



Elegant dining aboard *Miss Ann*

THE POTOMAC'S GRANDE DAME

Miss Ann

By
Joan Wenner



Miss Ann shimmering in the reflection



The only times *Miss Ann* leaves the water are for restorations.

If yachts could be said to luxuriate in their surroundings, the historic 1925 Delaware-built *Miss Ann* has been fortunate to have enjoyed dockage at several distinctive homeports.

When I first wrote about her in this magazine five years ago, she was at the Tides Inn in Irvington, transporting passengers

for delightful dinner cruises on the Rappahannock River, Carters Creek and the Chesapeake Bay. Now *Miss Ann* is securely berthed at the well-known Gangplank Marina at 6th and Water streets in southwest Washington, D.C. Located in the protected waters of the Washington Channel with its waterfront promenade, she

has views of the Washington Monument, Capitol landmarks and popular shopping and dining venues. *Miss Ann* was acquired by Frank Schroff and his brother Guy who established Miss Ann Charter LLC in 2008 to serve the Washington area. Listed on the National and Virginia Registers of Historic Places, she needs only minimal refitting and refurbishment (the ship's wheel alone is a handsome work of art, as they often were on turn-of-the-century yachts) to bring her back to her original design before embarking on future voyages.

Last summer, *Miss Ann* was re-christened by the Schroffs at the Colonial Beach Yacht Center. The family has ties there going back to the 1950s, when their grandfather, the owner of a trucking and concrete company in Georgetown, acquired a hunting lodge on an island in Monroe Bay, a place where the clan still gathers. As a bottle of champagne struck the anchor on the bow, news reporters noted a band on the fantail playing a stirring rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Miss Ann will spend much time cruising on the Potomac.



Thereafter a priest blessed the ship and all who sail aboard her, thereby marking another longtime nautical tradition.

This yacht's sojourn through the decades has been under various names, one of the most notable being the *Siele*, the name chosen by Detroit banker, industrialist and yacht collector John H. French as an anagram of his wife's first name, Elsie. Unfortunately, Elsie did not take well to her inaugural crossing of the rough Great Lakes, no matter how elegantly appointed and solidly constructed the vessel, so the story goes. *Siele* was used only once or twice over the next decade before her sale to Robert H. Wolfe who renamed her *Sea Wolfe*. Mr. Wolfe entertained from the Catawba Yacht Club, near Toledo, Ohio.

In 1941, the 194-ton beauty, with her lovely walnut paneling along companionways and her massive wheelhouse, was turned over to the Navy for the war effort. Her two-inch teak deck, packed with cotton and caulked with a black rubber compound, were repainted the standard battleship gray and outfitted for government duty, which included two 30-caliber machine guns. She was commissioned *USS Aquamarine* PYc-7, a designation that signified Patrol Yacht according to Washington's Navy Historical Center Director and knowledgeable historian Kim Nielsen. Nielsen noted that the lower-case "c" was used for smaller vessels selected for coastal, as opposed to blue water, patrols. The number 7, he explains, means the ship was the seventh to be commissioned. After duty with the Naval Research laboratory, chiefly conducting underwater sound experiments off Connecticut and Florida and in the Bahamas, the yacht was used as a special tender to presidential yachts *Potomac* and *Williamsburg*.

After the removal of her wartime equipment, which included two substantial gun mounts, she was sold back to Wolfe and remained his until purchased in 1952 by Ennolls A. Stephens of the Tides Inn and named the *Miss Ann* after his wife.

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2008 Christmas parade of boats in Washington with *Miss Ann* leading the Potomac's armada of yachts

There she stayed for more than half a century becoming an icon in the Irvington area.

Miss Ann was well maintained

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over her years at the Tides Inn: Not only her structural integrity, but her historical and aesthetic integrity were preserved. However, she is 81 years old and in need of restoration and updating. Over the next three years, notes Frank Schroff, she is scheduled for many projects, such as restoring the wonderful 1920s dining room and staterooms, and updating the kitchen. Her two large 1966 engines will be replaced with new, cleaner, more fuel-efficient versions. The new work will no doubt make a trip on the *Miss Ann* a travel through time back to the age of classic fantail yachting and will certainly be a treat for all on board the Potomac's grande dame.

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