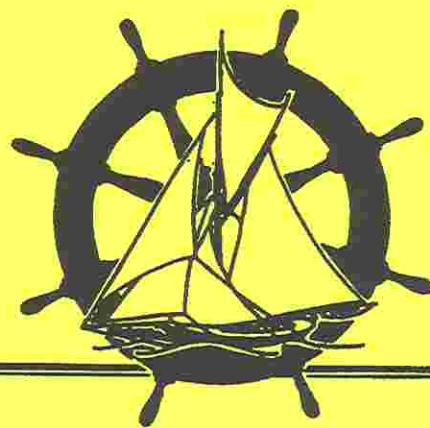


THE HELM

Fall, 2002 - Volume 20, No. 4



A PUBLICATION OF THE CLASSIC YACHT RESTORATION GUILD, INC.

Elf, past and future



President's Message

TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW!!!!!!

"or should I say...

TRYING to stay ahead of???

... by Rick Carrion

They say time flies when you are having fun. I must be having a lot of fun. Lately I have felt like the WHITE RABBIT in Alice in Wonderland that would look at the watch and run off saying "I'm late, I'm late for a very important date!" Simply put, I have been very busy trying to stay ahead of Graham Ero, ELF's shipwright. It has been a summer full of "Rick plane this lumber", "Rick order this part", "Rick paint this wood", "Rick do this job before I get back tomorrow." Well I think you get the picture. We have had a very productive summer and fall. As a public high school Earth and environmental science teacher I am able to get a lot done in the summer on *Elf*, but now it is tough trying to keep ahead of Graham. I also have my two wonderful children (Peter and Cassidy) on whose needs I must also focus.

I know the clock is ticking and there is a lot to do. Believe me, I can't wait to re-launch *ELF*. I have some additional goals and reasons to push ahead on the project. As of today my count down to RETIREMENT clock says 569 days to go until June 15, 2004 rolls around. I have already started planning my RETIREMENT PARTY. It goes some thing like this: Have *Elf* docked at the Granary docks (where I first laid eyes on *ELF* and purchased her), have a boat side party, and sail off into the sunset. (the Sassafra River runs east-west.) This plan works for me! Therefore, I must launch and rig *ELF* in less than 569 days or (HEAVEN FORBID!) teach another year. Needless to say I WILL STAY FOCUSED.

It really has been a very productive summer and fall with so many projects completed, and I must add, done very well! As I learned, trying to keep ahead of Graham seems to be a full time project. But by doing all the preparations I have freed Graham to do all the intricate joinery work, the kind of artistry at which he excels. This year has been great in so many ways.

I want to THANK EVERYONE for all your help and generous contributions of money, time, and effort.

If you would like to receive *The Helm* electronically (pdf file), send an email to:

elf1888@earthlink.net

Or call Rick at 410-275-2819

Encouragement

Please consider writing an article for our news interest features. When you see your article published I will give you a gift of an official *Elf* T-shirt or *Elf* mouse Pad. We may, at times, need to edit your contribution for space considerations. Thank you!

Topics to consider:

- Historical or unique moments on *Elf*
- Tools or gear and their uses on traditional boats
- How-to articles
- Kid's Corner
- Special Environmental moments that you enjoyed
- You and your boat adventures
- Other... your choice

"Lawley Built"

Graham's Letter

Slow , But GREAT PROGRESSSSSSS!!!!

We shifted gears last month. Everything, on a boat like this, is linked to everything else. We can't finish the interior until the engine is installed. Can't install the engine until the shaft hole is drilled. Can't deck until the interior is roughed in. Can't install ceilings until the chain plates are bolted in place. Can't install the chain plates until the seams under the chain plates are caulked, seamed and painted. Can't caulk and seam until the hull is faired off and sanded. I could go on, but you get the idea. We decided to get the chain plates on. So, for the last six weeks, it's been planing, belt sanding, fine sanding, caulking and priming caulked seams. As a result, the hull is almost ready for paint, but more importantly, for the first time in ten years, Elf really could float. No more sunlight shining through the seams.

Nothing takes you back in time more than the age old ritual of driving cotton into a wooden boat hull with irons and mallet. When Elf was built, only caulkers caulked. Caulkers didn't do anything else. That was their trade. Boat builders today are jacks of all trades and we realize that caulking more than anything else is a lost art. The cotton is not just to keep the water from getting through the seams. Once compressed by the swelling planks, the cotton digs into the edges and unites the hull into a single skin instead of dozens of individual planks working separately. Caulk too lightly and the process is ineffective. Caulk too hard and the hull is put under excessive strain that can result in damage. Different woods swell more than others. Each wood swells more or less depending on moisture present at the time. New planking has never been wetted. It's complicated, and nowhere in all that has been written about caulking does anyone risk trying to explain how you determine this. You're on your own. Well anyway, once the caulking is completed the hull faces the sea as a unit, stronger than the combination of its parts.

So now, in just a matter of days (no pressure) Rick will transform this hull into a beautiful, gleaming white masterpiece with waterline struck and a crisp new boot top. Once this is done, Elf will really look like her old self again.



Elf's Shipwright

Long Leaf Yellow Pine Order

We are in the process of ordering one of the best boat building woods available. This wood is extremely rare; an estimated 1,000 acres exists on earth. **If you are in need of some for your project, let me know ASAP so that we can share shipping costs.** Cost is currently at \$3 a board foot.

Approximate shipping charges are \$1 per mile from Georgia.

If you need lumber for a project, Rick may be able to cut it for you. Call or email him (see front page for his address and phone number).

Guild Vision

The Classic Yacht Restoration Guild is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the preservation of traditional watercraft, both power and sail. Yacht restorations are accomplished through a combination of member donated skills and resources. A cooperative educational setting is provided by the Guild for all members who wish to acquire or sharpen boat maintenance and restoration skills. Our membership is diverse. Each member can participate either as an instructor, a student of restoration techniques, a participant in Guild sailing events and cruises or as a supporter through dues and donations. The Guild also offers a variety of resources and skilled professionals who are qualified and interested in helping you connect with the right people to assist with your project.

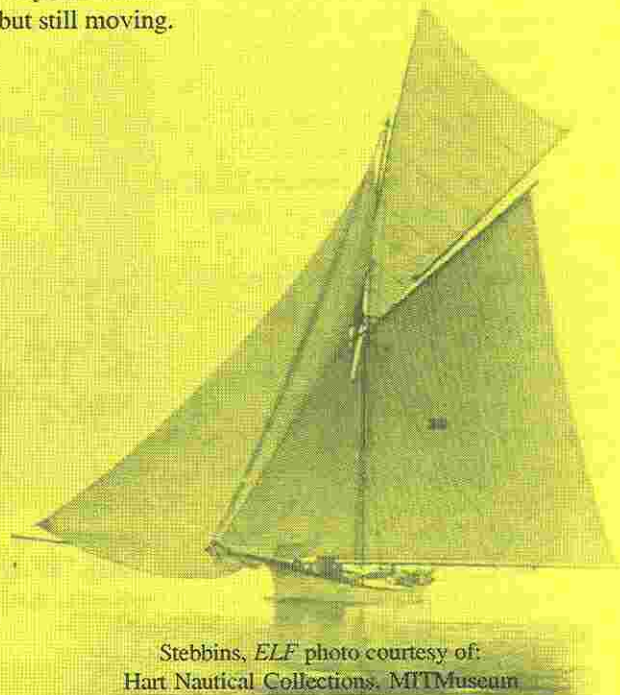
Work on our flagship *Elf* currently involves restoration of the original rig, deck, and cabin configurations. In addition, the Guild has received donations of many small craft which are used as demonstration and education projects. Ships carpentry, rigging, mechanics, and fine wood finishing are all topics covered by periodic workshops held while restoration projects are underway.

Once a Guild vessel is made seaworthy, the true pleasure of operating historic or significant small craft begins. Members are encouraged to sail Guild vessels with emphasis on instruction of boating safety, piloting, navigation, and the maritime history of the Chesapeake Bay. The Guild plans several cruises to maritime and waterfront festivals every season. Members serve as crew and staff displays at these events.

As a non-profit organization, the Guild always welcomes tax-deductible contributions. For example, the Guild received a 1963 vintage Lightning class racing sailboat and a large library of titles on boat building, maintenance, and maritime history. Also, donation of items used for restoration or fund raising are also tax deductible.

With a growing membership, the Classic Yacht Restoration Guild looks forward to increasing activity and good times. Please ask a member for further information and details.

Elf in a calm,
but still moving.



Stebbins, *ELF* photo courtesy of:
Hart Nautical Collections, MIT Museum

Yacht Elf

*Yacht: from Middle Low German, Jacht,
shortened form of jachtschiff, hunting ship
Elf: from Old Norse, alfr, mischievous creature*

... by Brian McCandless

In the 1800's, the industrial revolution was roaring full-steam in Western Europe and in America. Virtually every aspect of American life was touched by advancements in manufacturing, resource development, and scientific discovery. Advances in materials and refinement in traditional construction methods allowed the creation of aesthetically pleasing yet wonderfully functional cultural treasures. One of these is the beautiful Brown Palace Hotel in downtown Denver, with its opulent hand-wrought iron rails and stained glass ceiling. Still operating as a first-class hotel, it also houses a first-class collection of clipper ship and yacht models, a continental tribute to the time when North Atlantic boatyards were in full gear creating icons of their age. Here on the East coast, one such icon is yacht *Elf*, now being readied for her re-emergence as a fully operational nineteenth century sailing vessel, the oldest small yacht in America.

Boating, once the sole domain of merchant and military navies, grew in popularity as leisure time and spare cash became increasingly abundant. Boat racing, as an elite sport, had become a highly organized hobby in the nineteenth century, and the persistent competitiveness between English and American yachtsman eventually led to the highly visible competition, begun in 1851, known as the America's Cup [*]. The boats used in these gentleman's races were on an evolutionary track that had their origins in English pilot boats. The success of the English gaff cutter design, with its narrow beam, full, deep keel, and full set of sails, presented a recipe for innovation and challenge. Yacht *Elf* was but one in a progressive series of boat design and construction efforts to meet the challenge for more speed at a local level. But, that one survived and is on a fast track to re-birth.

Yacht *Elf* was designed and built by George F. Lawley, in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1888 for William H. Wilkinson, without computer-aided graphics or 3-D virtual reality; the builders may have been aided by half models, but probably proceeded from experience, intuition, and a few scribbles in a ledger. Mr. Wilkinson deserves credit as a designer in the sense that he himself was responsible for several rigging innovations, increasing his success as a racer on *Elf* and his next boat, Mildred. *Elf* was built at a cost to Mr. Wilkinson of \$3500. Given that an unfurnished 18-room home in the Boston area at this time cost about \$1000, this boat must have been at the limit of practical personal spending for those days.

So, during the last decades of the 1800's, well after Napoleon but not long before Kaiser Wilhelm and the ensuing world strife, *Elf* was a constituent of the Eastern Yacht Club, at Marblehead, Massachusetts. The photographic archives housed at Mystic Seaport Museum and at M.I.T.'s Francis Russell Hart Museum bear witness to her participation in summertime races, cunningly plying the start in the waters in front of the Corinthian Yacht Club, near Marblehead.

During this period, a 19 year-old Henry Howard crewed on *Elf*. Like many of his ilk, in the days of the six-day work week, he would leave work at noon on Saturday, take the train out of Boston to Marblehead, to spend the afternoon and Sunday racing. When he was 21 years old, *Elf* became available, since the boat had become non-competitive following a rule change in 1890 that taxed the sail area flown for all racing vessels. He purchased the boat in 1890 for the discounted price of \$2000. *Elf's* adjusted costs would be around \$700,000 new for Mr. Wilkinson in 1888 and \$450,000 at the re-sale price to Mr. Howard in 1890.

One Saturday in 1890, shortly after acquiring the vessel, Mr. Howard experienced a train delay out of Boston, which meant a late crossing of the starting line for *Elf*. After assessing the wind and marks for the course, the talented Mr. Howard took an inside track and actually won the race! Sail area taxation notwithstanding, *Elf* was an incredible performer, with a hull speed of about 8.5 knots, and great sail height, with her gaff 60 feet above the deck. All that upper-level sail means that she made good in light air, because she was high enough to catch the laminar, clean-flowing, air away from sea-level turbulence. In one of the photographs on file, taken on June 22, 1888, *Elf* is shown in near-dead air on a glass sea making wake under full canvas.

In 1893, according to the Boston Globe, Mr. Howard, along with his friend Mr. Benjamin Knapp and two other crew members, initiated offshore cruising in personal yachts by sailing *Elf* round trip from Marblehead to Halifax [+]. We and other members of the Guild are anxious to return to Marblehead to re-enact this ambitious voyage.

Elf has survived! Off-shore voyages, two world wars, removal of her original lead keel, conversion to a motor launch, and the ravages of water on iron fasteners and wood. The years are with her, however, due to impeccable construction, and thanks to the efforts of Gus and Vida Van Lennep who moved her in the 1930's to the Chesapeake Bay and maintained her beautiful lines which caught Rick Carrion's eye in 1971. As for her construction, she owes much to her iron floor timbers, known as "floors," which preserved her sheer lines and kept her absolutely appealing and solid through the, dare we say, century. For those who may not know, disfigurement of the sheer line is often the first sign of hull fatigue, which usually spells disruption, if not total loss of the vessel. The iron floor timbers were a Lawley innovation in the 1880's. She never lost her shape, as a result of the durability of those iron floor timbers, compared to the wooden ones used on all prior vessels. Technically speaking, her garboard planks never moved!

Yacht *Elf* was constructed during an era of incredible change and discovery in the world. A sense of this can be gained by listing a few historical episodes associated with the end of the nineteenth century, and (*Yacht Elf continued on page 5 . . .*)

Restoring the Elf

America's oldest small yacht finding a new life

... by Dan Meadows

Reprinted from the *Nor'easter* magazine with permission of Ira Black

In the early 1970s, Rick Carrion caught a glimpse of a boat with beautiful lines at the marina where he was working as a dockmaster. He was so caught up that he just had to find a way to buy her. He hocked his watch to raise some money and soon, he was the proud owner of a small wooden yacht badly in need of repair. Little did he know what kind of treasure he'd just purchased.

In 1888, *Elf* was launched into the waters near Boston. She was built by George Lawley, a New England shipbuilder famous for constructing America's Cup champions.

The yacht was first owned by William Wilkinson, bought for just \$3,500, with the intention of racing her in Marblehead, MA against other 30-ft. class yachts.

During the two years Wilkinson owned her, he showed his innovative side, developing various new techniques in her rigging such as mounted winches, wire running rigging and wire sail luff ropes. Wilkinson sold her after sail racing regulations changed in New England, implementing new sail area and boat length guidelines. Henry Howard bought *Elf* and continued to race her.

In 1893, Howard took *Elf* on a pleasure cruise from Marblehead to Nova Scotia that has been forever immortalized. An article, written by Howard and published in "Yachting" magazine, helped to pave the way for offshore cruising in small yachts like *Elf*.

Howard eventually sold *Elf* in 1897, and she began the new century by changing owners numerous times, moving about from New England all the way to the Caribbean. By the late 1960s, *Elf* had lost her luster. Decades of neglect had left her in a state of almost total disrepair.

Rick Carrion, working as a dockmaster at Sailing Associates in Georgetown, MD when he first laid eyes on *Elf*. He immediately became smitten with the boat and bought her in 1971 for \$1,500.

When he first bought her, Carrion had no idea of her history. In fact, her title had little or no information about her past, even listing her year of construction as unknown.

He lived on the boat for a time while going to college at Salisbury State, struggling just to keep her afloat. Even when he didn't live on her, he still had to visit her regularly just to make sure the pumps were still working. Then one day, during one of many paint scraping sessions, Carrion uncovered the vessel's long-lost documentation numbers.

He wrote to the Coast Guard's Office of Transportation and Documentation with the numbers, hoping to get some look into her past. When they came back with her date of origin in 1888 and the name *Elf*, he found much more than he expected.

Buoyed by the discovery of her advanced age, Carrion wrote to numerous nautical societies and maritime museums, looking for glimpses into her past. One of his inquiries attracted the attention of maritime historian Donald Street, who contacted Carrion informing him of his boat's status as America's oldest small yacht, and the third oldest in the world.

His research produced numerous early photos of *Elf* during her construction and immediately after her launch, giving Carrion good looks at her original layout and rigging. He was also able to identify more than 20 previous owners and dozens of mentions of her in various publications over the years.

In 1982, Carrion took the next step in preserving his yacht. He founded the Classic Yacht Restoration Guild (CYRG) and donated *Elf* to the organization. The vessel's history and the ever-increasing time and financial burdens she was placing on Carrion were a large part of his decision to form the guild.

In June 1991, the historic restoration of *Elf* began when Carrion literally built a boat shed around the craft at his home to house her during the many years of work that were to come. His intention was to strip *Elf* of everything that wasn't original and return the vessel to how she was the day she was first launched in 1888.

Using various vintage photos his research turned up, Carrion and shipwright Graham Ero have spent over ten years remaking *Elf*. The vessel was completely reframed in black locust, the stern totally redone and the hull replanked.

After being almost gutted, the new *Elf*—perhaps more appropriately, the old *Elf*—is starting to take shape. As little as four years ago, still with some rotting wood on her underbelly and gaps in her planking, it was hard to imagine seeing her on the water, but now she looks like a boat again.

One area they have varied some from her original design is the engine. Mainly, they added one. Originally, being a racing boat, she had no engine, not to mention the fact that diesel engines hadn't been invented in 1888. But they recently lowered a Westerbeke engine donated to the Guild into *Elf*, as much out of necessity and safety for when she does get back out on the water again as to satisfy Coast Guard requirements.

Carrion's Group sponsors a crab feast every year, as much to celebrate the *Elf* and the people involved as to raise money for her renewal. At a scenic spot on the Bohemia River, over 100 people turned out for this year's feast in late September. Food was plentiful, with lots of steamed crabs, burgers, hot dogs, a particularly juicy ham steamed in cherry and mesquite, and the all-important keg.

There was an added bit to celebrate this year as *Elf* had just been named to the Cecil County Register of Historic Places. She had already been named to the National Register a few years ago, one of the few boats to make that prestigious list. Carrion hopes this new honor will help give a push to her restoration. Every little bit helps.

I first met him several years ago and his enthusiasm for *Elf* and her renewal to past glory hasn't waned a bit. In fact, as her work progresses, it seems to be growing.

Carrion speaks not only glowingly about *Elf*, but also about his shipwright and friend Graham Ero. He doesn't hesitate to give credit for the work done on her to Ero's mastery. "I just carry the

wood and do what Graham tells me," he told a group of guests getting a look at *Elf* during this year's CYRG feast, "If he says, 'sand here' I go and sand that spot."

Ero, who owns a small boatbuilding business in Still Pond, has a reputation for doing superior work, both in building boats from scratch and restoring classics. One of his recent projects, the Chesapeake Bay buy boat Muriel Eileen, showcased some of Ero's finest work, next to the *Elf*, of course.

They are making steady progress on the now-114-year-old vessel. In addition to the engine, this summer has seen work progress on the forward bulkhead, forward v-berth, cockpit carlins, chain locker and some deck beams have been fastened into place. They are approaching the point where decking is going to be laid. As Ero wrote in the Guild's occasional newsletter, once the deck is on, the end will be clearly in sight.

For now, Carrion, Ero and a cast of volunteers who help out with *Elf* will continue to get by on enthusiasm and the occasional grant. The CYRG is always looking for new members. Basic membership is \$20 and any donations are appreciated. Anyone interested can contact the CYRG at PO Box 237, Earleville, MD 21919, 410-275-2819

(Yacht Elf continued from page 3 . . .)

specifically, in and around the year 1888. First, there is the broad context: a century before, in 1788, the Australian State of New South Wales was founded. Three score years before, the Baltimore clipper *Chasseur* delivered her "cease-and-desist" message to Parliament, ending the last war between the United States and England. Twenty years before, the American Civil War ended. During the late 1800's, there were wars between the government and the native American nations, and there was the Alaskan gold rush, followed by settlement and acquisition of that vast territory.

The year 1815 saw the founding of the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes, England, on the River Medina, Isle of Wight. This place continues to be a prominent locus of yachting activity. The first America's cup race was held in 1851 from this Yacht Club. In 1856, the *Manual of British Rural Sports* was published, giving wide exposure to pastimes such as yachting. In the year just prior to *Elf's* construction, 1887, Albert Michelson and Edward Morley completed their critical experiments in Cleveland, Ohio, which proved that space was not filled with ether; this discovery set the stage for Lorentz to justify his postulate of contraction, which gave foundation to Einstein's theory of special relativity and launched the modern era of physics. Most people don't know that part of the problem with the Michelson-Morley experiment had more to do with Morley's daughter than with interferometry!

And then there were the events during the year of *Elf's* construction! In 1888 in America, *Forest and Stream* was the monthly journal to read, the word "blizzard" was adopted to describe huge snowstorms, the Washington Monument was opened to the public, the National Geographic Society formed, the American Mathematical Society was founded in New York City, the chicken population in U.S. reached 180 million, and circulation of *Daily Telegraph* reached 300,000. In the rest of the world, the De Beers diamond corporation opened its doors for business, the bridge over the Forth River in Edinburgh was begun, the Act abolishing slavery was passed in Brazil, T.S. Eliot was born, T.H. Lawrence was born, John Logie Baird was born (he invented TV),

Guy de Maupassant wrote *Pierre et Jean* in France, and Thomas Hardy wrote *Wessex Tales* in England. Also in 1888, it is notable that the convention of Constantinople sealed Britain's role as the protector of the "neutral" Suez Canal, which had been completed in 1869, connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas. The American optical genius John A. Brashear, from Pittsburgh, steamed to Liverpool in 1888 to demonstrate his newly invented diffraction gratings, stocking European labs with the tools that would allow the atom to be dissected.

During the late 1800's, significant developments in boat design were undertaken by experiment, such as modifications of rigging and sail area on racing yachts. On working boats, such as schooners, the clipper bow was in vogue and schooners were constructed for the water they were to be sailed in: 1) deep draft with ballasted keel and 2) shallow draft, fitted with a centerboard. To accommodate the shallow waters of the inland eastern U.S., schooners in the 1880's were constructed with moderate drafts and centerboards, but by 1895, the designers did away with the centerboards. To keep up with increasing length and cargo, more masts were added. One of the first five-masted schooners was built in 1888 in Waldboro, Maine and carried a mammoth centerboard; she was dismasted on her maiden voyage! The year 1890 marked the all-time height the transport and sale of Maine ice, which was regularly transported down the U.S. coast by wooden schooners.

Elsewhere in the world, Mr. Joshua Slocum built his open boat, a Cape Anne dory style, christened *Liberdade*, on May 13, 1888, and set sail from near Rio, Brazil, on June 24 of the same year. He reached South Carolina in 1889, after 5510 miles at sea. He was recognized by President Roosevelt, and *Liberdade* was subsequently displayed in the Smithsonian Institute in 1890. In this period, from 1869-1895, the clipper *Cutty Sark*, having been launched at Dunbarton, was running; she was named after the short chemise hung upon her figurehead. In Cape Cod, the Crosbys' were enjoying a heyday of boat-building success. At the C.C. Hanley yard on Monument Beach, lower Cape Cod, the catboat, *Mucilage*, was built to rival the Crosbys' designs. On the Chesapeake Bay, eight shipwrecks marked a difficult spring of 1888. Shortly after *Elf* was constructed, May Day became a labor holiday and has been celebrated as a bank holiday in England continuously since 1889. In 1890, the reign of Kaiser Bismarck came to an end in Germany, while the year 1901 marked the end of the Victorian Era in the English speaking world. Not long after, America would emerge from its slumber, and revolutions in thought would spawn new ways of living, and the age of hand crafted wooden yachts would ultimately yield to mass-produced materials and methods.

Yacht Elf is a living example of a true classic and reminds us of the intensity and passion possible in human endeavors. We invite you to share this passion and join in the fun and challenge of the *Elf* restoration.

[*] read all about the America's Cup history in *Classic Boat* (July 2001).

[+] read all about it in Henry Howard's autobiography *Charting My Life* (1946)

"Lawley Built"

CRAB FEAST IS GREAT SUCCESS!

The 20th Annual Crab Feast and BBQ on September 21, 2002 created some happy memories and brought about some fascinating new friendships. Space will not permit a full report in this issue, but look forward to an array of photos in the next issue of *The Helm*. Suffice to say, the event was successful in every way possible – crabs, weather, music, food, friends and fun – and earned nearly \$3,000 for the Guild!

Special thanks are due to all those who donated valuable items for the first annual Silent Auction:

- *Harry Hammond and Josh Brown, American Home and Hardware – Elkton Supply Company;*
- *P.E. Pruitt's Waterside Restaurant and Raw Bar, Rock Hall;*
- *Barbara Howard, President, Cecil County Federal Savings and Loan;*
- *The Chesapeake Inn Restaurant and Marina, Chesapeake City;*
- *The Bayard House Restaurant, Chesapeake City;*
- *Ira Black, Editor, Nor'easter Magazine;*
- *Amy Carlson, Amy Carlson Interior Design;*
- *The Granary Restaurant, Georgetown;*
- *Bentley's Restaurant, Elkton;*
- *Jan Cohen, Thyme Catering;*
- *Fred Knobloch;*
- *Lynn Porter;*
- *John and Pam Vogel (thanks, Sis!);*

and perpetually supportive friends:

- *Bill and Deborah Sonntag*
- *Cindy and Jay Aigeltinger*

Thanks also to all those who brought delicious dishes, manned the grills, staffed the auction tables (despite breezy conditions early on), shuttled boaters to and from the site, successfully bid on auction items (especially *Jim and Margaret Tiffen* and *Gene Bonner, Esquire!*), played music, helped with clean-up, bought tickets, became new members of the Guild, or generally added to the festivities. Due to everyone's support, at whatever level, the Guild benefited by having a few more precious weeks of Graham Ero's attention! The end – or, the water! – is almost in sight!!

THE HELM



The Classic Yacht Restoration Guild, Inc.
P.O. Box 237
683 Pond Neck Road
Earleville, MD 21919-0237