

December 2023

Volume 19, Issue 6

# Port Tacks

The Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Village Marina, Watkins Glen, NY

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Please send any comments, questions, or corrections to:

[editor@flyc.us](mailto:editor@flyc.us)

## Commodore's Comments

by Terry Stewart

SV True Love

Well, as per usual, I have nothing to write about. But watch this:

Thank you all for making the "end of the year" dinner a nice event. The food, service, and atmosphere were very nice. If only the commodore could be more organized. It was really nice enough, that I would be asking if a repeat may be in order and if so, I could explore a date pretty soon. Please let me know what you think about that.



The winter winds are setting in, and all the beautiful sailboats change their forum from the melodic summer chiming, while floating in the slip, to the moronic banging of halyards and covers while perched on their winter crutches. Don't forget to wander around your boat as the winter months let you and examine your stands, stems, pads, and chains, and report any perceived abnormalities to me.

What will you do all winter? Last winter we tried to consume ourselves with Nathaniel Bowditch and his home in Salem, Mass. This winter we are delving into Herman Melville. After ignoring the reading requirements of the high school days, only now are we immersing ourselves into the famous novel *Moby Dick* written by Melville and published in 1851. The New Bedford whaling museum annually hosts a cover to cover read out loud of *Moby Dick*. It is called the "Moby Dick Marathon" and is occurring on January 6<sup>th</sup> at noon. The continuous read aloud takes about 26 hours to complete and, being a reader, you can camp out in the whaling museum for the amount of time required for the event.

Herman Melville's life was not nearly as glorious as Bowditch's was. His writing career lasted only 11 years and none of his works received any acclaim

until many years after his death in 1891. His writing about the life of a whaler is complete with many in depth and accurate descriptions of not only the vessel but also the social dynamics of the crew that were made up of adventurers from a broad spectrum of cultures and backgrounds.

Melville was born in New York City in 1819 and his formal education ended when his father died in 1832, when Herman was 13. He took to the sea when he was 20, signing on as a sailor aboard a merchant ship. In 1840 he boarded the whaling ship *Acushnet* for his first whaling voyage and jumped ship in the Marquesas Islands. This experience gave him the fodder for writing another classic entitled *Typee* which depicts two young men making their way among suspected cannibals after narrowly escaping from a wicked whaling ship captain. These are the things we surely all dream about doing, avast born slightly too late!

Have a happy winter!!

-Terry

## Vice Commodore's Comments

by John Chesbrough

SV Plein Air



### Subtitle

Gather around me hearties, for an impressive tale about the American Revolution, or an event both displaying and contributing to the general mood among

the American colonists before the war, an event known as The Burning of the *Gaspee*.

In 1772, Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island was a busy place for shipping and commerce for the local inhabitants, and the British navy detachment stationed in Newport was well aware of smuggling being done to avoid the hated revenue taxes. There was a new, young British lieutenant, William Dudingston, in command of a two masted schooner *Gaspee*, armed with eight guns for patrolling the entrance to Narragansett Bay. Dudingston was intent

## Port Tacks

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on performing his job well and he quickly became the most hated "revenuer" in the area.

On June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1772, local colonist Captain Benjamin Lindsey on the coastal packet *Hannah*, a sloop rig, with passengers and cargo from New York, entered the bay and started tacking into the north wind, bound for Providence. Dudingston and *Gaspee*, hiding above Jamestown, hailed *Hannah* to stop for boarding and inspection, but Lindsey ignored that British scoundrel and the chase was on. Unfortunately, Lindsey had at least ten years of experience in those waters, and *Gaspee* was without her local pilot, and the American boat led *Gaspee* into a trap. The tide was going out and one sandbar off Namquit Point in Warwick grounded the *Gaspee* hard. Residents of Warwick later reported that the British crew spent their time with an opportunity to scrub the hull in shallow water. *Hannah* meanwhile continued beating to Providence to announce the news that the hated Dudingston and his *Gaspee* were hard aground until the tide changed next morning. A rowdy crowd of merchants and sailors boarded eight longboats with muffled oar locks and rowed down to Warwick with malicious intent for the British boat. When the American colonists arrived, their spokesman announced their

intention to seize the boat, and they were answered with a gunshot. The Americans returned fire and Dudingston himself took a musket ball off his arm and into his thigh. Luckily the merchants had brought a doctor as they realized that they didn't need a murder among the charges that were sure to be brought against them. The wounded lieutenant and his crew were taken hostage and deposited by longboat to the near shore. *Gaspee* was torched and burned down to the waterline as the new pirates cheered and rowed back into the darkness.

A court of inquiry was quickly called but the colonists delayed proceedings and provided a dizzying array of witnesses with conflicting testimony. The case drew great attention from both sides, Sam Adams came down from Boston to support the new patriots. Eventually the case was resolved with some fines while political matters were heating up anew in the Boston area where some tea was spilled.

So it can be said that the first shot and human injury of the American Revolution happened at the burning of the *Gaspee* .

- John

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## Rear Commodore's Comments

by Don Swanson



### Concluding Thoughts on 2023

The season past is now collecting dust and memories begin to fade, but as it does so, the distance to next season inextricably and incrementally shortens day by day. And for those of us who are not sitting in tropical or sub-tropical locales, our wait is long

and cold. Hopefully, wherever you hang your skippers cap, the off season treats you kindly and refreshes your spirit in anticipation of that distant mirage of springtime rebirth and launch. But hey, let's not kid ourselves... the 2024 sailing season is still too distant and abstract a concept for this sailor and more pressing concerns are in the forefront of my thoughts... winter prep, off season maintenance and

SV Independence

plenty of armchair sailing when the skiing isn't that great and I have tired of trekking behind the snowblower. Yikes! Winter hasn't even begun, and I am already thinking of next spring.

Admittedly, this month's column topic has eluded me and compounding the issue was a complete and blissfully overlooked due date on my calendar for the deadline for this month's write up. Whoops! Well, as one might expect, there isn't too much to report on regarding racing, at least here in the Finger Lakes for the next five long months. So instead of the usual topic, I am going to write about a rite of passage that sailors eventually must make... so sit back and let me tell you about getting high with a little help from my friends. (Apologies to the Beatles.)

This is a tale of ticking off another rite of passage for sailors. It all started when I went out for a couple lazy hours one afternoon in June. Things were pretty busy at work that morning and no other place could help me relax and kick back better than being on Seneca Lake under sail. There was promise. A light northwesterly at about 6 knots was calling my name as I untied and motored out. Pointing into the wind, I removed the sail ties and began to haul up the main. It was almost all the way up when all of a sudden the sail crashed back down and a quick glance aloft revealed the eye splice end of the halyard, frayed and hanging about 4 inches out from the masthead main sheave. After a brief utterance of a few technical nautical terms... and with a thought of calling it a day I decided that it was far better to make the most by sailing on headsail alone and use the time to contemplate my newest dilemma.

You see, I am fiercely independent, and this along with my frugal nature has provided the motivation to learn and practice new skills and abilities over the years. (Why spend good money on someone else screwing up what I can mess up for free? LOL.) My parents were children of the Great Depression and WW2, and on account of that, self-reliance and frugality were foundational values baked into my development. It took hold. I have learned to repair machines, build homes (frame, wire, plumb, et cetera...), pools, stone walls, rock climb, sail, et cetera.... So here I was, thinking how am I going to fix this? Can I use climbing ascenders? Maybe a mast climbing ladder (if I could find one)?... It's a pattern of thought that I slip into automatically.... How do I fix this - on my own?

As a sailor, I have continued to embody this spirit. A side note: I did not name my sailboat. It came with the name *Independence*. Perhaps it was providential or just plain coincidence? I don't know, but it fits and has remained so. Like so many other challenges that have driven my tendency towards self-sufficiency, sailing has provided no shortage of new learning and experience. But as self-directed and sufficient as we may want to be, sailing has also spoken to me in a different way. As much as I might naturally resist asking for help, sailing has challenged me to do the exact opposite.

So back on the water, with my main halyard marooned at the masthead and as my mind tumbled

through how I alone could fix this, I had an epiphany. As sailors, especially single handers, we may typically eschew assistance, but as sailors we are also part of a community and with that, a duty to offer assistance when needed. But I also believe that we also have a duty to ourselves to occasionally ask for assistance and to do so with honor and pride. So there it was, while I sailed, actually drifting as the wind had pretty much petered out, I made the decision that I would ask for help from some sailing friends to solve this problem. By the time I was tied up in the slip, a group text call for assistance had gone out and already I was receiving some promising leads and offers to help.

As it turned out, a few days later the conditions were calm and dry and I was able to schedule a time with some hardy volunteers (Frank R. and Jim M.) and as the time of our meeting approached I engaged myself in the process of thinking through the task as thoroughly as possible. (Note: just like any other procedure, I try my best to visualize and define the specific steps along the way BEFORE starting). I had some rock-climbing equipment and skills which helped and for the most part, other than working out some redundant safety aspects the task of going aloft was and remains a fairly straightforward process. On the other hand, it was a great opportunity to tackle a couple other tasks (i.e., inspect the standing rigging and halyard sheaves, straighten out a bent windex arm, and install a flag halyard).

Glad to report, all went as planned. Once again, I am so thankful for the efforts of my helpers Frank and Jim for winching me up and belaying me safely. The halyard was retrieved, the other tasks completed, and it was a great feeling to not only be aloft and to experience a new perspective, but also to be back down when it was all done. And as much as I can now say that I have acquired a new skill and experience, the most mission critical aspect of this rite of passage was knowing when to ask and accept the support of our greater sailing community at large.

Happy Holidays to all.

- Don

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# Secretary's Column

by Katie Alley

SV Tomfoolery



## Gratefulness in "Stick Season"

Whew, I did it! One year as secretary down! And apparently, I did a good enough job since you all cheered me on to do it again. Last year, Terry talked me into taking this position. This year, he suggested secretary becoming

a lifelong position. Sorry, can't quite commit to that, but I can commit to 2024.

Somewhere between pleasant fall days, some less-than-pleasant schooner rides, and the joys of haul-out, time passed and we're thinking about the Holidays again. If you're a summer person like me, of course there is some sadness that comes with "stick season". ("Stick season" refers to the time of year when all the leaves have fallen off the trees, but the first snow hasn't happened yet.) But for me, it's easy to acknowledge that there's a lot to be grateful for and to celebrate this time of year.



Figure 1: Gear Buster Race - slow start!

To recap, the club gathered for our Annual Soup, Chili, and Chocolate Festival on October 7<sup>th</sup>. We had an excellent turnout, and the weather was perfect. Our winners deserve some recognition! Maggie Martin won the soup category with her squash soup and Margaret Radek won the chocolate category with her Ding Dong Cake. And somehow, I won the chili category but I'm still not convinced it wasn't the result of sympathy votes. Really, seriously, I am not good at cooking, and I found this chili recipe online. Nevertheless, there wasn't a bad dish I tasted there,

and I really hope some of you are cooking up your recipes again for your families' holiday gatherings!



Figure 2: October 27<sup>th</sup>, the perfect fall day.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, I got drenched on the schooner with crewmate Spencer and Captain Bill. On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, I found myself out on the schooner in 45-degree temperatures, a north wind, and rainy conditions with Brock, Spencer, and Captain Alley. On October 27<sup>th</sup>, we had our last public sail of the season, and I was in a tee-shirt enjoying the most perfect warm fall day. On November 5<sup>th</sup>, the schooner crew took *True Love* out one last time in cool conditions with a light breeze to have a proper toast of champagne on the lake.

This fall concludes my third season working on *True Love* under Terry's leadership. As you can tell, some rides are more comfortable than others. But after crewing 88 cruises this season (and dealing with a poopy head after far too many of those rides), I can proudly say that I still love this job. It really is a privilege and an honor to be a part of *True Love's* history. And of course, it adds to the experience to have the world's best boss and some amazing friends as crew who keep morale high. For that, I feel incredibly grateful.

It may seem routine for us to pull away from the dock, raise our sails, and tack back and forth. But we



Figure 3: World's best boss.

do it for a reason – the good feelings the breeze and the water give us. Many of the passengers on *True Love* have never been sailing or aren't boaters, so they only experience those feelings with us for one short cruise. While it might be just another day at work for me, it's a really special experience for them. I always hear "you're so lucky to have to job!" and well, they're right. Our visitors always put into perspective how fortunate we are to spend so much time on Seneca Lake.

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the schooner crew gathered at Seneca Lodge to celebrate the completion of 2023. The food, drinks, and decorations made the evening great! Highly recommend dinner at the restaurant if you haven't been already.

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, the club held its annual banquet at Seneca Harbor Station. We've been hearing good things about the restaurant all year from guests on the *True Love* and the food definitely lived up to the hype. We had a wonderful view of choppy Seneca Lake from inside the warm restaurant. And for the first time, Terry held a raffle of *True Love* merchandise for all attendees!

We have many returning officers and board members. There are two club members we welcomed into new positions – Nancy Sisbarro as assistant treasurer and Ted Carlton as a new board director.

Thank you for stepping up! 2024 is going to be great for our club.

As we celebrate 2023, and anticipate 2024, I encourage you to renew your FLYC membership sooner rather than later. Please note that I've made a couple of updates to the membership form for 2024. Since I have shifted to primarily digital communications for our events, there is ample space to list multiple email addresses. That way everyone in your family can receive these updates. Additionally, you may notice "Women's Sailing Team" as an area of interest added to the form... there will be more to come on that in the new year! But for now, if you're interested in any way - go ahead and check the box so that you'll be one of the first kept in the loop!

In the meantime, I'm hoping you all have a lovely Holiday season and a wonderful start to 2024. This time of year can be hard... no sailing, it's cold, the sky is gray, it's dark way too early, all the plants are dead, the trees are bare, our windshields are always covered with a thick layer of ice when we're in a rush trying to leave...

Though this time of year may not be anyone's favorite, it certainly makes the sailing season all the more special. The phrase "stick season" was recently popularized by Vermont-native musician Noah Kahan with his 2022 album of the same name. In this album, Kahan points out the beautiful and ugly parts of his home state, but more importantly, he acknowledges the necessity of transition. Seasons (and feelings) may change in a way that we don't like, but summer (and better days) will come again. And we can always plan for and anticipate the next season!

- Katie, FLYC Secretary

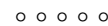


Figure 4 & 6: New marina friends.

# Is There Scientific Evidence for the Star of Bethlehem?

By Father William P. Saunders

CatholicStraightAnswers.com

*With the Holiday Season upon us, I found this article particularly interesting as it combines both scientific and theological aspects surrounding the Star of Bethlehem. Many thanks to the author for allowing us to reprint this article. -Ed.*

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**Q** *Is there any scientific evidence for the star mentioned in the Gospel, which guided the Three Kings to adore Baby Jesus, or is it just a literary image used to make a spiritual point? I have heard both sides. — A reader in Franconia*

**A** The answer to this question lies not only in the scientific evidence, but also the spiritual significance of that evidence.

Let's begin with the scientific evidence. Over the years, several findings have been presented to identify the star. Keep in mind that any dating is problematic due to variations in calendars (Julian versus Hebrew versus Gregorian) and record keeping. Nevertheless, some possibilities include the following: First, about 10 B.C., Halley's Comet was visible (although not known as "Halley" at the time); however, comets usually indicated doom and disaster, so this does not seem to be a good contender.

Second, Johannes Kepler (d. 1630), who wrote *Laws of Planetary Motion*, proposed that the conjunction of the planets Jupiter, Saturn and Mars caused a brilliant light (about 7 B.C.). Kepler had observed such a phenomenon in 1604 and calculated that this would have occurred at about the time of Christ's birth. He posited that a supernova occurred simultaneously which would have caused an intense, brilliant light that lasted for weeks.

Third, the Austrian astronomer Konradin Ferrari d'Occhieppo in 2003 proposed that the star was the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation Pisces in 7-6 B.C. He wrote, "Jupiter, the star of the highest Babylonian deity (Marduke), entered its brightest phase when it rose in the evening alongside Saturn, the cosmic representation of the Jewish people." Commenting on this finding, Ferrari d'Occhieppo posited that astronomers in Babylon

(an ancient center for astronomy) would have interpreted this phenomenon as a universally significant event, namely the birth of a king in the land of the Jews who would bring salvation. I think the constellation Pisces has a significance, since Pisces represents "fish" and Our Lord said to the apostles, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). His work was cited by Pope Benedict XVI in his book *Jesus of Nazareth, Volume I*.

Finally, astronomer Roger Sinnott using evidence from Bryant Tuckeman's *Planetary, Lunar, and Solar Positions, 601 B.C. to A.D. 1* (American Philosophical Society, 1979), presented a most interesting finding: In 3-2 B.C., three unusual planetary alignments (a triple conjunction) of the planets Jupiter and Venus with the star Regulus in the constellation Leo occurred. Interestingly, the splendor of this event would have climaxed Dec. 25, 2 B.C. Jupiter was named for Jupiter, the king of the Roman gods; Venus, named for Venus, the Roman goddess of love and motherhood; Regulus, a star that means "little king" and symbolizes a scepter; and Leo, the lion, the symbol for the tribe of Judah. One could suggest that here was a symbolic revelation of the Father (the King) sending His Son (the little King) into this world through Mary (the mother) to the land of Judah (the lion), the people of the covenant.

Remember, too, we read in Gen 49:9-10: "Judah, like a lion's whelp, you have grown up on prey, my son. He crouches like the lion recumbent, the king of beasts — who would dare rouse him? The scepter shall never depart from Judah, or the mace from between his legs." Sinnott posited that the Magi would easily have interpreted this event as a sign of the birth of the Messiah. Astrophysicists also cite such an alignment occurs about every 38,000 years. Perhaps this explanation is the best.

Archaeologists also have found evidence of some unique star being observed at the time of Our Lord's birth. Egyptian records (5-2 B.C.) indicate that in the month Messori, the star Sirius, the dog star, rose at sunrise with extraordinary brilliance. Messori means "the birth of a prince," and the Egyptian astrologers

interpreted this event to mean “the birth of a new king into this world.” Chinese records show that about 4 B.C., a brilliant star appeared in the sky for a long time.

The Jewish prophecies also pointed to a star that would announce the birth of the Messiah: “A star (anatole) shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Num 24:17). In the Canticle of Zechariah, we read, “All this is the work of the kindness of our God; He, the Dayspring (anatole or “rising star”), shall visit us in His mercy to shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Lk 1:78-79).

Whatever the “star” actually was, God used this phenomenon to announce the birth of His Son, our divine Messiah and Savior. Moreover, He used it to excite the Magi, the Gentiles, to come searching. The Magi were probably from the area of Babylon (present Iraq), where astrology was popular, and the observatory of Sippar existed; archaeologists have found cuneiform tablets where the observatory existed that speak of this star. Moreover, they probably knew the prophecy concerning the Jewish Messiah; after all, the Prophet Daniel was King Nebuchadnezzar’s chief Magus. Of course, we sometimes refer to them as “the Three Kings” because of their precious gifts — gold for a king, frankincense for a priest and myrrh (a burial ointment) for the victim who would die. Sometimes we refer to them as the Wise Men, yet wise enough to know they did not know everything. We also know them as Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar, and recognize them as saints, whose relics are kept at the cathedral in Cologne, Germany.

In sum, St. Gregory Nazianzen said, “The very moment when the Magi, guided by the star, adored

Christ the new King, astrology came to an end, because the stars were now moving in the orbit determined by Christ.” As we continue our Christmas celebration, may we, too, orient our lives — spiritually, emotionally, economically, politically, socially, in a word, totally — to Jesus. May we follow the true Light that penetrates the darkness and allow His light to shine forth in our own lives.

- Fr. William

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*Taken from CatholicStraightAnswers.com*

<https://catholicstraightanswers.com/three-kings-truth-behind-star/>



*This article is from the official website for Fr. Saunders’ Straight Answers about the Catholic Faith. The website contains all the questions and answers that Fr. Saunders covered in his books Straight Answers I and Straight Answers II as well as newly asked questions. It also contains Fr. Saunders 20-part RCIA class, which provides a comprehensive overview of the Catholic Faith.*

*Formerly the Dean of the Graduate School at Notre Dame University, Fr. Saunders currently serves at St. Agnes Catholic Church in Arlington, VA. To read more, see:*

[www.CatholicStraightAnswers.com](http://www.CatholicStraightAnswers.com)



# Editor's Corner

by Tom Alley

SV Tomfoolery



## Seasonal Jingles

By the time you read this most of us will be thoroughly entrenched in our "off-season" mode. The annual FLYC banquet will already be a two-week-

old memory and many of us will likely be thinking about the inevitable Holiday preparations that will soon be consuming our attention and energy.

Congratulations to the newly elected club officers and directors!

A popular conversational topic that comes up at this time of year when I'm around other boaters has to do with boat projects that I might be queuing up for the winter and spring. It reminds me of the credit card commercial where the announcer hits the tag line, "So, what's in YOUR wallet?" In our case, it's more like, "So, what's on YOUR list?" This puts a different twist on the concept of "season's greetings" as we all transit into the time of year where many of us concentrate on boat maintenance or upgrades.

But before I let myself lapse into the details of the various projects on this year's list, I do want to pass along a number of thoughts that characterize the current season:

- A belated but heartfelt "Thank You" to all of our military veterans for their generous service.

- A profound sense of gratitude for the wonderful sailing season we enjoyed on the nautical home we call Seneca Lake.
- A sincere wish to all of you for a Merry Christmas along with a healthy and happy New Year!

See you in the boatyard!

- Tom

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Seas & Greetings!

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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](mailto:editor@flyc.us).*

## 2024 FLYC Calendar

Please check the club web site (<http://www.FLYC.US>) to see the most current information.

### January 2024

26 Deadline for newsletter articles.

### February 2024

01 **February Newsletter Publication Date.**

TBA **FLYC Planning Meeting.** Meeting of the Board of Directors to plan the 2023 FLYC Event Calendar. All are welcome. *Details to be announced.*

# Finger Lakes Yacht Club

## 2024 Membership Application

Membership renewals are due by May 1st, 2024. **Annual dues are \$45.**

Please send this form and a check to:



Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc.  
c/o Katie Alley, Secretary  
295 Stillwater Drive  
Horseheads, NY 14845

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 2023

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Boat Name \_\_\_\_\_ Location/Slip # \_\_\_\_\_

Make/Model/Year \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_ Type  Power  Sail

Please indicate which areas interest you:

Racing  Cruising  Social activities  Newsletter  Other club activities you'd like to see? Email secretary@flyc.us  
 **New** Women's Sailing Team  Boating/Sailing Classes

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 \_\_\_\_\_