

Southern California Fleet Report – She's back!

by Christine Rohde, CYA Fleet Director and Past CYA Commodore
and by James Wolcott, SC Fleet Member

Introduction by Cris: One of the original 18 CYA boats, *Conquest*, has returned to CYA! We are delighted that, after having admired *Conquest* at Newport Harbor Yacht Club for a number of years, Jim and Cathy Wolcott are the owners of this beautiful and historic vessel, have become an active part of CYA, and are continuing *Conquest's* heritage in the Classic Yacht Association.

As Founding Member #13, Dick Burrud signed the original Charter of the Classic Yacht Association on October 24, 1970, at Long Beach Yacht Club. Dick and Sheila Burrud were the owners of this beautiful classic, *Conquest*, at that time and kept her in the then newly completed Marina del Rey, the largest man-made pleasure craft harbor in the world. They sold her to Roy and Mary Newton in 1971 and the boat remained in Marina del Rey until 1987. Roy and Mary were very active members in CYA (Roy was CYA Commodore in 1977) and were instrumental in 1976 in creating "An Old Fashioned Day in the Park" – a gathering of our classic vessels and classic cars each July in Marina del Rey. (This year, 2016, we celebrate the event's 40th consecutive year!)

In 1987 *Conquest* was purchased by Patrick Phinny who remained active in CYA until 1990 at which time *Conquest* disappeared from the CYA Roster. She returned in 1997 with new owner Albert Ouellette after being relocated to Isleton, deep in the California Sacramento River Delta, and near the Stephens Brothers Shipyard, where *Conquest* was originally built. Then she disappeared from CYA again. But now, thanks to the Wolcotts, *Conquest* has returned. The following is the history of *Conquest* as written by James Wolcott and submitted to CYA as part of the CYA membership application process. Welcome back *Conquest!*

CONQUEST A SHORT HISTORY OF THE VESSEL DOCUMENTATION #229013 by James Wolcott, SC Fleet Member

During the 87 years she's been afloat, *Conquest* has been owned by a flapper whose ghost is now said to haunt a Washington hotel, participated in a world war, hosted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, made a Playboy Playmate of the Month look reasonably nautical, housed a seacock parrot, and won the Newport Harbor Yacht Club Opening Day Commodore's Award and Werner Trophy. *Conquest* has seen a lot, but with a long line of owners keeping her in Bristol condition, it doesn't show.

In 1929, Donald L. Rheem, an industrialist and yachtsman from Orinda, CA ordered this one-of-a-kind tri-cabin cruiser from the Stephens Brothers shipbuilders in Stockton, CA. Stephens Brothers hull #572 was delivered to Mr. Rheem in August of 1929, and named the *Colonel Rheem*. Original details such as etched Art Nouveau mirrors, gleaming Burmese teak, and solid brass portholes, fittings and stanchions can still be seen throughout the boat.

Donald Rheem sold the *Colonel Rheem* to the then-president of Standard Oil Company of California, E.D. Veitch in 1933. Mr. Veitch renamed the boat *Ardagh*, a name she bore for five years until Donald Rheem's wife Alice bought the boat back in 1938 and renamed her *The Colonel*. Described by relatives as an exuberant flapper and a San Francisco socialite, Alice Rheem had partied in San Francisco, cruised *The Colonel* around the Bay Area, pursued an adventurous social life outside her

marriage, and generally behaved badly until her husband decided it was time for Alice to live elsewhere.

Apparently deciding that two states worth of distance between himself and his wife was adequate, Donald Rheem bought a mansion on a tranquil cove in beautiful Orcas Island, Washington, and shipped Alice – and *The Colonel* – off to live there. Alice's new home, the Moran Mansion (now part of the Rosario Resort and Spa) was purchased from Seattle mayor and shipbuilder Robert Moran. The protected waters of the San Juan Islands would have provided ideal cruising conditions for *The Colonel's* shallow draft and narrow beam, and it is hoped that Alice – and Don, when he visited – took advantage of this. (The Rosario Resort's historical records indicate that Alice's Northwestern exile did little to reduce her wildness – she was known to ride her Harley Davidson motorcycle into the nearest town in a red negligee and heels to play poker and more with local fisherman . . . but that's another story.)

Alice Rheem passed away while living on Orcas Island, but there are multiple reports that she still haunts certain rooms of the Rosario Resort. (The current owners report no signs of any hauntings on her former yacht.)

In 1940, *The Colonel* returned to San Francisco, sold to H.G. Hills, who rechristened her the *Royal Oak*. Like many yachts of this vintage, *Royal Oak* was

commandeered by the US Navy when the United States entered World War II. The Navy primarily used **Royal Oak** as a VIP vessel for inspecting the fleet. During this time, she hosted a number of dignitaries, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

After the war, the Navy sold the vessel to Herman Hogrefe, who brought **Royal Oak** to Los Angeles, where she stayed for over four decades under a succession of owners. (Sold to A.M. Beaver in 1946, to Linn Dale Johnson in 1948, to R.V. Henry in 1957, to Ray Passavant in 1960, and to Richard and Sheila Burrud in 1967.)

Dick Burrud was the owner who rechristened the vessel **Conquest**. He was also one of the founding members of the Classic Yacht Association; in 1970, when the CYA was born in a meeting room at the Long Beach Yacht Club, Burrud (charter member number 13) and **Conquest** were there.

In 1971, Roy and Mary Newton, CYA member number 62, purchased **Conquest** from Mr. Burrud. Roy was both Southern Fleet and National CYA Commodore in 1977. He was a good influence on the early years of CYA, and his name still comes up in conversation around Southern California classic boating.

In 1978, Patrick Phinny purchased **Conquest** and became active in the CYA until 1990. It was under Mr. Phinny's ownership that **Conquest** was used as the setting for a *Playboy* centerfold shoot featuring Baywatch's Erika Eleniak in 1989. Even with the nautically half-clad Ms.

Eleniak draped across her helm, **Conquest's** dignity and grace prevailed through the years.

In 1995, Albert Ouelette purchased **Conquest** and took her back to the Bay Area and Sacramento Delta, where she reappeared on CYA rosters in the Delta town of Isleton, CA. Mr. Ouelette remained active in the CYA until 2002, and owned **Conquest** until his death.

On Christmas Eve, 2004, the current owners, James and Catherine Wolcott, found **Conquest** for sale in San Rafael, CA. About a week later, in January 2005, they completed the purchase from Mr. Ouelette's estate. After a few repairs, **Conquest** came to her current home at the Newport Harbor Yacht Club in Newport Beach, CA. **Conquest** was in good condition, but the Wolcotts still found enough repairs and improvements to keep them entertained for years. Autopilot, marine electronics, a holding tank, VacuFlush heads, a Westerbeke generator, hot water, and refrigeration may not be authentic to the 1920s, but they definitely make for a more enjoyable boating experience. The throaty 1955 Chrysler hemi gas engines required no change, and keep **Conquest** cutting through the water at speeds of up to 14 knots.

Although she may look like a museum piece, **Conquest** has become the perfect family boat. The Wolcotts, their two sons, and their small (and occasionally seasick) parrot cruise **Conquest** whenever possible. During the summer, **Conquest** can regularly be found in Moonstone Cove at Catalina Island, usually with a stand-up paddleboard tied to the swim step and her crew of spear fishers, hikers and scuba divers getting ready to enjoy the evening festivities. Alice Rheem would be pleased.

