

Lake G'ville Yacht Club: 80 years of summer fun

By Michael Kirkpatrick

The Lake Guntersville Yacht Club celebrates 80 years of fun on the lake this year. It was founded in 1940, just one year after the lake came up. A little history: Construction began on the Lake Wilson dam in 1918 to provide hydroelectric power for munitions production for WWI. The war was over before the dam was finished, but the project was considered a major success. When the depression hit, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was looking for meritorious projects to put the country back to work. So, a series of 9 dams were planned for the Tennessee River to provide hydroelectric power, flood control, dependable depth for commercial barge transportation, and economic development. The Guntersville Dam was approved by Congress in November of 1935, construction began on December of 1935, and it was completed in January of 1939. The dam created Lake Guntersville, the largest lake in the South, 67,900 acres, and arguably one of the finest boating lakes in the world.

Some local residents wanted to purchase land from TVA to build a boating club. They approached TVA about buying land on Buck Island where most of the people forming the club lived. TVA said "N. O. spells NO, but, you can buy land across the lake at Signal Point."

That wasn't a good location for the Buck Island residents, because they would have to drive across the two lane bridge, go through town, over the hill and through the woods to get to the club. One of the club members was local community leader Mr. Guy Burns.

When he heard that President Roosevelt would be in Chattanooga dedicating the newly completed Lake Chickamauga dam in September of 1940, he took a small group of future boat club members to attend the dedication. They arranged a private meeting with the President.

Now President Roosevelt was a boat guy. When he first got polio he bought a houseboat in Jacksonville, Florida,



Murry Beck and his sister Sarah Beck Grace are both history-making commodores of the Lake Guntersville Yacht Club. Murry was the youngest commodore in club history and Sarah Grace was the club's first female commodore.

and spent many months cruising and swimming in the warm Florida waters. The President listened to the boat club members pitch on why the club should be located at the edge of Buck Island vs Signal Point. He agreed with them and send a letter to TVA telling them where the new boat club would be. And so it was, in 1940 the Lake Guntersville Yacht Club was founded, a small open pavilion and some docks were built and the fun began.

For 80 years the Lake Guntersville Yacht Club has been a place where people who love boats gather to enjoy boating, social time, host weddings,

celebrate major holidays, and support the local community through charitable giving. The club is a big extended family where good times are shared.

The leader of the club is called the commodore. The first commodore was installed in 1940. There has been a new commodore each of the 80 years. The current commodore is Glenn Curen-ton, a retired aerospace executive from Huntsville. Some families have been active members for several generations. Murry Beck, his sister Sarah Beck Grace, and brother Reb Beck have followed in their father's footsteps as commodores. Their family joined the club 45 years

ago. Their father became commodore when they were children. Murry later became the youngest commodore in club history. Sarah became the first female commodore. The Becks' children and grandchildren visit and enjoy the club with them. That's 4 generations of a boating family that have spent some of their best times and created some of their best family memories on beautiful Lake Guntersville.

The Lake Guntersville Yacht Club has been an important part of the local boating community for 80 years. Congratulations on 80 years of boating fun and good times! Cheers to 80 more!