

THE NEW YORK 30 AMORITA

Sitting rather unconscious in front of my ancient desk top computer the thought that came to me was to type into Google, *NY 30*. No amount of guessing would ever get you the answer as to what that might be. It hints of guardian angels coaching me to capture a snippet of my life, a nostalgia trip 66 years old. I had no expectation of a response.

Bang! There it was the crisp picture of the gallant sailboat Amorita occupying the whole screen. I had enjoyed sailing on it as a Sea Scout from 1943 – 45. I cried and got excited all at the same time. It was a segment of my life as a kid, I didn't have much to do with anymore.

The NY 30 was no slouch for class and accommodations. It was 44 feet long had a 7 ton keel and slept 6. It was gaff rigged and housed an auxiliary engine. Made for racing, 18 boats of its class were introduced into the water of the New York area in 1905. Why was the Amorita called out to be featured with a detailed history and pictured on the web site? It turns out that when the call was put out to NY 30 owners that a web site was to be created, the most detailed and extensive information was of the Amorita. Or was it? I like to think something magical happened so that I could connect with yesterday.

The Amorita had been in dry dock at the Rochester, NY Yacht Club for 4 years when I first met her so many years ago. This is before the days of fiberglass and the many boards that formed its hull were badly in need of caulking. Arrangements had been made with the owner for my Sea Scout Troop to care for this noble vessel until the owner could return from his duties in WWII.

My fellow scouts and I worked hard through the summer to get Amorita into the water, where it belonged. Finally it was launched. I wasn't there that day but was depressed when I did arrive to find that it had sunk at it's mooring. This was probably the first indication of our leader's lack of knowledge of what they were doing. Fortunately the water was pumped out of her and the hull repaired over a lot of finger pointing. The big job of sanding and varnish went full tilt.

It is hard to believe that with the little understanding of sailing that that we had that we got it sailing at all.. But we did. There were several short shake down cruises which were successful in spite of the fact that we had no auxiliary engine and the compass was not working properly. Getting out of the river waterway to the lake required several tacks. Performing each tack we must have been guided by the Sea Scout angel as I don't think anyone of us really knew much of what we were doing.

The top of our adventure was when the Sea Scouts were going to have a gathering of their boats at a place east of Buffalo, NY called Olcott. Picture Lake Ontario as an egg laying on its side. Rochester was just east of the mid line from east to west. We would be sailing west toward Buffalo to arrive at Olcott.

It was late Friday afternoon when we gathered for our first big sail. As we headed west it was not long before we lost sight of the shore as nightfall sneaked up on us in its usual way. It was inspiring. A perfect evening with plenty of wind to be in full sail. The jib bulging forward and the mainsail blooming as it's supposed to when running with the wind. We could occasionally see lights in the distance but had little knowledge of what city they represented. Perhaps a metaphor for Skipper Bane's lack of knowledge was when he informed those of us on the tiller as follows. "See that star up there? Just keep headed in that direction." Little did we know where that would really lead us.

After taking turns topside and at the tiller we slept in our assigned bunks. Laying there in the dark was an unforgettable experience. The water swishing by. No tremor of an engine. Simply us, the water and the wind. We were traveling in the ancient way man had explored the oceans long before our time.

Then came morning leaving us in consternation. The shore was on the wrong side. We were traveling in the right direction. We unfolded the maps and I discovered that the sand dunes on the shore matched the ones on the map but they were in Canada! Had we crossed the 53 miles to our neighbor to the north? It seems we had.

In order to confirm our location we decided to anchor off shore and paddled to the nearest building in our dingy. Bad, very bad news. Yes we were definitely in Canada but the real bad news is that we were in a Canadian Air Force gunnery range and that was illegal – out of bounds. We hadn't thought much about the planes shooting at the targets being dragged by other planes. Now we wanted out of there now!

We headed south and it wasn't long before we saw the far horizon punctuated with the Kodak factory's smoke stack, maybe two. I don't recall. But using the stacks as a guide we had a hold on something solid to get us to our destination. A lot better idea than following a star.

The way home was not without adventure. We began to see water collecting on the cabin floor. Picking up the floorboards revealed a fountain of water shooting in the air. We caulked that successfully, pumped out the water and continued on our way. Soon after we noticed that one of the mast lines had come loose from its guide very near to the top of the mast. We had nobody crazy enough to go up and rethread it. We should have insisted that Skipper Bane take it upon himself to fix it and redeem himself.

The winds and swells were gradually increasing as we headed to our destination. Somehow we figured out how to trim the mainsail. We were mostly running on the jib. We were just a few miles from shore when a light appeared some distance from us. Skipper Bane made his last suggestion. "They may be in distress, we better head that way." At that point, call it mutiny if you may, we were all ready for solid ground under our feet and common sense prevailed. Some of us felt we were the ones in distress. So we followed the old sailors adage. "When in distress do not attempt to rescue others." It really doesn't pay.

If there is anything like guardian angels they were very busy that weekend, those many years ago.