

THE ROCK HALL YACHT CLUB

"TIMES TO REMEMBER"

1937-2000

A meeting took place in Rock Hall, Maryland, on August 16, 1937, for those interested in boating to form a yacht club. Hillyr Akers acted as chairman. George Ellsworth Leary was nominated president, Frank Puppe, vice-president, and Dr. William S. Brinsfield, secretary-treasurer. It was decided that the annual dues of \$5.00 a family would be paid by the next meeting date and each member was encouraged to bring a prospective member. William Collins of the Chester River Yacht & Country Club was present and made suggestions that the organization join The Chesapeake Bay Racing Association.

The Rock Hall Fire House was to be used as a future meeting place for the group. One week later, on August 23, 1937, Ellsworth Leary reported the progress of obtaining the necessary corporation papers. Norbert Nitsch's sketch for the club's burgee was approved. The flag design showed a blue background with a red cross. A local Methodist minister, Rev. Charles Louhoff, was made an honorary member. It was decided that a janitor's fee of 50¢ was to be paid for cleanup after each meeting night. August 30, 1937 the corporation papers were read and there was a discussion to allow the club burgee to be flown on work boats, commercial boats and pleasure boats. It was decided that the club establish a board of directors to be elected at the next meeting.

The new bylaws of the Rock Hall Yacht Club were unanimously approved September 6. The Honorable T. Allan Goldsborough, Congressman, was made an honorary member. On September 13, 1937 Dr. William S. Brinsfield was elected commodore, Lowery Harrison, vice-commodore, Norbert Nitsch, rear-commodore, Kathryn Brinsfield, secretary, and John Harman,

treasurer. The first board of directors included Alonza Hubbard, Albert M. Strong, Abner Bryden and Irving Crouch. All officers and directors were local Rock Hall businessmen.

A committee was formed on September 20, 1937 to meet with Congressman Goldsborough regarding the dredging of Rock Hall Harbor. John J. Raskob was contacted regarding his donation of the Gold Cup Trophy for the upcoming race. A ten dollar bond for the treasurer was approved, and on October 11 a dance committee was formed consisting of Jane Hatcherson (Hill), Madeline Rich (Sparre), and Herman Hill, Jr. Frank Puppe reported that the Fishing Fair Association had chosen Rock Hall for the 1938 Fishing Fair. The Yacht Club would take an active part in this big event. The club was officially accepted into the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Racing Association in October 1937. The War Department notified the organization concerning specifications for the breakwater channel, anchorage and bulkhead of the proposed harbor at Rock Hall. Towards the end of 1937 several dances and card parties were held to raise funds. June Francis (Stenger) was made chairman of the Thanksgiving dance and Senator Arthur Brice was made an honorary member.

In 1938 all clergy in the Rock Hall area received free membership. Since the club had no property of its own it was decided to rent Leonard Rich's house for \$3.00 each meeting night. The War department reported that the Rock Hall Harbor would be dredged in the summer of 1938. An "electric music box" was purchased for \$25.00 in May, 1938, and the name of Weldon Kelley was submitted as the first Fleet Captain. The secretary, Kathryn Brinsfield, wrote to all candidates running for public office to donate trophies for the upcoming regatta. The donor's name would be inscribed on each trophy, and all would be displayed in Brinsfield's Drug Store. Dr. Norbert Nitsch was named first Fleet Surgeon. A local newspaper

The Enterprise gave front page coverage of the Rock Hall Yacht Club's regatta to be on August 20th and 21st, 1938 by stating: "The Rock Hall Yacht Club regatta moved for its place in the nautical sun this weekend. Rock Hall is the watering center of Kent County and hence the ideal place for such sport as a regatta affords. Kent Countians from all sections should lend a hand to put the first affair of its kind across." The first regatta scheduled thirty-eight events for sailing craft with a total of eighty entries, including workboats. The course started at the mouth of the harbor. Three hundred dollars worth of trophies were presented. Among the winners were Rock Hallers Albert (Snooks) Strong sailing "Stepaside" and William Brinsfield in "Kit Kat." The power boat race was won by William Hudson of Piney Neck. A Baltimore radio station broadcasted the events each day from the race course. The entertainment featured two outdoor dances on a specially constructed pavilion near the waterfront of the harbor. The trophies were displayed in Brinsfield's Drug Store in Rock Hall. Spectators were able to view the festivities from the public landing at the foot of Sharp Street. An unexpected attraction to the regatta that year was the presence of the world-famous Metropolitan Opera singer Mr. John Charles Thomas, who was in Rock Hall Harbor aboard his yacht "Masquerador." It is said that his singing was heard over the waters until late in the night.

Along with his other duties in 1938, Commodore Brinsfield contributed weekly "chit chat" comments for the Kent County News. He wrote that Rear Commodore Norbert Nitsch was planning changes in his sturdy sailboat and would soon have the craft ready for Sunday races. Medcalf and Jack Jacquette had purchased a canoe with a Model A Ford engine from Grit Urie and it was said to be the fastest thing around. He further noted that Joe Strong Downey, Herman Hill and Snooks Strong had been having a glorious time with their outboard

motor speed boat. The Commodore also wrote in the weekly paper "this is the time of year to get a boat built" and he wanted to see a lot of the "Rocking Chair Fleet" get themselves a boat so they could graduate to the "Sailing Fleet."

Jane Hatcherson (Hill) secretary, reported in 1939 a balance of \$204.09 in the treasury. Due to a change in plans regarding a club facility, Commodore Brinsfield suggested that a new headquarters be rented from William Mercer at the end of Gratitude Road (Rock Hall Ave.) near the Ferry Park in Rock Hall. A building and a 300 ft. private wharf were available for lease through September 1939 for \$25.00 a month. The commodore also proposed that log canoe races be held as an ideal finish for the next regatta. The starting point would be near Swan Point in the Chesapeake Bay. Letters were sent to Governor O'Connor and Mayor Howard Jackson of Baltimore concerning their donations of trophies. A sterling silver bowl to be used as the Rock Hall Handicap trophy would be purchased by members' donations for \$35.00. Commodore William Brinsfield was recognized by the members for his dedication and hard work in helping organize the club and also for conducting the first regatta so successfully. A letter of thanks was sent to the Chester River Yacht and Country Club for the use of its racing equipment at the regatta. The treasurer reported a balance of \$229.00 and there was much discussion on seeking a permanent clubhouse since the lease on the present "Mercer" property would end in September 1939.

In the summer of 1939 Commodore Brinsfield reported that he had found "an ideal location of waterfront property consisting of eighteen acres, several outbuildings and a small bungalow with the convenience of electricity, a furnace and good water." It was owned by Charles F. Southard. The property had almost a mile of waterfront by Lawyers Cove and

offered excellent harbor facilities with a broad expanse of Langford Bay just off the Chester River. The new site could be reached in Piney Neck by a nine-foot concrete road with a mile of slag up to the gate. The "cottage" faced a broad sloping area which went clear to the water's edge.

The property could be purchased for \$3,500.00 and the first mortgage secured for \$2,000.00 with Mr. Southard holding the second mortgage of \$1,000 for three years. The remaining \$500 must be paid in cash by the club members. A suggestion was made to sell stock in order to raise the necessary funds, but the original charter would have to be revised, as the corporation did not call for stock. Within a few weeks Paul Noble and James P. Cowperthwaite secured the option on the Southard property for \$5.00 and Allan Stradley promised to pay the first year's insurance.

In late August of 1939 the dues were raised to \$10.00 and the treasurer reported \$527.00 in the bank. The finance committee was authorized to sell \$500.00 worth of stock and to secure a necessary seal. In early September 1939 Allan Stradley became secretary and reported that all of the stock had been sold. The question of the \$1,000 note was discussed and it was decided that: "a married man would have to have his wife sign with him and that the signatures would be approved by Herbert Urie at the bank." It was further stated that the second mortgage for \$1,000 would also be taken by the members and be divided into units of \$50.00 each paying 6% interest. For each unit, a share of stock would be given as a bonus and all new members would have to purchase at least one share. Franklin Wood and Harry Russell were appointed to the mortgage committee.

A vote of thanks was given to the finance committee for raising money to purchase the

new site. It was announced that possession of the house would take place on the third week in October and dates for a housewarming party and an open house were set. Until that time all club furniture and supplies would be taken from the Ferry Park site in Rock Hall and stored in the barn belonging to Julia Skirven. A ladies auxiliary was formed with Mary Wood as first president. Commodore Brinsfield agreed to donate a piano for the new building.

What was to become the very first of many social events, dances and dinners took place at the housewarming party on October 27, 1939. All members attending donated much needed items for the clubhouse, including decorative wall lights. To raise money for the new house, Julia Skirven chanced off a pair of silver candlestick holders. Kathryn Brinsfield played the piano that night while Mill Strong led the singing.

In September 1940 when soft drinks were 10¢ and setups were 5¢, Commodore Cowperthwaite made the following annual report to stockholders: Membership was approximately seventy-five families, stockholders numbered about fifty-five, slot machines were placed in the clubhouse, a new well installed, the interior and exterior of club was painted, a wharf built and paid for at \$500, the bank loan had been paid off, interest on the mortgage had been paid promptly each month, and there were no outstanding bills. He further stated that the sale of stock had been discontinued as it was no longer necessary to use that means of raising funds. Commodore Cowperthwaite commented on the new addition of a deck being built off the barroom. The junior members of the club reported that they had bought and paid for equipment for a new tennis court, and some new benches and tables were purchased with a generous donation made by Mr. Eugene E. duPont.

In 1941 the club was informed that the State Aviation Department would construct a

landing float for seaplanes near the club wharf at government expense. Fifty tons of gravel at \$1.00 a ton was placed in the road by James Coleman. Money was needed to enclose the deck porch that year, so the mortgage was refinanced for \$2,500 at 4% and secured by member Adam Smith. The old mortgage was paid off to Paul Noble. Mr. & Mrs. H. Morris Paschall donated \$1,300 for windows on the new deck. A decision was made to tear down all the outside buildings except the toilet and garage and use the lumber to build a pavilion at the wharf. Members enjoyed many informal dances at the club that year for 50¢ admission and James Coleman was appointed chairman to construct the tennis court. In the summer of 1941 Dorothy Skirven (Green), secretary, reported a balance of \$884 in the treasury and a profit of \$147.00 from the regatta. The nominating committee had trouble in getting members to accept the position of commodore. In the fall of 1941 the secretary, Hallie Skirven, reported that James P. Cowperthwaite was reappointed Commodore, and a bouquet of flowers had been sent to Mrs. Preston Heck and her son Preston, as a token of the club's appreciation for their hard work.

During World War II James Coleman, secretary, reported that each member of the club in the armed forces would be sent a Christmas package. Emory Edwards and Vaughn Hogans were in charge of obtaining a flag pole and it was decided that construction of the tennis courts would be too costly to construct. The net asset of the club was reported to be \$12,500 and authorization was given to issue 250 more shares of stock at \$10.00 a share to rid the \$2,500 mortgage. Mary and Franklin Wood agreed to personally carry the remainder of the mortgage for 4%. Commodore Preston Heck was quoted at that time as saying the following: "The problem of survival of the Rock Hall Yacht Club was in the hands of the members. Unless they demonstrate that the club and its facilities had a place in the community and the members were

willing by their efforts to share the work and responsibility, that there should be a definite program of winding up the club's business and dispose of the property to the highest bidder for cash."

In the early 1960's the club issued 170 shares of stock at \$10.00 each for the purpose of paying off a \$1,700 note. In 1964 much discussion began on ways to upgrade the property along the waterfront and it was decided that \$20,000.00 would have to be obtained to pursue this work. Some members of the board rejected the idea as too costly, while Allan Stradley was reported as making the following comments: "This club was bought with a note and with very few members. This will not be the first or the last time that we will go in debt. We are in a much better position to borrow the money now. The club cannot stand still if it is to be continued." Commodore Harold Whittum reported that the vote was 7-2 in favor of the project with two abstaining. In May of 1965 work began on the major project at the waterfront. The building of a 300 ft. bulkhead, a 150 ft. pier, 40 tie-off pilings and dredging were underway. Carl Stenger was chairman and Robert Linder, a member, was the low bidder for construction. John Heinefield closed in the storeroom, part of the roof was repaired, and the dance floor sanded and refinished. The club's membership numbered 160, covered dish dinners cost 50¢ and the annual lobster dinner \$6.00.

In the fall of 1965 the very first formal Commodores' Ball took place with eleven former officers attending the elegant tuxedo affair. Honored were Commodores John E. Boulter, Harold C. Williams, E. Clyde Sparks, Robert Sparre, James L. Coleman, T. Allan Stradley, Elroy G. Boyer, Carl Stenger, L. Kenly Jenkins, C. Harold Whittum, and John Heinefield.

In 1970 Commodore William Grieb reported that sailing instructions for children were

available in the summer at no charge. A large stainless steel sink was purchased for the kitchen and Dr. Calvin Kaufman was named Fleet Surgeon. The club was painted on the outside for a cost of \$2,500 and the first Watermen's Day took place in October 1976 with workboat races, docking and rowing contests. Because of severe freezing weather the pipes and electricity had to be replaced at the wharf, along with pilings and parts of the pier. The insurance on the clubhouse was increased to \$50,000 and the treasurer reported expenditures of \$2,300.00. Secretary, Betty Ann Strong, stressed the importance of getting the stockbook upgraded. Commodore Wayne Brady complimented Jane Thompson for her outstanding job as entertainment chairman for two years. Carroll Thompson and Carl Stenger, Jr. volunteered their boats for patrolling. For the first time there was music in the clubhouse and also at dockside for the annual regatta. Emory "Pie" Edwards suggested that \$1.00 entry fee be charged for all boats that enter the regatta race. The Coast Guard would have their vessel available for a committee boat and the Marine Police offered patrol assistance.

The 1980's brought a new look to the outside of the club when vinyl siding was installed for \$4,500. Chandeliers and a ceiling fan were hung in the ballroom. The mortgage was paid off and burned at a club function. David Bramble donated large stones to repair the badly damaged ramp, and Herman E. Hill gave twenty-one tons of slag to spread at the pier. The entire roof was re-shingled and it was noted that five layers had to be removed before new shingles could be replaced. The foundation of the club was blocked-up for better insulation and a large liquor cabinet was built in the storeroom. Gate receipts for the regatta totaled an unbelievable \$4,300.00. Mary and Donald Dunn donated a silver bowl for a perpetual trophy to honor Kay and Allan Stradley for years of dedicated service. Hunting rights on the

waterfront were rented and a yard sale was held which added monies to the treasury. A \$5,000 loan was obtained for the purpose of installing a new well and the purchase of a lawn tractor.

Shares of club stock sold for \$10.00. A major refurbishing of the kitchen took place in 1983, adding new cabinets, counter tops, floor and ceiling tiles, and new lighting. Mike Groves donated most of the materials. A computerized cash register was purchased and Martha and Fred Rudisill donated the blue vinyl seat cushions for the benches in the foyer. At the 47th Annual Regatta in 1984, Morris Paschall won the "Down River" race on corrected time, while Francis Schauber's Chesapeake Log Canoe "Mystery" was the first to finish.

In 1985 Marian E. Simmons was elected the first female commodore on Maryland's Eastern Shore. She would hold that office for three terms. Membership rose to 191 and many enjoyed a luau, a square dance, a fish fry, an October Fest, a casino night, and an auction. The treasurer reported an income of \$34,000 and a lovely old glass trophy cabinet was purchased and refinished by Donald Roderick and placed in the ballroom. Eleven insulated windows were installed in the ballroom, and the ladies made new draperies and blue tablecloths. Each member received a directory listing names and addresses of everyone belonging to the club. The walls in the clubhouse were brightened with beautiful paintings by some of the member artists. Sale of the pictures brought in extra revenue. Aubrey Reihl, finance chairman, reported that the fair market value of the club's real estate assets were determined to be at \$400,000. At the regatta that year a barbecue dinner was served and there was dancing at dockside to the music of "Back Seat Boogie" and organ music in the clubhouse was furnished by Walter Von Ryik.

In 1986, with the club's income at \$37,000.00, new carpet was installed in the foyer, bar and dining areas, and folding chairs and a TV were purchased. The boat ramp was completely resurfaced and an Eastern Airline ticket that had been donated was auctioned off to raise

revenue. The regatta hosted 100 boats and the Kent County News presented a perpetual trophy in memory of Sonny Usilton. A group of card players had many poker games aboard Scott and Ange Vasant's boat "Angeline" which was docked at the club for several summers. Sue and Dinky Coleman's classic boat "Ole Kat" also moored at the club, was always a popular place to sip cheer and tell a few stories.

At a special stockholders meeting in 1987 Commodore Simmons gained approval for the acquisition of land bordering the club on the south by Lawyer's Cave. The waterfront property was owned by Hilton and Irving Crouch. An equal amount of land was exchanged between the club and the Crouches enabling new property lines to be established. Shirts and hats with RHYC emblems were offered for sale and a shed was erected to house the lawn tractor. Boat owners of the club enjoyed rendezvous in the Corsica River, the Inner Harbor and Cape May, NJ. The "Rock Hall Follies" played on stage at the RHYC for the first time in 1987 with members demonstrating their many hidden talents for singing and dancing.

The 50th regatta was held on July 10, 11, 12, 1987. Log Canoe vessels raced near Cliff City while the Cruising Class boats were off Grays Inn Creek. The eleven mile "Down River" race on the Chester River began in Chestertown and ended off Nichols Point at the tip of Quaker Neck. Hundreds of visiting sailors, members and guests were entertained at dockside on Saturday night, dancing to the rock band music of "Branded Outlaws."

To commemorate fifty years of RHYC the "50th Anniversary Award" was given to pay tribute to a member who had given valued service. Hallie Skirven was the first recipient to have her name engraved on a pewter tray. Her long association with the club began in 1941 when she became secretary. Over the past fifty years she held other offices and worked tirelessly volunteering on various committees and also helped to prepare many meals.

A golden anniversary celebration took place in November 1987 when Marian Simmons

hosted a gala Commodores' Dinner. Fourteen of the former officers attended and many shared experiences in keeping the Yacht Club afloat through the good times as well as the bad times. Carl Stenger reminisced about the time he and other members went to Talbot County and encouraged John North to bring all the Log Canoes at Miles River Yacht Club up to Rock Hall's annual regatta for the first time. Elroy G. Boyer made note of the fact that he had his first date with wife Mickey on a Sunday night at the clubhouse. James Coleman remembered when the weed "mill foil" choked waters in front of the clubhouse making it impossible for any boat to maneuver through. Finally the Department of National Resources sent cutters and bailed up the debris. Clyde Sparks told of the time he had to dip into his own pocket and pay off the orchestra when not enough members showed up for a night of dancing.

Bill Grieb presented the club with a large picture of the sailing vessel "Mayflower." At a regatta on the Miles River in 1938 the boat was the pride of a local Piney Neck family "The Strongs." That log canoe no longer graces the waters but is just a memory of summers past. The picture hangs on the wall in the barroom. Patsy Skirven Reihl presented a nostalgic "walk down memory lane" story to the guests that evening. By researching old news articles in the Kent County News office and sorting through the Yacht Club minutes and memorabilia she compiled the first written history of the club from the beginning in 1937 through 1987. Part of that history will be kept on the Commodores' Plaque unveiled that night by Marian Simmons and Mrs. Preston Heck, whose husband was commodore from 1942-1945. Donald Roderick handcrafted the mahogany board and brass plates engraved with the names of all past commodores were put in place. The plaque has ample space to include many future commodores.

As the Rock Hall Yacht Club moved into its 51st year, Commodore Marian Simmons stated: "The present success of our Yacht Club has been due to the unfailing efforts and

sustained interest of all the past commodores, directors, stockholders and members. We can look to the future for continued dedication in the coming years. We must always remember to honor all those who had the foresight in 1937 to form this Yacht Club and trust that we all can carry on their vision."

In 1989 there was much discussion concerning relocating the upstairs ladies room. The regatta band at dockside which was very profitable over the years, had to be discontinued due to many problems. Ethnic dinners were popular and a Mother's Day brunch was served by the men. Volunteers continued to be the backbone for keeping the club prosperous. As the decade of the 80's came to an end family membership cost \$150.00. James L. Coleman was presented the annual Anniversary Award and T. Allan Stradley received the Sportsmanship Award.

During 1990 club members continued to enjoy a variety of events such as Derby Day, Circus Day, afternoon card games and a Super Bowl party. Fish fries and wild game dinners were popular as well as the traditional lobster feast. Covered dish dinners remained at \$4.00 and membership dues were \$150.00.

In 1991 the club was given approval for six mooring buoys and they were put in place by Martin Legg and Donald Dunn. "Flower Girls" Jane Hackett, Milly Dilly, and Pat Geisler (Brown) kept the mounds neat around the clubhouse and in full bloom. Congressman Wayne Gilchrest, Vietnam veteran, spoke at the annual Commodores' Dinner in 1991. Major work began to bring the stockbook up-to-date because through the years many shareholders on the books were deceased and addresses for others could not be obtained. The club was able to regain shares of stock through Maryland Abandoned Property.

Commodore Aubrey Reihl reported a major building project budgeted for \$40,000 was approved and work began June 1, 1992. Two large bathrooms and a coatroom were added on

to the N.E. corner, along with a handicap ramp and the bar was enlarged and remodeled. Three sliding glass doors donated by Sally and Roy Blomquist were installed, which opened up the outer room to a lovely view of the river. On August 9th, when most of the work was completed, a ribbon-cutting ceremony took place. To benefit the construction project a quilt raffle took place. A handcrafted Chesapeake Bay theme designed by Marian Simmons and quilted by Mary Dunn would eventually raise \$3,200. Work progressed on replacing the septic tank, replacing new water lines, painting the ballroom ceiling, and repairing the driveway. Walt Brandt, Ken Anderson and David Austin installed a "PA" system and for the first time, the entire clubhouse was designated smoke-free. Property taxes were \$5,400. In 1992 Gertrude Heinefield continued to solicit donations from the business community and members for regatta trophies. Marvel and Dick Evans were congratulated for their service in making the 55th annual regatta a success and Clemens Gaines, who worked diligently as finance chairman, was also recognized. In December, an invitation to dinner was extended to the Rock Hall Mayor & Council members. Stockholders were selling their shares for \$25.00.

Permits were approved in 1993 for ten boat slips and work was completed by Mort Deckleman for \$7,100. For safety reasons the light poles were removed and electric lines buried to the dock and more stone had to be added to the boat ramp. Income was generated through yard sales, flea markets, rentals of boat slips, and mooring buoys and deer and goose hunting. Covered dish dinners were increased to \$5.00.

Commodore Martin Legg stated that the primary goal in 1994 should be to reduce the \$36,500 mortgage loan for construction. Bill Griffin, treasurer, reported that \$8,000 had been paid off on the principal and \$2,600 paid to Mort Deckleman. The old furnace became unsafe to use and was replaced. An oyster shucking contest and feast took place in 1994 as well as a Valentine Party hosted by the "Merry Widows." Walt Brandt handled the betting on Derby

Day, which included a mint julep party. Herb Hamilton, acting as chef, treated the membership to a delicious pig roast. Jack Pharo handled several horse races (on the ballroom floor) to raise money and a Texas Jamboree with a "southern bite" was hosted by the Schlenkers, Marvin and LaRue and Warren and Leah.

In 1996 the Kent County Public Works extended a sewer system to the Piney Neck area and the yacht club was connected. Friday Pub Nights continued to be enjoyed. A newly constructed deck was completed in 1997 and financing undertaken by selling boards for \$75.00. A new water conditioning system was replaced and additional shrubbery was planted around the clubhouse. Property taxes were \$8,600 and membership totaled 185. The Philadelphia Mummers provided the club with a fabulous musical show. The public was invited and the event raised \$1,000.

In 1998 Lee Clampfer was presented an award for his long dedicated service to sailing. A major kitchen renovation project was approved by the stockholders in 1999. Fleet Captain, John Macielag, held six sailing races, including the Laser Nationals and Windmill National Championships. Bar stools were purchased and a bottle cooler installed. The women's kitchen committee purchased a large commercial stove. A \$2,000 outstanding deck loan was paid off and it was reported that all moorings had been rented, but the bulkhead was deteriorating badly.

In the year 2000, the yacht club began its 63rd year with Mary Dunn having been elected commodore, the second woman to hold that office. Family membership dues were \$275.00 and the Kent County property taxes for the year were \$8,807.00. A certified appraiser valued the 17.58 acres for \$500,000 and the clubhouse for \$150,000. Jane (Nitsch) Ford, chairing the entertainment committee, planned a variety of activities. The rock fish and wild game buffets continued to draw big crowds as well as the covered dish, lobster and oyster dinners and

luncheon bridge parties. Jane got her start in 1938 planning entertainment, and she is still devoted to volunteering her services.

Thirty boats were entered in the 63rd regatta in five classes, and ten sailors raced in the Down River event. At the awards ceremony, Darlene Usilton presented the Memorial Trophy bearing the name of her late husband, Sonny. The Log Canoe regatta hosted six canoes and later the participants and committee members assembled at the home of Janet and Bob Hewes for an awards ceremony party. In August, Gail and Dorsey Owings sailing "Sea Biscuit" won the National American Championship for the second time in four years.

After years of discussions and, with the aid of a \$100,000 loan, the vision of a new kitchen became a reality. On March 1, 2000 major construction began on the facility and ten weeks later, with the project 90% completed, the membership was invited to inspect the facility, which included two storage room additions and refurbishing of the bar area. A walk-in refrigerator was in place along with more efficient dish washing appliances and stainless steel serving tables and a larger exhaust unit was installed. Central air conditioning was added to the kitchen and bar areas and new wiring was in place throughout most of the clubhouse. A ceremony took place to unveil the Deck Donors Plaque. The board handcrafted by Don Dunn has eighty-five brass plates engraved with names of all those who donated money toward construction of the new deck. Mary Dunn presented a framed photograph of Russell Burton who died during his term as commodore in 1998 but he was very active in working to get the deck built. In 2000 the club began to accept credit card billing and the decision was made to hire a grass cutter instead of relying on volunteer help. A yard sale netted \$1,139 for the kitchen construction fund and the lease on the blind raised \$2,000.

At the Commodores Dinner in November members and guests heard excerpts from a newly documented book detailing the club's history from 1937 to 2000. Many photographs were

included showing members enjoying a variety of activities. Proceeds from the sale of books helped to raise funds for the new construction project.

Near the end of her first year as commodore, Mary Dunn remarked: "As we get closer to the 21st century, it is good to reflect on those who have brought the club to this point. Any organization depends on the efforts of volunteers and there have been many over the years. We should consider where we have come from, where we are, and where we want to be twenty years from now. Hopefully, the leadership will put the club's best interest ahead of their personal goals and set a course to assure us that there will always be a Rock Hall Yacht Club in this incomparable setting."

After the 50th anniversary celebration in 1987 Hurtt Deringer, editor of the Kent News, wrote the following:

"From Chestertown you keep tacking to port at every crossroads from Edesville. Finally, after miles of farm fields, the motorist swings down a small hill, sees Lawyers Cove to starboard and perched to port on a tiny knoll the little clapboard club house that harbors the Rock Hall Yacht Club. Gone to Fiddler's Green are many of the great skippers and colorful characters that gave the club its warmth and joy. Such were the humble beginnings of the little club in Piney Neck. Hopefully, it will remain for the next 50 years."

As the year 2000 draws to a close we should look back to reflect what many officers, members and friends accomplished over the past sixty-three years. They willingly and enthusiastically volunteered their time and their resources to insure the club's success. We owe a debt of gratitude to all of them, but especially to Commodore William Brinsfield, who reported to the board in 1939 that "he had found the ideal place for our club." His vision remains so today and hopefully it will continue for many, many years to come. The Rock Hall Yacht Club has truly been a unique and an "ideal place."

All material in this book was researched and written by Patsy Skirven Reihl. The information was gathered from club minutes, interviews and local newspapers. Eugene Wagner scanned the photograph pages and designed the cover. Proceeds from the sale of "Times To Remember" will benefit the kitchen project.

November 2000