

Water Fronts for Feb. 4

I've used my sailboats for a variety of things over the years – mostly racing and cruising, but also such things as participating in the Parade of Lights.

But never had I put a boat to such emotional use as I did nine years ago last Sunday.

It was late January, 2001 when local boat owners were asked to participate in an event to commemorate the first anniversary of the Alaska Airlines Flight 261 crash near Anacapa Island which killed all 88 people on board.

I was one of numerous local skippers who volunteered boats to take relatives to sea on Jan. 30 so they could sprinkle flowers upon the sea in the area where Flight 261 went down.

Assigned to my boat were A. T. Lynch of Issaquah, Wa., and his young son and daughter.

We joined the fleet and paraded our way out to the crash site. The boats, including my New York 36, Blue Lightning, slowly circled as grieving relatives tossed flowers into the sea and recalled their lost loved ones.

I asked Lynch if he would like to write something in my log book and he wrote the following:

"9:32 a.m. A.T. Lynch II, daughter Alina, Son A.T. Lynch, Issaquah, Wa. My stepfather, my children's grandfather, Don Shaw, age 63, of Olympia, Wa, is our lost loved one. We are very grateful for taking us to the crash site. This has helped us heal being there today. God speed to you and your crew as you venture out on the ocean."

For what seemed like a long time the boats continued to slowly circle until it was announced over the marine radios that it was time for the fleet to head back to Channel Islands Harbor.

The flat sea and absolute calm was almost instantly interrupted as Santa Ana winds came roaring over the water, churning the sea and eerily putting an end to a somber occasion and making it difficult for skippers to get back to the harbor and safely offload their passengers.

The storm continued for more than 24 hours and it wasn't until two days later that friend Jim Modlin and I were able to take Blue Lightning back to Ventura Harbor.

After getting Blue Lightning safely back in her slip, it occurred to me that despite some fun cruises and a few successful races, the trip to sea on Jan. 30, 2001 was probably her finest hour.

In an ironic post script, I sold Blue Lightning the following year and she now sails the waters Seattle – not far from the Lynch family.

SOLID BOX:

The Ventura Power Squadron's next Public Boating Course will start on Feb. 16. The 10-week course will be on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Ventura Yacht Club, 1755 Spinnaker Drive at Ventura Harbor.

The course covers all of the basic elements to safe boating, including knots, boat handling, rules of the road, safe operation, weather, and US Coast Guard and California boating laws and regulations. The course is free. The cost for the printed materials and course plotting instruments is \$60 per person. Class size is limited to 50 persons, on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information contact Ashworth at 432-9732. For more information about the Squadron and its courses, visit the website at www.usps.org/ventura.

The Ventura Power Squadron is non-profit organization dedicated to safe boating through education and civic outreach. One of over 400 squadrons throughout the United States and abroad, the Ventura Squadron has more than 100 members who enjoy both sail and power boating, and support a full suite of educational courses that range from basic boating classes to advanced courses in GPS, RADAR, and celestial navigation. Ev Ashworth, commander of the Ventura Squadron, said "We are always seeking new sail and power boater members. Our motto is 'Boating is fun, let us show you how.'" He said the cost of membership is typically more than offset in membership savings for insurance, boat supplies, and instruments.

SOLID BOX

Stay up-to-date with the latest notices of race, results and other timely information by joining the local Google Group for the Association of Santa Barbara Channel Yacht Clubs. Click over to: <http://groups.google.com/group/asbcbcy> and then select "Join this group" on the right side of the page.

SOLID BOX:

Upcoming sailboat races:

* Saturday, Feb. 13, PBYC Spring Series 1. This popular three race series is hosted by Pierpont Bay Yacht Club. The other races are on Feb. 27 and March 20. The skippers meeting for each race is at 8:30 a.m. and racing starts at 11 in the vicinity of the Mandalay buoy. All finishes will be in the Ventura Harbor entrance channel. Entry fee is \$90 for the series (\$80 for USSA members) or \$30 for individual races (\$25 for USSA members). For more information, contact Richard Countess at (818) 889-2669 or at Rcountess@aol.com.

SOLID BOX:

2010 ocean sailboat racing schedule:

Feb. 13, PBYC, Spring Series 1

Feb. 20-21, CIYC, SCYA Midwinters, PHRF & J-24.

Feb. 27, PBYC, Spring Series 2

Feb. 28, PCYC, Racing Rules Seminar

March 13, AYC, St. Patrick's Day Race

March 14, PCYC, Regional Training Race

March 20, PBYC, Spring Series 3

March 27, PCYC, McCune Race, PacCorCup 1.

(Fax your race announcements, results and other information to Stan Whisenhunt at 659-3058 or call him at 659-1464. His e-mail address is Swhisenhun@aol.com).