**Ensign Memories**

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The Galveston Bay breeze was a comfortable 10-12 knots firmly anchored in its afternoon southeast orientation. HYC harbor was alive with sailboats, large and small, leaving their slips or returning. Signal flags were keeping a regular tempo from the HYC yardarm and masthead vanes were pointing toward the wind. This was not my first visit to pier 10, home of the HYC Ensign fleet 2. Many times before,I had walked the pier to admire the Ensigns, wondering which one might be the best fit for me. On this afternoon, a single-handed, blue hulled Ensign returning to pier 10 caught my eye. Its stern mounted Yacht ensign was in full display as the skipper expertly headed her into the southeast breeze and coasted her into its slip. That spring afternoon in 2006, I easily imagined that I could be the one at her helm.

The elegant lines of the Ensign, its combination of sturdy fiberglass hull with bright-work coaming boards and comfortable 8’-long cockpit seemed a perfect answer to the question looming over me: what would be the best one-design class for a sailor with years of experience sailing Geary 18s, (a small centerboard racer)and the 22.5’ Star Class keelboat racing sloop? After sitting on top of these wet, racing machines, the opportunity to race and sit comfortably in-board with a back rest –yet still enjoy the thrill of racing-was very appealing.

For Paula (my wife) and me, the Ensign stood out as a perfect formula for our next sailboat. I could take part in a competitive fleet one day, and another day we could set out together, or with friends and family, on a comfortable day sail – an activity the Geary 18 and Star boat didn’t offer us. Once I expressed an interest in the HYC Ensign fleet, it wasn’t long before I met Dean and Kay Snider. They hosted us for a late afternoon, sunset sail on Little Oil., anchoring in Woozy Bay for cold drinks and a picnic dinner, a perfect setting for romancing the Ensign at HYC.

Not long after that inaugural cruise, I crewed on Little Oil many times and took careful notes on rigging, sail trimming and spinnaker evolutions. In the fall I began to take inventory of available Ensigns at HYC looking for the one that was a complete boat, without major renovation needs. After a long search, I finally found the next rendition of the other woman, #1029 in Dunedin, Florida. She was christened at HYC on April 22, 2007. Our christening prayer asked her to “please provide us safe sailing and spare us more large expenses along the way.” Since that day, she has brought us home safely from every race and passage, but she does warrant constant maintenance and tender care, as any good woman would.