

Stonington Harbor Yacht Club
2018 Commissioning – Commodore’s Remarks

Our 2018 Commissioning Day Ceremony was held in the clubhouse on Saturday May 21, 2018. The Ceremony included a welcome address by Commodore Betsy Bowman, Invocation and Remembrance by Reverend Wayne Eberly, the Colors Ceremony led by Fleet Captain Tom O’Connell and members of the Race Committee, Remarks by Commodore Bowman, and the bestowal of the 2018 Richard Haders Award by Commodore Bowman and Mary Elliott Haders.

Following are Commodore Bowman’s Commissioning day remarks.

“SHYC is officially open for the 2018 season!!

Please join me in thanking Allison and Evan from the Calvary Music School for being with us today. Commissioning Day at the Stonington Harbor Yacht Club signals the official start of our summer season and the traditional start of our summer programming.

At our Annual Meeting last December, I highlighted three priorities for SHYC in 2018:

- Build the membership base,
- Make our club feel like your home and
- Expand water programs for all.

I am pleased to report that we have made progress on them all.

- We have added 10 new members so far this year.
- We have made some wonderful improvements to the clubhouse, notably the new floor in this room, and
- We continue to focus on getting more people on the water via lessons, race committee, cruising and many other avenues. To that end, we are excited to be expanding our partnership with NESS to deliver youth sailing instruction; to be expanding the ‘One Harbor’ concept with the Wad Club and NESS; to be continuing our strong relationship with Dodsons.

However, for my remarks today I want to talk about something even more important than our near-term priorities and tactical plans for 2018. I want to talk about a concept that transcends the ‘bricks and mortar’ of our clubhouse. Something that is present both on and off the water. Something that should be, and I hope always will be, the most important concept in our club. I want to talk about a concept that defines the SHYC community, and one - that I promise you - I will build on in my final year as Commodore.

That concept is ‘US’. What is US? What does that concept of “US” mean?

Some of the happiest times in my life have been on a boat with close friends. Laughing, telling ‘sea stories’ - perhaps with a drink or two, exploring new harbors, sharing a love of the water, and always being there when a friend is in need. For me, being on boat – whether mine or someone else’s with close friends engenders a warm feeling that I am safe being myself, surrounded by the bonds of friendship.

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“US”, for our club,- replicates and enlarges this same wonderful feeling. It’s a place where each of us always feels comfortable, knowing that we are respected and that we are valuable crew members on the SHYC boat. That is what our club really is all about.

It’s all about US. Feeling great about US. Knowing that the combined US adds value to everyone in many different ways. Whether is it racing, sailing, cruising, dining, or so many other activities that are the catalysts of lasting friendships that define US at all ages. Whether you participate in our youth programs, or are holding down the corner of the bar, at SHYC you are surrounded by friends.

To help all of US, we are going to create name tags that each member will wear when they are at the Club. To some, this may feel like an inconvenience, but it has had a dramatically positive impact on those clubs that have implemented it by making it easier to remember names. The name tags will be kept near the front desk. Please wear them and let everyone know who you are. Great friendships begin by knowing someone’s name.

I am proud that we have made progress on establishing that feeling in our club this past year. It remains my highest priority. As Commodore, you have entrusted me to lead SHYC forward from the front. However, to continue to build SHYC, I prefer to look at my role as leading beside you and creating an ‘US’ together. This togetherness includes our valued staff, who work so hard to make our club special.

The other aspect of SHYC and US is our culture. In my remarks a year-and-a-half ago, at the 2016 Annual Meeting, I said that one of my specific goals was to enhance the culture of the Club so that all members feel valued.

Maintaining and enhancing SHYC’s culture is a very important task for every one of us. It is our most important asset. We must perpetuate both the SHYC ‘can do spirit’ and our sense of friendly inclusive collegiality as we move forward. Continued, focused attention on this unique culture is vital, for assets such as this take years to develop and nano-seconds to destroy.

Building and sustaining the “SHYC mentality of US” is a feeling that is unique and special and that differentiates our club from all the others.

Working with our leaders, I will do everything possible to make sure that our special culture thrives, and that it continues to set SHYC apart as one of the very best clubs for boating enthusiasts and for engaging individuals that you could find — anywhere.

For 2018, I want all of us to develop a true sense of pride, without arrogance, in our club. This is especially important as we work with other organizations to perpetuate the ‘One Harbor’ concept.

To build on the feeling of US, I am issuing an immediate challenge to all members on two levels:

- Tonight, introduce yourself to someone you don’t know. Then make it a point to do the same thing every time you return to the Club.

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- And then step back and think about the role that SHYC plays in your life and be thankful. Also, think about how you might like to improve it and then help US do it.

In closing, a key measure of the health of any club is building a vibrancy that starts with each and every one of us being engaged in whatever activity of the Club interests you most. That will create an infectious energy that will build US and make it more fun.

I believe in US. I believe in the US that is comprised of your leaders, your staff, your friends and the friends you have yet to meet, but will.

Here’s to a fabulous 2018 season for all of US!!!!!! Thank you.”

Commodore Betsy Bowman

May 21, 2018