

Acton *Action*

Hueston Sailing Association

Off Season Read: *Rescue of the Bounty* page 4

Movie for you: *Captain Ron*, starring Kurt Russell and Martin Short. Page 2



HSA Completes 2020 with Election of Officers

Although the first week of 2021 was just as tumultuous as the year it left behind, there is hope on the horizon. For there on that horizon is the familiar triangular shape of a sail. It is small and the outline of the hull is just barely visible. On it I see letters – it says, it says... uh, “Welcome to Sailing Season 2021!”

Ok, that was just a dream, but we are looking ahead and making plans for a full schedule of events on our racing calendar and hoping to avoid the truncated start we had with last year’s COVID delay.

The Executive Committee balloting took place this past week and affirmed a slate of candidates. Your officers for 2021 are: Commodore – Laura Peters; Vice Commodore – Rose Schultz; Rear Commodore – Joe Fulford; Treasurer – Roger Henthorn; Harbormaster – Don Fecher; and new Secretary, Dominic Everaet.

This leadership team will meet soon to look at 2020 and plan the new season. When they come up with a 2021 schedule, you will hear about it right here.

Bounty Connection

In this issue we tell you about the book on the rescue of the crew from the *Bounty*, the movie ship that was lost in the Atlantic in 2012.

One of the crew on that was a 25-year-old woman named Jessica Hewitt. A few years before joining that crew, she was working as a crew on another tall ship, the *Margaret Todd*, a four masted, steel hulled schooner home ported in Bar Harbor, Maine as a tourist ship.

Former HSA junior camper Jacob Stratton was a crew member on that same ship just a few years before Ms. Hewitt came aboard. She got her certificate there aboard the *Margaret Todd* just before joining the ill-fated *Bounty*. Page 4.



Ships are the nearest things to dreams that hands have ever made.” Robert N. Rose

Captain Ron: It's All About the Boat

We start off our off-season sailing film series with a film I didn't think I wanted to see. Kurt Russell? Martin Short? A sailing comedy? Every time it came up to the top of my Netflix queue, I moved it down in favor of something more adventurous, more dramatic, more ... sailyish. Eventually I lost track of my queue, and *Captain Ron* showed up in my mailbox.

I've watched the film, and I'm ready to admit I was being prejudicial. Is it a good movie? Uh, not really. The film has been described as "goofy, farcical and dumb." And I don't usually go looking for movies that answer to that description. And I would probably describe a lot of it in those terms. Yet, I'm going to say it was worth it. Here's why. (continued on page 5)



Is Captain Ron Based on a true story? Actually, and incredibly, yes!

The Wanderer



The *Wanderer* (the boat's real name) is an actual sailboat – a Formosan 51 ketch that is a sailing beauty. Teak everywhere and a sight to behold above and below deck. (A ketch is a two masted boat with the after or mizzenmast in front of the rudder post as opposed to a yawl which is the same thing but with the mizzenmast behind the rudder post. I had to look it up. Again.)

There were actually three "*Wanderers*" used in the film. The first one is trashed up for the opening scenes to look like a derelect. The best one is used in the film's gorgeous blue water shots.

That "*Wanderer*" has seen several owners and some rough times. It was rescued from deterioration in about 2012 and had extensive restoration done in 2015 when she sold for about \$160,000. She is home ported in Kemah, Texas and may even be accessible for boarding.

Life in the Time of COVID: HSA Confronts the Pandemic

Recently we asked some of our members to tell us about how their Pandemic Year has gone. Here begins our series on “Life in the Time of COVID” as told by the members of our sailing community in their own words. Over the next few issues of the AA, we will bring you more.



Mark and Kathy Costandi – Hobie and Sunfish sailors

So far so good. Kathy is only in the presence of one client at a time as a massage therapist and she and the client follow required protocols which seems to work.

Since I work from home, having done so for the past eleven plus years, I am pretty much isolated anyway. We did visit New York for Thanksgiving to see our daughter but she and her one roommate are also isolated, working from their apartment.

We actually stayed there since her roommate was out of town for a couple of weeks. New York is very safe (or at least was at the time) as everyone seems to be smart about it there. We tested negative before we left, and when we got back. So all-in-all it has been pretty easy to deal with the logical safe protections and still able to function.

We do miss eating dinner at our favorite bars, which we did as much as three times a week. We worry about the staff. When we do take-out meals, we give very healthy tips to help out as much as possible.

(The Costandis, who have mentioned a life living aboard a cruiser before, are more intent

Kathy and Mark Costandi live in Cincinnati where Mark is an architect and Kathy is a massage therapist

than ever. It could happen within the next four years. According to Mark, “We are ready for a different lifestyle that basically eliminates all our needless possessions! I have a wonderful grade school friend who has a 34 ft Catalina at Port Annapolis and has convinced me that we need to be there... The interesting part of this story is that my friend John was introduced to sailing after coming with us a few times to Hueston Woods to watch me race when we were little.

“It inspired him to get into sailing later in life, and he and his family are active racers and cruisers in the Annapolis area. Now he has influenced me. Full circle.”

Off Season Read:

Rescue of the Bounty

As tall ships go, few are more well known to the general public than *The Bounty*. But which *Bounty* are we talking about? There's the original *HMAV* (Her Majesty's Armed Vessel) *Bounty* that real life British seaman took to Pitcairn Island in 1789 after seizing control from the infamous Captain Bligh. Then, in the 20th century, three sailing vessels answered to that name, all three either converted from another ship or constructed specifically for a film version of the famous mutiny.

It is the third of these "Bountys" that we are interested in, the one that was built for the 1962 film starring Marlon Brando and Trevor Howard. It is the subject of a 2015 book titled *Rescue of the Bounty* by Michael Tougias and Douglas Campbell.

The ship was built in Nova Scotia in 1960 and twice the size of the original to accommodate the film's idea of the story and the crew's film equipment. After the film and after going through several owners, including tycoon Ted Turner, the ship ended up belonging to HMS Bounty Organization whose head was New York based Robert Hansen. Hansen had been trying to sell the vessel for several years for about four million but had no takers.

The ship, as you might know, was lost in 2012's Hurricane Sandy, sinking to the bottom a hundred miles off the North Carolina coast in 40 mph winds and 30 ft. waves. The book is about the rescue of the crew as the three masted, 130 ft. long replica filled with water due to overwhelmed bilge pumps and sank.

What was a 50-year-old tall ship doing in one of the largest storms in history in an area of ocean known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic? That is what Tougias and Campbell reveal in this riveting tale of loss and survival.

How you get into a predicament like this and how an organization like the Coast Guard is able to mount a sea rescue with helicopters is enough to keep you glued to the story as the authors recount the decisions leading up to the disastrous day in October of 2012.

(continued on page 6)



Bounty Trivia

* Few of the original mutineers ever made it to Pitcairn Island where the remains of the *Bounty* lay in a Pitcairn cove, having been burned to the waterline and sunk to avoid being discovered by the British Admiralty which vowed to bring the mutineers to justice.

*Captain Bligh had with him the second copy (referred to as K2) of the John Harrison "Longitude" watch, the world's first Marine Chronometer (a clock or watch accurate and rugged enough to be used for navigation at sea). It was recovered, still functioning, from Pitcairn Island, and is stored at the National Maritime Museum near London.

*The first *Mutiny on the Bounty* was filmed in 1935 starring Clark Gable and Charles Laughton. You can guess who was who. The ship used was a sailing vessel that was still in service in the 1930's.

(photo above is of the 1960 *Bounty* in Lake Michigan near Chicago in 2010)

(continued on page 6)

Captain Ron: It's All About the Boat (continued from page 2)

After all Kurt Russell does have comedic timing, and he is willing to star in a film that parodies his own movie star persona. It isn't *Escape from New York*, but Russell does return to the screen here with a patch over his left eye. And Martin Short. I saw him in person a few years ago, and he is the genuine funny man still. In 1992 in *Captain Ron* he was perhaps at the peak of his comedy career.

The plotline? Short, as Martin Harvey, is the worn out office type in New York who inherits a sailboat from his uncle. He convinces his family (wife and two children – a teen daughter and an 11 year old son) to go with him and sail the boat from its Caribbean location to Miami where they plan to sell it.

“ It was so bad that Dwyer’s (the author) father threatened to throw the real Captain Ron overboard.”

Since the yacht is in such terrible condition, the boat brokerage destined to receive the yacht cancels the professional charter captain and lets the Harvey family hire a local one. Enter Captain Ron – a boozy, often out of work, often shirtless Kurt Russell. Let the memes begin. (There are a number of them on the web featuring some of the movies best quotes.)

As expected, things go from bad to badder as the accident prone but charming Captain Ron demonstrates both his ineptitude and his unlikely skill set. For me, though, the real star of this mildly entertaining comedy is the boat itself.

Based on a true story? Actually and incredibly,

yes! The man who wrote the screenplay for the film, John Dwyer, based the story on his own experience. Dwyer's father, an ad exec, bought a Chris Craft Commander, a 47 ft. powerboat, at a boat show in Ft. Lauderdale.

He then hired a guy actually named Captain Ron to help him take the boat from Florida to Texas. The real life Captain Ron had a peg leg in addition to one eye. (Dwyer didn't include the peg leg in his screenplay because he thought it was too over the top for a movie.) Like his movie successor, the real life Captain Ron was also drunk most of the time.

On the way from Florida to Texas, instruments failed, the electrical system failed, and Captain Ron managed to get lost on the Intracoastal Waterway. There was also a storm in the Gulf of Mexico where the family thought their lives were over. It was so bad that Dwyer's father threatened to throw the real Captain Ron overboard.

There are other stories you can find of similar experiences where a “Captain Ron” has been inexplicably hired to captain a boat. They may be a disappearing breed due to tighter regulations now but the Kurt Russell version lives on in this 1992 film.

Watch it for the fun, watch it for the magnificent sailing vessel *Wanderer*, or just because it is perhaps remarkably, and improbably, close to real life.



Off Season Read: Rescue of the Bounty (continued from page 4)

One person aboard was a 42-year-old crewwoman named Claudene Christian. If the name sounds familiar in this context, the answer is likely yes, that Christian. Claudene claimed to be a descendant of the original Bounty's mutinous leader, First Lieutenant Fletcher Christian. The fate of the ship, its crew and its captain, Robin Walbridge, the one who made the decision to sail into the teeth of a superstorm, await you.

The book was first brought to our attention by HSA's Todd Rovito who was captivated by the drama of the crew's rescue. Later, Carla Myers also told us about the "sad but inspiring" yet ultimately tragic sea adventure she was reading.

If you like this sort of book, you will be consumed as we were by its tale of tall ship sailors in a fight for their lives and the dramatic rescue of the surviving crew.

Below, The Bounty lying ahull in the Atlantic just before sinking in 2012.



The cameraman on the 1960 film version of *Mutiny on the Bounty* was Conrad Hall, the son of James Hall, one of the authors of the *Bounty Trilogy*. Hall was actually born in 1926. In Tahiti. True story.

Bounty Trivia (continued from page 4)

*Actor James Cagney was sailing his boat near the set of the 1935 film near Catalina Island off the coast of California and asked director Frank Lloyd if he could be in the film because he needed the money. If you watch this one, look for Cagney as an extra near the beginning of the movie.

*The *Bounty* book trilogy was authored by Charles Nordhoff and James Hall and consists of the story of the mutiny, *Mutiny on the Bounty*; the story of Bligh and the men set adrift from the *Bounty* after the mutiny in *Men Against the Sea*; and *Pitcairn Island*, the story of the mutineers as they settled on a then uncharted island that would become their home and final resting place.

*The second *Bounty* was built in 1960 for the film starring Brando and Trevor Howard. This is the ship that sank in Superstorm Sandy. It was the first instance of a ship being constructed from its original plans specifically for use in a film.

*Ted Turner owned the 1960 version of the *Bounty* for a time due the fact that he had bought the MGM library for his Turner Classic Movies channel and the ship came with it.

*The third *Bounty* was built in New Zealand for the 1984 film version of the story, made by an Australian film company and at the time was the most expensive movie prop of all time, four million, which was a sizeable chunk of the film's \$25 million budget.

*The 1984 film starred Mel Gibson as Christian and Anthony Hopkins as Bligh. Also, in the film? Relative unknowns Liam Neeson and Daniel Day Lewis. It also featured Sir Laurence Olivier.

*The *Bounty* that sank in Superstorm Sandy was also featured in other movies, including *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* as the *Edinburgh Trader* and in the 1990 film *Treasure Island*.