

Perry MacKay Sturges of Princeton, NJ, and Shelter Island, NY, was the first owner of NY32 #15. Her name was *Sapphire* and was with the family for twenty-three years. Mac, as Sturges was known, became a NYYC member in January 1930 and was the Fleet Captain in 1959-60 when he died. He was the Shelter Island YC (SIYC) commodore from 1931-33. At that time he owned and raced a Seawanhaka Corinthian Schooner and later an 8-meter (Brooks Brothers lists). In 1936 Sturges had S&S draw up a plan (design #177) for a 30-foot power tender, which was listed as not built (Best of Best, 1996). But a note in Your New Boat (1946, edited by Yachting staff) called the design a "combination yacht tender and ferryboat." This note said that she was built in 1937 by Julius Peterson of Nyack, NY. She was a tender to *Sapphire* and a ferry boat for her owner from Greenport to Shelter Island.



According to his obituary (NYT March 10, 1960), Sturges was vice commodore of the Naples Yacht Club. He graduated from Princeton University in 1917 and was granted an honorary MA from there in 1956. Sturges served in both World Wars in the Navy. He was described as a "former New York investment banker and sportsman, and a former Mayor of Princeton, NJ.." The Historical Society of Princeton, NJ, provided the information that Sturges was mayor of the city from January 1, 1950 to January 1, 1958.

Mac was forty years old when he bought #15 and his daughters, Cary and Julia, remember the boat and their father's love of her. They said he sailed her daily when on Shelter Island and raced in the yearly NYYC cruise and with Off Soundings Club and Edgartown YC. There is a model of *Sapphire* at the SIYC, which their brother, Perry Sturges Jr, made. The NY32 was sold after his heart attack in 1957 and then he got a

power boat for the 1958 NYYC cruise. *Sapphire* survived the hurricane of 1938 on her mooring in Dering Harbor, which Mac thought a 'miracle'. The Norwegian captain, Harry Haakenson, who lived aboard the boat ran the engine for hours during the storm to be sure she did not drag on her mooring. The morning after the storm, walking, as the roads were a mess, the five miles from his house to the SIYC, Mac saw she was still afloat as his daughter Cary related.

Sapphire on NYYC cruise 1936. Photo Levick (#128207).



Captain Harry on fore deck

Sturges at helm in 'Aussie' hat

When Sturges owned #15 she was painted with a paint mixed for him by the International Paint Company. According to his daughter, he called the color Endeavor blue after the America's Cup defender color. The DYC (Detroit YC) Main Sheet (July 1985, p41) had a picture of a 1942 Interlux Paint ad for their Sapphire color. Although Interlux Technical Service could find the ad shown here, they did not know if the color

was named after the boat. The DYC picture included that *Sapphire* was then owned by Doug and Penny Breck.

*Where Perfection is Demanded*

**Interlux is used**



**T**HIS LOVELY CUTTER is the perfect example of a true yachtsman's pride of ownership and the conscientious effort of master painters to attain perfection in finishing. The "Sapphire" is protected from keel to truck with INTERLUX Marine Finishes. The use of these beautiful, durable yet moderately priced coatings is not confined to sizeable racing craft. Junior squadron members, cruising enthusiasts and yachtsmen who just like to be on the water, feel the same pride in the appearance and preservation of their vessels. They too use INTERLUX Paints and Varnishes.

*"SAPPHIRE,"*

*Perry MacKay Sturges, Owner*



**International Paint Company, Inc.**

New York C. N. Y.  
21 West Street

New Orleans 13, La.  
315 Girard Street

San Francisco 7, Cal.  
901 Minnesota Street

**Interlux**  
Almost  
Indestructible

Montreal, Quebec  
6700 Park Avenue

Vancouver B. C.  
101 Powell Street

Send for Color Cards

**A G E N T S I N E V E R Y I M P O R T A N T P O R T**

*Sapphire* was not among the class during the 1936 Larchmont YC Race Week in July but neither were the other two of the class (#14 and #16) that had been surveyed with her July 17<sup>th</sup>. But looking at the racing results in the news it seems Mac and *Sapphire* were not YRA or LIS contenders. In her first year, *Sapphire* was listed with the NYYC cruising fleet, but not the racing fleet. She raced on the runs in that year's Annual Cruise and placed about mid-fleet of the ten 32s participating. But on the second run from Newport to Edgartown over 42 miles with southwesterly winds from 13 to 20 mph, she placed second in her class.

In 1937, *Sapphire* and Mac started their season with the Riverside YC Decoration Day regatta and of the seven in class racing they were only a few lengths astern of *Revonoc* (Taylor, NY Herald Tribune 5/30/37). The Boston Saturday Globe (July 24<sup>th</sup>), reported on the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Edgartown Yacht Club regatta with over 200 yachts racing. On the first day, July 24<sup>th</sup>, the races started in light winds, which increased during the afternoon making all the finishes fast. The article is unattributed but said in part :

"The highlight was the race of the New York 32-footers, in which three started. John B. Shethar's Valencia won, but only after a tough contest.

F.M. Sturgis' *Sapphire* fought the Valencia every fathom of the way and stood an even chance of getting the gun but difficulty with his jib on the last leg cost him the lead.

Twice the *Sapphire* sacrificed opportunities to blanket her opponent, and still hold her position. The third time she swung about across the Valencia's bow, making a perfect blanket, but her sheet jammed in the blocks and a length was lost, enough to lose the race."

*Sapphire* kept up her pace during the NYYC cruise and regatta. In the Annual Regatta on August 20<sup>th</sup>, she was just 15 seconds behind *Dolphin* with *Apache* third 22 seconds after her. Seems there was some pretty close racing among the sisters. *Sapphire* was first in the class for the second and third runs of the cruise in the good breezes. This looked like her best season according to the NYYC Race Committee reports for each year. In August 1938, there was a joint AYC and SIYC regatta that saw *Sapphire* first of the four 32s racing a triangular course in a fine breeze (Robins, NYT 8/8/38). They raced in the NYYC cruise that year, placed second in the Navy Members Cup race to *Rampage II* (#12), but lost a protest to *Arbela* (#8) in a run. According to the NY Herald (9/6/38) *Sapphire* was among the 147 yachts in the Larchmont end of season racing and placed second of the four 32s there.

In addition to these *Sapphire* racing events, she won the US Navy Challenge Cup in 1939, 1947 and 1948 for cruising rule sloops and yawls during a squadron run of the NYYC cruises (NYYC yearbooks). This cup was presented by the Navy Members of the Club in 1901 in "appreciation of the privileges, cordial hospitality and welcome extended to the officers of the United States Navy by the Club."

According to the NYYC Race Committee report, the fleet for 1949 included four of the NY32s with the same cruising rating as in the prior year. The boats present were

*Pavana* (#9), *Voyageur* (#12), *Windward* (#13) and *Sapphire*. Among the race committee members were William H Taylor and James Robbins, two reporters who wrote about the class launching and race activities for the NY Herald Tribune and NY Times. The Annual Cruise in 1949 saw no separate class for the 32-footers. The 32s raced with the cruising rule sloops and yawls and not on all days of the cruise. Two -- *Sapphire* and *Lord Jim* (#3) -- made the second run on August 3<sup>rd</sup> from Newport to Vineyard Haven. They placed 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively, in this mixed class on corrected time. On the fourth run from Nantucket to Edgartown, *Sapphire* won over 15 others in her class on corrected time. She did not sail in the Annual Regatta. On August 9<sup>th</sup> *Sapphire* won the run from Edgartown to Mattapoisett in her class of seven. For this season in the small sloops and yawls class, *Sapphire* took the Vice-Commodore, Rear-Commodore and Navy Alumni Cups. She sailed in all of the NYYC cruises, often the only NY32, from 1950 through 1957.

Sturges became a member of the Off Soundings Club in 1951 (Mystic, Coll. 285, B 1 & 7) and was the Club's vice commodore in 1957 when Rod Stephens (owner of #17 *Mustang*) was commodore. *Sapphire* sailed in the fall 1951 cruise which included two other of the class-- *Mustang* and *Windward*. She is listed for the 1952-1954 and 1955-56 events together with *Mustang*, *Windward* and *White Lie* (#1). The 1953 Off Soundings spring cruise included a fleet of 139 yachts (Yachting, July 1953, p66). It was two runs from New London, CT to Montauk Point and Montauk Point to Dering Harbor on Shelter Island on June 5-6. "Southwest and westerly breezes provided fine racing, somewhat spotty on the first day's run but piping up to 25 miles or so on the second. In Class A-1, two New York 32s finished one-two on combined corrected time for the two days." They were *Mustang* and *Sapphire*. At the April 2, 1960 Governor's meeting a resolution expressing profound regret on Sturges' passing was voted on and sent to Mrs. Sturges as an expression of sympathy. It said in part that he was "known and greatly respected by many members ... a real contributor.."

In 1958, this sister moved to Rochester, NY and became *Mallard*. Frank Ritter Shumway Jr. said he bought the 32 because she was a quality boat of that time (em 04). Frank said Sturges had asked him not to keep the *Sapphire* name as he wanted to use it for his power boat. *Apache* was already taken by #2. A Princeton graduate, Frank said he thought of *Tigress* after their mascot, but that was taken as well (#4). He settled on *Mallard* for his love of ducks. Shumway's prior boat was a 6-meter named *Apache*, with which he took the Rochester Cup in 1953 (Yachting, September). Rounding the Mark, 100 years at Rochester Yacht Club (Stolze, 1977) lists *Mallard* with Shumway as the 1958 and 1959 winners of the Rochester Race, Barrows Race and Lake Ontario International. Frank would become commodore of the Rochester YC for 1975 and 1976. His father, Ritter, has been the commodore from 1951-53. *Mallard* was the second 32 to belong to the Rochester YC. The first, #5, had been there twenty years earlier when she became *Vitesse II*.

In 1960, Dave Warner wrote in "Lake Ontario Notes" (Yachting, August) that Shumway's *Mallard* won the Flag Officers Series in the Rochester YC cruising class,

beating the Pilot sloop *Madame* . *Madame* had won in 1959. In the 1960 Port Huron Mackinac Race, the 36<sup>th</sup> annual one, *Mallard* finished fourth in class B beating her sister *Apache*, the 1959 winner, while *Madame* was eighth in class D (Yachting September). A new clipping in the Rochester paper (The Democrat and Chronicle) about the race said that Shumway' s crew included his wife, Shirley, Vance Palmer, Helen and Joe Ingerson, John McDonald, Mike Doyle and Vern Newell. Shirley (05em) said that she had also raced aboard *Shady Lady* (#1) when Charlie Sturgess owned her. *Mallard* was sold when Frank and Shirley got married and bought a house, although they gave her a new engine -- a 1961 Westerbeke diesel. They enjoyed both racing and cruising aboard their NY32. They have had other boats named *Mallard* since and a J24 named *Quack*. Their son now runs the family business, Shumway Marine, in Rochester, a full service yard and exclusive distributors of Ideal 18 and Sonar sailboats.



Mallard (Shumway)



*Mallard* stayed at RYC when Shumway sold her to Jonathan C. Heinrich in 1962. Her name changed to *Fairwind*. Frank wrote (07em) that Jonathan bought #15 from Frank "after seeing her on a cradle on the marine railway at the Rochester Yacht Club

about to be launched. It was June 1962, I was meeting my banker for lunch, I admired the boat and he said 'buy her.' It is interesting to know that in 1953 I sold the 6 meter 'Apache' to Frank." Both Shumway and Heinrich have mentioned they were long time friends usually competing on the race course.

Stolze (RYC history, 1977) shows *Fairwind* the 1962 winner of the Founder's Cup and the Lake Ontario Trophy. Heinrich was RYC commodore in 1967 and 1968 which was after he had sold #15 to Thomas Hanson. In the office files at S&S was a memo dated August 1962 from Rod to Walter Schaub, Bill Mavrogiannis and Drake Sparkman with *Fairwind* the subject. It said that Jon Heinrich, of Heinrich Motors, Inc in Rochester, bought NY32 #15 and was interested in " a simple study of possible re-arrangement placing the galley aft with the companion-way from the cockpit and placing the stateroom where the galley is now located." A job number of #125-C19 was assigned, but it is not with the complete set of design plans at Mystic Seaport. The memo mentions a rectangular ice box, details of which Heinrich would supply. Across the bottom is written reference to a September memo to "hold up work pending Rod instructions." Heinrich (06 em) remembered giving thought to making interior changes, but never followed through with idea. Her interior was changed at some time, because it now resembles the design plan #125-42 done in 1946 for *Mustang* that adds two berths to the main cabin Heinrich, who at the time owned and operated an automobile dealership, said he decided to sell the boat to Hanson as he was "concerned about the age and future maintenance. In hind sight I should have kept her."

Among Skip Gmeiner's (owner #2) files was a letter from April 1964 officially welcoming Thomas Hanson of Grosse Point, MI, to the New York 32 Owner's Club. "While campaigning 'Dauntless II' in class C in past years you acquired a reputation of not only a tremendous racing record but of superb sportsmanship. We feel that your purchase of a NY 32 will help the class to be even greater." The Owner's Club form which Hanson returned gave her new name as *Dauntless III* with blue topsides and light blue deck with varnished hatches. Her interior color was white as was her boot. The engine was a 1961 Westerbeke model M-99. She had both bow and stern pulpits and a single head stay. It noted that her interior was remodeled to sleep seven and there was a fiberglass ice box.

*Dauntless III* placed sixth in the Port Huron Mackinac with five other 32s racing and first in her division in the Chicago Mackinac (Yachting, September 1964). George Van noted in his September "Detroit Jottings" column that in six regattas on Lake St. Clair *Apache* was first by a slight margin over *Dauntless III*. The other 32s fell in behind #15, finishing *Vitesse*, *Falcon II*, *Tigress* and *Gentian*. In June 1965 Gmiener wrote Bill Stuart, owner of #1 on Lake Ontario -- "If you want NY-15 back in your area we will send her prepaid! Last year she won the season championship here. In the first two races this year -- guess what? Two firsts! Tom Hanson, her owner, has been a top notch skipper around here in class C for years and now he is in our hair in class A!"

Tom Hanson recalled (per com '07) the 32 was beautiful to sail on Lake St. Clair, but hobby-horsed some in large waves in Lake Huron or Michigan. He did some very

comfortable cruising in Georgian Bay when the Mackinac Races were Huron and then Chicago. *Dauntless I* was a L-boat, *II* a Pilot, *III* the NY32 and *IV* a Cal 36. The crew aboard *Dauntless III* was built upon the crew of the prior boat. Hanson suggested that much of his racing success was due in part to the competitiveness of his crew. They practiced and worked hard to win by shaving seconds off tacking, reefing and other normal racing activities. Hanson said in the C class there were seven or eight Pilots and in the A class there were seven 32s, making for fine competitive racing in each class. He left the 32s because it was evident that the light displacement boats were the coming thing, although he felt that the IOR rule made all boats obsolete or "throw away boats." Don Snider, a broker for the Cal line, took *Dauntless III* in trade for *Dauntless IV*. Hanson said it was a "good deal as he gave him about what he had paid for her". Snider sold #15 to Bob Neesley, who used the insurance coverage from his *Falcon* fire loss to buy #15 in the spring of 1968. For more about this loss, please see the story for #6 of the class.

Bob Neesley was a Detroit YC member and successful schooner sailor. His *Kittywake* was reigning schooner champion of the Port Huron Mackinac, winning the Yerkes trophy in 1943 and 1944. Bob sold her in 1945 and bought *Malabar VI*, an Alden schooner. His daughter Penny (Breck) and son Spike helped with much information and memories about this and other of the NY32 class in the Detroit YC. Both daughter and son fondly remember the Alden schooner on which they and two other siblings were raised. Penny remembers her dad sitting on the schooner in the DYC well next to *Apache* (#2) saying he loved the 32s lines and claimed his next boat would be a 32. It was #6 of the class and then #15. Spike said that their dad started sailing in an ice boat and the family owned the skeeter *Waubun* (Indian for winter or east wind) built in 1926 for 50 years. Bob was fifty-nine when he bought *Sapphire*. The Neesley family are all descended from two engineering brothers named Neeslie who came from Germany to work on the railroad. Their name was changed in New York to Neesley, sounding more English, by immigration. Bob was a telegrapher and then went into the insurance business with his own company.



They renamed her *Sapphire*, as her brass plaque below decks from 1936 proclaimed her to be. She moved to the DYC well where Neesley's prior yachts had sat next to *Apache*. In the 1968 Port Huron Mackinac Race, *Sapphire* finished second and placed second in class A with the closest NY32 being *Vitesse II* in sixth. *Falcon* raced with a new owner, placing twenty-sixth (Yachting, September). George Van's article about this race said that except

"for a brief squall Sunday afternoon, there were no hard winds during the race .... The wind backed enough to knock off most of the kites when the Bs and As got underway, although some boats fell off towards the Michigan shore carrying spinnakers. This didn't pay off. It was a Mackinac Race in which it paid to harden up away from a direct course. The wind varied enough to allow skippers who did this to come back the same way on the other tack. *Hilaria* followed this procedure and so did *Sapphire*."

Spike Neesley allowed that *Sapphire* was a good light air boat. In light wind during this Mackinac she easily sailed through *Apache's* lee, but when the wind came up later, #2 walked over #15. If it blew enough for *Sapphire* to reef, *Apache* did not. He said they

could tell by the wind on a race day which of the boats would win. In the 1968 race, the crew included both sons, Spike and Buck, plus his schooner crew Leonard Jerome, Hal Eberly and Wilfred McGuire according to the DYC Main Sheet (August, 1968).



*Sapphire* was one of six sisters racing in the 1969 Port Huron Mackinac. She won the CCA class in the 1971 Bayview Mackinac Race (DYC Main Sheet, September 1971) beating Hanson's *Dauntless IV* by almost an hour and a half of elapsed time and five minutes on corrected. The crew for the race included son Spike and son-in-laws Doug Breck and Jeff Brett. Buck was racing his 12-meter *Northern Light* to a fifteenth in Class A. This CCA class was set up for the skippers who, for various reasons, objected to racing under the IOR rule. With her fast time, *Sapphire* also won the perpetual trophy for the 32s with *Goldbrick* (#1), *Falcon* (#6), *Tigress* (#4) and *Ballina* (#16) racing. *Apache* raced but ran aground. Neesley raced *Sapphire* in every Port Huron Mackinac until 1976, his 40<sup>th</sup> race, and then retired from racing and so did *Sapphire*.

"After Neesley died, Doug and Penny hung a "for sale" sign on their own sailboat and bought *Sapphire* from his estate." (DYC Main Sheet, July 1986). That was in 1981.

Penny and Doug's daughter, Laurie, wrote that her fourth Mackinac Race in 1986 was aboard *Sapphire*. That was the year of several 50<sup>th</sup> year celebrations for the class. The Brecks and Gmeiners traveled to Oyster Bay, NY, for that one meeting up with *Falcon*, *Raider*, *Vitesse* and *Salty*. For the 70<sup>th</sup> of the class, the family traveled to Castine, ME, and sailed aboard *Sapphire* again. Laurie did remember some local Saturday racing when she was young and tried to stay out of the way. She also mentioned that there was 'racing' against the other 32s – *Goldbrick*, *Apache* and *Night Heron* – when all were out for a nice afternoon sail. There was always the lovely cruising in the North Channel and Georgain Bay after a Mackinac race.

Penny wrote that she took on the bright work and painting not only of *Sapphire* but also her well neighbor at DYC, *Apache*. It took her five years to completely redo the below and above decks of both, but she loved doing it all. *Sapphire* was stored in the water for all but one winter while the Breck's owned her. During the winter, they would put salt in the bilge and saw no problems with her aluminum sistered floors. These were the reinforcing to the mast step that Neesley did early on his watch. Penny said it was easier to paint and varnish with the boats in the water where she found less dust being around. *Sapphire* was the subject of article in Sailing in November 1987, that also discussed the design, Rod and *Mustang*. Penny said they decided to sell #15 because the work had gotten too be too much for her -- 80 pounds vs *Sapphire*'s 24,000 --to keep up. Both Heinrich and Hanson mentioned having seen "their old boat" at DYC and were very impressed with her bright work and overall look.



Apache's interior looking forward. Photo Gmiener.com

Gmeiner's flag

In the fall of 2005 *Sapphire* moved to Maine with her present owners, Jeffery and Sheri Combs. Her mooring in Castine Harbor was with two others of the class -- *Falcon* and *Gentian*. -- where she retained her Sapphire blue color. For the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in August 2006, Penny and Doug, their daughter and grandchildren together with the Gmeiners (*Apache's* family) were aboard *Sapphire* with the Combs' for the racing. These three 32s were joined for the festivities by two others -- *Siren* (#20) and *Gaucha* (#5, x *Vitesse II*).



Sapphire with crew of Coombs, Becks and Gmeiners ready for the 2006 anniversary race in Castine

When the Coombs' bought *Sapphire*, they were looking for a yacht to enjoy cruising and day sailing together with their children, having outgrown their Herreshoff Buzzard's Bay 14. They wrote that she was a lovely boat, kept in nearly original condition. All of the original details of the interior design and trim were intact and beautifully restored and maintained. The style and quality of the joinery that Nevins produced was there, just as it was in 1936.

They began sailing out of Castine, ME and took part in the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gathering of the New York 32 class there. The family sailed through the season and enjoyed many weekends on *Sapphire* that summer. But *Sapphire* hadn't raced or been sailed hard in a number of years and some problems became evident. She was hauled out for storage at Rosebud Boat Company in Penobscot, ME, and a few planks were taken off for inspection and to locate a particularly nasty leak around the mast step. *Sapphire* had not had a major restoration yet in her life, and it became clear that such an

effort now was overdue. It is a tribute to excellent construction, caring owners, and continual submersion in cold, fresh water that she survived so well. But at this point, with hopes for a generation or two of cruising ahead, in salt water, it was time to bring her back to her full capabilities.

During the winter of 2006-2007, the interior was removed, the ballast keel was dropped, and work began to replace 35 pairs of frames and 35 floor timbers, plus all new floor and keel bolts. Once completed, plans were made to replace the horn timber, mast step and repair the original plywood interior bulkheads, which had delaminated at the edges. The hull was replanked as well.

She was relaunched in 2008 and enjoyed family cruises yearly since then. She spends time moored off Orr's Island for sails along the Maine coast. In 2017 *Sapphire* sailed down to Newport to watch the J-boats racing and enjoy sailing in that area. They welcomed aboard granddaughters of the first owner for a day of happy memories and new stories





Any questions, corrections, more information, please contact me – am happy to see all

Debbie Rogers, [rogsmu@gmail.com](mailto:rogsmu@gmail.com) or 401-539-2858 (2007 updated 2018)

Notes -- Mystic Coll. are among the Manuscript Collections at Mystic Seaport  
-- Levick photos are housed at The Mariners' Museum