

Getting High on Weather Phenomena

Boating safety experts will encourage you to learn as much as you can about weather. And with justification. "Weather" is the earth's atmosphere trying to find equilibrium, and it's been attempting to do so from the beginning of time. The sun heats up the air in one place, the warmed air rises, colder air rushes in to fill the space created by its departure, other air flows in to take the place of the colder air, and on and on. The degree to which the elements respond to each other make the difference between a mild, sunny day with a light breeze, and "the perfect storm." So, as a boater exposed to those elements, if you can spot trouble, it's a step in the direction of safety.

The recreational boater doesn't have

to be a meteorologist, however, to safely enjoy a great day on the water, a cruise with the family or even a transatlantic crossing. Although you might encounter an occasional storm while on the water, you also will find that the skies are filled with wonder.

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The more you know about the phenomena that accompany the changing weather patterns around you, the more you'll appreciate

the beauty and splendor just overhead.

For example, what sailor has not been transfixed by the awesome spectacle of "Jacob's ladder"? These crepuscular rays, as scientist refer to them, shine through breaks in the clouds on or from just below the horizon, creating an optical effect sometimes described as "the sun drawing water." The light pillars resulting from the sun breaking through some distant clouds into an illuminated atmosphere provide a display that can put a perfect ending on a perfect day.

One phenomenon, called a "superior mirage," has been known to startle even the most experienced seafarers. The name doesn't refer to the quality of the mirage, but rather to a ghostly apparition formed above its real position. Ships on the horizon appear to be floating in air, upside down, no less. If you know that the mirage is caused by low-level temperature inversions, such as warm air flowing over cold water, then you can just sit back and watch the show. In days of yore, however, tense sailors who didn't have the benefit of science to explain these phenomena labeled the apparitions "ghost ships."

Rainbows always are cause for pulling back the throttles and reaching for the camera. For centuries, skippers have regaled their passengers with tales of treasure at the foot of the rainbow, and to this day children are told of the pot of gold that lies in wait for the lucky



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The Prairie Schooner



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stiff that finds the rainbow's end. But it's the lucky sailor that is able to sit beneath a "double rainbow," concentric arcs of brilliance that burst across the sky, one above the other, each with colors reversed. Meteorologists would call the outer rainbow a "secondary" rainbow, but to you and I on a warm, sunny day on the water, it would just be called "magnificent."

There are many other examples of natural aerial phenomena now showing at a sky near you—Sprites, Elves, coronas, sundogs, diamond dust, St. Elmo's fire, ball lightning, lunar rainbows, blue jets, irisation, and the green flash. The advantage to the boater, of course, is the huge, unobstructed "supermax" panoramic view available to us from the deck of our floating theater.

Some of the dishes that Mother Nature cooks up for us are not as digestible as those mentioned above. Those beautiful,



massive, towering cumulus clouds we see filling the skies in mid-summer may very well be harboring a dangerous storm cell. That breathtaking red sky in the morning (sailor take warning)

might be telling us to batten the hatches. But most of the atmospheric displays experienced by boaters seem to be there just to remind us how small our tiny little boats—and we—really are. And when we get a bit cocky and start taking risks on the water, a tap on the shoulder by Mother is not such a bad thing.

Knowing about weather—forecasting, patterns and phenomenon—is just part of being a complete boater. Not only can it help you avoid trouble, but it can give you an appreciation for the natural beauty of the skies, and the infinite variety of phenomenal events that take place just over our heads every day and every night. Whether it's Mother Nature or weather, you'll have more fun and increase your level of boating safety by knowing more about what you see when you tilt your head skyward. ♦

Source: www.commanderbob.com

Power Squadron Fun Night

3rd Annual Pizza & Beer Party

(Pizza & Pop for the kids)



WHERE? Happy Joe's Pizza, 4531 NW 86th St., Urbandale
(corner of 86th and Meredith)

WHEN? Saturday, 28 March 2009—1800 (6 p.m.)

WHY? To Have FUN & Socialize

WHO? Everyone

This is a perfect opportunity to invite guests

All guests are welcome!

COST? \$12.00 per adult; \$6.00 per child

RSVP to Pat Knueven at 278-2821 by Monday, 23 March 2009

so we have a correct count for pizza, beer and pop.

We don't want to pay for items we don't eat or drink and

Planned gifts continued from page 1

Horowitz, JN explains how these funds are managed by the Finance Committee. "The investment philosophy is very conservative and preservation of the principal is paramount. Currently the investment mix is 75% money market instruments, such as certificates of deposit and money market funds, and 25% in mutual funds with reinvestment of dividends and capital gains. Income from the "Gifts" will be used to fund initiatives that support strategic issues facing our organization."

You may be wondering how and why you fit into this program; read one member's prospective. "Now that I (P/C/C Les Johnson, SN) am not on the National Bridge, it has been a source of great satisfaction to be able to talk with more members and be re-involved with my Squadron and District. There is one subject that frequently comes up in conversation when visiting Districts and Squadrons. Members have thought

about making "Gifts" to USPS, but they are not sure how the money would be used. Some examples of past "Gifts" include \$40,000 plus to cover mentoring costs to start new squadrons, \$400,000 plus to upgrade and enlarge the headquarters building, \$3,000 plus for a defibrillator for headquarters and national meetings, and lastly a \$500,000 "Gift" was made to the Century Fund."

All of the above are a few examples of how "Planned Gifts" have helped provide the resources that are needed to best promote boating education. Did you notice that the amount of the "Gifts" vary from small to large? There are additional future projects that are needed. It is easy to ask the Planned Giving Committee for some direction for making a "Gift" you might have in mind. Remember, it is the accumulation of all "Gifts" to the USPS (big and small) that get things accomplished. ♦

The family of Dan Slatterly would like to thank each of you who sent food, flowers, memorials, cards and words of support in memory of Dan.

Your thoughtfulness was appreciated during this difficult time.

—Mark, Marleen, Mike and Traci Slatterly

Mark Your Calendar

- 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 09 Thursday Safe Boating Class Saylorville Marina
28 Mar 09 Saturday, 1800 Squadron Pizza Party Happy Joe's, Urbandale
4 & 5 Apr 09 Saturday & Sunday Brightwell's Boathouse Open House
6 Apr 09 Monday, 1830 Executive Committee Meeting Okoboji Grill, Johnston
11 Apr 09 Saturday Boaters' Swap Meet and Sloppy Joes Saylorville Marina
24-25 Apr 09 Friday & Saturday D/30 Spring Conference Crowne Plaza Hotel, Clayton, MO
4 May 09 Monday, 1830 Executive Committee Meeting Location to be announced
16 May 09 Saturday General Membership Meeting Lion's Park, Urbandale
16-22 May 09 National Safe Boating Week

A PUBLICATION OF THE DES MOINES SAIL AND POWER SQUADRON

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First Class

A Prairie Schooner for:

Inside this issue: Commander's Message—Planned Gifts Benefit USPS—Weather Phenomena—Pizza Party—Calendar