

## ***REFLECTIONS OF A CHARTER MEMBER***

THIRTY YEARS, OH WHERE HAS IT FLOWN?

Barb and I moved to Port Charlotte in July, 1972, and one of our first objectives was to transfer into the local power squadron. Easier said than done. We called the chamber of commerce, we made inquiries of the county offices, we asked at the marina, and everyone kept referring us to the only boating organization they knew, which proved to be the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

I had been a member of the United States Power Squadrons for the previous ten years in Minnesota, having served as a Commander of the Minnetonka Power Squadron, and I wasn't about to settle for membership in any other boating organization.

About a month after moving to Florida, Barb and I were swimming at Englewood beach. When we returned to our car, a couple was waiting to talk to us, who had noticed the USPS insignia on our windshield. It proved to be P/D/C Harold Walker, SN, and his wife, Gladys, who had also just moved to Port Charlotte, and couldn't believe there was no power squadron serving an area of such pristine waters as Charlotte Harbor.

Hal and I immediately became fast friends, and we resolved to get a squadron organized to serve the Port Charlotte/Punta Gorda Area.

Unbeknownst to us, our charter commander, and a small energetic group of Punta Gorda Isles boaters were already working to get a squadron started and an article in the local newspaper brought us together at a meeting in the municipal auditorium to get the ball rolling.

There were 35 to 40 men attending the meeting that evening, and after each individual introduced ones self, we found well over half had been officers or members of various squadrons throughout the country.

It was publicized that never in the history of USPS had so many members of the United States Power Squadrons, organized a new squadron.

Although the Fort Myers Power Squadron agreed to sponsor our group, it was unnecessary to provide any input or surveillance for Peace River.

P/D/C Robert Kloske, who spent so much time and effort in getting the group going, became our charter commander, and I was asked to serve as his exec.

On December 4, 1972, thirty-three men were made charter members of the Peace River power squadrons by the national organization.. We celebrated the event at the old Ramada Inn on Harbor Boulevard, and monthly meetings were held in the upstairs meeting room of First Federal Savings and Loan. That first year was tough as we struggled to maintain a balance in our checking account, but our first treasurer often supplemented our account with his personal funds in order that the account wouldn't be closed.

In February of the following year, we had our first burial at sea, but despite the various problems we encountered, the squadron grew. And as we grew, we required larger accommodations, but that could be another tale of woe.

I take pride in being a member of the United States Power Squadrons, and even more-so continuing as a member of the Peace River Power Squadron.

This group has come a long way in rising to a top spot in District 22, and the membership owes a debt of gratitude to the administrative abilities of those, who have taken command throughout its thirty years of existence.

P/C Basil Banks, SN

Second Squadron Commander & Last Surviving Charter Member

Webmaster's Note: This article was written in 2002 in honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PRPS. Basil continues to be a member of Peace River although he now lives in Palm Desert California. Among other positions, he served as a Boating Course proctor for many years before moving to California