Worth the Wait

The District of Columbia's 110-year-old Capital Yacht Club is anything but stuffy, and at night you have an exquisite view of the glittering waterfront.

by Diana Prentice

face it. A cruise to the nation's capital isn't a snap decision. It's almost a hundred miles up the Potomac, and with our top speed of six knots, Randy and I had put off this investment of time during seven years of exploring the Bay aboard *Strider*. But after hearing glowing reports from cruising friends who had anchored in the Washington Channel and dinghied daily over to Capital Yacht Club, we finally bit the distance bullet. And we found out they had not exaggerated.

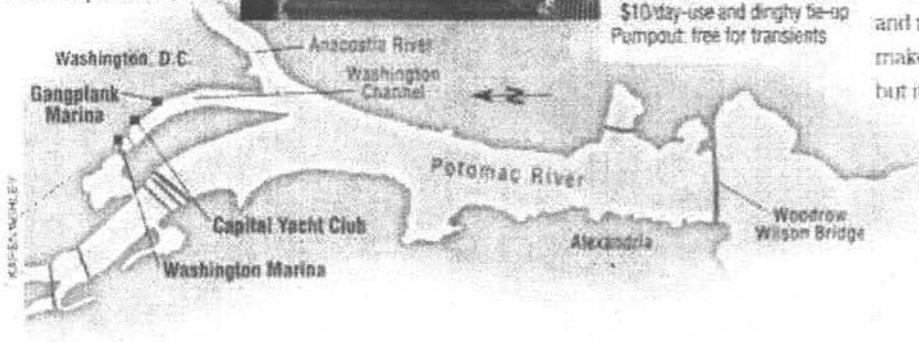
Our excitement built even before we got to Washington; on the final stretch from Alexandria, the dome of the U.S. Capitol itself hovered off our bow. Inside the channel, alongside East Potomac Park, our anchor chain rattled into 18 to 20 feet near a handful of other boats already on the hook, half of them flying U.S. courtesy flags. The holding can be skimpy here, but otherwise we felt totally secure in the shadow of Washington's many white marble monuments. The only negative about this anchorage is the city's monumental transportation din—planes, trains, vehicles and helicopters cluttering the air waves.

Cruising sightseers, whether anchored or berthed in the channel, have as their base of exploration a choice of either the Gangplank Marina, Washington Marina (not accessible to sailboats) or the private Capital Yacht Club (CYC). Like its neighbors, CYC offers shoreside services to cruisers on the hook as well as transient slips (some fixed docks, some floating) when they are available. We ended up staying at anchor for several weeks, moving into a CYC slip for just one night (you guessed it—for a marathon re-provisioning-and-laundry session). Not only was the club a safe-and-sound place to tie up our dink, it was a comfortably soundproof and gracious home base as well.



ADELE STAGG

Capital Yacht Club
Washington, D.C.
202-488-8110
www.capitalyachtclub.net
Fuel: gas and diesel nearby
Power: 30, 50, 100 amp
Depth: 20' MLW approach, 15' MLW dockside
Dockage: $1/foot plus electric; $10/day-use and dinghy tie-up
Pumpout: free for transients



KEVIN MCKELEY

After anchoring on that first day, we called CYC on our VHF radio and talked with longtime dockmaster Kelvin Lee. A few minutes later he met us at the dinghy dock, helped us tie up and led us inside the clubhouse, where he introduced us to administrative assistant Amy Morris. Registration and a simple credit-card deposit furnished us with a key to the dock gates and clubhouse door. Numerous other amenities accompanied the $10 daily fee: internet access, immaculate showers, spotless laundry facilities and a thick packet of sightseeing information. For relaxation there's a beautifully varnished full-service bar. Bartenders Julia Sardan-Vega and Stephan Tibbs, who alternate nights, were as skillful mixing drinks as they were patient answering our many questions.

So much is within walking distance: monuments, museums, restaurants, shops, the Metro station at L'Enfant Plaza, and the sprawling and popular waterfront fish market next door. After our exhausting days of being tourists, we found the rectangular and newly renovated CYC clubhouse (built in 1974) to be our refuge of choice. By all designs, this club really should be stuffy, with its accents of mahogany and marble colorfully adorned with burgees from around the world, and its dignified library gracefully blending modern elegance with traditions dating from 1892. CYC's 110 years have seen renowned vessels and illustrious members—among them George Bush the elder and Al Gore senior. And these days, as you sit at the bar munching peanuts, the hand reaching into the same bowl could be that of a Congressman or maybe even a CIA spook. But the conversation always flows easily and the cable TV is readily tuned to the Weather Channel on request. Members welcome guests to the club's various functions, too, such as Friday-night barbecues.

Maybe legions of legendary landmarks and magnificent museums (nearly all free) make Washington unique among ports, but it turns out that the Capital Yacht Club's hospitality is reason itself to [illegible] finally making it all the way [illegible] tomac River, Randy and I eventually had to face the really tough [illegible] of our visit—leaving. ■

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-42
EXHIBIT NO.40