

Early Summer 1993

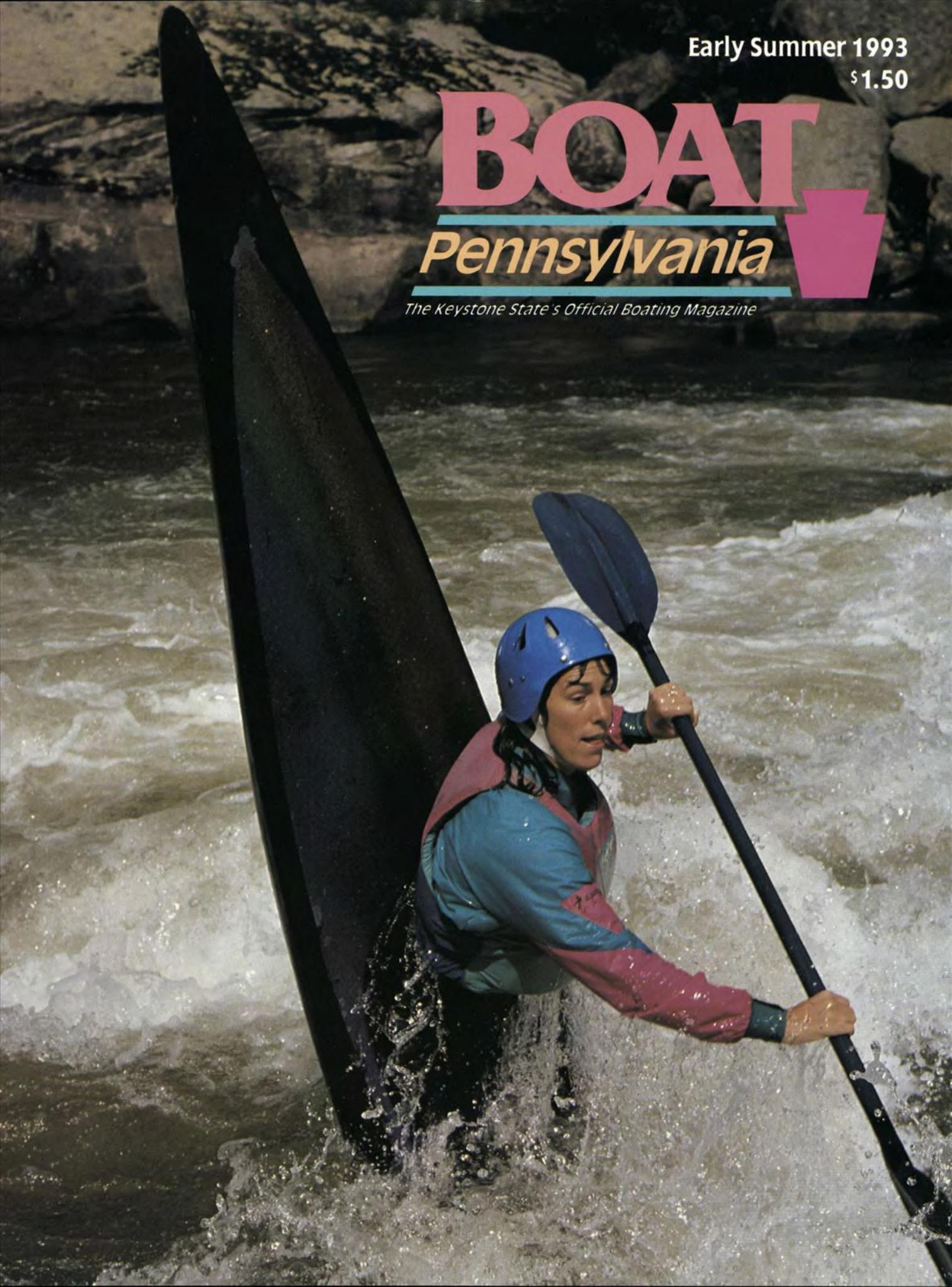
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BOAT

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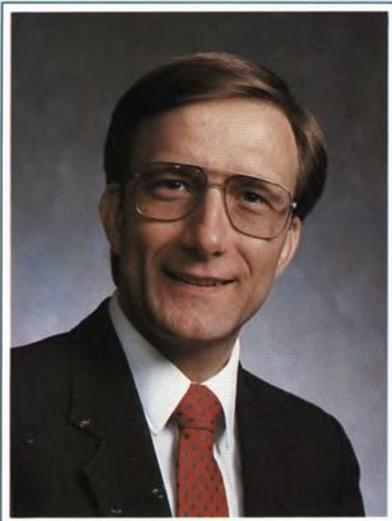


The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine



Viewpoint

“Sometimes all it takes to save a life is a little character”



John Simmons
Director
Bureau of Boating
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Recently, boating educators from across the country gathered for the annual National Safe Boating Council's Professional Training Seminar. For three days these people who have made boating safety their life work shared experiences, techniques and ideas to make recreational boating safer and more enjoyable. I think they had a little fun themselves while they were at it, but then, I don't know another group of individuals who enjoy their work as much as these people do.

The theme of this year's seminar was "Accomplishing the Mission... Safer Boating Through Education." The conference coordinators could not have been more on the mark. As the numbers of boaters who use our waters increase, the need for boating education becomes more and more apparent. It used to be that a person could get in his small outboard and ski or fish all day and hardly be bothered by anyone else. Today we must be ever vigilant for the other operator. The margin for error is much higher and it is important that we know and understand the rules of the road and observe the rules of seamanship.

The Commission's Boating Basics course, introduced just last year, has met with remarkable success. Over 400 instructors are now certified to teach this eight-hour program. This past winter there was a flurry of course offerings, many of which were filled to the point at which students were turned away.

The Commission is in the process of hiring four regional boating program specialists to continue the development of this program. Funding for these positions comes from the recent increase in boat registration fees. These individuals should be on staff this summer, and we are looking to increase further the number of Pennsylvania boaters who voluntarily complete a boating education course.

Courses will be offered throughout the season. Boaters interested in taking the course or becoming involved in teaching the course should contact the Commission Boating Safety and Education Division for more information.

Fifty percent of boating fatalities nationwide are caused by capsizing and falling overboard. Obviously, few people do this intentionally, so it is important that a life jacket be worn most of the time, especially during those times of the year when the weather and water temperature are still cool.

Poor swimmers should also opt to wear rather than stow. Unpowered boats, especially canoes, are by design more prone to capsize, and wearing a life jacket should be a routine occurrence. Those who canoe extensively already know this and almost always wear their PFDs. Fifty-six percent of fatal boating accidents over the past five years, however, occurred in unpowered boats. This percentage is much too high. It is a statistic that the Commission would like to see lowered.

Accidents such as the recent one in Florida involving three Cleveland Indians baseball players who collided at high speed with a dock make the greatest headline news. They are not the most common accidents. From the time when records were kept, falling in the water unexpectedly has been the leading cause of fatalities.

The Florida Marine Patrol introduced a mascot during the conference to help get this message across. "Bobber" is a reminder that we can all use a little help sometimes. We hope that boaters everywhere will heed the message of safety professionals. Take a boating course. Wear a life jacket. Be especially observant and considerate this year. And remember... "Sometimes all it takes to save a life is a little character."

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The covers

This issue's front cover, photographed by Kevin O'Brien, shows a kayaker having fun on the Youghiogheny River, Fayette County. If you're thinking of similar fun, you might want to learn how to kayak. The how-to details appear on page 28. Similarly, check out the article on canoe-camping on page 4, and the details on floating the Delaware on page 16. If you own a powerboat, turn to the article on boat covers, on page 9, the information on how to install a deck plate on page 12, and the piece on cruising Kinzua on page 24. The mid-season boat maintenance ideas on page 14 can help you keep your rig trouble-free this season, and if you spot a minor problem, you can fix it before it becomes a forehead-slapping major expense. This issue's back cover, photographed by Russ Gettig, shows a group on a pontoon boat cruising Glendale Lake, Prince Gallitzin State Park, Cambria County.