

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	4
From the Administrative Officer	5
From the Education Director	6
Secretary's Sidenotes.....	9
ABC-FLX News.....	11
Happy Birthday!	11
Congratulations!	11
Got News?.....	11
Upcoming Classes & Seminars	12
Instructor Development & Certification	12
Operations Training	12
Looking for Something?	12
A Member's Guide to America's Boating Club Classes.....	13
The Last Word.....	17
Long-Term Class Schedule	18
Calendar of Events.....	20

Report any errors or omissions to:

editor@abc-flx.org

From The Commander

By Kris West, S

SV Zephyr

The Dog Days of Summer

As many of you know, our dog, Phelps, is our constant companion both on and off the docks. What you might *not* know is that Phelps is the reason we ended up buying our Hunter 306 a few years ago instead of a smaller boat. My initial search for a sailboat centered on those in the 20 – 25 foot range - something small enough for me to handle but big enough to offer some stability out on Seneca Lake. But, as my husband Jim joined the search, he asked, “Kris, what about the dog? You know he loves to swim and we can’t just leave him home!” So, our focus shifted to finding a boat both with a cockpit large enough to accommodate everyone, Phelps included, and a sugar scoop transom that would make it easier for him to get in and out of the water. Since roomy cockpits and sugar scoops are hallmarks Hunters, wah lah, here we are with our 2002 Hunter 306.



Soon after the boat arrived, we wanted to make sure we had all the right safety equipment and added a CFD (canine flotation device) to our inventory. It has lots of great safety features including ample floatation, high visibility color with reflective accents and a sturdy grab handle. Nonetheless we quickly learned that 65-pound Phelps needed help getting from the water onto the swim platform which typically sits 5 – 6 inches above the water line. I endured scratches and bruises for only a few swims before seeking alternatives to hauling him out of the water by his grab handle.

Enter the Pup Plank - an inflatable ramp that eases the transition



Figure 1: All geared up for fun on the water with the Pup Plank ready to deploy!

between boat and water. It's quick to inflate and deflate and attaches to the boat easily with D-ring tie downs and lines. Phelps quickly learned how to use the weighted mesh 'ramp' to walk up onto a traction padded platform before stepping back onto the boat without any assistance. He also learned to use the platform as his launch pad when jumping into the water reducing scratches to the gel coat – an unexpected but welcome bonus!

We rounded out our 'safe dog' inventory with a highly visible

retrieving toy. As we've all learned in our man overboard lessons, waves can quickly obscure someone floating in the water. Imagine you're a dog swimming with your eyes mere inches from the surface and searching for a brightly colored tennis ball. Even 6 inch waves can frustrate and exhaust a retriever during what should be an easy game of fetch. It took some internet sleuthing to find a highly visible striped 9 inch retrieving toy that stands vertically in the water like a lighthouse. It's easy for Phelps to find making those games endlessly rewarding and entertaining!

By making it safe, easy and fun for Phelps to join us on the lake, his presence adds joy to every adventure. He also adds an element of safety for us because our joint swimming time has doubled as rescue training. Our initial "good boat dog" training focused on having Phelps only getting on and off the boat when invited to do so. That extends to our time swimming – he won't jump in unless we give the ok. His advanced good boat dog

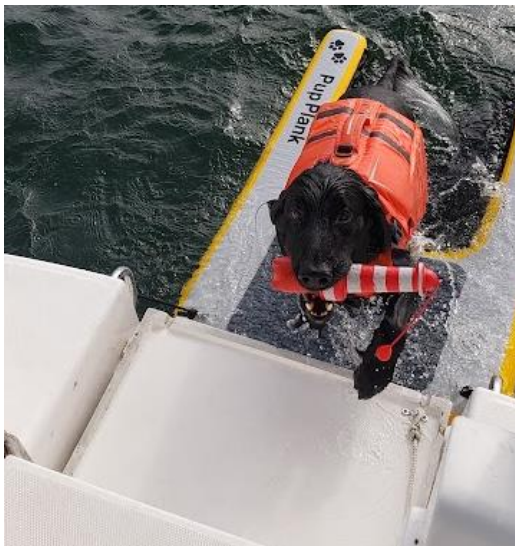


Figure 2: Boarding during a game of fetch.

The Drum

*Published six times per year by the Finger Lakes Chapter of America's Boating Club. The opinions expressed in **The Drum** are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of America's Boating Club, its officers, directors, or members.*

General Information

info@abc-flx.org

Commander

Kris West, S

co@abc-flx.org

Executive Officer

Jim McGinnis, SN-CN

xo@abc-flx.org

Administrative Officer

Maggie Martin

ao@abc-flx.org

Education Officer

Katie Alley, JN

seo@abc-flx.org

Assistant Education Officer

Scott Williams, JN

aseo@abc-flx.org

Secretary

Jeff Mack, JN

sec@abc-flx.org

Treasurer

Marcia Taylor, AP

treas@abc-flx.org

Membership

Phil Cherry, AP

membership@abc-flx.org

Public Relations Officers

Glenda Gephart

pro@abc-flx.org

Vessel Safety Check Chairman

Ray Margeson, AP

vsc@abc-flx.org

Web Site Administrator

Thomas Alley, SN-ON

webmaster@abc-flx.org

Unless attributed otherwise, ©2025 copyright by America's Boating Club - Finger Lakes Chapter. All rights reserved.

training now includes regular mock rescues where he swims directly to us and gives us a tow back to the boat. Hopefully, we'll never need his rescue services but, if we do, he'll approach it with all the confidence and enthusiasm he brings to everything he does.

While the phrase 'dog days of summer' originated from the return of the 'dog star' Sirius to the morning sky and is associated with the hottest, most uncomfortable part of the

summer, I will always associate my summer dog days with refreshing times on Seneca Lake with *all* of my beloved family members.

Now, get outside and have fun!

- Kris

co@abc-flx.org

o o o o o



Figure 3: Games double as serious rescue training.



From the Executive Officer

By Jim McGinnis, SN-CN

SV Brewster

Sampson Weekend Recap



Our ABC-FLX boating club enjoyed a fun-filled three-day weekend to Sampson State Park, August 1-3, filled with camaraderie, learning, and

plenty of good food and cold drinks.

We started Saturday out on the dock next to *M/V Bacchus* at 9AM for Bloody Mary's. Saturday morning brought a hands-on class on Man Overboard procedures led by me and Tom Alley with a hand-out from SEO Katie Alley — an essential refresher that combined safety

with practical skill-building. Saturday afternoon we had a lively mini-golf tournament hosted by Don Kloeber, where friendly competition and fierce putting set the tone. The evening was capped off with a memorable performance by the "Take 3 Quartet with Marcy," whose music had everyone enjoying the sounds until sunset. Sunday's return voyage tested our endurance, as we battled a stiff headwind all the way home. Thanks to everyone who made the weekend a success. Whether you

came for golf, the music, or the sailing, it was a reminder of why we love this club and the adventures we share. Here's to the next one!

Fair winds,

- Jim

jo@abc-flx.org



Figure 5: Fabulous day for Golf at Sampson.



Figure 4: MOB Recovery. Photo By David Kendrick – SYC.



Figure 6: Fearsome Two-some – Romulus World Championship.

From the Administrative Officer

By Maggie Martin

SV Plein Air

What's It Like Living on a Boat?



This month I was reflecting on time we had living on our boat in Florida during the winter months.

Living on a boat offers a unique lifestyle, often described as both adventurous and challenging. It can be a cheaper alternative to traditional housing for some, but comes with its own set of considerations like limited space, maintenance needs, and potential weather-related challenges.

Pros of Living on a Boat:

- **Proximity to Nature:**

Living on the water provides a constant connection to the natural environment, offering peaceful sights, sounds, and smells.

- **Potential for Lower Cost of Living:**

For some, boat living can be more affordable than traditional housing, especially when considering costs like rent and car payments.

- **Unique Community:**

Boat owners often form close-knit communities, sharing a common bond and enjoying social interactions.

- **Simpler Lifestyle:**

The limited space can encourage a more minimalist lifestyle, with less emphasis on material possessions and simpler living.

- **Active Lifestyle:**

Boat maintenance, sailing, and other water-related activities can contribute to an active lifestyle.

Cons of Living on a Boat:

- **Limited Space:**

Space is a significant constraint, requiring a minimalist approach and adaptability.

- **Maintenance Demands:**

Boats require regular upkeep, including repairs and maintenance, which can be time-consuming and expensive.

- **Weather-Related Challenges:**

Living on a boat means dealing with the unpredictable nature of the water and weather, including potential for seasickness, humidity, and mold.

- **Storage Issues:**

Finding adequate storage space for belongings can be a challenge.

- **Potential for Dampness and Mold:**

Boats can be susceptible to dampness and mold, especially in certain climates.

- **Financial Considerations:**

While potentially cheaper, boat living also involves costs like marina fees, insurance, and maintenance, which need to be factored into the budget.

- **Legal and Regulatory Issues:**

Living on a boat may be subject to specific regulations and restrictions, depending on the location.

In conclusion, living on a boat is a lifestyle choice with its own unique set of benefits and drawbacks. It requires a certain level of adaptability, a willingness to embrace a simpler lifestyle, and a realistic understanding of the challenges.

- Maggie

ao@abc-flx.org

From the Education Director

By Katie Alley, JN

SV Tomfoolery

Ignorance STILL Isn't Bliss



As Taylor Swift sings in her eighth studio album *folklore*, “August slipped away into a moment in

time...”

We're past the half time of the season, but the best boating weather perhaps is yet to come! It's been a busy, hot summer. From an educational standpoint, I feel as if I could continue with the article I wrote for the July issue of *The Drum*, “Ignorance Isn't Bliss”!

One afternoon aboard *True Love*, we witnessed what could have easily become a horrible accident. Two smaller powerboats (under 20 feet) were racing each other, side by side, headed north, very close to each other. They were going fast and their wakes were dangerously high and close. One boat managed to swerve just enough and bump the side of the other boat. They quickly overcorrected their course by turning hard to port and they are very fortunate that they did not roll over in the other boat's wake. Apparently it must have been a light bump since both boats stayed out on the lake, though they stopped racing each other so closely.

I can probably guarantee you that those skippers did not have their Boater's Safety Cards. Their behavior was incredibly irresponsible and reckless. Their days could have ended very differently. It's so important for us to remember how quickly fun can become dangerous. As ABC-FLX members, we should always remember to model safe boating and watch out for other boaters who may be a danger to us and themselves! Witnessing incidents like this out on Seneca Lake shows that boating education is needed in our area.

The education our organization has provided the community is far reaching and valuable. One woman contacted me asking for a replacement wallet-sized Boater's Safety Card. She took our BoatSmart course in 2002 at the NYSEG offices in Horseheads (an old classroom venue of ours). And luckily she still had a certification with her name on it so I was able to issue a replacement wallet card! Point is, courses we taught over 23 years ago still matter! This woman remembered the course she took with us and was responsible enough to

reach out for proper documentation.

Our 2025 Boat Handling class is about to wrap up with six students and Jim McGinnis as lead instructor. This group is testing a new online exam system for National. Students will be taking their exam on a laptop and receiving their grade instantly! National (and I) are hopeful this will work really well! The goal is to offer this option for most of our classes, which will help reduce the squadron's shipping costs associated with paper exams. Additionally, from my end, the new online exam-ordering platform is much more intuitive and user-friendly!

We are also wrapping up our third iteration of ABC for the year with eight students at Watkins Glen Yacht Club. Another big shoutout to Jim McGinnis, Kris West, ASEO Scott Williams, Phil Cherry, and Jeff Mack for all helping make this happen!



Figure 7: Our Sampson crew enjoys Bloody Marys and listens to Jim McGinnis' wisdom.

On August 2nd, instructors Tom Alley and Jim McGinnis led the Man Overboard Seminar at our Sampson Rendezvous. Students were able to get hands-on practice using life-slings, halyards, and winches to hoist a victim back on deck! All of the feedback I received regarding this seminar was ecstatically positive.



Figure 8: Victim Don Swanson gets hoisted aboard Brewster during a hands-on LifeSling demonstration.



Figure 9: Tom Alley demonstrates features of an "offshore" life jacket to seminar attendees Shane Alsworth and Margaret Radek aboard Tomfoolery.

The entire Sampson Rendezvous weekend was another hit. *Tomfoolery* enjoyed a lovely cruise north under sail on Friday. The mini golf tournament, organized by Don Kloeber, was another highlight on Saturday, as well as the *Take 3 Quartet* performance at sunset.



Figure 10: Stellar mini golf team, Captain Alley, and FLYC members Margaret Radek and Tom Keebler.



Figure 11: Phelps and others enjoy the music by the Take 3 Quartet on Saturday evening. Photo by D. Kendrick, SYC.

On August 20th, Scott Williams gave a brief presentation on celestial navigation for passengers aboard *M/V Teal*, which hails out of Ithaca on Cayuga Lake. Scott usually works as a captain aboard the vessel, but this evening, he was selected to share some of his navigation knowledge! *M/V Teal*



Figure 12: Part of the fleet and our band party at Sampson, courtesy of Seneca Lake Resorts on Facebook.

offers a lot of educational opportunities for the community, including their Wednesday evening cruises during which they bring in various presenters. I helped by showing several passengers how a sextant works. It was cloudy, of course, but people were interested and amazed with what navigators are able to do. Scott did give a brief pitch on ABC-FLX, and one of the *Teal* crew members approached me about taking a navigation class! Who's up for Marine Navigation this winter?



Figure 13: Captain Scott Williams shows a Teal passenger the basics of a sextant.

In conclusion, ignorance isn't cool, knowledge is valuable, and I'm proud of everything our organization has done for the boating community. A big thank you to everyone who has volunteered, taught classes, or helped plan events. Let's enjoy September and October!

- Katie

seo@abc-flx.org



Secretary's Sidenotes

By Jeff Mack, JN

SV Project

Race Around the Barge – Part 4



I woke up early on September 7th, excited for the Race Around the Barge. Things were calm at the marina—

just a light rippling on the water. I tidied up the cabin, made coffee, and had my last egg for breakfast. Then I got everything set: stowing gear, lashing things down, and checking the lines—preparing the boat for action.

As I scanned around the docks, I saw other sailors prepping too. I took a walk to the shore and looked down the lake. There was a lingering light wind from the south, and gentle waves rolled in toward the beach.

When I returned, a group of sailors had gathered near the dock. The skippers' meeting was scheduled for 8 a.m. at the Seneca Yacht Club, just across the canal from the marina. We were trying to figure out how to get there. Could three grown men fit in my 8-foot dinghy?

Thankfully, Paul, the sailor I met the day before, overheard the conversation and offered to drive some of us over. On the ride, Paul mentioned that he had done the Round the Barge race several times, even taking first place one year. He offered some helpful

tips, specifically warning us to stay away from the east side of the lake.

The forecast called for a moderate breeze from the west for most of the race, which was fortunate for me, sailing solo. Maybe I wouldn't have to mess with setting up the whisker pole or wish for a spinnaker. If the weather cooperated, this could work in my favor.

The Seneca Yacht Club sits in a picturesque spot on Boody Point at the northeast corner of the lake, on the south shore of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal entrance. The clubhouse, opened in 1929, is lined with placards and trophies from decades of racing. It's thin with insulation, but thick with history.

The skippers' meeting took place at 8 a.m. on the wide porch overlooking the waterfront. The fleet captain gave a warm welcome to visitors from the south end of the lake and briefed us on the race format. It would be a staggered start. Starting times were calculated for each boat using some "math magic," but generally, the longer and faster the boat, the later it would start. It was a great way to level the playing field across a mixed fleet and avoid the chaos of a traditional starting line, with boats ranging from 19 to 36 feet.

The official race start was at 10:00 a.m. A pretty 19-foot catboat with a green-and-white banded gaff-rig sail was the first to cross the start line—an

imaginary line drawn between the outermost green canal beacon and a mooring ball at the west edge of the mooring field.

The course was simple: round the barge to port and return to the club. We were to announce our finish over VHF and mark our time as we crossed the same line on the return.

My race strategy was basic. If the wind shifted more to the west as forecasted, I'd sail the most direct line I could—fast and straight to the barge and back. This meant ignoring one of Paul's warnings about the east shore. I'd had good speed there before, though I also once ran aground and dinged my keel in that same area. I'd need to be careful and watch the depth closely.

My assigned start time was 10:25. Another Sabre 28, a sister ship to mine, called *Oktoberfest*, skippered by SYC's veteran racer Werner Holtz, started a few minutes after me. As expected, it wasn't long before he was ahead of my beam, half a mile to the west and heading for the opposite shore.

I stuck to my course, sailing carefully along the eastern shore staying best as I could on a rhumb line to the barge. I tacked west once only about 50 yards as the converging air and leeway were forcing me dangerously close to the shore. I stayed hugging the contour of the underwater ledge between the shallow and deep water for about 3 miles until the lake opens up around Reeder

Creek, and I continued on my line through the center of the lake to the west side of the barge. Things seemed to be going well enough. Arriving at the hulk there was a convergence of several racing boats. I was among the first pack to round the barge and passed some boats in the process. The barge itself was a sight to behold close up, an interesting grand object of the military industrial machine. After the rounding, the wind livened to a strong breeze with gusts approaching gale force. the weather helm grew heavy. It was time to reef—had been for a while, really. I tried to roll in the genoa, but the furling line was stuck. Tracing it with my eye, I saw it had looped around the bow chock—a simple loop causing a major problem.

There was no way to fix it. I couldn't leave the tiller long enough to get to the bow, and the autopilot couldn't hold course in these seas. I wasn't willing to heave-to and lose my position in the race—at that point I was just behind *Oktoberfest*.

Instead, I decided to reef the mainsail. Not as easy as rolling up the jib, but manageable—it only required going as far as the mast. I fell off the wind slightly, let out the main sheet, and loosened the halyard to bring the sail down to the boom. The flogging sail was a noisy reminder to work fast. I locked the tiller, nudged it to windward, and made the adjustments: secured the tack to the reefing horn at the gooseneck, tightened the clew reefing line, and cleated it off.

Back in the cockpit, I headed upwind and tensioned the halyard.

Things were better but the boat was still overpowered, so soon I was back at the mast putting in a second reef. By then, the finish line was in sight, but the wind was howling — strong gusts from the northwest knocking us back.

I was feathering, pinching, and spilling wind from the tiny mainsail with each gust, doing all I could to keep *Tina* on her feet. It was slow going, but we were too close to the finish for more sail changes.

Oktoberfest had crossed the line minutes before—I was sure he'd taken first. I was maybe a mile out, still wrestling with the gusts, when I saw *Brewster*, Jim McGinnis' Hunter 336, bearing down fast behind me. It was a sprint for second place.

As *Brewster* closed in within 100 yards, I took a heavy header and *Tina* broached, rounding up into irons. We righted quickly, caught the next breeze, and kept racing for the finish. *Tina* and I crossed the line just a couple of minutes ahead of *Brewster*, and about 14 minutes behind *Oktoberfest*, securing a solid second place in our first Race Around the Barge. Some might call it beginner's luck — I suppose I would too, and I'll take any kind of good luck I can get.

It was a bit of a hassle getting the genoa furled afterward, but I no longer needed to hold a course—just needed to avoid other boats now crossing the line. I returned to the marina and put *Tina* in her berth for the night. By the time I returned to the club in my dinghy, Werner had already had the beer keg set up on the front porch and

was watching the rest of the fleet come in.

That evening, Jim and Lynn McGinnis hosted a supper aboard *Brewster* for the skippers from FLYC. It was a nice affair: pushpit-grilled chicken and a short shot of rum to toast the club's strong showing. After saying goodnight, I headed back to *Tina* to prep for the next morning's voyage home. The west wind was forecasted to persist through Sunday, and I intended to use it for the ride back down the lake.

On Sunday, I woke around 7 a.m. and was out of the marina within the hour. I motored west across the calm lake, with just a few ripples. The wind was still light but slowly building. The sky was mostly cloudy with some breaks of blue.

Around 8:30, I tied up at the public docks just north of the breakwater in Geneva. After setting spring lines and fenders, I walked into town for breakfast—French toast at the Water Street Café. It was a great fuel-up for the trip home.

By 9:30, I cast off and set sail on a close reach. The wind built from the west, with gusts from the north and southwest. I was able to maintain hull speed for most of the trip and made it back to Village Marina in just 4 hours and 50 minutes — a personal best.

I'm so grateful to have had such an incredible adventure, right here in my own backyard. I'll keep sailing, of course, but this is one of those rare moments that will stay with me for a long time.

The wind was with me the whole way, and luck—despite showing its mischievous side, was my most loyal companion. Those little moments that felt like curses

at the time? They've all turned into something memorable and meaningful. I come away from this weekend feeling deeply blessed to have lived it.

- Jeff
secretary@abc-flx.org

ABC-FLX News

Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our members!

September

Steven Moff
Charlie Fausold
Lynne McGinnis

October

Mary Margeson
Lisa Alley

Congratulations!

We have much to celebrate in our small chapter of America's Boating Club. In this issue we wish to recognize two of our members who have achieved the grade of Senior Navigator:

Don Kloeber
Jim Morris

Members attaining the grade of "Senior Navigator" have completed the advanced grade classes through Navigation (N)

plus six elective courses, or Junior Navigation (JN) and seven or more elective courses.

Congratulations, Don and Jim!

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!



Figure 14: A double rainbow seen from the SV True Love on August 25th.

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 Katie, our Education Officer, know.

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

Instructor Development & Certification

The course has been designed to demonstrate interactive teaching methods focused on adult learning. Students are required to prepare lesson plans and give three presentations to their peers utilizing a variety of teaching aids and presentation skills. The instructor may assign a topic for these presentations, or you may use material and PowerPoint slides from existing USPS courses, and they may build on one another.

For those who are already certified instructors, don't forget that your certification must be renewed every four years.

Fortunately, this is easily done by attending a 2-hour seminar to get you caught up in the latest teaching techniques and recommendations.

Details for these sessions are still being finalized, but it's not too early to get your name on the list if you're interested in helping our

club share its knowledge of boating.

Prerequisites: None

Instructors: Jim McGinnis & Charlie Fausold

Cost: FREE to members

Operations Training

To many, America's Boating Club (a.k.a., the USPS) is a large, complex organization shrouded in mystery. For many, this is an impediment to getting more involved in the club, which directly impacts your ability to get more *OUT* of the club.

Come join some of our more experienced members to learn how our club is organized and how all these groups work together to get things done. Not only will be time well spent, but the instructors will ensure you have a good time as you learn more about our club!

Prerequisites: None

Lead Instructor: Jim McGinnis

Cost: FREE to members

Marine Navigation

(Previously known as *Piloting*)

This is ABC's introductory class to navigation; the stepping stone from navigating "by eye" to using both modern and traditional tools to figure out where you are.

Prerequisites: None

When: Winter 2026

Sail

This course lets you learn about basic sailboat designs and nomenclature, rigging, and safety from experienced sailors. Then tackle the physical aspects of all forces and techniques, sail applications, marlinespike, helmsmanship, and handling of difficult conditions.

This course also features the Finger Lakes Chapter trademark on-the-water, hands-on instruction.

Prerequisites: None

When: Spring/Summer 2026

Where: TBA (classroom), Watkins Glen Village Marina (on-the-water)

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.

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.

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

www.abc-flx.org

A Member's Guide to America's Boating Club Classes

By Tom Alley

SV Tomfoolery

If you're relatively new to America's Boating Club (ABC), then a look at the courses being offered by our local chapter might seem confusing and/or intimidating. Where to start? What's covered in each class? This article is an attempt to answer some of the questions that might be floating about in your head. At the very least, I hope that you will be enlightened somewhat with an understanding of how the United States Power Squadron's (USPS's) educational program is organized.

Course Organization

ABC courses are lumped into four categories:

- **Public Education**
This is a euphemism for *America's Boating Course*. This is the class offered to the general public so that they can earn their Boater Safety Card from their state of residence. It's also considered a prerequisite for ABC membership. This course is often referred to as "ABC3" since it's in its third major revision.
- **Advanced Grade Courses**
Advanced Grade classes are a sequence of five courses that deal primarily with seamanship and navigation, with each class building upon what was taught in the prior one. These classes are

usually taken in a specific sequence.

- **Elective Courses**
Electives are a collection of classes that provide a broad background to various boating topics. The list of classes available changes from year to year as existing courses are updated, new courses are written, and obsolete courses are retired.
- **Seminars**
Like electives, the list of available seminars changes, but a bit more frequently because it takes much less time to write or update a seminar than it does a full course.

Generally speaking, a "course" is a class that will meet over a period of six to eight weeks, after which there will be a final exam to test the student's understanding of the material.

Seminars, on the other hand, are generally a single session lasting between 60 to 90 minutes without any testing of the attendees. Many seminars are available online.

A listing of currently available courses and seminars can be found at the end of this article.

Where Do I Start?

Traditionally, USPS members would take the public course and then sequence themselves through the advanced grade courses as they were offered.

However, the evolution of recreational boating, and society in general, has caused many to question this path.

Government regulations have also intruded to the point where just about everyone is required to take a public boating safety course. A few states even require formal licensing.

Generally speaking, if you own any type of vessel that's big enough to go from one end of Seneca Lake to the other, you should seriously consider the following courses:

- America's Boating Course
- Boat Handling

And if you have a GPS:

- Marine Navigation

These three classes will give you a solid foundation upon which to build your boating skills.

After that, it's all a matter of what you are interested in!

More Options

The way the USPS had its courses organized was fairly straightforward until the United States signed onto a United Nations document referred to as "Resolution 40". This document outlined a framework for recreational boater licensing and skill assessment.

It's worth noting here that the United States is one of the few countries in the world that does

not require licensing for recreational boaters. (Any licensing requirements in the US are state mandates, not federal.)

Resolution 40 defines minimum criteria for the licensing of recreational boaters that include physical ability (e.g., vision, hearing, etc.), educational courses, and demonstration of skill proficiency. It is primarily geared to address the type of recreational boating done in Europe and defines two levels of boater: Inland and Coastal.

Boat Operator Certification

The USPS/ABC response to Resolution 40 was to attempt to map the USPS program of advanced grades and elective courses into the framework defined by Resolution 40. The result is the Boat Operator Certification program, or “BOC” as it’s known within the USPS.

A key difference between the Euro-centric Resolution 40 and the BOC is that the latter does not try to constrain itself to the type of recreational boating found in Europe. Instead, it defines four levels of boat operator proficiency that align with recreational boaters in the US:

- Inland Navigator (IN)
- Coastal Navigator (CN)
- Advanced Coastal Navigator (ACN)
- Offshore Navigator (ON)

These levels are sequential and build upon the prior level. Requirements for earning each

of these levels can be found on the USPS national web site, but an outline of courses and seminars needed to complete each level can be found in the *Long Term Class Schedule* near the end of this newsletter.

A key difference between the older advanced grade program and the new BOC program is that, in addition to a written exam for classroom elements, the BOC program includes on-the-water skill assessments where a candidate must demonstrate proficiency in specific boat handling and navigational skills to a certified evaluator.

So What Does All This Mean?

The ABC / USPS is primarily an educational organization. Our primary purpose is to help recreational boaters educate themselves to become safe and responsible recreational boaters. Ideally, we provide a curriculum and a framework whereby you can expand your horizons to be the boater you’ve dreamed of becoming. Whether this means being able to relax on an inland lake for an afternoon of fishing, towing some water-skiers on a local lake or river, setting out on longer voyages to distant ports, or simply satisfying an internal curiosity, there are options you can explore in the USPS course catalog.

Still not sure what to take? Reach out to our club’s Education Officer (Katie Alley) or any of the members of the Bridge or Executive Committee.

You can find their names on page 2.

Above all, never stop learning. The team of educators we have in our local club work very hard to make the process a lot of fun!

o o o o o

Available Courses & Seminars

Public Education

- America’s Boating Course

Advanced Grades

- Boat Handling (S)
- Marine Navigation (P)
- Advanced Marine Navigation (AP)
- Offshore Navigation (JN)
- Celestial Navigation (N)

Successful completion of a class results in the student being awarded a “grade”, signified by the letters listed in parentheses after each course name. These letters stand for:

- Seaman
- Pilot
- Advanced Pilot
- Junior Navigator
- Navigator

Electives

The current list of electives consists of:

- Cruising Under Power and Sail
- Engine Maintenance
- Instructor Development
- Marine Electrical Systems
- Marine Communication Systems
- Radar for Boaters
- Sail
- Weather

Seminars

The current list of seminars available are:

- AIS Electronics for Boaters
- All About VHF/DSC Marine Radio
- Anchoring with Assurance
- Boating on Rivers, Locks and Lakes
- Boating with Confidence
- Confidence with Docking and Undocking
- Crew at the Helm (a.k.a., Partner in Command)
- Crossing Borders
- Cruising Boats and Systems
- Emergencies on Board
- Fuel and Boating
- How to Use a Chart
- How to Use GPS
- Hurricane Preparations for Boaters
- Introduction to Marine Batteries
- Introduction to Navigation
- Knots and Line Handling
- Man Overboard
- Mariner's Compass
- Modern Weather Forecasting
- Paddle Smart
- Partner in Command (a.k.a., Crew at the Helm)
- Planning Your Cruise
- Propane Systems on Your Boat
- Rules of the Road
- Tides and Currents
- Trailering Your Boat
- Weather for Boaters

In addition, there are some recorded "webinars" that are available only online:

- Living Aboard While Cruising
- Marine Weather Forecasting: The 500 Millibar Chart
- Ocean Currents and Computer Navigation

- Ocean Waves
- Personal Watercraft Operations
- Thunderstorms

Course Descriptions

Descriptions for all the courses and seminars listed in this article can be found on the United States Power Squadron's national web site (www.usps.org).

- Tom

o o o o o

Tom has been a USPS member for over 35 years and has served in various educational positions at the squadron, district, and national levels for most of that time. He and his family sail Tomfoolery, a 1965 Alberg 35 sailboat, that they have voyaged on for 30 years.

Worried about increasing crime, I asked a mate from Texas what I needed to defend my home.

He said get a 9mm, a couple of clips, and a box of shells.

I put it together pretty quickly. Still not sure how it's supposed to work ...



The Last Word

By Tom Alley, SN-ON

SV Tomfoolery

Season of Dog Days



As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, we're past the halfway point in our boating season and have just

completed the traversal of the dog days of summer. Days are getting noticeably shorter and a bit cooler. The list of remaining yacht club activities is dwindling, and schools and universities are resuming their educational activities.

While many were complaining of the heat, I only had to recall some pretty chilly days in January and February before concluding that it really wasn't that bad outside.

Although I'm desperately clinging to the remaining days of the boating season, I must come to terms with planning for haul out, winter storage, and the never-ending list of boat projects that demand attention. (...and money.)

On the brighter side, the waning of summer and onset of fall mean that there will be, statistically speaking, more wind on the lake. After three successive races plagued by "light and variable" (read: excruciatingly frustrating)

winds, these expectations were fulfilled on August 23rd when the FLYC fleet enjoyed a delightful, and steady, Force 3 breeze out of the south for the entire race.

The racing stayed close for the duration with skippers exercising their knowledge of COLREGS and race rules to determine stand-on and give-way status of their vessels for much of the afternoon.

Tomfoolery enjoyed her first win of the 2025 season, a delightful reward to an afternoon's labor. In addition, three students from the Boat Handling class enjoyed an afternoon as crew aboard *Tomfoolery* and *Brewster* for a sailboat race in near-perfect conditions.

In early September we will again partake of an annual tradition called "The Barge Race". If you've been following our secretary's columns, you've been reading about his experience of the race in 2024 and the impact it had on him. This event provides another opportunity to practice skills learned in the *Sail, Cruising Under Power & Sail*, and *Marine Navigation* classes that our chapter offers on a regular basis. It also offers the camaraderie of sailing with a group of experienced boaters on a multi-day cruise to the opposite end of Seneca Lake. It

also provides an opportunity to mingle with boaters from another club on our lake and form bonds with them as we compete and socialize with one another.

If you're still not confident enough to take your own boat to the north end of the lake, I would encourage you to volunteer as crew aboard one of the boats from Watkins Glen. It will be worth the drive to Geneva and back!

Finally, don't forget about the District Fall Conference on October 18th in Manlius, NY (just outside of Syracuse). It's yet another opportunity to interact with other passionate boaters from across New York State. I always find these conferences to be informative, enlightening, and enjoyable. Plus, I get to catch up with the many friends I've made in other chapters of our great organization.

In the meantime, though, I plan to do as much sailing as I can before this season comes to its inevitable end. See you on the water!

- Your Editor, Tom

o o o o o

As always, send your thoughts about this newsletter to:

editor@abc-flx.org

Long-Term Class Schedule

Seneca Education Department

BOC Level	Title	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Inland Navigator	Classes	ABC	C	X	X	X	X
		Boat Handling	C		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			X		
		Weather	C			X	
	Seminars	Tides & Currents					X
		Rules of the Road				X	
		Anchoring					
		Mariner's Compass		X		X	
	Skills	Coastal Nav				X	
		Pyrotechnics			X		

Table Key

X = Planned

U = Underway

C = Completed

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

BOC Level		Title	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Offshore Navigator	C	Offshore Navigation		X				X
		Computer Weather Forecasting	X					
	Sem.	Thunderstorms / Severe Weather	X					
		Offshore Navigation					X	
		CPR/AED	Contact American Heart Assoc. or Red Cross.					
Endorsments		Sail		X		X	X	
		Canadian Regulations	X					
		PaddleSmart		X		X		
Other		Instructor Development	X			X		
		Instructor Recertification	X	X			X	
		Operations Training	X			X		
		Celestial Navigation			X		X	

Table Key

X = Planned

U = Underway

C = Completed

Calendar of Events

September 2025

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* September issue publication date.
- 01-07 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)
- 18 District 6 Fall Council & Conference, *Cavalry Club, Manlius, NY* (D/6)
- 24 Deadline for *Drum* articles

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 2025

- 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

March 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* March issue publication date.
- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)

April 2026

- 14 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 17-19 District 6 Spring Council & Conference, *Binghamton, NY* (D/6)
- 17 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles (D/6)
- 24 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

May 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* May issue publication date.
- 01 *The Deep 6* spring issue publication date. (D/6)
- 12 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 16-22 Safe Boating Week (National)

June 2026

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

July 2026

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

August 2026

- 01 *The Deep 6* summer issue publication date. (D/6)
- 11 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 21 Deadline for *Drum* Articles

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

<http://www.abc-flx.org>
<http://facebook.com/SenecaPowerSquadron>
for any last-minute changes.