

CHICAGO YACHTING ASSOCIATION

By Commodore Kazimierz "Casey" Chlebek



It was truly a special honor to serve as Commodore of the Chicago Yachting Association for 2016. This special privilege of servitude is underscored by the fact that the CYA has a 50 year plus tradition in the service of the Chicago boating community. As many Commodores before me, I experienced satisfying moments, unique opportunities, and unintended challenges. I have come to recognize, appreciate and respect the fact that the Commodore must make every effort to reach out and connect to all stakeholders to be successful in his mission. The Commodore and CYA provide the bridge to connect all maritime interests in the area.

Foremost, I must express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the members of the CYA Bridge and Board. The CYA is a union of people from different organizations. Each deserves due credit and recognition for exemplary work. Our monthly meetings are held at member yacht clubs, and each of the hosting Commodores and their staff must be complemented for their efforts to prepare for the meetings. We all must recognize the diligent work of Scott Stevenson, Vice President of Westrec, to keep us informed at every meeting about the prevailing conditions "harbor by harbor." At the meetings, the first to report are the First Responders, representatives from the United States Coast Guard, Chicago Police Marine and Helicopter Unit, and Chicago Fire Department Marine and Dive Operations. We extend our appreciation for the due diligence of these safety organizations.

The essential elements of each Board Meeting are the reports by the CYA Officers. Let me salute each one for going beyond the call of duty: Vice Commodore Douglas James for efficient handling of the Yachting Celebration, Rear Commodore Sandra Smith for her hard work on the Commodores Cruise and Venetian Night, Secretary Kathy Lesser for handling secretarial duties, and Treasurer LaRue Watson for maintaining accurate and timely financial records.

We all must also recognize the unenviable duty of chairing committees and acting as CYA liaisons to other organizations: PC Fred Poppe for National Boating Federation, PC Betty Lerner for her efforts as publisher of the CYA premier magazine "Yachting in Chicago," and CCYC PC David Brezina for Chicago Harbor Safety Committee. Our Past Commodores, Walter "Sonny" Lisowski and Walter "Gibby" Vartan deserve a very special mention since they bring the most experience to the Bridge. Sonny is always ready with constructive ideas, and Gibby provides quick problem resolution. Success of our organization depends on communication, and we owe Chuck Goes many thanks for his duties as our newsletter publisher and webmaster. Thank you to all for jobs well done!

In addition to many boating activities organized by each Yacht Club, this year was very special for our boating community because two world class events took place on the Chicago lakefront. First was the America's Cup, which for the first time in its 165 year history had an event on fresh water. The Chicago races, along with other qualifiers around the world, will culminate in the 35th America's Cup in Bermuda in 2017. Second was the Tall Ships Festival, which returns to Chicago every three years. Tod Reynolds, director for the Louis Vuitton America's Cup World Series Chicago, and Patricia H. Lock, spokeswoman for the Tall Ships Chicago, gave in-depth presentations to the CYA.

If one were to examine our roster of activities a decade ago, it would be evident that CYA could boast of over a dozen programs including such huge events as Venetian Night and the Yachting Ball. For over 50 years, CYA organized the most spectacular annual Venetian Night, remembrance of which is echoed even today by those that participated in it. Unfortunately, in recent years some of these events were considerably scaled down, temporarily shut down, or canceled. Undeniably, such conditions also pose new opportunities for new ideas and fresh possibilities. That is our ultimate road to pursue. Our determination to go just another mile to reposition our anchor must remain unfazed.

CYA along with our member organizations needs to revitalize some of the once popular programs and create new ones which directly impact our communities at large. Boating programs for inner city kids is a good example. We must also strive to find new ways to reach out to the recreational boating community by a smart use of internet and social media tools such as Facebook.

At each opportune moment, CYA must remind everyone that our main objective is to be a representative for the recreational boating community on Chicago's lakefront. CYA, as the "bridge organization" must steadfastly remain the spokesperson for all local maritime organizations. This position must continue unchallenged!