

THE HORNPIPE

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Commodore's Comments

We are now well into our new season, our first as the Chesapeake Corinthian Sailing Club.

The off-season has been a time for day-dreaming about cruising, for dropping in on boat shows, and for searching the catalogs for must-have equipment and accessories. I have come across a couple of items that I found quite interesting. My favorite discovery so far can be seen in the latest Brookstone catalog — for \$200 you can buy a wooden box holding a motorized mechanism that will keep as many as four of your self-winding watches fully wound for you! Too bad it doesn't seem to be available in teak (not to mention that I have no self-winding watches).

The second item struck me as a rather good idea. For some time now I've been looking for hardware that would hold my boat fenders out of the way when I'm not using them. I've held off so far because I find the hardware rather pricey. I recently came across mention of the Stowaway inflatable boat fenders. I decided to give them a try, so I went to the Defender website and ordered the package of four 9" by 27" inflatable fenders in Navy colored canvas skins, a foot pump and a

(Navy) storage bag. The bag is about one cubic foot in volume, and stores the uninflated fenders and the foot pump. The fenders inflate easily in just a few seconds. I'm eager to try them out on the first CCSC cruise of the season.

We have once again renewed our agreement with Boat U.S. This agreement provides a 50%-discount on annual memberships for club members. When you renew, you need to provide the Cooperating Group I.D., which is GA80210S.

It's just about time to start prepping our boats for the upcoming season. It's going to be an exciting year for the CCSC — our vice commodore has put together an excellent float plan for the cruises, and our new and improved website (at www.ccscsail.org) is a welcome addition. As the politicians are saying, I'm fired up and ready!

Finally, I'd like to comment on Lee's excellent article in last month's Hornpipe, in which he discussed certain rather arcane maritime laws ("The Law Applicable to Best Wine Cruises and Anchoring Problems"). As one of the principal critics of his offering in the "Best Wine" contest, I must be honest and point out that we did not technically "swear" (that is, "make oath") that our comments were true. If my comments had actually

been under oath I might have been kinder. Perjury, while hard to prove in this case, is a serious matter.

Please note that at the January dinner meeting, we agreed to change the name of the club. Here is an official notice of that change:

In the By-Laws of the CCSC (as amended in April 2002), the second article reads as follows:

[Article] SECOND: The name of the corporation is: COLUMBIA CORINTHIAN SAILING CLUB

We are officially changing this article to read:

[Article] SECOND: The name of the corporation is: CHESAPEAKE CORINTHIAN SAILING CLUB

George Alberts

The Kingdom of Sailing

I decided to arrange for a sunshine dose in the middle of this winter, for strictly medicinal purposes. When my original trip fell through, I went to Plan B — a sailing school in the Virgin Islands in January. For eight wonderful days, I was totally immersed in the Kingdom of Sailing.

Without a lot of lead time, I decided to go with a sailing school so that I could just show up without having to figure out a lot of details on my own. I went with the Maryland School of Sailing and Seamanship, aboard *Halimeda* — a 45-foot Island Packet. *Halimeda* has a full keel and is thoroughly outfitted for ocean sailing. The Maryland School uses her for offshore training, and she makes the yearly trip from Norfolk to the Virgin Islands as one 1,500 mile passage.

“Mother is not the most ergonomic of ships,” my captain said. It takes a lot of muscle to convince her to work with you. Her electronics were sound but basic: no moving map GPS display — that would coddle the students too much.

Captain Curmudgeon is a former naval aviator and retired engineer who has an impressive record of delivery trips under his belt and the exciting sea stories to go with them. The only other student in my class was a California-based, thrice-divorced management consultant and aura reader. With this immense boat and just the three of us, I

got the “presidential suite” accommodations — the forward cabin with a double berth, plenty of storage, and my own head in the forepeak.

One of the things that makes this the Kingdom of Sailing is how well set up it is to support tourist cruisers. I flew into St. Thomas, and it was a ten-dollar and ten-minute trip to the marina where *Halimeda* was berthed.

To provision for the week, we walked to a local supermarket and splurged on another \$10 to get a ride back with the food. Typical of the islands, the supermarket had staples (including rum), but fresh fruits and vegetables were all wilted and expensive, flown in from other places.

The marinas all have dockside bars and restaurants — and even some of the uninhabited islands support beachside joints. You can always count on a place to buy a rum drink and another pirate t-shirt. I never got 100 yards inland the whole week — no need to! We always were able to find a mooring as we ended our sailing by about 3:00 p.m. every day. Mostly, you can’t anchor anymore because it damages the coral, but they’ve sunk moorings in the popular places. Often, we dropped over the side to spend an hour or so snorkeling around a cove in the terrifically clear and turquoise water.

The sailing was wonderful. This was my first time in the trade winds — reliable wind from a relatively constant direction — what a treat! The first day we beat our way upwind through “the worst rain I’ve seen in my five years here,” according to Captain C., with lightning and sustained winds over 25 knots. It was never cold, so being wet wasn’t a problem. The wind stayed brisk for a couple of days, then gradually moderated, so that we had plenty of practice putting in and taking out reefs. Within five minutes after departure, Captain C. had Cal and me putting *Halimeda* through her paces under power — figure eights, standing turns, reverse. From then on, he never took the helm until we re-entered the marina at the end of the week.

Cal and I each took hour-long tricks at the wheel, and also alternated daily between serving as engineer or navigator. We swapped off helm and bow duties each day as we picked up and slipped

the mooring. With only three of us, there was plenty of winch grinding to go around.

Halimeda likes to keep going in one direction — “Mother doesn’t like to pass her nose through wind” said Captain C., and we had a lot of backwinding the jib and sometimes even an engine assist to get her to come about.

Over the week, we sailed east from St. Thomas to St. John’s, along St. John’s north shore, north to Jost Van Dyke, stuck our nose out into the big Atlantic, back to Soper’s Hole at Tortola, up the Francis Drake passage to Norman Island, along St. John’s south shore, out into the big Caribbean, back to Cruz Bay, then back to St. Thomas.

The first day, while passing through a narrow cut between two rocks, the weather closed in and we had a total whiteout for about 20 minutes as frogs drowned all around us. (I sorely missed my chart plotter!) That seemed to be the storm’s last gasp, and from then on it gradually lightened and the weather was nearly perfect. Navigation became mostly a matter of looking and pointing, although I diligently took hand compass bearings and plotted out dead reckoning positions on my navigator days.

One afternoon, as we headed offshore into the Caribbean, we found sustained winds of about 22 knots and swells up to about eight feet and Captain C. decreed harnesses and tethers for all excursions out of the cockpit. Then we had an opportunity to use all the man-overboard drills we had been practicing, when the dinghy decided to take a solo voyage. We operated like the smooth-functioning crew we had become. The dinghy was recovered without incident, but I got a taste of how very important it was to have a designated pointer — it’s very easy to lose sight of the dinghy in the troughs — how much harder a person would be to keep in sight!



Caneel Bay, Virgin Islands



Nan at the helm

Besides man overboard drills (announced and unannounced) we practiced various maneuvers — tacked, gybed, hove to, and just simply sailed and sailed in that lovely wind. We practiced many different sail combinations. We reefed and unreefed. We also had an afternoon of anchoring practice. It’s not nearly so much work when there is an anchor windlass.

I learned a lot. I had an opportunity to go through all the more complex systems on this much bigger boat. I got to learn some fairly complex maneuvers I’m eager to practice on *Mutima* this year.

I had to learn two new knots, after demonstrating the eight I already knew, and they may actually be useful. I had a rigorous review of the rules and regulations, and that never hurts. I learned the really cute chart symbol for kelp and why it matters for anchoring — if I sail to New England this year that could be useful.

I learned that I’m not as prone to seasickness as I feared.

I learned if three people really want to get along they can (for at least a week), but a change of company can be really welcome!

Am I ready to go charter a boat down there?
Yes, but not with an inexperienced crew. Who's up for next year?

Nan Shellabarger