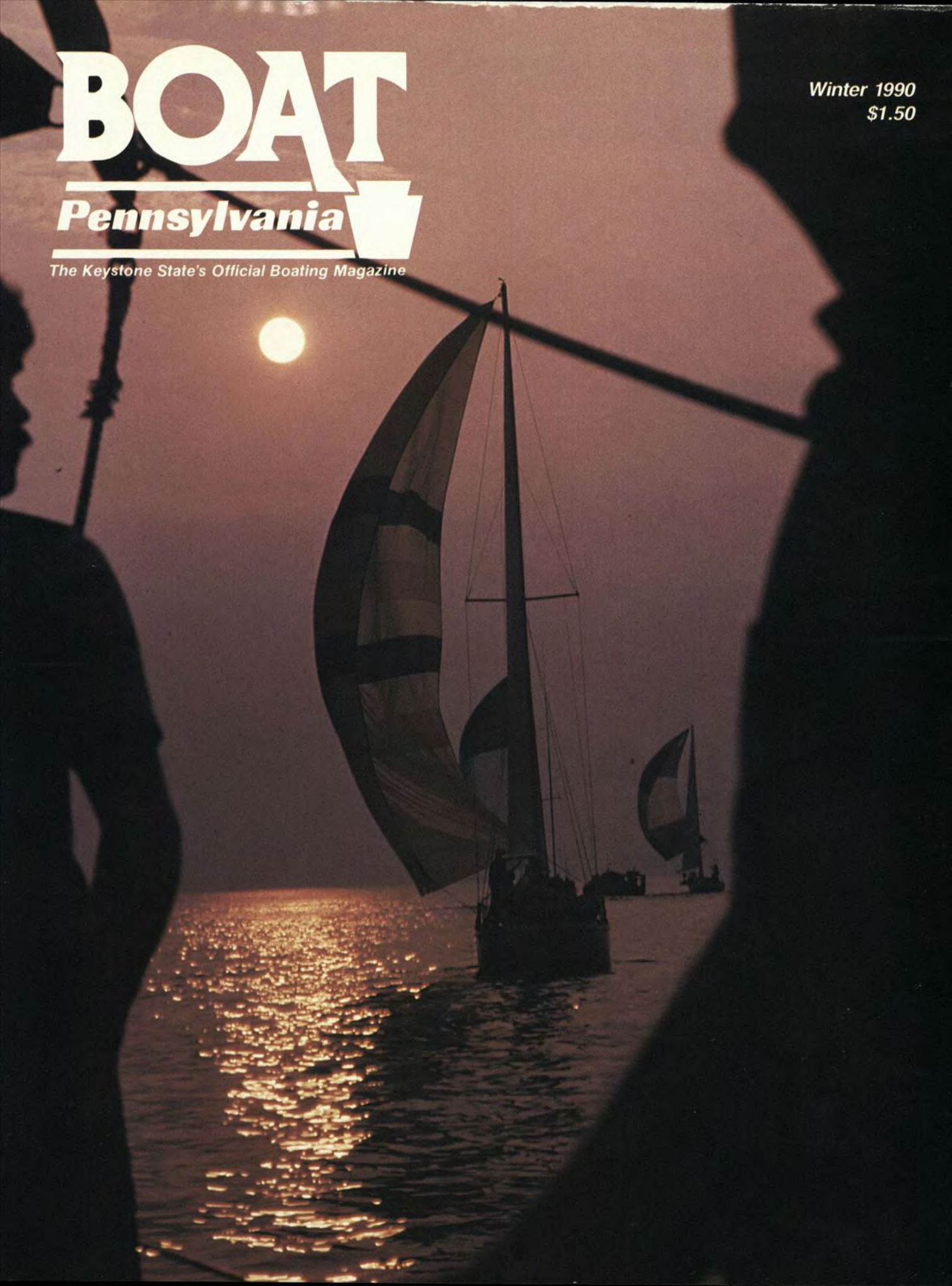
BOAT Pennsylvania

The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine

Winter 1990
$1.50



VIEWPOINT

Difficult Problems, Difficult Solutions

I recently attended a conference of the National Association of Boating Law Administrators. At this meeting were representatives of the states, the U. S. Coast Guard and many volunteer organizations that are sincerely interested in the promotion of safe boating. The theme of this conference was "Difficult Problems—Difficult Solutions." It couldn't have been more to the point.

The Boating Safety Advisory Council reported on its study of the use of prop guards. A video tape of a stunt man being run over by a boat graphically demonstrated what happens when a prop guard is installed. The subject reported that it was like getting hit by a baseball bat.

Certainly this would be preferable to being hit by a prop, but I wonder about the efficacy of a prop guard requirement. Performance experienced a five percent decrease at the expense of a 25 percent increase in fuel consumption. Of course, you can't equate human suffering with fuel consumption, but of over 9,000 boats involved in accidents in 1988, only 48 accidents involved being hit by a prop or a boat. Is the added expense worth the potential safety improvement? People will still be hit by boats.

The issue of noise also took a major role in the conference. From the use of high-powered muscle boats to personal watercraft, the issue of noise is a nationwide problem. Some states are taking drastic action to control noise. Certain types of watercraft are being banned as the only enforceable solution. Personal watercraft are particularly subject to these types of discriminatory regulations.

The industry is being prodded to clean up its act, but manufacturers seem slow to react. Improvements are being made in noise levels, but not nearly fast enough. The industry must take the initiative not only to meet existing noise levels but to accelerate efforts to eliminate engine noise completely as an irritant.

A new noise testing procedure was presented to the organization. This test would eliminate many problems with the currently accepted testing method, which requires that boats be run at full throttle through a test course. The new test will be conducted at the dock. This new test will encourage enforcement agencies to become more aggressive in their noise testing. But the industry will have to hurry to engineer solutions to noise production before they are regulated out of existence by public pressure.

Mandatory education is also a topic of much discussion. Connecticut and Vermont are the latest states to require some form of education before one can operate a boat. The Connecticut law is perhaps the most stringent in the country. Its law requires that all operators of boats in excess of 25 hp take a course or pass an equivalency examination. Only persons who can show evidence of having a registered boat during the past five years are exempt. Connecticut officials estimate that it will cost up to $4 million dollars to implement this system.

Is mandatory education the solution to the problems of increasing congestion on the waterways? Will safety improve as a result? Are boaters willing to bear the expense?

Personal flotation devices have proven themselves to be invaluable in saving lives. Since the inception of the requirement for carriage of PFDs was instituted, accident statistics have shown a dramatic decline. An even greater decline would be experienced if everyone were required to wear a PFD at all times.

Considering this, the cushion has recently received much attention. Many say that a cushion is useful, but if wearable PFDs were required, boaters would be more likely to wear them in dangerous situations and perhaps increase their chances of survival.

This sounds good, but what happens in the event that the wearable device is not worn when an accident occurs? A cushion is normally immediately available, but a wearable device is often kept under the seat or tucked in the boat's gunwales. Can a wearable device be thrown and grasped as easily as a PFD designed to be thrown? Certainly boaters have drowned in boats equipped only with cushions, but how many have been saved by the cushion and the accident never recorded?

There are many other problems facing agencies responsible for the protection of property, the safety of boaters and the enforcement of laws. Boating has grown at an unprecedented rate in recent years. The easy solutions are gone. The efforts of the industry and the regulatory agencies must now be directed toward the difficult problems that have difficult solutions—solutions we may not want to accept but ones that will be forced on us by circumstance and reality.

John Simmons
Director
Bureau of Boating
Pennsylvania Fish Commission

John F Simmons

BOAT Pennsylvania

Winter 1990 Vol. 7 No. 1

Pennsylvania Fish Commission

David Coe
President
State College
William J. Sabatose
Vice President
Brockport
Marilyn A. Black
Cochranton
Leonard A. Green
Carlisle
Ross J. Huhn
Saltsburg
Calvin J. Kern
Whitehall
T. T. Metzger, Jr.
Johnstown
Leon Reed
Honesdale
J. Wayne Yorks
Benton

Boating Advisory Board

Thaddeus Piotrowski
Chairman
Bloomsburg
Clayton Buchanan
Pittsburgh
Donald J. Little
Philadelphia
Judy Obert
Greentown
Gerald Sedney
Erie

Magazine Staff

Editor—Art Michaels
Art Director—Ted Walke
Circulation—Eleanor Mutch
Staff Assistant—Rose Ann Bartal
Staff Assistant—Charlene Glisan

Boat Pennsylvania (ISSN0888-1561) is published quarterly by the Pennsylvania Fish Commission, 3532 Walnut Street, Harrisburg, PA 17109. ©1990. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted without the written permission of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission. Subscription rates: one year, $6; single copies are $1.50 each. Second class postage is paid at Harrisburg, PA. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: *Boat PA* Circulation, Pennsylvania Fish Commission, P.O. Box 1673, Harrisburg, PA 17105-1673. For subscription and change of address, use above address. *Please allow three months for processing new subscriptions, renewals and changes of address.* Send all other correspondence to: The Editor, *Boat Pennsylvania*, P.O. Box 1673, Harrisburg, PA 17105-1673. Editorial queries and contributions are welcome, but must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Material accepted for publication is subject to Pennsylvania Fish Commission standards and requirements for editing and revising. Submissions are handled with care, but the publisher assumes no responsibility for the return or safety of submissions in his possession or in transit. The authors' views, ideas and advice expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinion or official position of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission or its staff.

Port Indian Regatta *by Bill and Bert Schill*
A community on the Schuylkill River near Norristown has been putting on quite a show for 36 years **4**

Cold-Weather Boating *by Cheryl Kimerline*
Cozy up to this information before you head out in winter **8**

Winterize Your Boat Trailer *by Gary Diamond*
Take care of your trailer and it won't let you down **12**

Paddler, Go North! *by Heidi H. Milbrand*
Magnificent paddling awaits you north of Interstate 80 ..... **14**

The New Water Ski Schools *by John M. Cornish II*
Deciding what you want from a water ski school and evaluating schools for what they offer are ways to reap benefits previously unavailable in Pennsylvania **18**

KIDS PAGE!
Be alert for danger areas when paddling **23**

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in Pennsylvania *by Dan Martin*
Pennsylvania's auxiliarists are remarkable people **24**

A Salute to Boating Volunteers *by Cheryl Kimerline*
Firefighters, emergency medical personnel, school teachers, college students, Red Cross water safety instructors, and others have something special in common **26**

The Witchery of Water *by Linda Steiner*
Sure, we have our water sports. But water attracts us for other hidden reasons **28**

The covers

This issue's front cover, photographed by Paul Jenkins, shows a fleet of sailboats heading eastward into Lake Erie from Presque Isle Inlet. If cold-weather boating interests you, before you bundle up, check out the article on page 8. If paddling turns you on, you might find some new places to play on page 14. Are you a water skier? Do you want to get some *real* training? See page 18. To view a spectacle, turn to page 4, and to speculate a little, see page 28.

This issue's back cover shows Commission boating education specialist Dan Martin plying the waters of the Susquehanna River near Harrisburg. Art Michaels took the picture.

J-11
77
1988 Total American Champion
HERN-7

Port Indian Regatta

BY BILL AND BERT SCHILL

Under a brilliant blue sky, randomly embroidered with mares' tails, a flock of Canada geese paddled serenely on the scenic Schuylkill River, one mile west of Norristown, unaware that shortly a gun would boom, reverberating up and down the river, and the Port Indian Regatta would be under way. The weather couldn't have been better for the start of the 36th Annual Regatta, composed of seven classes of boats competing for an accumulation of points toward determining a national high point champion.

The 54 boats entered in this year's event included 1-Litre Stock, Formula Cobra, 2.5-Litre Modified, 5, 6 and 7-Litre Stock, Pro Stock and Jersey Skiffs.

The runabouts, the first classes to start, buzz around the course like angry hornets, but when the hydroplanes stream out of the pits they roar over the surface. Most of the time only their propellers are in the water while the right and left sponsons alternately touch the surface, preventing them from turning over. As they thunder around the turning marks, they send up huge rooster tails of spray, providing the thrills and excitement the spectators come to see.

In contrast, the Jersey Skiffs, reminiscent of the boats used by lifeguards at the seashore, carry a driver and mechanic and pound over the water. Their style of running is entirely different from the sleeker, low-profile hydros. The skiffs constantly porpoise as they jockey around the course.

Before the start of the heats and during an interval in the racing, the Port Indian Ski Club entertained the spectators with an exciting display of their artistic water skiing skills. Having participated in the regatta from its inception, their opening act of skiing around the course carrying American flags, performances of ballet dancing and creating daring pyramids was very professional and crowd-pleasing. Batman and the Joker added an up-to-date comedy routine as they pursued each other, with Batman rescuing the maiden.

"Carnivals" of the past

While the Port Indian Regatta is celebrating 36 years of successful racing, the history of this attraction goes back to 1921 on the river at Port Indian, in West Norriton Township. In those days, it was called a carnival and information listed in a 1954 program states, "The River Regatta of 1954 is a far cry from the river carnivals of the twenties. A look at the old programs shows that canoe and rowboat races were the hottest competition of the day. Outboard motorboat races were held only if the entries were sufficient to warrant a race."

Swimming and diving events rounded out the day while music from phonographs carried in the canoes wafted over the water. On shore, the spectators lunched and munched until the water events were over. Then they danced the evening away. Those festive regattas were held annually until 1931. The regatta was dropped for 1932 but revived by the Sea Scout Ship *Penguin* in 1933, and continued for a few more years.

From an era when the Schuylkill was clean enough that ice could be cut, through a period of industrial contamination creating silt, pollutants and flood conditions, the river has gone through many changes. The federal and state governments carried out a desilting program and dredged the waterway. This not only deepened the river but widened the navigational width, once again opening the water for recreational use.

In 1954, the Port Indian Civic and Boating Association, comprised of the residents living along the river, became involved in formulating plans for promoting boating and swimming events and the First Annual Port Indian Regatta was under way. However, motorboats took the place of the canoes and for the first time, ski-jumping exhibitions were added.

Up until this point, the regatta was a one-day affair, but in 1955, water skiing took place on Saturday and the boats raced on Sunday.

More and more motorboats

Originally, Port Indian was a summer resort until families started moving in to make it a year-round community. The former canoeing and summer picnicking activities changed as the influx of people brought motorboats to take up dockage along the river.

In 1958, the powerboat races were extended to two days, with time trials and eliminations sanctioned by the American Power Boat Association (APBA) held on Saturday and the competition racing on Sunday. This stretch of the Schuylkill River was considered one of the finest race courses in the country because there was little current, practically no wind because of the tree-lined banks, and an exceptionally good viewing area for spectators.

In 1955, the inboard hydroplanes were expected to reach speeds of 65 miles per hour while it was anticipated that the outboard classes would reach 45 to 60 miles per hour. By the next year the hydros were hurtling along at 80 miles per hour.

A special class of inboard boats, known as Crackerboxes, was added to the schedule. They were capable of doing 60 to 75 miles per hour. Today's modern boats have come a long way since the early canoe and rowboat days and are now zooming over the course with capabilities of reaching 150 mph.

When the Port Indian Civic and Boating Association began its sponsorship of this regatta, it was to raise funds for community improvements. A new bridge across Indian Creek was built, replacing the old wooden one. Then the road, which is not designated, needed paving and funds helped in that area. Street lighting and trash disposal were added to the list.

The regatta kept growing and the expenses also increased, so outside organizations were called on to help. Lions and Lioness Clubs, Optimists Club, Jaycees, Sea Scouts, the Port Indian Ski Club, Jefferson Fire Co. #1, the Norristown Diving Unit and the Eastern Pennsylvania REACT all pitched in. REACT stands for Radio Emergency Affiliate Citizens Team and they handle the communications between the shore and the rescue and patrol boats on the river. The cooperation of these local groups makes it a community affair, and they benefit by receiving a small donation for their efforts.

Domino's Pizza and Hatfield Packing are contributors, but the major fund is raised for the Muscular Dystrophy Association through purchases made at the 7-Eleven refreshment stands.

Bill and Bert Schill

The Fish Commission patrols to make sure the course area is kept clear of spectators along the south bank of the river and that no boats anchor anywhere near the course, providing safety not only for the racing drivers but also the viewers.

Bill Dougherty, regatta chairman, lives in Port Indian, and has been doing a fantastic job for several years in getting this event organized. He has a committee to help, but the success of the regatta is his main responsibility. Before the start of the races, he welcomed the drivers, thanked them for entering, urged them to drive safely and have a good time. He also presented the winners with their checks and trophies at the end of the event.

The country is divided into 12 regions by the APBA with each region conducting races. Points from these races are added toward the national championship. Because the Port Indian Regatta is a two-day affair, the drivers can accumulate points from two separate races toward their goal.

Ready to race

Each race consists of four laps around a 1¼-mile course, counterclockwise, for a total of five miles. The boats are launched at the pit area at the western end of the course, or upstream, by being hoisted off their trailers by huge cranes and set in the water.

A five-minute gun is the warning to start the engines, leave the pits, try the course and time their starts. At one minute, a gun is fired and a white flag is raised at the judges' platform at the start-finish line. A digital clock ticks off the final 60 seconds while the drivers jockey their boats with roaring, unmuffled engines. They get into position to be in the inside lane and reach the starting line first when the gun is fired.

Any boat over at the start is disqualified. Even though the driver covers the course and finishes first, he is given no points for that race.

A good start can be the difference between winning or losing. Passing is very difficult because of choppy water and cavitation (bubbles caused by a leading boat's propeller). Almost immediately after the start, the boats string out even though they have equal capabilities and are as fast as the leader. Two heats are run to give everyone two chances for a good start. Then the fastest boats from the two heats have a final race to determine the winning points.

The residents living along the race course open their grounds to the spectators who line the shore, adding a party atmosphere to this already exciting event. Loudspeakers are placed at strategic spots along the shore so everyone can hear as Bill Moore, another Port Indian resident, announces the events from the start-finish line.

Bill and Bert Schill

Moore, a former racer but now retired, has been announcing the races around the country for the APBA over the past 12 years. A teacher at Girard College in Philadelphia, he is a member of the 100mph Club in Norristown, and although he has given up actively participating as a driver, he loves the sport enough to be involved still with the national association and announcing. Last year he was the referee for the World Championship at Valleyfield, Canada.

When asked what he thought of this particular regatta in comparison to others with which he is familiar, Moore said, "This is one of the top races in the East because the quiet river conditions are ideal and the drivers appreciate the hospitality of Port Indian, West Norriton Township, and Montgomery County."

The Port Indian Regatta provides the excitement and thrills of high-powered boat racing. This is an event the entire family can enjoy watching, having an up-close-and-personal contact with the drivers and their boats and experiencing the friendliness of the community.

There is no admission for this exciting event, only a parking fee of $12 per car.

So that you may include the regatta on your 1990 summer activities calendar, write for time and date to Bill Dougherty, Regatta Chairman, 66 West Indian Lane, Norristown, PA 19403.

Getting There

To reach the racing site from Philadelphia, take the Schuylkill Expressway West to King of Prussia, Exit 26B for Route 202 South . . . From the PA Turnpike, Exit 24 (Valley Forge). Follow signs for Route 202 South. From 202 South, immediately exit for Route 422 West to Route 363 North (Trooper Exit), at the 4th light turn right onto Egypt Road; at the 2nd light bear right onto Ridge Pike; go to the next light and turn right onto S. Schuylkill Ave. to the entrance (follow banners).

From Pottstown take Route 422 East to Oaks-Audubon Exit. As you come down the ramp, bear right (toward Audubon); go 4 miles to the 5th light and bear right onto Ridge Pike; go to the next light and turn right onto S. Schuylkill Avenue (follow the banners).

Cold-Weather Boating

by Cheryl Kimerline

Few may realize there are adventuresome warm-blooded boaters still out on the water enjoying a year-round boating season. Others are just starting to get boats out of storage to enjoy their favorite season. Duck hunters and anglers are active in the cold-weather months. Experienced paddlers enjoy the higher water levels that were not available in the warm-season months. Hardwater sailors (ice boaters) look forward to that first cold freeze so that they can start flying across the ice. "Soft water" sailors enjoy the brisk winds brought by the cold season before the big freeze. Personal watercraft users and powerboaters enjoy cruising the uncrowded areas in the off-season. Rescue personnel keep boats ready year-round in case of water or ice accidents.

What makes these people pursue boating activities in the winter? Is boating a year-round sport in Pennsylvania? How do these boaters keep warm? Why do they pursue boating in the off-season months?

Cold-weather boaters

The biggest advantages to boating in the off-season are no crowds, no waiting lines at launch ramps and no congestion on the water. That special lake or river that was wall-to-wall boats last summer is now yours. There is a calm, peaceful silence. What a perfect boating experience! Boating in the off-season sounds like a relief and a most relaxing experience.

A tranquil lake is the perfect hideaway until an unexpected boating accident occurs. Then no one is around to help. Cold-weather boaters must be extra cautious when on the water. They must tell someone where they are going, when they will return, a description of their boat, how many people are on board and who to call if help is needed. They must be prepared for the unexpected.

Cold-water protection

Cold-water protection is crucial for off-season boaters. Hypothermia (the loss of body heat) is a contributing factor in most cold-water drownings. Even with these known facts, few cold-weather boaters are equipped with the proper protective clothing. Cold water draws heat from the body 25 to 35 times faster than cold air. So if you capsize or fall overboard, get out of the water as soon as possible. Most small boats can be righted and reentered. If the boat cannot be righted, climb on top of it and wait for help to arrive.

Winter boaters must dress to get wet. The recent increase in cold-water activities can be partially attributed to the new protective clothing on the market. Layers of clothing protect the body's heat. These layers trap air and water close to the skin where they are warmed by the body's temperature.

Cotton is the worst material to wear because it loses all trapped air when it gets wet. It just becomes cold and clammy. Down is also worthless when wet because the feathers become wet, matted clumps. Wool, however, retains its insulation when wet because individual fibers are hollow and trap large amounts of air. Wool is one of the warmest and least expensive materials to wear and keep warm.

New synthetic fibers such as polypropylene and pile absorb only a small amount of water and can almost be wrung or shaken dry within minutes. Polypropylene long johns make an excellent inner layer next to the skin as the moisture when you sweat evaporates away from your skin, keeping you warm. The middle layer should be pile or wool to keep you well-insulated. An outer nylon shell or windbreaker as a top layer breaks the wind and keeps you warm. Wear the clothing that you are most comfortable in but make sure it keeps you warm in cold water.

Wetsuits

Wetsuits are one of the most common types of protective clothing available to boaters. Wetsuits, just like the name states, are wet. They allow the water in next to the skin. The first sensation when falling into cold water is the shocking cold. Water is trapped and warmed between the skin and the wetsuit. Thus, it may take a couple of minutes for that water to warm up.

Most boaters prefer the 1/8-inch neoprene suit because it is not too thick to restrict movement, yet it gives a lot of protection. The most popular wetsuit on the market is the long-leg sleeveless "farmer john." A separate long-sleeved wetsuit top can be purchased to be worn with the "farmer john" in extremely cold weather. Many cold-weather boaters prefer to wear the wetsuit with a combination of clothing. A "farmer john" wetsuit with a pile jacket and windbreaker for warmth and comfort keeps most boaters comfortable when wet.

Drysuits

Drysuits are becoming more and more popular because they are the ultimate in cold-water protection. They are what turns the winter boating season into summer. They keep you totally dry. They fit looser than wetsuits and allow more movement. Unlike wetsuits, they do not have built-in insulation. Warm insulating clothes must be worn underneath to regulate the body's temperature. Wool, pile or polypropylene are the insulating clothes most commonly worn. Drysuits are gaining popularity with small-boat operators (paddlers, windsurfers, sailors) who are guaranteed to get wet.

There are several different types of drysuits on the market. Shop around and see what is most comfortable.

Personal flotation devices (PFDs)

A personal flotation device should be worn by all people when boating on cold water. Several types are available that offer more cold-water protection. A float coat (Type III) looks like a winter coat, but it provides built-in flotation and is approved as a PFD by the U.S. Coast Guard. Such coats are popular with hunters and fishermen because they are available in many different colors including camouflage, blaze orange, green and tan.

Immersion in cold water can quickly numb the extremities to the point of uselessness. Cold hands cannot fasten the straps of PFDs, so it is important that the PFD is put on as soon as you step into the boat. Physical exercise such as swimming causes the body to lose heat at a much faster rate than remaining still in the water.

If wearing a PFD, you can adopt a defensive position in the water to conserve heat. The two postures that prevent heat loss are the H.E.L.P. (heat escape lessening posture) and HUDDLE positions.

The HELP position is a fetal position that protects areas of high heat loss from the neck, armpits, chest and groin. The HUDDLE position involves two or more people "huddling" together to conserve body heat. These postures can be used only if wearing a PFD, so choose a PFD that is not only comfortable but provides cold-water protection.

Ice boating

When that first cold freeze sets in, ice boat sailors have one of the most exciting sports around. An ice boat is a sail-

Tom Fegely

At least four inches of solid ice are needed before going "hard-water" sailing. Cold temperatures and light snowfalls produce the strongest ice, black ice, named so because it reflects the water's dark depths.

propelled craft that glides across the ice on three runners. The front runner is the steering blade and is controlled by a tiller (steering stick) in the cockpit. The two rear runners are attached to a plank that extends on both sides of the boat.

Sailing an ice boat is similar to sailing on water, although ice boats are faster because of the low drag on the blades. There is no feeling more exciting than to be flying across the ice, feeling the tingling bite of the wind, and hearing the wind rush and the *whoosh* of the runners dashing across the ice. The speed is incredible as you fly just several inches over the ice.

At least four inches of solid ice are needed before going "hard-water" sailing. Cold temperatures and light snowfalls produce the strongest ice, black ice, which is named because it reflects the water's dark depths. Unfortunately, black ice makes it hard to see where the open water is located. Black ice causes most of the winter accidents on our highways because it is hard to see.

Ice boaters anticipate the winter season all year. The ice boat season usually starts around the beginning of January and ends in late February with the thaw. The past several winters have been mild, so the season for ice boating has been short or nonexistent in Pennsylvania.

Arctic sailors

Ice boaters are not the only sailors who enjoy the cold, blustery season. Some "soft water" sailors brave the frigid temperatures and enjoy the fast winds brought about by the Arctic blasts. The summer heat usually brings few breezes, so for these sailors, the cooler months are the prime sailing season. The winds are stronger and the crowds are sparse.

Many people enjoy their last big sail of the season over the Christmas holidays if the first freeze has not set in. Wearing dry suits and float coats, these sailors fly up and down the lake, never worrying about a shortage of wind. If anything, they have to be concerned about too much wind as they tack down the lake.

Personal watercraft

The use of personal watercraft is widespread across the Commonwealth. I was first introduced to this new sport in the summer. The thrill of this get-wet sport in the hot summer months was just what I was looking for. However, some of these

Doug Golding

people I boat with have invested in protective clothing to extend their boating season.

By wearing drysuits, these more experienced operators boat until the first ice forms or when the ice first thaws in the early spring. They enjoy the wide-open space to practice their maneuvers without interfering with other boaters or without worrying about getting run over by a larger boat. They are constantly wet from the spray from their craft, so they should be dressed in protective clothing to ward off hypothermia. Too much exposure to cold water can make it hard to operate and re-board your personal watercraft if you fall off.

I was out on a personal watercraft early last spring. On that hot, sunny day, the water was a surprising bath of ice water. My partner and I were wearing dry suits and PFDs. We were staying dry and warm the first hour. The spray off the water was making our fingers numb.

Soon we capsized the boat. Trying to climb back on board was a challenge. Hypothermia had slowly set in and I was not moving as quickly as I thought I was. My balance was starting to be affected. I had problems holding on and operating the boat. My fingers were so numb, I had trouble steering the craft. Praying I would not tip over again, I sped to shore. My warm vehicle and thermos of hot chocolate saved the day.

When operating these get-wet crafts, try to pace yourself. Cold water and fun can combine to speed up exhaustion. Take breaks with warm liquids and foods. Boat with someone or let others know where you are in case some type of trouble might occur. Don't overdo it because mistakes in cold water can often be fatal.

Other boats often classified as personal watercraft are airboats and hovercraft. These watercraft operate not only on water but also on land. Winter enthusiasts from all over brave the winter chills to operate their boats on frozen waterways.

These boats do not have to worry about open water interspersed with ice because they operate on ice as well as on water. These watercraft are unique and should be tried by everyone. I am still not used to being out on the water, heading back toward the launch ramp and instead of tying up my boat at the dock and going to get my car, just driving right up the ramp into the parking lot.

Anglers, duck hunters

The harsh winter may scare away some of the less hardy anglers and hunters, but many stay out and enjoy the different sporting opportunities brought on by the change of season. What's a few flakes of snow or an icy film on the water when those fish are biting? The snow may be several feet thick on land, so reaching your prey by boat might be the easiest route. That bone-chilling wind, frozen fingers and icy froth on the water will not scare away dedicated sportsmen.

Layers of clothing that stay warm even when wet are crucial to these outdoor enthusiasts. Wear a PFD fishing vest or invest in a float coat to float you in an unexpected capsize.

Enjoy your sport on the quiet waterway. Think of those busy summer moments when the wakes of the powerboats kept rocking your fishing boat. Think of the summer noises of the crowds yelling at the beach, the uproar at the picnic areas and the loud roar of the racing powerboats. Aren't you enjoying your day out on the water in this quiet solitude? There are no excuses for letting that big one slip away (other than frozen fingers or that you were just enjoying the peace and quiet so much that you forgot to pay attention). Fishing and hunting in the winter months is relaxing and enjoyable when following basic safety precautions.

River running

Most summer months are accompanied by high temperatures and low water, not conducive to whitewater canoeing and kayaking in many areas. Winter precipitation brings up the water table and brings many experienced river paddlers on the rivers. High waters can be dangerous if not scouted ahead. Debris can be hidden under high water and can easily trap river boaters.

Be dressed for the cold water. Drysuits or wetsuits are the best clothing to wear. PFDs must be worn at all times because swimming the river is a good possibility. Know which actions to take in an emergency. Practice capsizing and righting your boat in warm months.

The high water level can produce an exciting trip. That small creek behind your house that meandered last summer is now a raging river. For experts who scout the river and know what lies ahead, this can be a safe, exhilarating trip.

Be Prepared

Proper preparation is essential when boating in cold water. Make sure your boat and equipment are in first-class condition.

- Check the weather forecast before planning your trip.
- If boating on a river, make sure the water is at a safe level.
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Dress properly for the cold.
- Always wear a PFD when boating on cold water. It is nearly impossible to put on a device in cold water. Swimming or moving around in moving water increases heat loss and can shorten survival time by more than 50 percent.
- Know the actions to take in an emergency. Practice righting and capsizing small boats in warm summer months.

Know the dangers of water and prepare yourself accordingly.

Cold Plunge

A cold plunge even when properly prepared is no fun. My last late-season sail was in November. Wearing a drysuit, wetsuit booties, wool gloves, a wool hat and a PFD, I was prepared to get wet or so I mistakenly thought. Coming about (turning around) at the far end of the lake, our sails caught a blast of gale-force winds. Our catamaran was immediately slapped on its side in the water. As I was catapulted head-first into the water, I covered my nose and mouth. That shock of cold water made me instinctively gasp. It reminded me of showering and mistakenly turning on the cold water thinking it was hot. This cold slap took my breath and energy away. It was several minutes before I could even get oriented enough to right my boat and head back toward shore. It had been an exciting day until the spill.

I quickly learned why only the experts sail on these cold, windy days. The sting of that cold water reminded me of my amateur status. Maybe I'd better leave the high wind and cold water to the experts.—*CK*

Winterize Your Boat Trailer

by Gary Diamond

One of the most neglected items boaters own is the trailer. They'll often spend hundreds of dollars and take great pains to make sure their boats can withstand the ravages of winter, but rarely is any time or money spent to ensure that their trailers will be ready when spring rolls around.

Trailers are not impervious to the elements. They have many things in common with cars, such as tires, frame, bearings, lights and safety equipment, but that's where the similarity ends. Your car doesn't get dunked in the water every weekend, and your car surely doesn't sit unattended for nearly six months each year. However, the family auto gets lots of TLC with frequent oil changes, grease jobs, new tires and other required maintenance. When winter comes, special care is taken to ensure that it starts every morning and provides reliable transportation. Your boat trailer also needs winterization or it won't be able to provide reliable transportation for your boat.

Winterizing a boat trailer usually takes less than two hours. The task can be performed by anyone with a fair selection of hand tools. All you'll need is a grease gun, lug wrench, a few screw drivers and a can of WD-40 or similar lubricant. You'll also need a few concrete blocks and a jack capable of raising the entire rig.

Art Michaels

Hitch coupler

Although problems with hitch couplers are rare, couplers do need periodic maintenance. The coupler should be inspected for hairline cracks and adjusted so that it latches firmly on the hitch ball. Couplers that are loose-fitting slam against the ball, sometimes resulting in complete failure while towing. The coupler should be cleaned and lubricated with a spray lubricant before winter storage.

Lights

Trailer lights are always subject to failure. They're constantly being submerged, so corroded lamp sockets are inevitable. There are two ways to overcome this problem. If you have an all-roller trailer, the trailer doesn't need to be submerged to launch the boat. But if your trailer has carpeted bunks, it must be submerged when launching and loading.

To winterize the lights, remove the lens and carefully remove the bulbs. Spray the inside of the entire light with a coat of WD-40. Replace the bulbs and re-install the lens cover. It's that easy.

Rollers and bunks

Most trailers have no provisions for lubricating rollers. However, the roller shaft often corrodes if it's not properly maintained. If the rollers have grease fittings, lubricate them frequently and you won't encounter problems. Rollers that do not have grease fittings may still be lubricated by spraying the shafts with a coat of WD-40.

Trailers with carpeted bunks also need maintenance. First, check the condition of the carpet. If it's worn or shows signs of dry rot, replace it. This is done by first removing the old carpet and cutting new replacement lengths of indoor/outdoor carpet to fit the bunks. Then, coat the wooden bunks with a weather-proof adhesive. This can be purchased from stores that sell indoor/outdoor carpeting.

Apply the adhesive to both the back side of the carpet and the bunks and let it become tacky before attaching the carpet. Once the carpet is in place, staple the edges at two- or three-inch intervals. Be sure to use stainless steel staples—regular staples quickly rust. Allow the adhesive to dry for at least 24 hours before placing the boat back on the trailer because some adhesives react to the gel coat finish on fiberglass boats.

Art Michaels

Trailer frame

Trailer frames, especially those of painted models, incur problems that often go unnoticed. Even though the frame appears to be in perfect condition, the inner wall of the channel iron may be deteriorating. Rinse the inside of the frame thoroughly with a garden hose and tilt the trailer to allow all the water and debris to drain completely out the end. Once dry, inspect the inside of the frame with a flashlight. If there are signs of rust, have the trailer sandblasted and repainted, inside and out. Inspect the leaf or coil springs for cracks and lubricate them with a coat of WD-40.

Wheel bearings

Most trailers have wheel bearing protective devices. They are marketed under several different names such as "Bearing Buddies," but they all do the same job—lubricate the bearings.

However, they do not repack the bearings, a procedure that must be performed at least once a year. This is accomplished first by removing the wheels. Next, the brake drum must be removed. There is a large nut under the bearing cap that is held in place with a cotter pin. Once the nut is removed, the drum containing the bearings should slide off easily.

The outer bearing sits in a tapered race and is easily removed. The inner bearing is held in place with a seal, which can be tapped out with the aid of a long punch. Once the bearings are removed, repack them with a multi-purpose grease and reinstall.

If you're not sure how to perform this particular job, take the trailer to either a marine dealer or a service station and have them do the job for you. When replacing the axle nut, tighten it until it's firm, and then back it off a quarter-turn and replace the cotter pin. If the nut is too tight, it can destroy the bearings.

Tires

It's rare to see trailer tires that are worn out. Most tire failures are caused by dry rot, not wear. This can easily be prevented first by jacking up the trailer and placing the axle on concrete blocks. The tires should be thoroughly sprayed with Armor-All or a similar product to keep moisture from being absorbed into the rubber. This alone will prevent dry rot.

Remove the tires after spraying and store them in a cool, dry place in your basement or garage, if you have room. Tires cared for in this manner will outlast their owners. When spring arrives, check the inflation pressure while the tires are still cool. If the tires are 10 pounds low, drive to the nearest service station and add 10 pounds. The pressure should be checked with a pressure gauge—not the gadget on the air pump. The indicators on air pumps are often inaccurate and over- or underinflated tires could result in excessive wear or possibly a blow-out.

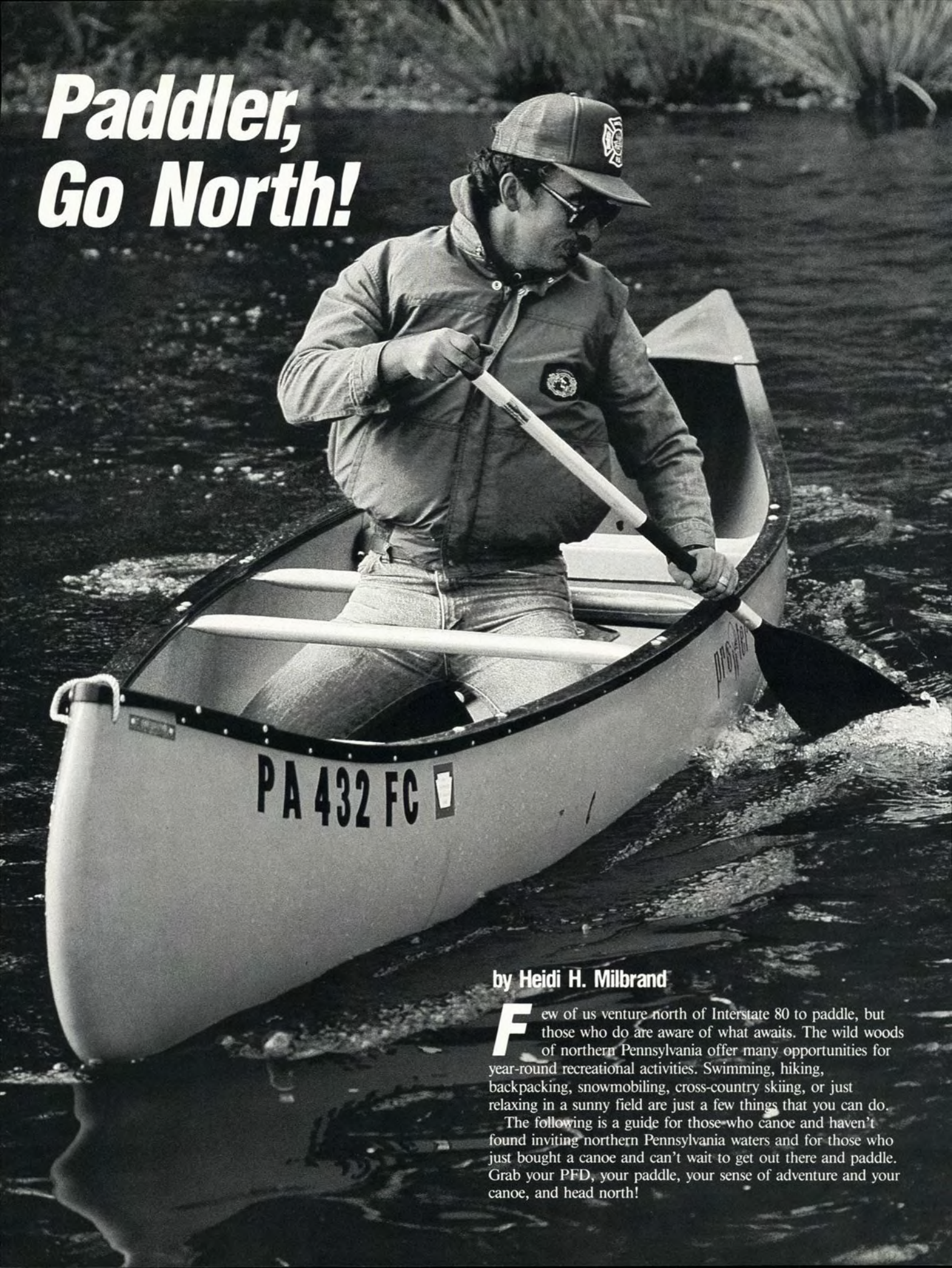
Covers

Most boat owners cover their boats during the winter. The covers usually are blue polyethylene tarps that are attached to the frame of the trailer with elastic cords. They do a great job keeping snow and rain out of the boat, but they don't usually protect the trailer. When using this type of cover, place a half-dozen tent stakes in the ground approximately two feet apart on each side of the trailer. Then attach the elastic cords to the stakes instead of the trailer frame.

Essentially, you have just constructed a tent that covers the entire rig—not just the boat. Snow and rain slide off the cover, keeping the moisture well away from the boat and trailer. Be sure to leave the ends open so there is adequate ventilation for both the boat and trailer. This prevents corrosion from forming, caused by condensation.

Boat trailers that are properly maintained usually outlive their owners. Those that are neglected self-destruct at a young age. It takes only two hours to keep your trailer in top condition. Then, when spring rolls around, you'll be launching your boat at the ramp instead of sitting on the shoulder of the interstate with a broken down, rusting hulk supporting your boat.

Paddler, Go North!



by Heidi H. Milbrand

Few of us venture north of Interstate 80 to paddle, but those who do are aware of what awaits. The wild woods of northern Pennsylvania offer many opportunities for year-round recreational activities. Swimming, hiking, backpacking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, or just relaxing in a sunny field are just a few things that you can do.

The following is a guide for those who canoe and haven't found inviting northern Pennsylvania waters and for those who just bought a canoe and can't wait to get out there and paddle. Grab your PFD, your paddle, your sense of adventure and your canoe, and head north!

Art Michaels

West Branch, Susquehanna

Looking at a map of Pennsylvania, you see the West Branch almost as a perfectly centered arc within easy reach of just about every Pennsylvanian. Its 231 miles offer an outstanding canoeing river that flows through forests, mountains and fields and offers paddlers solitude, the beauty of the land, and peace of mind. This river is the only one in the state to go so undeveloped for so many miles. You can freely camp without having a busy highway as a backdrop. It may not be complete wilderness, but it is a terrific stream to paddle.

The West Branch can be broken up into day-long trips and weekend trips, or possibly it could be done all at once for those who have long vacations. But whatever your itinerary may be, your trip will be enjoyable, no matter how short.

The first section that is above Route 80 is from Clearfield to Lock Haven. This section is what makes the West Branch so appealing. Below Route 153, you must portage around a five-foot dam before putting in. Soon after you're on the water here, another portage around a dam is necessary. This carry is via Route 879. After that, it's all downhill from here.

A railroad follows the river but is seldom traveled. Hunting camps appear here and there but are few and far between. There are mining scars still visible, but this allows for the imagination to run wild and picture what it must have been like in the good old days. Tornados ripped through here in 1985 and signs of the damage are still prevalent.

Take your gear and camp along the river banks. There are numerous grassy beaches and hemlock groves that make excellent campsites. At night, the only sounds you hear are the river flowing gently downstream and your friends' snoring.

Below Keating, the highway returns but does not distract from the scenery. One can see Hyner View State Park from down below, and on windy days, you can observe hang gliders sharing the sky with hawks. At Lock Haven, the mountain walls split and the river slows into a pool above the dam in Lock Haven. Your take-out is at the boat ramp directly after going under the Jay Street Bridge—the first bridge in town.

Clarion River

The Clarion offers 85 miles of swift, smooth water suitable for beginners and novices that be can broken up into several day trips or a relaxing canoe camping trip of a few days. The put-in is at the bridge in Ridgway on Route 948, and you can float freely to the Fish Commission access or take out anywhere in between. Cook Forest and Clear Creek State parks are located along the way and offer two great side trips for either camping or hiking. If camping in a state park doesn't excite you, there are numerous opportunities to camp along the river with grassy beaches and level sites, so who could ask for more?

The Clarion offers peace and quiet and a chance to let your mind wander aimlessly while drifting through a wooded gorge. Below the Fish Commission access, the river continues through a

deeper gorge and a mostly roadless area. You'll have to portage around the dam at the Piney Reservoir, but other than that, there are no other hazards.

You should be aware that the power plant does have releases and the water will run fast when this occurs. There is no access at the mouth of the Clarion, so you have to paddle down the Allegheny to the bridge in Parker City (Route 268). The Clarion is a gentle, fast-moving river and for this reason, it makes a popular canoeing river—so be prepared to share. But it's a "must" on your list.

Pine Creek

The Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania is carved out by this popular and most famous canoeing stream. If you paddle Pennsylvania, then you have paddled this stream. For 79 miles, Pine Creek flows southward through a beautiful canyon and makes you wonder if this is truly wilderness. Because this is a gentle and forgiving stream and a very popular one, thousands of people converge on it annually to say they have paddled the gorge. But not to worry—they only do a short section, because some of the trips are run by commercial outfitters, and then the rest of the creek is yours.

Your put-in is at Walton (T439), but be careful if the water is up and running. If not prepared for it, this stream can turn into a terror. At Galeton (Route 144), an eight-foot dam lurks, so be prepared to carry around it.

From this point, you enter the "heart" of Pine Creek. The mountains quickly close in and everything stays calm until the creek hits Owassee Rapid—a manageable rapid, but everyone runs it to the right and then finds trouble either by getting stuck in a big hole or wrapping the boat around a rock. If you stick to the left side of this rapid, you'll have no trouble.

After Owassee, Pine Creek consists of fast water and wide, gently dropping rapids that give way to great, forested mountains and some summer camps. There are state campsites and informal sites (ask permission) along the way if you decide to run the entire creek.

The high mountains start to recede, giving way to wide flood plains, and finally you break into a wide valley at Torbert. Your take-out is at the Torbert access, located two miles north of Route 220 on Route 44. Or you can paddle all the way down to the confluence with the West Branch of the Susquehanna and take out at Jersey Shore.

Little Pine Creek

Aptly named, Little Pine is a scaled-down version of Pine Creek with much faster water. Your put-in is the first access site along Route 287, below Texas Creek. Little Pine flows down a beautiful valley that almost becomes a canyon. The creek rolls along quickly before coming to a halt in a lake at Little Pine State Park. At the southern end of the lake is a flood control dam where you must carry your canoe up and over. Drop your canoe back in at the bottom and away you go.

The last remaining miles continue as they did above the dam. You can take-out at the bridge at Route 44 (before the Waterville Hotel) or go down to the confluence with Pine Creek and take out there. It's much easier to take out at the bridge. Landowners at the confluence tend to get a bit possessive. By the way, stop at the Waterville Hotel and have a "mountain burger."

Upper Delaware River

Bald eagles, high mountains, and clean water greet you on the upper Delaware. But a trip down the Delaware on a summer weekend offers you a unique experience. Hundreds of misled

paddlers who think a PFD is a seat cushion and a paddle is something to hit your partner with will accompany you down the river.

Your best time to paddle the upper Delaware is during the spring (cold water) or the fall (glorious colors) when no crowds converge on the river and quiet is your companion for the day or week!

Start at the Fish Commission access in Buckingham and float 80 miles downstream to the access at Matamoras. During these 80 miles, the Delaware flows through heavily wooded hills to mountains that form a canyon. Hardly any summer homes grace the banks of the Delaware, thanks to the National Park Service and the Upper Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River Act. You can float for miles and not see anybody but an occasional deer, eagle, or bear.

At moderate levels, the river is great for beginners. The waters are smooth and have well-spaced rapids that are wide open. Two exceptions are Skinners Falls and Shohola Rapids. Skinners has big waves and holes that can swamp an unsuspecting boat. Stick to the right and sneak slowly down and you will have no trouble at all. Shohola is an uncomplicated but long rapid. If the water is up, watch out! The same thing can happen to you that happens at Skinners.

One of the nicer sections to paddle, the upper Delaware offers peace and solitude and great scenery year-round.

Moshannon Creek

Commonly known as the "Red Mo" because of the acidic waters that drain into the stream from abandoned coal mines, this stream offers miles of great scenery and novice to intermediate whitewater. Your put-in is at the bridge at Osceola Mills, and then the Red Mo wanders. The creek is smooth, swift, and deep—great for novices.

As it enters a gorge below Munson, long and easy rapids form, but the gradient continues to increase. Maneuvering is required and the continuity of whitewater demands more than a beginner's skill. The scenery continues to improve and additional water allows you more time to enjoy it.

When you reach the mouth of the Red Mo, you'll see that it goes "uphill" to crash into the West Branch of the Susquehanna. You can take out at a private access on the left or paddle to Karthaus. If you don't feel like paddling that far, you can take out at the Route 53 bridge.

Paddle On

These streams and rivers are just a few of my personal favorites because they offer a great range in water. There are many other streams and creeks "up north" that are just waiting for you. The majority of these waters are runable year-round, but some can only be run in the spring when the water is up. To find out what the water level is on a particular stream, call the National Weather Service River Forecast office in Harrisburg at (717) 234-6812.

Remember to wear your personal flotation device (PFD) always. Respect private landowners if you have to portage on their land—always ask their permission. Never go alone—a recommended number of boats to have on a canoe trip is three. Have fun and paddle safely. See you on the river!—*HHM*

graphics by Reprographics, Div. of GANCOM

The New Water Ski Schools

by John M. Cornish II

In the realm of water skiing a new and interesting concept has surfaced. Throughout Pennsylvania and the United States the development of water ski schools and attendance at these schools is becoming more popular. Many skiers who have not had the experience of attending one of these schools wonder what a ski school is all about, who enrolls and why.

As water skiing's popularity has increased in the past several years, so have many recreational skiers desired to improve their skills. The consumer creates a market and the suppliers answer their demands. Hence, water ski schools have sprouted. The demand and recent publicity of water skiing has stimulated the creation of many ski schools varying in expertise, programs and locations (you will find schools in almost every state).

Any water skier, regardless of his or her interest and ability level, can find a ski school that services his needs. One of the areas that a skier might seek training in is any one or all three of the traditional water skiing disciplines of slalom skiing, trick skiing or jumping. Barefoot water skiing, show skiing, and kneeboarding are other areas of interest that schools have been established to service. Many of the schools mix their disciplines at a recreational level and specialize their instruction for more advanced skiers.

There are several questions that skiers should ask themselves and think about before enrolling in a ski school.

All water skiers, regardless of their interests and abilities, can find ski schools that service their needs. Many schools mix their disciplines at a recreational level and specialize their instruction for more advanced skiers.

American Water Ski Association

• *Why am I going to a ski school?*

Are you going on a vacation just to ski, or are you really using your vacation time to improve your skiing skills? Believe it or not, some individuals enter a ski school just for the opportunity to ski daily. This type of ski school enrollee has no concern for an entire day of skiing or a rigorous workout. If this is the case, you'll want to inquire about the outside recreational facilities and availability of entertainment.

Schools offer special programs for the recreational skier that disregard strict training. However, if you are looking for improved skills, ski schools provide intense training. The school you decide on may be in a resort or vacation setting, while another may be on a secluded lake somewhere. Be sure to get enough background on site location and facilities.

• *What do I expect to get out of attending a ski school? What are my goals?*

This question is important to answer as you consider your thoughts on the previous item. The answer to these two questions may determine where in the United States you plan to attend a school. It is possible to travel almost anywhere in the U.S., but your reasons for going to a school may solidify your decision. You personal expectations and the philosophy of the school must coincide for a successful ski school experience.

• *When do I attend a ski school?*

A suggestion to any prospective ski school student is again to consider your goals and schedule your attendance according to your physical conditioning. A typical situation is when a Pennsylvania skier wants to go south during the winter or early spring as a vacation away from the cold. The skier enters the southern ski school with visions of improved skills when the snow melts. These visions probably require an intense training program that the body (after the winter lay-off) is not ready for. After the first day of skiing the muscles are stiff and sore and improving any skills is highly unlikely. Plan your attendance with both your goals and your body conditioning in mind.

• *How long should I attend a ski school?*

Ski schools offer a variety of programs. Depending on your expectations and the school, a single day with two, two-hour skiing sessions may be arranged or as little as one, one-hour lesson may suffice. Other options include two- or three-day programs, one week of instruction or a couple of weeks at a training site. The week-long training programs probably include 5–7 skiing sessions a day. Within each of these choices the amount of skiing that you expect is a major consideration.

You may be fortunate enough to live near a school or have the funds available to attend a ski school on a regular weekly or bi-weekly basis. This type of program is probably ideal because you can receive instruction that meets your individual needs and abilities, go home and practice what you learned while developing your skills and physical stamina, and return to the school for evaluation, review and further instruction. This type of program sometimes becomes a contracted arrangement that can be very beneficial to both parties.

Ski schools usually have some type of boarding arrangements. Whether it is in a dormitory setting or an arrangement with a local accommodations, you'll need to inquire about the costs, location and other pertinent details with the ski school management.

The costs of ski schools are competitive and varied. On an average, one week at a ski school ranges from $300 to $500. Hourly and daily rates are usually available. Depending on the popularity of the school, its instructors and its name, you will find prices at all levels. The cost of attending a ski school may be a major factor in your decision of how long, where and when you attend.

• *How do I choose a ski school? Which one do I attend?*

Consider your goals, expectations and your personal physical and economic limitations. Other items that need to be considered are the quality and type of instruction offered at each school. You may want to research the schools you are considering to have a better understanding of their programs.

The American Water Ski Association has a listing of ski schools available by state. In those listings are some details about the schools. Both *The Water Skier* and *Water Ski* magazines offer articles and information on ski schools.

You'll notice that some of the schools are named for the well-known skiers who you see on television or hear about in magazines. Don't be surprised if you never see that famous skier, because most of the instruction is done by the school staff. If your goal is to receive instruction directly from the pro, you'll need to check this out before enrollment.

Make sure the pro and staff are good instructors. Some of the skiers who can perform and are great athletes are not able to effectively teach others how to improve their skills. In most cases, the staff instructors are very good at teaching skiing skills. Check with other skiers who have attended the schools. Ask for references. You may want one of the staff instructors to teach you rather than the pro.

If your goal is just to rub elbows with the professionals, don't worry about their instructional abilities. Just make sure they will be there to ski with you.

Another aspect to consider is the enrollment of the school's instructional sessions. Ask what your guaranteed water time is. It is possible to enroll in a school that might load a boat going out for instructional skiing with as many as eight or more skiers. This is not an element for quality or adequate water skiing instruction.

The type of instruction offered at the school may or may not fit your personality and convictions. This needs to be examined. Remember, you are actually going to pay someone to analyze, criticize and correct you and your performance as a water skier for the purpose of improving that performance. A skier must be ready to accept the constructive criticism from the instructor in the style of that instructor. This information needs to be processed and put to use without insult or negative feelings.

A skier's attitude and desire matched with some physical ability is the key to success. In many cases, the student makes the instructor and school successful with the proper attitude and personal preparation. Instructors and students alike should conform to each instructional situation because skiing possesses a personal pride that must at times be curtailed to make the instruction beneficial.

Water ski schools are a great idea for any recreational skier who has a desire to become a better skier, no matter which level one hopes to attain. The skier must first set his sights and know why he wants to go to a ski school. A skier is influenced by attitude, physical conditioning, ability and economics.

Next, the skier must evaluate the schools for what they have to offer and how it is presented. Consideration of all of these points is important to a successful ski school experience.

Commissioner Plumly Dead at 59

Commissioner Joan R. Plumly, of Jenkintown, died last November at the age of 59. Commissioner Plumly was an avid boater who valued safety and education most highly. For nearly 20 years she participated on the state, regional and national levels of the U.S. Power Squadrons, and she was especially active in the Delaware River Power Squadron. She was also a member of the Pennsylvania Boating Association for almost 20 years. She had been a commissioner since July 1984.

She taught family and friends to water ski, fish, sail, skin dive and snorkel, and she enjoyed boating on home waters and on the Chesapeake Bay with family and friends.

The Commission will miss her keen interest in and knowledge of Pennsylvania boating.

Rights of Way

Safety is a two-way street. Sharing the water with other boaters would be chaotic if it weren't for rules. There aren't visible lines dividing the waterways into traffic lanes, but boaters operating in crowded lakes and harbors stay on their side of the "road" to avoid collisions.

The principle all boat operators must follow is this: Only one boat has the right of way. This boat is termed "stand-on vessel," and is expected to proceed without changing course or altering speed. A boat not having the right of way, the "give-way vessel," must yield to the stand-on vessel. This is a simple rule, as these basic situations show.

- **Crossing.** Crossing occurs when two boats approach at an angle. If another boat approaches from the right (starboard) side, that boat is privileged and has the right of way. That boat holds its course and speed. The "give-way vessel" yields by slowing down or stopping and passing behind the other boat.
- **Overtaking.** When a boat overtakes another boat from the stern, the overtaking boat should keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken. The overtaken vessel holds a steady course and speed.
- **Meeting.** When two boats meet each other, on reciprocal or nearly reciprocal courses, neither has the right of way. Both are required to alter their courses to the right (starboard) so that they pass port to port.
- **General prudential rule.** When a boater has attempted the steps outlined above and an accident still seems inevitable, then do whatever is necessary to avoid a collision.
- **Special circumstances.** Boats propelled by oars or paddles have the right of way over motorboats. The same applies with sailboats. However, when a sailboat overtakes a motorboat, the motorboat is privileged and has the right of way.

This explanation is a capsulated view. For a complete accounting of the navigation rules, see *Navigation Rules, International—Inland,* available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402.

You will find another useful interpretation of the rules in *Chapman's Piloting, Seamanship and Small Boat Handling,* published by Hearst Marine Books.

In addition, see page 14 of the *Summary of Boating Regulations 1990.*

New Access Guide

The Chesapeake Bay and Susquehanna River Public Access Guide is a must for those who explore the river and bay. The guide, produced cooperatively by Pennsylvania, Virginia, the District of Columbia and Maryland, contains the most up-to-date information on public access sites in the Chesapeake Bay, its tidal tributaries and the Susquehanna River.

Colorful maps display information on over 650 public access points. Facilities at each site are listed for boating, swimming, hiking, camping, fishing, picnicking, nature study and more.

The new guide is available for $5, including shipping and handling, from: Pennsylvania Fish Commission, Publications Section, P.O. Box 1673, Harrisburg, PA 17105-1673. Please make your check or money order payable to the Pennsylvania Fish Commission.

Did you see the Commission's billboard? Members of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Advertisers Association donated 140 locations statewide last summer for a life jacket safety message. Tom Buckwalter and Glenn Schlosser of Whiteco Metrocom, Inc., coordinated the entire project and provided the artwork.

Dan Martin

CURRENTS

Runabouts and Water Skiing

If you are satisfied with your outboard rig's cruising performance, you may be disappointed when you decide to use the family runabout for water skiing. The outboard that the dealer said would tow two skiers can barely get one person up and running. The outboard doesn't seem to have enough "oomph."

The problem is usually not a lack of horsepower, say the Mariner Outboards boating authorities. It's much more likely that all you need is a propeller with a lower pitch.

A similar situation is driving a car with a stick shift. You use a "low" gear to get started, and then shift to "high" when you have built up speed. Going to a lower-pitch propeller is similar to starting in "low" gear. It lets you develop more thrust to pop skiers out of the water and get the boat on plane faster. Each 2-inch drop in pitch provides about 10 percent more thrust.

Pitch is the theoretical distance that a propeller moves forward while making one revolution of the blades. A 19-inch prop moves ahead 19 inches for each complete turn of the blades. (That's the theoretical movement; the distance is actually less.)

When the lower-pitched prop is on the engine but you're not towing a skier, watch the tachometer to make sure that the engine rpm does not continuously exceed the maximum recommended full throttle rpm. Propping the engine above the maximum recommended rpm limit is called "under propping."

Limited Use of PFDs Stymies Boating Safety Efforts

Twenty years of record-keeping have marked tremendous strides in boating safety. But one aspect of the record that has not improved is the number of boating fatalities attributable to drownings. According to Coast Guard estimates, 80 percent of all boating fatalities each year result from drownings, and most of these involve victims who were not wearing life jackets. Consumers shouldn't be confused by debate about the effectiveness of life jackets, or personal flotation devices (PFDs). The real problem arises from their lack of use. The numbers clearly show that PFDs save lives. But like seat belts in cars, they only work when they are worn.

The task of encouraging PFD use among boaters is helped along by laws requiring all boats to be equipped with one Coast Guard-approved PFD per passenger. But even though spot checks and stepped-up enforcement efforts are improving both awareness and compliance with this standard safety requirement, many boaters still choose not to wear flotation devices. Most people simply do not believe anything will happen to them. Others acknowledge the possibility of a mishap, but opt to rely on their swimming abilities in the event of an emergency.

Actually, capsizing or falling overboard, the most common scenario in boating fatalities, often results in a head injury that renders an otherwise capable swimmer unconscious. Cold water is also a danger that can make efforts of both good and inexperienced swimmers useless within minutes. Another overlooked factor is that foul-weather gear, frequently worn by fishermen and sailors, makes swimming nearly impossible. Even the strongest swimmers who suddenly find themselves overboard without a PFD are quickly weighted down by water-filled boots and raingear. They find merely staying afloat a major struggle.

PFD manufacturers have recognized that enhanced wearability is the key to getting more people to use PFDs—the best designs are the ones that get worn. Manufacturers are concentrating on providing multiple options for the wide variety of on-water activities. Today's PFDs come in models designed specifically for water skiing, canoeing, kayaking and so forth, and modern foul-weather gear now offers "float coats" and integral safety harnesses. Special PFDs for fishermen provide an extra benefit: In addition to buoyancy, they sport numerous pockets for storing lures and tackle.

With the wide selection of PFDs available, choosing the right model also becomes an essential factor in how often flotation devices are worn. To help consumers with selection, PFDs are rated according to their buoyancy and effectiveness in different kinds of waterways under various conditions. The Coast Guard recently adopted new names that better describe the intended uses and limitations of PFDs, replacing the earlier design of Types I through V. In this system, descriptions listing the advantages, disadvantages and available sizes are affixed to each life jacket sold after March 1989.

- **Off-shore Life Jacket (Type 1).** Best for open, rough, or remote waters where rescue may be delayed. Performs the best and will turn an unconscious person face-up, but can be bulky.
- **Near-Shore Life Vest (Type II).** Best suited for general boating activities in calm, inland waters where there is a good chance of fast rescue. More comfortable and less expensive than Type I, but will not necessarily float an unconscious person face-up.
- **Flotation Aid (Type III).** Best suited for calm waters where there will be fast rescue. Comfort, wearability and specialized designs for various boating activities make it the most popular choice, but it will not necessarily float an unconscious person face-up.
- **Throwable Device (Type IV).** Cushions, ring buoys and horseshoes designed to be thrown to someone in the water. Supplements buoyancy of a person wearing a PFD, but is not meant to be worn. Not recommended for children and non-swimmers.
- **Special-Use Device (Type V).** Restricted-use PFDs, such as sailboard harnesses, commercial whitewater vests, and the new "hybrid" vests that contain an inflatable chamber for additional flotation. Must be worn at all times. When inflated, provides same buoyancy as Type I, but is considered less reliable because of possibility of puncture.

Understanding the different PFD ratings and the importance of their use in all water activities is the other side of the wearability issue. The new designations are one of the latest steps in that direction. Some in the boating industry advocate additional legislation, but both manufacturers and the Coast Guard endorse education as the more effective way to convince boaters to wear PFDs. When education is successful, legislation and accompanying enforcement become much less necessary.—*National Marine Manufacturers Association*

CURRENTS

Don't Use Automotive Parts in Your Boat

Some marine engine parts seem very expensive compared to their automotive equivalents, but there are major differences in the environments in which they are designed to operate. Some automotive fuel components release fuel and vapor into the engine area, and some automotive electrical parts emit sparks. Fuel vapors do not accumulate beneath the hood of a car, but they quickly reach explosive levels in the engine area of a boat.

These parts include:

- Alternators
- Distributors
- Starters, generators, and accessory motors (hydraulic pump, tilt drive, and so forth)
- Starter solenoids
- Carburetors
- Fuel pumps

Using automotive components may seem like a bargain when you repair or replace parts on your boat, but be sure to look at the value on human life when you tune your marine engine.

Boating, Water Safety Awareness Workshop

The Fish Commission Bureau of Boating has scheduled an instructor workshop for its Boating and Water Safety Awareness Program in conjunction with Slippery Rock University on April 21 and 22, 1990.

This hands-on training includes topics such as personal flotation devices, small-boat safety, hypothermia, alcohol, basic rescue and river boating. Course time will be spent in the classroom and in the swimming pool. The course is open to school teachers, youth group leaders, park personnel and other interested individuals who work with students in the middle school or high school age group.

For more information or to schedule an instructor's workshop in your area, please contact Cheryl Kimerline, PA Fish Commission, Bureau of Boating, P.O. Box 1673, Harrisburg, PA 17105. The phone number is (717) 657-4540.

U.S. Coast Guard Offers Consumers Information and Assistance

The consumer affairs staff of the U.S. Coast Guard provides a central point of contact for consumers or users of Coast Guard services who have questions or complaints concerning Coast Guard programs and policies.

Although established to deal primarily with boating safety, the consumer staff also assists consumers who want information on other public-oriented Coast Guard programs such as vessel documentation, commercial vessel operator licenses, aids-to-navigation services, drawbridge operations, water pollution, search-and-rescue services, and vessel boardings for law enforcement purposes.

The consumer staff produces and distributes information on Coast Guard activities and policies through press releases, media articles, a newsletter called the *Boating Safety Circular,* and a series of Coast Guard consumer fact sheets. The fact sheets cover topics of interest to consumers—for example, the "Pros and Cons of Documenting a Boat," "Marine Sanitation Devices on Boats," and "Sources of Boating Safety Education." Single copies of the *Boating Safety Circular* and fact sheets are available free.

The consumer staff also operates a toll-free Boating Safety Hotline: 800-368-5647. The hotline is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It's designed to do three things: (1) tell boat owners and buyers whether a particular boat model has been involved in a safety recall (in some recalls, manufacturers are only able to notify a small percentage of current owners); (2) take reports from owners concerning safety problems in their boats to determine if a safety recall is warranted; and (3) answer questions on boating safety.

For additional information on U.S. Coast Guard programs, call or write the Commandant (G-BC), U.S. Coast Guard, 2100 Second Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20593. The phone number is 800-368-5647.

Dedicated to the sound conservation of our aquatic resources, the protection and management of the state's diversified fisheries, and the ideals of safe boating and optimum boating opportunities.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE
Edward R. Miller, P.E., *Executive Director*
Lawrence W. Hoffman, *Executive Assistant*
C. Blake Weirich, *Aquatic Resources Planning Coordinator*
Dennis T. Guise, *Chief Counsel*
Robert B. Hesser, *Environmental and Technical Liaison*
John Arway, *Division of Environmental Services*
Joseph A. Greene, *Legislative Liaison*
Lois J. Telep, *Executive Secretary*

COMPTROLLER
Ross A. Starner

BUREAU OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
717-657-4522
Allison J. Mayhew, *Director*
Rafael Perez-Bravo, *Personnel*
Glen Reed, *Federal Aid*
Mary Stine, *Fishing Licenses*

BUREAU OF FISHERIES
814-359-5100
Delano Graff, *Director*
Vincent Mudrak, *Division of Research*
Richard A. Snyder, *Division of Fisheries Management*
Dennis C. Ricker, *Division of Trout Production*
Shyrl Hood, *Division of Warmwater/Coolwater Fish Production*

BUREAU OF PROPERTY AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT
814-359-5100
James Young, P.E., *Director*
James I. Waite, *Division of Construction & Maintenance Services*
K. Ronald Weis, R.A., *Division of Engineering & Technical Services*
Eugene O. Banker, P.E., *Division of Property Services*

BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
717-657-4542
Edward W. Manhart, *Director*

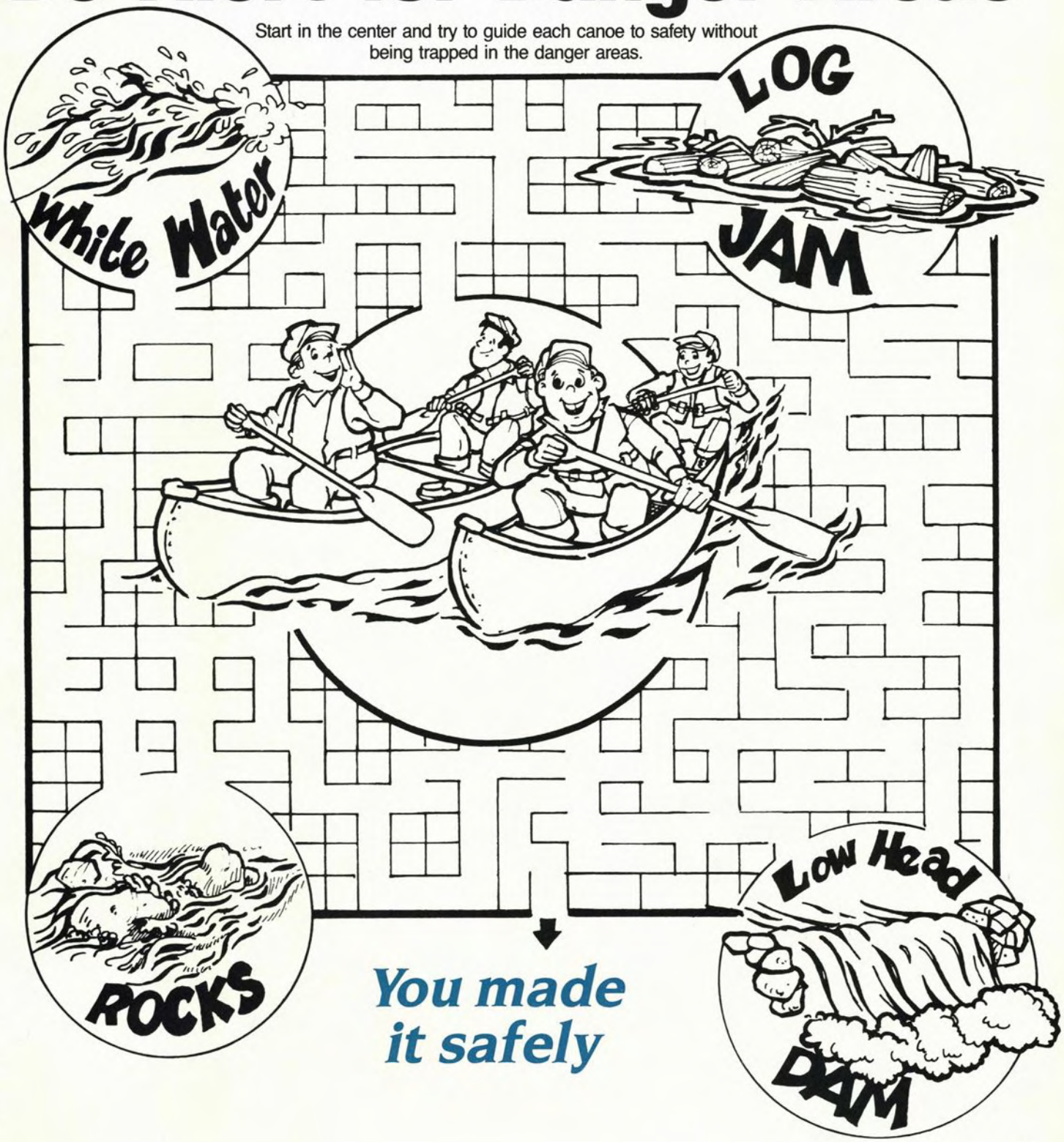
BUREAU OF BOATING
717-657-4540
John Simmons, *Director*
Virgil Chambers, *Division of Boating Safety & Education*
Andrew Mutch, *Division of Boat Registration*

BUREAU OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION
717-657-4518
Cheryl K. Riley, *Director*
Larry Shaffer, *Publications*
Stephen B. Ulsh, *Education*
C. Blake Weirich, *Education*
Dave Wolf, *Media Relations*
Art Michaels, *Magazines*
Ted R. Walke, *Graphic Design*

KIDS PAGE!

Be Alert for Danger Areas

Start in the center and try to guide each canoe to safety without being trapped in the danger areas.



illustration—Ralph Phillips

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in Pennsylvania

by Dan Martin

Mayday! Mayday! The repeated call came over the marine radio, "We're taking on water. My boat is sinking." The Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel increased speed, heading toward the distressed boat. Within minutes another water-related disaster was prevented by a patrolling U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary team. Since 1939, the all-volunteer Auxiliary has assisted thousands of boaters this way and in many other ways.

Fifty years ago the United States Congress had the foresight to pass legislation creating the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The Auxiliary served during World War II, guarding ports, making seagoing rescues and patrolling our shores. After the war the Auxiliary began its current program in boating safety.

One of the four cornerstones of the Auxiliary is to assist the regular Coast Guard in search-and-rescue operations and to go on patrols. In Pennsylvania, members from the three Auxiliary districts perform hundreds of official patrols during the boating season while under orders from the Coast Guard. During these operations, privately owned vessels manned by trained Auxiliary crews perform all kinds of services to boaters. They tow vessels, patrol at regattas and special events, pump bilges and provide boaters with navigation, weather and other information.

While on patrol, they also help update charts, check lights on bridges and verify placement of aids to navigation. You see Auxiliary patrol vessels everywhere in Pennsylvania from Lake Erie to the tidal waters of the Delaware River. The Auxiliary also has air operations that fly search-and-rescue missions and perform other boating safety duties, such as monitoring boating density on lakes and rivers.

The most amazing thing about the Auxiliary is that they do all this free of charge. All auxiliarists are trained in boat handling and must be certified to go on patrols and perform services. They use their own boats and planes, buy their own uniforms, pay for their own travel and use their vacation time to train and perform public service to boaters.

Shortly after coming to the Fish Commission, I took one public Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety course, "Boating Skills and Seamanship." The free 13-lesson course included instruction in boating safety and legal requirements, boat handling, marlinspike seamanship (knot tying), weather, marine radios, navigation rules, boating terminology, trailering, rules of the road, sailing and piloting. The course was taught by members of the local Auxiliary flotilla. The instructors made every effort to keep the course interesting. All the instructors were experienced boaters, many of whom had years of boating experience. This course is also taught in a six-lesson core format. The Auxiliary also offers a "Sailing and Seamanship" course and one on "Advanced Coastal Navigation." Education is one of the Auxiliary "cornerstones" and is very important to Pennsylvanians.

The Auxiliary teaches more boating classes than all other organizations combined. There is no charge for any of the three courses other than class materials. In addition to teaching formal boating classes, auxiliarists provide special programs on boating and boating safety to schools and organizations. Hundreds of boating classes are offered each year by flotillas all over Pennsylvania.

The most amazing thing about the Auxiliary is that they do all this free of charge.

For information on where to take an Auxiliary course near you, call toll-free 800-AUX-USCG. Everyone going on the water should take a safe boating course. Public education courses on boating are also offered by the U.S. Power Squadrons, the American Red Cross, Scout groups, some schools and the Fish Commission.

Another "cornerstone" of the Auxiliary is performing Courtesy Marine Examinations. These free boating safety equipment checks are performed at public boat docks and other locations by trained teams of Auxiliary examiners. Boats are checked by request of their owners to make certain all state and federal mandated safety equipment is on board and in legal operating condition.

In addition to mandated legal requirements, the boat must also satisfy Auxiliary requirements for safety equipment to be issued the annual "Seal of Safety" decal. Auxiliary examiners provide the boat owner with one-on-one advice on how to equip and maintain the vessel. Many insurance companies give a discount to boat owners who pass this examination. President Bush, like thousands of other boat owners, has his boat inspected every year.

Auxiliarists, when they find time, also assist the Coast Guard during mobilization exercises, often playing "bad guys" so that regular Coast Guard units can practice boarding, drug searches and other operations. Auxiliarists stand weekend communication watches at radio bases, perform pollution patrols, and assist the Coast Guard in recruiting efforts.

If this sounds like a lot, it is. Auxiliarists do as much or as little as they are qualified or have time for, and they have fun. Fellowship is the final "cornerstone" and one the organization could not do without. Auxiliarists are an amiable bunch and take time to enjoy one another's company and boating. Membership is open to the public and is usually explained at public boating classes.

Auxiliarists perform hundreds of patrols during the boating season. Privately owned vessels crewed by trained personnel perform all kinds of services to boaters.

As an employee of the Fish Commission and a boating education specialist, I often have the opportunity to spend time with auxiliarists. They really are the salt of the earth. They give so much and ask nothing in return other than the enjoyment of being on the water and helping other boaters. So keep up the good work, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary! And happy 50th Anniversary!

The Auxiliary teaches more boating classes than all other organizations combined. There is no charge for any course except for class materials.

Boating education specialist Dan Martin is the Commission Coast Guard Auxiliary liaison.

Dan Martin

A Salute To Boating Volunteers

by Cheryl Kimerline

Take water and add firefighters, emergency medical personnel, school teachers, college students, Red Cross water safety instructors and other water safety-oriented people. What do you get? A dedicated, energetic group of Bureau of Boating volunteers.

These individuals tolerate hot, humid summers, brave the rainy springs and falls, and survive the frigid Arctic winter winds to aid the Commission in instructing young people in boating and water safety awareness programs, training rescue personnel in water and ice rescue operations, staffing boating displays at mall shows and sportsmen shows, and providing lectures to civic organizations.

Why does this small but hardy group of individuals volunteer valuable time to the Fish Commission? The answers are as varied as the individuals. David McGonigle, summer college intern from Shippensburg University, likes to tell this story to describe one of his summer teaching experiences.

"Our Boating and Water Safety Awareness Program starts with a discussion about various types and functions of PFDs (personal flotation devices). The students on this hot, humid day were less than attentive as they listened to my lecture. The real learning started during a short relay race of swimming 50 yards while wearing the PFD. The comments before the activity ranged from, "this sure is not very far," "I can't swim with a PFD on," to, "sure will be easy to complete." However, on completing the swim, comments through chattering teeth and while gasping for air sounded like, "glad to have the PFD on 'cause I sure couldn't have saved myself if I didn't," and, "swimming in cold water isn't easy."

"I will remember all the students I taught last summer," David said. "It really was a cool, wet and wild experience."

George Angstadt, first assistant chief of Ephrata Area Rescue, expresses another view. George is a water rescue volunteer because he thinks "everybody should learn water rescue procedures." Angstadt's

Volunteer Jeff McKay (above) teaches ice rescue. Intern David McGonigle (left) teaches students how to wear PFDs.

Water Rescue volunteer instructor John Weinel teaches a line system instructor's water rescue course.

Fish Commission photos

Volunteer Bill Snelling (above, top photo) shows how to paddle a swamped canoe. Intern Heidi Milbrand (above) teaches paddling strokes.

Water Rescue volunteer Geroge Angstadt demonstrates in-water rescue techniques with Fish Commission instructor Dan Martin. Courses are geared to sports enthusiasts as well as professional rescue personnel.

Fish Commission photos

goal is to train rescue personnel how to work in difficult water situations without putting themselves in danger. For the rescuer, the risk encountered can be avoided, particularly with training.

2,000 hours

In 1989, our volunteers contributed almost 2,000 hours of service. In addition to their valuable service, several volunteers were recognized as recipients of awards. George Angstadt and Thomas Eckert, lieutenant with the York City Fire Department, received the 1989 Water Rescue Award presented by the Fish Commission in recognition for outstanding contributions in the promotion of the Pennsylvania Water Rescue Training Program.

Thomas E. Eckert also received the 1989 Regional National Water Safety Congress Award in recognition of his accomplishments in water safety and rescue training. Steven Ketterer, Harrisburg River Rescue, received the 1989 Local National Water Safety Congress Award for his accomplishments in water safety and rescue training.

Getting involved

What's the prerequisite for these individuals to get involved with these boating and water safety activities? Virgil Chambers, chief of the Commission Boating Safety and Education Division, says, "Knowledge and experience coupled with enthusiasm for our program are the basic ingredients that we look for in a volunteer instructor. In addition to teaching ability, our instructors must believe in hands-on training and should not be afraid to get wet."

How can you become a volunteer for the Bureau of Boating? These dedicated individuals went through our training classes and enjoyed them so much that they wanted more. A swimming and boating background is the first step to becoming a volunteer. Second, everyone should enjoy working with people. Third, these individuals are highly motivated with personal goals and commitments in the field of boating and water safety.

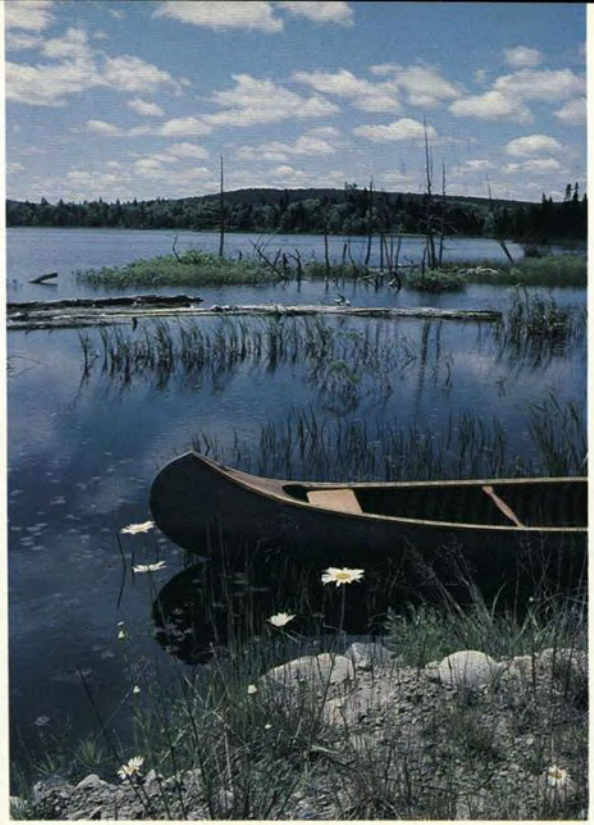
The Fish Commission would like to thank these dedicated individuals. Our programs thrive because of them!

Cheryl Kimerline is the Commission Bureau of Boating special programs coordinator

The Witchery

# of Water

by Linda Steiner



Linda Steiner

As if in some magician's spell, I drift suspended. Far below me I see rocks scraped and gouged by a giant's hand. I float on and they fall away beneath me. Then there is nothingness. I am over a green-black abyss. I feel the dizziness of height, a fear of falling. But fascination holds me and I peer down, down to where the light fails. What, I wonder, lurks in the inky darkness?

Monsters, trolls, gremlins? Hardly. A lake trout perhaps. I dip my paddle in the clear liquid and the canoe glides effortlessly across the water. I skim the deep dropoff in the glacier-carved lake and round the island. A reassuring sight awaits me.

There are other vacationers here on the sunny lake. Some are paddling, like me, others cruising with sail or buzzing motor, or just lazing back at rest in a gently rocking boat. I also see them on the shoreline, sitting on docks, toes trailing in the water, or on lawn chairs in front of cabins, watching the rest of us play.

But is that all? Is that all we're here for? For play, for a suntan, for a couple of days off? Why aren't we elsewhere? Why have we chosen to spend our time on the water, to float in it, ride on it, sit by its side? Are the reasons transparently practical, or are they obscurely embedded in ourselves, in our needs? Or is it all a spell, a witchery the water has cast on us?

It's true that water exerts a potent influence, an undeniable enchantment. Like moths drawn to a flickering flame, we come to the waterside to be entranced. It satisfies our senses, mirrors our moods, yet remains uniquely its own creature.

Water is an "almost living thing." What else in nature is so palpable yet so powerful and changeable? Not the sky—it's beyond our touch, and not the unmoving rocks. Even a tree tossed by wind is still a tree. But a lake! It can be sleepily placid, an incarnate lullaby, and minutes later, so transformed by a storm that there's no need for a monster below to inspire terror. Calm or turbulent, water is liquid emotion. No wonder we feel a kinship of spirit.

At the waterside we are never alone. The water is a constantly varying companion, surprising us with the richness of its

character. It reveals some new side every moment of the day or night, and from season to season. Happily bright at noon, discreetly shy in morning mist, or harlequined with sunset hues, it mystifies anew at midnight. In the dark it shows a shimmering pathway to the moon. Come dance your way to the stars.

We need a boat, of course, to surrender to that embrace. And when we do, we leave the familiarity of firm ground for a medium bewitched. We enter a realm of magic simply by going out onto the water. Clouds float by below us, and a thousand tiny suns sparkle in the waves. We see not only the water's reflective surface, but through the mirror itself, into an alien world.

We sit atop someone's sky, while fishes fly beneath us. In that foreign land, forests are strangely treed with weeds that undulate in a water wind. Miniature mountains of drowned boulders conceal dim caves, not dragons' lairs, but the hiding places of bass and bluegills.

Even in the clearest lake, the scene is not as it seems. It is distorted, as an enchantment. The bottom rises to our eyes, but not in fact. A stick that pierces the surface bends, but when drawn out is straight again. Things underwater are not where they appear to be, and with a change of angle or breath of breeze, they disappear altogether.

Above, I see a sailboat grow two hulls and masts. Two sets of people on board laugh one laugh across the water mirror. Shoreline trees have no roots, but green boughs at top and bottom. A bird flies above me, while its double keeps pace below. I lower my paddle toward the surface and see another rising to meet it. I myself have a water twin. It makes me think of something I read,

"I saw new Worlds beneath the Water lie, New People;
yea, another Sky and Sun . . . "

Not all the mystification lies in looking down. When we are on the water, the incantation contains a change in our perception. Is it we who are moving, or the shoreline? Does the land rise and fall with the waves? Is the edge rushing by the river? Our senses defy our common sense. We know we are astride the water's strong back. We can feel its muscle. Then why do the eyes belie?

And what of the ears? The tongues of the water know many tales. Some are whispered secrets just between us two, the hushing of a ripple reaching shore, the quiet tinkling of a spring that reveals a stream's constant birth. Or it may be a loud war song, the clamor of battle between river and rock, a fast-raging, high-leaping, foam-flecked fight, which, in time, the river always wins.

We may act as spectator to the fray, or be a participant borne along on the wild water, unharmed but not untouched. To ride such rapids is an experience in awe and humility. Water cannot be mastered, only cajoled into giving us passage.

With foot against the ground, weight-lifting, friction-struggling, we win our progress hard on land. Motion on the water is dreamlike. Though I am not strong, my paddle pulls a canoe I cannot lift, easily and swiftly the length of the lake. I push the paddle away from the stern and the boat turns, rotating as effortlessly as I might spin on my toes. Unmerited grace is a gift of the water's wizardry.

Linda Steiner

Linda Steiner

Another gift is that of time and timelessness. On the water, we are intensely in the present, in the "right now" of grappling with current and wave. Here the water's whims matter most, not ours, and we had better pay attention. In the face of such immediacy the petty past and future have no place.

But the profound does. Water spellbinds us because it hints of an unrememberable past. Perhaps what draws us to the waterside is so deeply ingrained in our own history, so anciently basic to humankind, we can hardly step back and define it, only react to it. We grew up needing the water and ending up wanting its companionship as well.

There is something eternal about rivers and lakes. They hold cryptic messages for us of our own mortality. Water runs away downstream and is gone, but the river remains. A boat may boldly slice the surface of the lake, but we leave no scar behind, nor any other mark to say, "we were here." The water is as unconcerned with our passing as is the rest of the universe.

Undeniably, water is a place for more than one type of reflection. A lake "is the earth's eye, looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." It expresses our moods for us in tempestuous storm, contemplative peace, or gaily breezy waves. Or it impresses its own emotion on us, changing our mood to fit. Water allows us to experience feelings generated from without, not just within, ourselves.

Each body of water presents innumerable faces, and no two rivers, lakes, streams, or ponds are alike. Every one possesses its own charm. Some glitter like fairy gems between the steep walls of mountains. Some reflect magical bits of sky in otherwise dull terrain. In the immensity of some we see the earth curve. One long frog leap carries us across others. The array of water's personalities demands our attention and bewitches our imagination.

All of water's manifestations lure use powerfully, but we need not be wary of its sorcery. The water mirror presents true images of ourselves and the world, as well as distorted illusions. Both are equally entertaining and revealing. Lolling in a boat, we feel the water's gentle cradle rock, yet enjoy the knowledge of its potential for power. Not alive, but lifelike, displaying motion, voice and mood, what else in the stolid landscape could be so akin to our mercurial selves?

Only that continuing enchantress, water.

PA 432 FC