



# THE DRUM



A Publication of the Seneca Sail & Power Squadron

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## From The Commander

*By Mark Erway, AP*

As we come to the end of 2015 I am mindful of what a great pleasure it is to be part of the Seneca Sail and Power Squadron. We have a number of active, capable, committed, contributing members who work together very well. Together we have accomplished the task of remaining a healthy unit as we continue to follow our Strategic Plan by means of events and activities that share the knowledge and fun of boating, resulting in increased participation and membership.

Last January our Squadron Education Officer, Tom Alley, and our Junior Sailing Co-Leaders, Rolf Lewis and Katie Alley, traveled to the National Conference meeting in Jacksonville, FL where they gave a presentation on our Junior Sailing program. During the year, the Ensign Magazine, the Squadron's national publication carried, not one, but two articles written by Tom Alley and co-authored by our XO Charles Fausold, ASEO Jim McGinnis, and Junior Sailor Co-Leaders, Katie Alley and Rolf Lewis. By the way, Katie Alley just had an article published in the Winter 2016 edition of Ensign (page 8), about this summer's Junior Sailing cruise. Congratulations Katie!! [That makes 3 consecutive issues containing articles from the Seneca Squadron! - Ed.] Junior Sailing is home-ported out of the Village Marina in Watkins, and this year we had nine young people involved in the program along with six adults and four host boats. Classes were mostly OTW with the weather ranging from dead calm



to 20+ knots, heavy jackets to T-shirts. We learned sailing basics and after a few weeks added racing basics. By prearrangement, the Finger Lakes Yacht Club, with whom we have a wonderful working relationship, graciously allowed us to compete in their series of races. What great fun it was, and better yet, we got to mix Squadron and Yacht Club together before and after each race. All in all, it was a very successful program.

In order to continue growing this very successful program in 2016 we need more adult volunteers (two adults per boat) and we need two or three more host boats. Remember, insurance is covered by USPS. This was my first year helping out and it was so rewarding I will certainly be doing it again. (A side note here - Annie and I just bought F5, a 1987 O'Day 272LE and we will be offering it as a host boat.)

The idea behind Junior Sailing is, first of all, to share the joy and the knowledge of sailing with our young people; and secondly, to get families to discover the joy of boating. An example of success in this area is the Stewart Family; Mom, Dad, and both children (who are members of our Junior Sailor program)

### Attention Members!

**What:** The annual Seneca Sail & Power Squadron Change of Watch

**When:** 1300 on Sunday, 17 Jan 2016

**Where:** Hilton Garden Inn, Horseheads

have joined the Squadron and Mom (Karen) is already serving as our Public Relations Officer. And through them another family of four have recently joined. Our roster currently lists 82 names associated with our Squadron. WE are bucking the national trend, and that is success.

Our Squadron will have a strong educational offering in 2016 because we have a strong educational department. We kick off in January with a new offering called a "Maintenance Seminar", it will be approximately seven weeks of hands-on restoring a Fleetwind 12 sailboat. We will, of course, offer ABC classes and others as the schedule is developed. I think one of the strongest components of our classes are the "other" people we meet, that is, the instructors and the class members, with whom we form lasting friendships.

Another very important component to our growth is that we have four members who are Vessel Safety Examiners. These men will provide a friendly, legally non-binding, overview of your vessel from a very basic safety oriented standpoint. It is only meant to give you assurance that things like your PFD's, fire extinguishers, blowers and fans, bilges, and navigation lights meet basic standards. Rather than feeling threatened we would hope people feel some level of comfort knowing they are in decent shape to be on the water, and that their family and guests are as safe as the skipper can make it.

Did you know that there are prizes given out at our District Conferences for the numbers of Safety Checks performed by members in a Squadron? Typically, Rochester walks away with it, but it would be great to see our Squadron win a prize. So, this spring and summer, would you allow us to perform a safety check on your vessel? They are free of charge and only take about 30 minutes. Contact Don Kloeber, Ray Margeson, Jim McGinnis, or Charles Fausold. Each one of these VSE's needs to make at least five checks in 2016 to keep their certification. Would you help them out?

I'd like to give special recognition to some of our Squadron members:

- Sixteen new members in 2015:
  - Kim and Richard Hawley;
  - Karen and Robert Stewart, their children Junior Sailors Jill and Sam;
  - Howard and Meg Cabeza, their children Tessa and Henry;
  - Mike Crouse (Coach for Junior Sailors);
  - Dave and Patty Dawson-Elli;
  - Junior Sailor Zack Michel;
  - Tim Wade; and Junior Sailor Robert Whalen.
 (Eleven of these members are because of the Junior Sailing program.)
- Joseph Strait, Jr. who received his 25-year membership pin.
- Charles Fausold on attaining his Senior Navigator (SN) rating.
- Carrie Sproul, who attained Life Member for having received 25 merit marks because of her many years of selfless devotion and service to the Squadron.

Next year our Squadron will host **Rendezvous 2016**, July 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. Squadron members will boat from Watkins to Geneva, go through the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, travel the length of Cayuga, and end up in Ithaca. You are invited to participate in any portion of or the entirety of the route. Set the dates aside on your calendar now. We will be having a good time and you don't want to miss it. We plan on having events for juniors as well as adults; competitions, OTW seminars, prizes, food and, most of all, fun.

You are all invited to our annual **Change of Watch** which will take place Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1 to 4 pm (1300 to 1600) and this year it will be at the Hilton Garden Inn, Big Flats. For those who are new, it is a special meeting when the slate of officers for the new year are elected and sworn in, and we'll talk a bit about what's coming up for 2016. This year our District 6 Administrative Officer, Nancy Bieber, will be with us to give some words of recognition and encouragement and do the official swearing in of our officers.

## The Drum

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The holidays are behind us, the new year lies ahead; it's not too long until spring preparation begins and launch day will be right around the corner. Check out the educational offerings as they are announced. [See page 4 of this newsletter! – Ed.] Watch for activities that interest you. Then, sign up, join in. You'll be amazed how much we have to

offer and even more amazed at how much you have to offer.

Regards,

- Cmdr. Mark  
SV F5

[cmdr@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:cmdr@SenecaPowerSquadron.US)

## From the Executive Officer

By Charlie Fausold, SN-IN



Recently I was awarded the grade of Senior Navigator (SN) by the USPS. Also known as a “full certificate” it signifies that I have completed and passed all of the courses, from Seamanship to Navigation and all of the electives. It has been quite a journey. I have also completed several marathons, and while I may not be the fastest person

on the course, when I start something I like to finish it.

I will be the first to admit that earning this distinction does not mean that I have become a master mariner. “Book learning” is no substitute for on-the-water experience. Fundamental principles and skills acquired in the classroom must be applied in real situations in order to be truly “learned.” Although I have been boating all of my life, my experience has been limited to Seneca Lake. AP taught me how to read a set of tide tables, but I have never had a chance to actually use them.

You may ask, why bother to learn celestial navigation if I never sail beyond sight of my own dock? Well, for one thing I have always enjoyed learning new things, and the USPS makes it easy. The courses are well designed, the

manuals and presentations are excellent, and our squadron is blessed with knowledgeable and enthusiastic instructors led by stellar SEO Tom Alley, SN. Second, what better way to spend a winter evening - or a summer afternoon – than in the company of other boaters, telling stories, sharing experiences, and learning together? And finally, what is boating all about if not dreaming? There is always that bigger vessel, a new destination just over the horizon, adventures yet to be had.

What is the next port of call on your cruise through the USPS?

Fair winds,

- Charlie  
[xo@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:xo@SenecaPowerSquadron.US)

## From the Administrative Officer

By Rebecca Lewis



Happy New Year 2016!

It is my hope that you all have had a very wonderful holiday season and may even be stretching it out to enjoy it just a bit more.

2015 was a great year for SSPS with many wonderful accomplishments. Our membership grew; our Junior Sailing Program gained new members as well as being

mentioned in the last three issues of *The Ensign* (Summer 2015, Fall 2015 and Winter 2016), and several members earned certifications through hours of hard work and dedication. Congratulations to everyone!

A host of events were planned for education and socializing during the sailing season culminating to our November dinner meeting, which went off without a hitch though an unexpected change in venue was necessary. I extend a warm thank you to all Squadron members who attended. It was a most enjoyable evening.

Looking forward, the Annual Change of Watch will be held on Sunday, January 17, 2016 from 1-4 p.m. In addition to the change in the time, we also have a change of venue. This year the COW will be held at the **Hilton Garden Inn** in Horseheads. There will be beer and wine available at the cash bar. Dinner and dessert will be served prior to the business meeting with swearing in of elected officials.

An email with all of the details; including price and dinner options, will be sent to all members.

Please send all RSVP's along with your menu selections by phone: (607) 368-3367 or by email: [ao@SenecaPowerSquadron.us](mailto:ao@SenecaPowerSquadron.us)

Payment for your dinner(s) may be made by cash or check upon your arrival at the event. Please make all checks payable to Seneca Sail and Power Squadron.

Many regards,

- Rebecca  
[ao@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:ao@SenecaPowerSquadron.US)

## From the Education Officer

By Tom Alley, SN



It's been a busy year, as evidenced by our sparse educational calendar this fall. Part of the reason has been the amount of effort needed to get our series of boat maintenance

seminars off the ground and I'm pleased to report that we have about a dozen students taking advantage of this effort.

Similarly, we are beginning to plan for summer activities with the Junior Sailing program and with the impending District Rendezvous, which our squadron has been asked to help host. Since it is our youth program that makes our squadron unique, it is something we certainly want to showcase to the District when they are here as our guests.

Speaking of showcasing – have you read *The Ensign* lately? Our humble squadron has managed to publish an article in this magazine for the last three consecutive issues! Does anyone else here smell a challenge? Can we make it four? I think we can. All it takes is someone willing to share an adventure or an experience.

With that said, take the first step and broaden your educational horizons by signing up for a course (or two). You'll find details of our winter, spring and summer offerings later in this newsletter.

Don't see anything you like? Drop me a note and let me know what you'd like to see. Chances are we will be able to work something out for you.

Happy New Year!

- Tom  
[SEO@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:SEO@SenecaPowerSquadron.US)

## Youth Committee Report

*The Youth Committee members are taking a break for the Holidays, but will be reporting soon on their plans for the 2016 boating season.*

*Congratulations to Youth Committee Co-Chair Katie Alley on having an article published in the Winter 2016 issue of The Ensign! –Ed.*

## Upcoming Classes and Seminars

By Seneca Squadron Education Department

### Boat Maintenance Seminars

If you've wanted to take your boat maintenance skills to the next level, or even just get some basic skills established, we have a series of seminars for you! The project has kicked off, but it's not too late to join in on the fun.

Class details are as follows:

- **When:** Mondays and Wednesdays during January and February, beginning January 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.
- **Where:** Kennedy Family Barn, Horseheads, NY

- **Instructors:** Mike Crouse, John Read, Tom Alley, and others.
- **Cost:** \$10/person. Additional fees will be charged as needed to cover the cost of supplies. Total cost not to exceed \$50/person.

Seminar fees will be used to offset the cost of materials used to refurbish our class boat.

Topics to be covered:

- Structural fiberglass repair.
- Hull painting.
- Deck repair/painting (including non-skid application).

- Proper deck fitting installation.
- Brightwork repair, restoration & refinishing.
- Sailboat re-rigging.

Other topics will be added as needed.

Registration: Contact Tom Alley, [SEO@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:SEO@SenecaPowerSquadron.US).

(continued...)

## Advanced Piloting

A 9-week continuation of the Piloting class where students will expand on their skills to enable longer coastal voyages in tidal waters.

- **When:** Beginning in March.
- **Where:** TBD
- **Instructors:** Jim McGinnis and Charlie Fausold.
- **Cost:** \$80

## Seamanship

A 9-week class to cover the basics of recreational power and sail boat handling. This is an overview class that will spend 4 weeks in the classroom and 4 weeks aboard various boats for some hands-on instruction. The final session consists of a written exam.

- **When:** May and June.
- **Where:** Classroom TBD. On-the-water session at Watkins Glen Village Marina.

- **Instructors:** Various.
- **Cost:** \$90

## Sail

An intensive 9-week class to cover the theory and practice of sailing. Students will spend 3 weeks in the classroom followed by 5 weeks aboard various sailboats. After a review session, there will be a final exam at the end of the course.

- **When:** July and August.
- **Where:** Classroom TBD, On-the-water sessions at Watkins Glen Village Marina.
- **Instructors:** Various
- **Cost:** \$75

## Seamanship/Sail Combo Offer

The Seamanship and Sail courses complement each other nicely. Since we schedule them to run in tandem, why not sign up for both? To sweeten the deal, the Squadron will offer a \$10 discount for the package if you register for both

classes at the same time. Students who have done this in the past have remarked that it was a great way to spend the spring and summer on the water!

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**Policy reminder:** It has been our practice in the Seneca Squadron to offer scholarships to our outstanding students. If you receive a perfect score on the final exam of any of the Advanced Grade or Elective courses, the next course is on us! (In plain English: It's free. No charge. Gratis. Got it? Good! Now sign up for one of our classes!)

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If there is a particular course you are interested in taking, please contact Tom Alley, the Squadron Education Officer, with your request:

[SEO@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:SEO@SenecaPowerSquadron.US)

# Software Releases, Updates, and Recommendations

## SafeTrX 2015

As digital electronics advance, sailors have access to more and more options when it comes to communications and navigation. We've all heard of EPIRBs, GEPIRBs, AIS, satphones, and other relatively high-end systems to allow boats to be tracked at sea and monitored for signs of trouble. However, many of them are over-kill for small inland bodies such as the Finger Lakes where a cell phone signal is easily obtained in all corners.

Enter an app called "SafeTrX 2015". Using the GPS in your smart phone, it can report your position to allow friends and family to keep track of you as you sail to your destination. It can also serve as a way to send an alert if you run into problems or if you are overdue at your destination. In essence, it is a poor man's tracking device.

More information is available on the company's web site ([www.safetrxapp.com](http://www.safetrxapp.com))

## Sight Reduction Made Easy

At the national conference in Jacksonville last January, I had to pleasure of meeting Mark Seeley, SEO of the Dallas Squadron. Mark was one of the finalists in the national teaching aids competition with his spreadsheet for helping JN and N students learn to properly reduce celestial observations. At the time, the spreadsheet would only work on Windows-based computers, but with a little work, I helped him develop a version that would work on both Mac and Windows platforms.

With some further enhancements, we co-developed a version of the software that could be used both as a teaching aid and as an actual navigational tool. (I tested

this spreadsheet during our delivery voyage of a catamaran described in Jim McGinnis' article later in this newsletter.)

This spreadsheet will help guide you through the reduction process, performing all of the calculations and doing some of the more mundane lookups for you so that you can focus on taking the sight and on the process of the sight reduction.

If you'd like a copy of this spreadsheet, contact me via the e-mail address below and I will send it to you.

System Requirements: Microsoft Excel with macros enabled.

Email: [Tom Alley](mailto:TomAlley@SenecaPowerSquadron.US)

# Dealing with Spam from Senior Boaters of America

*From the USPS Law Committee, USPS National Headquarters*

USPS members continue to receive unsolicited and unwanted email communications from Senior Boaters of America.

**Do not validate them; ignore their emails!**

USPS does not endorse or support this group. If you receive an unwanted email from this group, do not respond to it. Members who have done so have received rude, harassing and threatening responses. Use your spam filter for trash like this.

Do not engage them. Responding provides the sender with proof that yours is a valid email address available for further communications. Your response also provides the group with a form of validity. Ignore them the same way you would a solicitation from a Nigerian prince.

For additional information, e-mail [David Allen](#) of the USPS Law Committee.

# Seneca Squadron Scrapbook

*Submitted by Rebecca Lewis*



2015 Seneca Sail and Power Squadron

# The Future of Sailing

By Captain Alex Blackwell, USCG Master

Reprinted with permission from CoastalBoating.Net



In most parts of the world, people lament the decline in enthusiasm for sailing. And yes, we do see

so very, very many boats that never seem to leave the harbor. We have heard many tales of youth sailing programs that have serious rates of attrition from one year to another. Yacht clubs everywhere are relying more and more on so called social members to keep their membership numbers up, while hoping to convert these non sailors to sailing.

It is interesting to note that people have many different ideas of what 'sailing' is. National organizations such as US Sailing and many yacht clubs view racing in a regatta as what sailing is all about. Yes, these same groups also pay lip service to other aspects of 'the sport', but by defining sailing as a sport, they do indeed contradict themselves right at the outset.

Velux 5 Oceans race leader, (October 25, 2006) Bernard Stamm was astonished on hearing that most of his opponents had returned to shore in a storm: "I was quite unhappy with the way I was doing on the race course. I was being so careful that I had the feeling I was more sailing than racing. So, to discover that I am leading is a really good surprise. It is really sad to hear that the others had to stop but, anyway, I am not going to wait for them!" So, this is a dyed in the wool racer, who clearly sees racing and sailing as not being one and the same, yet revels in both.

There are also the cruisers among us, who consider our lifestyles as true sailing and look down on those who race in circles around the buoys. And what about the rift between blow boat and

stink pot owners. The boating industry seems quite fragmented, and its members quite insular. It is a small wonder then, that the US has such a hard time fielding a winning Olympic sailing team. With all the boaters interested in their small world instead of being excited at being out on the water, and enthusiastic about others enjoying this as well, we simply have no cohesive base. But these are just the symptoms, and just like in medicine, you can try and treat the symptoms, or you can try and get to the root of the problem and perhaps find an actual cure for the disease.

In a self perpetuating spiral of stress and forced activity, peer pressure and resulting busy schedules force parents to bring their offspring from one planned and organized activity to another, with no time for the kids to just be kids. Spending a whole day just messing around in the yard or in a boat just does not fit in a 'program'. Consequently it is a small wonder that young people drop out of organized programs because they are tired of being organized and it ceases to be fun.

I believe that the root of the problem in building interest in any activity or sport is making it too stressful and competitive at an early age. How different would it all be if the youngest kids (and then progressing onwards through their life) were to be shown just how much fun it is to go out in a boat. Would kids not then provide a large pool of young adults clamoring to crew on a race (or cruise), or buy their own boat(s) as their formative childhood memories taught them a deep love for being out on the water? Would these same young enthusiastic adults not perhaps then grow up into potential sponsors and supporters of a thriving Olympic fleet - elevating this into a real matter of national pride?

Perhaps a cure for the problem of a lack of enthusiasm for sailing or any other activity is just to learn to relax, to "smell the roses", to enjoy a sunset at anchor, in short, to learn to live. Let the kids discover stuff for themselves

The kids are our future and the future is theirs. Though it may run contrary to current convention and also to popular belief, perhaps we might just let the kids be kids. Give them access to a boat and let them find out where it takes them. If we spend less time stressing over their prowess on a race course, we may even start to enjoy sailing more ourselves.

We actively lobbied our yacht club to change its junior program and include pleasure sailing as well as racing. We had heard from numerous parents that their child had dropped out due to the pressures of the constant competition. In fact their attrition rate bordered on 30% per annum. One also always puts the racing successes up on the pedestal and not the "Joy of Sailing". They then added a program of messing about in boats parallel to the racing program. What was the result? Zero attrition, a succession of olympians, a dramatic increase in junior members of the club, and plenty of young and enthusiastic crew for the big boats.

- Alex

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Questions? Contact the author at:  
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Captain Alex is also the co-author of Happy Hooking – The Art of Anchoring.

# A Close Encounter of the First Kind

By Jim McGinnis, AP

SV Brewster



*The vessel we were delivering: A 2006 Nautitech Catamaran called Verre de Mer, seen here in her temporary slip in Edgewater, MD the day prior to our departure.*

Tom Alley woke me from a deep sleep. My alarm had been set for 2:45 a.m. but I slept right through it. I was bone tired.

We were on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of a 5-day sailboat delivery trip from Annapolis, MD to Brunswick, GA. Dave Dawson-Elli had purchased a 2006 40-ft Nautitech catamaran, *Verre de Mer*, and wanted to take it south for the winter. For now, let's just say the boat has all the "bells and whistles". The four of us, including Tom Taylor (T<sup>2</sup>) were taking four hour shifts each night, two hours on deck and two hours on the helm then four hours off, starting at 7 p.m. each night.

I checked my phone and saw that it was 3:10 a.m. My second shift had started at 3:00 a.m. and I should have been on the deck with Dave, who was at the helm. The port side diesel just behind my bunk was rumbling consistently at 2000 RPM, clearly just a little louder than the iPhone alarm Steve Jobs had undoubtedly

fretted over for hours to make it "insanely great".

As I crawled out of the sleeping bag, I glanced out the porthole to a scene that invoked sheer terror. The red and green navigation lights of what appeared to be the bow of a huge ship were bearing down on us not 25 yards from the thin fiberglass hull of our catamaran. We'd been marking large ships consistently on radar over the last few days and some were lit up like a K-Mart floating past when they came into view. Others had nothing but the mandatory red/green bow and white stern lights to meet COLREGS minimum requirements.

I blinked again and noticed that the two Christmas-like bow lights were moving closer together and then they crossed! Oh thank God, I just realized we were sailing parallel to a channel marked on both sides and that the lights were the red and green sea buoys. They appeared to be a set of boats headed our way but in fact, we were completely alone. As I began to pull on clothes for the shift, I resolved not to mention this little mis-encounter to Dave.

The temperature had dipped into the 30's that night and the moon set at about 11:00 p.m., so it was beyond dark. In our wake, we were leaving a beautiful, turbulent stream of bright white fluorescence. Apparently some tiny sea creatures can

generate light in response to changing water pressure. No one knows why they do that. (At least no one in our crew knew why.) The planet Venus was rising in the eastern sky as bright as a street light in an otherwise deserted alley. Stars in previously unseen constellations covered the rest of the sky like a light lace curtain.

To be up on deck, I wore several layers of shirts and a polar fleece capped off with a ski hat, gloves, windbreaker and my hip waders. We all wore our offshore inflatable life jackets with a snap link through the D-rings on the front with a short line to a carabiner that snapped into the jack lines we had strung on the deck from bow to stern. These precautions had come in very handy the night we passed Lookout Bight, NC with winds gusting 30 to 35 knots.

Let me take a minute to describe *that* night. Rounding Cape Hatteras, we had been getting pushed by a steady wind at 15 knots. By the next point of land, Lookout Bight, a Small Craft Warning had been issued by the Coast Guard. As the wind continued to build about 1:00 a.m., the crew on deck decided it was time to put a reef in the main. As every sailor knows, it was now well past time to think about putting a reef in, but that's



*Sunrise on the Atlantic from Verre de Mer's helm. Obviously, it's hard to get photos at night, especially given how dark it gets offshore!*



how it goes. The number 1 reef went in without issues. Dave only told us later that this was the first reef he'd ever put in the main on this particular vessel.

Two hours later it was blowing harder, and Dave decided to get everyone on deck for this maneuver since the wind was 30 knots and seas were 8 to 12 feet. Waves trapped under the central deck of the cat boomed and forced some seawater back up into the cockpit through the scupper drains. Spray shot up through the trampoline on the larger waves. The rest of the crew were already on deck so I just pulled on my jeans and a windbreaker under the lifejacket and headed up there.

We started to plan how to put the reef in. On *Verre de Mer*, at the mast, the reef point is held by short strap on the luff that needs to be hooked to the mast. The reefing line at the clew pulls down on the aft reef eye to shorten the sail. Dave went forward to the mast to drop the mainsail a few feet and attach the reef point. The boat was pitching violently. This big catamaran rides on top of every part of a wave. He needed light to untie and tie several knots so I held on the cabin top with one hand and provided light with my LED flashlight in the other hand. During this process I could see the spinnaker halyard was now flying free to leeward and snaking back and forth in the heavy air. It had come loose from the mast cleat and was now a lost cause. Things seemed to be going from bad to worse. Dave was crawling across the cabin top along the swinging boom to get to the reefing line which he was unable to tighten from the base of the mast.

Once Dave got to the end of the boom we could see why. The red/white reefing line was wrapped about 20 times around the topping lift and our American flag. We could see that it wasn't coming loose anytime soon. We decided to drop the main altogether as we had now 35 knots from the north east and sailing on jib alone would be plenty of sail. (Just about this time a wave crashed against the hull and soaked me from head to toe. Thankfully, I had dry clothes below and I would be using them now.) As Dave was working his way back along the boom to the mast, the spinnaker halyard

came flying past his ear. He was able to grab it and secure it on the mast cleat. Wow, maybe our luck is changing! We lowered the mainsail into the sail pack and zipped it shut. The catamaran settled down a bit and we headed southwest towards the North Carolina coast.

So getting back to Monday night off South Carolina, I was now dressed and ready for my shift but still shaken a little from seeing what I had thought was a tanker bearing down on us. I sat down on the stern rail seat and asked Dave for the de-brief from his shift. Radar was marking a few ships but nothing within 10 to 12 miles of us. There was a single red light off our starboard bow and a station ID appeared on the AIS (Automatic Identification System) radio showing it to be about 6 miles away. For some reason we weren't getting any radar reflection from it. Also, the communications link from the integrated GPS, Radar and chart plotter to the AIS was not working and because of that the object was not showing up on the main chart plotter screen.

We could see a red light but there was no white light behind it, so we could not tell how long the object was. Its position off our starboard bow at about 2:00 o'clock did not change and there was still no radar signal. Throughout the trip we had been getting a strong radar reflection from everything we could see and much that we could not. Before we left the dock we had hoisted a radar reflector high on our mast to be certain we would be seen by other ships. For now, we wanted to maintain our course since we were running downwind directly towards Brunswick and had the main trimmed just off the shrouds. The mysterious red orb came closer and closer staying off our starboard at 2 o'clock until we could see that it was bouncing on the waves as we were.

What could that be so far off the coast of South Carolina? Contacts with aliens are described in terms of degrees of close encounters. There are encounters of the 1<sup>st</sup> kind

all the way up to more recently defined levels of the 7<sup>th</sup> kind. You certainly remember *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) directed by Steven Spielberg with Richard Dreyfuss & Teri Garr. A close encounter of the first kind is, according to Wikipedia: "Visual sightings of an unidentified flying object seemingly less than 500 feet away that show an appreciable angular extension and considerable detail."

Suddenly, the light was just a hundred yards ahead of us and we could clearly see a large sailboat's port side. It was a white, 45-ft ketch with full sails on the jib, main and mizzen mast. It had a dingy hanging off davits on the stern that was possibly blocking the stern light. This was a close encounter for sure, but not the alien kind.

The other sailboat had the right of way, so we headed up and ducked behind them. The boat silently passed by and continued south east. What is the chance of that happening at 3:00 a.m., 50 miles off South Carolina? Two boats nearly collided. Their heading and speed had matched ours, keeping them on a deadly course with us for over an hour. Likely they were on auto-pilot as we were. They were the stand-on vessel. Why didn't we hail them on the radio? Why couldn't we see them on radar? Why couldn't we see their stern light? We were fortunate that we were able to avoid any problem at all, thanks to the AIS signal. Dave and I agreed that we had dodged a bullet this time.

I finished my shift without incident. For me, this was the most intense watch of



*One of the members of the pod of "escorts" we thoroughly enjoyed during our last day at sea.*

the trip. I had woken up to the shock of an apparent impending collision and finished the shift with a close escape from the real thing.

At 5:00 a.m., when Tom Alley came back on deck, he noticed that we were being accompanied by a school of dolphins. So definitely our luck had changed!

- Jim

*Right: The Verre de Mer delivery crew (L to R): Tom Taylor (P), owner Dave Dawson-Elli, Tom Alley (SN), and Jim McGinnis (AP), after arriving in Brunswick, GA from a 670 nm delivery voyage.*



## Viewing and Downloading Nautical Charts with Google Earth

*By David Burch – Director, Starpath School of Navigation*

We have been working on using Google Earth (GE) for practice with echart navigation, which led to a couple short videos on the process listed at the end here. In this process we discovered a remarkable NOAA service that I am embarrassed to say that I did not know about till now. I am not sure how long it has been online, but it is there now and works great. It is part of their new products on seamless display, that we discuss more at the end here. The GE feature of that program is the subject at hand.

With this easy to use utility you can see at a glance all 2100 NOAA charts outlined on the GE world map, with the ability to actually view the individual charts, with or without a border, as well as a very quick way to download the RNC (Raster Navigational Chart) echart of any one of them.

The process is explained on a page of the NOAA site called [Seamless Raster Navigational Chart Server & Web Map Services](#), but you pretty much have to know it is there to find it. Once there the main link that is needed is the Google Earth kmz file, called [NOAA RNCs.kmz](#).

When you click that link it will download the 340 Kb kmz file to your downloads, and then just open Google Earth and drag and drop that file onto the GE world. You will see something like Figure 1.

Then just zoom to the region you care about. Below is the region we use for our coastal nav training program near the chart 18465. In Figure 2 I have rolled the cursor over the 18465 boundary, which

highlight it, then clicked the boundary line to pop up the control panel shown.

At this point you can start experimenting with the options. The "collarless preview" loads the chart without the borders; the collared preview shows a full copy of the paper chart with all borders and scales.

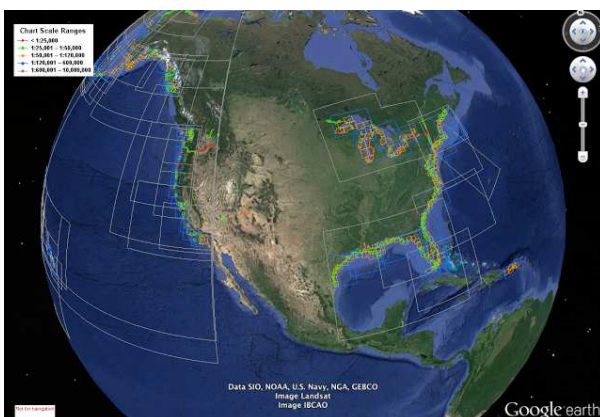
Below is a link to a short video about this process, showing some of the neat features it offers, including how to do a direct download of any RNC echart.

[Viewing Nautical Charts on Google Earth](#)

We also have an earlier video that shows a bit more of using the GE display for practice with echarts, though for work on 18465 it would be best to use the above, latest chart rather than the 18465TR we discuss in this older video.

[Echart navigation practice with Google Earth, Part 1.](#)

As noted earlier, NOAA is getting started with their own version of this [type of display from their own server](#), which has a lot of potential, but it is not yet nearly as convenient as the GE version. Especially promising is the [counter part they have for vector charts](#),



*Figure 1: NOAA's GE interactive chart catalog.*

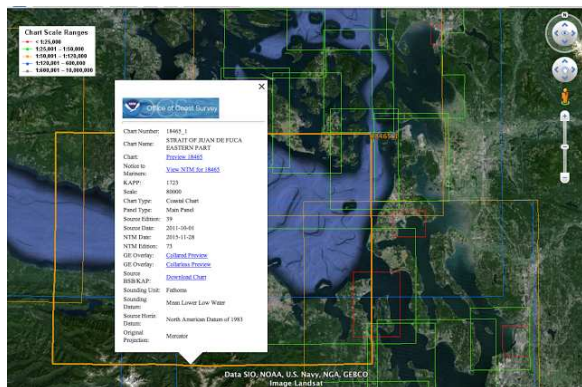


Figure 2: Zoom into a specific chart.

but this one is even less developed than their seamless raster chart. All in all though, NOAA has been doing a

tremendous amount of development of their site with many benefits to mariners.

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David Burch is the author of 13 books on marine navigation and weather and the director of Starpath School of Navigation in Seattle, WA. David is the author and developer of several software training programs, including the Starpath Radar Trainer and Starpath Weather Trainer Live.

He has more than 70,000 miles of ocean experience.

His articles have appeared in *Cruising World*, *Ocean Navigator*, *Sailing*, *Sea Kayaker* and now in the prestigious *Seneca Drum*. His column "Burch at the Helm" has appeared in *Blue Water Sailing* magazine since 2009.

David is a past Fulbright Scholar with a Ph.D. in physics.

To read more of David's work, check out his online blog at:

<http://davidburchnavigation.blogspot.com>



## I Am a Sailor

By Katie Alley, P

*This is a creative writing essay I recently turned in for my 11<sup>th</sup> grade college-level English class – the prompt was simply "I am a..." I have not gotten it back with a grade yet, but I have determined for myself that I am happy with it. – K.A.*

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I am a sailor; I always have been and I believe that I always will be. Most people, when they hear the word "sailor", have a stereotypical image of an older man with a prickly white beard and large, worn, blocky hands come to mind. I cannot deny – there is truth behind this stereotype. Plenty of the sailors I know match that description perfectly. A majority of them are retired and purchased a boat to invest their time into. However, there are other sailors too. Families with children, spare time, and spare money buy boats to pass the summer days on. Wealthier young couples, who typically have a strong interest in sailing from former experiences, sometimes purchase boats too. All of these sailors gather in one spot and form a little community – the marina. I like to think of the Watkins Glen Village Marina as my genuine home because that is where I am truly happy. It reminds me of what I am.



**True Love's Light**, a painting by Katie Alley based on a photograph taken on 19 June 2015 during the annual Lighting of the Boats at the Watkins Glen Waterfront Festival.

The Watkins Glen Village Marina is made up mostly of the "stereotypical" sailors – retired old men. I considered myself special for a long time because I was one of the only children who was at the marina regularly. This holds true today – I am one of few sixteen-year-olds in the marina. I became a sailor because of my dad, who I often refer to as "Captain". My dad, who had interest

in both the sky and the water, could not become a glider pilot, so he decided to acquire a sailboat to call his own – a *Grampian 26*. During the 90s, he earned the status of Senior Navigator and obtained a captain's license. He even purchased a larger boat – an *Alberg 35*, that I sail on today. Captain took my mom sailing in the Niagara River and on Lake Ontario. In fact, my parents

circumnavigated Lake Ontario while my mom was pregnant with me – so I really am not exaggerating when I say I have been on boats since I was in the womb. My parents were the wealthier young couple with a boat until I came into existence, making us the family with spare time and money.

During my childhood, I would spend the endless, hot, dull summer days on *Tomfoolery* as a way of finding something more thrilling to do than watching TV at home. Captain would put me in a harness and tie me to the jackline running along the starboard side deck of the boat so I would not fall overboard into the cold waters of Seneca Lake. I enjoyed sitting on the deck, feeling the cool, crisp breeze saunter through my thin hair, and watching the other boats shift their tall, white, sheet-like sails across their foredecks. On Saturday afternoons, the local yacht club had races, and I came along with Captain's crew. They became good friends of mine. This one middle-aged man always brought a bag of pepperoni to share – except I have never liked pepperoni. Another younger man looked like a pirate to me because of his longer hair, unshaved face, and the bandana he often wore. On Sundays, Captain, my mom, and I would sail for the luxury of it. We would always sail past the salt plant on the west side of the lake. Occasionally, when I was well-behaved, Captain would let me touch the steering wheel or the winches. The old men back at the dock would say, "Captain Tom, I believe you have a sailor in the works."

As I grew up, I developed a familiarity with the loose boards and residential boats of dock four and all of those adults I continually saw at yacht club picnics. Everyone knew me as "Tom Alley's daughter" and acknowledged me with bright smiles. My younger brother, who intermittently tagged along to these picnics, never cared much for sailing. He would go every now and again, but to me, it has always been that he would rather stay home in front of the TV. More often, my mom chose to stay home with him. It did not bother me much as I could be elsewhere for awhile with Captain and with my friends who established a fondness for sailing

because of my invites to join the crew for a Saturday race.

When I was fourteen, I became serious. I took my first boating class and earned my boating card. I gained knowledge of sailing terminology and could finally put a name to that one rope I had been grabbing all these years or recognize that one term Captain used frequently and actually understand what he was talking about. Sailing made a little more sense to me. There is more to it than just hoisting your sails and sitting back waiting for the wind to magically move your vessel. Being a sailor is not that simple.

When I was fifteen, I grasped even more sailing tactics and a leadership role. Long story short, our community of mostly older men was seeking to gain younger membership. Thus, the Seneca Junior Sailing program was created, thanks to Captain. My best friend, who I refer to as my first mate, the new dockmaster's son from dock 3, and myself became the popular junior sailors at the marina. Through this program, Captain and several other older men became coaches and taught us teenagers how to efficiently dock, cruise, and race their sailboats. Not to brag, but we defeated the "lazy, rotten, good-for-nothing" teenage stereotype, and beat lots of those old, experienced sailors in the Saturday races. The dockmaster's son and I became the youth leaders in our community because of the program.

Sailing is not easy. There is a process to simply leaving the dock. The correct lines have to be taken off the cleats in the correct order. The wheel must be turned to the accurate spot so that the boat can glide out of the slip without hitting a piling, the break wall, or another boat. Remember to watch the boat's speed and for any traffic as the boat makes its way out of the marina. If the engine does not work, the boat will have to be towed by a fellow courteous boater. The vessel must be steered into the wind and the main sail's cover should be removed. Someone with powerful biceps needs to hoist the main sail up the mast. The halyard needs to be secure to the cleat. The jib sheet will likely get caught on a stanchion as someone turns the winch-handle to bring it out. Is anyone still watching for

traffic? The tactician better be planning tacks and jibes down to the second so that the boat is in the best spot near the starting line in a race.

While underway, the helmsman steers the boat and watches the tell-tales on the jib sail to determine whether to head up into the wind, or fall off. The watch-captain stays on deck to alert the helmsman of any other boat traffic. The navigator plots a safe course on the chart and monitors the GPS. The deckhand can manage lines, trim the sails according to the helmsman's commands, and of course, swab the deck. All of these positions are continuous jobs that require constant attention.

I watched Captain sweat for hours and hours bent over in the engine compartment while he replaced the fifty-year-old gas engine for a diesel one. He is an engineer but ran into many problems that required his perseverance to solve. I watched people in the boatyard redo their bottom paint and patch up fiberglass hauls year after year to maintain the condition of their boats. I watched one of the sailors I admire the most rush to put his entire boat back together in a period of two weeks after gutting the inside to travel to Lake Ontario at his preferred time. (He did it.)

I proceeded my boating education further and became more of a "sailor in the works". The older sailors respect me greatly. My first mate and I cruised with Captain and became his foremost crewmembers. With more experience, we could run the boat ourselves with only his supervision (to make sure we did not do anything extremely stupid and/or break something expensive). We raced *Tomfoolery* and placed well. We practiced man-overboard drills constantly, despite Seneca's cool water temperatures. We sailed the entire length of Seneca in extremely windy, rainy, and wavy conditions. We learned how to swap out a sail in stormy conditions. We traveled to an unfamiliar lake when original plans did not work out. We challenged ourselves in circumstances other experienced sailors would not have. Sailing demands a sense of adventure and passion – which are things we certainly possess.

I obtained several new titles including “veteran junior sailor”, “Youth Committee Co-Chair Holder”, and even “the dockboy’s girlfriend” for awhile. One of the Junior Sailing coaches told me, “Young lady, get a good education, make a lot of money, and buy yourself a boat.” I thought about that regularly while laying in *Tomfoolery*’s berth waiting for sleep. I know now what he said is what I want to do. It is exactly what I want to do. Another retired sailor I knew made money by charging people for rides on his boat and then took his wife and his boat down to Georgia for the entire winter. I listen to all the older, experienced sailor’s stories of sailing in Lake Ontario races with hundreds of boats, navigating the vast, eternal ocean, and meeting new faces in unfamiliar

harbors along the canals and coasts. I know that one day I will visit and experience all of these places because I am a sailor.

Maybe I will not have air conditioning on my boat like one of the junior sailing coaches on dock four has, and maybe I will not have Wi-Fi on my boat like the dockmaster does. But I do know I will have my sails and my first mate and any other crewmembers I adopt to accompany me. Captain used to recite the old proverb routinely, “A smooth sea does not make a skillful sailor.” I do not need the luxury of a TV, air conditioning, or Wi-Fi; All I need is the luxury of the wind in my sails where I position them. I can navigate the shifty winds of Seneca Lake, make my way

through the canals, travel anywhere in the world, and never come back. I will forever treasure the oranges, pinks, and yellows of the intense, vibrant Seneca Lake sunsets. Our dock neighbor, an older man who lives on his boat, said to me that sailing “is tomfoolery, all of of it.” I am passionate about the foolishness of putting a big sheet up in the sky to push me slowly through the water. Another older sailor in the marina, as his boat was being launched for another season, said to me, “Gee Katie, the older I get, the more unsure I get about all of this.” For me, as I get older, I feel more confident and certain; I am a sailor.

- Katie

## The Last Word

By Tom Alley, SN



Electrical circuits, despite what you may have learned in school, require smoke to operate. Without the smoke, they cease

functioning. As proof for this hypothesis, I offer the following observation: If you are working with an electronic device and the smoke escapes from one of its components, the device will soon (if not immediately) stop functioning.

It seems like the Holiday season gets busier every year, and this year was no exception. During the Thanksgiving weekend my laptop stopped working after a delicate whiff of smoke escaped from an equally delicate component on its motherboard. Ten very long days later, its replacement laptop arrived and then, given that my life and career both revolve around these infernal devices, I

had a lot of catching up to do. Fortunately, the hard drive (and all of its data) was in good shape and “all” I lost was a little over a week’s worth of time.

In the mean time, schedules slip and the to-do list gets longer. An unplanned trip to the Midwest in early December didn’t help my productivity, either. Arriving back at home I was greeted with the end-of-year rush at work with everyone trying to meet their annual targets and goals.

At home it was the Christmas lights outside and the Christmas tree (and associated decorations) inside, along with all of the school events, pageants, and never-ending fundraisers and volunteer commitments.

This year our family will stay home for the holidays, so maybe I can get some R&R at that time. Oh, wait. I have to get a newsletter out. *[Insert properly conjugated nautical expletive here.]* We also have some squadron classes and seminars to organize. And of course, our

launch date to get the boat back into the water is, by the time you read this, only about 125 days away, so that means I’d better begin ordering the various supplies and gizmos that need to be installed before we get the bottom wet.

“There’s no rest for the wicked,” goes the saying, but I’m pretty well convinced that there’s no rest for anyone else either! (Mostly because I maintain that I do not fall into the aforesaid classification.)

So, what’s keeping you busy – especially with your boat? Drop me a line so that your story can be shared!

- Tom

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As always, send your thoughts about this newsletter to:

[editor@SenecaPowerSquadron.US](mailto:editor@SenecaPowerSquadron.US).

# Calendar of Events

## January 2016

- 1 Seneca Drum January issue publication.  
 17 Change of Watch (1300)  
*Hilton Garden Inn, Horseheads, NY*  
 19 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*Kingsley Residence*

## February

- 14-21 USPS Annual Meeting  
*Orlando, FL*  
 16 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 22 Deadline for Drum Articles

## March

- 1 Seneca Drum March issue publication.  
 15 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 TBD D/6 Spring Conference  
*TBD*

## April

- TBD D/6 Spring Council  
*TBD*  
 19 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 25 Deadline for Drum Articles

## May

- 1 Seneca Drum May issue publication.  
 17 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 TBD Junior Sailing Organizational/Kick-Off Meeting  
*Village Marina, Watkins Glen*

## June

- TBD Watkins Glen Waterfront Festival  
*Watkins Glen Village Marina & Waterfront*  
 21 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 24 Deadline for Drum Articles

## July

- 1 Seneca Drum July issue publication.  
 12 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 15-19 D/6 2016 Rendezvous  
*Watkins Glen, Geneva, Cayuga, Ithaca*

## August

- 16 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 22 Deadline for Drum Articles

## September

- 1 Seneca Drum September issue publication.  
 16-18 Seneca Barge Race  
*Seneca Yacht Club, Geneva, NY*  
 20 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*

## October

- 18 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*  
 24 Deadline for Drum Articles

## November

- 1 Seneca Drum November issue publication.  
 15 Bridge Meeting (1900)  
*TBD*

## December

- 19 Deadline for Drum Articles

Calendars are "living documents." For the latest information on squadron activities, please check our web site:

<http://www.SenecaPowerSquadron.US>

or our Facebook page:

<http://facebook.com/SenecaPowerSquadron>

for any last-minute changes.