With January now upon us, we are starting our boating course registration on Tuesday, January 10 and Thursday, January 12. Also on January 10, at 7:00 pm sharp, we will have the fall class exam rewrite.

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Upcoming Events

• **Monday, January 16, 2012 - Student Graduation**
  This convivial evening gives us the chance to congratulate the Fall 2011 Class on passing the course and welcome this spirited group into the CPS membership. Expect laughter, applause and a very special presentation.

• **Monday, February 20, 2012 - Marine Equipment and Gear - What’s New, and What’s Hot or Not**
  Robert Buller
  As *Pacific Yachting*'s Equipment Editor, and *Canadian Yachting*'s Technical Editor, Robert is the perfect person to update us on products, trends and developments for power and sail.

• **Saturday, March 31, 2012 - Bilgewater Bash**
  Kick up your heels at the Vancouver Power and Sail Squadron’s Annual Dinner and Dance at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club. (See page 9 for details.)

  *Past, current and incoming Power Squadron members are all welcome at Squadron Nights, held at the False Creek Yacht Club on the north shore of False Creek under the Granville Street Bridge. The doors open at 7:00 pm, the event begins at 7:30 pm, and the cost is $5.00 per person. We look forward to seeing you there!*
Commander’s Report  
(continued from page 1)

January 16 at the False Creek Yacht Club is our fall class graduation night. Please come out and support our new graduates. Those who have taken the boating course know the time and commitment it takes to pass the course.

Keeping our squadron running smoothly is the commitment of our volunteers. I would like to thank all those proctors and instructors who gave their time and energy to help the students achieve success in passing the fall boating course and our elective courses.

I would also like to thank our volunteers who help with registration, marking exams, and running our squadron social evenings.

A particular thank you to my Bridge members for their continued support.

I look forward to seeing you at our social events, and wish you a very Happy New Year and safe boating.

Bill Stewart
Commander
What a Party!

The Annual VPSS Christmas Party at the False Creek Yacht Club was a huge success again this year. A picture is worth 1,000 words, so here we go. Thank you Dennis Steeves for taking the photos and capturing the buzz.

And there’s more....
At Thanksgiving, a few of us decided we should have one more cruise before putting our boats to sleep for the winter. Cruise Master Tim suggested a few days in the San Juan Islands. With November 11 a holiday for some of us, we left the docks at Blaine at first light on Friday, November 11, headed for Rosario Resort on Orcas Island. We wouldn’t be alone on the water because there was a lot of naval and coast guard activity on the water, some sort of joint Canada-USA military exercise in the area.

The day was cool and clear as we started out. Our group consisted of Tim and Barb on Tatika, Tony and Christina, on OH SEA DEE, Ted and Charleen on Abracadabra, Gary and Sandra on Descanso. With one trawler and one sailboat in our group we cruised at 6 knots through still, calm seas, the early morning sun dancing on the water. On the radio Tim joked with Ted about getting through border security with an Afghan hidden on board, referring to Flame, their beautiful Afghan dog. Ted replied that he was sure the Afghan would be a little mischievous during the next few days.

Our route to Rosario Resort took us south toward Lumi Island, past Lawrence Point on Orcas, west through Obstruction Pass and then north into East Sound to Rosario Resort. All went perfectly until we neared Lawrence Point where we were suddenly engulfed in fog which formed so fast we hardly knew what was happening. Descanso was the only boat with radar so moved to the front of the line. Everyone had GPS chart plotters so we knew where we were. Descanso could watch out for other boats around us.

As the fog rolled over us Tony radioed Ted, “Your Afghan is going to be able to sneak into Rosario under the blanket of fog!” That brought lots of chuckles and a few more Afghan jokes which served to break the tension of motoring through the thickest fog any of us had ever seen. We continued slowly on, radar reflectors up and hopefully announcing our presence to other boats. It was good we had them because the water around us was, for some reason unknown to us, becoming really congested with other boats, a fact known only to Gary and Sandra on Descanso with radar. Some of the boats were small, others huge, probably tankers heading south.

We slowed as we made the turn into Obstruction Pass to head west. On the radio I asked everyone to tighten up our formation because of the narrow channel and all the other boats around us. We still couldn’t see them in the thick fog, but there were dozens of them. Maybe there was a salmon run or something.

Following up on Tony’s earlier broadcast about sneaking into Rosario, Tim radioed, “That’s good guys, a nice tight grouping for the assault.” That brought more laughs and more comments from the rest of the group as we slowly motored through the thick grey blanket of fog. None of us were very comfortable in the fog as we cruised between islands and rocks which we could not see. My biggest concern was the incredible number of vessels around us that only I could see on our radar. Finally I radioed to the rest of our group, “Valley Squadron, be really careful and keep a sharp lookout. There are dozens of vessels around us in the fog.”

Totally blind in the fog, except for our instruments, we finally were out of the narrow, rock choked Obstruction Pass and rounded north into East Sound and towards Rosario, now only four miles away. Our way was fairly clear now.
Suddenly, a gasp. Collective gasps on every one of our boats. Our GPS systems went down. What a time for a GPS glitch. I radioed everyone, “Valley Squadron, I can lead us, but pull ahead so you can see the stern of the boat ahead of you. I guided each one until we were like a tight string of pearls moving up the sound. It wasn’t bad for me, but it was very spooky for everyone else who had to trust me to keep them off the rocks. The crowd of boats around us, still out of sight, was moving with us and if anything, growing in size. Really bizarre, and scary since they too were now without GPS. Once again I reminded everyone to keep a good lookout. Again, one of our group joked that “Maybe the Americans don’t like Afghans!” That broke the tension a bit.

As we cruised through thick fog Descanso’s radar showed an abrupt change in the pattern of the dozens of boats around us. The outer ones formed a double ring around our boats about a third of a mile out from us. Then about a dozen smaller vessels picked up speed and headed straight towards us, three boats coming at each of our boats.

“Valley Squadron, watch out, something strange is happening. Lots of boats are cruising straight at us,” I radioed. Suddenly one of the small radar images ahead of us seemingly morphed into a large island right ahead of us. This time I radioed with a bit more authority, “Valley Squadron, Valley Squadron, Valley Squadron. Everyone stop. Everyone stop.” On the radar I saw a 500 foot island ahead of us where there should be nothing but a tiny blip on the radar. “A huge object just appeared out of nowhere right ahead of us.”

As Descanso slowed, two more huge objects appeared on the radar screen, both behind us but one to port and one to starboard. At the same moment I saw them, the island in front of Descanso materialized out of the fog. Descanso coasted to a stop with an immense submarine conning tower rising heavenward above it. Small navy vessels, the radar dots, zoomed in on us. On both the VHF radio and on loud speakers we heard, “Come to a complete stop. Prepare to be boarded. Move away from the helm and raise your hands.”

Utter terror as each of our group, unseen by the others in the fog, looked at 50 mm machine guns, automatic weapons, rocket launchers and navy SEALS in full combat gear appearing out of the fog. Only Sandra and I could see the immense submarine looming out of the fog. What was happening? What was going on? What had we done?

That’s all the time we had even to think before we had a boat alongside and six SEALS on board. “Don’t move a muscle” they ordered. My knees were shaking so badly that was impossible. In an instant they were below, searched everything, looked in the engine compartment and then radioed to someone, “Alpha team, we’re clean.”
Then the question, “What is Valley Squadron?” I shakily explained who we were and where we were going. As I was finishing one of the SEALs, evidently listening to his radio, began to laugh. He looked at the others and said, “Relax, they found the Afghan.” Everyone looked at the NCO and he continued, “It’s an Afghan dog. These guys really are boaters out for the weekend.” Everyone relaxed, guns descended and we were told what happened. The US President and Canadian Prime Minister were having a secret meeting on Orcas Island. The military exercises were actually guarding the leaders. The military overheard our VHF transmissions about the Afghan sneaking into Rosario. That and our other jokes had set in motion a huge operation to contain the threat to the leaders.

Tension gone, the SEALs were great. The fog began to lift and we saw the fleet of submarines, destroyers and smaller craft around us. The jamming of our GPS signal ended and once again we had navigation systems. Two navy patrol boats escorted us the last two miles into Rosario, waving and laughing as they left us at the docks.

What can you say? We were all pretty shaken but had lots to talk about. And talk we did until dinner time. We had reservations at the resort dining room and at 6:30 pm but our group of 8 arrived to find a huge sign saying, “Sorry, but we are closed tonight.” As we stared in dismay at the sign a woman who looked more like Secret Service than a waitress asked if we were the Valley Squadron group. Finding we were, she told us we would have our meal, a very special meal, with some very special hosts who had heard about our interesting military reception and wanted to make amends. We were ushered into the dining room, seated, and introduced to our dinner hosts, Prime Minister Harper and President Obama.


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**Boat Show Volunteers?**

Are you interested in volunteering at the Vancouver International Boat Show, February 8 - 12, 2012? If so, please reply directly to Lynn Meisl, District Assistant PRO at lmeisl@telus.net or Eardley Beaton, PRO at beatonsbeat@shaw.ca not later than January 25th. Volunteers should give a first and second choice of date and time. They would like three people per shift.

There will be a very important PMD Orientation Night for Boat Show volunteers on Monday, February 6th. This will take place at Willingdon Church (4812 Willingdon Ave., Burnaby, Room 3040) at 1900. (The District Council meeting will follow approximately one hour later.) All Boat Show volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend this orientation for helpful hints and information regarding changes for this year’s booth staffing procedures.

Lynn is trying to find out whether Boat Show tickets will be available for sale to squadron members at a reduced rate. As a volunteer – you are in! Unfortunately parking is not included.
Dear Friends,

It has been another busy year for our 970 volunteer crew members. In 2011, we were tasked on 690 missions, assisted 629 people and saved 141 people. As well, our crews were able to salvage $15.4 million in property in the last 11 months.

On behalf of everyone who enjoys our oceans, beaches, and lakes or travels over water, we'd like to thank you for your support of our heroic and dedicated volunteers. This holiday season we're asking for your donations to help keep our volunteers well equipped, safe and ready to respond to an emergency on the water.

The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary-Pacific relies on public support to raise $1.7 million annually to keep our 46 community-based stations throughout B.C. operational 24/7, 365 days a year.

Please give generously today and help us continue to save lives on the water.

WHAT YOUR DONATION CAN DO

✦ $80 stocks a Rescue Vessel with thermal blankets
✦ $150 buys a crew member a utility vest stocked with the necessary first aid and safety equipment
✦ $1,000 equips a volunteer in the required Search and Rescue Safety gear

Mail Your Donation To:

CCGA-P
25 Huron Street
Victoria, BC V8V 4V9

Or Call: 1-800-665-4757
Or Donate Online: www.ccca-pacific.org

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Bilgewater Bash

ONLY 120 TICKETS AVAILABLE
CALL NOW TO RESERVE YOUR TICKET AND AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT!

The Event: The Annual Vancouver Power and Sail Squadron’s Bilgewater Bash

The Date: Saturday March 31, 2012

The Place: The Royal Vancouver Yacht Club
3811 Point Grey Road, Vancouver

The Times:
Doors open: 17:45hrs
Bilgewater at: 18:00hrs
Famous RVYC Buffet dinner at: 19:00hrs
Doors close at: 12:00hrs

After the Buffet: Door Prizes and Dancing to the DJ

Ticket Prices: $70.00/person before February 15th
$80.00/person after February 15th

To order your tickets: please call Ruth Cuddeford at 604-294-5310 (Monday-Friday 08:30hrs—17:00hrs)

The Reality: We must have a significant number of tickets sold by February 15th or this wonderful event will be cancelled!

A Donation: If you are able to provide a door prize, please contact P/C Dave Atchison at 604-263-7883