

“Old Ironsides” The Full Story

In early July 2000 I asked Brad Pease, who owns “Pease Boat Works” in Chatham with his brother Michael, if Georgette and I could be aboard “INFANTA”, a 46 Rhodes yawl, to witness the tall ships departing Boston for their race to Halifax. Brad told me that they were not booking passengers but that Infanta was available for charter and that he, Brad, was to be the skipper. The cost for the day was \$1000.00. We would board the boat at the Barking Crab in Boston, sail around the harbor and watch the Tall Ships depart. Pretty exciting. I said, “Life is short - let’s go for it.” The check was written; the deal was done.

Georgette and I invited Lucy Buckley and Edwin Jepsen, our neighbors in Chatham, to join us. Their share of the cost was for Edwin to continue to feed our cat “Jolly Jack Pussar” as he had done for years any time we were away. Another deal struck. Edwin was dealing with prostate cancer; Lucy was recovering from hip replacement. We had the boat provisioned with wine, beer, hors d’oeuvres. Lunch was organized. This was going to be a straw hat yachting day on the water.

We arrived at the Barking Crab at 8am. The restaurant was closed, the gate was locked, but Infanta was there sitting at the dock in the rain and fog. I called down from the bridge, “Ahoy Infanta.” A voice answered back which was not Brad’s. This fire plug of a man stepped out of the companion stripped to the waist. This was the hairiest man I had ever seen. “Where’s Brad?” I shouted. The hairy fire plug replied, “He’s not here - I’m your man. Come on down; I’ll get my shirt and open the gate.” Early man turned to go below, showing us the # 4 that someone with a barber’s electric razor had shaved in his back. Georgette and I looked at each other. It was raining, foggy, and I had visions of the shavings in the wine and hors d’oeuvres, the lunch platters, and on every surface below. “Open the gate” I said to Georgette. “Open the gate and give me back my \$1000.00.” This is not what we booked. Georgette said “Stay calm; cut him some slack; give him a chance.” The gate was unlocked, we requested permission to board, and permission was granted. Number “4” welcomed us aboard and introduced himself. “I’m Jay Moyner. I will be your captain and steward and will do everything I can to make all of you comfortable and ensure that the day will be very exciting.” My opinion of #4 began to change. He did look as though he had been over served the night before, but that is no reason to judge ANYBODY. We settled in. The boat was immaculate and our skipper a perfect gentleman.

We departed the Barking Crab for Boston Harbor. The weather was uncertain – drizzle, fog, a little clearing more fog and drizzle. Capt. Moyner informed us that our Sail Boston flag had been stolen the night before which meant nothing to any of us, we were out for a day on the water. As we motored to the harbor area off Logan airport we were stopped by every police force in the harbor. “STOP” and anchor down. Capt. Moyner would give the name of our boat and state that “our Sail Boston flag had been stolen”. There would be a pause on the various police boats and we would be allowed to carry on. At noon looking back into the inner harbor we saw the USS CONSTITUTION being escorted by two huge tugs one on each hip gently taking her to the mooring platform just off of Logan airport.

Out of the blue a large aggressive Coast Guard vessel approached “Infanta” and over the bull horn shouted, “STOP AND SURRENDER YOUR VESSEL.” Boy this is quite the adventure! Capt. Moyner, ever the gentleman, again stated, “Our Sail Boston flag was stolen, radio the parade Marshall and inform him that ‘Infanta’ is standing by, waiting instructions to take her place in the parade.” WHAT!!!! We are in the parade?

The Tall Ships began to appear from the inner harbor and one by one they passed in review of "OLD IRONSIDES." Cannons were fired on the passing ships. "OLD IRONSIDES" would reply in kind. Things were NUTS aboard Infanta. "Capt. Moyner, you never told us we were going to be in the Parade." Capt. Moyner replied, "I thought Brad told you."

Towards the end of the Parade the vhf radio came alive. "Infanta, Take your place in the Parade, pass in review, and salute the USS CONSTITUTION." More insanity aboard Infanta. Praise God that years ago I read about US NAVY etiquette. If you are starting in a row boat or a mega yacht, and pass or are passed by a United States Navy War Vessel, stand and salute. If they see you, the officers and crew will return the salute.

As we approached The USS CONSTITUTION, I instructed Georgette, Lucy and Edwin to stand on the port rail. "When I say salute, salute and don't drop it until told. I will dip the colors. Capt. Moyner and I will also salute".

As we glided up to pass in review I gave the command to salute. Prostate cancer, hip discomfort, and any other cares of the world were gone. No one on Infanta had ever known such pride, reverence and pure joy as at those moments of saluting the most revered symbol of our nation's resolve. We dipped our colors as did Old Ironsides. As we passed, Her colors were raised, we raised ours and stood down. Through all the cheers and misty eyes, Georgette with her one setting 35 mm camera took the two pictures: Broadside and Starboard Bow.

The memories of the day will never fade.

Edwin Jepsen passed away a year and a half ago. If there ever was a man who was his own man it was Edwin Jepsen.

I had not looked at the photos since they were originally developed and they sat in my desk drawer. Looking at them after Edwin passed away brought back to life one of the greatest days Georgette and I have ever had together. Studying the two images and how Georgette was able to take such perfect photographs of the Constitution on a moving boat and all the excitement is beyond me and they seemed to capture the emotions of the day.

The rest is history.

Capt. Jay Moyner is a dear friend and always will be. Lucy is well and misses Edwin. We all do. Georgette and I are between boats but keep sailingÑ

Stuart Swan

"We can never tell what is in store for us."
President Harry S. Truman