



JYC Newsletter - April 2018

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# Launch Time!

Commodore's Briefing -

Well, last month I had the audacity to announce that spring had finally sprung... it's now a month later and it is obvious that I was wrong. I have learned my lesson. This month, I won't insult the weather by presuming that I know what they have in store for us. I hope the weather warms up soon though, I'm ready to go sailing.

This Saturday is the April Meeting & Party. We will also have a table or two set up for the annual swap meet. If you've got some sailing gear that needs a new home bring it out maybe somebody will take it off your hands, for a reasonable price of course.

May 12th is the currently scheduled date for the Spring Race. Our new Rear Commodore and I will keep you informed as we get closer to the date, but I wanted to remind our racers to put it on their calendars.

I hope to see you all on Saturday! Hopefully warmer weather is on the way.

Nate King  
Commodore



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## Jacomo Yacht Club Officers

Nate King  
Ann Helder

Commodore  
Secretary

Zach Ritter  
Mercedes Lentz

Vice Commodore  
Treasurer

# Superstitions, Rituals and Taboos

Excerpts from: Scuttlebutt

Published April 15, 2018

Italian Pietro Fantoni notes that before we can demonstrate our racing skills, we must first be certain we have not gone foul on any of the superstition that have been part of our sport since man became a sailor.

From the early days, man realized that the sea can be a hostile place, especially when it was still believed that the earth had an edge that could be sailed off. The sea imposes respect and evokes fears, so there are many superstitions, rituals and taboos.

While time has marched on, Fantoni contends how the intelligent modern sailor, not leaving anything to chance, should still observe the following guidelines.

## Launching

The celebration of the launch of a new boat has very ancient origins. While today it is customary to break a bottle of champagne on the bow, in ancient civilizations the launching ceremony was more serious.



Homer tells us that the Achaean fleet could not reach Troy, because of strong headwinds that keep it along the coast of Aulis. The prophet Calchas prophesied that the fleet would not leave until the Achaean king Agamemnon had sacrificed to the goddess Artemis his more beautiful daughter Iphigenia. Iphigenia, was sacrificed and the fleet set sail for Troy.

Argo was the ship that carried Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. In her bow it contained a fragment of wood from the forest of Dodona, which could speak and prophesy. To ease the journey, the Argonauts sacrificed to Apollo two oxen, partied, got drunk and then fell asleep to the sound of the lyre of Orpheus.

For the Greeks, libations to the gods were an important rite to be performed before the start of navigation. And the keel of a new ship was made wet before the launch, with the blood of slaves bound in chains.

Likewise, the Vikings sacrificed prisoners to the gods, shedding their blood on the deck to protect their new ships.

For the ancient Romans, cutting their hair and nails when the weather was good was a bad omen. So was sneezing, swearing and dancing on board ship.

Nowadays the launching ceremony, though harmless and bloodless, is still full of superstitions. Many sailors would feel bad if the bottle does not break against the bow on the first attempt ... whether it is the bow of a big ship or a Snipe. And make sure to soak the boat with a few drops of champagne before you gulp down the rest of the bottle!

### Leaving the dock

“Buona fortuna!” (“Good luck!”) In Italy this wish, for most sailors, means bad luck. So most follow it with a gesture: touching the balls ... to ward off bad luck.

Instead of “buona fortuna,” push your Italian sailing friends off the dock with “in bocca al lupo” (which means literally “in the mouth of the wolf”). Or even more specifically, “in culo alla balena” (literally.... “in the asshole of the whale”).

### Boat Name

With regard to the belief that changing the name of the boat is catastrophic, the French agree, although with a significant exception. Only on August 15 you can give a new name to the boat, after scrupulously following a rigorous ritual. The boat must be renamed while sailing close to the wind, making a series of short tacks, drawing a zigzag pattern. Then she must bear away and go exactly downwind. The reason for such a ritual? The path is a snake that eats its own tail! Obviously you must add the blessing of the priest. Woe to that priest, however, if he puts one foot on the boat! French Snipe sailors, is this true? Or is it an urban legend?

### Whistling

According to many cultures, whistling at sea brings misfortune. It is said that Fletcher Christian aboard the HMS Bounty used a whistle as a signal for the mutiny against Captain William Bligh.



The British believe that whistling and scraping the mast bring wind when the wind is calm. This is the general rule, but don't ever do this when sailing south of the Channel. For the French, whistling is dangerous. A sailor's song from the time of square-sailed ships says: “Siffle gabier, siffle pour appeler le vent, mais sitôt la brise venu, gabier ne siffle plus!” “Whistle topman, whistle to call the wind, but as soon as the breeze comes, topman don't whistle anymore!”



### Unfavorable wind

The French have an old saying, perhaps obsolete, but worthy of mention, used on sailing ships of the past centuries. When they met several days of upwind unfavorable conditions, they would ask, “Vent debout, vent debout sans fin, qui n'a pas payé sa catin?” (“Upwind, upwind endless, who did not paid his whore?”) The unfavorable wind was considered a punishment for sailors who had left port without having paid the bill at the brothel.

### Bananas, umbrellas, and hatch covers

Never bring bananas on an English boat (and also boats of other nations, it seems). Similarly, do not get on an Italian boat with an umbrella. Never turn a hatch cover upside down. Maybe because an upside down hatch cover could be a premonition of an upside down boat?



### Sirens

The sirens were mythological creatures, beautiful and dangerous, who enchanted the sailors with music and persuasive voices. In Homer's *Odyssey*, they are presented as marine singers, inhabitants of an island near Scylla and Charybdis (the present Straits of Messina) who enchanted, and then killed, the sailors who imprudently landed there. Their deadly island was littered with rotting corpses. But

Odysseus, advised by Circe, ordered his men to tie him to the mast of his ship and inserted wax in the ears of the other sailors. (Why he did not simply plug his own ears has never been made clear.)

### Colors

In Italy, a green boat is considered the bearer of bad luck. At first, the ban concerned only clothing. Never wear green clothes, perhaps because green is not distinguished from sea water. Subsequently, the ban was extended to the color of the boat. The "believers" cite the example of Gatorade, which almost sunk in the Southern Ocean during a Whitbread Ocean Race, and all the green spinnakers of Paul Cayard's *America's Cup* boat in 2001 that exploded, to the benefit of Prada. So green is bad.



I read recently in a book that for American fishermen blue is not a good color for a boat. I also think that for American sailors red is unlucky, remembering the red 12 meter *Liberty* that lost the Cup, ending the longest winning streak in the history of sports.

For colors, everybody has a different theory.

There are so many superstitions and rituals we still follow today. Even the most absurd and irrational superstitions remind the modern racer, as they reminded sailors in the past, that man is fallible and boats are fragile. So I hope you have taken good notes, in order to protect yourself and your boat against bad luck in the unknown future.

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# 2018 UPCOMING EVENTS

**HOSTS NEEDED** There are still lots of opportunities on the calendar for hosting a club party.  
Email Ann Helder, Secretary, to save your date.

Date	Time	Event	Host	Location
April 14	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
April 21	13:00	April Meeting/ Party & Swap Meet	Mercedes & Jason Lentz	Sailboat Cove
May 12	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
May 12	13:00	Spring Race	TBD	Sailboat Cove
May 19	17:30	May Meeting/ Party	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
June 9	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
June 16	17:30	June Meeting/ Pig Roast & Luau	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
July 14	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
July 21	17:30	July Meeting/ Party	JP & Ann Helder	Sailboat Cove
August 4-5	TBD	50th Anniversary Regatta	JSC	More info coming!
August 11	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
August 18	19:00	Overnight Raft Up	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
August 19	9:00	August Breakfast Meeting	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
September 8	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
September 8	13:00	Fall Classic	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
September 15	17:30	September Meeting/ Party	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
October 13	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
October 20	17:30	October Meeting/ Chili Cook-Off	<b>TBD</b>	Sailboat Cove
November 10	10:00	Cove Clean Up		Sailboat Cove
November 17	14:00	November Meeting/ Donning of the Socks	Josh & Shannon, Nate King ,and Matt & Monica Ward	Sailboat Cove
November 30		Last day to pull your boat		
December 8	17:30	Holiday Party	Fleet	TBD

