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Please send any comments, questions, or corrections to:
editor@flyc.us

Commodore's Comments

by Mike Sidell

SV Delta G

Greetings from the middle of winter!

I hope you're having a productive 2026 so far. February means planning the activities of the FLYC for the year, with our organizational meeting being held later this month. If you have any ideas for the club's calendar or thoughts about what we should be doing in 2026, please reach out!



While I've been thinking about my sailboat, I've been busy actually working on power boats. Two different power boats have received my attention this winter. The first was a 1982 Ranger bass boat, featuring silver flake paint, a 140-hp motor, the works. A good friend asked for my help in getting it ready to sell. Her husband had been sick for years and was unable to use it. The boat hadn't been registered since 2012. Since his passing, she decided it was time to let it go. I hauled it up to my shop from her garage in Montoursville and spent a few weeks going over it. First to be removed were two mice that had taken up residence. On a warm(er) day – all of 25 degrees - I got the motor running and the owner came up to help me shine it. Hopefully by the time you read this, it will have been sold.

My second boat is a 23-foot Chris Craft Express Cruiser, circa 1952. From what I can tell, it's the largest kit boat that Chris Craft made. They didn't make them for long and this diamond-in-the-rough had been stored since 1981 in a barn in western PA where I found it a few years ago. The last owner had always planned to get it back on the water, but life got in his way. My goal was to have it water-ready last summer, but a variety of delays made that



Figure 1: My winter project, view from stern.



Figure 2: My winter project, view from bow.

impossible. Work stopped on it once sailing season began. Last winter, I replaced rotted wood in the hull and fiberglassed the bottom. This winter, I applied fiberglass to the outside, sanded it down, and started working on the topsides and cabin. The motor is being overhauled and I've turned my attention to the inside which I removed the year before. It's nice to see it coming together instead of being taken apart! Whether or not it'll be on the water this summer remains to be seen. Either way, it's been a great project and I'm enjoying the challenge of restoring this wooden boat. Whether it's this summer or next, Nancy and I are looking forward to seeing where it takes us.

Whatever you're working on or dreaming about, I hope you're thinking spring too!

- Mike
Slip 433

Port Tacks

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Club Web Site <http://www.flyc.us>

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Contact all officers at: officers@flyc.us

Commodore
Mike Sidell commodore@flyc.us

Vice-Commodore
John Chesbrough vc@flyc.us

Rear Commodore
Don Swanson rc@flyc.us

Secretary
Katie Alley secretary@flyc.us

Treasurer
Denis Kingsley treasurer@flyc.us

Assistant Treasurer
Nancy Sisbarro asst.treas@flyc.us

Directors (Terms ending 2026)
Maggie Martin maggie@flyc.us
Andrew Theismann andrew@flyc.us

Directors (Terms ending 2027)
Tom Alley alley@flyc.us
Russ Nelson russ@flyc.us

Contact all directors at: directors@flyc.us

COMMITTEES & KEY CONTACTS

General Information info@flyc.us

Facebook Administrator
[Position Open] facebook@flyc.us

Newsletter Editor
Tom Alley editor@flyc.us

Race Committee
Chair: Don Swanson racechair@flyc.us
Asst. Chair: Bill Trondsen rcasst@flyc.us
Jim McGinnis mcginnis@flyc.us
Tom Alley alley@flyc.us

Social Committee Chairs
Margaret Radek social@flyc.us
Assisting: Maggie Martin

Nominating Committee
Nancy Sisbarro
[Volunteer(s) needed.]

Webmaster
Tom Alley webmaster@flyc.us

Vice Commodore's Comments

by John Chesbrough

SV Plein Air

On Meeting with the Schuyler County Sheriff



On Sunday, January 18th, 2026, the ABC-FLX group held its annual “Change of Watch” meeting which included a talk by Lee Titus, Officer in Charge, Schuyler County Sheriff Marine

Unit.

Mr. Titus spoke of his search and rescue experiences with the USCG, from which he recently retired. He pointed out that EPIRBs¹ and PLBs² make the difference between a rescue and a non-successful search. The majority of boating deaths are the result of human error and alcohol is frequently involved.

As for local interests, he spoke on maritime law enforcement as it pertains to boating safety. He thanked the group for offering the Brianna's Law boating safety classes. A large and varied class of students completed the course and passed the exam to receive the official safety certificate in the spring of last year. (It will be offered again in Spring 2026.) Mr. Titus pointed out that such a large number of boaters, freshly schooled in basic boating safety, can be of help as situations arise on the water.

Out on the water, if a boater witnesses unsafe operation, no one is encouraged to put oneself at risk, and you should never attempt a confrontation. If you

believe that a dangerous situation has taken place, and if you get a boat's registration number, you can call the Sheriff's Department with your complaint and they will investigate.

Mr. Titus explained that the Sheriff's maritime force is limited in personnel more so than assets (boats). While they have jurisdiction over all of Seneca Lake, the area they primarily patrol is the southern half of Seneca Lake, from Watkins Glen to Long Point.

Mr. Titus also thanked the ABC-FLX for its own boat inspection service, which is free, and encouraged everyone to take advantage of it. (Ray Margeson is the boat inspector and he will gladly set up an appointment with you.) When your boat passes the inspection, a sticker will be issued stating that your boat is fully compliant with all state and federal safety requirements.

On finishing his presentation, Mr. Titus thanked the group for the opportunity to promote safety on the water and the group expressed gratitude to him for taking the time and answering our questions.

Veraisons Restaurant at Glenora Winery was our host and provided a delicious meal with beautiful views of our favorite lake.

- John

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¹ Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon

² Personal Locator Beacon

Rear Commodore's Comments

by Don Swanson

SV Skylark

Change on the Horizon



[Bill and Don are alternating duties to write the column for the club's race fleet. In this edition it's Don's turn. – Ed.]

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It's been a busy and productive winter for the Race Committee. While the boats have been collecting snow, we have been using the time to look ahead to the 2026 season and beyond. Essentially, we have been conducting a top-to-bottom review of our entire race program: looking at procedures, communications, and handicapping. Our mission has been to make racing fun, fair, and welcoming, with an underlying objective to expand our fleet and to help make us all better sailors. The end product is still being finalized, but changes are coming; an evolutionary change in how we manage scoring and communications. Be sure to check back in the April issue when we'll provide a lot of details on what's new in 2026. Stay tuned!

A Preview of FLYC Racing & Cruising Events in 2026

Our upcoming season will feature our usual FLYC Summer Series of eight races scored cumulatively. The series encompasses dates across the season and provides a host of races across varying conditions and course configurations.

As a complement to our Summer Series race schedule, the club also sponsors a number of fun races throughout the season. These thematic races are intended to provide a less competitive setting with the primary focus on fun and even a bit of zany. From the season opener - The Rust Removal Regatta to the season closer - The Gear Buster, we intersperse the season with a complement of races; where skippers can be as competitive as they want to be (or not) and everyone has a great time on the water.

Weekend Events

For as long as I have been around (eight years and still going strong), it has been a tradition for FLYC racers to cruise north to Geneva for the SYC Around the Barge Race in September. This long distance race (24 nm) is a wonderful opportunity to combine the joy of cruising and racing during the weekend following Labor Day.

Another racing/cruising weekend to look forward to will be the FLYC annual distance race – The Commodore's Cup. We are planning to repeat the format of last year's event which roughly mirrors the Barge Race. Scheduled in June, we invite racers from the SYC to cruise south, stay over as our guests and then race with our home fleet north, hopefully all the way to Geneva (or as far north as conditions permit). The finish line may vary, but the ultimate plan is to end up in Geneva where we will partake in a celebratory picnic at the SYC's lakefront facility. Last year was a huge success and we are looking forward to doing it all over again. Keep your fingers crossed for a wind that blows all day long. The highest placing FLYC member will be recognized on the newly christened trophy plaque. Thank you, Commodore Mike!

And if that isn't enough to whet your appetite for time on the water, consider jumping on board for the annual ABC-FLX Annual Rendezvous usually held around the very beginning of August (or late July). FLYC sailors are invited (many belong to both clubs). It's another opportunity to ply some new waters, get to know our power boat friends, have a lot of fun and maybe even learn and practice nautical skills by participating in a workshop or two. MOB drill, anyone?

And with every new season there is boundless potential for innovation. Who knows? Maybe we'll sneak in a couple of pick up weeknight races or even a surprise fun race snuck in on an otherwise open and random Saturday. Ok, not so random... but you get the point. No guarantees, but hope does spring eternal and if you and I can manage to get more time on the water, it's a win-win.

One Final Thought

Only through the volunteer efforts of the race committee does any of these events happen

I would also request that participants keep in mind why we do this. The underlying goal is to enjoy the camaraderie and to have fun. Races at their core are about competition but honestly, it's mostly for the pleasure of being on the water and challenging ourselves to become better sailors. We really appreciate your help, especially when retrieving marks after a race. We welcome everyone to participate in racing. It makes us all better off as a

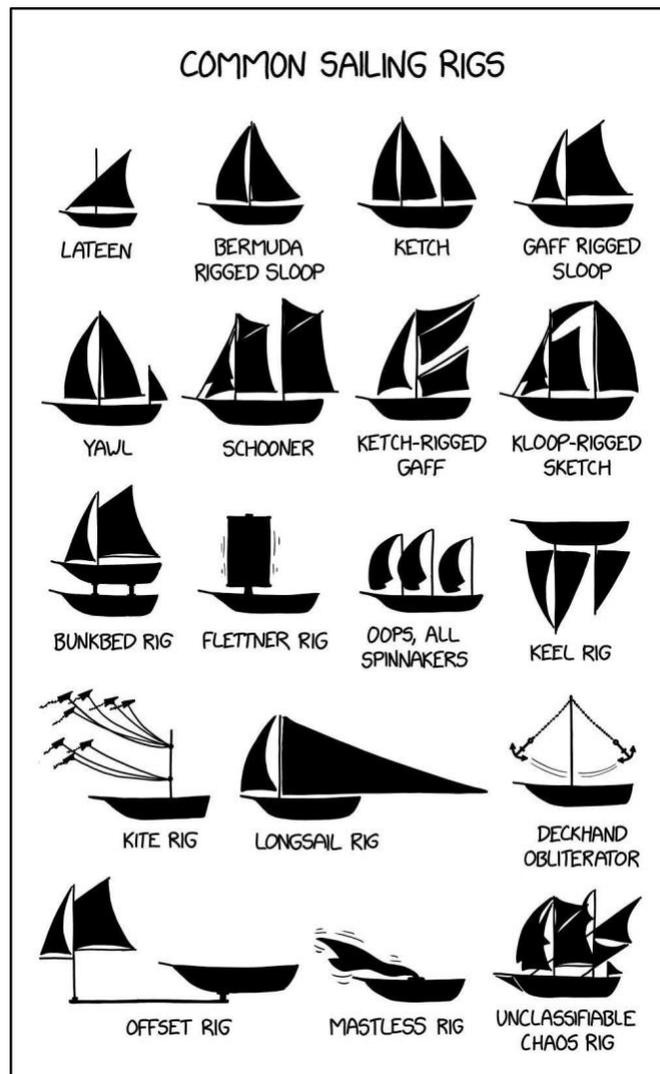
sailing community, on and off the water. But ultimately, FLYC races are sponsored for the benefit of members - to enjoy, learn, and be recognized for their success.

Stay tuned..., lots coming up in April so get your calendars and your boats ready.

Cheers,

- Don

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Secretary's Column

by Katie Alley

A Self-Reflection



"It is better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one."

- Herman Melville,
Moby Dick

As you read this, *True Love* crew Brock Sgrecci, Spencer Beaver, and I are headed to Maritime Professional Training in Fort Lauderdale, FL, to pursue our US Coast Guard Master Captain's license. We are riding in the "schooner van" along with Terry Stewart, his wife Lisa, and their chihuahua Anchor. We are currently in North Carolina. It is still only 23°. We are on disc 3 of the *Moby Dick* audiobook.

For Brock and I, throughout our teenage and young adult years, the question has never really been *if* we were getting our captain's licenses, but more so *when*. Spencer did not grow up boating, but since getting involved with the schooner several years ago, he has whole-heartedly embraced it as a career and a passion. For all of us, it's a big deal. It's hard to believe this time is finally here. Terry has provided us with an incredible opportunity.

Speaking for myself, as a young adult in this big competitive world, it is hard to not feel any "imposter syndrome". Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern where a person doubts their accomplishments and fears being exposed as a fraud or as incompetent, despite external evidence. I wonder if all the time I've spent on little Seneca Lake, pouring wine and swabbing decks, is "good enough" for me to become a captain. Maybe I'm a bit of a "nepo baby" because my dad is a captain and he's always known Terry. Maybe this is just how the cards were dealt for me and I'm getting a good hand that I didn't really work for.

But last night in the Marriott hotel in Frederick, MD, Brock and Spencer helped me see the big

SV Tomfoolery

picture again. The whole *True Love* crew didn't hop in the van to go to captain's school - just the three of us. My brother (also the son of a captain) isn't becoming a captain. We're going because Terry saw our dedication to *True Love*, our care for her future, our loyalty to the job year after year, our passion for the water, and our potential for a lifetime as a captains. Yes, it is an absolute privilege to be on the trip and to know Terry, but the belief that Terry has in the three of us is a direct result of our hard work.

And whoever else is in that classroom on Monday - they all deserve to be there, too. We have all completed our hours on the water and taken the time away from our day jobs and lives to be there. We had someone believe in us and tell us to go become captains. We all have the same goal and we want to spend the coming years on boats. Sure, our time on the water may look different from one another, but that's what makes each of us interesting and we can learn from each other. What makes me any less worthy of being there?

I can let go of my doubts, hang on to my gratitude, and go to class on Monday knowing a whole marina back home is cheering us on. Now, be sure to send your FLYC dues in by May 1st or this captain will have you walk the plank.

- Katie, FLYC Secretary

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You can follow Katie and what she's up to on Facebook at "Katie Alley Art" or on Instagram at @katiealleyart.



Figure 3: A True Love crew road trip. Look out, Florida!

Updating an Electrical Panel

By Russ Nelson

SV Łódź

My boat, *Łódź*, was built in 1982, and boy does its original power panel look original. Toggle switches and tube fuses were SO 1982. I wanted better, so I purchased a new power panel, still with 6 switches, but also power indicator lights, circuit breakers, a voltage meter, a 12V car port, and USB-A / USB-C power ports.

The panel was mounted to the back of the wood trim, so it took some finagling to mount this new panel to the front. While I was at it, I angled the panel slightly to the port stern.

Because I've done this kind of thing before, I put a bit of white tape on each wire and labeled it with the wire's purpose. I cut off all the wires flush with the switches, so I could have some spare wire length. Using WAGO connectors (the orange & clear plastic

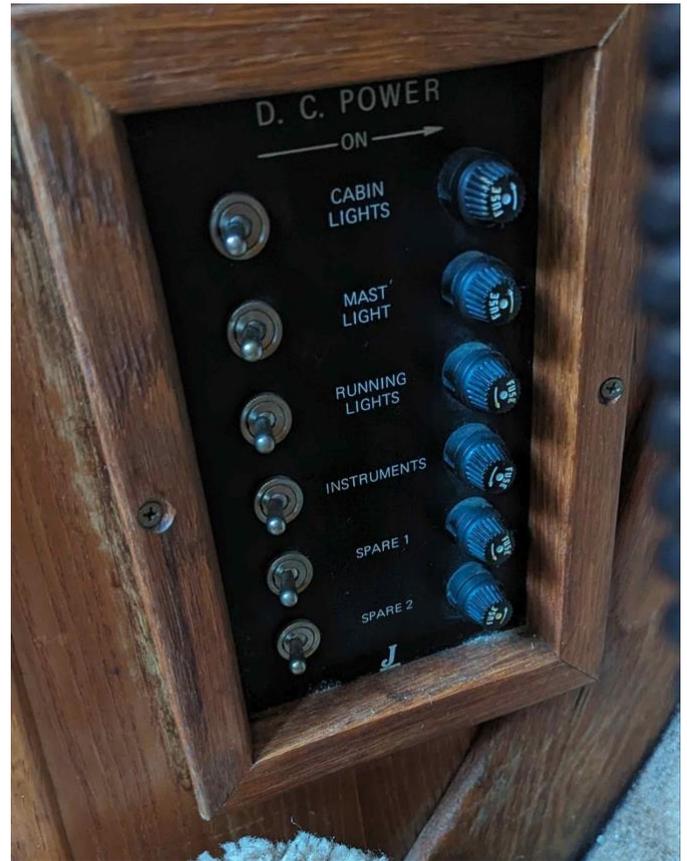


Figure 4: Original electrical panel aboard *Łódź*.

bits), I connected the existing wires to the new switches.

Everything worked like a champ, as did the 12V power port and dual 5V USB ports. Now I can run my 12VDC mini fridge and charge my Baofeng UV-5R radio tuned to channels 16 and 72. Ready for race day!

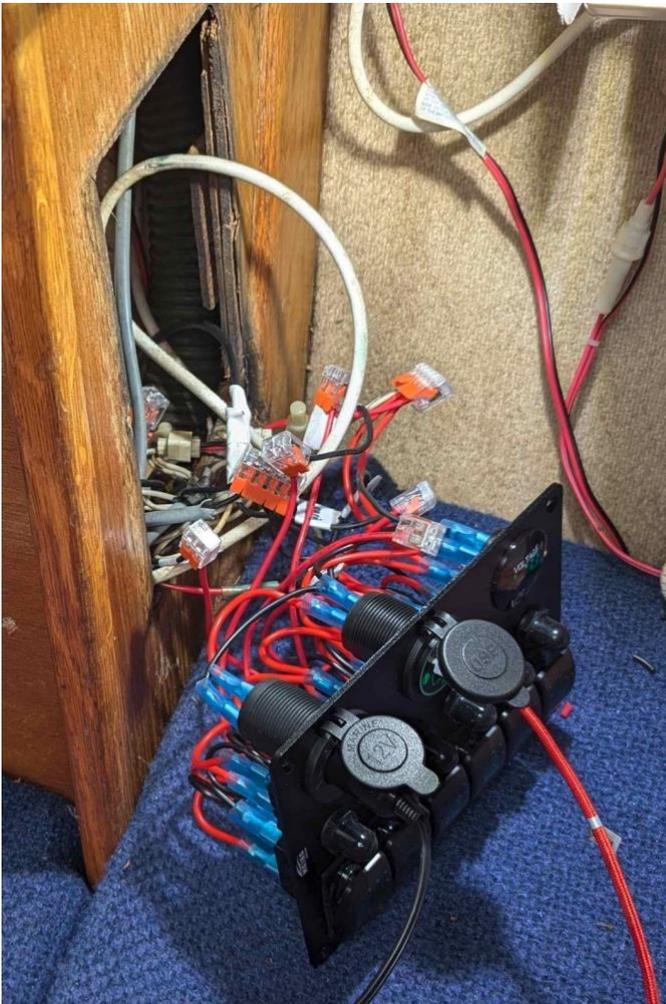


Figure 5: New panel being wired into the boat.



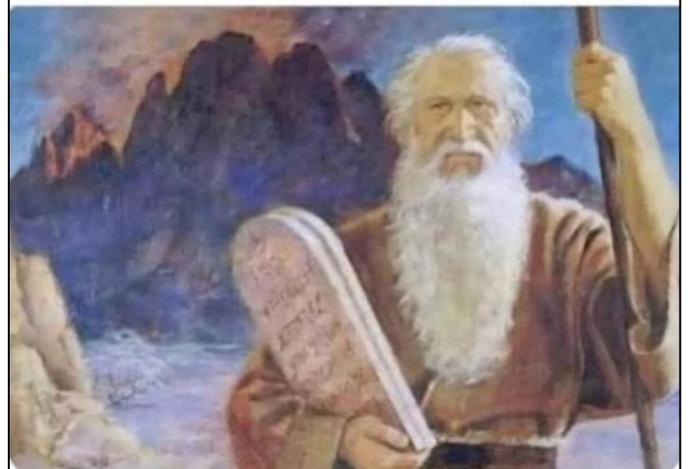
Figure 6: New panel in its finished state. Note the wedge backing panel to angle the panel for easier viewing in the cabin.

For the future, I plan to redo all of this using DIN-rail mounted connectors to make it less of a tangle of wires. Also, my instruments are Raymarine and use Seataalk between them, but my autotiller is not connected. Making that connection is also in my plans.

- Russ

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So technically Moses is the first man to download files from the cloud using a tablet



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How to Sail Faster in Handicap Fleets

From 180sails.com

RCR Yachts Newsletter



Photo courtesy of 180sails.com.

[From 180sails.com/Evolution Sails](http://180sails.com/Evolution_Sails) (courtesy of RCR Yachts)

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This article started the same way many great sailing discussions do, as a bit of Yachty Karate in the loft after a race. One of the guys had gotten pinned behind a slower boat in a beer can race and was talking through how to get around them. With mixed fleet racing becoming more common in PHRF, ORC, ORR, and IRC, these situations matter. If you come from a one design background, some of these concepts may feel foreign, but they are essential tools for improving your results in handicap racing. And many of these techniques translate directly into one design racing as well.

The most important mindset shift is understanding that handicap racing is a time trial. The other boats on the water are obstacles, not opponents in the same tactical sense as one design racing. You can beat a boat without ever passing it physically, and you can lose to a boat that never comes near you. The key is minimizing time lost. That requires knowing what the other boats are capable of, how your boat compares, and how to position yourself to avoid getting slowed down.

Sailing your boat to its numbers becomes critical. You may be racing boats that are nowhere near you on the course or sailing in different breeze altogether. Focus on your shifts, your targets, and your sail trim. When you end up next to boats that are not in your section, your goal is simply to get by with the least impact. I have even cleared out of the way

intentionally to let a faster boat roll through quickly so we could get back to sailing our own race without being bogged down in their dirty air.

Knowing the characteristics of the boats around you makes a huge difference. A light sportboat may be quick downwind and slow upwind. In that case, stay close upwind, then set up your passing lanes for the run. If you are sailing a symmetrical boat around asymmetricals, you will want to stay to leeward so they cannot heat up and force you onto their angle. If you have a big genoa and a lower pointing mode than modern jib boats with inhaulers, you may need to set up to leeward at the start to avoid being squeezed off by boats that can outpoint you. In one design terms, that juicy lane you are used to may disappear because the boats on either side sail different angles.

Boat speed still matters, and your exit plan off the start becomes more important. As a slower boat, you may prioritize getting a clean lane and staying away from boats that will roll you. Keep your head on a swivel and anticipate when a faster boat is coming up behind you. Sometimes the safest move is to tack or gybe out early before their dirty air becomes a problem. As a faster boat, life is easier, but the penalties for getting stuck behind someone are greater. Every second spent going slow is time lost against the clock. If you get trapped, do not wait too long to break away and find a clean lane.



Photo courtesy of 180sails.com.

Knowing your own boat becomes far more important than in one design. You do not have another identical boat next to you providing instant feedback. You will

need to rely on polars, instruments, and feel to make sure the boat is at max speed. This is especially hard when you are sailing alone or around much slower boats because it is easy to get complacent. Sail selection also becomes trickier. The boat ahead may not have a kite set because they only have symmetrical sails, but your asymmetrical might be perfect for that angle. A heavy boat might hold onto their big genoa longer, while your lighter boat may need to downsize earlier. Without other comparable boats nearby, you need a clear understanding of your own sail chart.

When passing or being passed, the goal is simple, lose as little time as possible. Boats of similar speed are the most disruptive because you stay in each other's bad air longer. If you are overtaking a boat, choose your passing lane early. To pass to weather, climb well above them before engaging so they are less tempted to luff. To pass to leeward, think about your wind shadow and the angles where your boat is fast. Establish your lane early so you can punch through their dirty air quickly.

When being passed, minimize the damage. If you need to show the boat behind where you want them to go, for example bowing up slightly to signal you prefer them to pass to leeward, do it early. If they insist on going over the top, sometimes it is better to return to your course and accept a short period of dirty air rather than sailing high and slow for a long time. If you regularly race in the same fleet, you will learn tendencies. Our local T 10 fleet, for example, loves to take people up when trying to pass, so getting separation early can save you a lot of trouble. Mark roundings amplify all of these concerns. Coming into a crowded rounding, ask yourself whether the big poorly sailed boat is going to cause chaos on the turn or whether there is a boat that can outpoint us arriving at the layline at the same time. Sometimes the smartest play is delaying slightly to get an inside track on a problematic boat. Sometimes you sail an extra length to avoid getting pinned or

rolled. Even in one design, the goal around marks is always the same, get around with the least pain, not necessarily by exercising every possible right of way privilege.

Mixed fleet racing presents unique tactical challenges, but mastering these concepts can transform your results. Winning is about sailing the fastest course with the least interference from others. Sometimes that means letting someone pass with minimal disruption. Sometimes it means breaking off to sail your own race. Understanding how to manage the boats around you will help you climb the results sheet and give you plenty of new material for the next round of Yachty Karate in the loft.

Handicap racing requires a different mindset than one design. Success comes from treating the race as a time trial, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the boats around you, and minimizing time lost when passing or being passed. Knowing your own polars, sail selection, and performance characteristics becomes essential. Use these strategies to navigate mixed fleets cleanly, protect your time, and sail your best race regardless of who is around you on the course.

Learn More

If you want help optimizing your boat speed, sail selection, or mixed fleet performance, we would love to work with you.

Explore Our Learning Center:

<https://180sails.com/learning-center>

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180sails and Evolution Sails are sailmakers located in Chicago, IL.

This article appeared in the RCR Yachts newsletter and was also published on the 180sails.com web site.

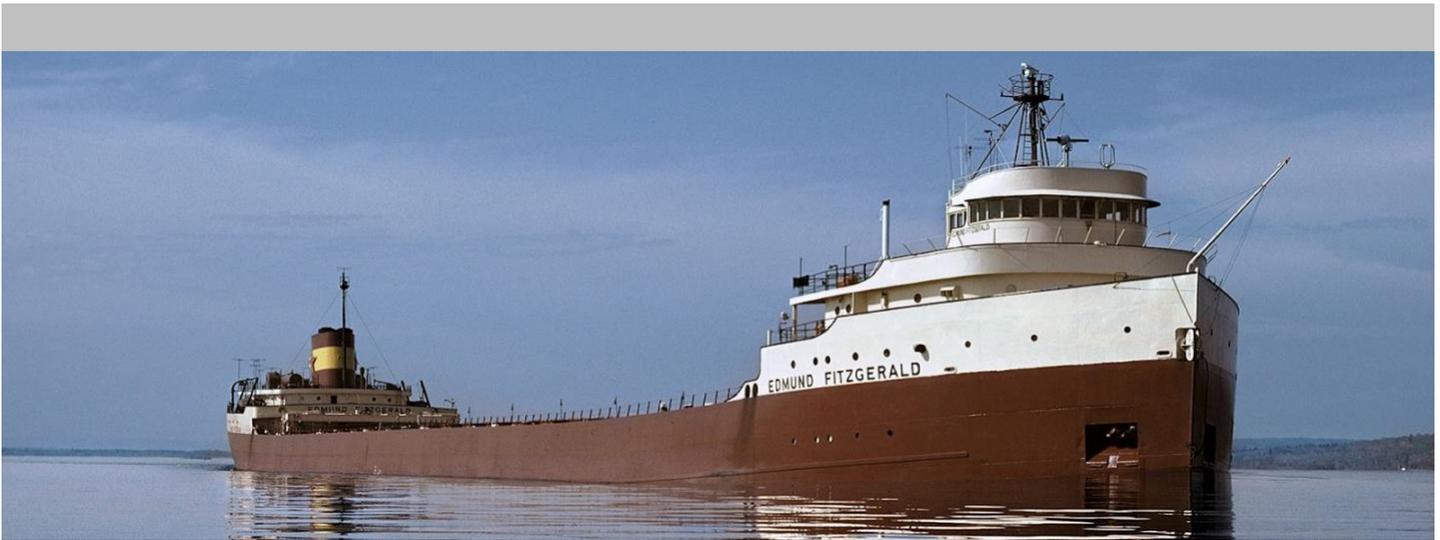


Figure 7: The Edmund Fitzgerald on St. Mary's River in 1975. Photo by Bob Campbell via the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum. Source: <https://shipwreckmuseum.com/edmund-fitzgerald/>

Katie's Page Port

By Katie Alley

SV Lanikai

Book Reviews of Nautical Narratives

A new recurring column where your secretary reviews a book with nautical themes.

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This Month's Review: *The Edmund Fitzgerald: From Glory to Gut Wrenching Tragedy*

Author: Timothy J. Thompson M.A.

Published: August 25, 2019

"Does anyone know where the love of God goes when the waves turn the minutes to hours?"

-Gordon Lightfoot

I don't intend for this review to be another reflection on religion. The first book I reviewed, *Lost!* By Thomas Thompson, covered enough themes on faith and pragmatism. I am choosing to start my review with this quote because I think it truly expresses the dire, violent, and unprecedented situation the 29 crew members of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* found themselves in back in November 1975.

I selected the book *The Edmund Fitzgerald: From Glory to Gut Wrenching Tragedy* by Timothy J. Thompson because we just passed the 50th anniversary of the freighter's sinking, and I wanted to learn about what exactly happened. Thompson is a historian with the goal of revealing the truth behind

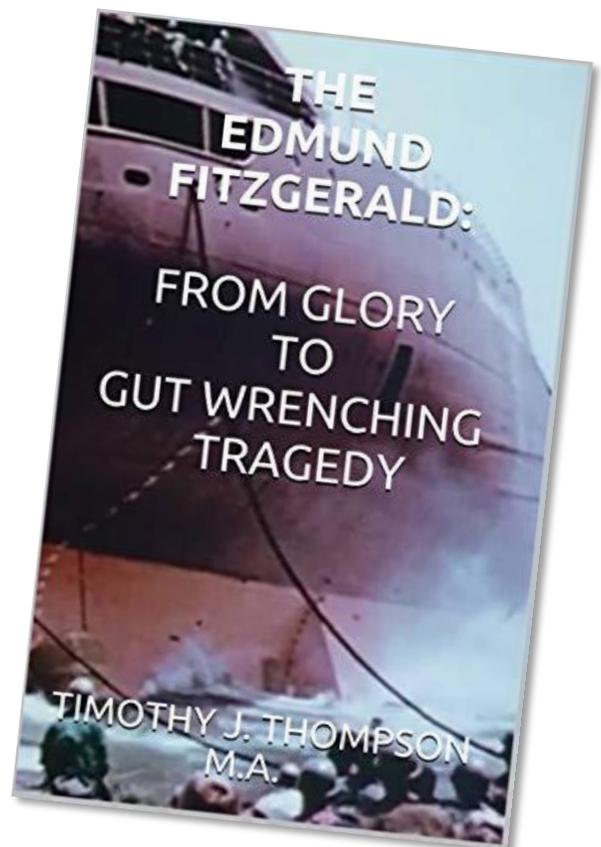


Figure 8: Image via Goodreads.

the ship's catastrophic end. His book is a detailed analysis of the disaster and an evaluation of the causes, unlike *Lost!*, which told the story as if the reader was right there experiencing it and listening to the sailors' dialogue.

It is clear from the start that the book is well-researched. Thompson provides historical context about the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, the iron ore industry, freighter activity on the Great Lakes during the 20th century, and weather patterns on Lake Superior. This context is valuable, but we don't get to the actual recount of the last voyage until page 100.

In case you are not familiar with the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, here are some interesting (and crucial) facts Thompson shares about the vessel:

- At the time of her launch in 1958, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* was the world's longest, widest, tallest, heaviest, and most luxurious iron-ore freighter ever built. She was also the most expensive.
- She was 729 feet long and 75 feet wide, with a draft of 25 feet.
- She weighed 13,632 gross tons and was designed to carry 25,400 tons of iron ore at full capacity.
- She had 21 cargo hatches with seven-ton covers and 68 clamps each.
- Her top speed was 15.6 mph - highly impressive for the time.

The *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank during a Nor'Easter on November 10th, 1975. Here's a timeline of what happened:

- Nov 9 - Early Afternoon: "*The Big Fitz*" departed Superior, WI, carrying **26,116 tons** of iron ore, headed for Zug Island, near Detroit, MI. The weather is warm and pleasant.
- Freighter *Arthur M. Anderson* follows shortly after the *Fitzgerald* and accompanies her across the lake.
- 1900: The National Weather Service issues a gale warning for all of Lake Superior, predicting 39-43 mph winds and 6-8 foot waves.
- Nov 10 - 0100: The *Fitzgerald* measures 60 mph winds and 10 foot waves crashing into the ship.
- Nov 10 - Morning: The storm continues to intensify, and winds shift to the northwest, allowing for waves to achieve unfavorable fetch across Lake Superior.
- 1430: Freezing rain turns to snow, and visibility reduces to less than one quarter of

a mile. The crew of the *Anderson* lose visual contact with the *Fitzgerald* for the last time. On radar, the *Anderson* observes the *Fitzgerald* passing dangerously close by the Six Fathom Shoal of Caribou Island on radar.

- 1510: Captain McSorley of the *Fitzgerald* reports on radio to the *Anderson* that the vessel is damaged and taking a starboard list. He is slowing down and requests that the *Anderson* stay nearby until they reach Whitefish Bay.
- 1535: The US Coast Guard headquartered at Whitefish Point Naval Air Station issued an emergency broadcast to all vessels on Lake Superior to take safe shelter immediately. On shore, maximum sustained winds of 80 mph and gusts up to 96 mph were reported. Waves were above 20 feet.
- 1610: Captain McSorley reports that he lost both radars and requests that the *Anderson* aid the *Fitzgerald* in navigation via radio.
- 1700: Crewmen on the *Anderson* observed waves 25 to 30 feet in height.
- 1840: The *Anderson* encounters two exceptionally large waves, each about 30-35 feet, ferociously striking the ship from behind and sweeping the decks with water. The crew immediately worries about the waves reaching the *Fitzgerald*, which is about 10 miles ahead of them.
- 1910: Captain McSorley of the *Fitzgerald* transmits their last radio message to the



Figure 9: The *Edmund Fitzgerald*'s path and the Nor'Easter's path on November 9-10, 1975. Image via WZZM13. Source: <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/weather/accuweather/remembering-the-edmund-fitzgerald-wreck/507-ae621280-adeb-46d1-8f0d-01a4cc339956>

Anderson: “We are holding our own, going along like an old shoe, no problems to report at all.”

- 1915: The *Anderson* observes the *Fitzgerald* for the last time on radar. Shortly after, she disappears.
- 1930: Visibility improves as the blizzard lightens to flurries, but the *Anderson* cannot spot the lights of the *Fitzgerald* anywhere.
- 2015: The *Anderson* is finally able to make contact with the Coast Guard after communication troubles due to the loss of power on shore. All of the Coast Guard’s vessels are far too small to search for the *Fitzgerald*, so they request that the *Anderson* go back out to search. She does, and searches throughout the night with the help of another freighter, but they do not find any survivors, bodies, or signs of the *Fitzgerald*.
- Nov 11 - 0800-0900: The *Fitzgerald*’s lifeboats wash ashore, severely damaged.
- The next few days: Several dozen life jackets, along with other miscellaneous boat supplies, wash ashore on Michigan’s upper peninsula. Her inflatable life rafts are also found, empty.
- May 20, 1976 - 1230: The *Edmund Fitzgerald* wreck is discovered lying in two pieces in 535 ft of water, approximately 17 miles from Whitefish Bay.

The official 1977 Coast Guard report states that the most probable cause of the *Fitzgerald*’s sinking was “the loss of buoyancy and stability which results from the massive flooding of the cargo hold.” They speculated that high seas and loss of freeboard resulted in waves flooding in through the cargo hatches. Thompson offers a bigger picture of what actually happens, referencing the earlier context he provided, and shares five main reasons he believes the ship sank:

1. **Faulty construction:** The *Fitzgerald* was built in sections that were welded together, not riveted. Rivets allow steel to flex and bend much more easily than welds. Welded steel can crack and ultimately separate when exposed to high pressure.

Earlier that year, the crew discovered that the keel was separating from the hull plates. A quick “band-aid” welding repair was made. It was clear

that the hull was weak and could technically break apart.

Also, earlier that year, chipped paint coming off in long, uninterrupted swatches was observed on the seams in the steel. This indicated abnormal flexing of the ship’s hull. The Coast Guard additionally found over 100 separate areas of discolored steel, which indicated extensive amounts of stress on the hull. No action was taken since the owners of the *Fitzgerald* planned to refit the ship during the winter of 1975-76.

2. **Years of overloading cargo:** As you may have noticed, the *Fitzgerald* sank carrying more cargo than her designers intended. Unfortunately, this was the norm for the ship. At times, she carried over 30,000 tons of cargo. Her maximum capacity was supposed to be only 25,400 tons.

Since the ship was so expensive, the owners expected a great return on her, and encouraged the constant overloading. The *Fitzgerald* did up to 50 trips per season for over a decade. This undoubtedly stressed her hull and caused her to sit lower in the waves.

3. **Poor maintenance:** In addition to the hull issues, the Coast Guard found in their 1974 inspection of the *Fitzgerald* that multiple cargo hatches suffered from worn gaskets, cracked coamings, and damaged clamps. The Coast Guard passed the *Fitzgerald* with an understanding that repairs would be made.

In April 1975, the Coast Guard returned and found that the repairs had not been made, and the ship was in a much worse state than the year before. The watertight seal of the cargo hold was severely compromised. Ultimately, they gave in and passed the *Fitzgerald* again, with reassurance from the owners that the 1975-76 refit was planned.

4. **Poorly sealed hatch covers:** The cargo covers were already damaged, and evidence from the wreck tells us that they were not properly sealed by the crew either. The *Fitzgerald* lies at the bottom of Lake Superior with many of her forward hatch covers displaced, and a majority of the clamps in the downward position (meaning not holding the seven-ton, 48 ft x 11 ft cover in place). An average of only four clamps per cover

were found engaged. (Remember, each cover has 68 clamps.)

During fair weather, captains would only have the crew engage some of the clamps to save time (and money). When the *Fitzgerald* departed on November 9th, the weather was great, and the storm was forecasted to pass south of Lake Superior. Unfortunately, this changed. The Coast Guard's conclusion about waves filling the cargo hold through the hatches is likely correct.

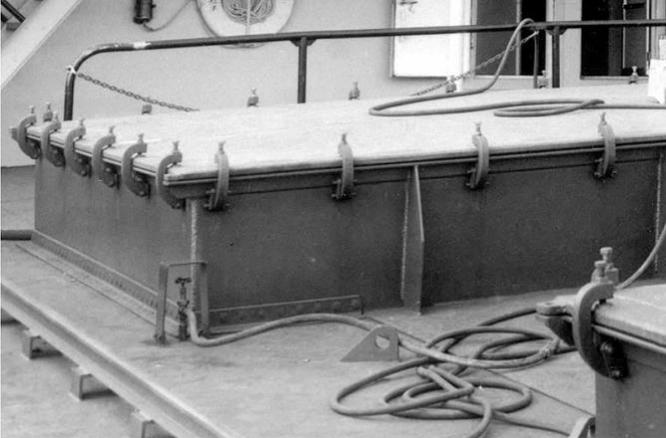


Figure 10: View of the *Fitzgerald's* hatch covers and clamps. Image via Travel-MI.com. Source: <https://www.travel-mi.com/Edmund-Fitzgerald-Wreck.html#gallery/pageGallery/1/>

5. **The Six Fathom Shoal:** Thompson's research reveals that the area around Caribou Island was last surveyed in 1919 (prior to 1975). Only part of the Six Fathom Shoal was mapped. Divers discovered an extended area of the shoal after *The Fitzgerald's* loss. It is very possible that the *Fitzgerald* ran aground on a rock formation and damaged her starboard side ballast tanks.

After reading Thompson's in-depth analysis, I agree with his five conclusions. I appreciate that Thompson calls out the negligence and greed of the *Fitzgerald's* owners. The owners, to this day, blame "Mother Nature" and the horrible storm the crew faced that day for her sinking. I agree with Thompson's version of the truth, that if the owners had properly maintained the *Fitzgerald*, made

necessary repairs, and avoided the constant overloading, she would not have taken on so much water and ultimately broken apart.

Of course, no shipwreck is caused by one singular mistake or person. Captain McSorley is also partially to blame for not ordering the crew to secure all of the clamps and for navigating close to a known shoal. Furthermore, the US Coast Guard was incredibly irresponsible to allow the *Fitzgerald* to pass inspection, knowing the ship's integrity was severely compromised. The owner's promise of a full future refit meant absolutely nothing to the 29 people lost on November 10th, 1975.

As for a critique of the book itself, Thompson's writing is wordy and repetitive. The last chapter discussing Thompson's conclusions is especially repetitive, but perhaps it's good for readers who do not know anything about freighters or who may forget details from earlier in the book. The inclusion of images, particularly of the wreck underwater, was extremely valuable and engaging. I did not enjoy this book as much as *Lost!*, but I think that is because this is a historical analysis, and not so much a "narrative."

I'll conclude this review and recap with reminders we, as mariners, can take away from the disaster of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*:

- Coast Guard inspections exist for a reason, as do Vessel Safety Checks, NYS automobile inspections, pre-flight checklists, and annual checkups at the doctor.
- Have a pre-departure checklist and do not cut corners.
- We cannot control the weather.
- Keep your charts up to date.
- Stop procrastinating that one boat repair.
- Greed is one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

- Katie

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Editor's Corner

by Tom Alley



Midwinter Reboot

You know the drill. Your electronic device is doing just about anything *except* what you want it to do right now. After trying all the usual subtle, elegant,

and minimally invasive techniques to remind the device who's the boss, you resort to unplugging it, counting to 10, and then powering it back up again. This technique is helpful for people, too, and I'm happy to say that, even though I didn't completely unplug, I did enjoy some productive downtime over the Holidays. Now, rebooted, I'm ready to dive back in. Well, maybe after I enjoy just one more beer...

Racing Reboot

The FLYC Race Committee has been spending a lot of time together as we wait for winter to pass. Procedures and processes have been reviewed with the objective of improving the racing experience for everyone. Plans are being finalized as I write this. Look for some announcements from the Rear Commodore in the next issue of *Port Tacks*.

Web Site Reboot

Our web site is becoming somewhat geriatric. The server hosting the site is long past its prime and the software underpinnings are similarly dated. A proposal to upgrade the site was made to, and was accepted by, FLYC leadership. Work will take place over the coming 12-18 months.

SV Tomfoolery

Doing this alone can get expensive, and we all enjoy the ridiculously low dues that our club has been able to maintain for many decades. Fortunately, we have found a couple other boating organizations in a similar state, and we will be partnering with them to share expenses to keep web costs down for all parties.

Work on the new web site started in early January. Thanks to the members who volunteered to help with this effort! Stay tuned for progress updates as milestones are reached.

Old Boat Reboot

Last year's modernization projects aboard *Tomfoolery* continue into this year. Last year saw the retirement of key instrumentation. This year, the work continues with the replacement of a 30+ year-old autopilot and some refurbishing of other miscellaneous components and subsystems. I don't know that the upgrades done to date or the ones planned for this year will make my good old boat any faster, but they certainly make her a more comfortable retreat in the summer for those times I need a "reboot" from the challenges posed by real life.

See you in the boatyard!

- Tom

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Well, your editor has opened his big mouth again. If you wish to agree, or (more likely) to tell him he doesn't know squat, please send your comments to editor@flyc.us.

Finger Lakes Yacht Club

2026 Membership Application

Membership renewals are due by May 1st, 2026. **Annual dues are \$45.**
Please send this form and a check to:



Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc.
c/o Katie Alley, Secretary
PO Box 224
Watkins Glen, NY 14891

Are you also a member of America's Boating Club (US Power Squadrons)? If yes, check this box.

Application: New Member Renewal

Important: Please include the names of all of your household family members. This will ensure that membership privileges are awarded properly.

Name(s): _____

Contact Info: Renewing members - check this box if your address is unchanged from 2025

Address: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Please list all email addresses you would like to receive digital communications to.

Boat Name _____ Location/Slip # _____

Power

Make/Model/Year _____ Length _____ Type Sail

Please indicate which areas interest you:

Racing Cruising Social activities Newsletter Women's Sailing Team Boating/Sailing Classes

Other club activities you'd like to see? Email secretary@flyc.us

By this application, I/we promise to uphold the By-laws of the Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc. and to comply with its rules and regulations.

Signature(s) _____ Date _____