

## COMMODORE, Larry Sprague

Earlier this month, on Saturday February 5<sup>th</sup>, Mary Ellen and I attended the commissioning of the *USS Savannah* in Brunswick. This was a unique experience for the two of us, as we had never attended the commissioning of a ship, and it is unlikely we will ever attend another one.

A navy ship typically has four celebrations in its existence. The first is when the keel is laid, and the second is the "Christening" which occurs when the ship is launched for the first time after it has been constructed. This is typically done with the smashing of a bottle of champagne across the bow and then the ship sliding down the ways into the water for the first time. After the ship is floating in the

water, it may still have one to two years of additional work to be performed.

At some point, the first crew is put aboard and they start to bring the various systems to life. This first crew of a commissioned vessel is known as "Plank Owners". Next, the ship goes out on a series of sea trials where all of the components are tested and any repairs or modifications are made. One of the most important tests is the "shock test" where explosive devices are set off relatively close to the ship to ensure that all systems will still work even after a near miss.

Once the ship is ready to be handed over to the navy and made an official part of the fleet, the ship is "Commissioned". Whether or not a ship is a commissioned

vessel is an important distinction in the laws of warfare. Sailors on a non-commissioned vessel can be charged with piracy. In the days of sail where there was not a clear difference in appearance between merchant and navel vessels, a navel vessel would fly its "commissioning pennant" from the top of the mainmast as well as the Navy Jack from the bow.



Commissioning Pennant



Navy Jack  
(continued on page 2)

**MEETINGS:**  
Every second Monday of the month at Carey Hilliard's,  
**3316 Skidaway Rd.**  
Order dinner at 6:00;  
meeting at 7:00.

**WEBSITE:**  
www.geechesailingclub.org  
**EMAIL ADDRESS:**  
geechesailingclub@hotmail.com  
**FACEBOOK:**  
Geechee Sailing Club

**GEECHEE SAILING CLUB'S UPCOMING PARTIES & CRUISES**

**Socials:**

*Saturday, March 26, 4:00 p.m. - Chili Cook-off at Marsh Harbor Clubhouse*

**Cruises:**

*March 19-20 - St. Patrick's-Regatta (see Angela's report on page 8)*

*April 9-10 - Shakedown Cruise to Half Moon River*

*May 28-30 - Cruise to south end of Wassaw Island*

*June 24-26 - North end of St. Catherine's*

*(See page 5 for further listings)*



**THE SPEAKER FOR THIS MONTH (MARCH 14) IS RORY JOSE OF WILMINGTON PARTNERS. (THEY BOUGHT SAIL HARBOR.) THIS IS FINALLY YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THEIR PLANS "STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE"!**

## COMMODORE, Larry Sprague (continued)

The fourth and final ceremony in the life of a naval vessel is its “Decommissioning”, where the ship is struck from the roll of ships in the fleet.

The *USS Savannah* is the sixth ship named for the City of Savannah. She is an Independence class littoral combat ship (LCS). The Independence class ships are trimarans and, because of their wide beam, they are all based on the west coast. The wide beam makes for an excellent helicopter platform, and these ships will carry two MH-60 Seahawks (like the Blackhawk). The *USS Savannah* will be configured for the antisubmarine mission.

I became a member of the Commissioning Committee due to my membership in the Navy League. The Navy League supports all of the sea services, and in particular the Coast Guard which has an air station at Hunter. Following the Coast Guard’s rescue of our daughter, Anna, and her now husband, Mark, we wanted to do something that would support the Coast Guard on a regular basis, and so joined the Navy League. The Commissioning Committee was responsible for raising the funds for and scheduling all of the activities surrounding the Commissioning of the ship. The Navy only pays for the actual commissioning itself, but all other activities are planned by and paid for by the Commissioning Committee.

Unfortunately, we were unable to have the commissioning in Savannah because the Georgia Ports Authority was not able to release a berth to us for a five-day span due to the backlog of ships waiting to be unloaded. Thus, the ship was commissioned in Brunswick, just down from the Brunswick City Marina. We did not get even this commitment until the first of November, and so we had only three months to raise the money and plan the activities surrounding the commissioning. Generally, a Commissioning Committee will have one-and-a-half to two years to prepare, so we were really behind the power curve. Through the hard work of the committee, it all came together and the crew of the ship really enjoyed themselves, loved Savannah, and were very appreciative of our efforts.

On Friday, the day before the commissioning, I went down to Brunswick for the Sponsor’s Luncheon. The Sponsor for the *USS Savannah* was Dianne Isakson, wife of the former Senator Isakson. As the ship’s sponsor, she was present when the keel was laid (September 2019) and at the Christening (August 2020).

Mary Ellen joined me that night and we stayed at a B&B close to the docks. The B&B was an old house chocked full of items that one might find in my grandparents’ house. The proprietor was very nice and we had a glass of wine with them before going to dinner. It turned out the husband had been a Chi Phi at Emory over twenty years before I matriculated and also pledged Chi Phi.

On Friday night a cold front pushed through, and so Saturday morning broke clear but with a cold wind of about 20 mph. I came prepared with a winter parka, neck gator, gloves, and skull cap. There was a simple breakfast served to the guests in a tent pier-side. Fortunately, they had some heaters to keep it bearably warm. Mary Ellen and I were there at 7:30, and as the morning rolled along, the various Commanders, Captains, and Admirals arrived, as well as the local and state-level dignitaries. The top ranking civilian representing the Navy was Meredith Berger, the Under Secretary of the Navy. The actual ceremony was delayed by about an hour because the high winds had pushed the ship down from the gangway, and so she had to be repositioned with the help of a tug.

The ceremony itself took a little over an hour. The speeches were about what one would expect, and no speech went over five minutes. Both Van Johnson, mayor of Savannah, and Cosby Johnson, mayor of Brunswick, spoke. Both did credit to themselves and their cities, but Cosby Johnson’s speech and delivery were really good.

The best part of the Commissioning ceremony came at the end. The US flag and the Commissioning Pennant were

raised, as well as the flag for the Secretary of the Navy (four stars). Then Mrs. Isakson, the Sponsor, went to the microphone and said, “Bring the ship alive!” The band struck up “*Anchors Away*” while the crew, who had been standing on the pier, ran up the gangway to man the ship. The bow gun swiveled and moved the barrel up and down while various sirens and alarms were sounded and the radar started spinning. Mere words cannot capture the emotion that ran through all those participating in and watching the ship coming to life. The ceremony was closed by a prayer from a retired Navy Chaplain, spoken as the band played the Navy Hymn, “*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*”.

After the ceremony it was like Christmas after all of the presents have been opened. Everyone returned to their weekend, dispersing to their homes and returning to their normal lives. But now we have another ship, manned mostly with 20-something-year-olds, standing guard so that we might live our lives in peace and without fear. God Bless them.!



USS Savannah, LCS 28



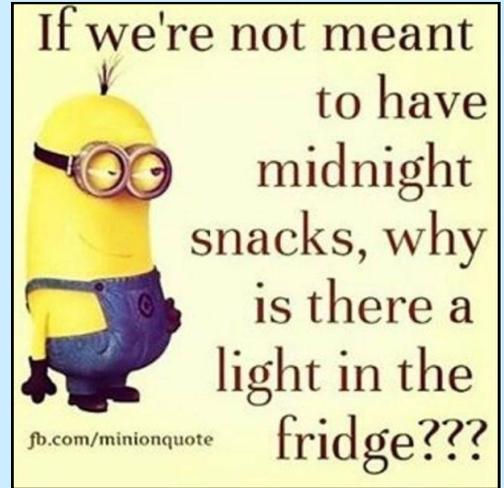
## VICE COMMODORE, Linda Howard

Unfortunately, Dick and Beverly Long had to bow out of speaking March 14 due to health issues. We will hear from them at a later date.

However, we have a SUPER opportunity to finally get answers to all our questions about the new owners of Sail Harbor. I have had many people asking me questions since my article in the August Rhumb Line. Unfortunately, I don't have the answers...but Rory Jose of Wilmington Partners who bought Sail Harbor...does!

You won't want to miss hearing him!

**Be sure to bring all those questions!**



## SECRETARY/TREASURER, Dawson Long

As your Secretary and Treasurer for 2022, I want to report to you on the balance of our accounts. The Vanguard fund balance as of December 31, 2021, is \$20,547.32. The current balance of the checking account as of 2/22/22 is \$5,586. Please continue to write the checks to the Geechee Sailing Club. You may mail them to Dawson Long at 1910 Skidaway Road, #37B, Savannah, GA 31404. Or you may prefer to mail them to the P. O. Box 15293 Savannah, GA 31406; that is fine.

As your Rear Commodore, I am writing this article on Tuesday of Two Twenty-Two Twenty-Two (2/22/22). Sailors are inherently superstitious, so please share with me what you did on this day to keep the gremlins away from your

engine room. In fact, I had better go start my diesel today to keep them out of my engine before they get too busy. If you do not believe that gremlins live in your electrical panel, you are crazy. Watch out for any supernatural electrical charges that may affect your electrical system on your boat.

Of course, I am kidding; the actual meaning of this date sequence is that I should go ahead and buy the dream boat while I still have the old boat. It is Two Boat Tuesday. By the time you read this article, the fall-out from my wife's reaction to the boat purchase will probably result in counseling. That is for another article.

As I write this article, I am channeling this Tuesday 2/22/22..... Now It

has been confirmed. It is Two-Hull Tuesday. I need to buy a catamaran! Thank you for your emotional support through my tough boat issues. Please do not forget my Go Fund Me Campaign entitled "Buy a Bigger Boat". The campaign needs more traction.

As we navigate the ever-changing waters of operating a boat or a marriage, may you enjoy smooth sailing as we welcome Spring on the water.



## MEMBERSHIP CHAIR, Georgia Byrd

### An Evening With the Amazing Miss Judy

The first Tuesday of February was packed with food and fun thanks to the storytelling talents of Captain Judy Helmey. For over an hour, Capt. Judy shared tall tales of fishing mixed with history and mystery with an audience of 39 Geechee Sailing Club members and their guests. Her recollections, no doubt, left guests with a thirst for more.

Judy's history with boating began with storied memories from her childhood. As the daughter of Mr. Sherman Helmey, she grew up around the smell of oil, engines, and parts. As the owner of what was known as "Helmey's Garage," her father was called "Moose," and his history was mixed with a cooler full of rumors, according to Judy.

"During these times, Daddy allegedly worked with Al Capone," she said, emphasizing that, "it was told to me."

One thing led to another, and Judy's tales turned to tales of bootlegging from the shores of Wilmington Island to her Dad, "making adjustments," to the automobiles he repaired to hide liquor. His affection for cars turned to the water and his first boat, which he affectionately referred to as, "Miss Jerry," was named for wife, Jerry. Each boat that followed was either called, "Miss Jerry" or "Miss Judy."

Little did Judy realize that when her dad began taking his buddies fishing in 1948, a hugely successful

charter empire would be born that she would carry on for many years.

"I don't know what Daddy charged back in the old days, but I do remember the charges per person in the latter fifties. A person could go all day on the ocean with everything furnished except your food. He furnished bait, tackle, ice and water. The cost for a fishing trip per person was \$6.00. It was a steep price, but daddy said that he thought he could get it. As you can see, he did," she recalled.

Captain Judy's Charters leave from her base docks on Wilmington Island. She offers fishing charters on a range of boats for inshore and offshore charters. To book your charter, call her at 912-897-4921 or 912-897-2478 and to learn more about her intriguing history. Check out her website, [missjudycharters.com](http://missjudycharters.com) where original photos and more colorful chapters from her amazing life are well documented.



## SOCIAL CHAIR, Mary Ellen Sprague (by Linda Howard)

Mary Ellen was not able to go to the Oyster Roast we had on the 26th because that was the day of her father's funeral. Needless to say, we missed her and Larry and knew that they were thinking about us as we were thinking about them.

Here are some photos of the party that had 35 members and guests in attendance. The weather was a little cooler and breezier than we thought it would be, but it was perfect in that it kept the gnats away!

We had a great time with plenty of oysters that everyone said were delicious (Dawson brought the oysters and Tommy manned the steamer). We also had hamburgers and hot-dogs (Kevin manned the grill) - and we had plenty of sides and desserts. It started at 4:00 p.m., but went until after dark since no one seemed to want to leave.

We also had a chance to sing happy birthday to Tim Grissette for his 85th birthday!

Hopefully, we'll see the guests again at the meeting on March 14!

(More pictures on p. 6)



**I will be bringing some of each to our meetings. If you want to give me an idea in advance of how many, you can call or text me (Linda Howard, 658-7398). Everyone loves them, so you won't be disappointed. The bottles are \$10/each and the mugs are \$12.**



## CRUISE CHAIR, Larry Sprague

Below is the cruise calendar for 2022:

**April 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>** – Half Moon River – Shakedown Cruise

**May 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>** – Memorial Day Weekend- South End of Wassaw (**Saturday-Monday**)

**June 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>** –North end of St. Catherine's (**Friday-Sunday**)

**July 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>** - Beaufort Water Festival (July 16-25)

**August 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>** – Daufuskie (Formerly Marshside Mama's)

**September 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>** – Labor Day – Harbour Town, Hilton Head (**Friday-Sunday**)

**October 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>** – Bluffton Arts Festival (Oct 15<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>). Friday night at Freeport Marina or in creek across the river from the marina (**Friday-Sunday**).

# SOCIAL CHAIR, Mary Ellen Sprague (continued)



## COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR, Linda Howard

Every two months I wait excitedly for the mail to bring me the *BoatUS Magazine*. I then sit down to have a good read about all the latest innovations and sailing stories.

I know this sounds weird, me just being the Galley Slave, and the Captain (Tommy) not even opening the magazine, but it is the only magazine I get - and the only one I want to get.

This time I ran into an article that got my attention because it mentioned a SCAD student. Tommy and I, through our church, “fostered” several SCAD students over the years - not to mention that our son Daniel graduated from there with an Industrial Design Degree.

Here’s the short version of the article:

It seems that BoatUS partnered with Berkley Fishing to get ideas from BoatUS members for recycling or repurposing used fishing line and soft baits. As they said, “At stake for contestants was a total of \$30,000 in prize money for any boater, angler, armchair technologist, team, student, or anyone willing to submit a contest entry. The contest ended May 2021.” Gee...I wish I had enrolled Daniel in this competition. That’s right up his alley!

They ended up choosing 3 winners, and the first prize (\$15,000) went to Abigail Askew of Florida, a recent graduate of SCAD. Her concept resembles one of those Redbox DVD movie rental machines, and she named it “Berkley Recycling Machine.” This machine would melt down and remold used baits and soft lures into new ones. You could actually stand there and watch the injection-molding process through a window on the machine.

What a neat way to incorporate fun into sustainability and keep our animal friends safe!



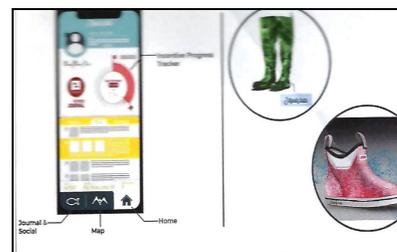
The 2nd Prize (\$10,000) went to Eric Vaughn of Nebraska who said that if you have an electric drill, you are ready for his “Integrated Line De-Spooler.” His idea involves using the empty space that exists on the inside of every new fishing line spool. His innovative engineering solution inserts a new smaller spool used to take up old line into a standard line spool, essentially “nesting” the spools in the existing empty space found inside standard spools, where it will be kept safe from animals becoming entangled, until the consumer recycles it.



The Third Prize (\$5,000) went to a team of college students from Western Michigan University (Laura Nicholas, Anna Hurst, Maxwell Downey, and Ross Malachowski). They created an app for the smart phone called “Hook Bait.” It encourages people to use sustainable alternatives by offering them incentives for recycling. By scanning a QR code at recycling centers, the app records what you recycle and gives rewards based on the individual fishing style). Those incentives could in-

clude hip waders or water shoes made from the recycled fishing materials. The app also offers the ability to track your recycling progress, including a map to see what friends are catching. It also has a journal to save photos of fish caught and important fishing information such as lures and locations, and makes it easy to post on social media.

You can actually go online to [boatus.org/monofilament](http://boatus.org/monofilament) to learn how to build your own fishing line recycling bin.



There is also a video at [boatus.org/contest](http://boatus.org/contest) about the winning entries. I discovered that if you go to where it lists the 3 winners across the page and click on each one, you will see their interviews. Super cool.



## RACE CHAIR, Angela Margolit

The last Frostbite Series will be March 5<sup>th</sup>. Yours truly has served more on the RC than raced, but still lots of fun.

The Savannah Yacht Club will be hosting another Speaker Series this spring with Americas Cup sailor Gary Jobson. The event will take place at the Savannah Yacht Club Dock House on Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendars!

Feel like taking your boat up the coast in early April for a fun event? THE SANTA ELENA REGATTA including the Jean Ribaut Cup and Pedro Menendez Cup, will take place on April 2-3. The Organizing Authority is the Beaufort Yacht & Sailing Club.

The Jean Ribaut Cup and Pedro Menendez Cup are two separate events sailed on consecutive days that are combined to form a significant sailing event named The Santa Elena Regatta which commemorates the founding of the Spanish colony of Santa Elena on Parris Island. You can register via the Regatta Network : [https://www.regattanetwork.com/clubmgmt/applet\\_registration\\_form.php?regatta\\_id=22160](https://www.regattanetwork.com/clubmgmt/applet_registration_form.php?regatta_id=22160)

Update on our 43<sup>rd</sup> St. Patrick's Regatta:



I am in need of volunteers for Saturday evening, March 19<sup>th</sup>, at our informal social gathering. It will take place at Molly McGuire's on Wilmington Island. They have an outdoor "Oyster Deck" which I have reserved for the skippers and their crews. Since we had so many donations two years ago for the Tricky Tray at the banquet, I'd like to try to dispose of some of the items (but we won't have room for all of them!). Please contact me if you are interested in helping out.



Oyster Deck at Molly McGuire's on Wilmington Island

The Grissettes will again be providing the RC Boat, and one of our sponsor members, Dana & Esther Rutland of BoatUS, will be providing the Mark Boat.

The Competitors' meeting will take place via Zoom at 7pm on Friday night. The Fleet races will take place on Saturday for five classes: Spinnaker, Non-Spinnaker, Cruisers, J/24s, and Rhodes 19s. Then on Sunday we'll have the Pursuit Race, where start times are based on PHRF ratings. Races on both days start at 11:30am as low tide is late afternoon.

Please support our 2022 Regatta sponsors. My point of contact follows each company name:

Boat US / Tow Boat Savannah:  
Dana & Esther Rutland

Cay Insurance Services  
(Dawson's brother)

Celebritees: Chris Ramsey

Chelsea at Five Points Realty:  
Dawson Long

Encompass Health: Laura  
Dover

Hinckley Yacht Services: Dustin  
Hartley

Landings Harbor Marina: Larry  
Sincoskie & Jen Sabo

Molly McGuire's: Melissa  
McCurry

Richmond Hill Boat Club, DBA  
Freedom Boat Club (new this  
year): Steve??

RJC Yachts (thank you new  
member Georgia Byrd)

Savannah Boathouse (new this  
year): Thomas McCarthy

Thunderbolt Marine: Ernie  
D'Alto

Yates Astro Termite & Pest  
Control: Mark Willman



## FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

Unscramble each word, then take the letters that are underlined and unscramble them to come up with the last name of one of our members:

L E A P P

— — — — —

K R B A E

H S R E F

F E I B R

Answers to February's Scramble:     **A R N O L D**

TRIVIA

TROUT

PLANT

BLEND

## SUPPORT FOR OUR MEMBERS

This column is for club members to support other members "in need" (phone calls, visits, prayers, meals, etc.). Let me know of anyone you want to add. I won't go into a lot of detail on each here, but you can call them. I will also get approval before entering any names into this column. Please text me at 658-7398.

- Linda Meyer: Ongoing chemo.
- Lem Highsmith in St. Joseph's, hopefully moving to a Rehab facility.
- Anna Highsmith in Memorial ICU with Covid. Improving.
- Georgia Byrd with upcoming hip surgery March 4.
- Mary Ellen Sprague in the death of her father.
- Linda Howard with post back surgery issues.

## 2022 OFFICERS

**Commodore** ..... **Larry Sprague**  
**Vice Commodore** ..... **Linda Howard**  
**Secretary** ..... **Dawson Long**  
**Treasurer**..... **Dawson Long**  
**Social Chair** ..... **Mary Ellen Sprague**  
**Cruise Chair** ..... **Larry Sprague**  
**Race Chair**..... **Angela Margolit**  
**Membership Chair** ..... **Georgia Byrd**  
**Communications Chair/Editor**.....**Linda Howard**  
**Past Commodore**.....**Dawson Long**

For questions or comments, contact Linda Howard, Editor (912/658-7398)