

Little Commander Rendezvous

September 24th, 2006

by Mike Adam

THE WEATHERMAN had warned us all week that we could expect thunderstorms and, as Scott Anderson put things: “Real gully-washers.” We’d discussed postponing the rendezvous, but, since there are only about four more weeks of boating here on Lake St Clair, Near Detroit, Michigan—and most of those weekends are spoken for—we decided to just move forward and see what would happen.

Saturday was overcast and threatening rain; Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River were like glass. We ended up with four visiting Chris-Craft Commanders (and their fearless crews), which came out in the less-than-perfect weather, plus a few other Commanders in residence.

Warren Calcaterra and his wife, Suzanne, were the first to arrive in their 1968 31-foot Commander Hardtop. They were followed by Gus and George in a 1971 42-foot Commander, then John and Fran Rose in their 1970 42-foot Commander. Mike Schrage docked last in his 1970 35-foot Commander. I just showed up at the dock and washed down our 1967 47-foot Commander, happy that anyone showed up at all.

Jim Herring came by car, as did Scott Anderson, who brought his two children, Cameron and Krista, to hang out with my son Spencer and me.

The whole gang ended up socializing the afternoon away in-between brief rain showers, then enjoyed a fantastic potluck barbecue while watching the sun set into the clouds.

Sunday morning the Sun woke me about 7:45a.m., and I thought: great, maybe a little ride will be possible. But when I went up on deck, the wind was blowing white caps on the River—and the sun was giving way to dark rolling clouds. No ride today.

While the weather was not as nice as we had hoped for—or experienced in past years—it could have been worse. We all had a nice visit and talked about trying to organize an event next Summer that might bring more of our Commander friends to our cruising grounds. Stay tuned as we bring this before the Governing Board. ■

Lake Wheeler Antique and Classic Boat Show

**September 29th-October 1st,
2006**

by Bill Baldwin

THE RDC-TRIANGLE (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel-Hill) Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc., pulled a truly humongous rabbit from its collective hat this year when hard-working members presented their First Annual Antique & Classic Boat Show on Lake Wheeler within the city limits of Raleigh, State Capital of North Carolina. Thirty-six boats came from as far away as Connecticut, New York, and Michigan for this full-fledged boat show—an impressive achievement, considering the Chapter had been chartered less than a year and a half previously.

Serious planning for the event started more than a year earlier when Chapter members discovered Lake Wheeler, itself, which serves as a secondary auxiliary water supply for the City of Raleigh. The 650-acre lake is surrounded by an additional 150 acres of park and land buffer. Within the park, the city maintains four long, well-kept piers and three launch ramps. Nearby is a large complex with a city-run snack shop, a dining deck, and a banquet room. All we needed was to add a couple tons of communication, preparation, and planning. After that, it was simply hard work.

We’re still not sure who arranged for the glorious, late-September weather. So many members have taken credit we’re simply not listing them. But that element set the stage for two full days of great boating activities. The first boats arrived early Friday morning. They continued to arrive until evening when those present broke for the customary wine and cheese get-together. After this, everyone retired, except for retired Sheriff Mike Miller, who stayed aboard his 20-foot Cruisers, Inc. Royal Vacationer to guard the boats themselves and keep the docks free of avian by-products, cheerfully supplied by a large gaggle of geese which appears to have moved permanently into the park.

Saturday morning saw a solid lineup of arriving boats: everything from canoes with magnificently hand-carved embellishments, swan boats, Chris-Crafts, Centuries, a Hacker Dolphin, and everything in-between. We were pleased; visitors were ecstatic. Nothing like this had ever been held in this part of the state, and East Carolinians were clearly glad we’d given

them the opportunity to see just what historic Antique and Classic boats are all about. Moreover, because of the great weather and roomy docks, some of these great boats were active on the lake at nearly any given moment.

Probably the most appreciated part of the show, at least from the standpoint of participants, was the large, constantly busy RDC-Triangle Ramp Team, providing expert help with every phase of launching and retrieving. No one had to fare for himself (or herself) at the waterfront. It was something we’d planned from the start. It worked.

The show ended with a waterfront awards ceremony, then an indoor banquet that featured a short speech by Show Grand Marshal Ted Grulikowski, who, accompanied by spouse Barbara, graced the show with their famous 1927 Chris-Craft Cadet, *Chief Waramaug*. Ted presented Chapter President Mike Mayer the second of two Cadet burgees known to exist. One flies from the jackstaff of *Chief Waramaug*; the second now flies from Mayer’s newly restored 1929 Cadet. It was a pretty emotional moment.

As the last boats left in the half-light of a magnificent Carolina evening, RDC-Triangle Chapter members made the last cleanups, then limped home with grins on their faces; despite sore feet and aching joints, everyone knew he or she had done an admirable job. But when Show Chairman Charley Mansfield climbed into his Shelby Cobra for the ride home to Durham, he was already planning the bigger and better show we’ll put on next year—same place, Lake Wheeler—only on September 28 and 29. He’d already reserved the park. No matter how far away from Raleigh you live, you’ll not want to miss it.

Chris-Crafts winning trophies:

“Best Original/Best Preserved Boat,” was won hands down by Ted and Barbara Grulikowski’s; *Chief Waramaug*, a 1927 Chris-Craft 22-foot Cadet powered by its original 127-hp Scripps F6 Junior Gold Cup engine “Best Chris-Craft,” sponsored by the Chris-Craft Antique Boat Club was awarded to Tom Warnke for his 1929 26-foot Chris-Craft runabout. ■



Top: A view from the water of the Lake Wheeler Boat Show at the height of activities.



Left: Chief Waramaug, Show Grand Marshals Ted and Barbara Grulikowski's 1927 Chris-Craft 22-foot Cadet won "Best Original/Best Preserved Boat" award hands down. The boat is powered by its original, 127-hp Scripps F6 Junior Gold Cup engine.

Lower left: A 1956 Aristo-Craft Typhoon visitor from Lake Norman. At right is the display from the North Carolina Maritime Museum

Lower right: A view of one of the shows three crowded piers. At center, running, is Mumbles, a 1994 Hank-Craft Gentleman's Runabout built by Professional Restorer Fred Mayer, "Hank the Plank," of Buffalo New York. Forward on the pier is Tom Warnke's 1929 26-foot Chris-Craft runabout that took this year's "Best Chris-Craft" award.

Bottom left: Lootaas, Mark and Jennifer Thompson's 1929 Hacker Craft Dolphin took both "People's Choice" and "President's Choice" awards.

Bottom right: A view of the general show area, including a totally unexpected—but gorgeous—swan boat named Svanen, or course.

