


AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB

For Boaters, By Boaters®




THE DRUM

A Publication of the Finger Lakes Chapter

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editor@abc-flx.org

From The Commander

By *Phil Cherry, AP* *SV Harmony*

What's A Merit Mark?

Over the past several weeks, as is customary in September and October for squadron commanders, I was documenting for our national office my list of bridge or other members deserving of what's called "merit marks". Merit marks are essentially "atta-boys" except they have a much more rich and robust history with the US Power Squadrons, and to have received many merit marks over the course of a boating career is a great honor among our members. Indeed, members who receive five merit marks bring "Senior Member" status, and 25 merit marks accord a member life membership, exempt from national dues! Guidance provided to Commanders states that merit marks should be given for quantifiable and substantial service to the organization, as leaders and educators.

I have to admit I was very late in submitting my merit mark



recommendations for 2023 and that was largely due to my ignorance of how the merit mark process worked. What struck me as particularly interesting lately was a comment made by one of our newer members when they asked what a merit mark was. That got me thinking that our orientation into membership in the ABC-FLX is not as helpful as it could be in explaining to new members who we are, how we function, and how to comprehend the nuances of our 110-year-old organization. As I think back to when I was a new member, I think it was likely the same because I didn't know what a merit mark was until I received one!

I don't mean to be critical of the organization or any past officers, and in fact I admire all of them

for their dedication to the club, their prior leadership, and exceptional boating abilities. However, I do think the organization fails its members when we fail to provide an adequate introduction to the organization that they've just joined. This may be annoying for new members but becomes problematic when members join the ranks of leadership or become Commander. I blame myself for not becoming better acquainted with the merit mark process as soon as I became Commander, and I apologize to my members who have not received timely or deserved merit marks over the past two years.

I suppose it's just coincidental that while I'm thinking about new member orientation that our leadership team has also been discussing the problem of declining membership and the need to recruit new members. If we are able to recruit new members it behooves us to provide them with an orientation guide to their new club and to

explain things like merit marks so folks have a common understanding of the benefits of membership. The silver lining to this is that I am committed to developing a new member "guide" early next year (after my retirement as Commander) that might help folks better understand us. Things like Merit Marks, benefits of membership, and our organization's overall structure and processes are important in helping new members take advantage of their membership and perhaps to become engaged as leaders moving forward. We shall see.

As we enter November and the prospect of winter looms, my hope is that your final boating days were as spectacular as the recent weather, and that you're now resting comfortably "on the hard". Let me be the first to wish you all Happy Holidays!

- Phil, SV Harmony
co@abc-flx.org

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The Drum

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From the Executive Officer

By Kris West, S

SV Zephyr

Help Me Help You



As Commander Phil mentioned in his September Drum article, the Bridge has undertaken an update of our strategic

plan. Our goal is to have it available for review and adoption at our annual meeting in January. To that end, the Bridge created a planning committee and provided input to the committee on the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This process gave the planning committee a broad overview of where we are now, where we'd like to be, some of the challenges we face along with some of our core strengths. We identified several broad goals including:

- Increasing membership and new member retention.
- Cultivating member engagement through improved communications and mentoring.
- Enhancing educational programming.

Before we develop our plan to meet those goals, I'd like to hear from you. For instance:

- What attracted you to join ABC-FLX in the first place?
- What motivates you to continue your membership?
- Are there ways that we can better meet your educational needs and interests in boating?
- Can you suggest ways we can help you meet either your goals or those identified by the bridge?

Please take a moment of your time to share your thoughts by e-mailing them to me at xo@abc-flx.org. If you'd prefer to chat, just e-mail me your number and let me know when you are available for a call.

I'll be the first to admit that *no one, anywhere, ever* has said, "Hey, you know what would be really fun? Writing a strategic plan!". Personally, I enjoy getting to know people around the docks; sharing experiences; and, building skills, knowledge and community. I want to hear from you because

I recognize that you, our members, represent a deep well of experience and ideas. I want to tap into that wellspring of knowledge. Stealing a line from Jerry Maguire, I want to hear from you so that you can "Help me help you". With your input, we can chart a course toward strengthening our organization and continuing to make boating fun and safe for everyone.

After reaching out, remember to get outside and have fun!

- Kris

xo@abc-flx.org



Figure 1: We need your help to chart our course forward. (Photo courtesy of Jim West.)

From the Administrative Officer

By Maggie Martin



Our Next Club Event

We have Fulkerson's Winery, located at 55756 NY 14 in Dundee lined up for

our group get-together in November. Sayre has generously

agreed to host us starting at 6pm on Tuesday, November 19th. We can purchase drinks at the bar, followed by a buffet dinner. Members are invited to bring a covered dish to share. Our guest is Peter Mantius, who will be speaking about 'Hazards to the Finger Lakes'. Peter is an environmental investigative reporter based in Watkins Glen. He has been writing an online blog called 'Water Front Peter

Mantius' since 2017, after over 30 years in a journalism career. We look forward to seeing you all there and to learning more about this important subject, our lakes.

SV Wined 'n' Down

- Maggie
ao@abc-flx.org



From the Education Director

By Katie Alley, JN

SV Tomfoolery

Wintering



“Wintering” Definition (via [Cambridge Dictionary](#))

Present participle of *winter* (especially of a bird) to spend the winter in a particular place

“Birds migrate so that they can winter in a warmer country.”

“A lot of older people from northern states winter in Florida or Arizona.”

As we head into November, we tend to hear the words “winter,” “winterizing,” and “wintering” in our minds and our conversations more and more frequently. We face Christmas advertisements, drastic temperature changes, and 4pm sunsets. Reflecting on this season, we had it all - hot, cold, windy, calm, sunny, rainy. I had some great learning experiences out on the water, with the highlight being my maiden voyage on my Sunfish (boat name still TBD, read more about my experience elsewhere in this issue).

Personally, right now, I welcome the season change. Two weeks ago, I went back to having *just one* full time job. This season, I

crewed on a total of 89 cruises aboard the Schooner *True Love*, with 35 of those cruises (or 40%) occurring in the last 6 weeks of the season. (To clarify, this was *in addition* to my full-time year-round job as a marketing coordinator.) So “wintering” for me looks like sleeping, staying home, and giving my year-round job my absolute all so that my boss lets me work on the schooner again next year.

“Wintering” probably looks different for each and every single one of us as Upstate New York boaters. Whether it’s traveling south with the birds or staying home and sleeping with your cats like me, the off-season is an excellent time to fit in a class with us. Curl up by the fire with a blanket and a textbook. Study some of the conceptual lessons that don’t necessarily work well with an on-the-water component.

Education Department Update - At National and Our Chapter

The Navigation class is still underway for our chapter with the final exam on this month’s calendar page. In my email, I receive occasional updates on what is happening at the National level education-wise. Recently I learnt that National intends to replace ExamGen, the software and hardware system built in the 90s that has since generated all USPS exams. Considering the system is at least as old as me, it is not easy to get replacement parts or update it. In fact, National

currently cannot print any exams due to a printer failure on this system. Surely this will be resolved soon, but it’s time to replace ExamGen with some technology from this millenium.

Additionally, there is a strong need for students to be able to take exams electronically. Obviously this became prevalent during the worst of the pandemic, but in order to keep up with other boating education resources, USPS needs to have digital exams. In the (hopefully near) future, each student will be able to choose to take a class’s exam on a printed paper copy or online. The SEO will input the students’ choices when ordering exams. Both the printed exam and the digital exam will be the same for students in the same class. Students who take the digital exam will receive immediate results. All navigation classes involving plotting on a chart will remain hand-graded while all other courses’ exams will be machine-graded. The huge pro to this is that the online exams are easier to write, review, and update regularly. Ideally, the authors will be able to build better tests for all of us!

Updates to the Navigation Courses

National has begun to restructure the way our advanced navigation courses can be taught. Presently, *Junior Navigation* and *Navigation* mix celestial navigation skills with other offshore sailing topics.

(This is what our chapter is teaching now.) Some people only want to learn celestial skills while other people only want to learn how to plan an offshore trip and what navigation software and electronics exist. Because of this, the material is being reorganized.

Offshore Navigation (ON) will cover tech-assisted cruise planning and how to execute an offshore voyage. This course includes all the information on electronics, including GPS, digital pilot charts, and OpenCPN. It concludes with an open book exam. In order to take the exam, students have to complete the practice cruise activity featured in their course textbook. Students would take this course after completing *Marine Navigation (Piloting)* and *Advanced Marine Navigation (Advanced Piloting)*.

The new *Celestial Navigation* (CEN) course will include very little plotting and instead focus on using a sextant, taking sights, calculating LOPs and fixes, and reading the nautical almanac. Students complete this course by building a sight folder that National evaluates. There is no other exam. Plus, no prior courses or navigation knowledge is required to take this course! Learning the art of using a sextant will now be accessible to more members without having to take 3 prerequisite classes. This course is actually suitable to offer to the public as an elective.

If a student completes *Offshore Navigation*, they will earn the grade of JN (Junior Navigator - assuming they have completed *Advanced Marine Navigation*). If

a student completes *Celestial Navigation*, they will earn the grade of N (Navigator - assuming they have completed *Offshore Navigation*). However, the old courses (*Junior Navigation* and *Navigation*) cannot be mixed with the new courses (*Offshore Navigation* and *Celestial Navigation*). You must take either the legacy courses *OR* the new courses to achieve the grade of N. Both the legacy and the new courses achieve the same goal. The way they are split up now allows students to learn about offshore electronics without having to learn celestial navigation, or vice versa. Both new courses are available as Beta versions with eBooks only.

Other National Updates

I received a copy of the September 2024 *Education Department Consolidated Report of NEO, Committees, and Project Teams* in my email last month with some interesting news.

First, some fun stats: 3,247 people from 409 classes completed ABC between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. Furthermore, of the 287 current squadrons, 153 (or 64%) held at least one ABC class between this same time period. Happy to say we were a part of those numbers!

The *Sail* course is currently being updated. The old *Piloting* course will be retired by the end of this year. (*Marine Navigation* is the new version of this course.)

A new course called *Inland Boating* is in development. This class will cover cruise planning,

charts, weather, navigation rules and aids, river boating, AIS, locks, lake boating, and more. This course will be considered an elective composed of multiple seminars. Completion of this course earns a student the grade of IB (Inland Boater). This class could be a really good one for our geographic area!

The *Engine Maintenance* class will eventually be retired and replaced by a new course called *Marine Propulsion Systems* (MPS). This course will be structured in such a way that all students will complete an introductory section together, and then choose one or more specialized tracks on specific propulsion system(s) to study. This way, students who want to learn about diesel engines do not have to study the material on inboard jet drives, for example. There will also be the option to complete all of the material in the class if a student is just curious.

There's a lot going on and it's nice to know we have so many folks volunteering at a national level to update and organize all of these valuable courses. It's my job to try and make all the news, abbreviations, and ranks clear to you guys! Please let me know if you have any questions. And as you think about your "wintering" plans, take a look at our course schedule in this issue. We can keep you busy and learning without being on the water!

- Katie

seo@abc-flx.org

Secretary's Sidenotes

By Jeff Mack, JN

SV *Tiny Tina*

Last Summer With Tina



This was my last season with the Sabre 28 I wrote about a couple issues ago. Despite feeling

deeply connected to this boat, I concluded at the end of last season that it was time for a change. I wasn't ready to quit sailing or boat ownership, but I was eager for a new project – perhaps something smaller, easier to manage, and with fewer upkeep demands. The Sabre's never-ending list of tasks and rising costs just to keep had me searching for something between my 28-foot keelboat and 15-foot catboat: ideally, a boat I could trailer, move myself, and store at home.

With this vision in mind, I halfheartedly began looking for a boat that fit these criteria and listed my Sabre 28, *Tiny Tina*, for sale. I showed her to a few potential buyers on the hard, once clearing ice and snow off the tarp for a look inside. During these tours, I found myself oversharing about *Tina's* quirks, like the 50-year-old gas-powered Atomic 4 engine's potential issues and the numerous unfinished projects. I pointed out leaks, rigging wear, peeling paint, and sticky seacocks. Unsurprisingly, nobody

bit. So, I paid for another season at Village Marina. Despite my reluctance to sell I was firm in my resolve, especially since I found *Minka*, a small masthead sloop that ticked many of my boxes and now sat waiting in my driveway. But with *Tina* still in the water, I knew this would likely be her last season with me, so I planned to make the most of it and *Minka* would have to wait.

I embraced the Finger Lakes Yacht Club (FLYC) racing fleet more fully this year. I raced solo most of the time, but enjoyed the camaraderie and fun, taking first in a couple of summer series races, including the Commodore's Cup, and placing second in the Around the Barge race out of Seneca Lake Yacht Club. I sailed the length of the lake four times, including a personal best from Geneva to Watkins Glen in just under five hours. It was an unforgettable season.

Once *Tina* was berthed, she attracted more serious buyers, several of whom wanted to go sailing. I soon realized I needed to save the boat rides for second visits, as it seemed like I was giving away free sails to people who liked to focus on what was wrong with my old boat to get a good deal. After winning a couple club races, interest picked up even more. One day, I showed the boat to three different people. I had offers but stayed firm on the price, including the balance of the slip rental. I knew *Tina's* market value and, more importantly, her

value to me. I wasn't desperate to sell; I wanted the right buyer.

In early July, I received simultaneous offers, including one from Daniel, a young man who seemed immediately charmed by the boat. After a brief inspection, he sat on the cabin top and declared he wanted to make an offer. His enthusiasm mirrored my own when I first found the Sabre 28 five years ago. He outbid another offer well over my asking price and agreed to cover the slip for the remainder of the season. It was clear he was the right person for *Tina*; he saw not only her potential but also recognized the care I'd put into her.

While happy to find the right buyer, I was sad to cut my season short. I proposed a deal to Daniel: I'd forgo the extra money he offered and of course the slip fee, and provide some ride-along trips and training on my lay up and recommissioning procedures. In general I would be available to help get him going with the boat-in exchange for letting me keep the boat for the rest of the season, Daniel agreed, appreciating the additional guidance for his first sailboat. Thanks to his flexibility, I was able to finish out an incredible season with *Tina*.

One of my final sails was under a light north wind when the Northern Lights were forecasted. As I tacked up the lake at twilight, There was a slight lift which I resisted at the helm and the tiller snapped off at the bracket, throwing me against the cockpit

coaming. I wasn't just taking a final sunset sail but learning yet another lesson—this time about the danger of neglecting a wooden tiller. Apparently, there was some dry rot from water ingress around the first through bolt hole. After improvising a temporary fix with duct tape and

sail ties, I managed to sail back under the glowing red sky, another unforgettable adventure with *Tina*.

In the end, this season was about new experiences, connections, and the bittersweet process of letting go. Despite a growing

attachment to *Tina*, I knew I had to follow through with the sale. I was moving toward something different, but *Tina* will always hold a special place in my heart.

- Jeff
secretary@abc-flx.org



ABC-FLX News

Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our members!

November

Judy Cherry
Patti Dawson-Elli
Glenda Gephart
Catherine Gueli
Tom Keebler
Andre Wigley

December

John Chesebrough
Bob Drake
Denis Kingsley
Jeff Mack
Maggie Martin
Lisa Oldroyd
Lawrence Sampson
Marcia Taylor

Seminar Pricing Reduced

Chuck Wells, the National Education Officer, has announced a significant price reduction for members seeking seminar credit. Formerly \$25, USPS members can now receive educational credit for attending a seminar for just \$10. This price reduction is effective immediately!

The price for non-members remains at \$25 per seminar.

Paper Charts Are History

Please check out the article in the November 2024 issue of *The Deep 6*, our district newsletter, for how the United States Coast Guard will be modifying their communication procedures for the transition to electronic charts.

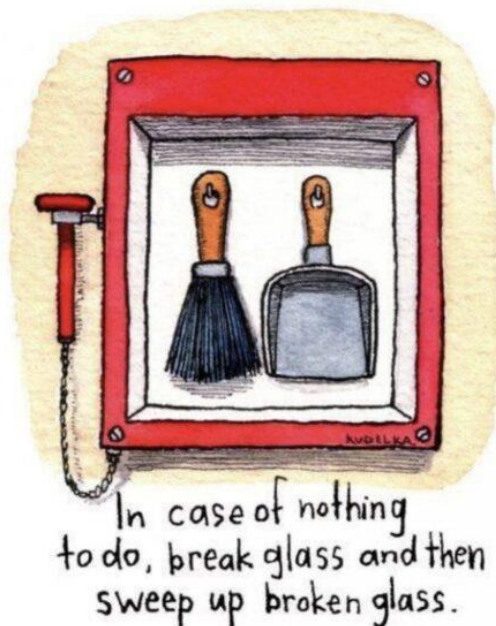
Effective January 2025, paper charts will no longer be printed by the U.S. government. They can still be purchased from private companies, however. Publications such as *Local Notice to Mariners* will see a drastic shift in their update schedule (more frequent) and how they are distributed (all electronic).

Again, refer to the November 2024 issue of *The Deep 6* for details.

Got News?

If you have news to share that you think would be of use to your fellow boaters, please submit it to you friendly newsletter editor so that it can be included!

KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS



Upcoming Classes & Seminars

Where Do I Start?

To work through the progression of Boating Classes and the progression of Boating skills development we have organized the classes and skills on the Long-Term Schedule. If you have any questions or want a class offered sooner let me know.

See also: <https://usps.org/sss-where-do-i-start>

Radar for Boaters

The name says it all - learn all about radar and how it works. Radar is a practical tool for navigation and collision avoidance. This course talks about radar equipment and how to use it as a boater.

Prerequisites: Marine Navigation (Piloting)

When: Rescheduled to Winter 2025.

Duration: 7 weeks (6 classroom sessions plus a final exam)

Weather

Have you ever had a thunderstorm appear out of nowhere over the western hills of the lake? It can really put a “damper” on your day of cruising! The newly revised weather course can teach you about meteorological systems, how weather is created, and signs of impending poor weather. Learn how to understand a forecast in-depth and how boaters can receive the most accurate forecasts onboard.

Prerequisites: None

When: Winter 2025 (January?)

Duration: 6-8 weeks. Details TBA

How to Register

If you have questions about any of these courses, or better yet, if you wish to sign up, please contact: Finger Lakes Chapter Education Director, Katie Alley:

seo@abc-flx.org

Or you can go to the national web site (www.usps.org) and register under the “Find A Boating Class” tab on the member home page.

America’s Boating Course (ABC)

Earn your NYS Boater’s Safety Card - a certification now required for all boat operators in New York! ABC-FLX prides itself on offering a unique version of this 8-hour course that includes an optional on-the-water session. During this on-the-water session, students are able to translate their newly acquired knowledge from the classroom to an actual boat ride. Our version of this class includes two hands-on classroom sessions, a review session, the exam, and the optional on-the-water-session.

What You’ll Learn:

- Information about NYS boating laws, regulations, boat registration, and licensing
- Required boating safety equipment

- Basic navigation and rules of the road
- How to handle medical emergencies and mechanical problems onboard
- The basics of towing and trailering

Class size is limited. Contact Katie at SEO@abc-flx.org to be the first to receive information on how to sign up.

Prerequisites: None

When: May 2025

Where: TBA.

Duration: Two 3-hour classroom sessions, a 1-hour review session, and the exam.

Boat Handling

(Previously known as *Seamanship*) Learn how to handle your boat in a variety of situations and become the skipper you want to be. Gain confidence in docking, underway, anchoring, and other seamanship skills.

Our new Boat Handling course is intended for newer recreational boaters who have completed a basic boating class (like America's Boating Course) and want to gain more knowledge, skill, and confidence to boat safely and have more fun in a variety of situations. (Description copied from national website, not sure if you have to give credit)

Covers the following topics:

- Rules of the Road
- Docking
- Confidently handling your boat underway

- Anchoring
- Emergencies on Board
- Knots and Line Handling

Each topic is also available as a free-standing seminar.

Our instructors will enrich the course with local knowledge, experience, and discussion that will help you expand your boating horizons.

Includes on-the-water sessions!

Prerequisites: None

When: May 2025

Where: Classroom TBA. On-the-water sessions at the Watkins Glen Village Marina.

Duration: 7 weeks (including final exam).

SEO@abc-flx.org.

Available subjects for instruction can be found on the chapter web site:

www.abc-flx.org

Looking for Something?

ABC-FLX would be happy to hear your requests and ideas. Feel free to contact me, Katie Alley, at



Long-Term Class Schedule

Seneca Education Department

BOC Level	Title	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	
Inland Navigator	Classes	ABC	X	X	X	X	X	
		Boat Handling		X		X		X
		Engine Maintenance					X	
		Marine Electrical Systems			X			
	Seminars	Using A Chart						X
		VHF/DSC Radios						X
		Using GPS					X	
		Basic Weather and Forecasting				X		
	Skills	Basic Powerboat Handling					X	
		Fire Extinguishers						

BOC Level	Title	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	
Coastal Navigator	Classes	Marine Navigation			X		X	
		Marine Communication Systems		?				
		Weather	X					X
	Seminars	Tides & Currents						X
		Rules of the Road	C					
		Anchoring						
		Mariner's Compass			X		X	
	Skills	Coastal Nav					X	
		Pyrotechnics				X		

BOC Level		Title	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Advanced Coastal Navigator	Classes	Advanced Marine Navigation			X		X	X
		Cruise Planning	C					
		Radar		X				
		Emergencies Onboard	C					X
	Sem.	Marine Radar (Retired)						
	Skills	Advanced Coastal Nav	C					X
		First Aid						

BOC Level		Title	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Offshore Navigator	C	Offshore Navigation			X			X
	Sem.	Computer Weather Forecasting		X				
		Thunderstorms / Severe Weather		X				
	Skills	Offshore Navigation	C					
		CPR/AED						
Endorsmentss		Sail	X		X		X	
		Boating on Rivers, Locks, and Lakes				X		X
		Canadian Regulations		X				
		Paddlesmart		X			X	
Other		Instructor Development					X	
		Instructor Recertification	X		X		X	
		Operations Training					X	
		Celestial Navigation	X			X		

Table Key

X = Planned

C = Completed

First Time for Everything: Trailering

By Katie Alley

Alcort Sunfish

As mentioned in previous editions of *The Drum* this year, I purchased a 14-foot Alcort Sunfish earlier this spring. Well, I finally managed to make my maiden voyage with her in September, as well as a second trip in October! I learned a lot from both of these rides.

As I shared in the July edition of *The Drum*, I have put well over a grand of money into this small little boat. A majority of this, however, was for the trailer. I wanted a small sailboat of my own for years but the fact that I would have to trailer it turned me off of it. I didn't want to deal with it. But when Captain Scott Williams gave me a bargain on this little green hull that I couldn't pass up, I decided I was in a place where I could figure it out. Lots of people trailer their boats after all. I spent a ton of money on my small SUV - why not use it to trailer stuff? I can do that now!

I'll admit, after I went through with the deal on the boat, I was feeling really overwhelmed regarding the trailer aspect. The boat did not come with a trailer. New trailers are far out of my price range. Even the build-it-yourself trailers are expensive. (Do I look like I'm in the demographic who knows a lot about trailers?) I figured I had to go the route of finding something trustworthy used.

I took my search to Facebook Marketplace. There were a lot

of duds to sort through - rusty trailers, overpriced trailers, "needs all new tires and wiring" trailers, "lights don't work and bearings are bad" trailers, and "this has been sitting in my yard for the last 15 years" trailers. Luckily, just a week after I bought the boat, I found a 15-foot jet ski trailer for sale outside of Binghamton. It was galvanized steel so no excessive rust to worry about. The seller said the tires were good and the lights all worked. Only con was that the trailer did not come with any paperwork - meaning no title, registration, or bill of sale.

Mike Crouse generously drove me to go see the trailer and pick it up. He said it was an absolute steal for \$300. The seller tossed in some extra hubs and wires for me. He was very kind and definitely just wanted the trailer gone. I commented on how the trailer was going to sit in my dad's driveway and the seller said, "better his than mine!"



Figure 2: The trailer the day I bought it.

The trailer was originally a jet ski trailer but the previous owner had a john boat on it. This meant that it needed some refitting for the Sunfish's hull. My dad and I took measurements and built new bunks to fit on the existing wooden frame. We installed the bunks with new brackets and added an adjustable keel roller. The project took several sessions in my dad's workshop and a couple of trips to Lowe's to get it completed. But the final result is perfect for me and my boat!



Figure 3 Laying out lumber for bunks.



Figure 4: Installing bunk brackets on the existing wooden frame. Carpet was added to the bunks later.

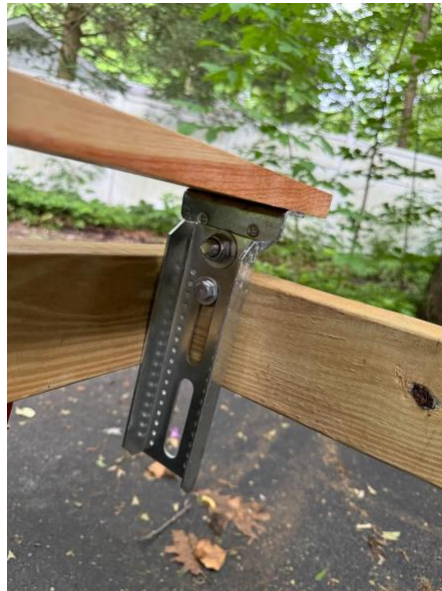


Figure 5: Installing bunk brackets on the existing wooden frame. Carpet was added to the bunks later.



Figure 6: She fits!

Registering a trailer in NYS requires knowing the trailer's weight. I paid \$11 to use the scale at Horseheads Pick-A-Part and get the official weight slip. (FYI - It is legal to tow an unregistered trailer to a weight station with the intentions of getting it registered.)

I paid U-Haul \$414.47 for my hitch, mount, ball, lighting wiring, and hitch installation. I had absolutely no interest in learning how to install a hitch myself. I wanted to pay someone to do it for me quickly and correctly and U-Haul did exactly that. It took the

gentleman at Ithaca U-Haul just under 3 hours to install it and he went above and beyond to show me all the parts and how it worked afterwards. I can now tow things up to 4500 lbs. The trailer is only 220 lbs and the Sunfish is about 150 lbs, so yeah, I think my towing capabilities are sufficient for the long run.

Registering the trailer was a bit of a chore. I had to do some digging on the NYS DMV website to figure out how to do it. Your best option after acquiring a trailer with zero paperwork is to register it as homemade. I had to bring in a couple of forms to the DMV including the weight slip and sales receipts of the parts I purchased to prove it was "homemade" and that I had paid sales tax on the parts.

The rep at the DMV said that she had never registered a homemade trailer before and pulled out a folder with instructions. My sales receipts were a couple of Amazon orders and a Lowe's receipt for parts totaling a couple hundred dollars. I paid for the trailer off of Facebook in cash. I told the rep the frame was given to me for free and the receipts were for the parts. She was okay with this, I was assigned a VIN number, and the registration was completed!

Cost to register a trailer depends on the weight. For me, including approval for towing up to 1000 lbs and a new license plate, I paid \$17.75. The trip to the DMV took about half an hour - most of which was

waiting in line. In NYS, a trailer's registration acts as proof of ownership and there are no titles issued (at least for trailers of this size). The registration expires December 31st each year and you can renew online.

To be 100% street legal, your trailer also has to pass a safety inspection within 10 days of registration and the VIN needs to be permanently affixed to the tongue. I'll admit I did not get around to fitting the safety inspection into my schedule. I only used the trailer twice and figured no one would ask questions now that I had the license plate. I fully intend on taking the time to get it inspected next year!

My dad and I made an attempt to affix the VIN number to the tongue using a stamping kit, but the galvanized metal was too tough. The stamps wouldn't leave a mark. A dremmel did not allow for enough fine hand control to engrave the VIN on the tongue either. So I will have to purchase an official engraving tool of some sort to be compliant with that, too.

The first time I took the boat out was on September 21st. Figuring out how to transport my mast, spars, and sail was an area of debate for awhile. I ended up purchasing a \$50 nylon bag to store them in and affixing that to the top of the boat with the ratchet straps and two foam blocks. The foam blocks prevent the rigging from bouncing on the deck while driving. Some people online voiced against this method,

saying the bag will flap in the wind and rub up against the sail and wear it out in certain spots. I decided that this shouldn't be a problem for me only traveling 30 minutes to Seneca Lake. Plus the only real loose part of the bag was right at the end, which only really touched the ends of the spars and masts.



Figure 7: The setup.

I admit I was pretty nervous and very cautious driving with the boat on the trailer for the first time. But in my experience, driving with the boat on the trailer is less intimidating than driving with the trailer empty. The trailer makes far less noise with the weight of the boat on it. Plus, I can see the boat in my rear view mirror, where as I cannot see any of the trailer while it is empty. Nevertheless, I made it to Watkins Glen without issue.

Unfortunately or perhaps fortunately, I had no one to help me launch it for the first time that day. I watched several

YouTube videos in preparation. If I wanted to sail, I had to do it myself. I parked out-of-the-way near the boatyard to rig up my boat. Then, moved over to the boat ramp. With only a couple of tries I was able to back it down into the water myself!

I tied off the boat on the small dock and put away the car and the trailer. Relatively speaking, the Village Marina boat launch is a bit complicated to get out of. Down the lane between Dock 4 and 3, turn right at the breakwall, then continue east to eventually turn north and get out in the lake. This is far more challenging without an engine. Perhaps my BEST purchase of all the boat gear was a \$18 telescoping paddle from Amazon. I felt like I looked SO GOOFY kneeling on my boat, with the sail laying all crazy on deck, trying to paddle this thing and steer the rudder to get out of the marina.

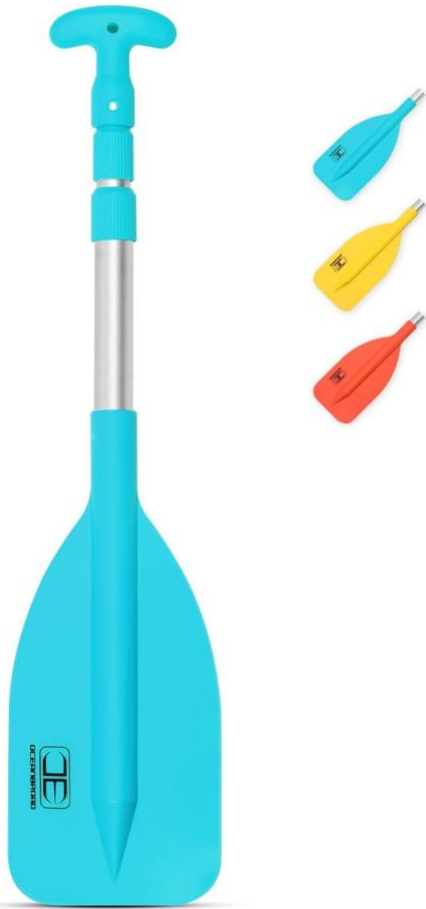


Figure 8: OCEANBROAD Telescoping Emergency Paddle 21"-42" Aluminium Shaft for Kayaking, Boating, Canoeing, River Tubing - image via Amazon.

When I taught the Girl Scouts how to sail on Sunfish at camp on Cayuga Lake, I had them hang onto the bow handle and swim the boat away from shore and clear of the swim area and dock. Luckily, our camp's shoreline was very sheltered by two points - one to the north and one to south, so they could still raise their sails on shore without having to worry about the wind taking the boat away from the swimmer. I could have tried this, but swimming in the marina is not always the best idea as we know. Plus, I wanted to be able to stay on my boat and stay in control of the

rudder, with so many other boats around me.

This first day I sailed there was a South wind. So close to the south shore was pretty sheltered and I was able to raise my sail without immediately taking off. Even in the shore's shadow, that little boat wanted to soar before I could get the halyard cleated off. I got myself situated by the two stone breakwalls north of the boatyard (just west of the canal and Cargill Salt) and then sailed east.

The boat was immediately happy - the mast "purred" in the hull. The wind was exactly the amount I needed to get reacquainted with Sunfish sailing. Though, being a south wind, I avoided truly sailing downwind, because I was nervous I would not be able to get back upwind and back to the marina. So I mainly just reached back and forth at the southern end for that first day.



Figure 9: Maiden Voyage.

At the end of the day, I was much more confident putting the boat back onto the trailer. I mean, it was just the reverse of what I had already done.

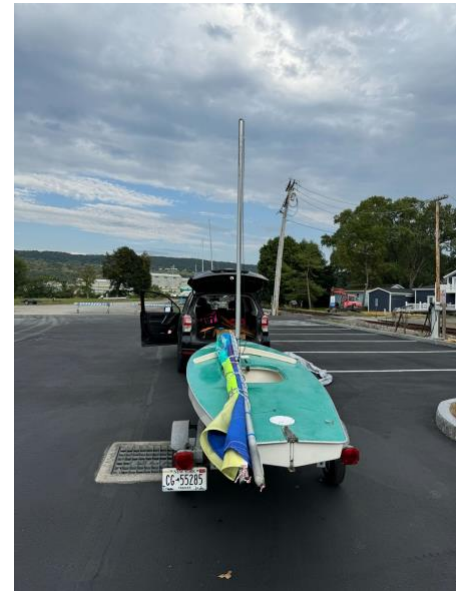


Figure 10: Packing up to go home.

The second time I sailed the boat was on October 5th. This day was more like fall than summer - temperature around 70°F and sunny. The wind was out of the North which is what made me really want to sail again - I wanted to truly test the upwind and downwind capabilities of the boat.

I was much more comfortable and confident driving the trailer and launching the boat the second time. Though, the north wind presented it's own set of challenges. The boat launch was full of seaweed for starters, which is annoying. I had a much more difficult time paddling out of the marina since we feel more of the north wind than south. I also had a difficult time raising the sail, even on the lee sides of the breakwalls, because it was not sheltered enough and my boat wanted to take off before I even had the sail up halfway. It took me three tries to get it up and keep the boat under control.

I was able to try out the boat on upwind and downwind courses, which ultimately made for a more interesting sail than reaching back and forth. I was reminded that the Sunfish is not an upwind boat. I made it up to Hector Falls in under 2 hours with maybe 5 or 6 tacks. I sailed essentially dead downwind back to the marina and made it there in about half an hour.

Downwind is so enjoyable on these boats - it's like surfing!

I was reminded how much of a wet boat the Sunfish is. I knew getting in the water up to mid-calf is a part of the trailering process regardless to get the boat floating. As much as you try to avoid it, I think getting your butt wet on a Sunfish is inevitable. With the hull so low in the water, any little wave is going to splash up on deck. I know that'll be really nice in the summer and it was *tolerable* on this October ride. Since this last sail, I have acquired a wet suit so that I can get right back on the water when May and June come around!

Dropping my sails in the North wind was also challenge since I

had a hard time getting the boat to stop. I had to drop behind the breakwalls and paddle back to the marina and the boat launch. When reloading this time, Mike Crouse and Jeff Mack were present on shore - curious to see the process and eager to lend a hand. Mike advised me not to back the trailer into the seaweed pit, and he and Jeff lifted my boat out of the water and carried it up to the trailer bunks. (Thank you!) Mike also picked up my trailer with his bare hands while I drove in reverse* to get it down the launch, since backing it up is still a bit time-consuming for me. (**I don't think this is recommended.*)

So what are my takeaways from my first trailering experiences? I think the Village Marina boat launch is challenging location for boats without engines. Plus, *there's always an audience*. I do not think I will launch here again with a north wind because of 1) the excessive seaweed and 2) the difficulty I experienced paddling out of the marina. Logistics wise, trailering is annoying and I do wish I had a beach or a slip to tie my Sunfish

up in. Since I live in an apartment complex, my boat is living in my parents' driveway. Meaning that I have to drive there to pickup the boat before heading to the water. It's an extra leg of travel. Figuring out the registration was annoying too, but now that I know how it works, I'll be good.

Does the hassle of trailering outweigh the fun of the boat? So far, definitely not! I think that next year I need to *take advantage* of the fact that my Sunfish is on a trailer. I can go anywhere! It is easy for me to default to the Village Marina - since that's the location I'm familiar with and I know people there. But I think it's worth it for me to check out other launches and see some different views - definitely Smith Park and Sampson and perhaps places on Keuka and Cayuga as well. Finally, like everyone new to trailering, I just need some more practice backing up.

- Katie

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The Last Word

By Tom Alley, SN-ACN

SV Tomfoolery

The End



Other than being a rather popular song sung by *The Doors* in the late

1960s and being prominently featured in the movie *Apocalypse Now*, the subtitle of this column also sums up the status of our on-the-water activities in 2024. By now our boats are pretty much stacked up in the boatyard and are in varying states of readiness for the colder months to come. Our visits to the marina are becoming less frequent (unless, of course, you are one of the procrastinators – like me – who is still winterizing their boat).

While there are many people who proudly proclaim that Fall is their favorite season, I'm not one of them. The "crisp, brisk, exhilaration" that some people experience in a cool autumn morning only makes me want to

crawl back into the warm bed I left a short time before. The shorter days are also oppressive to a degree. In just a few weeks I won't be able to do anything outside during a weekday because I'll be at work during the only hours that the sun is up. No, I'm definitely a fan of the summer with the long periods of daylight and temperatures that don't require multiple layers of clothing. In fact, if there's ever a petition for support of global warming, please let me know so that I can sign it!

Soon we will be caught up in the rush generated by the Holiday season. First Thanksgiving, where we can be (rightfully) grateful for the time we got to spend on our boats and with our friends this past year. Then comes Advent, the time of anticipation for the coming of Christmas. After that will come the much longer advent where some of us will begin anticipating the boating season of 2025.

As I write this, it will be right around 200 days until *Tomfoolery* finds her way back

into the water. My 'boating advent' has already started. 'Tis the season for lists and for projects and for endless preparations. It will be a season of optimism, a season of looking forward to boating adventures yet to come. The days will be short and cold, but there will be a joy and a hope in all of us for the promise of the 'next' season.

May you experience the humility of gratitude as we settle into our non-boating time of year. May you find peace and joy with friends and family during the coming Holidays. May you experience the joy and hope offered by the potential of our next season of time on the water.

And to my fellow procrastinators: I'll see you in the boatyard!

- Your Editor, Tom
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As always, send your thoughts about this newsletter to:

editor@abc-flx.org
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Calendar of Events

November 2024

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* November issue publication date.
- 01 *The Deep 6* fall issue publication date. (D/6)
- 12 Bridge Meeting (1900)

December 2024

- 20 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

January 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* January issue publication date
- 14 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- TBA Finger Lakes Change of Watch
- 17 Deadline for D/6 *The Deep 6* articles. (D/6)

February 2025

- 01 *The Deep 6* winter issue publication date. (D/6)
- 01-10 USPS Annual Meeting (National)
- 11 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 21 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

March 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* March issue publication date.
- 11 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- TBA District 6 Spring Council & Conference (D/6)

April 2025

- 08 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 18 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles (D/6)
- 21 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

May 2024

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* May issue publication date.
- 01 *The Deep 6* spring issue publication date. (D/6)
- 14 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 18-24 Safe Boating Week (National)

June 2024

- 11 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 21 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

July 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* July issue publication date.
- 08 Bridge Meeting (1900).
- 25 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles. (D/6)
- 31-8/3 D/6 Rendezvous, *Sylvan Beach, NY*. (D/6)

August 2024

- 7/31-8/3D/6 Rendezvous, *Sylvan Beach, NY*. (D/6)
- 01 *The Deep 6* summer issue publication date. (D/6)
- 02-04 Summer Boater Weekend, *Sampson State Park Marina, Seneca Lake*.
- 13 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 22 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

September 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* September issue publication date.
- 06 Seneca Lake Barge Race, *Seneca Yacht Club, Geneva, NY*.
- 09 Bridge Meeting (1900)

October 2025

- 14 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 17 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles (D/6)
- 24 Deadline for *Drum* articles
- TBA District 6 Fall Council & Conference (D/6)

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

<http://www.abc-flx.org>

or our Facebook page:

<http://facebook.com/SenecaPowerSquadron>

for any last-minute changes.