

THE HORNPIPE

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Commodore's Comments

Best wishes to all for calm seas and favorable winds in the New Year!

Is the Chesapeake Bay becoming another San Diego — a hub of year-round sailing? We kept *Nik of Time* in the water until the last week of haul-out operations (the week after Thanksgiving) at White Rocks Marina. We sailed repeatedly through the late fall and into the Thanksgiving weekend in warm temperatures and with sunny skies and gentle winds. It was truly delightful. And because of the great weather, the marina did not back up on its haul-out schedule as in some years. Everything went smoothly and calmly. If this is global warming, we may be in for much more of this. That would be a small silver lining to a dark cloud.

I trust everyone has noted the upcoming Club party at our home on January 27. We hope to see everyone who is in town and do some serious looking ahead toward the 2007 sailing season. Our home, at 111 Starhill Lane, is located just off Frederick Road about a mile back toward Catonsville from downtown Ellicott City. If you are coming from EC, look to turn left onto Starhill Lane at the end of the long hill

that rises from the Patapsco River. We are the sixth house on the right. A bright red front door lit by a spotlight is your beacon. Coming from the other direction, Starhill Lane is the second right turn off of Frederick Road shortly after you pass Demitri's Restaurant and its neoclassic, concrete-poured Greek columns. The MacDonalds will supply the entrée and drinks. Everyone else should bring an appetizer, side dish, or dessert. Please, don't everyone bring dessert. Also, please bring \$35 for the 2007 dues.

To help wile away the winter, let me offer a few miscellaneous items I have come across.

I recently read that ESPN lost three million dollars broadcasting the last round of the America's Cup races and is Acompletely out of sailing@ as a result. What a shame! The coverage with its onboard cameras and GPS trackers transformed the sport from something as exciting as watching grass grow to an absorbing display of matched boat racing tactics. The technology beautifully showcased the science and art of sailboat racing. I hope some other network steps forward to take ESPN's place. Short film clips on the evening news will not satisfy.

The other day, I saw that the Maryland Maritime History Festival has been scheduled for May 4-6 this year, once again in Annapolis harbor. One of the keynote events will be demonstrations of team racing using the Naval Academy sail fleet. *Team racing* — can't say I am familiar with this variation of the sport. Is it like the Tour de France, in which team members collaborate to advance their fastest cyclist and to slow the opposition? Are performance enhancing drugs an issue?

Those of you who set the Baltimore Inner Harbor as a sailing destination on occasion, take note. On my last trip there, while I was sailing past the Aquarium, another cruising sailor motoring near me shouted a warning that sailing inside of the Rusty Scupper Restaurant is prohibited and subject to a fine. I didn't know whether to believe him! A later telephone call to the Coast Guard — Curtis Bay yielded nothing; the duty officer told me he knew of no such rule and that if there was one he himself had recently violated it. (By the way, it is

always different calling the USCG. They call you ACaptain@ even though you are calling from your car in the middle of a Beltway traffic jam.) The State DNR also knew nothing (and didn't call me ACaptain@). Finally, a call to the Baltimore City Dockmaster yielded pay dirt: there is a prohibition on sailing in the innermost Inner Harbor promulgated by the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development! I was directed to that Department for a copy of or citation to this hidden gem. A series of calls to HCD again yielded nothing, as did another call back to the Dockmaster (my informant had disappeared and I had not noted his name). So there you have it, *Captains*. Conduct your navigation in the Inner Harbor accordingly.

Hope to see you all on January 27 and on the bay shortly after that.

Lee Benedict