



SANTA BARBARA YACHT CLUB

Anthony E. Papa, 2008

If ever there was an unlikely candidate for SBYC commodore, it was Tony Papa. Born in Bronx, NY to a close-knit family of Italian immigrants, Tony grew up in an environment that encouraged many things. Sailing was not one of them. Although as a youth, he would spend time on nearby City Island, which produced seven America's Cup winning yachts, "the maritime life I enjoy today was a mere dream I never really expected to come true."

But after marrying his high school sweetheart, Sabrina, things began to change. "I had always been attracted to the sea and would often dream of cruising. My first sailing experience occurred in the mid- 1980s in Montauk, NY, when Sabrina let me take her father's Hobie Cat out for a spin in the bay. Although I was clueless, I was also foolishly fearless and loved every minute of figuring it out."

The couple began their own migration west toward California, though Tony didn't realize it at the time. Sabrina, who had gone to St. Mary's College in Moraga, had every intention of returning to the Golden State. So, she followed Tony until she finally led him to Santa Barbara. He related a memory of a day back in 1994 when he and Sabrina were at the harbor walking along Marina 2. He remembered feeling more than a little self-pity, looking out at the docked sailboats and wishing he had grown up differently so he could sail. At that moment, it seemed "sailing was completely out of my reach, forget about ever having a boat of my own." Sabrina interrupted his lament by saying, "Why don't you learn how to sail?" Tony paused, wondering if at 31 years old he was too old to learn. In true Tony form, however, he replied, "I want to buy a boat." Their yachting fate was sealed when Sabrina flippantly said, "So, buy one."

The couple ended up inside Seacoast Yacht Sales, then owned by SBYC member Stan Shaw. "Within a few days, we bought our first boat, a blue-hulled Catalina 36 we named Michellinda after our children, Michael and Lindsay. I took my first sailing lesson from our broker on my way to Santa Cruz Island."

After several conversations with Stan, joining SBYC seemed like the next logical step. "I can remember feeling worried about getting admitted. I was pretty sure the membership committee wouldn't be impressed with my lack of sailing experience. Fortunately, they found us a worthy young family and we were welcomed with open arms. Staff commodores and commodorables including the Darrows, Cookes, Otises, Watsons, and Churchills helped us quickly understand the history and camaraderie of the club. Through the years, we have made countless friends and innumerable family memories.

When Tony was approached to join the board of directors in 2003, he was honored and eager. "I had grown to appreciate and respect our long history and welcomed the opportunity to serve and preserve our ideals. In 2006, I became rear commodore during John Demourkas' commodore year. "It was a fun year. I completed my first Ensenada race on our Catalina 42, Possible, with Staff Commodores Chrisman, Berryhill, Darrow, and Ewins. Rounding out the crew was my 16-year-old son, Michael."

Tony's vice commodore year was filled with managed chaos as he, Commodore Toye and Club Manager Craig Wilberg guided the club's first-floor remodel. Many of us remember playing "musical restrooms" that year.

With a smile, Tony recalled his commodore year, which "was a lot of fun starting with the port visit of the USS Ronald Reagan in January, and a fabulous Italian party in February. The Italian party has to be my favorite memory from that year. It celebrated my family's heritage, and we were joined by two of my sisters from NY,

an uncle (Father Joe) and a nephew. Trish Davis and Craig pulled off an amazing evening with several surprises.”

While considering his years spent on the board, Tony is probably most proud to have played formative roles in supporting then-Commodore Friederich in creating the endowment for our youth sailing program and launching our first charity regatta. He has continued to stay active in the club chairing a couple of charity regattas and the Long-Range Planning and Advisory Committee. He currently serves as this year’s cruising fleet captain. “I am also very proud to have worked with member Bob Duncan on the special committee that negotiated the new long-term land lease for our clubhouse.”

Tony had difficulty finding the right words to describe what the club has given him. “Membership has made me part of a long and proud history and SBYC will be part of the Papa family’s history for generations to come. The club and its membership have given me a second home, an extended family, laughter, countless experiences, and a lifetime of memories.”

His personal message to members is to “get involved. Volunteer. Join us for cruises. Serve on committees. Enjoy. Like everything else in life, you get out what you put in.”

Thank you, Commodore, for your contributions to our club and for sharing your memories with us.