
CHANNELS -- SPECIAL E-MAIL EDITION

February 1997

Channels is the newsletter of the Sailing Club of Washington. The E-mail edition is an edited text-only version of our hard copy monthly publication.

MONTHLY MEETING SPEAKER, FEBRUARY 10

Are our rivers safe for sailing? If we fall in the Potomac, will we glow in the dark? Are we stemming water pollution? Chad Smith of American Rivers reveals the real condition of our local waterways.

(SCOW monthly meetings are held at the American Legion Post, 400 Cameron Street, Old Town Alexandria, VA. Use the downstairs door. Socializing: 6:30. Program: 7:30)

COMMODORE'S LOG

(Anne La Lena) One month of winter down, two to go! Last month wasn't so unkind, all things considered. Our riveting January speaker, Geoff Kerr of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation, thrilled us with tales of daring and dastardly deeds on the high seas of the Potomac. Although we've had some snow and ice we also had an early taste of Spring. While the year started with quite a frigid New Year's day, three days later SCOW sailors enjoyed a tantalizingly mild first weekend.

Temperatures soared to the 70s that first Saturday, and Skipper Coordinator Denise Derry and her boat caught the eye and the interest of a Washington Post reporter and photographer. Denise landed a great photo of herself sailing merrily away in the January 5th Sunday "A" section, no less. SCOW was also named in the accompanying article, thanks to Denise.

Quite a few SCOW sailors seized the day and enjoyed it out on the water. That Sunday Don Deese took Ms Elli for a quick spin in the lagoon with Joe DePoorter and myself. Later, Dan and Shirley McClafferty joined us as we dodged and darted around Susie Q skippered alternately by Betsy Troeder, Jeff Teitel, Thom Unger and the indefatigable Denise Derry. Barbara and Stuart Ullman and son Gage enjoyed sailing that weekend as did Bill Gold. All three Scots in use on a January day!

ADVENTURE ON THE HIGH SEAS

That weekend was also memorable for your commodore--who got baptized, so to speak, in the Potomac. While I too enjoyed a sail, I also got dipped in the river. It pays to practice what is preached in our basic sailing class, as Mother Nature reminded me.

Our boat was tied about 15 feet from the end of the dock. As it was gusty we decided to reef the mainsail. So far so good. But we also raised the main, and then proceeded to walk the boat down to the end. Well, the wind filled our sail, the boom got caught with its end in front of a piling at the end of the dock and we had to free it. Joe hung on to the painter while on the dock. I hung on to the boom while standing in the boat as I tried to move it around the piling.

Just as I began to realize what could happen, did happen. The boom was freed, the sail filled and both promptly swung over the boat and over the water with me hanging on for dear life.

"Oh crap," I thought. 'I'm going to get wet," and I did.

As my legs were still in the boat, first my posterior slid back over the side and down into the brink. "Hold on," yelled Joe, and I did.

Then the boom slid further out over the water and my body followed, shifting position so one leg slid down over the starboard quarter stern and in the water and the other leg seemingly on its way, dangling in air.

"Get in now," commanded Joe, and I did.

One leg was stopped in mid-slide and was pulled/pushed back in the boat. Then the other was lifted out of the water and over and in the boat. Folks on shore clapped Joe's strength and my acrobatics.

Thank goodness Joe was able to hang on so I could maneuver myself back in the boat. Thank goodness also, that Ms Elli had a long enough painter so Joe could play it out and work with the situation.

I was very calm throughout this little adventure. While it happened fast, it seemed to go in slow motion in one way. I did have a few concerns though. I wondered if Joe could keep hold of Ms Elli or was I going to capsize the boat as I held onto the boom as it swung away from the dock.

I wasn't worried about falling in particularly. I knew I would get out, plus I certainly wasn't far from help. Even more importantly, thanks to SCOW's capsize course, I knew what to expect going in the water, but I also knew the challenge it would be to get out.

So, what did I learn? Do raise the sails at the end of the dock. Do bring a change of clothes when sailing. Expectations to the contrary, you never know what will happen. And, most importantly, do not stand on the leeward side of the boom as the mainsail fills up. Do laugh at yourself and be grateful for the small mishaps.

May all our sailing misadventures be so minor. Neither Ms Elli nor I was hurt, not even my pride. I just laughed and laughed once I was back on land, because it was funny. I only wished I could have seen it. And, last but not least, once you fall in, climb out and back in the boat and sail away, because even soggy and kinda cold, it's a treat to sail in January.

Have a sweet February, SCOW, remember all your valentines.

LEARN FIRST AID/CPR

(Mike Geissinger) At the top of the training list and first out of the shoot is a FIRST AID/CPR course. This is a must for anyone, on or off the water. Francie Stevens is the instructor. The course is lasts eight hours.

It is scheduled for Saturday, February 22 and the cost is \$22.29. (A substantial discount!) Sign up at the February 10th membership meeting, or call Francie at (703) 799-8348 for more information.

NEW WEB ADDRESS, E-MAIL DETAILS

Our SCOW Web site has moved uptown: <http://www.sailing.org/scow> (Thanks to Jeff Teitel). Among other things, you can read the latest issue of Channels at the site, or check on back issues. Watch the space for upcoming enhancements.

In addition, we now have over 40 subscribers to our E-mail mailing list. If you want to subscribe to this free list, just send a message to majordomo@shirenet.com saying: SUBSCRIBE SCOW YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS. This automated list provides a very fast way to communicate with many of the club's most active members.

In past issues of Channels, we have described a method of accessing SCOW E-mail using the ShipToShore bulletin board service. This is still active, and the bulletin board has other items of interest to sailors. You can reach it at 703-525-1458 (communications setting: 8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit.)

TRAINING

(Mike Geissinger) The more you know about sailing, the more fun you have. The 1997 schedule of training courses for SCOW members is being finalized as you read.

There will be a complete list of courses, requirements, prices, dates, and registration forms in the March Channels. At the February Membership meeting on the 10th, will have the schedule of courses and sign up sheets. Sign up early and often. Don't get shut out of the course of your choice. Remember open registration at the old Alma Mater?

The sailing offerings begin with the Basic Sailing Course. The first class will begin in late April, the second in June. If there is enough demand, another session will be scheduled after the summer doldrums, in August.

Intermediate and Cruising Courses are being scheduled for those who are ready to refine their sailing skills. You have to have these courses in preparation for the Whitbread Race or for more enjoyment on the Potomac. In conjunction with the Cruising Course, Paul Zuno from the Coast Guard Auxiliary will present a Boat Safety course, open to everyone.

Remember the first time you saw a Scot (or any other boat capsize)? You said to yourself, "What do they do now?" The Capsize Course will teach you how to cope with righting that overturned boat and getting back on your way. Disregard the rumor that the course will be offered next week. We are waiting until the Potomac water is a tad warmer.

Once you get comfortable with the sails and steering you will have to get the basics of where to aim the boat. Bay & Coastal Navigation Courses will set you on the correct heading and take the headaches out of reading a chart. Dead reckoning is not terminal!

We're in the process of formulating some other workshops and seminars that will make all the members better skippers and crew. The registration forms will be available at the monthly meetings, beginning in February, and through Channels.

So strap on your marlinespike, grab your gloves, and don your docksiders. The sailing season is just around the corner. You're gonna' need the training to make all your outings on the water pleasurable. Sharpen your pencil or pen, registration time is coming!

If you have a course suggestion, call the SCOW Hotline, (202) 628-7245, and leave word on the Training Line (#7).

IMAGINING...

(Denise Derry, Skipper Coordinator) Through my plane window I look toward the Washington Sailing Marina. I see the crane area and boat racks. At 7 a.m., it's too early for anyone to be there. The runway wind sock shows a steady 5 to 8 knots. The river has no real waves, only wind ripples and the current flow. Dawn is breaking on a bright blue sky. I imagine gliding across the lagoon with Tilly, my 16-foot Point Jude. What an effortless sail this would be. I'm the most fair-weather sailor of them all...at least on Tilly. This is our sort of day. Except for the 3 inches of SNOW, this scene reminds me of the first weekend after New Year's.

A pure rush of abandon filled me as Gayle Rubin and I slipped away from the dock on Tilly. Such a lark! We couldn't have imagined a more perfect day. We played tag with Psycho (Barb, Stuart, and Gage Ullman, Monica Maynard and Thom Unger) to Alexandria where we docked to get a snack. The landlubbers were surely jealous!

It probably took longer to wash off the Potomac crud on Tilly's hull than it took to run downwind back to the marina, but all of the schlepping and scrubbing was worth it. Gayle remarked that our experience was ever so much sweeter because the day really was stolen from the gods. A gift.

I was proud to see so many SCOW members taking advantage of our 74-degree good fortune. that we've got skippers who eagerly jump at opportunities. All three Scots were out. Lee Spain and Alice Starcke had their boats out too. I'm sure other SCOW skippers were out on their boats too, but I was in my own January Sailing Fog so may have missed seeing everyone.

The day was so intoxicating, that while I was rigging Tilly and coordinating the extra helping hands, Gayle and I got underway before moving my car and trailer from underneath the crane! Some responsible and sensible SCOW members moved it. Thanks so much!

Winter days make for short sails of 4 to 6 hours, but the novelty makes the excitement longer-lasting. That weekend will get me through the next many cold & blustery weekends ahead of imagining...

SCOW's got lots of people who jump at opportunities. This year, jump at your opportunity to get--or stay--certified as skipper. As Skipper Coordinator, let me help!

RIVER ACTIVITIES

(Lee Spain) This season promises to be lot of fun with a full schedule of cruises, races, and social sails. With your help, SCOW can have a blast while accomplishing an ambitious schedule of river activities.

Social Sails: The first social sail is scheduled for April 17th. This year, you should be able to cruise on a big boat or small boat during Thursday night social sails. If you can skipper a big boat, serve as dockmaster, or grill a mean burger, please sign up at the member meeting and show your stuff this summer.

Overnight Cruises: If you 'd like to roll on down the river this spring, overnight big boat cruises are scheduled for May 3rd & 4th and June 28th & 29th. These raftups are a great way for you to get the maximum use of your big boats. You don't have to be skipper, you don't have to know somebody, and you don't have to be an experienced sailor. All you have to do is sign up. For new members, these trips provide an excellent introduction to fellow club members and the cruising lifestyle. Of course, if you are a qualified big boat skipper, please sign up to be a captain for one of these cruises. (Please note, we're cutting back on floggings this year.....)

Racing: This season, big boat racing will continue on Tuesday nights. But, you can also get plenty of our special brand of casual racing excitement during Flying Scot racing on Wednesday nights. Whenever possible, I'd like to see SCOW boats in a variety of other races such as Potomac River Sailing Association (PRSA) series races, the PRSA Spring Regatta, the famed Leukemia/President 's Cup, and our own Also-Ran Regatta. Finally, there 's no need to be intimidated by racing or the racing rules, SCOW racing is pretty casual and we will be holding a racing seminar before the season begins.

BAY SURVEY

(Larry Gemoets) Just a short note this month to let you know that we are working on the first gatherings of the season. Details at the February meeting and next month's Channels. Bay skippers, you should get our short survey on or before February 1. Please return it to me at the next meeting, or mail it back.

HOMEGROWN HERO

(Lee Spain) James L. Nelson's *By Force of Arms* (1996, Pocket Books, \$12.00), gives American fans of O'Brian and Forester a homegrown hero to cheer. The story starts with American merchant captain Isaac Biddlecomb attempting to smuggle molasses from Barbados into Rhode Island. The British pursue him by land and sea. To escape, Biddlecomb disguises himself as a common seaman and joins the crew of an American merchantman. By a twist of fate he is pressed into the British fleet. Sea chases, British naval politics, cruel first mates, and mad captains abound in this novel.

We also get to see a colonial American grapple with the choice between revolution or loyalty to the British crown. The first novel by James L. Nelson, an experienced sailor and former third officer aboard the famous replica British frigate HMS *Rose*, *By Force of Arms* offers a well-paced read that strikes a nice middle ground between O'Brian's reflective prose and Forester's action-packed adventures. A short glossary helps you keep the t'gallant separate from the orlops. This novel is the first book in a proposed trilogy called *Revolution at Sea*. But I guess you can't keep a sailor at the typewriter for long: I'm still waiting for further adventures with Biddlecomb and the fledgling colonial Navy.

THE EDITOR'S VALENTINE

Strap me for a Dutch-built bugger: I don't enjoy reading Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey & Maturin novels. However, I love to listen to them. I send my most affectionate and respectful Valentine good wishes to Recorded Books, Inc. and their copper-bottomed, Bristol-rigged narrator, Patrick Tull. What a voice--a bit like Jack Hawkins with a hint of Patrick Stewart, bringing life to ancient Admirals, blustery commanders, squeaking mids, and even the improbable Diana Villars. Check local libraries, or call Recorded Books, Inc. at 1-800-638-1304.

NEW BAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCOW MEMBERS

(Larry Gemoets) As many of you know, *CLOCKSTOPPER*, a Bay boat owned by SCOW member Patrick Derry, was sold last fall to make room for a new and improved version that can be chartered. Captain Derry is pleased to announce that the search for a suitable replacement is at an end. This spring, *SEANCHAI* (pronounced Shawn-a-key) a 50' Gulfstar cutter rigged ketch, will join the Bay fleet.

In the past, members without boats on the Bay would sign up on a crew list that was sent to all interested skippers. As a rule, only a few names on the list were called and those were generally called a day or two before the raft-up. Even then, skippers tended to call people whose sailing skills they knew so new members were often disappointed. They weren't invited because the skippers didn't know them and the skippers didn't get to know them unless they were invited. The classic Catch 22.

Even chartering a bareboat isn't an option for novice sailors unless they get invited by a qualified skipper, so the same problem arises. The introduction of *SEANCHAI* to the fleet will help alleviate this problem. The weekends of SCOW raft-ups have been blocked off on *SEANCHAI*'s

charter schedule and will be available for card carrying SCOW members only. Members will be able to sign up individually for a raft-up aboard SEANCHAI on a first come, first served basis. It won't be free, but the cost will be less than half what it would be to charter a much smaller and less well appointed boat, and you won't have to try and arrange a group to help pay for a bare boat charter (especially hard for new members who may not know many other sailors yet). These charters will have a fixed cost per person, per day, whether there are two people or six, and since berths are reserved in advance, planning a sailing weekend will be a snap. These charters will have a Coast Guard licensed Captain so a novice can enjoy the cruise as well as an old salt.

SEANCHAI can carry up to six passengers as well as the Captain and crew, so we should see a lot of new faces at raft-ups this summer. As if that is not enough, rumor has it that David Snellen (now Captain Snellen) has purchased the GYPSY ROVER, a 54' gaff rigged topsail schooner that he hopes to put into charter service sometime this year. He too plans to offer SCOW members great deals on charters. Between these two battle cruisers, SCOW members will have spectacular access to the Chesapeake Bay.

WINTER DREAMS

(Bill Gold) On this sunny winter day, I remember with warmth the past holiday season and then, reluctantly, become aware of gray days yet to come, standing like chunks of ice between now and the promise of warm sun on sparkling water...thinking of sailing... thinking of what sailing means to me.

Sailing is both an activity and a state of mind. When we sail, we put ourselves into an element that requires action, trimming sails, steering, watching for obstructions, reading markers and the intangible wind itself. We say good-bye, for a while, to work or TV to participate with nature. There are as many reasons to sail as there are individuals...the particulars of any life expressed in the general wish for a little more return on psychic investment. Each of us earns that psychic income in our own way.

On different sailing occasions, I've watched the sun rise or set and marveled at the stillness of an autumn morning soaked in color. I've watched dolphins play and flying fish fly. I've watched the rain pelt a choppy bay into a flat, frothy mush and felt terror during a lightning storm.

We can discover, wherever we sail, that we can grow in harmony within ourselves and with the outer world. We can encourage our own reluctant spirits and greet our mother Earth in any of her moods that we are comfortable engaging. Like the Hopi who seek to live in harmony with the Great Spirit, we can seek our own singular equilibrium.

On this midwinter day, I think of sailing and think of this. Between now and Spring, I'll watch for a chance to sail. Maybe there will be a 65 degree day in February. It has happened before.

CIVIL WAR SAILORS

Fort Ward Museum recently opened a new exhibit, "Jack Tars of the Union Navy". Highlights include rare patterns for rank badges, a compass, and some intriguing photographs. For example,

the lower decks were as ethnically diverse as they are now. (Lincoln encouraged Black sailors from the beginning of the war--unlike soldiers, Black sailors could not offend border-state sensitivities. Out to sea, out of mind... Seemingly, all non-commissioned jobs were open.)

Another new exhibit, "The Littlest Soldiers" features war-time toys, books, and artifacts. Don't miss the Confederate spelling book!

Fort Ward is a genuine Civil War outpost, west of Old Town, on 4301 West Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA. Call 703-838-4848.

FAREWELL TO RIC HARVEY, WITH AFFECTION AND RESPECT

(Anne La Lena & Melissa Ennis) With sparkling blue eyes and ready grin, Ric Harvey looked like a rock-steady ideal New England Sea Captain. In fact, he WAS a rock-steady New England Sea Captain.

Born in Newton, Mass, in 1933, Ric graduated from the University of Mississippi and became a Naval officer in 1955. He was an aviator aboard the KEERSAGE and served two tours of duty in Vietnam. He retired as a Captain in 1979.

He settled in Washington in 1984 and joined SCOW, which he enhanced time and time again. Ric was Commodore in 1992, and maintenance director in 1991. His unfailing good humor and steely determination kept our boats afloat and our spirits buoyant. Every year he could, he served as a training instructor and all-round enthusiastic and energetic volunteer.

Ric inspired confidence. For example, as Anne La Lena and Melissa Ennis were literally learning the ropes in Basic Sailing in 1991, Ric's calm instruction ballasted our shaky skills. He cared for sailors as much as he cared for the boats. He kept a wary and protective eye on vessels and skippers alike.

All SCOW sailors benefited from his experience, time and effort. He was a generous and expert sailor, and an admirable man.

Ric died of cancer at his home in Arlington November 24, 1996. We extend our sympathy to his daughters, Jill Harvey of Chantilly, Diana Harvey Weber of Atlanta, and Allison Harvey of McLean.

Many SCOW members have fond memories of Ric. Here are some, collected at the January membership meeting.

"A kind and gentle man who made learning to sail seem possible. His spirit is one he water and will continue to guide many." Carrie Blankfield

"I remember Ric always being around SCOW activities with a helping hand. I'll never forget a wonderful cruise during which we had a fast trip from Solomon's Island up to West River in about six or seven hours." Anon.

"Remember Camp Letts and Ric contributing so much to our good times there." Sharon Shumacher

"Ric was a very nice fellow--he added a lot to SCOW. A great person to talk with especially on the Thursday night social sails!" Nikki Horton

"Ric--a gentleman's gentleman." Jerry Nothman

"He loved to laugh and to see people having a good time. He was talented, tall, lanky and a nice eye-ful. I don't think he ever realized how many admirers among the fair sex he really had." Anon.

"Some of my earliest memories of SCOW involve Tuesday night racing, in which Ric was an avid participant. I remember both crewing with him and competing against him. We all miss his dry wit and sailing knowledge and skills." Cindy Peters

"A wonderful commodore." Jim Metcalf

"Ric was always a steady hand on the helm in rough weather. He will be sorely missed." Anon.

"Ric was an early friend at SCOW for me, an encouraging teacher and an eager racer. Some of the best Flying Scot racing I ever saw was the Also-Ran (Regatta) several years ago, with Dave Hunt in one boat and Ric in another -- grand sailing by grand sailors. I miss him." Stuart Ullman

"Sweet dreams my dear friend. I thank you for your unselfish smile of encouragement. Your presence always made us feel comfortable. I was one of the lucky ones to have enjoyed your friendship. Sleep well, my fellow sailor, and enjoy the presence of solitude." Deo C. Pachas

NEW NUMBERS

Denise Derry. Office number 202-863-2680 x217

Social Director, Jim Metcalf, home 703-978-9449, work 703-993-2070

HATS OFF? NOT!

In cold weather, a hat is your most effective piece of foul weather gear. (Your mother was right, at least about this.) Studies have shown that sailors who drop the temperature to the brain too far may risk the spontaneous purchase of powerboats. Be warned.

Sailing: the fine art of getting wet and becoming ill while slowly going nowhere at great expense.

A Dictionary for Landlubbers, Old Salts, & Armchair Drifters by Henry Beard & Roy McKie, brought to your attention by Mike Geissinger.

REMEMBER SOCIAL NO-SAILS

SCOW meets every Thursday evening for Social No-Sail at The Potomack Landing Restaurant, Washington Sailing Marina.
