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UPPER BAY Boating

May 2017

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Upper Bay Boating

P.O. Box 353 • Forest Hill, MD 21050
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For advertising opportunities call Dave at:
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Welcome to the May edition of Upper Bay Boating

May is always a busy time for Upper Bay Boaters. Most of the fishing boats are already in the water for the spring fishing season, but typically less than half of the pleasure boats are in by the beginning of the month. With so many other things going on in your life, sometimes getting the boat ready takes a back burner. That is until the Memorial Day weekend creeps up, then it's always a mad dash to get her in the water for the remainder of the boaters.

Part of the preparation is to ensure it a safe summer out on the bay. Before you splash your boat, make sure everything is up to date. Please look for a Coast Guard Safety inspection day with your local auxiliary. These trained volunteers will let you know if you have everything you need aboard, and if the boat is ready as well. I think it is a very good idea to do this annually. Displaying the safety decal lets the marine police know your boat adheres to their standards. Also, take a few hours to attend the Sgt. Marvin T. Haw IV Boating Safety Day on June 3. It is in Wilson Point Park on Middle River. You will experience a fun filled day full of demonstrations and exhibits, all designed to make you a safer boater. There is a full page ad in this issue with more information.

This year we added a new column, ask a Marine Technician. This is great opportunity to

get an answer to a boating problem you may have. Whether you are a DIY boater, or prefer to have a professional work on your boat, you can pick up some great tips from Kevin. Just like dealing with a doctor, sometimes it is better to get a second opinion on what's ailing your boat.



Don't forget to "Like" us on Facebook, and post some of your fun filled days out on the water. Boating is the original social network. I always found it more enjoyable to spend a day out on the water, than anything else that was happening on land. Looking at some of the local Facebook pages such as boating, fishing, kayaking, etc. on the upper bay sure enforces that thought. And don't forget to share some of your fun with the readers of this magazine; we are always looking for some pictures of you all out on the water. Just send them to dave@upperbayboating.com

Lastly, if you enjoy the magazine and website, please let the advertisers know. After all, it is our loyal advertisers whom keep these pages coming out each month. Just say: "I saw you in Upper Bay Boating."

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May on the Chesapeake Bay

By Wendy Gilbert *Features Editor*

My daily news feed is full of harsh weather news. Hurricanes, mud slides, forest fires and the like. Disasters bombard my senses. Even harsher murder and mayhem makes watching or reading the news a difficult way to start the day. And thanks to all kinds of alerts, the news day never ends. Some folks have chosen to avoid the discomfort by simply ignoring it, but after a couple of decades in the newspaper business, that will never ever be my way. I just must know what's going on. My husband and I chat about the news (the good and the bad) over dinner or on our evening walk. We don't have the same interests, so there are always a few minor stories that we each have missed. We don't follow the same news outlets either, so it's fun to compare how the same story is presented. But no matter how you present it, some of it's dead depressing.

After a hard day's news, sometimes I just need to be rocked. Preferably on a boat. I understand April in Paris, but give me May on the Chesapeake Bay!

The need to be physically close to the water is hard-wired for some of us.

People all over the world cluster around the coastlines and not just because of proximity to ports and therefore



supplies as our junior high Social Studies teacher told us.

Science, hard or soft, proves it repeatedly. Some of us are just water people. Living near a couple of popular boat ramps I see them all year 'round.

They are the first to reach the ramp on a barely tolerable day in the winter and seldom bother to winterize at all. Thus, their craft are usually small enough to fit in a garage or a backyard shed. They are tempted to flirt with small craft advisories, but generally play it safe.

This morning anglers with their violently colored bass boats sped down the Elk Neck Monte Carlo, desperate to take to the water. Speeding aside, I'd appreciate it if they'd secure their trailers a bit better. Those boats swing wildly on the sharp turns.

Classic cases of getting there fast and taking it slow.

Soon the moorings will be set in the harbor and the season will begin in earnest. I hope everyone enjoys a safe and happy boating season this year. Some like it hot, but for me I'll take May on the Chesapeake Bay any day!

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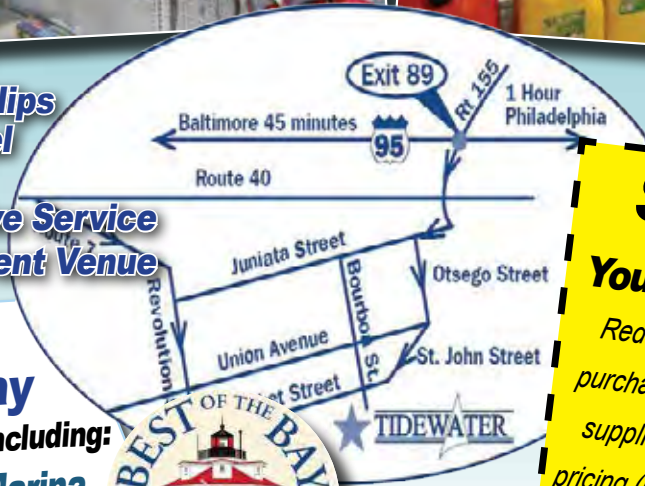
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Hurakons in 2017

By **Wendy Gilbert**- Features Editor

We remember them all by name. Hazel, Agnes, Gloria, Floyd, Isabel and Sandy.

The word hurricane doesn't even need to proceed them. The first one I remember was Agnes in 1972. My sister and I were safely tucked away at Peterkin Conference Center for a couple of weeks of summer camp. At first, the incredible rain storms were downright interesting. The boys took dramatic soapy showers under the downspouts – providing us girls with some serious giggles. And most of the outdoor activities were cancelled. Instead of Field Day and softball, we watched movies and attended dances – again providing the girls with serious giggles. It was the early 70s after all.

After a few days, the sun came out and so did the snakes! Harmless black snakes and creepy copperheads had been swept down the mountain and were sunning themselves everywhere!

As incredible as it seemed, we were also facing a water shortage. The camp's reservoir was so full of rocks and debris from the storm, it required rationing until someone could clear it. That was not a chore anyone tried to delegate to campers or hippie counselors.

We were happy to leave the snakes and the camp behind for another year, knowing all would be back to normal next year.

All the long way home, we saw the damage Agnes had created. Hastily painted signs on buildings were everywhere. The waterlines were still visible, but the paint line assured us that we would always remember just how high the water went.

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season is supposed to be slightly below average regarding activity. The hurricane researchers predict 11 named storms during the upcoming season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30.

Colorado State University (long known as the experts in this field) expects four of the 11 named storms will become hurricanes, with two likely to reach major hurricane status. Major hurricanes are category 3, 4 and 5 storms on the Saffir/Simpson scale. They have maximum sustained winds of at least 111 mph.

Last year's hurricane season in the upper Chesapeake Bay was, thankfully, unremarkable.

Hurricane Hermine was the only storm of note that remotely threatened the area. She drifted out to sea and will be forgotten soon enough.

Per the Farmer's Almanac, not your typical source for cyclone information, notes that Native Americans referred to these storms at "Hurakons" after "a great spirit who commanded the east wind."

Spanish explorers adopted the word and then began giving hurricanes the names of patron saints on whose feast days the storms occurred. Later, hurricanes were identified simply by their longitude and latitude.

Move forward a century or two and an Australian weatherman enters the hurricane naming game. He is the first person to name a tropical storm after a woman.

During World War II, meteorologists in the U.S. military named storms after their girlfriends and wives.

The first storm in the Atlantic Ocean named for a man (recently) was Hurricane Bob.

Hurricanes names are selected by the World Meteorological Organization. Every six years, the list of names begins again. However, the names of especially destructive hurricanes are usually retired

Wendy Gilbert



Hurricane Names 2017

Arlene	Harvey	Ophelia
Bret	Irma	Philippe
Cindy	Jose	Rina
Don	Katia	Sean
Emily	Lee	Tammy
Franklin	Maria	Vince
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Looking Back

Publisher **Dave Bielecki** started his boat advertising career way back in the day at **Inner Harbor East Marina** in Baltimore. He was happy to re-unite with these friends many years later after starting **Upper Bay Boating**. **Bill Flour** was the General Manager, and **Millie** the Office Manager. (photo by Tom Scilipoti)



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Captain for a Day

By Captain Mark Galasso
Tuna the Tide Charter Service

This spring I had the opportunity to work a number of fishing shows and meetings throughout Maryland and Pennsylvania. In some I did fishing seminars, and others I worked the booth for my rod building gurus at Shore Tackle and Custom Rods. It's always fun to meet new people and exchange fishing and boating knowledge. The fact is, I probably learn more than I teach.

This year I talked to a lot of people who recently purchased boats. Some for the first time and some who have owned boats for 50 years. In those conversations a theme (and an idea) emerged. Not a new idea but one that seemed like an opportunity. A number of people asked me if I could do a charter, but on their boat not mine. I thought about it for a while and decided "why not?" The big boys do it. Custom offshore boat builders offer captains to teach new boat owners how to operate their new vessels. Why not set up a program for smaller boat owners. I know a number of captains that help out individuals that buy boats from associated dealers and I hear good things about it from both sides.

So in our case, this is what we do. The client calls and wants to set up a charter. We pick a time and date that works. Prior to that we meet at one of my boats. During this initial no cost consultation we determine what the client wants to get out of the day. I also get a handle on their experience level and the boat they intend on using. In some cases the boat owner is a seasoned veteran of boating. They want to learn how to maximize the fishing potential of their boat. How do they set it up for trolling? What equip-

ment is needed for casting and jigging? Is my depth finder tuned properly to best locate fish? And if so where and how do I start looking?

In some cases I find the boat owner is brand new to boating. Part of the day might be devoted to boat handling, safety and rules of the road. Since time is limited I often refer these people to their local Sail and

Power Squadron or Coast Guard Auxiliary for further more extensive teaching. We also discuss where to find basic information on boating and fishing. For example seasons, regulations and other information is easy to look up on Maryland DNR's excellent website.

The bottom line is it speeds up the learning curve and makes for more educated boaters and fisherman. And from what I have seen this leads to happier safer days on the water. At this point I should add a disclaimer. This is not an add to drum up more charters. There are quite a few captains out there who would do the same thing. All you have to do is ask! Even on straight fishing charters I always ask what my clients hope to get out of the day. Sometimes I'm shocked by the answer. Fishing might be far down the list. My recommendation would be for any potential charter client to talk to the captain well in advance and get on the same page prior to leaving the dock. You might want to sight see and

your captain might be totally focused on catching fish. Or you might want to learn a specific area that your captain might feel is his "Secret Spot". I'm sure there are a few hand-held GPS units on the Bay bottom due to this misunderstanding!



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Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association

by Tim Campbell

The Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association was started in 1981 by a small group of recreational fishermen concerned with improving the striped bass fishery in the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately, rockfish were becoming threatened by over-harvesting. It seems improvements in fishing techniques to catch striped bass both commercially and recreationally, surpassed the ability of the famous fish to sustain itself. And so, in the early 1980's, MSSA leaders rallied members to urge legislators in Annapolis to support a total ban on harvesting striped bass. At the time, some corners of the fishing community considered this measure extreme. Undaunted, MSSA organized two pivotal protest marches in the state capital. Finally, after much debate a striped bass moratorium was imposed. It lasted from mid-1984 to 1990.

During those lean years, many bay anglers targeted other species such as big slammer bluefish. Some avid anglers traveled out of state in search of better fishing opportunities. Passions flared and public pressure to reopen striped bass fishing was immense. Following numerous scientific studies by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the fishery was reopened in 1990. MD DNR enacted strict regulations including size limits and shorter seasons. Many folks believed the moratorium was lifted too soon. Striped bass weren't considered fully recovered until 1995. To this day, striped bass are one of the most regulated fish in the Chesapeake Bay.

Besides pushing for the striped bass moratorium, other noteworthy MSSA achievements include supporting legislation to eliminate unreasonable bridge tolls and boat slip tax-

es; working to create more artificial reefs, limits to menhaden harvesting, opposition to dredging Man O' War Shoal, and opposing the opening of oyster sanctuaries. Rockfish as a gamefish was also a goal for the MSSA, but the worthy idea never took hold. Frank Holden, MSSA President, explained the reason Rockfish/Gamefish status never came to pass is, "because rockfish came back so well." Apparently, striped bass were a victim of their own success.

"The mission of MSSA is to provide a unified voice to preserve and protect the fisheries resources, the rights of recreational fishermen, and the opportunity to support activities that enhance the marine environment."

MSSA is perhaps best known for its popular tournament series and Captain of the Year contest. Billed as the "World's Largest Striped Bass Tournament", the 34th Annual Championship on the Chesapeake is scheduled for May 5 to 7, 2017. The 28th Annual Tuna-ment dubbed, "The People's Mid Atlantic Tuna Tournament" is set for June 16 to 18, 2017. The 7th Annual Mid Atlantic Flounder Tournament is September 16 & 17, 2017. And the 25th Annual Chesapeake Bay Fall Classic is slated for November 17 to 19, 2017. Competition is open to all members.

Currently there are 14 chapters with about 7500 members. Meetings are typically held once a month, feature expert speakers and are free and open to the public. MSSA promotes youth fishing programs and some chapters sponsor free fishing events for kids during the summer. MSSA chapter meetings are a great place to learn more about fishing and meet new friends.

Frank often says, "MSSA is much like any other organization in that you get out of it what you put into it."

Go to www.mssa.net or
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for more information.



Dave Bielecki, Author

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Back River Restoration Committee Inc.

On March 31st Back River Restoration Committee, Inc. (BRRC) held their Guest Bartender Night at RiverWatch Restaurant. The event was a great success, raising funds to go towards the purchase of an excavator to pull abandoned boats and other large items that are a safety, pollution and eyesore issue.

Various elected and governmental officials, business owners as well as several Maryland Yacht Club Commodores volunteered their time behind the bar, selling raffle tickets, being auctioned off to the crowd and promoting BRRC to help raise funds for the cleanup efforts of Back River and the Chesapeake Bay. The venue was packed with people out to support cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay while enjoying a great evening with friends. Thanks to all who participated in one way or another.



The Guest Bartender Night was followed up with a cleanup on Sunday, April 2nd. at the Essex Park and Ride. Nearly 75 volunteers, ranging from toddlers to those in their eighties showed up to join in the BRRC - Project Clean Stream (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay) Cleanup. Volunteers picked up trash along the shorelines of Back River and Eastern Avenue for 3 hours, resulting in 4,720 pounds of trash collected and kept out of the Chesapeake Bay.

BRRC held their Spring General Meeting in April with a turnout of nearly 100 people. Guest speakers included Katrina Jones, Outreach Coordinator for Harbor Development at the Maryland Port Administration and Dave Sikorski, Executive Director of Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland. Both speakers were very interesting and informative, sharing information about current dredging projects

and initiatives as well as current legislative issues about oysters and CCA's oyster reef ball program. BRRC is looking forward to working closer with CCA and setting up dates for volunteers to come out to build oyster reef balls to create artificial oyster reefs in the bay.

BRRC is currently recruiting college Environmental students for their summer internship program. Students will gain hands on experience in their field of study and see the problems our waterways are facing. If you or someone you know would like to know more about this program, please contact BRRC.

Upcoming events include a cleanup on Grays Road in Sparrows Point on April 29th, where we will need as many volunteers as possible. Please visit BRRC at the Baltimore County Marine Safety Day on June 3rd at Wilson Point and Rockin' on the River on June 4th at Conrad's Ruth Villa in Bowley's Quarters. Other events include our Golf Tournament in June, our Rockfish Tournament in September and Shrimp feast to follow in the fall.

Please visit the BRRC website at www.savebackriver.org or email savebackriver@gmail.com for more information about any of our upcoming events or how you can get involved in protecting the future of Back River and the Chesapeake Bay.





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BRRC Spring Membership Meeting Notes by Tim Campbell

The Back River Restoration Committee held their spring membership meeting on April 11, 2017 at the Hawks Club located at 430 Riverside Rd. in Essex. There were about 100 people in attendance to hear a full slate of speakers. After everyone stood, faced the flag and said the Pledge of Allegiance, Karen Wynn, BRRC Executive Director acknowledged the BRRC Board of Directors. Then, everyone clapped as the newly chartered Boy Scouts of America Venturing Crew #726 was introduced. Among other things, these young men and women, ages 14 to 20, will be making reef balls and learning more about the Chesapeake Bay at Weaver's Marine.

Delegate Bob Long told the audience the Abandoned Boat Bill passed. Sam Weaver, President of BRRC was instrumental in bringing attention to this issue. Councilman Todd Crandell summarized the progress of the Tradeport Atlantic Project and briefly discussed the neighborhood rat and trash problem and what steps are being considered. As part of an eight week pilot program, trash pick-up may go back to two days a week.

Katrina Jones, Outreach Coordinator for Harbor Development gave an overview of dredging projects by the Maryland Port Administration in a thought-provoking power point presentation. She explained the importance of the Port of Baltimore

Dredged Material Management Program and why dredging is necessary. The history of Hart-Miller Island, The Poplar Island Restoration Project and the Masonville Story were especially interesting.

Dave Sikorski, Executive Director of the Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland presented next. He explained that the mission of CCA-MD is about recreational anglers working to conserve, promote and enhance Maryland's marine resources. Dave talked about oyster management, the reef ball program, The Maryland Aquatic Reef Initiative, the Man O' War Shoal issue and the Building Conservation Trust in an informative slide show.

Finally, Sam Weaver, President of Back River Restoration Committee presented a power point show about what BRRC is doing to clean up the community. He shared many pictures of once trashy areas which are now clean thanks to the work of BRRC members and volunteers.

To date, almost three million pounds of trash including countless cans, bottles, dead trees and old tires have been removed by BRRC.

The meeting started at 7:00 pm and went to 9:30 pm. Free soft drinks, hot dogs, chips, pretzels and cookies were available.

Go to www.savebackriver.org for more information.





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WALKER BAY DINGHIES ON DISPLAY

A Boater's Boater

by Dick Greenwood

As I was driving home from their house in Rock Hall, it occurred to me that I hadn't asked the Perry's a key question. Thanking the heavens for technology; I pulled over to the side of the road, got out my cell phone, and called. Millie answered.

"Millie," I began, "I'm sorry to bother you, but I forgot to ask you something."

"Yes," she replied, a trace of laughter in her voice, "what is it?"

"Millie, why did you guys sell the Marinette?"

Now she laughed out loud. "We were downsizing, and everything was up for grabs."

I thanked her and continued my drive.

Millie and Jeff Perry are an interesting pair. Jeff has been boating for over 56 years. They've been boating together for 48 years. They both belong to the Coast Guard Auxiliary. In every way you can imagine, they're partners and boaters. I first had contact with Millie when I was writing for Nor'Easter and she wrote to the editor about an article I had written. I can't remember if she liked the article or not, but I remember that I responded to her comment and we proceeded to become friends. One time, after I showed my curiosity about their aluminum, 32-foot Marinette, husband Jeff even took me out for a day on the Elk River and C&D Canal.

Fast-forward 10-years or so and you see Jeff and Millie selling their home in the Allentown, PA, area and relocating to Rock Hall. They were downsizing. A piece of that process involved selling their 32-foot boat and buying a 19-foot Chaparral bowrider. Now they trailer to Rock Hall Harbor or Long Cove Landing to launch.

Sitting at their kitchen table I asked them if they'd had any misgivings about selling their Marinette. They didn't hesitate for a moment, both smiling and telling me that it was an easy decision and that the only worry they had had was over how their granddaughters would respond.

"The girls loved to spend nights on the boat," Millie says, "so we were concerned that selling it would dampen their enthusiasm for spending time with us."

"Turned out to be no problem," Jeff adds. "And it's going to get better when I show them what it's like to be pulled along on a tube."

The girls are 15, 14, and 11-years old; but Jeff and Millie have it under control. Under control is how they roll. Talking with them could be a competitive event. They both have lots to say and a willingness to share information. That's why I forgot to ask them the question about selling their Marinette.

"So, why Rock Hall," I ask.

"We lived in the Allentown area for 36 years, but we always had our boat on the Chesapeake. This is a great area, we found a house we love, and it just made sense," Jeff explains. "I have my workshop behind the house, and this gives me all the motivation I need."

Mention of his workshop causes him to light up. "Let me show it to you."

We go outside where his 24-foot RV is parked, and he stops to tell me about the motor home and the places they



Jeff Perry, a Boater's Boater.

visit. Then we go into the small but well equipped shop he's set up. Tools of every sort are in evidence. I remember that Jeff is a retired Mechanical Engineer, so it makes perfect sense that he's interested in building and repairing things.

It turns out that the "things" Jeff builds and repairs are also boating related. "I've been doing some repair work on Mercury outboards," he tells me, "and I'm building a hydroplane, a 12-footer. That's the biggest hydroplane I've ever built."

My mouth is agape by this time. Jeff seems to be able to build or fix just about anything that goes near the water, and that fixing and building are what he fills his life with. It's this thought that keeps resonating in our conversation.

For a couple of years now I've been mulling over an idea planted in my head by Tom Sassaman, my friend and a boater par excellence who was the first to alert me to the trend toward smaller boats. Three or four years later, my friend, Chuck Pellegrini reinforced the idea when he put his 32-foot express cruiser up for sale and bought a 20-foot center console boat. But Tom's comments were aimed at an explanation for where the first time boat buyer was going.

Now there's a new wrinkle: experienced boaters, boaters who don't want the maintenance headaches and the expenses that go with larger boats, are turning to smaller boats. They aren't giving up on boating; Jeff still intends to travel around the Bay and visit old haunts, but he'll do it in shorter trips. Chuck will still run down to Kent Narrows for lunch, but he'll be home for dinner.

Talking with the Perry's and Pellegrini's, both now Rock Hall, small-boat owners dispels the notion that boating and longevity are mutually exclusive activities. It isn't age that takes us out of our boats; it's an unwillingness to downsize.

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Know Before the Tow

Breaking down on the water is stressful for everyone. Don't let calling for a tow ruin your day. Captain Dale Plummer of TowBoatUS Annapolis, Baltimore, Middle River shared some basic do's and don'ts to help you be better prepared and make your tow worry-free.

DO: SECURE YOUR BOAT As soon as you realize you are going to need towing assistance, secure your boat. Take down your sails. Be sure to have lights on at night. Turn off unnecessary equipment to preserve batteries and anchor whenever possible. Anchoring gives you control over your boat which frees you up to spend time on the radio or phone coordinating the tow. Get everyone into their PFDs and continue to monitor your surroundings.

DO: KNOW WHO AND HOW TO CALL

And, be prepared with your towing membership information. BoatUS has a great cell phone app that when used to make the phone call sends your membership information and current lat/long directly to BoatUS dispatchers. If you are not a member of an on-the-water towing service, be prepared to discuss estimated charges and to provide payment upfront. Towing estimates are based on hourly fees from the time the Captain leaves the dock until he returns. Hourly charges increase after dark or during small-craft warnings. An average tow costs \$700 per incident.

"The worst part of my job is when I hand over a big bill to a boater for a tow because they don't have a towing membership. It could have been free," Plummer said.

DO: KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GPS coordinates are preferable but a strong, clear physical description of which body of water you are on with nearby marker number, creek or cove name is helpful as well. Mention local landmarks that you are near such as a waterfront restaurant, park, or marina not regional ones such as bridges or smoke stacks that can be seen for miles out on the water. Nobody likes to wait for a tow. Knowing where you are, helps the towboat captain find you and get you home faster.

DON'T: PREPARE A TOWLINE Once on scene, the towboat captain will provide specialty tow lines and, if needed, fenders. They will determine the appropriate attachment points which may not be those you'd expect.



"Get your lines and fenders out and have them ready when you're approaching the dock," Plummer said, "but keep cleats free and the boat's sides clear of fenders until the captain tells you otherwise." Sailboat owners should have sails down when the towboat arrives. The Captain will direct you if he needs assistance with lines or maneuvering. Otherwise, stay seated within the vessel during the tow.

DO: FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

A talented towing captain will be able to tow and put your boat safely in its slip without much help. Follow directions and keep your passengers seated during docking. Remind everyone to keep hands and fingers away from the towboat, dock, and lines. Stay aboard the boat and wait for the towboat captain to tell you to tie off or hang fenders before doing so.



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"We want to make it easier for marinas, waterfront organizations or other groups that serve boaters to join this life saving program and help us find the best loaner sites possible," said BoatUS Foundation Outreach Manager Alanna Keating.

Approved locations will receive a kit containing 12 child life jackets with sizes from infant to youth as well as signage and a local publicity kit. Loaner host sites simply need to track usage with an easy sign-out system and provide the Foundation with periodic



feedback. The best loaner sites will be accessible to the boating public, serve a large boating population and be located in areas without current loaner programs.

Boaters typically borrow a life jacket for an afternoon or weekend. "We know kids grow fast and sometimes boaters need a correctly-sized jacket for a younger guest," added Keating. There is no charge for the use of life jackets and the BoatUS Foundation replenishes the supply of jackets as wear-and-tear takes its toll.

The program gives tens of thousands of parents and boaters peace of mind each year when they head out on the water, and since 1997, three children's lives have been saved by a BoatUS Foundation loaner life jacket. To apply to become a site or find a site near you, go to BoatUS.org/life-jacket-loaner

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On the Waterfront

with George Waters

photo by Donna Bedell

Looking to Escape from the Screw-Up Department of Life

This is why a man should never tidy up. Ever.

"I was just trying to help" will likely be carved on my tombstone, right under "I didn't mean to screw it up." There are so many ways for a man to screw up, especially if he is alive. With my track record, even dead I will probably manage to screw up moldering. Witness the following recent exchange:

Wife (looking at the sideboard): "Have you seen my receipt? I need it to return this ugly lipstick."

Me: "The receipt that was right there?"

Wife: "Yees. I left the lipstick on top of it so I could return it."

Me: "I remember throwing away a receipt. I thought it was one of mine. I was just trying to tidy up."

Wife: "Tidy up? You never throw ANYthing away. You have piles and piles of stuff you don't throw away." (She points to five or 20 damning piles around the room.) "The one thing you 'tidy up' is mine?"

Me: "I don't think the lipstick is that ugly."

I would have had a stronger position if there had not been coins, paper clips, a name tag and several other receipts still on the sideboard next to the lipstick. I would have had a stronger position if I had feigned an attack by a fruit bat and then run out the front door promising to continue the conversation later, like maybe after a few weeks of rabies shots.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, "As man liveth, so he screweth uppeth." I have thrown away receipts I needed too, on occasion, but I did not try that out on her as a comeback. Years of living as a human man gives you a certain sense of what will assuage a woman's ire, and pointing out your proven consistency in the screwup department is not it.

So she was not getting her seven bucks back for her tube of Peony Pucker. (From the Color Fwap! line of cosmetics: "Color so head-turningly bold, men will walk right into plate glass windows...Fwap!")

Since the universe is not fair when it comes to lips, my wife's preferred shade was no longer for sale locally, and clearly Pucker was no replacement. As penance, I ordered her favorite color, Sassy Shenanigans or something, online. It isn't even lipstick, it's like a lip felt pen. A felt pen! For lips!

I will never understand why society feels it has to make perfectly good things better.



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Filet Fun!

By Montana Grant

New fish recipes are always fun to try. Here is one with a salsa flair, that is tasty, healthy, and easy.

Fresh fish is just one of the great benefits of being married to a fisherman. Limits of filets end up in the freezer, and are soon forgotten. Eventually, you find someone to give the surplus of fish too, or you have a fish fry party. Frying fish takes more cleanup, the house smells fishy for a few days, and fried foods are not as healthy.

This recipe is great at home or at the campsite. Treat the filets like they are ribs, and prepare a Rub. I use spray oil to keep things less messy. The rubbed filets can be grilled, or baked, for 10-12 minutes. Thicker, and larger filets will take longer.

While the filets are baking, prepare your topping. Avocados may seem like a yuppie food, but they are healthy and full of flavor. The lime, cilantro, cut up tomatoes and a dash of Old Bay seasoning, blend together perfectly.

I was not expecting anything special when I first tried this new recipe. My first bite proved otherwise. This was one of the best fish dishes that I have ever tasted. It works great on most species of fish. Even my "old fried fish and tartar sauce friends" were surprised.

Fresh fish filets are best for this recipe. Once you give this a try, you will discover more freezer space, and feel a need to fish more often! This is perfect for a Fish Friday or anytime.



Sunfish Sailing

Sunfish sailing is back in Annapolis! While there are a lot of people who have Sunfish, organized Sunfish sailing has been absent from the Annapolis area for quite some time. About two years ago some interested sailors started bringing their Sunfish together, and as of this year there is now a sanctioned Sunfish Class fleet, #705, sailing in Annapolis.

The Annapolis Sunfish are generally out Tuesday nights in Annapolis Harbor for the Tuesday Evening Sailing One Design (TESOD) races put on by the Severn Sailing Association (SSA) from May to September. The group's experience ranges from self-confessed duffers to very experienced and accomplished sailors. As with so many other Sunfish fleets, one of the beauties is that regardless of the various experience levels everyone has fun.

Probably the biggest reason everyone so enjoys themselves is because how fun a Sunfish is to rig and sail. With literally hundreds of thousands of Sunfish built since the 1950s, most people have seen one if not also sailed one. But for those who have not, a Sunfish has the hull, a tiller and rudder, a dagger board, a mast and sail, a main sheet and a halyard for raising the sail. Really, it is that simple. Often when sailors of a different sort of boat see me rig my Sunfish and cast off in only a couple of minutes they incredulously ask, 'Is that it?' Yup, it is that simple. Also, at just under 14' and around 120 lbs a Sunfish can easily be put on top of a car or a small trailer.

By the way, that bright yellow Sunfish I sail is the same one on which my Dad taught me to sail in 1969 -- yes, they can be a very durable boat. Because of that durability along with how many Sunfish have been made there are always some for sale. Put 'Sunfish for sale' in your favorite search engine and up will pop a number of choices. The quality of used Sunfish will vary from pretty darn good to 'no, really, just throw it away.' One in



descent shape, sometimes even including a trailer, can be had for \$1-2K. One other nice little benefit: SSA's TESOD races are free to all comers.

If you are itching to give a Sunfish a try, know there is now a local fleet which will be glad to have you. If you already have one and want to come join us, all the better. Either way we look forward to sailing with you!

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The UNITED STATES COAST GUARD:

They Work So We Can Play

By L. Alan Keene

Upper Bay boaters, along with recreational boaters from around the country, dodged the proverbial bullet last month as proposed cuts to the US Coast Guard's 2018 budget were re-considered. The Federal Office of Management and Budget announced early in March that a 12 percent cut of 1.3 billion dollars from the 10.3 billion dollar

USCG budget would be part of the President's fiscal proposal for 2018. The effect of such a massive cut would have had far reaching implications. Its effect on search and rescue services, that we boaters take for granted, could have been dramatic.

As a Chesapeake Bay boater for more than 20 years, there has never been a moment, after shoving off from the dock, that I didn't feel secure in knowing that if ANY type of emergency arose on my boat that day, the US Coast Guard would be there to coordinate my rescue. A pan-pan or mayday call over my VHF radio (or a cell phone call to 911) would bring an immediate and appropriate response, offering me and my crew whatever aid we needed to keep us from further harm. The security that comes with that knowledge has enhanced my boating experience, as I'm sure it has for most of the other 20 million recreational boaters who ply our nation's waters.

To paraphrase an old adage, "you don't really appreciate what you have until you lose it." Well, fortunately that didn't happen, but a decrease in search and rescue personnel and equipment could have been one of the outcomes, had the budget cuts become law. The USCG has many diverse missions and "maritime search and rescue" is just a small part.

As an arm of the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard screens an average of 360 vessels a day for potential security threats to our nation's ports, boarding an average of 24 of those ships for close inspection. Drug seizures of over 1,000 pounds are made on the average day by the USCG, in addition to the interdiction of 17 illegal migrants who attempt to enter the US via boat.



The Coast Guard continually patrols our coastline, rivers, bays, lakes, canals and waterways that are critical in allowing the movement of 8.7 billion dollars' worth of goods to enter and leave our ports daily.

In addition, maritime safety inspections, conserva-

tion inspections, escorts of high capacity passenger ships, commercial casualty investigations, pollution incident investigations and property protection duties ALMOST fill out their day. What's left is what allowing you and me to head back out onto the waters of the Upper Bay with the confidence that somebody's "got our back" if we need them. Be it extreme weather, collision, serious illness, rig failure, sinking, fire, man overboard or any number of potential emergencies that can befall a recreational boater, we know that the Coast Guard will be there, along with local Fire Department rescue teams, to provide the help we need. They're experts at it. They save 10 lives everyday.... lives that would be lost without them.

Then, what can we do to say "thank you" to the men and women of the United States Coast Guard for making our sport so much safer and more enjoyable? We can start by raising a hand as that familiar orange and silver 25-footer zips by. While our wave may not be returned by the busy crew, our show of respect is always appreciated. Secondly, we can say thanks by contacting our legislators and letting them know how very important the services of the USCG are to us and how any cuts in their budget could have a dramatic effect on the safety of our sport.

And finally, the most important thing we can do to say thank you to the fine men and women of the United States Coast Guard is to make their job easier and more enjoyable by wearing a PFD whenever our boat leaves the dock or anchor. As they've preached to us for half a century, life jackets save lives. Wear yours this season and help ensure a happier outcome for everyone!

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Ask a Marine Technician

By Kevin Ladenheim
Mallard Marine Services



Tip of the Month: For stuck fasteners, I think Kroil is the king of penetrants. It's not sold in stores, you have to order it direct at www.kanolabs.com.

Correction: Last month I recommended Ideal Noalox® as an electrical wire anti-oxidant because it is available at local hardware stores. Noalox® is 15-20% zinc powder by weight and isn't the best choice. I would stick with Sanchem NO-OX-ID® instead.

Q. Any tips for changing my raw water impeller?

A. I think what makes the job a lot more pleasant is the proper tools. Many sources mention using a pair of screwdrivers or various pliers to grip and pull the impeller out. Those approaches might work but proper tools make the job less stressful.

When you have good access to the pump, an impeller puller is a great tool to have.

Both Sea-Dog Line and Jabsco make widely available impeller pullers. I called Sea-Dog Line to check and the diameters in Figure 1 for their pullers are the outer diameters of the entire impeller, fin tip to fin tip.

To use the puller, insert the two fingers between the impeller fins, landing roughly halfway down the height of the impeller hub. Tighten the two side knobs evenly, until the fingers have a good grip (you'll develop a feel). Then tighten the center knob against the pump shaft to remove the impeller.

Inspect the impeller for cracks and missing pieces. A subtle failure to watch for is the bond of the rubber to the impeller bushing can break and allow the impeller to spin on the bushing. If the impeller looks great but there is no cooling water, this might be the problem. Also check for intake blockages.

If there are missing impeller pieces, they are not far away. They don't dissolve, but instead collect, blocking cooling packages. They are jammed up somewhere downstream of the pump, for example at a heat exchanger or transmission oil cooler. You have to get those pieces out!

If engine or transmission oil temperature has been running hot, the impeller pieces might be the problem.

Many impellers and pumps use a parallel keyway and square keystack to lock the impeller and pump shaft so they rotate together. Other pumps instead use a Woodruff key. The Woodruff key is just as easy to remove but harder to replace. The Woodruff key looks like a nickel cut in half to create a semi-circle. The impeller will have a square slot to receive the flat side of the semi-circle. The shaft will have a milled semi-circular slot to accept the curved side of the key.

Any misalignment of the impeller slot on the key causes it to sew-saw right out of the slot when you attempt to seat the impeller. The way to prevent this is to make a mark on the circular face of the pump shaft, where the impeller puller pressed, in line with the key slot. Shine a light down the impeller bore and line its square slot up with the Woodruff key and press it home by hand. I like to use Dow Corning 111 o-ring grease to help hold the key in the slot if needed. I would avoid using any old grease to prevent problems with rubber incompatibility.

In some situations, a great custom plier based tool sold by Bay Shore Marine (bayshoremarineengines.com) in Annapolis would be a great help. Look for it under *Featured Items* at the bottom of their home page. They have an excellent video showing how to use it.

Remember to order a new gasket or o-ring to fit your pump with your new impeller if it's not included.

Some brands of pump have OEM impeller kits that include a small packet of glycerin to lube the impeller for the first start up when the pump will be dry. You can buy larger bottles of glycerin at pharmacies. It's great for the impeller lubrication as well as a big help in getting hoses onto fittings.

Sea-Dog Line	660040-1	2-1/4" to 2-9/16"
	660020-1	3-1/16" to 5"
Jabsco	50070-0040	1-9/16" to 2-9/16"
	50070-0080	1-9/16" to 2-1/4"
	50070-0200	2-9/16" to 4-5/8"

Figure 1 – Impeller Puller Models

Please send questions and comments to ubbasktech@gmail.com. All emails will be answered.



2nd Annual Sgt. Marvin T. Haw IV Boating Safety Day

Please join the Baltimore County Police Marine Unit along with the Essex Precinct, Natural Resources Police, the United States Coast Guard, and many other Agencies for our 2nd Annual Boating Safety Day!

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Fishing Boat First Aid

By Montana Grant

Fishing, crabbing, and boating time are priceless. Nothing is worse than when you head out on the water and your motor dies, equipment fails, and things go south. The best way to prevent problems is to think ahead. Even with the best preparation and maintenance plans, things can go wrong. At least you will learn how to prevent, and fix them.

Outboard motors are the most expensive accessory on your boat. Give this the most attention. Most people figure that if it is running, that is good enough. If you fish with these folks, bring a paddle. You should have your outboard motor looked at, by a real mechanic, every 2-3 years.

Mechanics will check for propeller wear, lubricants, grease points, and issues that will prevent you from having fun. Fishing line and trash always gets tangled behind the prop. If you do not clear it, the line will cut your shaft seals which will drench your lower unit. Repairs are expensive.

If your boat has steering cables, check for the stretch in the cables. If your motor snaps into gear instead of sliding into gear, it will damage the lower unit. Adjustment is so important and is easily tuned by a mechanic. A great boat mechanic is harder to find than a good auto mechanic. When you find one, treat them well.

Fuel is a simple thing, but many guys try to burn old, and water contaminated, gas. Most fuel becomes contaminated in 30 days. Aged fuel will work but, fresh fuel improves performance. Use the fuel prescribed by your owner's manual.

Electronics start with the battery. Keep your battery fully charged. Don't buy a cheapo battery. Make sure that the terminals are clean, and that your connections are tight. Loose connections mean lost energy, and excessive corrosion. Clean and reconnect all contact points. Now seal them with a silicon product, like Goop, to protect them.

Trailers are also often overlooked. Tires, wiring, and bearings deserve attention. Re-grease the bearings every year. Check your wiring before the next trip. There is nothing worse than trying to fix wiring at 5 a.m., while your, half asleep, friends are waiting.

Bearing Buddies are great but require a marine grade, waterproof, wheel bearing grease. Never overfill these bearings or hub covers. Each hub is designed with an opening to contain excess grease. If you add too much, the hubs back seals will be under too much pressure, and will leak.

If your trailer has sat for a long time, the grease has settled into the bottom of the bearing. Storing your trailer on blocks will allow you to occasionally spin the wheels during the winter. Moisture can settle in the bottom of the bearings, and will cause pitting.

Make sure that the lug nuts are tight! I annually rotate my tires to make sure I address every bolt. Also, tighten any, and every other bolt, on the trailer, including the hitch stand. Don't forget to check the tow ball bolt on the truck hitch. The truck connections, wiring, and chains are also a must check.



Lug rollers may also need some love. If they appear damaged, replace them. This will reduce wear on the boat and make launching, and retrieval, much smoother. Pull the rollers off and clean them with Armor All for protection and smoothness. While you are in the area, check all welds on the trailer, and the support boards, or rails.

Trailer lights are always a pain. Weak or inoperable lights are preventable. Check the coupler on the trailer tongue, and make sure it is clean, and provides a good ground. Check your ground, White wire, to make sure it is connected, with a new, and clean screw. A quick way to check your lights is to turn on the vehicles parking lights, and flashers. This will show you both running lights and turn signal operation. Then check your brake lights. If they do not work, fix them!

Now it is time for a test drive! Do not wait until the opening day of fishing or crab season, to run your boat. Confidence will be greatly improved if you test all of your equipment, ahead of time.

Avoid submerging hot running lights. Unplug the lights before you untie your boat straps. This will allow time for the lights to cool. Stop launching your boat when the lower unit of your outboard is submerged. Now test start the motor. If you wait until the boat is separated from the trailer. You will have to waste more time.

Once the motor is running, back the trailer up, and free your boat. You may think that these steps are too routine. Just remember that you will be the guy stuck at the boat ramp while I am cruising onto the bay for another day of fun fishing, in my properly maintained craft!

Cruise safe and smooth!

For more Montana Grant visit his website at www.montanagrantsfishing.com.



SETTIN' the HOOK

with Dave Kilby

2017 Bass Tournament Season Underway... Finally!

Although the Upper Chesapeake Bay region experienced a milder-than-usual winter, the early days of spring were not so kind to local tournament bass anglers. In fact, January, February, and early March offered better weather and also better fishing, it seems.

Several tournament organizations were forced to cancel their scheduled early tournaments due to high winds, heavy rains, or the only snowstorm to visit our area.

So when the annual Mariner Point Open tournament landed on a relatively calm day in March, the launching ramp at Anchor Marina in North East, Maryland looked like I-95 on a holiday.

Largemouth bass at this time of year are in the pre-spawn stage and tough to catch, especially with the recent weather conditions and temperature fluctuations. However, this is the time of year to put some huge bass in the boat. Care must be taken, however, to release these big bass as most are females who are looking to spawn.

The Mariner Point Open boasted some of the top anglers in the 5-state area. With that kind of starpower on hand it was impossible to pick a favorite. Virtually any team entered in this tournament was capable of finishing on top.

Although only two teams were able to produce a 5-bass limit, several largemouth bass over 5 pounds were carried to the scales. Each and every fish that was weighed in was released alive back into the North East River.

Maryland's John Hansen and Steve Getz finished in 3rd place with just 2 bass, but they totaled just under 10 pounds. Who wouldn't want a couple of 5 pounders in the livewell, especially if it put some cash in your pocket?

Mike Sentore and Sean McKee finished in second place with a total of 5 bass that weighed 16.9 pounds. This New Jersey duo can always be found at or near the top of every event they enter.

Rick Dilenno and Dave McCulloch, who hail from New Jersey and Pennsylvania respectively were crowned champions with a stellar catch of 5 bass weighing 22.9 pounds. They also laid claim to the big bass of the tournament, a beautiful bass that weighed 6.15 pounds. Congratulations!

Also, kudos to Rich vonNordeck who recently landed a HUGE largemouth bass weighing just under 10 pounds while practicing for a tournament on the Upper Bay.

If you would like a sponsorship package, please email me at greatfuturesbass@gmail.com.



John and Steve



Rick and Dave



Sean and Mike

Aw Rats!

by Brenda Dawson

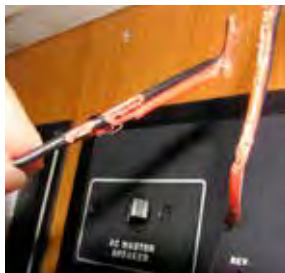


Dinner adrift is something Doug and I do often during the week. Late afternoon, we arrive at the boat, drive upwind into Georgian Bay, turn off the motors and drift while enjoying BBQ dinner and watching the sun set as the breeze slowly drifts us back to the harbor.

We've enjoyed this habit for years, but on this day, one thing was different. We hadn't been to the boat for a couple of weeks because of an injury. Right away, we noticed The GPS didn't work. It wasn't a big deal at the time and we thought we'd look after it later—probably the fuse—Wrong!

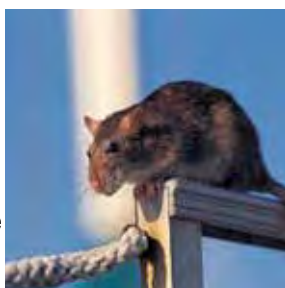
A Real Mess!

The next time we arrived at the boat, we were greeted by a real mess. It was now obvious why the GPS quit. Evidence of a rodent was all around us—a hole in the carpet, holes in the headliner and bulkheads, chewed up crackers—foil bags and all. Even hard plastic containers that we thought would protect nuts were eaten along with the contents. It even ate two speakers in the vee berth. And the worst was the smell of urine and droppings all over. Above the headliner and under the helm many wires were chewed including the GPS—no wonder it didn't work. What a mess!



Rats Aboard

After much investigation and discussion, we concluded that we must have a rat on board. Carefully following the instructions of the sticky new rat traps, we only caught some fur. Then, we took the advice of friends and boaters and left an appetizing lump of peanut butter on a huge rat trap—the good old fashioned kind. The next day, we just opened the car door in the parking lot and Terry, a fellow boater, announced that he had seen a rat in the trap on our cockpit floor. “Disgusting” he said. We agreed, but were pleased to have caught it. Success at last! Two days later, we caught a second rat—even more disgusting.



Why Us?

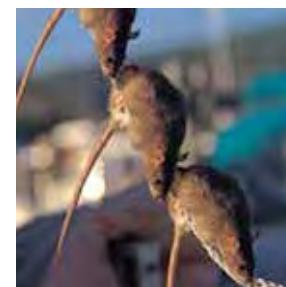
Now for the cleanup and repair—lots of time and money. Why us? Why would a rat pick our boat out of hundreds in the harbor? We know from experience at the family marina years ago that mice,

rats, muskrats, weasels, mink etc. don't belong in a marina for this very reason and we used to take great precautions to keep them out and get rid of them immediately if they did get in. It is well known in the marine industry that muskrats love eating the boot on OMC out-drives on the pre-1985 models. The result? The boat sinks. They also enjoy trim tab hoses disabling your levelers and spewing hydraulic fluid into the environment. We don't have the answer yet. In our case, we didn't have much food on board. The only food they got was crackers and peanuts. I guess that is why they started eating the boat.



Easy Boarding

It's easy for them to climb up the lines and through the canvas hole on any boat. Once inside, they travel through holes in and around the cockpit, where the deck overlaps the cockpit liner. From there, the channels where the wires and cables run, become their roadways.



Sailboats are a little more immune because the cockpits are designed to be left uncovered and water tight. As a result, it is much more difficult for an animal to get in—but not impossible if it smells good.

Prevention

Prevention is better than cure, so it is important for marinas to keep ahead of these animals. Boaters should also take precautions and store food in glass jars and regularly dispose of garbage. Do all you can to discourage them from setting up camp in your marina. Believe me. You don't want one on your boat. Trust me.



By Brenda Dawson, Author, FirstMate 101
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Classic Corner

Antique & Classic Boat Festival

Don't miss the Antique & Classic Boat Festival & the Arts at Navy Point in St. Michael's, Md. June 16, 17, 18, 2017. Here are some scenes from last year's show, taken by George Hazzard



Live Aboard

by Don and Gail Elwell

Moving Day

Moving is always such a treat.

Yes, that was sarcasm in case you missed it.

Be it house to house or boat to boat, moving is a pain in the butt. You get to wonder such imponderables as "where did all this stuff COME from?" and "what is this and why did we save it?" among other favorites. Yep, it's a joy.

For those of you who have followed this column or our blog (thefloatingempire.com)

you know that we're leaving our beloved barrel shantyboat Floating Empire, and moving aboard a new vessel, now dubbed Tesla's Revenge, an electrically driven solar boat with which we want to do some traveling. We'd been afraid that we would have to demolish our shantyboat, but, happily, a new owner has emerged to give Empire the TLC she needs and she'll be off on a series of new adventures, and that pleases us.

But that leaves us downsizing yet again. I kid my wife

that we're going to keep doing this until we can fit our possessions into a single briefcase. She tells me that will just make it easier when we move to Mars. Sail-

boats—even former ones—mercifully have a lot of stowage space, albeit often hard to access, but the eternal waltz of "what goes where?" is proceeding apace here aboard.

The new vessel is coming along. . . . clumsily . . . as we're having to continue rebuilding and refitting the boat while we're living on her. Tesla's Revenge is a former Cal 2-29. We've shifted over the Empire's battery bank (all

Deconstructing the Galley aboard Floating Empire



eight of them), and will be pulling the mast (the mast supports have some issues), building a pilot house over the cockpit, and equipping her with a 5KW motor and 1000 watts of solar panels. We've reworked the galley and installed a composting head, added a new pump water system and new wiring, and re-installed the teak (which had all been removed) which was rather like doing a 3000 piece jigsaw puzzle without a reference picture. Now we're finishing making the craft seaworthy.

Then the real fun begins, probably about midsummer.

As we reflect on Floating Empire and our last three years on the water, it's amazing to think what a wonderful choice moving aboard proved

to be: the adventures had, friends made, and all surrounded by the beauty and grace of the water. We wouldn't have had it any other way.

So look, in future episodes for a new masthead photo of our new livaboard, along with new adventures on the water. We'll leave you with one last photo of the Empire, one of the best things we ever accomplished.

**Don and Gail Elwell
And first Cat
Magellan
Aboard the EV
"Tesla's Revenge"**



Old tools, new home



One of the challenges is repurposing artwork and storage into new uses.

www.thefloatingempire.com

lifeartwater.blogspot.com

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Boat Restoration Made Easier

with a reference from an original sales brochure-

An **Old Boat Brochure** is most helpful to boaters who have acquired or purchased an older boat that needs to be renovated. In some cases the boat has been changed and altered from the original, or neglected. Seeing what it looked like new, as a guide, boaters are able to restore their new treasure.

Michael B from NY purchased a 34-ft Marine Trader Trawler 1982, but could not find any information to help him restore it. Then, he found www.OldBoatBrochures.com and was thrilled with the information in the original brochure, pictured below. Like vintage vehicles, they are a window into time, where enthusiasts can see just the way they were.

Brochures available at www.OldBoatBrochures.com

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Chronicles of the Chesapeake Bay Voyagers-Part 2

Elk River Park to USCG Station Still Pond

Saturday, April 5, 2014

Paddlers began arriving early at the old United States Coast Guard Station on Still Pond. This was to be the takeout point for the first leg of our journey down the Chesapeake. We met at USCG Still Pond to leave vehicles for the drive back to Elk River after the paddle. Kayaks and gear were quickly redistributed between cars. By 9:30 a.m., three shuttle vehicles loaded with gear and boats for 11 kayakers were on the road bound for a launch on the upper Elk River.

Still Pond Neck Road, which leads into the USCG Station, dead-ends at the station itself. To get there you must drive through the town of Still Pond, and of course, this means that you must leave on the same road. The speed limit drops from 50 to 25 mph just as you round the bend entering Still pond. As our little convoy entered Still Pond village, we were merrily greeted by two county sheriffs, who had obviously seen us driving in. With blue light flashing, they fell in behind us as we passed. We pulled to the side of the road whereupon the sheriffs cited us with speeding citations. Although the rear vehicle's driver claimed that he had maintained his speed below the limit upon entering town, the citing officer stated that he was ticketing all three vehicles because we "were traveling together." What a great way to begin a paddle.

As we drove towards Elk Neck, we listened to NOAA issue a small craft warning. A region of high pressure was moving in. It would bring with it 20-25 mph sustained winds and gusts up to 35 mph. At Elk River Landing, the NOAA prediction appeared accurate. Skies were clear, the air temperature was 45°F, and the water temperature about the same; 45-46° F. All kayakers had brought with them either a dry suit or similar apparel. We had all paddled in cold conditions before.

Given the NOAA warning, we had to decide whether or not to continue with the paddle. We decided to continue, reasoning that the shoreline of this NE to SW river would provide us with protection from westerly winds. In retrospect, our rationale was partly correct. What we failed to fully appreciate was the delay our speeding violations would have on our arrival times at various points along our route; especially the waters that lie below the confluence of the Chesapeake and Delaware canal and the Elk river.

Above Welch Point we paddled against a weak ½ knot current. The winds were quartering, but the waves manageable. Bob is a fast paddler. We call him the energizer bunny, because he is always out front of us scouting the waters ahead. At Oldfield Point several events were combining to change water conditions there. Our delay put our arrival at Oldfield at a time when currents from the C&D Canal would be high and met head-on by westerly winds as the Elk River turns into them. Bob radioed back that we should find a rest stop and wait there to discuss the conditions that lie ahead. Beyond Oldfield we would encounter large, chaotic waves. White caps were building as 25-35 mph winds blew across the long fetch on Piney Creek Cove. We were halfway to our destination, but the question raised was should we return to Elk Neck Park, or should we continue on?

After some discussion, we decided to continue. We divided into two, smaller units. Strong paddlers would sweep the wings and rear of each unit. Less experienced paddlers would paddle inside the unit, ensuring that should anyone capsize, they could be rescued quickly. Fortunately, this did not happen. However, at this point Murphy stepped up. One paddler missed her group's departure and ended up paddling the cove alone. Another paddler's kayak was not loaded properly and it weathercocked severely. Dropping the skeg worsened the effect. If left alone, the paddler would end up stranded on the opposite shore. Bob, this group's leader, quickly attached his tow line to bow of the uncontrollable kayak and he and three other paddlers swapped off tows as they pulled their fellow paddler across the cove. Once on the opposite shore the high bluffs forming the west bank again provided a wind shadow.

The crossing had taken much of our energy. In one case, the strenuous exercise in conjunction with dehydration caused one paddler to develop strong stomach cramps. He had to be taken ashore until they subsided.

The beach below Elk Neck State Park was a welcome sight. We had heated cabins reserved for all of our party. Most paddlers unloaded their gear and began hauling it uphill to where the cabins and hot showers were located. Some hardy souls preferred to remain on the beach and camp. As night fell, we ate our dinners and drank our evening wine under a clear and star-filled sky. We all realized that a very good day for paddling lie ahead of us.



Sunday, April 6, 2014

On Sunday morning the winds were calm and the skies clear and cool. A high had set in. Paddling the glassy blue waters of the Elk will be pure pleasure today, I thought. After breakfast, we reloaded the kayaks and set off for Still Pond. Looking downstream we could see Howells Point, Pooles Island, and below them, the widening expanse of the Chesapeake Bay. We stopped for lunch along the sandy shores of Pond creek. From there we could look back to see the Turkey Point lighthouse and the wide, shallow waters of Susquehanna Flats. Mares tails were forming overhead; more or less guaranteeing another 24 hours of good weather.

The original plan was to cross the Sassafras river at Betterton, where the Kent County Department of Recreation had promised the bathroom facilities would be open. But energy was high and all paddlers wanted to do the longer open water crossing to Howell's Point. We would be paddling during slack tide, so there was no risk of being swept off course.

We crossed in groups. The faster group arrived at Howell's Point well ahead of my paddle group and immediately went ashore. About this time, I recall someone on the VHF asking, "Is that a paddler on shore? Or is that an irate property owner." I thought I was being pranked.

Howell's Point is a flat finger of land that, from the water, appears to jut out into the Bay. I have passed by it several times, and must admit, it is beautiful. It lies at the foot of a steep, green grass covered hill. Three picnic pavilions lie at the Point's end. Of course, the first place the kayakers from the lead group headed were the pavilions. Unfortunately, what they didn't know is that Howell's Point is private property. By the time I got to shore, I could see a very angry woman standing there scolding our group. She informed us that she was holding a cell phone and that she had the Kent County sheriff's office on speed dial. If we did not leave immediately, then she would call them and have us all arrested for trespassing. I thought, "Geez, we don't need another encounter with those sheriffs today." To defuse the situation, I instructed our party to pack up. We would find another rest stop

downstream. But, as I spoke, the woman began to calm. Then she stated that we could remain on the beach, provided we remained below the mean high tide water line.

As we sat on our kayaks and snacked, the woman continued. She told us she was not the owner of this beach, but instead, owned an adjoining property. She had been walking along the shore when she looked up to see our group landing. She had come to warn us off the pavilions. She said the actual owner, who lives at the top of the hill, begins his warnings with a shotgun blast. We talked a few moments, and I told the woman that we really had no way of knowing who owned the property and that we would never deface property or leave trash behind. She told us that others have. She also told me that as group leader, I should have looked up the owner of the property in the tax records and contacted him before landing there. The tax records were, after all, a matter of public record. With that, she turned and began walking down the beach. As she walked, she put the phone to her ear and made a call. It must have been to the property owner, because a few moments later a car drove down the roadway and parked. It remained at the pavilions until we were on water, headed south to Still Pond. I wondered if the owner had brought his shotgun. I later learned that one of the women in our party renamed the location in her GPS to "Hell's Point." Seemed fitting to me.

The paddle around Still Pond Neck provides breathtaking views of the red clay cliffs of the upper Chesapeake. In the summertime these cliffs are home to hundreds of swallows that sweep the bay for small insects. At almost regular intervals one sees massive trees sitting on shelves of earth with their roots dangling in the air. Below them lie the trunks of other trees that have clung to life on similar shelves until the storms of the bay slowly eroded away their existence.

We landed at Still Pond USCG station at 5 p.m. Our two-day voyage down the Elk River and upper Chesapeake Bay covered 22 NM. By trip's end, everyone remained in high spirits. Gear and kayaks were loaded aboard the shuttle vehicles and all that remained was to recover our vehicles from Elk River Park and return home. It was the start of what was turning out to be an interesting adventure.

Photo Gallery



Thomas Scilipoti



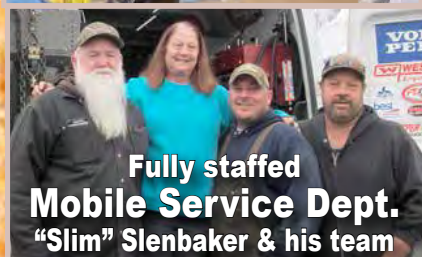
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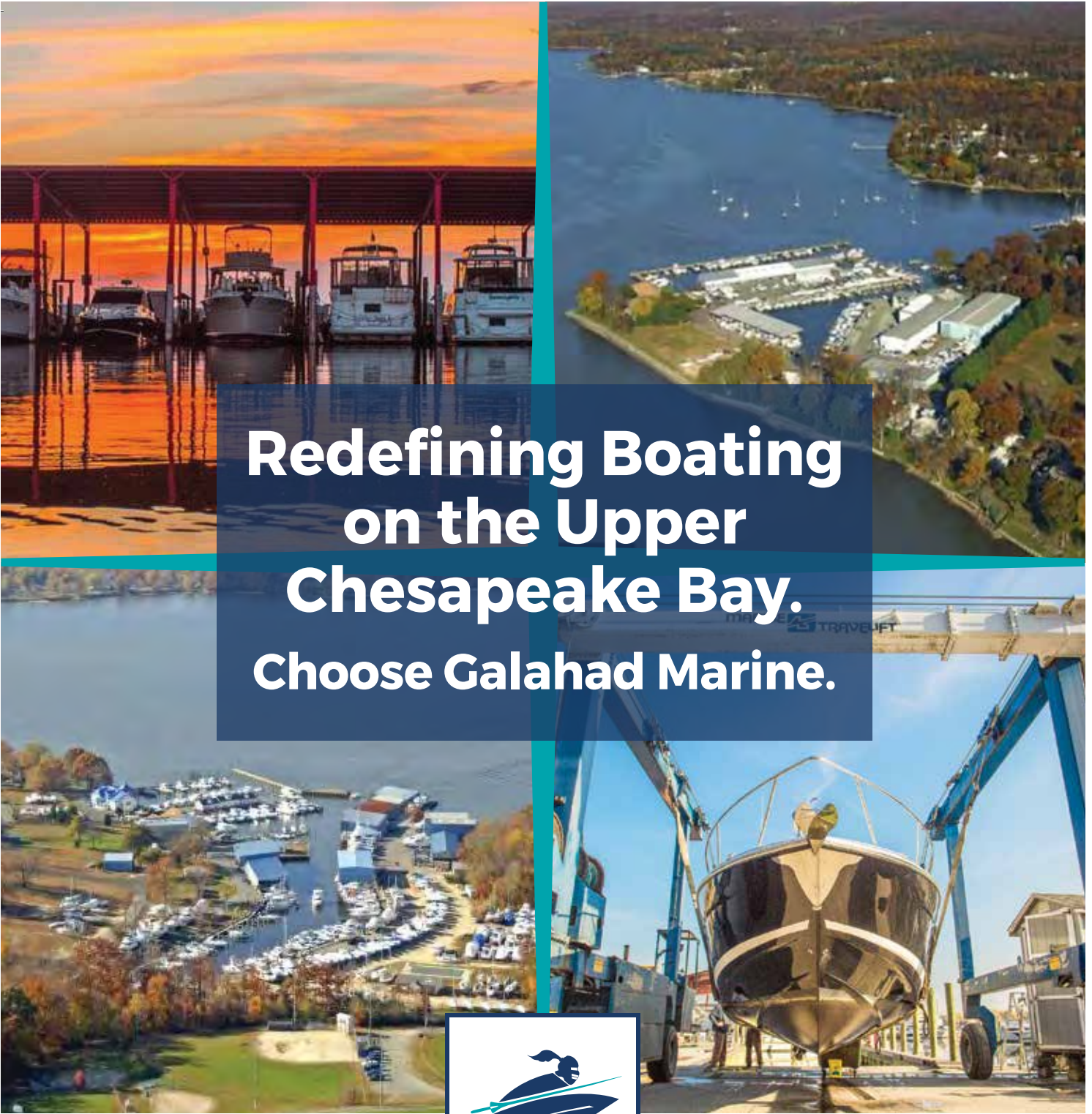
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