

FRANCIS 'FLYER' SANTOS  
90th BIRTHDAY!!!!



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

*Happy birthday! May your special day be filled  
with happy memories, bright hopes, and the love of  
family and friends.*

*With best wishes,*

*George Bush*

*Laura Bush*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20500



*Mr. Francis A. Santos  
94 Commercial Street  
Provincetown Massachusetts 02657*

02657/2016 |||

September 10, 2004

For me, Flyer and his home at 94 Commercial Street represents the best of old Provincetown. The door is always open and no matter how much time passes between visits, you walk in, settle down, and pick up the conversation where you left off at the last visit. The subjects are always interesting - the people we grew up with who made our town special and unique, the different boats that graced our harbor, and the everpresent politics.

The memory I treasure the most occurred less than a week before Flyer's wife passed away. She had some sewing for me so I stopped by one afternoon after work. She had her coffee frappe in hand and I was telling them stories about the police station, which is where I work. I explained how I always bring in a coffeecake, or something, on the day I count meter money and it looks like a shark feeding frenzy when I set the pan on the counter. Both of them started laughing so hard that Mrs. Santos almost dropped her frappe. We all had such a nice visit. That special memory is what living in a small community is all about. We care about one another and we do for one another. Flyer has done that all his life and I hope I can continue the tradition. I can think of no finer tribute to my friend.

Happy Birthday!

Patricia Benatti



FLYER - HAPPY 90TH AND MANY MORE.

I WONDER SOME TIMES WHAT THE ANSWER IS TO LONGEVITY. PERHAPS LIKE YOU SAY, IT'S BEING PART OF THE BREAD AND MOLASSES GANG. BUT THAT DOES NOT ALWAYS RING TRUE. SOME OF OUR MOLASSES CROWDD HAVE LONG GONE BEFORE US, MAYBE THE ANSWER LIES IN A WAY OF LIFE THAT YOU AND I LED IN OUR WORK AS BOAT BUILDERS. THE CAULKING OF GARBOARD SEAMS ON A FROZEN BEACH IN JANUARY, LYING ON A PIECE OF CANVAS. REPLACING PLANK ON A BOAT DURING LOW TIDE, RUSHING TO GET THE NEW ONE IN BEFORE THE TIDE CAME BACK. CRAWLING UNDER THE, "LUCY F" LYING ON THE BEACH, TO PUT BACK IN PLACE A PLANK THAT HAD DROPPED OUT.

CRAWLING UNDER THE "ELSIE HOWARD" TO  
STUFF GAKUM IN THE SEAMS THAT OPENED  
WHEN HER KEEL TWISTED WHILE ON THE  
BEACH FOR PAINTING. THE HAULING OF  
"AEROLITE" WHEN THE "HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES"  
CRANKING THE HAULING WINCH, TIRED OUT  
AND THE YARD CREW HAD TO FINISH THE JOB.  
TAKING OUT THE OLD "ATLAS ENGINE" FROM  
THE "FRANCES MARION" HAVING IT GO OVER  
THE SIDE, TAKING THE BOOM WITH IT.  
SALVAGING THE DRAGGER "QUEEN MARY" FROM  
THE WEST END BREAKWATER TAKING HER TO  
LANDS END MARINE WHARF TO AWAIT HAULING.  
HER OWNER ANTHONY RUSSELL SPENT TWO DAYS  
DEWATERING THE ENGINE. THE NEXT DAY A  
50 MPH. SOUTHEASTER CAME UP, SHE WAS  
POUNDED AND ROLLING SO BADLY WE HAD  
TO SINK HER TO SAVE HER. ALL ENGINE WORK  
HAD TO BE DONE OVER.

THERE ARE MANY MORE STORIES TO TELL  
BUT LET US WAIT TILL YOUR 100 TH.  
IN THE MEANTIME KEEP UP WITH THE BREAD &  
MOLASSES - KALE - FISH - SQUID - CABBAGE AND  
HOME BAKED BEANS, THE SPICE OF LIFE

Joe Andrews



September 11, 2004

Dear Flyer,

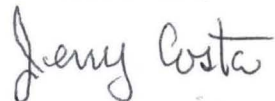
I was 17 years old when I first went to work for you. I remember thinking wow, this guy really knows his stuff! There were two men in my life whom I learned so much from—one was Capt. Ed Gaspa and the other was you, Flyer. Both of you taught me the meaning of hard work and honesty and the importance of family and friends. The two of you still influence my life today. Thank you and God bless you.

There are so many funny stories to tell about working at the boatyard. I remember how much you liked to talk! One day you were putting a rail on the Papa Joe. As you were talking, you would take out your ruler to measure and go inside to cut the wood. After three attempts, the rail was still too short. Then you proceeded to stop talking to get it right! Another memory was when we were putting in a new engine (I think it was on the Victory II), and the boom slowly fell down! I remember the days of steaming oak timbers, which would bend like rubber. Another funny story was when we were taking a propeller off of the Joan and Tom. We had wheel pullers on it, and Larry Meads put the torch on it to heat it, but it still wouldn't come off. We went in to have a coffee break, and while we were sitting down, we heard a loud noise, and it finally let go! Since I was thin and agile at that time, I often set up light weight staging. One day when you were on it, it collapsed, and you fell to the ground cursing me. Sorry about that, Flyer.

We worked hard at that time during the winter, spring, and fall, especially in the spring getting boats ready for the summer. The boats on the skids were the Inca, the Caroline, the Cee Jay, trap boats, Coast Guard boats, and so many others. I just wish that we had film showing the things that we did back then since many people wouldn't believe it.

I can't thank you enough, Flyer, for everything that you did for me. You are truly a remarkable man, who will always be remembered with deep respect. You are a bright light in my life. Congratulations on your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, and best wishes for many more.

Your Friend,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Costa". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Jerry Costa



THE THIRTY SECOND DIALOGUE (Believe it or not, thirty seconds.....)

34

My memoir about my son Michael's now ~~twenty-five~~ year relationship with the Santos family begins with Flyer who was then and still remains the dominant voice in our ever changing West End neighborhood. Although Flyer's presence is town-wide and well documented by his years in Town Hall, the building of the Rose Dorothea, and the West End Racing Club, his daily interactions with his West End constituency are legendary. The following thirty second dialogue must be the shortest one ever recorded.

At the time of my initial 'baptism' with the West End's leading orator, our family lived on West Vine Street. As with so many first time Provincetown vacationers, we spent a good part of our day straining to see the water and tripping up and down Commercial Street to the beach. Shortly after arriving, we gravitated to the area on the harbor where most of the neighborhood mothers and small children congregated. It mystified me that this beach was in the midst of a thriving boat rental business. Skiffs and sailboats driven and sailed by boys ranging in age from 7-10 years continuously pulled onto the beach usually at high speeds dodging kids without much indication that the boys were even aware of the swimmers, waders, or castle builders. Captain Jack's Wharf, the West End Parking Lot beach, the West End Racing Club were all passed over in favor of the small theater known as Flyer's Boat Rental.

One of the 'boat tenders', as this 'farmer' was to learn these boys were called, was Georgie Joseph, our neighbor on West Vine Street. My son Michael tagged along after Georgie and eventually gained Flyer's attention (That is another memoir entry). Being hired by Flyer as an apprentice tender boy remains a joyous memory for Michael twenty-four years later. What I heard from my first grader was that he was to be there by 7:30 am "READY TO WORK". His work day would begin with all or some of the following: bailing the skiffs and sailboats, filling the gas tanks for the skiffs and carrying them out to the skiffs, raising and later lowering the flag, sweeping the deck by the pilot house, and most importantly moving the skiffs and sailboats as the tides demanded. The rest of the hours lest you think we all should have been reported to SPCC were spent swimming, learning to rig the sailboats and then to sail, learning to start the motors and drive the skiffs, and best of all hanging out with the big boys especially Donald Thibeault who in the old Provincetown tradition of summertime romances married Michael's cousin Kathleen Carney. Within weeks, Michael had been elevated to a full time tender boy which entitled him to drive the skiffs to the offshore moorings that were rented by owners of larger boats. This additional responsibility meant that his daily wage of \$1.00 which Flyer's wife Irene doled out at the end of the day was augmented by the tips that the customers gave to the tender boys.

Why did I not believe that this might not be the best way for Michael and a few years later my son Russell, should spend their summers? Indeed, many of my friends were incredulous especially when they learned that both boys from the age of eight could be part of the West End Racing Club. Well, there was no choice. As was said in more innocent days, "Give a child a Jesuit education and you had a Catholic for life". Well, give Flyer a child before the age of eight and there was no chance that you could persuade him (there were few girl tenders) that he should give up his life of work for the more glamorous sailing club. After my first encounter with Flyer, I was as committed as they to a summer at Flyer's Boot Camp.

On the morning of this memorable first day, Michael was so anxious that he might be late for work that he rode his new bike. I, having some misgivings that this might not be as great as my seven year old thought, followed him on foot arriving in time to hear the following:

Flyer: "Is this your bike?"

The new bike lay sprawled on the weeds of the then vacant lot next to pilot house.

Michael: "Yes".

Flyer: "Did you buy this bike?"

A slightly bewildered Michael answered: "No."

Flyer: "Did your mother and father buy you this bike?"

Our naïve hero answers with a notably nervous voice, "Yes...."

Flyer: "And this is how you treat your bike?"

Michael has no answer.....

Flyer who has never needed an active partner in any discussion continued: "You expect me to let you work with my boats and this is how you treat property....."

Needless to say, Michael understood. His career as a boat tender was launched.

His mother who had not been noticed returned to West Vine Street and called Michael's dad reporting, "We ought to pay Irene the \$1.00 a day and see if there's an opening for the girls.

During the ensuing decades, Michael and Russell learned to sail, to drive all sizes of boats, to fish, to swim, to respect the water and to respect and love the experts such as Flyer and his sailing rival, Joe Andrews.

Years later, when Michael applied to Phillips Academy he was asked to write an essay about the person who most influenced his life.

Of course, the subject was Flyer!

Thank you, Flyer, for all the wonderful values you have given my sons and the friendship you have extended to the rest of the family.

Sheila LaMontagne



10 September 2009

Dear Flyer-

Happy 90th birthday - and many more!

Thank you for all you have done - and  
continue to do - to teach the children  
of Provincetown (and their parents!) how to  
sail - and for letting them learn the  
joys of working together, playing together,  
and tying knots that won't unravel -

The Alloran Family

Bob, Phyllis

John Robert

Philip



Happy Birthday Flyer!!!!

My fondest childhood memories are of summers in Provincetown and time spent on the water, in the water and near the water. Often those days included time at the beach across from your house with all the attendant activity of the boat rentals, the friendly teasing, rides back and forth in the skiffs, lazy shade under the old wharf, beachcombing for trinkets and shells at low tide and eating conkerinkles with a pin. Those were my 'good old days'!

I'll always be grateful to you and my father and all the others who had the concern and vision to bring the West End Racing Club into reality. Having an actual clubhouse and a schedule of activities and a whole group of kids to hang out with was heaven! Learning how to sail and be comfortable and safe in a boat was an excellent way to spend childhood days.

Your friendship meant a great deal to Larry and it is thanks to you and the 'old timers' at the boat yard who were all so generous with your knowledge and skills that my father became interested in not only sailing and racing but boat building as well. He much preferred the way of life in Provincetown and would have been only too glad to spend his days the way you have spent yours. What a great life!

Provincetown has changed enormously from those carefree days of the fifties and sixties, but it's nice to know that some things remain the same. There is only one Flyer Santos! Wishing you all the best for this birthday and many more!

Fondly,

Lauren Richmond

Bruce Deely



West End Racing Club - first summer



Cheryl Santos

Larry Richmond / Dick Santos





# KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

One of Provincetown's most colorful characters is coming up to his 84th birthday on September 10th, so I thought I would visit early and let you know a bit about Francis "Flyer" Santos. Flyer is a man of many passions, no half measures and blessed with good health, a loving family and a wonderful marriage. Flyer's wife, Irene, is always adding lively information to our chats.

One of Flyer's passions is the *Rose Dorothea*, an Indian Head Schooner 125 feet long, 25 foot beam built in 1905 in Essex Massachusetts. The *Rose Dorothea* is important to Provincetown and to Flyer Santos because in 1907 it won the Lipton Cup out of Provincetown in a dramatic mast-splitting fisherman's race. The Captain was Marion Perry. Flyer now owns what was once Marion Perry's home at 94 Commercial Street. Sir Thomas Lipton had minted and donated a handsome 3 foot stunning trophy which is housed in the Heritage Museum. Marion Perry, against all odds, even a broken mast, won the magnificent trophy for Provincetown at the Boston-Gloucester Race. Take a stroll over to the Heritage Museum to view this trophy and while you are there you will be able to see another magnificent sight—the *Rose Dorothea* built by Francis Flyer Santos over 8 loving years.

Flyer's labor and expertise was all volunteered. His helpers gave freely of their time. Their interest was not only in the *Rose Dorothea*, but in the privilege of working with Flyer Santos, a master boat builder of constant good company. The Historical Association as well as private donations financed the project. The Sail Club, a limited group of donors, paid the hefty sum to rig the

boat. Frank James helped with the labor of rigging the beautiful model. I have been a volunteer at the Heritage Museum since the day it opened, I am the only volunteer left from the original group. I cannot count the times that open-mouthed amazed tourists from all over the world are in awe of the unique model. "The work!" they say, "the dedication!" They get so carried away they wonder how we moved it in here or how we will move it out, until they realize that it was built in place.

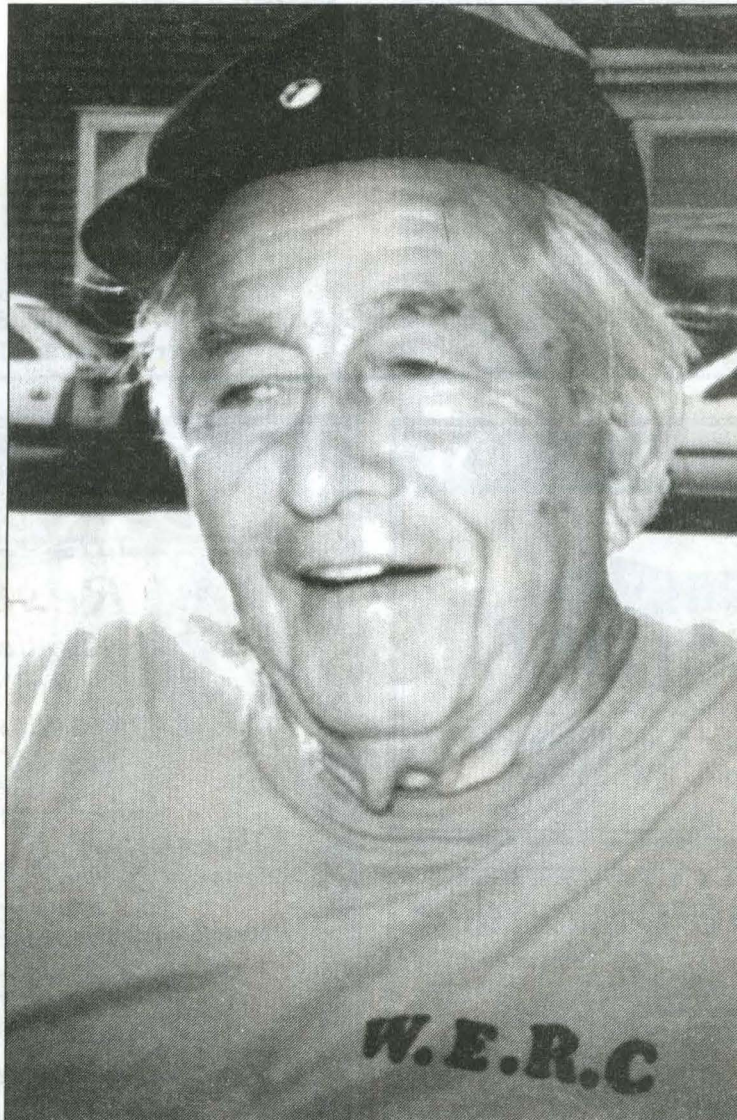
People from the world over and in all professions have marvelled at this work.

This was not the first model of the *Rose Dorothea* built by Flyer Santos. When Flyer was 21 years old, 63 years ago in 1935, he built a float for the Knights of Columbus to use in the Fourth of July Parade. That model was for a one-day parade—one day—and was first prize material then. But, the model of the *Rose Dorothea* at the Heritage Museum is permanent and will outlast us all.

Flyer could talk on about the *Rose Dorothea* for as long as ears could listen; he even named one of his six children after the vessel. But I wanted to know more about the life of Flyer, Provincetown born and bred.

Flyer was born on Conant Street in a great metal bed of green and blue and red on September 10, 1914. He was the 2nd of seven children born to Madeleine

and Joseph Peter Santos. Madeleine was first born and she lives in New Bedford. Josie or "Joe Windows" came after 'Flyer' and is the only deceased sibling. Elizabeth is in New Bedford, Priscilla in Michigan, Jimmy and Carol are both in Provincetown.





Flyer enjoyed his youth and "liked school very much until Freshman Year", the 1st year of the Depression. Despite hardship, Flyer continued and graduated in 1932. He knew that practical knowledge of work was more important to him and his family than Burke's "Conciliation of America" speech, but he managed to maintain both roles. His ongoing study of history and boat building combine the intellectual and the physical. Flyer is a dreamer and a realist at the same time. He realizes his dreams.

The struggle of the Depression put Flyer into several jobs. Each evening he sold needed items door to door. One item of this era was "Depression Taps" for shoes. They were rubber, cost 39 cents, and just like a patch on a tire, you could repair your ailing foot gear. Flyer created jobs: he sold fish, not now and then, but everyday. "That's how you build a business, everyday." Fish sold. He would go to the wharf and perform as a barker for Wong's Chinese Restaurant. Barking done, he would go off to Patrick's and work at the salt water taffy trade. The next stop was the boatyard where all the young lads of Provincetown would "work." "Mostly we scrapped among ourselves as to which one would row the people out to their boats. No motors then, all muscle power." The next shift was the paper route, the largest in Provincetown; not much money, but the most varied samplings of delicious pies. Flyer's favorite was Guinness' Restaurant next to the Red Inn, where Jimmy Crawley's grandmother arrayed ten different flavors daily. Nice to know that grandson Jimmy keeps up the proud tradition of expert cooking. It was during this era that Sheeney Marshall dubbed Flyer with his nickname, "Flying Machine." "I never did stay at one thing too long, always in motion, so Sheeney said 'You're like a flying machine!'" Flyer's next endeavor after high school was to open a restaurant, "Flyer's Square Deal" where Sal's Restaurant is now. He was 16 years old and ran it for 9 years, a completely solo endeavor. The war came and ended that and Flyer was off to Rhode Island for his war effort work.

From those rich years in his Provincetown boyhood, Flyer has two outstanding memories of adults who effected and shaped his life. His paternal grandmother, Emilia Santos, was a remarkable woman for many reasons. "She was a big woman, could carry a barrel of flour and a barrel of sugar up the steps, no help. She would lift her brothers. She had a swamp garden where Taffy & Lil Silva live now. She had two new houses built by Rogers who was one of the best and fanciest carpenters in town. You can see his earmarks all over your house, diamond shingles, those gutters, the way he cut them—58 Bradford and Ruth O'Donnell's house at 5 Atlantic Avenue. She paid for it all, cash, from taking in washing and ironing. He built on Commercial, too. See that porch with "Gaspa" scribed into it? Rogers went to California. People weren't ready for that fancy work here. My Grandmother rented rooms in your house—she was a tyrant. If you didn't keep your place clean, you were out. She had the face of a Prussian General. What a disciplinarian! The most remarkable thing was that she was blind 30 years or more and deaf. All that work she could do and she was blind. She owned all that land, sold down Winthrop Street to "Fake Cheda" to build a house next

to and behind Taffy's to "Sebula" to build. You used to sell to neighbors in those days."

"When I was 13 years old, I went to take care of her for 3 weeks. She had "pingtings", tiny chicks behind the stove keeping warm until old enough to go into the yard. She used to fold bills in a certain way so she knew exactly how much she was giving you to run an errand. She taught me to count and pray in Portuguese in 3 weeks—remarkable woman!"

Flyer's other influence was Furtado, the boat builder. His shop was where Sal's is now. When Flyer was finished selling door to door at night, he would go to Furtado's. He would stop to listen to the old timers' talk of whaling and fishing.. This is where Flyer was introduced to boat building. Furtado was from San Miguel, Azores. He couldn't read or write, but was a genius at his craft. Everybody was drawn to him. Norman Rockwell at his nervous 5'8", 110 pounds, was attracted to the boat yard in order to find a subject for his illustrations of Moby Dick. He found his subject in Garippa Silva, one of the original crew members of the *Rose Dorothea*. The studio was set up on West Vine and Tremont Streets where Wendy Willard lives now at 27 Tremont. Flyer got the mast and rigging and set it up for Garippa to pose. Billy Miller's widow had a telescope, old and brass. Flyer secured it for Rockwell to use as a prop for the sketches.

Flyer is always helping somebody. That "Flying Machine" energy provided him with the knowledge of details such as who would have an antique telescope. These peaceful days were left. Flyer was off to Bristol, R.I. for 5 years, 1940-45, to work at the world famous Hereschoff Boatyard building P.T. boats, mine sweepers and air, sea and rescue boats. Hereschoff is, of course, famous for his ever-popular, ever-durable ketch. For years, prior to the war, the boatyard catered to the Vanderbilts and all Cup defenders.

Flyer married Irene Maille in 1938. Irene is French, from New Bedford and is a skilled hairdresser. "Nice when you can have a wife who can help you." The couple had 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls. "That was done on purpose. I wanted a boy, a girl, a boy, a girl. It's like wood in India and Africa: if you cut it on the full moon, it won't work right. So girls are conceived on the waning of the moon, boys on the waxing. So, we had Jimmy, Janet, Francis John, 'Grassy', Patricia, Dorothea and Arthur Joe. It's all been a struggle, but I enjoy working. I taught all those kids to swim by the age of 4, and to row & sail by 6 or 7. I married a non-swimmer, but my kids needed to know, being brought up on the water. It was a struggle... Depression and war and big families, but it's like Abe Lincoln, 'All I am and hope to be I owe to my angel mother', and wife. My wife did the bookkeeping for the boatyard all those years. To my mother and my wife I owe everything.

"It's sad the rich are buying the working class out. If they offer you \$200,000.00 and you say 'no', they'll offer you \$400,000.00. It's all the same to them, but you're gone. I won't sell. I'll retain my boatyard. I'm here for good."

I went to Flyer to discuss the West End Racing Club—well, as you can read and imagine, that's another story. Happy 84th Birthday, Flyer.



2011

Dear Flyer,

I first of all want to thank you for all of the great opportunities that you have given to me over the years. I have learned more from you and the kids at the Club than any teacher in any classroom could ever teach me. You have always believed in me, and inspired me to be the best I could be, every day, in every way. For that, I am eternally grateful.

It is with great regret that I have to say this, but I will not be returning to work at the Club this summer. I have to leave for college in mid-August, and I wouldn't feel right reaping the benefits of a season on the water without having to do the hard work of hauling boats and oiling booms at the end of the season.

Every day I spent working at the club, I felt as if I were getting away with murder. I was getting paid to be on the water with a bunch of kids all day, there is nothing in the world better than that. I think that it would be selfish of me to stay on any longer; I have had the great opportunity to work this job for over three years, and loved every minute of it. There are many other deserving people who are just as qualified as I am, and it is time for me pass the tiller to someone else.

If it is alright with you, I would love nothing more when I have some free time to help out. Over the years, I have found that the place I feel most at home, whether I am on a small Sunfish or a US Navy warship, is on the water. I love the

smell of the salt air, the sound of the waves, and the feel of the deck moving beneath my feet.

You have no idea how much the Club has given to me, and how much it means to me. I need to thank you again, but no matter how much I thank you, it will never be enough. You, along with Ms. Avellar, Dan, and all of the instructors and kids that I've had the chance to work with over the years have made me into who I am today; and I like to think that I'm better today than I was nine years ago, when I first joined the Club. Thank you for everything.

Fair Winds and Following Seas,

*Philiz Allison*



FLYERS BOAT SHOP

1957

The pride of the Cape Cod boatyards,  
A must for all to see.  
Is Francis Flyers boatworks,  
In P-town by the sea.

Where boats are soon demolished,  
And confusion reigns supreme.  
And a crowd of brawling howling men,  
The like you've never seen.

He's hauled a lot of draggers,  
Lobstermen and trawlers too.  
But when he hauled the Patrol Boat,  
He bit off more than he could chew.

"Hey, Flyer, where's that scraper"  
"Hey, Flyer, where's that drill"  
"Hey, Flyer, where's the paint brush"  
"Hey, Flyer here's your bill".

We damn near drove him crazy,  
In the little time allowed.  
He was always in the middle,  
Of a milling yelling crowd.

He begged us not to bother him,  
And please leave him alone.  
He said he'd give us the damn boatyard,  
If we'd just let him go home.

So Flyer take it easy,  
Just relax and have no fear.  
We are coming back to see you,  
Twice a goddamn year.

OGG 83486

*written by Stomer*



## Flyer's Boat Shop

The pride of the Cape Cod boatyards,  
A must for all to see.  
Is Francis Flyers boatworks,  
In P-town by the sea.

Where boats are soon demolished,  
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66  
36 yrs old - Flyer.

Provincetown Yacht & Tennis Club

1950

July - August

Class 1

Francis Santos

Oh, the minstrels sing  
Of a P-town king  
Who points his Ranger high  
He loves to race  
And he sets the pace  
And he makes the good boat fly  
So raise your voice  
We all rejoice  
That Flyer sweeps July -- and August

Written by  
Dick Gerald



A MAN AND HIS BOAT

His world begins here in an empty cradle  
Holding the shape of hulls against the sky,  
Waiting to snuggle up a boat then slip it  
back to sea.

Rib-cage poppets rise above a maze of yard,  
Deliberate confusion of the trade  
Where sea gulls stalk at ease,  
And where he talks, talks of the sea.

The tools that lie in readiness, as if awake,  
Live by his summoning to make the dead oak  
quake beneath the quick and  
shivering sail.

Nothing he keeps sleeps,  
But speaks the dialect he taught them-  
Ship's talk, -to build a ship.

The man is true,  
Heart's keel beneath him,  
Balanced by work, he lives close to the wind.  
The ship he made, he launched, he loves, he sails.  
I cannot tell you more that needs my telling.

*For "Flyer" on his birthday, Sept. 10, 1970*

(Dedicated to "Flyer" Santos and the launching  
of his boat, the "Columbia.")

*June, 1969*

*Josephine Del Duca*