

BOAT

Pennsylvania 

The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine

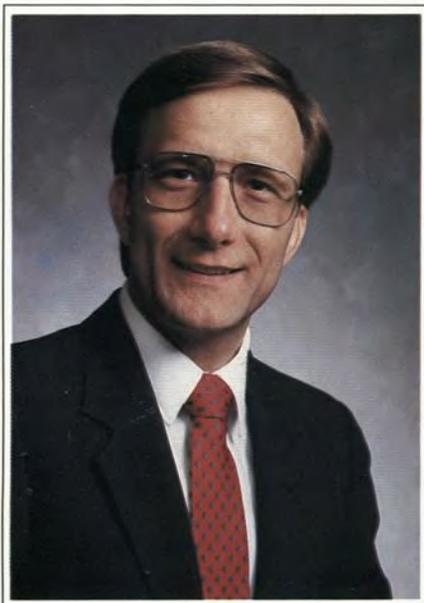
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Viewpoint



Who's at Fault?



John Simmons
Director
Bureau of Boating
Pennsylvania Fish Commission

One of the things that I enjoy after a day's work is a bicycle ride through the hills surrounding my home. For an hour I get to work out my frustrations, be by myself, and enjoy the outdoors.

The time on my bike also gives me time to reflect. On one recent trip I thought about how inconsiderate many motorists are. I couldn't count the many times motorists passed me on blind corners, passed too close, or tailgated me down a hill. I have had one bike wrecked when an individual passed on my left and immediately turned right, right in front of me. Many times I have had people make left turns or cross in front of my approach as if I were not there. I have been fortunate not to have experienced a serious accident.

I wondered how people could be so inconsiderate. I have as much right to the roads in my township as they do. But then I began to ponder my own driving habits. I found that I do many of the same things when the table is turned and I'm behind the wheel. I try to do better. Yet I do many of the same things driving my car that I think are really stupid when I'm the one on the bike.

I thought about some of the things I do as a bicyclist. I always wear a helmet and stop at traffic lights. I always signal my intentions. But stop signs become little more than an annoyance as I slide through. I go around potholes and don't always check behind me. I pass cross streets and, daydreaming, don't pay attention to the possibility of cars coming from my right. In short, I do things that are not safe and that probably aggravate motorists—and I should know better.

Boaters do many of the same things. I often hear big-boat operators complain about little fishing boats and angling boaters complain about the actions of the big powerboats. Everybody complains about personal watercraft. But ask yourselves, "Am I without fault?" When was the last time you checked your wake? Are big wakes created only by big boats? Do you always give a drifting fishing boat a wide berth? Do you assume as a sailboater that you can do whatever you want? Do you try to water ski in a crowded area? Do you fish where everybody else is trying to water ski? Do you look behind you before turning?

These are things that everybody knows but how often do we forget? It is so easy to think that all problems are caused by someone else. I would have a hard time counting the number of times people have told me they moved to a particular area to get away from the crowds and because they liked the atmosphere of a particular lake. "The lake isn't the way it used to be," they tell me later. "Why, when I came here..."

Few of these individuals realize or will accept that the lake has changed precisely because that individual and hundreds of others also saw that wonderful lake and thought the same thing. The lake didn't change after they came. It changed *because* they came.

Boating is a very popular recreational pursuit among Pennsylvania residents. Despite the recession, boating continues to grow. People are buying different types of boats than a few years ago—mainly big boats and small personal watercraft. This is changing the character of our boating waters. Education, regulation, restriction and law enforcement will help control this new population of boaters. But all boaters must become aware that they are part of the problem. It's not always the other guy.

"Physician, heal thyself," the saying goes. If boating is to continue to prosper, boaters must recognize that the problems we face come from within. We must adjust our attitudes toward others who share common waters. We must accept our share of the responsibility for a safe and enjoyable recreational boating experience.

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The covers

This issue's front cover shows Adrian Martin holding her own on a pull toy in the Susquehanna River near Goldsboro. On the back cover, Sue Hartman skiffs the wake. This action also took place in the Susquehanna River near Goldsboro. If water skiing or pull toys interest you, see page 4 for vital information. Paddlers won't want to miss page 8 and 26, and be sure to read pages 14 and 16 for fascinating bits of boating history. All boater have a stake in the problem of noise. See page 12 for details. Want to give a terrific gift this holiday season? Please turn to page 31.

How to be an Expert Observer

by Bruce Kistler

