



WESTLAKE YACHTING CLUB **A BREIF HISTORY**

The following was written by Past Commodore Henry Kendall, Historian for WYC.

Following 13 weekends of rain in 1940, twelve boat owners who rented individual dockage from the Westlake Hotel, agreed to band together as the Westlake Yachting Club. The rain had not dampened their enthusiasm, but had strengthened their desire to enjoy boating in spite of undesirable weather. At that time, no facilities were available except an old Marine Railway left from a shipyard that built wooden mine sweepers during World War I. After receiving a Club Charter, the number of docks was gradually expanded from the original twelve to the present number. Water and electricity were added and fencing and bulkheading followed. In 1954, ground was finally broken for the original Clubhouse, which was completed in 1956.

On January 22, 1959 disaster struck the Rocky River area and after the ice flood subsided, many shored boats were overturned and damaged and the Marine Railway was completely destroyed. Rather than replace this old equipment the system of a mobile hoist and a special boatwell was installed.

In 1965 the Club took another great step forward and constructed a roadway, down the 80 foot drop from Detroit Road to the Club area. Now members no longer had to climb or descend the 102 steps (known as "Cardiac Hill") unless they needed the exercise.

That facility was a tribute to the resourcefulness and industry of many of our members who gave unselfishly of their time and effort to build a better club for the future.

(Another source of information was collected from seasoned Westlake Yachting Club Members past and present.)

The Westlake Yachting Club was founded in 1942 and is one of the older yachting clubs in the state of Ohio. The club originated in the city of Rocky River and derived its name from the Westlake Hotel where membership meetings were originally held. The rope that forms the letter "W" on the club burgee is a representation of the Rocky River that runs adjacent to the location of the original meeting location. At no time in its history, has the Westlake Yachting Club been located in, or had any formal affiliation with the city of Westlake, Ohio.

The club has a long and proud history steeped in the traditions of public service, promoting clean water activities, safe boating education, the annual Blessing of the Fleet, ILYA and GCBA participation, just to name a few. Through the years, the club has actively participated in annual clean-ups of the rivers, waterways and coastal shoreline of Lake Erie. Members have conducted educational boating courses and participated with the US Coast Guard and US Power Squadrons in promoting safe boating classes. The club was also originally established as a social organization, which through the spirit of fellowship, comradery and fun could more effectively promote interests in safe boating.

In 1970's, the club lost its home in the Rocky River location. Membership participation waned and the club was in danger of becoming no more than a mere memory. Most of the membership disbanded with the exception of nine members, which kept the club alive by maintaining its charter status and held monthly meetings in Baratko's Restaurant basement in Lakewood. The club was essentially inactive (although maintained as an entity) for a period of approximately 8 to 9 years.

In 1988, the Westlake Yachting Club was invited by Del Spitzer to move to Lorain, Ohio and was provided with meeting space in the administration building at the old American Shipbuilding yard. The club occupied that space (where Nautical One was located until the building was demolished in 2003) until they relocated to the present location where the Wheelhouse Restaurant and meeting rooms currently reside. At the time of that last move, a working agreement was struck between Spitzer Marinas and the yachting club that active members would receive a 10% discount on their dock fees and we would pay Spitzer \$50.00 rental fee for each active member per year. Spitzer and the Westlake Yachting Club worked as a team to promote our club.

We continued being active in GCBA, ILYA, Waterway Cleanup, etc until about 1994 when we became more of a social club.

We have the longevity of 64 years as Westlake Yachting Club on the shores of Lake Erie.

When we moved to Spitzer we included “**On the Black River**” on our stationary and clothing. So everyone would know where we were located.

We have participated in many local events and had recognition from our local newspapers and groups.

ie: Donations to Spirit of America for the underprivileged children of Lorain County Schools.

- * Some of our members over the years have volunteered time to help children in the Spirit of America program.

- * Booth at Port Festival.

- * Organized Blessing of the Fleet on the Black River.

- * Booth with Spitzer at the IX Boat Show.

- * Booth at Spitzer dock parties to encourage membership and let them know who and where we are.

- * Hosted GCBA Rendezvous at our Club.

- * Held Safe Boating Classes.

- * Participation and Organizing Parade of Lights.