


# AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB

For Boaters, By Boaters®




# THE DRUM

A Publication of the Finger Lakes Chapter

In this issue...

- From The Commander..... 1
- From the Executive Officer ..... 3
- From the Administrative Officer ..... 4
- From the Education Director ..... 4
- Secretary's Sidenotes..... 6
- ABC-FLX News..... 8
  - Happy Birthday! ..... 8
  - Total Lunar Eclipse on March 13<sup>th</sup> ..... 8
  - Congratulations, Radar Class Graduates! ..... 8
  - Got News?..... 8
- Upcoming Classes & Seminars ..... 9
  - Weather ..... 9
  - America's Boating Course (ABC) ..... 9
  - Looking for Something? ..... 10
- Song of Myself..... 11
- NTSB: Improper Anchor Chain Scope Led to Vessel Loss ..... 12
- The Last Word..... 13
- Long-Term Class Schedule ..... 15
- Calendar of Events..... 17
- Report any errors or omissions to:  
editor@abc-flx.org

## From The Commander

By Kris West, S SV Zephyr

### Remember Brianna

As we all rang in the New Year on January first, I'm betting very few of us took a moment to think about Brianna Lieneck. I know I didn't - even though Brianna's short life has affected me directly. In 2005 Brianna was an 11-year-old Long Island girl who loved softball and was looking forward to entering sixth grade. She was a vibrant young girl whose life was cut short by a tragic boating accident.

After an outing to Fire Island on the evening of August 17<sup>th</sup>, Brianna and her family were headed home across Great South Bay under a bright waxing gibbous moon aboard the family's 24-foot Bayliner. Their evening took an awful turn when they were broadsided by a 25-foot Grady White at about 9:00 pm. According to a New York Times article, the Grady White tore a gash through the Bayliner, mounted its gunwale and nearly passed entirely over it. Brianna,



who was sitting near the point of impact, suffered massive trauma to her head and torso and died of her injuries. Both of her parents sustained severe head and face trauma whereas those aboard the larger, heavier Grady White walked away with no physical injuries.

The cause of the accident was likely a combination of factors, including among them, excessive speed. The driver of the Grady White was initially charged with boating while intoxicated but the charges were later dropped when tests performed by police four hours after the collision showed no alcohol or drugs in his blood. Whether the driver of the Grady White was able to distinguish the

Bayliner’s running lights from the brightly lit coastline was another potential contributing factor to the accident. In any event, the tragedy was considered entirely preventable had the operator of the Grady White possessed the most basic knowledge of boating safety.

Brianna’s mother, Gina Lieneck, started a multi-year campaign to ensure that her daughter’s life was not lost in vain. At the time of the accident, New York State’s boater safety law had been kicked down the road so that it applied only to those born after May 1, 1996 even though the majority of boat owners are middle aged adults. When it was initially signed by the governor in 2019, Brianna’s Law was designed expand boater safety requirements over a 5 year phase-in period gradually expanding the age under which boater safety laws apply. As of January 1, 2025, that phase-in period is complete and now **all operators of motorized watercraft, regardless of age, must complete a state-approved boating safety course.**

It’s worth diving into the details of what the law covers. Boat operators must be at least 10 years old, take a boating safety course and acquire a boating safety certificate. Any operator younger than 18 years old who does not have a boating safety certificate must be accompanied by at least one person who is 18 years or older and holds a boating safety certificate. ‘Motorized’ includes sailing vessels that have auxiliary motors and personal watercraft like jet skis. There is no ‘grace period’ for someone who recently bought a boat so any new boat

owners must have a certificate to legally operate their boat. New York State recognizes boater safety certificates issued to out-of-state visitors provided that the certificate was issued from the visitor’s current state of residence and the course was approved by the National Association of Boating Law Administrators as indicated by the NASBLA logo on their certificate.

The law does not apply to non-motorized craft including kayaks, standup paddleboards, rowboats, canoes or small sailboats without motors. The law also does not change the requirements for renting a boat from a livery in New York State. However, livery staff must hold a boater safety certificate, must provide safety information to renters and demonstrate safe handling before departure. Finally, the law does not apply to people who have an equivalent or higher level of boater safety training such as members of the US coast guard auxiliary, those who have a Coast Guard license or those who are certified boating safety instructors.

Failure to comply with Briana’s Law includes a fine of \$100 - \$250 per violation. There may be additional financial consequences for anyone involved in a boating accident and who does not have a boating safety certificate including denial of insurance

coverage and increased personal liability. Most importantly, there are immeasurable psychological consequences felt by anyone involved in a ‘preventable’ accident. I can’t imagine the nightmares nor the guilt suffered by the Grady White operator after



he killed an innocent 11-year old child and shattered the Lieneck family.

As members of the Seneca Sail and Power Squadron, I’m certain you’ve completed your America’s Boating Course (ABC) and have received your boater safety certificate. You should have your certificate on board and available to show law enforcement should you need it. Sadly, ‘I left it at home’ isn’t a valid excuse and will likely result in a fine. One benefit of taking ABC with the Power Squadron is that if you ever lose your card, you can request a replacement card.

Did you know that you can also get a special annotation on your driver’s license indicating you’ve received your boater safety

**Get your Boater Safety Certificate and Get the anchor on your NYS Drivers License!!!**

[www.briannaslaw.com](http://www.briannaslaw.com)



certificate? Since you likely carry your driver's license with you, 'getting the anchor' is an easy way to also demonstrate compliance with Brianna's Law without having to keep track of a separate certificate. Visit

[www.shop.parks.ny.gov/boatersafety/](http://www.shop.parks.ny.gov/boatersafety/)

to learn how to get your license updated.

Because of Brianna's Law, ABC was the first course I took with the Seneca Sail and Power Squadron and was my 'gateway drug' into joining the organization. Through this course, I met some amazing instructors and people who are dedicated to

having fun while also being responsible and safe on the water. Members of our squadron are a welcoming community of boaters who enjoy the water and are generous in sharing knowledge and experience. While there are other venues that offer the boater safety course in New York, few provide the depth of local knowledge and skill available through our squadron.

Today, Brianna Lieneck would have been in her mid-thirties except for that horrific and preventable accident. We will never know what her life could have become. One thing is certain though – her life did mean

something. All operators of motor boats in New York are now required, by law, to understand safe boating procedures. The requirements of Brianna's Law are common sense measures that help everyone enjoying the beautiful waters of New York State have a good time and get home safely after every outing. Please encourage every boater you know to get their boater certificate if they don't already have it.

Thanks for reading and now, get outside and have fun!

- Kris

[co@abc-flx.org](mailto:co@abc-flx.org)

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## From the Executive Officer

By Jim McGinnis, SN-CN



### Sampson Weekend

**Please plan to attend the ABC-FLX Rendezvous 2025**

Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> through

Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>,

Seneca Lake Resorts at Sampson State Park, 6040 NY-96A, Romulus, NY 14541

**Time is now to get slip reservations! SenecaLakeResorts.com**

We have a fun packed weekend planned. Sail/Motor to Sampson on Friday, Concert Friday night!

Saturday will be a day for sailing, swimming, boating and Boater Training. Mini-golf Tournament!

Saturday night will feature our regular band **Phil Smock and his "Take 3 Quartet"**

SV Brewster

Sunday should be a leisurely return to Watkins Glen, weather conditions permitting.

Meals and beverages are on your own for the weekend. We have several get togethers planned.

You can come for any part of the weekend by boat or by car.

If you have any Questions? Call or text Jim McGinnis at 607-346-5408.

- Jim

[xo@abc-flx.org](mailto:xo@abc-flx.org)

# From the Administrative Officer

By Maggie Martin

SV Plein Air

## Change of Watch Recap



The month of March can be the most cruel -and it's not over yet! Waiting impatiently for boating

season!

It was good to see everyone in January at the Change of Watch that was hosted by the Harbor Hotel in Watkins Glen. Schuyler

County Historian Gary Emerson gave an interesting talk on the History of the Seneca Lake waterfront near where the Village Marina is located.

## District Spring Conference

If any of you are going to be attending the District 6 meeting in Penn Yan on April 12<sup>th</sup>, my husband, John Chesebrough, and I will be reliving our adventure sailing from the Florida Keys to Cuba a few years ago. It will be in the afternoon, consult an updated schedule.

## Up Next...

On a local note, our next gathering is planned for April 15<sup>th</sup> at J.R.Dill Winery, 4922 NY 414, on the east side of Seneca Lake. We can relax, enjoy the view, and sample local wines and beverages. A speaker will be featured, confirmation pending. Appetizers will be available. Hope to see you all there-it will be spring then!

- Maggie

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# From the Education Director

By Katie Alley, JN

SV Tomfoolery

## Winter – But Not Much Longer!



Your winter views may include a scenic winter wonderland mountaintop from the great heights of a ski lift. Or

perhaps they include the dimly lit page of a good book from the candle on your living room coffee table. Alternatively, they might include a big, warm, dark comforter wrapped ahead your head, followed by a furry friend's adorable face waking you up.

The start of the year is typically one for rest, planning, and indoor projects. Our group is no exception to that in the dreary winters. I'm happy to share though that the Bridge has laid out a lot of the 2025 calendar.

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, we held our Annual Change Of Watch meeting at the Harbor Hotel. We welcomed some new and returning officers and committee members. I'm especially excited to have some new energy in the commander's seat as Kris West takes the lead! I'm also incredibly grateful for our longtime volunteers who have been a great help to me and our education endeavors.

As for the education calendar, the *Radar* class has just finished up. Congratulations to student/instructor Jim McGinnis, and students Shane and Jacque Alsworth! Everyone finished the course and passed the test!

Next up, we have the *Weather* class on the schedule, aiming for a start during the week of March 10<sup>th</sup>. The lead instructor will be Tom Alley. We are still working on securing a meeting spot. All of the prospective students live between Horseheads and Corning, so we are hoping to find a classroom location that is more centralized than the Schuyler County Human Resources Center.

Unfortunately, finding a meeting spot has been an ongoing issue for many years for our group, as many places charge non-profits to use meeting rooms and public resources like the library are very booked up and do not allow private weekly room reservations. We're trying to find a creative solution! If you are interested in the *Weather* class and would like to be added to the list of prospective students, please reach out and we'll fill you in on what our plans are!

This year, we will be offering *Boat Handling*, previously known as *Seamanship*. This course is truly a staple in our curriculum. I see it as the next step up from the ABC class. It builds a solid foundation of boating knowledge and opens up doors to more niche nautical topics - like navigation, marlinspike, sailing, and more. Plus, it's extremely practical and hands-on as we teach as much of this class as possible on-the-water. We aim to start this class in May and finish in June. Again, let me know if you are interested,

and instructors - think about what sections you might want to teach! To follow in previous year's footsteps, we'll also be offering ABC in late May and including an on-the-water session with that. Brianna's Law is in full effect in New York state this year, meaning that every boat operator must have their Boater's Safety Card. This card is awarded to those who complete a state-approved, 8-hour safety course that covers a wide scope of basic boating knowledge. Several members of the public have contacted our leadership to ask about the course and replacing lost cards. This is a signal to us that people are paying attention to the law and the need for the ABC course still exists.

Our annual rendezvous to Sampson is scheduled for August 1-3<sup>rd</sup>. I love this trip so much every year! The beautiful state park is a great meeting spot for us to host educational events and parties. This year, we plan on offering (at least!) two seminars that we have never offered before. One of them will be the *Man*

*Overboard* seminar and I'm hoping to make that one a hands-on experience with swimming involved. The second choice is not finalized yet, so if you have any suggestions on what you'd like to take, let me know! A full list of possible seminars is available here:

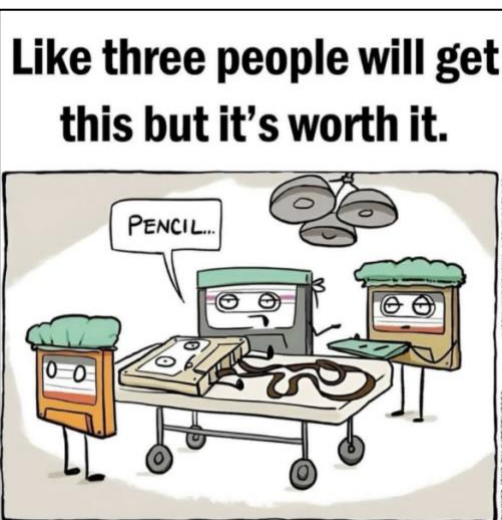
<https://americasboatingclub.org/index.php/learn/select-type-of-boating/all/all-seminars>

Please note that nothing is off limits - for example, I can find kayaks for the Paddle Smart seminar and I know we have trailers for a Trailering seminar! It's all about what you guys want to see and learn.

Right now, we still have a few more weeks of ski lift rides, reading, and afternoon naps to get through. But eventually the snow will become that lovely slushy, wet mud that we all love walking on in the boatyard. No, really - we love it because its a sure sign of spring and lake days ahead!

- Katie

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# Secretary's Sidenotes

By Jeff Mack, JN

SV Project

## Race Around the Barge



For my upcoming column, I'm recounting (in series) the adventure of my trip up the lake last September

for an epic yacht race out of Geneva, NY.

Every year, the Seneca Yacht Club hosts a "Race around the Barge," where boats set out from the channel markers near the club at the lake's northeast outlet, sailing south past the US Navy's sonar testing barge—moored 10 nautical miles away at 175°—and then charge back to the club. This year, I joined the fray as a solo racer with my Sabre 28, competing alongside several boats from the South Shore.

Representing the FLYC fleet—with boats like *Brewster*, *Ellawicious*, *Independence*, and *Sweetest Thing*—our showing and performance was as impressive as that of the host club. Despite some fast competitors from the Glen not making it up the lake this year, the race on Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, turned into one of my most cherished adventures on Seneca. Although I now look back with a twinge of nostalgia (and a bit of seasickness over selling off the vessel that took me through it all), it was a fitting last roll in the

waves for *Tiny Tina* and me. It was also a good test of what I've learned about keelboat sailing over the last few years, even now as I devote energy to my new project, *Minka*. I still occasionally dream of being with *Tina*, in the element.

We set out on Thursday afternoon—a day ahead of the rest of the South Shore fleet—to anchor about 15 nautical miles up on the east shore. The plan was to spend the evening at Lewis Duck Camp in Lodi for an end-of-summer party. My friend, Michael, joined me on this leg, and he helped me secure my 8-foot Walker Bay dinghy to *Tina's* foredeck. I'd need the dinghy at the party, where shallow water at the dock forced me to anchor out, and again on Saturday when to get from the State Park marina on the lagoon's north side to the yacht club on the south shore.

The dinghy, weighing just 75 pounds, was light enough for me to handle alone—but since it was my first time deploying and retrieving it, Michael's assistance was invaluable. It fitted neatly over *Tina's* coach roof like a small cap, its beige, pleated plastic giving it a charming, old wooden clinker appearance. I found it on Facebook Marketplace for only \$300. It even came with the sailing kit, which I tossed in the quarter berth for the trip, ...just in case.

We left Village Marina at 12:50 PM, by the hour we were "gull winging" under a blue sky streaked with wisps of white. The

genoa poled out to port while the main gently billowed on the starboard spreader. Michael, visibly enjoying the glory of sailing—pulled his phone out to film the schooner *True Love* gliding into the wind about 100 meters behind, cutting over our path toward Hector Falls with a bone in her teeth. A light breeze from the south, gradually building to a steady gentle breeze, carried us along an average of 5 knots speed during our smooth three-hour cruise.

Arriving at our destination, we dropped anchor in nine feet of water, where a bed of muskgrass lay a couple of hundred feet from the beach. On the second attempt, the anchor dug in solidly—a reassuring hold that would be tested as the evening wore on. With the boat drifting gently against the anchor, we kept the engine running while Michael and I unlashed the dinghy and slid it over the starboard lifeline. It splashed onto the water gulping up a bucket's worth into the bottom and, after a short drag around, landed neatly by the transom swim ladder to tie off.

Once we confirmed the anchor was holding, we powered down the engine and prepared for a short trip to shore. I pulled the tender into the ladder and clambered in, with Michael handing over his backpack—this being the last leg of his journey with me up the lake. I would be on my own with *Tina* for the rest of the week.

Rowing to the pebble-strewn beach beneath towering oak trees, we reached Lewis Duck Camp, where a gravel path led up to a shady lawn in front of a quaint A-frame cottage. Sharon, our gracious host, greeted us warmly. Soon, guests began to trickle in, including—our friend Tom's father-in-law from Spain, who fired up a giant propane burner to prepare a traditional paella in a pan nearly a yard in diameter. With chicken, rice, peppers, and saffron all mixed into one enormous dish, the meal fed more than twenty people, setting the stage for an evening of relaxed conversation, drinks, snacks, and a fire pit gathering overlooking the lake.

As dusk fell, the setting sun blushed the sky with a pink glow that engulfed the horizon as it sank behind the western hill. Seated in my favorite chair, I kept an eye on *Tina*, moored silently in the darkening light, her sleek silhouette reflected on the glowing water. I'd been using the trees to gauge her position all afternoon.

After the party began winding down and guests departed, I rowed back to *Tina* under the soft glow of the moon. Despite a long day, I still had tasks to complete

before the weather could turn against me. The forecast warned of building south winds and increasing wave action, so I decided to retrieve the dinghy while the night was still calm. I climbed the swim ladder, grabbed my headlamp, and pulled the dinghy around to the starboard beam, I tied a loop into the end of the painter, clipped it on to the main halyard, and hoisted it up with the cabin top winch, then wrestled it in place on the deck and lashed it further to port than before, so I would have more room on the deck to handle the ground tackle when the time came. The operation went smoother than expected, and a few lingering guests — and Sharon — watched, from the shore. When I finished with my jostling, I waved good night to them indicating all was well.

Once the deck was quiet and the Duck Camp lights dimmed to near darkness (except for one lit window that served as a landmark through the port fixedlight), I checked my position on Navionics and confirmed that the anchor was holding. I laid out my PFD, headlamp, shoes, and rubber gloves — preparing for a possible anchor retrieval — and set my

bed for a short rest, planning for just 30 minutes of sleep.

I woke earlier than planned and ran the engine a while to charge the batteries. After another short nap, I awoke to check the GPS. The anchor was still secure, but the increasing wave action was becoming an annoyance. Peeking out of the companion way I heard the trees on shore hissing in the moderate breeze. To the west the lake was bathed in a milky moonlight, the surface current rushing north like a raging river. Anxiety crept in as I wished I had headed up past Lodi Point earlier, when conditions were calmer, but there was no changing the past — only learning from it.

I reflected on the lessons of the night which I had learned before about anchoring: Lead with caution, and anchor for what is coming. By 2 AM, weary yet determined, I decided it was time to head to the bouncing bow to pull up anchor and continue north — if only another mile — to find some peace in the lee of Lodi Point.

*To be continued...*

- Jeff  
[secretary@abc-flx.org](mailto:secretary@abc-flx.org)

# ABC-FLX News

## Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our members!

### March

Mark Erway  
Helene Fausold  
Jim McGinnis  
Terry Stewart

### April

Dave Dawson-Elli

## Total Lunar Eclipse on March 13<sup>th</sup>

The entirety of the lower 48 states, and some regions beyond, will witness (weather permitting) a total lunar eclipse the night of March 13<sup>th</sup> and into the early morning of March 14<sup>th</sup>. This special cosmic event occurs when the moon, Earth, and sun are aligned. Long, red wavelengths of light pass through Earth's

atmosphere and are projected onto the moon in majestic rusty or crimson colors, making the moon appear red and giving rise to the term, "blood moon".

The coming total lunar eclipse, now less than a month away, is the first to grace Earth since 2022.

Earth experiences a total lunar eclipse, on average, every 1.5 years. But it's a somewhat rare space phenomenon to view because you have to be on the side of Earth facing the moon when it happens. Also, weather can impede viewing, as it did for many during the 2024 total solar eclipse, so it's wise to attempt a viewing when you can.

Viewing is easy. You basically (again, weather permitting) just need to go outside. Unlike a total solar eclipse, wherein just a narrow band of Earth's surface witnesses the event, huge swathes of territory will be able to

see the moon turn red. Unlike solar eclipses, a lunar eclipse lasts for hours, so there's no rush.

## Congratulations, Radar Class Graduates!

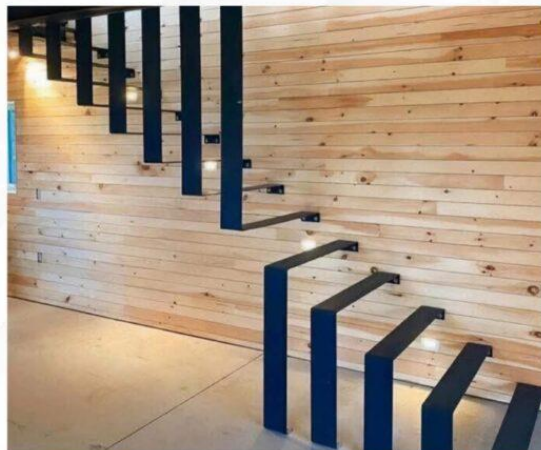
Congratulations to the following students who successfully completed the *Radar for Boaters* elective course:

- Jacque Alsworth
- Shane Alsworth
- Jim McGinnis

## 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!

**Home owner:** I'd like to break both of my legs  
**Architect:** Say no more





## 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>

### 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

**Instructor:** Tom Alley

**When:** Weekly, beginning Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 7:00pm.

**Where:** Corning Aviation Conference Room, 348 Sing Sing Rd, Horseheads, NY

**Duration:** 10 weeks (including final exam)

**Cost:** \$105 / \$44 add'l family

**NOTE:** Due to Corning company policies, pre-registration for this course is required to have access

to the facility. Contact the instructor for details.

### 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](mailto: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.

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](mailto:seo@abc-flx.org)

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

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

[www.abc-flx.org](http://www.abc-flx.org)

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### 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:

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### Looking for Something?

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

[SEO@abc-flx.org](mailto:SEO@abc-flx.org).



# Song of Myself

*By Walt Whitman (1819-1892)*

*Song of Myself, 22*

You sea! I resign myself to you also – I guess what  
you mean,

I behold from the beach your crooked inviting  
fingers,

I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of  
me,

We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me  
out of sight of the land,

Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,

Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,

Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,

Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet  
always-ready graves,

Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and  
dainty sea,

I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of  
all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of hate and  
conciliation,

Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each others'  
arms.

I am he attesting sympathy,

(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip  
the house that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline  
to be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?

Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I  
stand indifferent,

My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,

I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging  
pregnancy?

Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd  
over and rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a  
balance,

Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,

Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and  
early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past  
decillions,

There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-  
day is not such a wonder,

The wonder is always and always how there can be  
a mean man or an infidel.

- *Walt Whitman*

o o o o o

*This poem is in the public domain.*

# NTSB: Improper Anchor Chain Scope Led to Vessel Loss

By Mike Schuler

[www.gCaptain.com](http://www.gCaptain.com)

*Editor's Note – Anyone who has taken Seamanship, Boat Handling, or Sail knows that we spend a fair amount of time talking about anchoring in those courses. Here's a real-life example of just how important this skill set is. Thanks to author Mike Schuler for allowing us to reprint his article. -Ed.*

o o o o o

February 11, 2025 – The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has determined that inadequate anchor chain scope and navigational errors led to the grounding and total loss of the cargo vessel *Bonnie G* in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The incident occurred on October 4, 2023, when the vessel was anchored approximately one mile south of St. Thomas. After the anchor chain parted, the vessel drifted and subsequently grounded, forcing the evacuation of all 12 crew members. The U.S. Coast Guard successfully rescued all personnel, with no injuries or pollution reported.

The vessel, valued at \$1.5 million, was declared a total constructive loss.

Investigation revealed that the captain had initially reviewed weather forecasts predicting winds between 10-15 knots with gusts up to 25 knots. However, upon arrival at Crown Bay, the vessel encountered worse conditions than expected.



*Figure 1: Coast Guard rescue crews assisted 12 people who were forced to abandon the 195-foot cargo vessel *Bonnie G* the morning of Oct. 4, 2023, after the vessel started taking on water and ran aground half a mile south from the local airport in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)*

Additionally, a loaded barge that had broken free from its moorings blocked the intended docking location, forcing the decision to anchor.

The NTSB's investigation uncovered a critical error in the anchoring operation. The captain deployed only 135 feet of anchor chain based on an incorrect water depth assessment of 23-26 feet, when the actual depth was 68 feet. Investigators determined that the vessel should have deployed 2.5-3.5 times more chain for secure anchoring.

“When anchoring a vessel, a length of anchor chain that is five to seven times the water depth should be used; even more anchor chain should be used in adverse weather,” the NTSB report emphasized.

The situation worsened when the captain, after the anchor chain parted, failed to consult onboard navigational charts and inadvertently steered the vessel onto a nearby rock. This error resulted in a hull breach forward of the engine room. Compounding the damage, the forward watertight door in the engine room was left open when the crew abandoned ship, leading to progressive flooding that could have been prevented.

The NTSB concluded that the grounding resulted from both the inadequate scope of chain deployed when anchoring and the captain's failure to identify and avoid a charted rock while attempting to reach safe water.

“When anchoring, mariners should review navigational charts and other sources of local information, such as the US

Coast Pilot, to become familiar with nearby hazards,” the NTSB stated. This guidance is particularly crucial during adverse weather conditions when vessels face increased risks of drifting and may need to move quickly.

- Mike

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## The Last Word

By Tom Alley, SN-ON

SV Tomfoolery

### Let the Projects Begin!



In my annual

countdown to launch, the number of days is no longer a 3-digit number. In fact, it will be down around 75 days when this newsletter gets published. The Holidays are well behind us, and it's still a little bit early to start doing my taxes. The result is some fertile mental ground to start dreaming of the coming boat season and to start making the inevitable lists that define the projects for this spring.

Of course, there were already some lists of off-season tasks before I even hauled out last fall, but they're pretty high-level and lacking in any sort of

detail. As a chronic, habitual planner, each of the items on the high-level list typically turns into multiple pages of notes and more lists.

Two items that percolated to the top of my list last fall were:

- Fix depth sounder.
- Fix refrigerator.

Well, the depth sounder involves thru-hull fittings, so that will have to be done prior to launch. The refrigerator can potentially be done after the boat is in the water, so I decided to focus on the depth sounder first.

The sounder on my boat was installed by me 28 years ago. The LCD display is so faded that if you squint and stare, you might be able to make out some pale shapes and smudges that look like they could be numbers. Interphase, the company that made it, was acquired by Garmin and all support for this model stopped many moons ago. I think “fix”

is a very optimistic concept at this point. “Replace” is much more realistic.

My depth sounder is a forward-looking unit, and I've really come to like that feature. There's just something about being able to “see” forward of the boat rather than feeling your way with the keel. Chalk that up as a “must have” feature for the new unit. My current sounder also has an integrated knot meter, log, and temperature gauge. The knot meter is a must-have, and it sure would be nice to know just how invigorating a dive into the lake will be on those warm afternoons. Log that one as a strong “want”.

Well, after several days of searching online, it turns out that there aren't too many units that can do this. Suffice it to say, there is no stand-alone unit with those functions on the market today. Instead, I resigned myself to a modular system that gets built around a

multifunction display (MFD) and gets tied together with a data bus. Can you say, “Ka-ching!?”

To be fair, the new system will have far more capability and, being modular, can be updated or expanded in the future just by plugging in more bits and pieces. However, the magic of three decades of inflation that has transformed the price tag of the original sounder by half an order of magnitude does make for a degree of discomfort.

Of course, the transducer for the sounder has a completely different geometry than the old one, so that will require some patching, cutting, and fairing of the hull when the transducers get swapped. Hopefully the knot meter will fit into the same hole as the old one, or I’ll be

doing double the fiberglass work I’m currently anticipating.

It's a similar situation above the water line. The new displays are of a different geometry than the old ones, so none of the holes can be re-used. I spent a fair amount of time playing an interesting game of “Tetris”, laying everything out in an attempt to minimize the number of holes I’ll have to patch in *Tomfoolery’s* dashboard. In the end, I decided it will be much easier to source some mahogany or teak and build a new instrument panel from scratch.

Once the transducers and display are installed, they need to be connected together. This will involve power cables, NMEA 2000 cables, at least one Ethernet-like cable, and probably some other things I

haven’t thought of yet. I’m sure at least one of the holes I drilled for the existing cable runs will turn out to be too small, resulting in even more surgery to the interior of my boat.

And so it goes. You can see how these things cascade. At this point I have dozens of pages of notes and sketches. And that’s just the depth sounder. I have to do the same thing for a 30-year-old refrigerator.

I’d better get another notebook. See you in the boatyard – soon!

- Your Editor, Tom

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As always, send your thoughts about this newsletter to:

[editor@abc-flx.org](mailto:editor@abc-flx.org)



# Long-Term Class Schedule

Seneca Education Department

BOC Level	Title	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
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						
		VHF/DSC Radios						
		Using GPS				X		
		Basic Weather and Forecasting			X			
	Skills	Basic Powerboat Handling				X		
		Fire Extinguishers						

BOC Level	Title	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
Coastal Navigator	Classes	Marine Navigation		X			X	
		Marine Communication Systems	?					
		Weather	X				X	
	Seminars	Tides & Currents						X
		Rules of the Road					X	
		Anchoring						
		Mariner's Compass		X		X		
	Skills	Coastal Nav				X		
		Pyrotechnics			X			

BOC Level		Title	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Advanced Coastal Navigator	Classes	Advanced Marine Navigation		X		X		X
		Cruise Planning					X	
		Radar	X					
		Emergencies Onboard					X	X
	Sem.	Marine Radar (Retired)						
	Skills	Advanced Coastal Nav					X	X
		First Aid						

BOC Level		Title	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Offshore Navigator	C	Offshore Navigation		X				X
	Sem.	Computer Weather Forecasting	X					
		Thunderstorms / Severe Weather	X					
	Skills	Offshore Navigation					X	
		CPR/AED						
Endorsments		Sail		X		X	X	
		<del>Boating on Rivers, Locks, and Lakes</del>						
		Canadian Regulations	X					
		PaddleSmart		X		X		
Other		Instructor Development				X		
		Instructor Recertification		X			X	
		Operations Training				X		
		Celestial Navigation			X		X	

**Table Key**

X = Planned

C = Completed



# Calendar of Events

## March 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* March issue publication date.
- 11 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 13 Weather Class begins (1900)

## April 2025

- 08 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 11-13 District 6 Spring Council & Conference, *Penn Yan, NY* (D/6)
- 15 Spring Membership Meeting, *J.R.Dill Winery, Burdett, NY*
- 18 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles (D/6)
- 25 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)
- TBA Boat Handling class begins (1900)
- 17-23 Safe Boating Week (National)

## June 2024

- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 20 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

## July 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* July issue publication date.
- 08 Bridge Meeting (1900).
- 18 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)
- 01-03 Summer Boater Weekend, *Sampson State Park Marina, Seneca Lake*.
- 12 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 22 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

## September 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* September issue publication date.

- 01-17 USPS Governing Board Meeting, *Grand Rapids, MI* (National)
- 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)

## November 2025

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

## December 2024

- 09 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 19 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

## January 2026

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

## February 2026

- 01 *The Deep 6* winter issue publication date. (D/6)
- 09-15 USPS Annual Meeting, *Myrtle Beach, SC* (National)
- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 20 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

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.