



SANTA BARBARA YACHT CLUB

John Demourkas, 2006

Though his last name might evoke images of faraway places, Staff Commodore John Demourkas grew up right here in Santa Barbara, spending most of his youthful free time on the beach with his dogs and his friends. John's best buddy back then was a boy named Craig Clements. Craig had an older brother named Kenny; perhaps you know the guy. From time to time, John and other youngsters were invited to sail with Leonard, the boys' dad, in Wet Wednesday races.

As John continued his education at La Cumbre Jr. High and Santa Barbara High, his boating experiences took a back seat to the more mainstream seasonal high school sports of football, basketball, and track.

John resumed boating after UCSB, when he and his brother-in-law, Steve, bought a fishing boat. In those early days of fishing, John became known as Captain Zero, which was a reflection of the number of fish they would catch. Not one to be fouled by fish, John read up on fishing, took classes and learned how to navigate. Around the same time, Steve decided they needed a faster boat, so he bought a Sea Ray 24 "to get to the islands more quickly". The two honed their fishing and navigation skills, although John is still known to some as Captain Zero.

Their next boat was Aquaries, an Excalibur 26. "We didn't know anything." So, they partnered up with Phil Bosch and Bill Forscheler, an SBYC member at the time. Bill took on the roll of skipper and taught the novices all they needed and wanted to know. Things didn't always go smoothly, though. "We'd run into other boats occasionally. We were pretty scary on the racecourse... which goes back to Captain Zero."

During this time, John also experienced becoming a dad. "She's the light of my life. Marissa is bright and enjoys sailing so much. She embraced it." Marissa went on to build her college sailing team, learning a lot about life in the process.

In the mid-1980s, after having been involved in Wet Wednesday for many years on Aquaries, John had gained an affinity for SBYC and the members he had met through racing. "Wet Wednesday was as big of a party – and as much fun – then as it is now, and I just had a need to join. I felt like this was where I belonged, and I needed to be a member." As time passed, John became more and more involved in racing and improved his skills. In fact, it was through SBYC sailing that he met Deneen. In a September 1993 charity regatta, while racing on Taxi Dancer, buddy Phil Bosch suggested he "check out the chick on the runners." Three years later, they married.

The couple bought a hot new racing boat, a Farr 40, and with inspired input from friend, Joel Quaid, named it Groovederci. "Little did we know there were world class competitors involved. There was a learning curve for everyone, but ... there was great camaraderie in the fleet, traveling about, etc." For four years, they raced with Deneen at the helm and John serving as pit crew. As many SBYC members know, Deneen has gone on to become a world champion. Proudly, John admits, "To this day, she can push a boat better than I can."

When asked to take on more of a leadership role, John felt "honored and overwhelmed that I'd be considered to be a director because I'd only participated through racing. But I took the time to meet people at the club. I enjoy

the club, and it's so important to me in my life that... I considered the whole seven-year process to be an honor. I did it happily."

During John's commodore year, "we were able to balance income and expenses, and put initiation fees toward our capital campaign fund instead of the operating fund. We amended the bylaws to bring them into the 21st century. It was a huge endeavor."

John's favorite memories of 2006 were the parties, organized by entertainment mastermind Sharon Wolfe. "The Big Fat Greek Wedding was absolutely epic. I felt like I was getting married again." The Circus Luau was another. John, the good sport that he is, sat on a breakaway platform in a dunk tank. "Ora Woods threw the first ball into the dunk tank and got water in my cocktail."

More than just party memories, though, SBYC has given this commodore, "a sense of attachment to the sailing world and a burgee to try to conquer my goals – a sense of center in the sailing world. I'm proud of my club. It is so beautiful and worthy of world recognition." He would like fellow members to "appreciate the fact you have one of the most fabulous venues in Santa Barbara that is linked to a legacy that is the reason the harbor you're looking at exists."