

CRUISING WORLD

DECEMBER 2009

SAILING LIFE | SAILOR PROFILE



From Dump to Destination

Did you know that a popular sailing club on San Francisco Bay had its origins on refuse? BY PATRICK GALVIN

IT'S OFTEN SAID THAT SAILORS are dreamers, men and women who see opportunities where others see only roadblocks.

Thirty years ago, mounds of trash didn't stop Anthony Sandberg, now 60, from envisioning a world-class sailing destination on what was then the municipal dump of

the city of Berkeley, California.

Driven by a mission to teach people the joys as well as the responsibilities of sailing, which include protecting the water, the air, and the land, Sandberg and his friend and business partner Richard Jepsen turned the dump into a sailing center that's a shining example of recycling and repurposed use. Together, they've demonstrated to the business world that being "green" isn't just the right thing to do; it also builds the bottom line.

This year, Sandberg's vision, OCSC Sailing (www.ocscsailing.com), cel-

brates its 30th anniversary. OCSC stands for the Olympic Circle Sailing Club; the Olympic Circle being a race course created years ago, situated just outside and to the north of the Berkeley Marina. Today, despite the down economy, the business is thriving, with more than 1,100 members ranging in age from 21 to 75. On any given day, the clubhouse, with its views of

the Golden Gate Bridge, may play host to a billionaire, a bartender, or a group of inner-city kids buzzing with excitement after their first afternoon out on a sailboat and discerning their

frictions what it was like to take the tiller into their own hands.

That's because for the last 30 years—exactly half of his life now—Sandberg has promoted sailing as an activity that creates community. His goal was never to have a "yacht club" but rather a place where sailing is affordable and accessible to anyone who has the burning desire to learn how to do it.

Much of that vision grew from Sandberg's own life experiences. An active sailor since his early childhood in Hawai'i, he left home at the age of 16 to become a crewmember on a square-rigger that sailed around the Pacific Ocean. After attending Dartmouth College, he participated in regattas around the world and skippered yachts for wealthy European boat owners. As a counterbalance, he served 18 months in the Peace Corps in Nepal, where he worked to improve living conditions for locals.

Setting down in the Bay Area, Sandberg started OCSC Sailing as a sailing school in 1979 using a telephone and a borrowed boat. Things were so tight that to build the business, he spent the first six months sleeping in his Dodge van in the marina. Before clients arrived for sailing lessons, he'd pull out of the parking lot, then reappear a few minutes after them just to keep up appearances.

The early days of scraping by had an upside, however. The experience taught Sandberg that he didn't need to own sailboats to have a successful sailing school—a revolutionary concept at the time. Today, nearly two-thirds of his 50 sailboats are the property of other people. OCSC Sailing maintains the vessels and shares the revenues collected from renting them with their owners, who are thrilled to know that their boats are paying for themselves.

Sandberg's life's mission is to spread the joy of sailing, and the popularity of his Wednesday Night Sails is proof that his enthusiasm is contagious. The event draws more than 200 people at a time, from expert sailors to novices. Some have never been to the Berkeley Marina, and most have no idea that the dry land they stand on was once filled with garbage. To them, it's just one of the best places on Earth to sail, which is exactly what Sandberg envisioned 30 years ago.

Writer Patrick Galvin lives in Portland, Oregon, where he enjoys sailing on the Columbia River.



OCSC Sailing (above) was built on the city dump (top) in Berkeley, California. Anthony Sandberg (left) has been the visionary.