

THE HORNPIPE

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Commodore's Comments

Quiz: How much does it cost the Coast Guard to operate one of its C-130 aircraft in a search and rescue operation for a missing yacht? As per a recent press release from Coast Guard Sector NC requesting assistance in locating and shutting down an individual who is making repeated hoax vessel-in-distress calls, \$4,244 per hour. In comparison, Coast Guard helicopters cost about \$4,400 an hour. Coast Guard cutters cost \$1,550 an hour, while Coast Guard small boats are a bargain at between \$300 to \$400 an hour. No wonder the Coast Guard refers many tow and rescue calls to private operators like Boat US.

A clear trend is emerging in the general response to my several solicitations in prior comments of nominations for election as next year's commodore. I don't want to divulge the nature and extent of the trend for fear of influencing the outcome — just as network newscasters refrain from predicting election results until polls close. But everyone should feel free to continue submitting nominations to any member of the board.

I all but used up the ink in my fountain pen composing the report of the Best Wine Cruise, which will follow below if it meets the editors'

standards. We have had a lot of spectacular late September and early October weather for sailing. I trust members have taken full advantage and will be dutifully submitting reports to the *Hornpipe*. They always make good reading.

Lee Benedict

Wine Cruise Protested

In picture-postcard early fall weather, the 2007 Best Wine Under \$10 Cruise to Mill Creek generated its own storm clouds of controversy.

Ably co-captained by Robbie and Ed Sabin, the cruise drew four boats, the Sabin's spacious *Aldebaron* serving as flag ship, Nan Shellabarger's very fit cruiser *Mutima* sailed from Hammock Island by Jenny Poniske, Vice Commodore George Albert's high tech *Breezing Up* (which always seems able to dish up delightful warm taquitos at a moment's notice), and [not in the] *Nik of Time*, the winner of "last to arrive after coming the shortest distance" honors, commanded by me, your humble lame-duck flag officer. The Delanoys checked in from the north bay on *Agapé* by telephone and reported that they were completing their two week

Delmarva circumnavigation and would not make the southing necessary to join up.

Cliff Jackson, Nan, and my Mary joined the event from the pier at Cantler's Restaurant. A number of the cruisers' adult children (and several of their guests) were also present: Erica Poniske, John Sabin, and Ashley Benedict. Jenny and I were accompanied by dogs, Gweedo and Norman-the-Yard-Sale-Dog, respectively.

Robbie handled the mechanics of the triple-blind wine tasting/grading event with her signature precision. All bottles were sleeved in numbered brown paper bags to disguise label and prevent sponsors from spiking their votes on their entries. The panel of judges sampled a small (in some cases not so small — in other cases, not small at all) amount of each vintage and graded it.

The winner among three white wines was a Chateau Saint Jean Chardonnay submitted by Jeff, a guest of my daughter. The winner among seven reds was the Sabin's Merlot. Ten entries, four boats — go figure! The lowest graded entry by a surprisingly wide margin was the Shiraz submitted by yours truly, earning me a bunch of synthetic grapes emblematic of the Rubber Grapes Award.

George clearly had spent a lot of time training for the event and was in peak wine tasting form. He questioned how Jeff's multi-dimensional, precocious and, robust white wine taste sensation (with a hint of apple and a trace of naughtiness) could possibly cost less than \$10.00. Jeff's answer, that it was purchased without sales tax for \$9.99 in Delaware, drew a yellow protest flag from George. The contest committee (Robbie) deftly resolved this bemusing challenge by ignoring it (as Lord Nelson did at the Battle of Copenhagen, placing his telescope to his blind eye and reporting that he did not see the admiral's signal to disengage).

But the real controversy centered around the aforementioned Shiraz that earned the artificial fruit award. It is beyond dispute that George's comment that my entry had all the maturity of a pimply teenager, Jenny's warning that expectorating my wine into Mill Creek might kill all marine life, and Ed's uneasy "Whoa" after his sip, all expressed right before the voting, unfairly contributed to the Shiraz' very low score every bit as much as Erica's

alarmed pronouncement that she was suddenly tempted to give up all red wine altogether for all time and all purposes forevermore. So too was Mary's comment that I now had something to "live down to" or to "live down," my choice. All I asked — all I expected, — was a level playing field. Needless to say, I have written an angry letter of protest to Senator Barbara Mikulski. This matter is far from closed.



George Alberts (*expert wine taster*) and **Robbie Sabin** (*entire contest committee*)

For George, Cliff, and the Benedict gang, a very pleasant dinner at Cantler's Restaurant followed the pulse-pounding suspense of the wine tasting. The other wine tasters couldn't resist the siren call of their bunks. I am withholding the names of the latter group in order to protect the guilty. After all, this is America.

Lee Benedict

CCSC Moonlight Cruise, September 26

Breezing Up headed out shortly after 7 PM Wednesday evening, under mostly clear skies and a good southerly breeze. On board, in addition to yours truly, were Admiral Jutta, Barbara and Matt Coyle, and Nan Shellabarger. As we motored out of the mouth of the Bodkin we immediately picked the rising harvest moon, low on the eastern horizon. Except for a few minutes when a lonely cloud blocked it out, we had a beautiful clear view of the full moon as it grew higher and brighter.

The southerly breezes were perfect for a reach across the bay. As I turned the helm over to Nan I didn't realize that it would be a real struggle to wrest the wheel from her as we headed back into Bodkin later that evening. More about that later.

We sailed almost directly into the moonlight reflecting on the water. As we approached the point where the Brewerton Channel Extension bends to the north, we were puzzled by what appeared to be a stationary set of lights that should, according to the books, represent a ship under way. We resolved the puzzle when I fired up the radar and figured out that it was indeed a ship (a tug pushing a barge, as we learned later), on a course almost paralleling us and at about the same speed, which made it look stationary.

By that time we had gybed and were cruising back to the Bodkin, a mile or so east of quick-flashing **R18** (our target), when the exhilarating portion of the sail began. The winds amazingly kicked up to a sustained 25 knots, still out of the south, and we had some fun furling the genoa and settling the boat down. I had to issue a direct order before Nan (reluctantly) gave up the helm — she clearly enjoyed her extended stint at the wheel. I was concerned about the problems the stiff wind would cause when we pulled into our slip, but by that time the winds had just as amazingly dropped off. As we pulled into the slip the island gave us additional protection and the winds at the slip were under five knots.

As we put the boat to bed under a silvery glow from the brilliant moon, everyone agreed it had been a delightful and (for a while) an exciting, even exhilarating, evening.

George Alberts

CCSC Mexican Dinner Cruise (September 28-29)

Three sail boats and two kayaks(!) rafted up Saturday evening on Broad Creek in the Magothy, on a lovely fall day.

As the weekend approached, the weather looked too good to pass up, so I had volunteered to take on the planned Mexican Dinner Cruise, changing the destination to Broad Creek.

Breezing Up headed out at about 12:15 p.m. Saturday afternoon, under bright skies and fairly strong northerly breezes. On a nice broad reach, doing about six knots under sail, I passed east of Baltimore Light and gybed to head into the Magothy. After dropping the sails and firing up the engine near Dobbin's Island, I entered Broad Creek at about 2:30 p.m., looking for the perfect spot to drop the hook. As I was circling, I heard a call for *Breezing Up* on the radio. I responded, we switched to Channel 18, and the caller invited me to tie up to the mooring just off his dock, where a lovely Nordic 37 tug was sitting. I thanked him for the generous offer but decided to anchor further out into the beautiful surroundings — I'd forgotten how nice Broad Creek could be.

About an hour later I saw Andy and Usha Monjan approaching on board *Impulse*. As they were rafting up, I saw Barb and Matt Coyle entering the mouth of Broad Creek aboard *Nancy Ann*. They tied up in short order, and the party began. Andy provided a batch of margaritas, salt bowl and all, and we enjoyed guacamole, chips, salsa, cheese, and crackers in the cockpit of *Breezing Up*. It wasn't long before we were joined by Robbie and Ed Sabin, arriving in separate kayaks from the home of friends nearby.

The potluck Mexican dinner worked out well, with taquitos, tacos, beans and rice along with the hors d'oeuvres. Good food and great conversation made for a fine time all around, until it was time for the Sabins to head home and the party more-or-less to wind down. Under a nearly full moon the raft turned in for the evening.

After a cool and restful sleep (for the most part — the large powerboats rafted south of us got a bit noisy at times), the next morning we enjoyed the lovely setting and some fresh coffee and tea before breaking up the raft and heading home. The moon was still watching over us, from the west, as I left at about 9:15 a.m. and got back to Hammock Island about 11:15 a.m., after motor-sailing under light northeasterly breezes, in the company of *Impulse*. I didn't see *Nancy Ann*, and I assume the Coyles were enjoying a leisurely sail home.

George Alberts

The Poor Sailor's Guide to On-the-Go Weather Updates

How often have the actual conditions on the water been different than the forecast? We have a running joke on *Mutima* that the one thing you can be sure of on the Chesapeake is we'll experience anything OTHER than the forecast. It also often seems that what we experience in the marina is quite different from what we find "out there". I'd like to have satellite weather radar at my fingertips and a full marine computer network running from my interior nav station to my exterior helm station merging traffic and weather information with sensors on my boat to give the full and complete picture of what's going on and what's coming up. Since I don't really have either a nav station or a helm station, I make do with a variety of hand-held devices in the cockpit, and one of the most useful is my smart cell phone.

I always check NOAA weather radio before heading out, but usually it takes me a couple rounds of listening to the whole cycle to hone in on the most relevant information, because I usually zone out as they go repetitively through something like "wind and waves may be greater in thunderstorms" for the third or fourth time. One of the things I'm most interested in is the current actual conditions from the near-by automated reporting stations. I recently figured out how to pull up those observations on my desktop computer. The windy weekend of the wine cruise found me in my office nervously monitoring the buoys noting the "Wind Speed 26 knots; Wind Gusts 35+ knots" as my boat made its way from the Bodkin down to Whitehall Bay without me, under the able stewardship of Jenny and her daughter, Erica.

To look at the buoy observations on the web, go to http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/maps/Chesapeake_Bay.shtml, and you will see a map with clickable points for the buoys. The most relevant ones for me are Tolchester, Thomas Point, Francis Scott Key, and a brand-new "interpretive buoy" from the new John Smith Historical Water Trail, conveniently located just east of the intersection of the Craighill and Brewerton ship channels at the mouth of the Patapsco. I can do this from home, but someone

with a laptop and cell phone modem (or wifi in their marina) can do it from the boat.

Even more portable than the web is Dial-a-Buoy. Call 1-888-701-8992, and follow the self-explanatory "press 1 for..." prompts. It is easiest to use if you know the 5-digit codes for the buoys. For letters, just use the number that corresponds with the letter on your phone — but certain "smart phones" don't show the classic letters on the keypad, so you have to translate them to numbers in your head or in advance. I've programmed the main access number into my cell phone, and the buoy codes are also plugged in. There is also a handy option to get the relevant forecast after listening to the current conditions.

My codes are:

Tolchester	TCBM2	(82262)
Thomas Point	TPLM2	(87562)
Francis S.K.	FSKM2	(37562)

Sadly, the new Pataspco buoy closest to my boat (44043) appears not to be in this phone database yet. However, the interpretive buoy system has its very own phone access. In fact, that is how it is "interactive" when you are out on the water. Dialing 1-877-BUOYBAY (1-877-286-9229) gives you a menu to select cultural, historical, meteorological, or oceanic data from the three buoys currently in the interpretive system on the Chesapeake. There is also an Internet-via-cell-phone option, at www.buoybay.org/m which gives the same choices available to read on your tiny little phone screen. Again, I've got all this already programmed into my smart little cellular device, so all it takes is a couple of buttons to get exactly what I want.

Because my cell phone is also a little palm computer it has direct web access using cell phone frequencies. I use it to get a relatively current weather satellite radar picture. I've found the quickest download is to access Accuweather via Avant-Go — once I've set it up, I get the tiny little satellite picture of the Chesapeake area west to the mountains with just one "refresh" click. It's useful to check if those dark clouds to the west are building into actual thunderstorms (or at least actual precipitation). I think there are other ways to do

this, but I've got this one set up and it works well for me. The only problems are looking at the screen in direct sunlight is hard, and, for me, sometimes reading glasses are needed to make out smaller features.

Often, sitting at the marina in the creek, we are speculating what is going on outside on the bay. With these options, we can get a better handle on what conditions are like right now, and hopefully be less surprised by what we find "out there".

Nan Shellabarger

One Persistent Wasp (A Cruise Report of Sorts)

A few weeks ago I boarded *Breezing Up* to tackle a few odd jobs below decks. As I slid the companionway cover back, a wasp buzzed past me. I didn't think much of that until I noticed what it had been up to. There was a small mound of mud in the companionway hatch slide. New construction, I presumed. I knocked it out, washed the area down, and went on with my work.

The September 21-23 weekend I got permission from the admiral to spend some time on the water. I headed out Friday morning, looking forward to some nice sailing weather and some quality time on board. As I opened up the companionway and slid the cover back, I noticed a wasp hovering nearby, obviously interested in joining me below decks. I watched anxiously as it buzzed around the cabin, finally landing on my starboard stereo speaker, which is mounted on a cabinet in the forward part of the main cabin. As I took a better look I could see that the top left corner of the speaker had been converted to a small wasp condo — mud in the shape of a smooth-sided rectangular box about an inch high, an inch deep, and two inches wide. As the wasp snuggled into a hole in the ceiling of the condo, I decided that my old friend had returned and made itself quite comfy. I suspect it entered and left the cabin through the ventilation slot in the companionway boards.

I waited until the wasp emerged a few minutes later and shooed it out of the cabin. I disconnected the speaker wires, dismantled the speaker cabinet and took it outside to clean it off.

After scrubbing it down I put it back in place, being careful this time to deploy the companionway screen. I thought I'd taken care of the problem, but I noticed a wasp (surely the same one) buzzing back and forth outside the screen, obviously a bit confused and angry. I shooed it away one more time, then headed out for a lovely day sail.

The skies were clear and the breeze was moderate from the south, so I enjoyed an easy reach across the bay. Just west of the southern tip of Swan Point Bar I decided to turn around and sail back to Bodkin. After a pleasant reach back to home base, I decided to anchor out for the night, south of Hammock Island. There was a bit more boat traffic than I'd hoped for a Friday evening, so after a swim in the brisk water and then bouncing for a while at anchor I decided to pull back into the slip for the evening. As I hauled the anchor up, I noticed a pair of sea nettles drifting past the bow — good thing I didn't see them earlier or meet them on my swim! Back home, as a precaution against the wasp, I deployed the companionway screen. It wasn't long before I noticed my wasp pal buzzing back and forth just beyond the screen before flying off. I settled in for a late dinner and a comfortable sleep.

The next morning I headed out again, under a hazy sky, delighted to discover the same moderate southerly breezes. I sailed again on a comfortable reach, across to the Swan Point Bar, then motored up into Swan Creek and anchored. Unfortunately, the anchorage got quite crowded and noisy, so I decided to haul the anchor back up and head out across the bay. The same southerlies were waiting for me, a bit stiffer now (ten to fifteen knots), allowing me to sail at six knots or so all the way to the Bodkin entrance. I sailed into Bodkin and up to Jubb Cove, where I anchored for the evening. There were several boats at anchor, but it didn't feel at all crowded, and I was pleased with my decision.

The next morning I enjoyed a leisurely breakfast and then headed back to the marina. After a couple of hours in the slip I decided to go out for an early lunch. Having forgotten about my wasp friend, I left the companionway open and didn't bother to deploy the screen. As I came back to the boat and stepped down into the cabin, my friend buzzed past me, headed out of the cabin. I looked

at the stereo speaker and quickly discovered that he had come home and had been hard at work rebuilding his condo. A thin coating of mud covered the top left corner of the speaker!

After a quick trip to Angel's for some wasp spray I returned to the boat, waited for the wasp to return, and blasted it! With mixed feelings I cleaned up and buried the dead at sea.

Note: According to Wikipedia, the wasp that befriended me was a solitary mud wasp with a

life span of about 40 days. A true soul mate for this introvert, and I still have mixed feelings about doing my friend in.

George Alberts