

## *Boats have personality, the Amorita has perseverance!*

### Owners hope to rescue yacht sunken in race

By Sean Flynn/Daily News staff

The owners of a classic sailing sloop that sank Saturday afternoon after a three-sailboat collision off Beavertail in Jamestown hope to raise the boat today. Jed Pearsall and William Doyle, both of Newport and co-owners of the Amorita, each said they are optimistic that the New York 30 sailing sloop built in 1905 can be salvaged.

"I'm devastated," Doyle said Monday, as he talked about the accident. "We'll use whatever means are needed to get her up. She will be rebuilt. She's not lost, but damaged." The owners said the Amorita went down quickly after the Sumurun, a classic sailing yacht from 1914, hit it. The Sumurun has its homeport in Antigua, in the Caribbean.

Also involved in the collision was the Alera, another 1905 New York 30. The Alera is based in Boothbay Harbor, Maine. The owners and others connected with the boats did not want to talk about details of the accident because there are insurance claims involved.

Pearsall, Doyle and two crewmembers from the Amorita were in the water after their boat went down, but nearby boats quickly picked them up. The classic sailboats were racing in the Robert H. Tiedemann Memorial Regatta, in a course that went around Conanicut Island. The boats were going around a marker when the Alera reportedly nudged the Amorita into the path of the Sumurun.

Doyle said the hull of the Amorita suffered "significant damage." He said the other two boats had minor damage. Scott Backholm, a search and rescue controller with the Coast Guard, said the call came in Saturday about 3 p.m., and the Coast Guard at Castle Hill launched a boat. He said everyone was out of the water by the time the Coast Guard arrived. The state Department of Environmental Management is investigating the accident but was not prepared Monday to release any information, according to DEM spokeswoman Stephanie Powell.

Members of the New York Yacht Club formed the race committee for the regatta, which set the rules and procedures for the race. Michael Leavitt, communications director for the New York Yacht Club, said the club would not release information because it was an event sponsored by the Museum of Yachting.

Doyle, chairman of the Museum of Yachting, said he was concerned the accident would detract from the overall success of the regatta, which is planned as an annual event in memory of Tiedemann, a founder of the museum. Last year, the regatta was only open to 12-meter yachts, but this year it was open to other classic sailing vessels as well, he said. Doyle said 30 boats participated and it was a successful event in terms of fundraising. He said the weather was fine and everything went well, except for this "unfortunate accident." "There were perfectly safe conditions on a beautiful day," Doyle said.

In 1904, New York Yacht Club officers decided to contract famous yacht designer and builder Nathaniel G. Herreshoff, of Bristol, to design and build 18 one-design sailboats for club members to race against each other.

During the winter and spring of 1905, the Herreshoff boatyard built the 43.5-foot sloops, including the Amorita and Alera. They are 30 feet long at the waterline, hence the name. The New York 30s won immediate accolades and had an avid following because of their sleek lines, smooth handling, speed and strong mains. Pearsall said he and his father, Adrian, bought the Amorita in 1981. They restored the boat according to original specifications, including reframing and installing new planks, deck, cabin, cockpit and engine. Doyle became a co-owner in the early 1990s and he and Pearsall raced the boat successfully in many regattas.

Sail Magazine in January 1994 listed Amorita as one of the "100 Greatest Yachts in America." Boothbay Harbor Shipyard bought the Alera from owners in Ontario in 2004 and totally restored it in 2005. David Stimson, a master wooden boat builder and designer, oversaw the work, and sailed to Newport with his wife and two sons during the inaugural cruise in the summer of 2005. A. Robert Towbin has owned Sumurun, built by Wm. Fife and Sons in Scotland in 1914, for more than 25 years.

Pearsall said the three boats came together at the course marker off Beavertail, at the southern tip of Jamestown, about one-fourth of the way into the race, when the accident occurred. Pearsall said he is confident the boat will survive this ordeal. "Boats have personalities," he said. "The Amorita has perseverance."