

## CHICAGO YACHTING ASSOCIATION 2015

By Commodore Walter "Sonny" Lisowski



To serve as Commodore of the Chicago Yachting Association, one of the most prestigious organizations on the lakefront, is truly an honor. I have followed some of the finest boaters in Chicago who are all now known to the organization as CYA Past Commodores. I have the deepest respect for all of those who took up this challenge of leadership. I, too, will soon fall into their rank as CYA Past Commodore.



Chicago is a unique place to be a boater. The CYA, area yacht clubs and local maritime organizations are equally as unique. The huge volume of fresh water that is Lake Michigan can be a challenge. The CYA is dedicated to staying abreast of issues and information affecting this area of the Great Lakes.

The CYA is a melting pot of all that happens on Lake Michigan. When pertinent information is gathered, CYA passes it on to our members immediately. This has been a responsibility of the CYA for decades. Technology today enables us to distribute important information promptly. The CYA is the wheelhouse that helps deliver any and all information to CYA members and area boaters.

Safety on the water is first on our agenda. Working with the United States Coast Guard and other First Responders such as the Chicago Police Marine and Helicopter Unit and the Chicago Fire Department Marine and Dive Operations, CYA brings all important information to our membership. Let's not forget the most understaffed of all the First Responders, the Illinois Department of Conservation Police. They supply important information regarding Illinois laws and other related information. Our members appreciate receiving important marine information in a timely fashion.

While distributing emergency information takes priority, CYA also distributes information on local events of interest to the marine community. For example, the newest Chicago harbor at 31<sup>st</sup> Street has become a destination for concerts, sporting events and fun in the sun. Many of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street events have been family-friendly endeavors of our harbor management company, Westrec. Boating is a family sport, and the CYA would like to thank Westrec for their desire to be family friendly with the events at the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Harbor.

On another note, this past August 12 the CYA was involved with the Swim Across America organization. My boat, *Mirage* was the paramedic boat as 12 swimmers swam across Lake Michigan, taking turns in one hour legs. We started off at 31<sup>st</sup> Street Harbor and after 43 miles and 20 hours of endurance, the swimmers landed in Michiana, a beach on the Michigan and Indiana border. The swimmers raised over \$50,000 dollars for Rush University Cancer Center! Because the Chicago Yachting Association encompasses the yacht clubs

throughout the Chicago lakefront, it was easy for us to assist the Swim Across America organization with their boating needs for this event.

As Commodore of the CYA, I have been able to assist various marine organizations and yacht clubs. The CYA has many members like myself that individually donate their time to get involved with venues where we can hear first-hand what is happening in the Chicago marine community and in other boating areas around the country. We have a member of the CYA on the Chicago Harbor Safety Committee; another is past president of the National Boating Federation. We are also represented on the Mayor's Fishing Committee, The Judd Goldman Adaptive Sailing Foundation and the Chicago Christmas Ship Committee. CYA members also attend meetings for various city organizations from the Chicago Park District to the Chicago Sports Commission.

My experiences as Commodore of the Chicago Yachting Association have been very gratifying. I am proud of my service to the boaters of the Chicago area and am honored to have been instrumental in expanding CYA's outreach in the marine community. And now I look forward to joining the illustrious group of CYA Past Commodores.