
CHANNELS -- SPECIAL E-MAIL EDITION

December 1998

Commodore's Log

By Stuart Ullman

It's hard to begin this Log, my last as Commodore. Its natural to think back across the year when the year is close to ending, isn't it? So my mind is wandering that direction, through all the things I've said before in this column. There are so many things I should say, or should have said, or want to say, or should want to say but don't.

So back I go, through the whole year of Logs. Back through Galesville and past the Emma Giles; past waterfights in Solomons and wild Tuesdays in the Potomac, past a filthy green sky, ugly and brutal, on Robinson Terminal, and down the river to Nanjemoy in Rebecca. Past my April argument with Mr. Frost. Past the storms in February that sent the river over the sea wall, and sent Phil and the Marina staff scurrying around the docks for 13 hours, wet and cold, to rescue lonely, thrashing boats. Back past a long, strange evening sail across a foggy river: through all the weeks, and in and out of days (here's a literary reference for you Len), and into the night of my very first Commodore's Log, writing and thinking over a beer, while I watched the dank, cloudy darkness out the Potowmack Landing windows.

We're almost there again, aren't we? Almost back to winter, and almost back to a new year.

But back to the point: what should I say here, in my last column? Let's start in the right place, with the thing I want to say most. At the Hail & Farewell we, the 1998 board members, handed out what we called awards to a number of people---we didn't make up the term, SCOW has traditionally called them that. They are really just a public way to say thanks to the people who have volunteered more than we have a right to expect. But I'm concerned, a little, about the huge numbers of volunteers we didn't recognize at the dinner that night. It's true that SCOW expects a bit of volunteering from it's membership; that's one of the ways we keep dues low and maintain our status as the best sailing deal in the known universe. We state that up front, I believe, on the membership application form. You're supposed to volunteer. But that doesn't let the board off the hook: we should still thank you for doing it.

So thanks, to the trainers, the raftmasters, the checkout skippers, the people who organized parties and the people who set them up and took them down, the people who manned the SCOW booth at the Waterfront festival, the Thursday dockmasters and Scot skippers and the cruising boat skippers and picnic hosts; thanks to the crowds that show up every maintenance day, and the others who show up to do maintenance jobs between maintenance days. Thanks to the skippers who come out to race on Tuesdays, and by doing that introduced new sailors to the

pleasures of racing small boats, and thanks to the people who organized the Also Ran. Thanks to the skippers who put the boats away well, clean, with everything stowed properly, and with gas in the cruising boat tanks. Thanks to all the bay skippers who take SCOW members out as guests on their boats. And to all of those---I'm sure you're out there---who went to some effort for SCOW, and were somehow left out of my list, thanks to you too.

Now that I have thanked all those who helped us this year, what shall I do with the rest of you? People whose participation has faded, or newer members who are just finding their SCOW identity. I know that a thousand things, jobs and family and lives, can intervene to distract you from SCOW. Many people have cycles in their participation in SCOW, or any organization, some years volunteering for everything, and other years for nothing. But having looked back across this year, and thanked all those who made this year work, maybe this is the right time to look forward to the next year, to remind all of you that the board's responsibilities are too big for the board. No director can do the whole job assigned to them alone. The incoming board will need you.

Here are some things to remember when next year starts in earnest: SCOW doesn't belong to the board of directors, it's our club. We need to remember that SCOW is us, what SCOW is and what SCOW does is up to us. If you see a SCOW need, then you should fill it, or help fill it, or at least find the appropriate Director and let them know you're concerned. Don't sit there waiting for the board to notice the same things you notice, and then to call you, or to fix it for you.

Remember that the boats in the SCOW fleet are not assets of some distant entity, silent and uncaring. They are your boats. Yours. I keep saying that you are all boat owners, and that is true. You should feel warm, proprietary, protective, when you see them. You should use them, get in them and get them out on the water---that's why you became a boat owner, isn't it? And you should help maintain them. Those of you who attend Social Sails, or SCOW parties, remember that these are your parties, given by your friends and sailing companions, and the usual social expectations apply: if you are frequent guests at gatherings, sooner or later you should take your turn as host. People who have access to boats on the Bay, the SCOW Bay Skippers, remember that there are only about thirty of you. Often, and I think this has been true for several years, the board will not have a current bay skipper on it, so whoever is assigned the Bay Activities slot has limited influence. He or she can't master the rafts; can't even attend them unless invited and transported by one of you. It makes no sense to complain that bay activities are declining, and do nothing about it. You are the people who can do something about it. The bay is your pond, and the raft ups are your parties. Do you want the bay fleet to be more active, more fun?

At the risk of sounding Star Trekky: Make it so. Be active. Have fun. There, I've done my scolding to prepare for next year, and I've said all my thanks except one. What's left? What should I finish with, at last? I've searched back through all my Logs for some inspiration about what my final words here should be. It's no use. None of the things I write seem adequate. But I did notice that once before I cheated, and used someone else's words in a Commodore's Log. And when I did that, I cited only the last verse of a longer poem.

They say that when Mozart was a small child his father would rouse him from bed by picking out a scale on the piano, but leaving off the last note. Mozart couldn't stand the incompleteness of it,

and had to get up to finish it. I'm sure that all of you have exactly that kind of ear for poetry, and so hearing just the last verse left you tense and worried. Some of you knew the poem already, and some looked it up, but others waited, distracted by jobs and families, seeing the need but hoping the universe would supply it without their help. Or that the board would supply it. Or that I would supply it and relieve the tension, since I was the one who left the verses out to begin with.

Well, alright. I guess I can't leave Thom a tense and worried club, and Mr. Frost's words are so much better than any I've come up with. So here's the whole poem, "Reluctance", by Robert Frost. It seems more appropriate now, in the part of the year when he wrote it, and when so much is changing.

Out through the fields and the woods
And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
And looked at the world, and descended;
I have come by the highway home,
And lo, it is ended.
The leaves are all dead on the ground,
Save those that the oak is keeping
To ravel them one by one
And let them go scraping and creeping
Out over the crusted snow
When others are sleeping.
And the dead leaves lie huddled and still, No longer blown hither and thither;
The last lone aster is gone;
The flowers of the witch hazel wither;
The heart is still aching to seek,
But the feet question "Whither?"
Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow, and accept the end
Of a love or a season?

Thanks to all of you for a great year.

Report From the Treasurer:

We are going to end the year in good fiscal shape, thanks in part to everyone's hard work in recruiting new members and training new skippers! As of the beginning of November, we had received just over \$31,000 in income and spent \$27,000. Current bank balances show approximately \$9,000 in the regular checking account, \$4,500 in the money market checking account, and \$11,000 in the boat asset fund. Even with a couple months of expenses and a hefty

end-of-year contribution to the boat asset fund, we anticipate leaving more money in the checking account than we had at the beginning of the year. Larry.

1999 Board of Directors

Thom Unger, Commodore
Monica Maynard, Vice Commodore
Bob Bruening, Treasurer
Sandy Clover, Secretary
Directors:
Bill Clark
Tina Daberkow
Tom LeBrun
Jack Schwartz
Shelby Shoop
Jason Stevens.

Hail & Farewell '98

OK, now THAT was a good party! At least that's the feedback received thus far. We're happy that you had a good time, because the H&F committee enjoyed selecting food & music, and developing "the little touches" to make it special. A surprisingly large number of last-minute attendees made seating a little tight at some tables, but we're used to eating in salons of 25-foot sailboats, so rubbing elbows does not bother us...much. Perhaps, there weren't enough e-mail reminders to RSVP? If you have suggestions or comments regarding this year's event, or suggestions for next year's H&F, please send them to Denise Derry, who will compile a "lessons learned" report for the next coordinator.

For all their unsung efforts, the Board would like to thank the H&F team. Francie Stevens took reservations for the 6 weeks prior, and then coordinated with Melinda Miller who printed the colorful place cards to reserve your seats at a table of your choosing. Bev Ashcraft had fun developing a neat "Where to party after the party" info sheet of area pubs & dance clubs which was available on the check-in/out table. Sandy Clover spun off an idea for centerpieces prompted by Heather Spurlock, and then with the assistance of her first mate, Larry Gemoets, assembled the pretty seashell-filled rose bowl votive holders. Greeters ran in two shifts with Larry & Sandy taking the first, and Wilson Varga and Bev taking the second.

Special thanks to Tina Daberkow for again providing SCOW with a lively photo scrapbook of the past year, which will also be available to review at the Holiday Raft-Up, December 13th. She'd be happy to teach anyone else how to organize and preserve their photos too, just phone her!

RadioPro DeeJays, the company spinning tunes and those "defective" hula-hoops, will post 3-4 photos of our event (snapped by everyone with the disposable cameras we planted around the room) on the customer pages of their website, at <http://www.radiopro.com/scow>.

As foreshadowed in earlier articles and e-mails, Friday the 13th isn't necessarily an UNlucky day. As guests arrived, they were given a raffle ticket for the four doorprizes awarded throughout the evening. The earlier guests had a greater chance of winning that first doorprize, won by Sandy Clover - a basket of sailing goodies including a Flying Scot winch handle, a watertight sportsafe container for money & license, a croakie, a lid latch, a floatable key chain, a SCOW bumpersticker, and a tube of bug repellent with sunscreen. Liz Bruening won the second doorprize, which was an ever fashionable SCOW t-shirt. The third was a pair of nifty sailing gloves, which went home with Anne La Lena. The grand prize of the Coast Guard-approved, fanny-pack inflatable PFD went to (fairly new member and skipper candidate) Andy Gralla. Also, one lucky person at each table walked home with the centerpiece, if they found a SCOW bumpersticker under the table at their placesetting.

To be sure, the evening was not entirely focussed on winning or luck. It was in recognition of another successful year brought to you by the Board of Directors '98: Commodore Stuart Ullman, Vice Commodore Thom Unger, Treasurer Angela Burnett, Secretary Cathy Hess, and directors Merri Ash, Tina Daberkow, Bill Davenport, Denise Derry, Scott Getzow, and Monica Maynard. Each director recognized members who helped make their job easier throughout this year, and the commodore presented awards to others who have provided club infrastructure throughout the years, including Sam Schaen for keeping the database, and Donna Thurber for coordinating new members. Other volunteers were recognized for their contributions, including Sharon Schoumacher, Allan Lewis, Len Zuza, Jeff Laufle and the "rookie of the year" winner, Stu Robinson.

The commodore also announced the winners of the Eli Abramson and Al Blankfield awards.

The Abramson award, in remembrance of dynamic club member Eli Abramson, is presented to the individual who has consistently offered their services to SCOW over many years. This was presented to Joe DePoorter, who has quietly contributed many hours to the training program over these years, has taken on large maintenance tasks (some providing intimate knowledge of the bilge). Over the last year he re-wired Rebecca, both in her cabin and in her mast, constructed a beautiful new switchbox for her, and worked to repair and repaint Rebecca's bottom. Years ago he performed similar services for our former boat Caprice. He has scrupulously performed water exams, and through his skills, knowledge and common sense, has set a fine example for all of SCOW's sailors.

The Al Blankfield award is in remembrance of our friend and Bay skipper, Al, and is presented to the member who makes significant contributions in the year in which it is awarded. This year's winner was Denise Malueg Derry. Denise organized the year's first social event, the January ice skating party; she also organized the July 4th raft-up and the Hail & Farewell, and helped organize and set up the Mardi Gras and Halloween parties. She coaxed Bay activities, and cooked up some Thursday Social Sails. She wrote Channels articles---extra articles, not just her Skipper Director's reports---many times when needed. She provided her advice---always good---and her work whenever the club needed them, and sometimes saw sooner and better than the Commodore did what those needs were and how to meet them. And in addition to all of this, she did an outstanding job as Skipper Director and board member.

After the awards, Vice Commodore Unger presented Commodore Ullman with a spiffy pair of binoculars as a gift from the Board for his diligence, energy and unwavering enthusiasm throughout this year of challenges. Then the 1999 board of directors was introduced by Commodore-elect Unger: Vice Commodore Monica Maynard, Treasurer Bob Bruening, Secretary Sandy Clover, and directors-to-be Bill Clark, Tina Daberkow, Tom LeBrun, Jack Schwartz, Shelby Shoop, and Jason Stevens. We wish them the best of luck in 1999, and offer them any assistance they need to make it a successful and windy year.

Holiday Raft Up

Sunday, December 13th, SCOW will raft up on land, at the Colonies of McLean, VA

for it's annual holiday pot-luck, 6:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Cost of admission is your tastiest pot-luck fare, or \$8 at the door. SCOW provides a carcass & beverages, members provide the accompaniments & cheer! Nothing gets done without our volunteers! Contact Stuart Ullman (301-652-0453) if you'd like to offer your services for set-up, clean-up, music or bartending.

Directions to the Colonies: Take the Beltway to Tyson's Corner, Exit 11A. Take Route 123/Chain Bridge Road to McLean. Turn right at the first light on to Old Meadow Road. Go 1/4 mile, turn left onto Provincial Drive: the gatehouse entrance to The Colonies. Tell the guard you're headed for the SCOW party at the Clubhouse (ahead on the left). Park where you can.

Maintenance

Monica Maynard

It's been a fast year. Not everything on my to-do lists has been done, not by a long shot. A lot of things I wanted to see finished under my directorship are not done. But I expect that Tom Lebrun, our incoming maintenance director, won't mind if I busy myself with some of the unfinished work, even after I officially pass the screwdriver on to him. Boat maintenance is an endless activity. I'm sure there'll be plenty of work for those of you who want to participate next year.

I've enjoyed working along with our great volunteers throughout my year as maintenance director. I'm grateful to everyone who pitched to work on year's maintenance tasks. You all stepped up to do what ever needed to be done, whether it was scrubbing a boat, lifting a mast, or sharing your experience and advice.

THANKS to all of you for a job well done and a great year.

My Life as a Board Member

Denise Malueg Derry

Despite what sometimes appears to be the fish-bowl status of the Skipper Director (and any board position), a recent encounter made me realize that even with a lot of phone and e-mail contact, some folks don't recognize me. My hope of drifting to the sidelines of obscurity next year springs eternal! Next year, there will be another skipper director who will field questions, grade exams, reassure tentative skipper candidates, hold picnics in the grove during group checkout days, write long-winded articles, reformat handouts, kill hundreds of trees with endless copying of skipper packages, attend board meetings & member meetings & training committee meetings & just about every other SCOW-sponsored event in order to shepherd this same set of about 100 folks to whom I've become quite attached. Even though it seems at times that I can't go to an event without being bombarded with skipper questions (really, I do not mind!), I am grateful for the time I've taken to get to know SCOW, and I recommend that everyone take their turn in a Board position. Everyone has special skills and interests, and being on the Board allows you to shape your own pet projects, and really make a difference. I've never been one to have a "grand plan;" I am entirely satisfied with smaller successes, of which there have been many over the past two years—including about 25 new skippers in the past year alone, and an overall increase in the skipper roster of 14%!

While serving as Skipper Director, I feel as if I've met every member of SCOW. Still, when I look over my list of skippers, I can't quite match a face with every name, although what once was a list of unknowns is now very familiar. Oddly, I feel as if the skippers represented by that list are "mine." I have developed an affinity for the lot of 'em. We all joined SCOW for different reasons, have different expectations of the club, and have different perspectives to offer.

I'm happy that more members have become active skippers, tutors and trainers this year. These folks are really the "face" of the Skipper Director. A skipper candidate may only e-mail or phone me, but the trainers, tutors and my beloved Checkout Skippers are the members with whom the candidates actually sail. This year I know they've done a great job, because the candidates have told me so!

The skippers themselves are a neat mix of individuals. It's been a pleasure making their acquaintance. I must admit that I do not have as much courage as my group of skippers does, but I have gained some confidence from this job nonetheless, which I attribute to them. I applaud my skippers for their resourcefulness, their enthusiasm (say it like ya mean it - en-toooz-iasm!), and their cooperation. The new skippers who have checked out during my tenure are to be especially thanked for their patience, as well!

Events that occurred during my stint as Skipper Director reminded me of adages that hold true, no matter how many times I forget them: I should never say "never," the most welcome "gifts" (usually advice, assistance or encouragement) can come from the most unexpected bearers, a well-timed "thank-you" can be worth more than any trinket, and an oldie but a goodie: the return on an investment of time & energy is directly related to the amount we contribute. In conclusion, these two years have provided me with some of my greatest friends. They have made this trick entirely worthwhile.

Submit articles to us at: channels@scow.org by one week after the monthly meeting, by any means. email preferred.

Larry Gemoets, Editor

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Submissions to Channels: Just type or paste your articles into the body of an email message. We will format it for you. No tabs, no indents, no attachments, NO Kidding. Pony express, mail, etc are acceptable, but get it here (not just in the box) by deadline -ed.