



# SANTA BARBARA

YACHT CLUB

## James G. Pattillo, 1984

I am often humbled by the stories told by our staff commodores. These gentlemen who have helped to shape our Club into the wonderful, welcoming place it is have such interesting tales to tell. Our commodore from 1984 is no exception. Jim Pattillo's father was in the Air Force for thirty years, and he and his family moved often. After he retired, he entered law school. Although Jim didn't follow in his father's footsteps regarding the military, he did get a head start in following his dad's post-Air Force profession. In fact, Jim told me that the place in which he lived the longest was Stanford University, where he spent six years earning his undergraduate and law degrees.

Jim's first position was with a law firm in Salt Lake City, where his wife attended medical school. During the same time, his father took a job with a law firm in Santa Barbara. He told his son the firm could use his help. So, Jim came "down here and went to work for them" in 1971. He shared with me an anecdote about those days. Apparently, there were clients who were sometimes hesitant to accept young Jim's advice. When this would happen, he would call in his dad for a second opinion. It must have been amusing to father and son to witness the immediate turnaround in clients when they heard the older, "wiser" and grayer partner agree with the advice already offered by the young graduate!

While his father was stationed at the Pentagon, the family rented a house by a lake. While there, Jim and his brother expressed an interest in buying a boat. His dad said, "Let's build one." The three built a kayak out of lathe and canvas and made a mast and boom for it. When it came to making the sail, they used sheer ingenuity. The boys stapled that sail together since neither knew how to run a sewing machine! So, when Jim moved to Santa Barbara, it was natural for him to sail here. He raced Mercury one designs before buying a Star boat. He was also co-owner of a J24 that he raced for many years. Although boatless right now, he does race fairly often on a Melges.

Jim joined SBYC in 1971. "It just seemed like a natural thing. Mom and Dad belonged, and so, why not?" Three years later, he was asked to become secretary and held the position for several years. In 1981, Vice Commodore Bill Underwood asked him to become Rear Commodore. He was in charge of House and Grounds in "'83, the year the storm came through" (see 9/08 Scuttlebutt). The morning following the storm, he remembers borrowing his parents' ladder and rushing it down to the Club. Much of the sand had washed away from under the clubhouse and there was no other way to get into the building. Electrical power was not working, and they had a big job ahead of them. "We had to get the food. Trophies got lugged off until power could be reconnected, the alarm turned back on, and everything would be safe again." There are photos of members climbing down that ladder with huge plastic bags protecting the food and trophies as they were removed. Because of that storm, filter fabric was installed behind the rocks by the parking lot to improve their integrity for the future.

Jim also served our Club as race and protest committee chairs, and was a USYRU judge, but there was one thing about the Club that had always bothered him, and he had to make right. You might have noticed that there is a door on the second-floor landing at our clubhouse. Behind it are kept linens and other items that the staff uses to make our dining experiences enjoyable. This door used to be brown. "I had always hated that

door.” One of the first things he did as commodore was to “make that...door less visible” so he matched the paneling to the walls and painted it gray. Brilliant! I couldn’t imagine it any other way!

But the Club has given back to Jim, too, in the form of, “any number of close friends, endless hours of enjoyment, frustration, and ... provides a sort of landmark or point of reference that lets you navigate through the rest of what you’re doing. You sit at one of the round tables and have lunch,” and the folks chatting amiably, the smiles you see, have a way of taking you away from “your troubles. There are interesting people to talk to; like a family, really,” and those people don’t pressure you. “You don’t need to win a gold medal every day” to feel good at SBYC. In order to have the best experiences there, he encourages people to, “Get on a committee.” It doesn’t matter which one. “You meet people and learn more about the Club. Instead of timidly thinking ‘who are these people,’ you know these people. Instead of parking your car, going to your boat and going sailing,” get on a committee and get involved.

Before we parted, Jim shared two more points of interest with me. He wrote a novel, which was published in 1991. He had entitled it Kill with a Smile, but the publisher renamed it Skim. It was “kind of a sex, drugs and rock n’ roll book.” He has been writing another manuscript. “It would be fun to ring the bell again and get another one published.”

He also is interested in woodworking. He enjoys going to museums where he’ll take photos of items and build replicas at home. Among his favorites are a Shinto table with a granite top and the dining room table from the captain’s cabin of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Swedish warship. I can’t help but wonder if he’ll be building another kayak any time soon – and if he ever learned how to sew.