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History of Cal Lake Yacht Club/Lake Charles Yacht Club

By: Elbert Price, Organizing Commodore

In the spring of 1964, I bought a yellow Flying Dutchman (The Dutchess) and brought her to Lake Charles. I began sailing it there. I launched her under the Lafayette bridge, where the parish had built a launch site and parking lot for trailers. Gerald Chafin, who also owned a Dutchman saw it there and looked me up.

We decided to ask then Mayor Jim Sudduth to appoint us a lakeshore spot near downtown to organize a sailing club. He located a spot for us just opposite the place where the street curves to go west, now opposite Guarantee Bank.

Gerald and I went on the Marge Monroe TV talk show and announced our plans to have a democratic sailing club. Anyone with any sort of sailboat could belong for \$5 a year. Our planned objective was beach parties and moonlight sailing. We certainly did a lot of that as membership grew.

Our first recruits were J. E. Hooper, Percy LeGross and Guy Richards, my immediate neighbor. The first meeting was hosted by me and because of my connections with media, etc. , I was elected the first commodore. We set up a hoist as soon as possible for Lightnings that could not trailer launch.

We named ourselves Cal Lakes Yacht Club because the old Lake Charles Yacht Club was not yet defunct. Shortly afterwards, the old Lake Charles Yacht did vacate the title, due to its property being acquired by the city to build the present Civic Center. Our club had acquired a barge, put an enclosure on it and moved our location around the corner on the west side of the Confederate graveyard. Gerald Chafin followed me as commodore in 1967.

A youth climbed atop the structure, dived and was injured. His family appeared ready to sue. We decided to abandon the name, Cal Lake, and pick up the now vacated name of Lake Charles Yacht Club,

Before the club moved to the point where it is now located, I moved into the stock market. J. E. Hooper got me voted to a free lifetime membership that included a slip that he constructed for me. I eventually became so infrequent a visitor that I took my Dutchman out and passed my slip on to Steven Leger. I sold my boat to Carol Anderson, a friend. Her sons have written to me about their fun times on the ole' "Dutchess" sailing many places.

Since 1984, I have been living and painting in Santa Barbara, CA and ocean sailing here is very different than lake sailing, not better or worse, only different.