



Photos by RICK DeWITT

Many volunteers and musicians helped make the 2012 City Island reunion a resounding success.

CI Reunion

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Anthony and they remember him, and I think that's great. I will be coming back here as long as I am alive."

Former Islander Bill Cus recently moved back to the East Coast, near Philadelphia, after living in the western states of Arizona, Colorado and Minnesota for more than 14 years. He said he saw his recent move east as a chance to attend the reunion and be part of the effort of putting it together. "Today I am back home with family and friends," Bill said. "It is really great to be here. This is really special because City Island will always be one big family forever."

Ricky Vogt, a longtime resident of the Island who moved to Hopewell Junction, New York, said that the reunion is a highlight of his year, "People come here I haven't seen in 30 years—all the people I grew up with. It is always a pleasure to come back."

The day was filled with handshakes, hugs and kisses for those who were well remembered. But the story of the day was also told in the glimpses at vaguely familiar faces, followed by curious glances downward at the nametags. Only then did you realize that you had just run into someone you may not have seen since grammar or high school. But still the memories came flooding back, and your first conversation in more than 40 years went on for more than an hour.

That was the magic of this day, and it was replayed time and time again.

"I haven't been back on the Island in over 20 years," said John Roche of Corning, New York, "and it is really nice being back and seeing old friends. Unfortunately, some of them are not with us anymore, but I'm glad I did this and came here today."

Kathleen Lynch-Siano, who has lived in Florida for the past 35 years, said: "When you come back here, you never grow up, and you never grow old and you always come home. It is all about friends, the

people you went to kindergarten with and other old friends. This is very special and unique."

Michael Cantor left the Island as a young man in 1976 and now makes his home with his family in Virginia. "It is great to be back on City Island," he said on reunion day, "visiting with all the people I used to know and love. It feels good. It is a very comforting feeling being here today."

Nick Butterworth, a musician living in Chester, New York, who was part of the musical entertainment for the day said: "This is our 'Little Rascals.' This is where we grew up. It is our playground, and it's like family here."

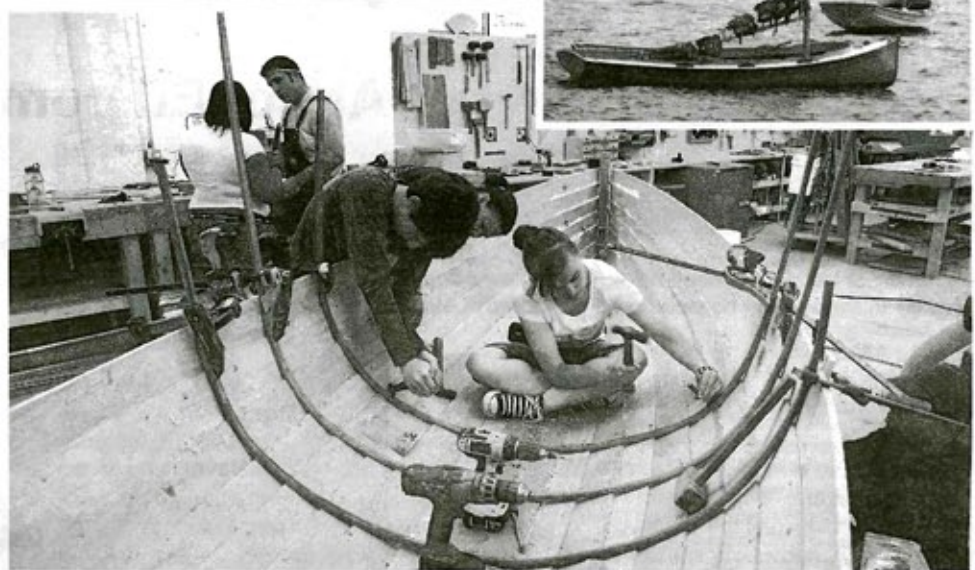
Longtime City Islander Vincent Panzarino, who came to the reunion all the way from Reville Street, said: "This is the best community I have ever known, the best family and friends and the most genuine people. This reunion is like 'Woodstock' for my community but even better—a gathering of old friends who really love each other."

Thora Svalgard, who left the Island as a young girl, returned with her brother Eric to experience the day after hearing from him how great it was two years ago. "It feels great to be back on City Island. I came back here with my husband for a quick visit recently, and I went to see the old house where I grew up. The man who bought the house from my father still lived there, and when he saw me standing outside, he recognized me after all these years—only on City Island!"

Michael Teti from Atlanta, Georgia, made the trip for the second time in two years with Pat, his brother and fellow City Island native. "I come back to the City Island reunion every two years for the experience of being a kid again. You enjoy coming back to see people who no matter what has happened over the years. They see you and they welcome you and they love you. No excuses or apologies are necessary. You lived here, and it doesn't matter what has happened over the years. You are accepted and you are always welcome. That is very special."

Rocking the Boat on City Island

By KAREN NANI



Photos by KAREN NANI and courtesy of ROCKING THE BOAT

Members of the youth organization Rocking the Boat sailed their wooden boats to the Morris Yacht Club on Aug. 8, 2012. The organization teaches students how to construct full-size wooden sailboats from start to finish (second photo). In August the students spent four days sailing 35 miles in three of these hand-built wooden boats (inset). After Steve Breines of the Morris welcomed the group and its founder, Adam Green (top photo, left), the teens got to work pitching their tents for the overnight camping stay (bottom photo).

The building of wooden sail boats may be absent from our island these days, but it is alive and well in the South Bronx, thanks in part to connections with the boating community on City Island.

Rocking the Boat is a non-profit organization that challenges underprivileged youth to develop self-confidence and skills. Each year, students work in a professional-grade boat-building shop to construct full-size traditional wooden sailboats from start to finish, including sailing them from the Bronx River to Long Island Sound and back.

In August 2012, 25 high school students spent four days sailing 35 miles in three of these hand-built wooden boats from Hunts Point to Calf Island, a small island preserve off the shore of Greenwich, Connecticut. They made an overnight camping stop along the way at the Morris Yacht Club on City Island and shared their experiences with some Island sailors.

The program's founder, Adam Green, loved returning to City Island with his students. Mr. Green, a native of Manhattan, spent time during his childhood on Pete Seeger's Hudson River sloop *Clearwater*, which was often docked in City Island in

the 1970s. "We have several connections to City Island," he told *The Current*. "Some of the sails for our boats are made with help from Doyle Sailmakers on Fordham Street." The organization also keeps a 30-foot Pearson sailboat at the Minneford yacht yard.

Mr. Green got the idea for Rocking the Boat while he was volunteering at an East Harlem junior high school during a semester off from Vassar in 1995. He led 10 students in the construction of an eight-foot dinghy that they launched at the end of the semester in the school's swimming pool.

After college, he formed the first boat-building program for high school students based out of Hostos Community College in the South Bronx. He took a year off to develop Rocking the Boat into a sustaining youth program, and he honed his own boatbuilding skills as an apprentice on the *Clearwater*.

The program took off, and it now serves 2,500 students and community members annually with environmental and boating programs, including a team-building rowing program, on-water efforts to restore the

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SAILING LIFE ON CITY ISLAND

By JOYCE MULCAHY

How many of us would anchor our boat in the water as other boats charged us, mere feet from our stern? There's no armored Iron Man suit or Fantastic Four aboard. Men and women with nerves of steel however, you will find on an RC boat. Every race needs a race committee, to set the start line, determine the course and officiate the race.

Since I came to City Island six years ago, there has been a familiar and friendly face aboard the RC boat every Wednesday night for the EBYRA (Eastchester Bay Yacht Racing Association) and various races I've entered. Eben Hansmire began serving on race committee with the EBYRA in 2006, and since 2007 he has been their Primary Race Officer (PRO).

Eben knows what it's like to see a sailboat headed right for him. Typically, the fastest distance over the start line is closest to the committee boat, and the sweet spot most captains maneuver for. The EBYRA RC boat is named *Favored End*, with good reason. There was a time his RC boat was hit. "There have been quite a few close calls, too. When you're that close to the starting and finishing action, you are definitely in harm's way," he says.

As every racer knows, the start to a race is critical. Each boat vies for the best positioning. You want clean air, rather than receiving bad air (having your wind



Photos by JEN LIN

Eben Hansmire has been the Primary Race Officer for the Eastchester Bay Yacht Racing Association since 2007.

blocked from a competitor's boat). Starting behind the pack can get you off on the wrong foot, or more accurately leg, and it can be hard to recover from. The best seat in the house watching the excitement at the start line is often from the RC boat.

"My interest in race committee work was sparked by Butch Ulmer of UK Sails [on City Island]," Eben recounts. "He showed us how to set a starting line. I began to understand how challenging it can



be keeping all the variables (wind, current, boat performance, weather, etc.) in mind while setting up a race course. These are the same variables that racing sailors have to keep in mind, and it's what makes sailing a sport, and passion, which is as intellectually challenging as it is physically."

Edd Schillay, the EBYRA Commodore, commends Eben: "True to his stellar reputation, Eben goes above and beyond, maintaining the committee boat and always improving his skills in race management. He has been a vital and crucial part of the organization, and it's hard to imagine an EBYRA without Eben involved weekly."

Becoming a race officer means knowing a lot about a lot—from wind variations to tide tables and currents, from racing rules and race management to all the other administrative functions to running a race. In order to receive your officer certification, one has to demonstrate expertise as a race officer and undergo training and testing every four years, typically from "US Sailing" (www.ussailing.org).

Eben first discovered sailing at a Wisconsin Boy Scout camp in 1958 aboard a dingy, or "snipe" boat. "Unlike the modern snipe, the decks of these boats were plywood, covered with canvas and were so heavy that it took four of us kids to get them into the water of the small inland lake." Further experiences as a young man led to sailing in all sorts of weather, and all seasons. "My most exhilarating sail was on an ice boat which my high school friend and his father had built, and took place on the frozen waters of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. We probably hit 50 or 60 MPH but skimming along on the ice, often over rough patches, it seemed like we were

going about 100 MPH!"

Eben not only serves as PRO with the EBYRA, but also at times with City Island's J24 Fleet 61. Leigh Mulroy, who races aboard her J24 *Blondie*, says: "Eben does a great job and makes sound decisions, stands by them without wavering and raises the level of RC at any regatta."

City Island Yacht Club Commodore Brad Stone concurs that Eben is just the kind of PRO every racer hopes for. "He brought sanity and coordination to the difficult task of race management in our area. From the minutes before a start gun fire to post-race scoring, he sorts through many variables and decisions with a precision, proficiency and consistency racers really appreciate."

At the start, and finish line to a race, shouts can often be heard from various captains proclaiming right of way: "Starboard!" or "Make room!" or "Moop!" If there is a protest of one boat against another, the RC boat can be called up to testify at the hearings, since they have the best view to the offending boat. But the sport of sailboat racing is often characterized by good sportsmanship. Joe Kolius, Olympic sailing silver medalist at the 1976 Montreal Games and later skipper aboard *Courageous* in the 1983 America's Cup, says of sailing: "Sailing is a great sport. You don't have to beat up the other guy like you do in boxing and football; you just try to outsmart him, and then you out and have a beer with him."

And after a race, feel free to buy your Primary Race Officer Eben Hansmire a drink, but first let him take off his Sunday man suit and tuck it behind the bar.

(For all local upcoming races/regatta visit, www.cityislandsailing.com)

Rocking the Boat

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Bronx River, and ecology tours.

"We completed the three boats anchored off City Island this year: *Triumph*, *Legacy* and *Spartina*. The oak used to build *Triumph* came from a tree from Pete Seeger's house in Beacon, New York," he proudly reported. "The oak for *Legacy* came from a fallen 265-year old tree from the Botanical Garden in the Bronx."

The energetic young sailors were happy to share their experiences and describe how the wooden boats are built. "We use a steam box to bend one plank at a time. Then they are riveted together," one told this reporter, which brought back memories of seeing the 12-meter yachts, such as *Constellation*,

built at Minnefords in the 1960s.

Mr. Green emphasizes linking everything to environment science. They use a local business's recycling crane to launch the boats; they have helped clean and restore the Bronx River, including bringing back oystering in the river; and they collect data on fish, birds and plant life.

It was the group's second stopover at the Morris Yacht Club in two years, and they were welcomed by board member Steve Breines. "It is a pleasure hosting these kids. They have the right spirit, and the Morris' members are happy to meet them and talk about boating," he said.

The feeling seemed mutual as the young sailors began to pitch their tents for the overnight stay. If you want to learn more about the program, visit their website at www.rockingtheboat.org or call them at 718-466-5799.



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