

# Potomac River Yacht Clubs Association



[www.PotomacRiverYachtClubs.org](http://www.PotomacRiverYachtClubs.org)

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## From the Commodore

Randy Semper

The remnants of Hurricane Isabel roared through our area September 18, 2003 causing considerable damage to many of the Potomac River marinas. The Bridge decided to have a common theme for the MAL articles in the November newsletter reporting how our member club facilities were affected by the storm. It should be interesting learning how our clubs managed during the storm and the articles will provide a record for future reference. I know some PRYCA clubs' facilities were severely damaged and others averted disaster only through the efforts of dedicated club members.

I'm sure many of you have stories about how your boat survived the storm. Here is mine. We live on Aquia Creek and keep the boat at a floating dock behind the house. As the storm approached, I increased the size of the lines holding the boat to the dock and added additional lines. Every cleat on the dock had a couple of lines going to the boat. The storm arrived Thursday evening; our dock is somewhat protected and the wind had little effect. However, after midnight, the water level had risen several feet above the highest water mark we had seen since moving in 17 years ago. It floated the dock off the pilings. One end of our ramp is attached to the seawall and the other normally rolls on top of the dock. The wind pushed the boat and dock away from the seawall and the ramp then proceeded to roll into the creek. The two old anchor lines I had tied to trees halfway up the backyard was the only thing that kept our boat and dock from starting off on their own journey down the creek. (Fortunately, I had resisted the taunting of my wife



Being on the good side of Isabel



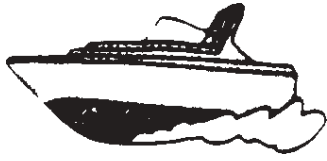
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A Well Prepared Ship



After the Hurricane



who thought tying lines around trees was overreacting.) Unable to do anything about the boat that night, I went to bed.

The next morning, the wind had changed direction and the front half of our boat and dock were over the seawall and resting against the light post in the backyard. Fortunately, part of the dock had caught on a piling as the water receded and kept the stern pointed into the creek. With a little luck we were able to free the dock from the piling, start the engines and back the boat out of our yard. We secured the dock and boat to the pilings with a few lines and after the water level receded further, got friends to help raise the ramp back onto the dock and reattach the dock to the pilings. Hopefully, it will be another 17 years before we see another storm like Isabel.

Regrettably our Fleet Captain Chuck Johnston is resigning from the PRYCA Bridge so he can relocate to South Carolina later this month. Chuck, we have appreciated your support for PRYCA over the years and wish you well in your new home. We will miss seeing both you and Sandra.

November is our annual meeting and election of the bridge for next year. My congratulations to those that were nominated for the bridge and thanks for agreeing to serve the association. I hope to see every club's Delegate at the annual meeting and more of you at the Change of Watch dinner in January.

### From the Vice Commodore

Marv Storey

This will be my last article for the year as Vice Commodore. It has been both an interesting and challenging year with three major PRYCA events having to be cancelled —the Float-In at Fort Washington, the Dog Days of August at Colonial Beach and the End of Summer Party at Tantallon Yacht

Club. Each of these events had to be cancelled due to situations outside of our control. Since these activities are major events for PRYCA member clubs, we are working hard to make sure they will return in 2004 or that we will have something similar.

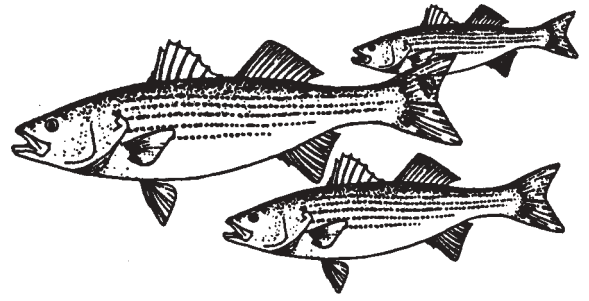
Our last major event for the year (actually held in January) is the Change of Watch Dinner-Dance. It will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2004, at the Sheraton Crystal City. The Sheraton does an excellent job hosting PRYCA with excellent food and facilities. The hors d'oeuvres they provide during the cocktail hour are fantastic. Make sure you mark your calendars and send in your reservations early. You get a discount on your registration fee if we receive it (or it's postmarked) before January 1, 2004. Information about the Change of Watch is available via email from me, from the PRYCA web page and from your Club Delegate.

We did not reserve a block of rooms this year because the Sheraton wanted an 85% guarantee of reservations/fees received. Rooms fees should be \$89-\$99 depending on overall hotel occupancy on our weekend. It is normally a slow time for the hotel so you should have no problem getting a room at a good price.

I need to mention another issue, the BOATR Safety Program. There has been minimal activity in this program this year. I realize overall boating activities have been slow this year because of poor weather. I hope the reduced support for the BOATR Program is only because of the weather and that it will pick up in 2004. It is a good program and anyone who participates will be a better and safer boater. There is still a little time this year. Why don't you get together today with your club's BOATR Performance Examiner and check off a few of the



Dock Damage at District Yacht Club



exercises.

I can't wrap-up my article without commenting on Hurricane Isabel. Everyone else is writing articles about it in this issue of the newsletter, so I need to put my two cents in while I have the chance. There is one very important point I want to make—insurance. It's too late to obtain proper insurance if you received damage from Isabel; however, if you came through unscathed, you are lucky. We lost two boats at the District YC. One was insured by Boat/US but the other had no insurance. Boat/US had the insured boat taken care of almost immediately. The uninsured boat cost its owner a pile of money. Make sure you are covered.

I have enjoyed being your Vice Commodore this year. Thanks for allowing me to represent you.

### **From the Fleet Captain... a leave-taking.** Chuck Johnston

It started in May... Sandra and I were floating down the ICW to visit friends in Charleston, SC when Dummy dinged his prop, necessitating a 4-day layover in Swansboro, NC. Since 4 days in a boatyard wasn't our idea of a good time, we rented a car and pressed ever southward. After visiting two sets of friends in Charleston, we followed up on an invitation from an Internet Mainship buddy to visit Dataw Island, SC. It was love at first sight. When we moved to our present home in Cobb Island, we thought we had arrived at paradise. But when we saw what Dataw had to offer, and we thought of the waist-deep snow in Maryland last winter, South Carolina *really* looked like paradise.

In a subsequent visit, we placed an offer on a home and returned to put our house on the market. Once that was

done, we jumped on board the QE2 for an oft-delayed honeymoon cruise to London. This was followed by a side trip to Dummy's ancestral home in Scotland. The trip over was everything the QE2 is promised to be, and London swings like a pendulum do.

During our stay at the Royal Horse Guards Hotel, we learned via e-mail that our house was sold. We left for Edinburgh knowing that a lifestyle change was in store.

Back in the USA, we learned that Hurricane Isabel was headed our way. There are many ways for boat owners to prepare for a hurricane, but I seized on the best one: sell it. This is known in some quarters as the Wexler Method. One phone call later, the deal was done. An old friend had admired *Black Tie* from the first day we owned it, so I called him up, asked him to put his wife on the phone, and 30 seconds later, his doom was sealed. We were now boatless and soon to be homeless. We repaired to the home of friends in Pittsburgh to wait out Isabel. Chicken, you say? Believe it. Yours truly went through Hazel, Agnes, and a host of others, including the biggest typhoon ever recorded in the South China Sea. They are no fun and can be extremely hazardous to your health. Returning from Pittsburgh, we discovered that Isabel had removed every pier on the south shore of Cobb Island, along with several acres of land. While we were grousing about our losses, we soon became aware of friends and colleagues who had lost nearly everything. Time to count our blessings.

We threw ourselves into the task of inspections, negotiations, packing, hiring movers and gazing longingly at photos of our new home in Dataw Island. We were content and happy with our lot. Then it happened. Thou shall not strike a happy medium. We learned that God, in his wrath had extracted a revenge of biblical

proportion. The two vacant lots next to ours on Dataw Island were owned by none other than... you're not gonna believe it... hang on now... Steve (P-Diddy) Wexler. Of all the gin joints in all the towns in the world, he had to pick ours. Oh well, at least we'll have London.

### **From the Rear Commodore**

Lou Seelig

A Night Aboard with Isabel

I was called stupid, asinine, moronic, imbecilic, foolish, idiotic, dim-witted, @&%\$, and many other expletives when I announced I was going to spend the night on board my vessel *Thee Sealegs* on the evening of September 18, 2003—the night that a level 2 hurricane named Isabel was scheduled to roar through the area. Despite the uncomplimentary views stated by my friends and family, who were willing to express a view (others just quietly backed away looking at me out of the corner of their eye wondering if all my parts were working), I reasoned that I could be in two locations. I could be at home, where if a misadventure occurred I would have no control of the situation. I would just have to watch and fret. Or, I could be on the boat, where I could prevent a possible calamity as an experienced seaman having endured a variety of weather conditions including hurricane Felix in the Chesapeake Bay. Not only that, but I felt I could probably learn something from the experience. My apparent lack of reasoning and sanity prevailed despite the consensus opposing view.

I boarded *Thee Sealegs* at Prince William Marina about 1800 hours at low tide amidst a light rain. I just dropped my wife Jean off at the safety of my son Steve's house in Alexandria and parked her car what I thought was safely up the hill behind the new



bathroom. My car was protected in the garage at home.

The wind was blowing about 30 knots, which was only 10 knots faster than I could travel at maximum speed aboard my boat, so I was not overly concerned. I double-checked that I had taken all precautionary actions the previous day, I took down all the canvas, put double lines on my boat, and slacked all lines attached to the fixed pilings, anticipating a substantial rise in the tide from the storm surge. I stationed my form-fitted PFD within easy reach, unpacked my foul weather gear, started all engines and generator and checked all systems ensuring that they were operating properly. I felt I was prepared!

After my diligent review of the vessel, I went below, turned on the TV, watching all the frantic reports from the weather prognosticators, and made a drink. Having forwarded my phone calls from home to the cell phone I had aboard, I was constantly interrupted by friends and family from all over the country reinforcing their uncomplimentary views of my intentions. Suddenly, the power went out in the marina and the neighboring community, and I was completely in the dark. Stumbling over all the furniture in the salon, which normally would be on the bridge, I successfully turned on the generator providing me with power and resumed watching the panicking weather reports while nurturing my drink. I was thankful I

was on board to start the generator otherwise the refrigerator would have drawn the battery down preventing my bilge pump from working.



At 1930 hours I got hungry, got into Jean's car, and searched for a grocery store. I found a mom and pop grocery store not far away—one of the few stores with power—and purchased a can of New England Clam Chowder I prepared on board. I thought this was a fitting dinner considering the circumstances feeling like one of those brave New England fishermen and thankful that my boat was not named

the *Andrea Gail*.

There was still a light rain falling when I returned noticing that the water level was approaching the top of the bulkheads forming the island separating the Occoquan River from the marina. Concerned that the water would actually exceed the level I anticipated, I double-checked my lines, and the lines on all the boats on the dock, ensuring there was sufficient slack to accommodate the rising tide. While I was moving from boat to boat checking their security I noticed that the sky periodically lit up with a blue/green phosphorus lightning, distracting me from my rounds. At first I thought it was a series of transformers igniting from power surges, but it was all around and completely lit up the sky. It had to be the most unusual lightning I had ever seen.

The winds began to pick up to about 50 knots causing the trees on the island to bend, but not with the ferocity I anticipated. All of a sudden the power in the marina came back on while I was walking my watch, thankful that I was standing on a rubber welcome mat at the time. I had not anticipated the contingency of being fried while standing on a metal dock. There was the possibility of a short in the power lines from the stress causing the power to run through the dock. I went down below and turned my electrical switches to shore power and turned off my generator giving me a false sense of



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security. Little did I know.

Lazily sitting in my easy chair in the salon watching TV, jammed between all the furniture from the bridge, fearful, that I would fall asleep, I decided to establish a disciplined schedule that would keep me awake and allow me to calculate and prepare for all possible contingencies. I decided that I would use the sound of the bell from my mariner's clock as my alarm. When the bell rang I would don my foul weather gear and survey the dock.

At four bells (2200 hours) while I was preparing to walk my watch on D Dock, the power went out again in the Marina and the community. After restarting the generator, I donned my foul weather gear with reflector tape and my PFD. I stepped outside in the light rain and looked to starboard from

my vessel noticing that the water level breached the retaining bulkheads forming the island. The water was now slowly consuming the island protecting the marina from the surging Occoquan River. I walked the dock toward shore braced against the wind, carefully surveying each vessel on the dock until I reached the end. The ramp leading from the "fixed boardwalk" to the floating metal D dock was now horizontal when it normally sloped downward at a 30 degree angle.

Having carefully noted the water level on my previous tour, using the boardwalk as my frame of reference, I accurately calculated that the water level was rising at a rate of one foot per hour using the time proven formula called "Kentucky Windage," an algorithm only known by experienced rifleman.

At six bells (2300hours) I again walked my D Dock watch. When I reached the end of the dock, the ramp



leading to the boardwalk was at a 30-degree upward angle with the moving base, four feet above the floating dock impeding access to the boardwalk on shore. Despite the obstruction, I climbed onto the ramp and slid to the boardwalk. Safely on the boardwalk, I decided I would survey the entire marina to give me a broader perspective of the impact of the storm surge so I could better prepare myself. While surveying the marina I encountered Carlton Phillips, the CEO

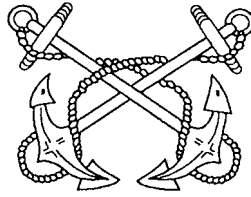
of the Marina, riding his golf cart along the boardwalk conducting his own survey. He gave me his cell phone number and told me they had a crew in the sales office safely above the river and prepared for all contingencies. I was comforted that there were other people around if I needed them. But, I was confident I could handle my boat.

The television stations were now reporting that the major impact of the storm was moving west from

Washington and the heavy winds and rain would not be as serious in our area as anticipated, with the major winds passing through about 2400 hours. However, they were still forecasting a storm surge in the river 9-12 feet above normal high tide, which would come well after the storm passed. I knew that high tide was 0120 hours and felt

that if I could maintain my diligence until after high tide I would not experience any damage to my boat.

At eight bells (2400 hours) I conducted my routine inspection. The water was now breaching the boardwalk. The floating docks were now two feet higher than the boardwalk and many of the lines on the other boats were much too tight to withstand any further rise in the water level. Unless the lines were loosened the boat could conceivably be pulled



into the water and sink. I was easily able to adjust the lines on my boat by loosening the cleat hitch, reassured that a simple cleat hitch described in Chapman's is a very secure "knot" providing the tension to secure the boat, and just as important, easy to undo under stress. However, I had a lot of difficulty adjusting the lines on some of the other boats that did not use an appropriate Cleat Hitch. In one instance it took about fifteen minutes to undo one of the knots tied to the cleat. In an emergency this could have been a disaster. Several of the boats had the free end of the line tied to a piling that was now under water. Since I could not reach the free end, the only choice I had was to watch and wait, or cut the line and string another if the boat was in danger. I elected to watch and wait.

At four bells (0200 hours) I was really getting concerned. I used the boardwalk as my frame of reference to determine the rise of the water level. However, when I climbed onto the ramp, which was now at a 50-degree upward angle leading to the boardwalk, I realized my error in judgment. The entire boardwalk raised up with my weight on the ramp acting like a lever. I was completely stranded! The water level was now flooding the entire parking lot. I was now getting concerned about Jean's car, but calculated that I still had two hours before the water reached the car at the rate it was rising.

I had to obtain a new frame of reference to determine the rate of the raising storm surge. I decided I would use the pilings holding the floating docks in place. I surveyed all the finger piers and was startled to realize that most of the pilings were even with the finger piers and one more foot rise in the water would cause the floating docks to float down river with all the boats. Suppressing my anxiety, I worked out all possible courses of

action. One was to start my engines and tow the floating dock with the other 12 boats. However, this seemed impractical. The one I settled on was to watch and wait hoping for some divine inspiration.

At six bells (0300 hours) the water level began to slowly subside with only a couple of the finger piers rising over the top of the pilings leaving the floating dock secure. Confident that the finger piers would settle back into their proper position, I felt relieved that no major disaster would strike my boat and decided to take a nap.

Many of you will judge the accuracy of the opinions I received from my friends and neighbors. Some of you may even learn from my experience. More importantly, I would like to hear of your experiences so that they can be published. Maybe we can all learn and we will collectively become safer boaters.

### **From the Immediate Past Commodore**

Curt Johnson

The following was borrowed from the New Netherland Museum News Letter.

Henry Hudson's 1609 Voyage, The Quest of the *Halve Maen*

The original *Halve Maen* was commissioned on March 25, 1609, for the Dutch East India Company. She took a crew of 20 and despite her seemingly primitive technology and accommodations, was for her day, a vessel for ocean navigation and commercial exploration.

Her captain, Henry Hudson, was already a famous explorer of arctic waters when in 1608 he was hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a Northeast, all-water route to Asia. But only a month out of port the crew of his

ship were disheartened when their passage north of Norway was blocked by arctic ice flows. Many talked of mutiny.

Sitting in his cabin, the concerned captain considered his dilemma and options. A compromise was made. The course was changed and what was a search for a Northeast Passage became a transatlantic crossing to search for a Northwest Passage to the rich spice trade of China. Some thought that Hudson's intention all along was to go northwest.

After reaching the Maine coast and replacing a foremast lost in rough storms during the crossing, Hudson sailed the *Halve Maen* southward as far as the present day North Carolina Outer Banks. Then, turning northward Hudson explored the Delaware Bay before arriving at the mouth of a wide river. Could this be the passage to the Pacific Ocean?

Hudson stopped at points on the New Jersey coast before sailing the small ship up the river, which today bears the Captain's name, the Hudson River. But it was soon obvious that it was an inland river, not a westward passage. Hudson sailed upriver to present-day Albany before returning downriver.

It would be many years before the significance of Hudson's 1609 voyage to America would be understood and the *Halve Maen* recognized as one of the best-known ships of exploration.

Hudson's voyage had important consequences in making this historic journey. Hudson claimed the region for the Dutch and opened the land for the settlers who followed. Hudson's voyage, more than ten years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, led to the establishment, in 1624, of the Dutch Trading Post, Fort Nassau, at present day Albany, New York. The first European settlements in the states of Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey,

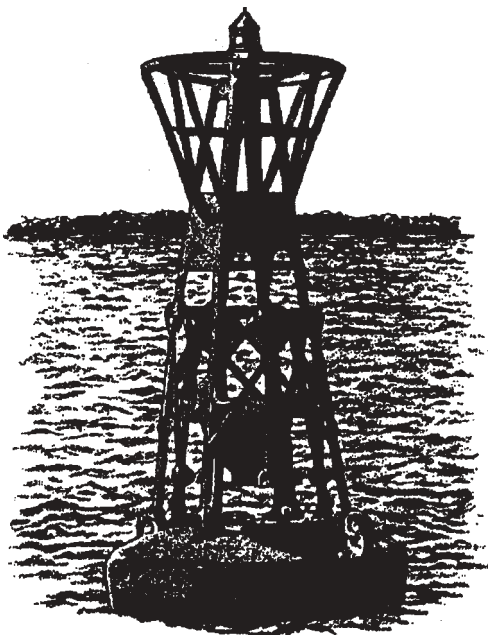


New York and Pennsylvania were built by the Dutch beginning in 1624 and formed the Dutch colony of New Netherland.

By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, all of New Netherland had become the possession of the British crown. Yet the maps of the region still reflect the original Dutch settlements. Brooklyn, Hoboken, Block Island and a dozens more places take their names from the first Dutch colonists. These names hint of the early Dutch role in establishing our nation, an involvement that continued through to the American Revolution.

I hope to see all of the Delegates at Capital Yacht Club on 3 November. At this meeting we will hold the election for the 2004 Board and we will all get a chance to meet and greet those who will lead PRYCA next year. The candidates for the Board are an enthusiastic group who will provide us with experienced leadership for a successful 2004.

See you in November.



### Current Statement of Financial Condition

As of September 30, 2003

	this month (Aug & Sept)	year-to-date
<b>Opening Balance</b>		\$ 6,667
<b>INCOME</b>		
Dues		1,320
Interest	6	18
Change of Watch 2003 (net)		894
Float-in (net)	<6,080>	<1,384>
Quarter Master	465	471
Safe BOATR (OYC donation)		73
other		25
<b>Total Income</b>	<5,609>	1,417
<b>Total Assets</b>		8,084
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Newsletter (printing& postage)	81	283
Roster		446
NBF Dues		200
Sponsored Events (Cobb Is)		150
Safe BOATR		942
QM	236	1,687
other	34	336
<b>Liabilities &amp; Expenses Accrued</b>		
Postage, admin, etc	51	261
Sponsored Event (Aquia)	150	150
<b>Total Expenses &amp; Liabilities</b>	553	\$ 4,455
<b>BALANCE</b>	\$ <6,162>	\$ 3,629



**From the Editor**

Ned W. Rhodes

Everyone has a story about the hurricane Isabel. Mine is not very interesting as I had the boat pulled and blocked in the parking lot the Wednesday before the storm. They had me back in the water the day after the storm and since there was no damage to the docks, we hooked right back up to water and electricity. And my insurance policy covered almost all of the cost to haul-out, block and relaunch.

My excitement was to drink a bottle of wine in the dark while making hourly phone calls to Occoquan Harbour Marina to find out how high the water had risen (about 8 feet above normal high tide). The docks almost floated off the pilings and Rick Sorrenti had a tree fall on his car parked in the marina parking lot.

I have come up with these lessons learned:

- 1. Dock your boat at a marina that has haul-out facilities.
- 2. Don't buy a boat bigger than

can be hauled out by your marina.

3. The hurricane insurance rider to pay for your haul-out is worth it.

4. Have your boat ride out a hurricane on shore and plan on pulling early.

5. That home generator you bought 2 years ago for emergencies was finally worth it.

**From the Mid Potomac MAL**

George Allen

Here is a report on the BIG Storm from the Mid-Potomac Clubs. Starting from the North, Prince William Yacht Club reports no major damage to any boats. Being located further up the Occoquan River helped. But, what helped the most was the outstanding support from Prince William Marina. PWM hauled out over 115 boats, and accommodated others from as far away as Washington DC. To the extent possible (size permitting) they placed boats from the fixed docks in floating slips. Everyone pitched in, Boat Owners, Club Members, PWM Staff, and even the kids, put out extra lines and fenders. After the storm, some damage was noted to the Boardwalks and some dock supports, but not to the structures. The Pump-out took it tough, but hey we

needed it fixed anyway.

As reported by Randy Corey, the Quantico Yacht Club was virtually destroyed. The marina had water about eleven feet over normal highest tide and powerful waves. Two dinghies and a 28-foot Bayliner ended up inside the Yacht Club. It was insured. The Quantico marina suffered what would have to be considered moderate damage compared to some. All electrical service will be lost for some time and the docks are damaged. The water was about three feet deep inside the Head. The docks were twisted and separated breaking the new plastic conduit. The south dock will probably have to be replaced and drifted 25 feet allowing several boats to bang into one another and the pilings. One boat was sunk and a sailboat was washed on shore in the city park. Most damaged boats have been moved to other marinas for repairs.

At Aquia Harbour Yacht Club, way up past Austin Run, there was no damage. This was due in large part to the efforts of club members such as Dan Adams, John Olkowski, John Flannigan, and Jack Spath who turned out to tie up boats, secure loose objects and police the docks. They also stowed the Clubhouse and made it ready for heavy weather. No boats or property were lost or damaged. Austin Run was finally deep enough to transit, but in that wind, no way. Further down the creek things were not as good. At Willow Landing a boat came to rest on the T of a pier because he put out 25 feet of anchor line. Seven footers at Aquia Bay contributed to badly damaged docks and boats. Some boats even floated free (those that were hauled out and blocked ashore, but not far enough from the surge). John Malitec, US Coast Guard indicates that close to 60% of the docks on the Rappahannock and Potomac no longer exist.



Typical Clemson Driver

## From the East MAL

Andi Storey

Post Isabel Report on Washington, District, Tantallon, and Ft. Washington Yacht Clubs.

Although the wind from Isabel was not as much of a factor as anticipated, the rising water and tidal surge more than made up for it on the Anacostia River.

**Washington Yacht Club** had little dock or boat damage, but they did suffer the loss of their kitchen facilities and all appliances which were on the ground floor. High water did threaten but didn't damage their clubhouse on the second floor.

**District Yacht Club** was hard hit with two boats sinking and floating



Two Boats at District Yacht Club



docks floating off pilings in spite of three people riding out the storm on their boats to man lines and tie docks to pilings. They were able to secure one dock to its pilings but the other moved 5-6ft off center carrying the attached half dozen boats with it. When it came down, one boat came down on a piling and sunk, and another sunk a day or two later. We had damage to all three land-to-dock connecting docks, cutting off electricity until repairs could be made. Power and water was finally restored to all docks by Tues., 10/14 thanks to the work of the members.

Seven members remained in the clubhouse and were able to rescue club records and some furniture by putting it on tables and the bar before the water stopped rising at 2 ft inside. Trying to find items to rescue, in the dark, sloshing through knee-deep water was an adventure not to be repeated.



On the positive side, the members turned out in force Saturday after the water receded and cleared the grounds of trash, removed carpeting, tested appliances (large and small) to see if they still worked and attempted repairs if they didn't. Generally speaking, what amess!

**Fort Washington Boating Association** reported one visiting boat sunk but no report of damage to club boats was received. Floating docks remained in good condition although water did rise almost to the level of the marina office.

No report was received from Tantallon Yacht Club.

### From the North MAL

John Corley

It's an ill wind that blows no good!

September 18, 2003, hurricane Isabel began her visit to the Potomac River valley. By noon, the wind churned the lower river to a boil. Trees swayed in the gusts, as their branches broke and cluttered the ground. Boats strained their lines and canvas was torn to shreds. And, still the wind blew, in increasingly stronger gusts.

By four PM Isabel was pounding the mid river with her winds and a stinging rain roaring through Cobb Island and Colonial Beach. Trees were uprooted, crashing down on houses and cars, taking power and telephone lines with them, and blocking roads. Though many boats had been taken from their moorings and docks and stored on trailers or blocked ashore, others were beaten on pilings as their lines snapped.

By six PM the force of the storm was advancing northwards, now playing havoc in Occoquan, Mount

Vernon, and Fort Washington. Windows were broken, roofs blown away, and shorelines eroded. As the full force of Isabel's winds were now blowing up the river and the Chesapeake Bay, water levels rose and streams overflowed their banks, causing local flooding.

By eight PM the streets of Washington were cluttered with tree limbs as wind gusts exceeded fifty miles an hour. The river was swelling over her banks, the rain was driven in drenching sheets of water, and it was already dark. There were booms and flashes in the night sky, not thunder and lightning, but transformers exploding. By nine PM the lights went out, leaving only battery powered emergency lights at District Yacht Club, as the river flowed over the fixed docks and shoreline. At eleven PM the batteries expired and the clubhouse fell into darkness, the river was waist deep at the fixed docks and overflowing the clubhouse porch; that's as high as it has ever been in the fifty-year history of DYC, it had never entered the building. Midnight the river flowed over the threshold of the front door, and high tide was still two hours away. Everyone wades into the parking lot to move their cars, it's too late for some. One AM, another foot of water, and furniture begins to float around the room; everyone retreats to high ground, the pool table or bar top. Bam, Clang, Bang, it's two AM and pots and pans start to float out of kitchen cabinets. Three AM, an hour past high tide and the water is still rising. Four AM, the water is two feet deep in the clubhouse, finally it begins to recede. Six AM, day breaks as the last of the water flows out of the clubhouse.

Outside, the river is still chest deep at the fixed docks, pilings are still under water and the access ramps to the floating docks have floated off their bearings, breaking off plumbing and

power lines. A section of floating dock with a dozen boats had shifted ten feet off its pilings. As the water continues to recede, a trawler is impaled on a piling, and a cruiser and a speedboat get their swim platforms hung up on piles. The speedboat was rocked off its perch, the cruisers swim platform shattered under the weight of the boat, and the trawler sank.

Isabel's wind, rain, and flooding left devastation in her wake along the entire length of the Potomac River. Boats were destroyed at their docks, docks were washed away, cars and buildings were damaged by flood and fallen trees, and dry stored boats were blown or washed off their stands and trailers. Airline and passenger train services were canceled, schools and business were closed, and power and communications were interrupted. So, was Isabel an ill wind that blew no good? Were there lessons learned?

In spite of the intensity of the storm and the damage it caused, injuries were minimal. Accurate forecasting provided ample time for preparation. Emergency preparedness proved to be effective in damage control. Interstate cooperation of utility workers minimized duration of outages. Insurance adjusters and financial aid workers quickly mobilized, as did social workers and public services personnel. Volunteers, friends, neighbors, and strangers sprung into action, lending assistance to those in need. The impact of Isabel is not over, but it is under control; we've learned that we can benefit from preparation, and that we can work together.





**From the South MAL**

Fran Jarrett

Everyone at Swan Point as well as the dredging folks will be busy in Cuckold Creek for the next month. They have a place right here in Swan Point to put the spoil and it sure will be nice next year to have a dredged channel. Everyone will be welcome to bring their boats and stay, play golf and enjoy our club house. We have a new chef and he is doing a great job, serving up great food. This place has been discovered and we have over sixty homes going up right now.

The hurricane really did some damage here. Before it got here, I urged folks who had their boats on lifts on the Potomac River side to bring them over to the marina, as it was more sheltered. A

few did, but most of them did not. They had considerable damage. The boats who did stay in the marina rode out the storm just fine. That is a hard lesson learned.

Cobb Island took a beating, worst storm they say in 50 years. Took out all the piers on the Potomac River side. A lot of homeowners had to be rescued at midnight as water was coming in the homes. Thank goodness no loss of life.

I spoke to Dalgren Yacht Club, they had quite a bit of damage, but they managed to have their last race after the hurricane. So they didn't lose everything. Colonial Beach was devastated, had a lot of damage to the city.

You can see the boats that did have damage. They are in a salvage lot on Route 301 nearby. Boat/US will be auctioning them off very soon.

**From the West MAL**

Walt Cheatham

**Fairfax Yacht Club**

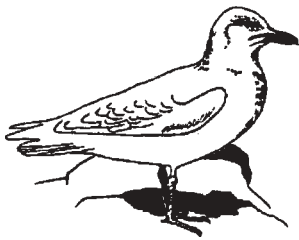
All five piers floated off their pilings, rupturing power and water connections, (A through D remained pretty much in place due to the tethered boats, but the heavy E dock with its roof broke loose out in the river and crashed into D dock with severe damage to several boats and the sinking of one), and the fixed walkway along the shore was battered and severely damaged.

**Fort Belvoir Yacht Club**

One houseboat was impaled on a metal piling and sank, one sailboat was swamped, several floating piers were damaged beyond repair, multiple boats



E-Dock Slightly Out of Place at Fairfax Yacht Club



were floated/blown off boat stands and trailers, the canoe/kayak rack was blown up the creek (along with the tied-on water craft), and the Marina building flooded up to level of the bathroom sinks.

### Mount Vernon Yacht Club

Several floating docks rose above their pilings, and floated to new locations taking tethered boats along; one dock was damaged, but has been returned to operating condition by club members. Former PRYCA Commodore Steve Donock and son David worked round the clock with several members adjusting lines and retying boats to help minimize the damage.

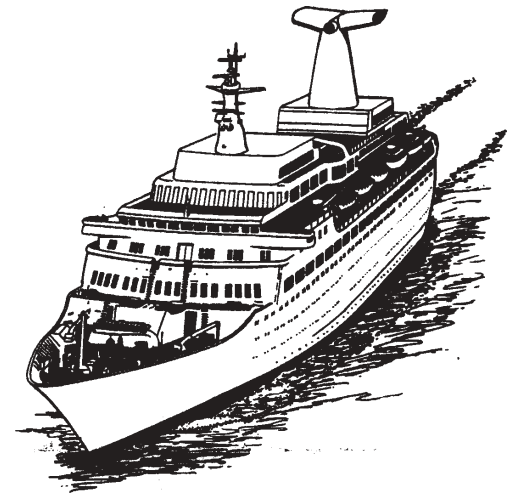
### Occoquan Yacht Club

With no official home, OYC boaters were moored in many places with concentration on the Occoquan River and Neabsco Creek. Occoquan Harbor Marina and Hoffmasters fared well

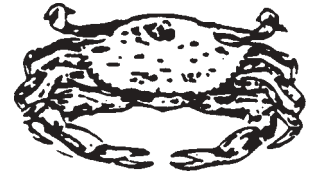
although water rose to about eight feet over high tide and above the 100 year flood plain; Fairfax YC didn't and is covered above; Tyme n' Tyde Marina lost the outside docks and sustained severe damage to boats outside while the boatel building protected the boats inside but at a loss to the big building door and office and showroom areas; Easy Cruz just inside Neabsco took the worst hit losing several docks with boats tied to them as well several more on land including some that had just been "safely" blocked to ride out the storm; and Hamptons Landing further up the creek actually fared pretty well with mainly dock damage.

### Old Dominion Boat Club

Water invaded the basement (bar/kitchen/party room) to almost the 6foot foot level, and the fixed docks took a big beating. The main damage to boats, however, happened to boats stored on land in the parking lot.



G Dock at Occoquan Harbour Marina



## Extended Wet Weather Affects Potomac

Potomac Basin Reporter  
Vol. 59, No. 4, A \ July / August 2003

The Potomac basin's multi-year drought ended last fall with snowfall and frequent rains that have continued right through this summer. The onset of the extremely wet weather had many people—those who were under water restrictions, along with personnel from water supply utilities and ICPRB's drought management staff—dancing in the rain.

The continuing rains that have provided welcome relief from the extended drought are now creating other issues in the basin. The cool spring and summer have been very wet and quite cloudy. Combined, these conditions have hindered the growth of aquatic plants in many waterways. Clouds of sediment carried by storm water from the land have accompanied heavy loads of nutrients—nitrogen and phosphorus—which can fuel the growth of algae and reduce oxygen levels.

These conditions also have caused concern for the Chesapeake Bay, which is experiencing severely depleted oxygen levels in the bottom waters. Bay scientists who surveyed the bay in late June and early July reported the largest zone of oxygen-deprived waters observed during 20 years of data collection. Comprising about 40 percent of the bay's mainstem waters, the zone of low oxygen runs along the bottom of the bay's main channel from Baltimore down to the York River. The cool temperatures have stratified bay waters, keeping the heavier, saltier water with very little oxygen trapped at the bottom. The low dissolved oxygen levels affect the fish and other aquatic animals, seen in the fish kills and "crab jubilees" being reported in some areas

of the bay. Crab jubilees are the whimsical-sounding events when crabs are observed walking onto land to avoid suffocating in the oxygen-depleted water. The heavy nutrient loads also are resulting in dense algae blooms in some parts of the bay.

A quick look at the Potomac reveals that the river may have dodged a bullet, sending much of its nutrient load to the bay while leaving the river affected to a lesser degree. While dissolved oxygen levels at several Potomac monitoring stations are lower than the long-term average, the weather and high flows have conspired to limit the most apparent damage, at least for now. Few algae blooms (from high nutrient loads) and fish kills (from low dissolved oxygen and algae) have been observed so far this year.

The blue-green algae *Microcystis*, which used to carpet most of the metropolitan portion of the river every summer through the early 1980s, has been absent despite the year's high nutrient loads. Some blooms of the algae are beginning to be noticed, although further downstream, according to Bruce Michael, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources chief of the Water and Habitat Quality Program. Michael noted that the algae also was not an issue last year, when the region was locked in a drought with lots of sun and warm water temperatures. In addition to lower nutrient loadings from the lack of storm runoff, Michael gave credit to management improvements, particularly the biological nutrient removal that is now part of treatment at Blue Plains regional wastewater treatment plant in the District of Columbia, as well as other treatment plants.

When the spring storms began washing several years worth of nutrient loads in to the river, it quickly became clouded with sediment. Water

temperatures were cool, and the weather remained unusually cloudy. These conditions limited the growth of phytoplankton, or algae, in the water. Because the algae populations were not present to use up the nutrients, much of the load was carried into the bay without producing algae blooms in the river. Those nutrients, however, have helped contribute to those same types of problems now being seen in the bay, noted several researchers.

Perhaps the most visible sign of the extended period of wet weather is the lack of submerged vegetation in the river. Areas that last year held huge stands of aquatic plants "are just now beginning to show up," noted John Sisson, a professional bass fishing guide who frequents the area from Piscataway Bay to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The area usually supports huge stands of grasses that didn't start growing in the spring, victims of high sediment loads that muddied the cool water, along with a lack of sunlight. Largemouth bass fishing is "still very good this year," Sisson said, because the fish are concentrating near hard structure—bridge pilings and other attracting features—in the river. It has been a poor season for submerged plants throughout the Potomac system.

"Fortunately, the Potomac remains a very resilient river system" said ICPRB Executive Director Joseph Hoffman. "The bay's large zone of low oxygen levels, as well as at the mouth of the Potomac, bears witness to the importance of reducing nutrients throughout the Potomac basin, both for our Potomac River environment and that of the bay, of which our river is the second-largest tributary."





### Watching the River Flow

Potomac Basin Reporter  
Vol. 59, No. 4, July/August 2003

The Potomac is continuing its high-flow ways, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, with the river flowing at several times its normal level.

In June, the river's flow, measured near Washington, D.C., averaged about 27.1 billion gallons per day (bgd), or about 453 percent of the historical June average of 6.0 bgd. Daily extremes ranged from a high of about 52.5 bgd on June 5 to a low of about 8.7 bgd on June 30. The river never even got close to reaching the norm during the month. Water withdrawn for metropolitan area drinking use averaged about 389 million gallons per day (mgd), about 18 percent less than during the extreme drought conditions of June 2002. Total freshwater inflow to the Chesapeake Bay averaged about 123 bgd, or 297 percent of the historical average. The Potomac contributed about 26 percent of the total. Flow to the bay in June was the second largest on record, behind the flow of June 1972.

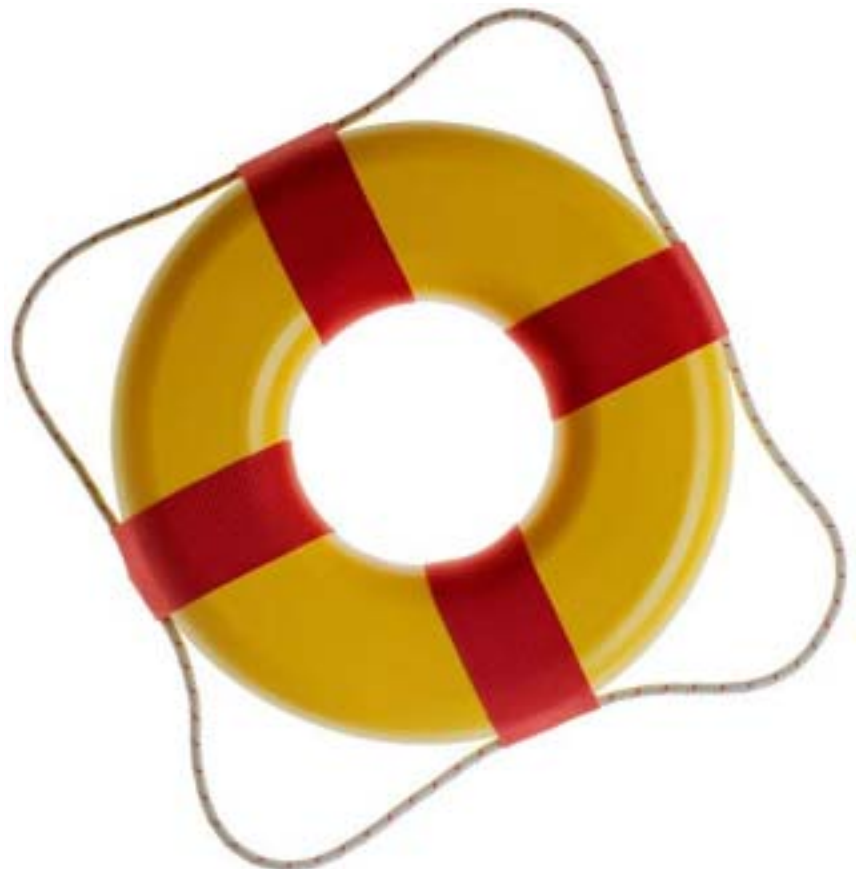
July flows, while lower, remained well above average. About 7.0 bgd flowed by Washington during the month, or 217 percent of the normal monthly flow of about 3.2 bgd. Daily extremes ranged from a high of about 11.8 bgd on July 12 to a low of about 3.7 bgd on July 31. Metropolitan area water withdrawals averaged about 418 mgd, about 18 percent less than July 2002. Freshwater inflow to the bay averaged about 45.1 bgd, or about 183 percent of average. The Potomac contributed about 20 percent. July 2003 bay inflows were the third-highest on record.



### 4th Annual Holiday Parade of Boats

December 6, 2003

Alexandria's harbor lights up when more than 50 brightly lit sailing and powered leisure boats cruise along the Potomac River at the City's historic waterfront. Alexandria Marina at the foot of Cameron Street, behind the Torpedo Factory 5:30-6:30 p.m. Free! 703.838.5005 or see their web site at <http://www.FunSide.com>.



Upcoming Events

Dec 1	PRYCA Board Meeting @ Fairfax YC 1800
Dec 6	Alexandria Parade of Lighted Boats
Jan 24	PRYCA Change of Watch



**Potomac River Yacht Clubs Association**



2749 North Wakefield Street  
Arlington, VA 22207

Address Correction Requested