewhere.

Maintenance needs to be performed with a diesel and time and dollars would be better spent on maintenance than replacement. Imagine having the tank changed out only to find that the problem persists ... bummer. As an alternative to ignoring possible problems I suggest talking to not only marine diesel mechanics but heavy equipment diesel mechanics - the older and more experienced the better.

While back I looked into converting to diesel from gas. Everything I read and was told informed me not to use the old gasoline tank on a

diesel conversion (in bold print and underlined). While talking to a diesel mechanic he said, "a tank is a tank. Drain the gas out of the tank, wash it out with some diesel a few times and the tank'll never know the difference. All of the pumps, filters, feeder lines, etc. must be changed but a tank is a tank." Speaking of colonoscopies - did you check the fuel lines for abnormalities--pinched lines, ENAMEL BUILD UP, polyps?

Mark Wyatt

The steel fuel tank on Aerie, my 1972 I-36, has to be replaced with a custom-built aluminum one because of severe corrosion. I've got a '73 and have the same problem. The tank is allegedly "terneplate" but more likely just steel. Terne plate tanks are resistant to leaks opened by vibration. Its easy to join by soldering. There is little or no weight penalty. 0.018" weighs about the same per unit area as 1/16" aluminum. Unfortunately, real terneplate is hard to come by.

Mine's rusting from the inside. The rust is heavy and rests in the bottom, like sand. It doesn't clump up, but very fine particles get past the magnetic separator in the fuel pump and coat the carburetor passages, slowly clogs jets, etc. I finally installed a Racor gasoline filter in what once was a continuous line from tank to engine; now there's 7 joins which can leak instead of 2. With such a low horsepower engine, it's years between filter changes.

The last time I had the engine surveyed the surveyor said it's a problem, but the tank walls are really thick and in the temperate climate and warm water the boat's always been in, the rust rate is so low I may corrode away before the tank does. Temperature change is what sucks in air through the vent line, and with each night's dropping temperature, the dew point is reached inside the tank, voila! Mileage may vary, tanks in northern climes suffer much more.

Monitoring regime is to bash the sides of the tank with a mallet when it's conveniently empty (and see if it falls apart), examine the exterior paint job for the slightest sign of rust, and listen for the vapor detector whose sensor is directly under the tank and is on 24-7. The saw that "keeping your tanks full stops condensation" works because it's the air space above the gasoline where moisture condenses on the tank walls, but it's not worth the bother if the inside tank temperature never reaches the dewpoint. As far as tank filthiness is concerned, scoping many serviceable gasoline tanks reveals horrors, but as long as the rust and crud level doesn't reach the pickup tube penetrating the top of the tank, it's not a problem. Replacing the tank looks like a big job.

Lorraine Hillman

I replaced my atomic 4 in 1990. I remember contemplating the fuel tank thing and whether or not I should switch it out. After pulling the engine, I pulled the tank and brought it into a tank place in Orange County. I lived in the Seal Beach area at the time. The original aluminum tank was like new on the inside. I had it tested and was told to just put it back in which is what I did after coating it with a aluminum paint of some kind. It already had a place for the return line. Its been 13 years now and the last 5 have been in Bellingham WA. I havent looked inside but there are no leaks, the filter never gets dirty and I have never had a fuel problem. Knock on wood.

Julia & Kevin Novak:

I talked yesterday to a skipper I crew for in races (Ranger 34). He bought a "Baja Filter" through Latitude 38 magazine or their webpage under Baja.com. He says it's really good for filtering contaminates, water, fungi, algae, whatever. It was designed specifically to clean up the low-quality fuels provided in Baja.

Hank Williams

Practical Sailor recently did a test of fuel filters. Their results rated the West Marine Filter (\$28.99) just as good as the Baja (\$200) at filtering out crud and water and it is much easier to clean than the Baja. I bought the West Marine; so far so good.

Art Fowler Wraps It Up

I would like to thank everyone who responded to my questions about what to do with my fuel tank and fuel contamination problems. I received a total of twenty replies. The suggestions or histories presented were almost evenly split between replacing the tank (11) or refilling it and reusing it in its newly cleaned condition (9). A couple indicated that replacement was possibly looming down the line, but were getting by and as such I included them in the latter category. Many of you spent some time in forming a response and I thank you all for your efforts.

One response was particularly interesting and is awarded the prize for the most original and creative, that being from Brian Jacobs of Blue Moon. He writes: "A few of things come to mind:

1. Don't worry about it, you have one of the cleanest tanks around.
2. Completely empty and dry the tank, then pour a gallon or two of catalyzed epoxy into the tank.
3. Cut some more holes in the tank, and use the tank as a box to hold a collapsible neoprene tank. Page 263 in the 2003 West Marine catalogue, They have tanks in the following sizes: 14.5, 24, 37, and 53 gallons. Then, every few years, pull it out and throw it away and start from scratch again.
4. Completely dry the tank, then partially fill it with a strong mixture of bleach to kill the mold, then pump it out, dry, and refill with diesel"

Thanks, Brian. I've been giving them all some consideration. Oh yes, and what have I decided to do? After thoroughly inspecting the existing tank, I now believe there is some additional time left on its service life. As a result, I gave it some additional cleaning yesterday, closed it up, added 10 gallons of auto diesel #2 (nice and clear so you can easily spot contamination buildup) topped off the filter, turned the key and it started immediately with no bleeding required. I will return shortly and top off the tank and in the months to come, will let you know how things go. ~ Thank you all again, Art Fowler

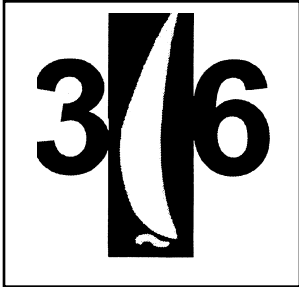
REMINDER TO RACERS: GET YOUR BOAT MEASURED

I-36 Measurer Paul Tara wants to remind racers that they need to make arrangements to have their boats measured. Contact Paul at 831 336-3622; he's at South Beach most weekends now.

Robert Aston is based in the City and has agreed to act as an assistant measurer. You can contact him online: astonr@ix.netcom.com to make arrangements.

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May 2003 Newsletter - Islander 36 Association of San Francisco Bay

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