

3rd Annual Petaluma River Cruise

Santa Rosa Sailing Club

Saturday, October 8, 2011

Petaluma Marina--> Downtown Turning Basin-->Petaluma Marina

Participants:

Mark Alarie, Spindrift 10 #695

Fred Brass, Koralle Jr #10

Brian Roberts, Laser Radial #36990

Wallace Whiting, Vagabond 14 #1763 "Patricia Rose"; Gail and Bob Cafferata, crew

[Link to Turning Basin Map](#)

[Link to upper Petaluma River chart](#)

At 10:00 A.M., we put our 4 boats in at the Petaluma Marina. Brian was the first to leave the dock, and he sailed up and down all the fairways of the Marina until the rest of us were ready at 10:45 A.M. The wind was very light and on-the-nose, and it took us (at least the slower of us) most of 2 hours to get close enough to the D Street Bridge to request (via VHF) an opening, stopping first briefly at the docks of the River Heritage Center where a volunteer offered a tour, and where our faster skippers (Brian and Mark) waited for the slower ones. The bridge tender radioed back, "no problem, I'll open the bridge just in time when you are close enough." Well, he opened the bridge when we were still a ways off and nearly dead in the water for lack of wind. We tacked up to the bridge as fast as we could, but the tender started to close the bridge moments before we got there. The bridge tender let the road traffic clear and opened again. This time, we sculled, paddled, and (in the case of Fred) motored feverishly to get through. It was 1:05 P.M., and we enjoyed a sail around the Turning Basin before docking at Cavanaugh Landing. We ate at Riverside Bistro, jumped in our boats, and ran under the D Street Bridge as it opened for us at 2:30 P.M.

We tied up at the River Heritage Center and toured the facility, which is an old warehouse (on the peninsula between the River and The McNear Channel) with "Ghirardelli" painted on the side. It is a volunteer organization dedicated to increasing small-boat activities on the Petaluma River. It houses a reed canoe, various other small boats, and historical displays. The volunteer who hosted us was thrilled that there were small sailboats on the River. She indicated that this is rare.

We walked up the peninsula, past the ship wreck in McNear Channel, to the Turning Basin, where we toured the restored 80-foot LOA, 2-masted schooner *Alma* and the replica Chinese junk *Grace Quan*, both from the San Francisco Maritime Museum.

The *Alma* was built in 1891 and used as a sailing cargo ship around the bay and the delta, and its crew showed us a vintage picture of her moored in Petaluma with her deck piled about 10 feet high with hay. The scene showed numerous other working sailboats at Petaluma. *Alma* is a flat-bottom

boat that has a hard time going to weather. It flies 2 gaff-rigged sails, a top sail between the masts, and a boomed jib on a bowsprit. It sailed and motorsailed to Petaluma from the Bay the day before.

The *Grace Quan* was built in 2003 as a replica of a 42-foot junk used between 1860 and 1910 for shrimping out of China Camp (now a state park near San Rafael). The skipper spoke with us about the research done to create an accurate replica, including studying shipwrecks off China Camp and studying contemporary junks in southern China. *Grace Quan* has no engine. It has a single cotton, tanbark-treated, full batten sail. There originally would have been three paddling stations, but these really couldn't have been used for anything but docking given the size of the oars and their leverage. The *Grace Quan* sailed from China Camp to Lakeville on sail alone. The skipper was proud of being able to work much better to weather than can the *Alma*. The *Grace Quan* has a dagger board forward of the mast and a transom hung rudder that can be lifted clear of the water.

After returning to our boats, we had a very pleasant run to the Petaluma Marina, arriving about 3:30 P.M. Because of our late start, light winds, bridge problems, and spending a enjoyable time in downtown Petaluma, we took out at the Petaluma Marina rather than continue to Lakeville.

A great time was had by all. We unanimously suggest that the Club do this twice every year.

Below are a couple pictures, but there are more on the [Club's Facebook](#) page.

