to the west, I was making good time. With an off-shore breeze, the sea, with only a fifty-mile fetch, was fairly calm. My barograph, a recording barometer, had stated to show a downward trend, so I expected the weather to deteriorate. As I closed on the Cape and started to cross the lines of sargasso weed that one sees where two different currents meet, the open water sweeping up from the southwest around Hatteras was starting to make its presence felt.

My last sight of the day put me twenty-five miles northwest of Cape Hatteras. As the sun went down the wind backed toward the southwest and began to increase. By midnight I was in very heavy seas, dense cloud cover and the wind, now from the southwest, had increased to 35 knots. I had hoped to round the Cape and head southwest to the Carolina coast where Robin

Now I understood the infamy of Cape Hatteras
could come from Florida to join me for Thanksgiving. Listening to the wind howling through the rigging and ducking as the spray crashed down the length of the boat, now close-hauled under forestaysail and mizzen trying to hold my position, I began to think it might be Thanksgiving of next year before I would see Robin.

With the weather and the current of the Gulf Stream both coming from the southwest, I knew that I would be unable to make any headway in the direction I wanted to go. If I held the boat very close to the wind, I would just be able to hold my position until the weather eased or the wind hauled round. When would that be? Now I understood the infamy of Cape Hatteras!

Being only 25 miles off shore, one may question the wisdom of staying out there and not making a run for shelter. The boat was taking a beating, I was tired and getting more tired, and there was no let-up in sight. Over many years of sailing, I have learned that approaching a shoreline at night leads to accidents. Make that an unfamiliar, very dangerous shoreline and in the teeth of a gale with a tired helmsman, and you have every conceivable ingredient for disaster. Very few accidents happen to boats that maintain clear seaway; I've always kept this in mind during my cruises.

Although it is not unusual in late fall in the North Atlantic to have strong winds, in my experience they have seldom lasted for more than twenty-four hours. But by morning the wind was up to 40 knots and gusting higher, the sky was black, the sea reinforced by the Stream's current had become a large, breaking, angry white mess. I wasn't able to get a sunsight that day, but I wasn't worried as the open Atlantic was to leeward of me and I had 4000 miles of downwind drift before I might go ashore that way. I spent the day fighting to maintain my position. I made sure I got plenty of rest in case the weather should change during the coming night. Whether conditions improved or worsened, I would need my strength to handle the situation.

Rough weather off a major headland comes upon you fairly quickly, and it's amazing how suddenly the sea can change as you round any of the capes. There are a number of notorious headlands around the world; one does well to respect the bad reputations that these capes have. Often a reputation has been built over many years, initially established during the days of commercial sailing vessels. The seamen on those ships respected the sea and its potential. Those who have read about the deeds of these ancient mariners must admire their seamanship and accumulated knowledge. If they had fear of these capes, it is fitting that we too, should be aware of the danger when approaching them.

Night came without the weather improving, but Lenire was handling herself beautifully as she always had on many similar occasions before. The barometer was still falling slowly and showed no sign of its inevitable rise. It looked as if I was in for another night of bad weather. Although the weather itself in a small boat is frightening enough, my primary concern at that point was that I was sitting right in the middle of a major shipping lane. I had a good radar reflector and a strong masthead navigation light, but I wasn't absolutely certain that I would be visible to all commercial shipping. I was beginning to feel uneasy about my position with the weather worsening. Because of the shape of the coastline south of the Cape, running before the storm and entering the main body of the Gulf Stream would increase my distance from Florida and the American coastline very quickly.

It was two o'clock in the morning on the ninth day out, and the wind had increased in strength to a steady 45 knots. With the seas crashing on the boat, I was hove to under a reefed mizzen and a storm staysail. I had decided to wait until daylight before making any decision on the next course of action, hoping that the weather would ease and I could get a little more rest than I had been getting. Then I saw it. The biggest container ship you would ever want to meet, even on a sunny afternoon. She was

then I saw it...the biggest container ship you would ever want to see...

about 100 yards off the starboard bow, and as she came down off the waves the spray shot hundreds of feet into the air. The decision was made. I eased the sheets and turned the boat to the southeast. It seemed like ages before she responded, and the container ship disappeared off my starboard quarter.

About ten minutes later, with the raging sea on my beam and Lenire screaming along at ten knots on a beam reach under storm sails, I realized that this was not the safest way to spend the rest of the night. I knew that if I turned to put the sea on my quarter, the safest point of sail, I would be going away from Robin and Florida. As I was trying to decide whether to stand and fight the weather, the boat suddenly lurched to port, and I was sputtering for breath. Standing waist deep in water in the cockpit, I watched water pour down the companionway. The boat lurched again to port. Just as quickly as the cockpit filled, it emptied. That made my decision. I eased off and went looking for sunshine!

For four days and four nights, I was in gale force winds. At my furthest point offshore, I was 800 miles from the American coastline, and I eventually approached the Bahamas Abaco Keys on a westerly course.

We didn't celebrate Thanksgiving together that year, but Christmas was great!
The Reign of the Pink Palace

HYC at 90!

Nine and thriving still—the Houston Yacht Club is celebrating its anniversary in Opening Day ceremonies April 25 and 26, 1987.

The beginnings of the Houston Yacht Club in 1897 are shrouded in history. Some say that the first name was the Houston Aquatics Club and that meetings were held at the old Rice Oyster House on Main Street. Others claim that the beginnings were in the office of Dr. W. B. Griffin and that boats were kept on Buffalo Bayou. It is sure that about 1906 another group, the Houston Launch Club, was started. They first had a clubhouse at the base of Travis Street and later moved to Harrisburg, the corner of Elm and Frio Streets opposite Brady Island. These two groups eventually merged, built a building in Shoreacres, Texas, and became today’s Houston Yacht Club.

The Houston Launch Club had a strong powerboat tradition, participating in national speed boat races. A gathering of the steam-powered, long, thin "canoe hull" boats must have been a sight for which spectators in 1915 gathered eagerly. The most famous of these was C. G. Pillot’s yacht, Augusta, 103 feet long. The Augusta, built locally at the Brays Bayou Shipyard in 1912, was designed by the renowned naval architect, Nathanael Herreshoff and was thought to be the longest boat west of the Mississippi.

The Houston Yacht Club, mostly sailors, were also active in racing. They had mostly centerboarders with sand bags for ballast. The crew, numbering twelve or thirteen, had to be real

by Lynn Martin

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A Houston Yacht Club

George Glass, Houston Launch Club Commodore, 1908

The Russara, 77 feet, purchased in 1912 by John S. Bonner

The Augusta, 103 feet, built in 1912 for C. G. Pillot

The long, thin canoe hull motor yachts - at Galveston 1912

Tommy Lee's famous 61 foot Shellback, winner in the 1930's

The Bo-Peep, owned by P/C Louis Bonner

Boating on Buffalo Bayou, 1910

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Scrapbook 1897-1987

Harbor fun on a 45 foot Chris Craft in the late 1950's

P/C Charles Smythe's Lady Lou motor sailor

P/C George Allen racing his Stout Fellow

Two racers on the Bay in their salad days — any guesses?

Tragedy — Alicia, August 18, 1983

Pomp — Opening Day Ceremonies

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athletes since they had to shift two fifty pound bags of sand to the high side before each tack. They met in Seabrook but berthed their boats at Morgan's Point. By the 1920's the Houston Yacht Club and the Houston Launch Club were boating and racing together.

With the name, Houston Yacht Club, and the flag of the Houston Launch Club, the two groups issued a prospectus in 1927 hailing the "construction of a magnificent and commodious club home" on the shores of Galveston Bay. That clubhouse, with its Spanish architecture and coral color, soon became the Pink Palace to all who sailed past.

Though the Depression years were undoubtedly hard for the club members, the racing tradition was carried on, sometimes with some controversy. In 1936, for example HYC sent a woman, Fairfax Moody, as a member of its team to the Lipton Club Regatta in Mobile, Alabama. The Mobile Yacht Club allowed her to compete but promptly passed a resolution that since it was opposed to "women sailing against men, but not against members of their own sex," future regattas would bar women as "helmsmen, crewmen or officials."

The racing boats of the day were not really suited to the choppy waters of Galveston Bay. Al and Ernie Fay, then members of HYC, went to Sparkman and Stephens for a three man keel boat with spinnakers that would perform well in those waters. Thus came into existence the 21-foot Corinthian, which dominated racing until well after World War II.

Racing and most other club activities came to a halt in World War II. The clubhouse served as a United States Coast Guard training and boarding facility for 150 cadets. Because the cadets were not furnished with boats, many of the HYC members donated theirs for training. Other members helped patrol the Houston Ship Channel, including C. G. Pilot in his Augusta.

By 1961, the club was again operating full sail ahead. The Houston Chronicle reported in January that additions to the clubhouse were underway that would make it "one of the outstanding resort-type yacht clubs of the South." Eighteen thousand square feet were added as well as a "huge swimming pool" and an open terrace. But a year begun so proudly, ended disastrously. In July, fire from an exploding gasoline tank destroyed three boats and ruined an entire boat shed. Restoration was only half finished when Hurricane Carla hit on September 11, 1961. According to the Bayshore Sun, those who saw the harbor the morning after Carla's devastation said they would remember the sight "the longest day they live." But, as would happen again, the members gathered their shattered boats and rebuilt their harbor bigger and better than ever.

The 1960's and 1970's saw the development of the youth group, the Ragnots. (When the group began in 1957, they had neither boats nor sails—rags—hence ragnots.) Soon an active racing program was developed. In fact, these proud young sailors have claimed more National Junior Sailing Championship Sears Cups than any other group in the country. The first Texan to win a Sears Cup was Ragnot John Kolius, the skipper of America II in the recent America's Cup trials. The club's most recent national champ is Lawrence Maher who was the 1984 Sunfish National Senior Champion.

By 1980 the club, with over 700 members, was again ready for expansion. The harbor was enlarged in 1982 to hold over 560 boats, with many more spaces for Sunfish and dry storage boats. But almost as if nature were against expansion for HYC, disaster struck again on August 18, 1983. Hurricane Alicia. Houston was hit with billions of dollars of damage, and the HYC harbor was again devastated. Aerial photos before the storm show a peaceful harbor nearly full of boats. After Alicia, only the inner harbor still contained boats; the outer harbor shows only masts above the water. Again, however, members rallied and repaired their harbor, developing a hurricane plan to...
When comes 1987 and the ninetieth anniversary celebration. Tradition-minded members, led by Fleet Historian and Past Commodore, Tynes Sparks, were determined that the club should remember tradition as it planned for the future. They demanded the return of the Pink Palace. They did their homework and gathered samples from other famous stucco palaces of the twenties, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, the Beverly Hills and the Don CeSar in Florida. Paint chips in hand, they went to the Board of Directors. By opening day or shortly thereafter, boaters on Galveston Bay will once again see the proud coral landmark—the Pink Palace is coming back.

Happy Birthday, HYC!

Activities at HYC today

"Something for every boater" could be the motto of today's Houston Yacht Club. Just the list of organizations within the club's structure attests to that wide variety. For the women, the Ladies Association provides social activities at bimonthly luncheons while the Women's Sailing Association encourages lady skippers with a summer sailing camp, tips and techniques discussions and frequent outings on the Bay. For the children, the Ragnot program offers a separate summer sailing camp and weekly sails during the summer. For powerboaters, the Powernauts meet monthly to poke good-natured fun at stuffy sailors. For everyone, the Cruising Association has monthly- short weekend trips to places like Double Bayou with an occasional longer cruise "down the ditch." Nearly every month, the Entertainment Committee comes up with a social event, sometimes for the family, sometimes just for the grownups.

And for the racer, the Houston Yacht Club has an international reputation of many year's standing. The activities and the boat types are extensive and varied. Just this year, for example, there are five club regattas, spring, summer and fall series for Cruising Line, Olympic Line and Solo Line boats, nine invitational regattas and twelve special events. In 1986, the Olympic Festival Yachting events were held at HYC. This year the USYRU Prince of Wales Match Bowl races will be held at the club—the quarter finals in June, the semi-finals in July and the finals in September. In 1988, HYC will host the junior championships: the Smythe Cup, the Bemis Cup and the Sears Cup. The following year it will be the Adams Cup for women. And just in case members are not quite ready for national championships, there is a new fleet handicap racing system that

allows every sailboat to compete in special races—no matter how old, no matter how slow.

Marc Lampkin, HYC Commodore, admits that Houston's slow economy has hurt membership, if not club activities. "We saw a delayed effect. Early in 1986, it began to hit us. We lost about 10% of our membership, but we're on the way up again now." According to Lampkin, an aggressive membership campaign is now under way to bring in new members so that the club, which remained financially healthy through the downturn by fiscal conservatism and delay of capital expenditures, can start moving ahead again.

"Why should boaters give up the pleasure of being right on the Bay?" Lampkin asks, acknowledging that many casual boaters in the area fear HYC's exposed position. Damage to the harbor and its boats was great in 1961 when Carla hit and again in 1983 with Hurricane Alicia. Since Alicia, HYC has developed a widely acclaimed hurricane preparedness plan. Its main provision calls for evacuating large boats from the harbor when forecasters begin to pinpoint the Houston area as a likely target. Before the approach of the hurricane season, the club makes arrangements with more protected marinas inland for members' boats. When the officers declare an emergency, members are quickly notified, and the harbor empties as the big boats move out and the smaller ones are secured on land. The plan, in effect for the last two seasons, has rapidly emptied the harbor during two scares, giving club officials confidence that the real thing will not cause the devastation of the two earlier storms.

The argument of Lampkin and others is that, even with occasional false alarms, the convenience of year around immediate access to the Bay far outweighs the possible inconvenience. In addition, harbor rates have recently been adjusted so that they are competitive with the marinas in Clear Lake.

Current members, over 600 strong, obviously agree with their commodore that the pleasures outweigh the dangers. The club is a busy place! On week nights, special events like a two-for-one Mexican buffet on a recent Wednesday bring

happy boaters and Houstonians. New club manager, Krista McCauley, and new chef Pat McCormack are making special efforts to serve

good food in a friendly and pleasant atmosphere. As one member

(continued on p. 52)

1987 HYC flag—burgees of old HYC and Launch Club
recently said, "We haven't been coming much in the past two years. I can't believe the new atmosphere, the wonderful food, and the enthusiasm. We'll be back often." On the weekends, some racers are out on the course while others are working to get their boats in top shape for their next series. Children are playing and sailing Sunfish. Families are upstairs dining and watching all the activity.

Last year, HYC won the coveted St. Petersburg Trophy, awarded for the best yacht club race management in the United States. That's why, says Lampkin, so many national championships are held on their course. Race management provides everybody a chance to participate in the races. In fact, Judy Lampkin, the Commodore's wife, says that she has never raced much but feels very close to it because she found her niche in race committee work. Many of the powerboaters in the club also find their niches on race days by helping set up the races. "We couldn't do without them," says Lampkin.

Are yacht club members snobs? "No," says Lampkin, "that's always the charge of those outside an organization who don't really know the people inside. In fact, we are somewhat unique in the cross section of our members. Nobody has to be a millionaire to join." Both of the Lampkins stressed that the Houston Yacht Club is a member-run club. "Many clubs hire people to get things done; we get some enjoyment out of doing it ourselves. The changes we make and the new programs that we start come from ideas that our members have for improving the club."

With such enthusiasm and energy, HYC should have a very bright second ninety years.

announces that the head is not working properly and demands an explanation. Surveyors quickly learn to be diplomats desperately searching for proper words to get the client away from his shoulder and into the nearest marina coffee shop...knowing that the client is paying the bill. Just occasionally have I found it necessary to stop my work and ask the client to leave... along with his neighbor "expert" wife... four children with friends, etc., etc.

I have been known to sit quietly for a prolonged period of time and contemplate a boat's rigging, for example, not knowing what I am looking for, but deeply feeling that something is wrong. If I were asked what am I looking for, I would in all honesty have to say "I don't know"... However, before the report is published, I make sure of the correctness of my hunch.

The prospective buyer pays the costs of the survey and retains the Report of Survey as his personal and confidential property.

There is no standard fee schedule for surveys. My company currently charges a flat basic rate of $6.00 per lineal foot using the boat's published length... overall - on-deck... as a guide, with a $125.00 minimum. This surveyor expects payment in full when the Report of Survey is given. We make every effort to publish and deliver the formal report within three calendar days after completion of the inspections.

I think that R. E. "Bob" Wallstrom, Marine Surveyor, best described the surveyor "as having much in common with a bartender, for he must, as well as fulfill his task, upon the request of this client dispense sage advice on the practicality or suitability of a craft, as well as provide financial wisdom on short and long-term resale value."

way of experience which qualifies him to do this job for you. Yacht building requires skill, and only a skilled surveyor is capable of translating what he sees into a meaningful and unbiased report. Even with several years of experience as a boat owner, a person may develop "tunnel vision" while undergoing the ecstatics and agonies of a purchase and needs the objective and pragmatic viewpoint of a seasoned professional. Smoke emitting from the exhaust of a diesel auxiliary may be as simple as contaminated fuel, or as expensive as total replacement of the engine. Dislodged fiberglass bonding of a shelf to hull can be relatively minor, while this same condition, if found to exist at structural bulkheads, is very important. It is a matter of the surveyors' ability to interpret what they view and grade it accordingly.

Another test that is very important is the language of the surveyor. I, personally, am not willing to relinquish all the traditions and heritage which are still very much a part of boating and boat ownership. I feel that when the time comes that we no longer, as professionals, know the meaning of those fine terms, such as fairbody line, bearding marks and ghost lines, we will have lost the true feel for yachts and they really will be plastic replicas of fine vessels found only in outdated magazines and museums. I have heard some so-called surveyors say to clients, "The boat is really trashed out. The professional surveyor would say, "Vessel is poorly maintained and in need of refurbishing."

With these questions, you should find the proper surveyor and be on your way to happy boating. Good sailing!