



The Pilot

March 2026

Sign Up for the 2026 Cruise

Welcome new member Tim Backenstose

Upcoming Events

March

Change of Watch
Philadelphia Boat show
District 5 Spring Conference

April

Dinner Meeting
Election of Nominating Committee

May

Dinner Meeting and
Cruise Information

Newsletter Contents

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Commander's Message

First and foremost, ABC-Valley Forge would like to thank the trustees of the Henry E. Sweet Trust for their contribution to our squadron. Their Squadron Revenue Support Initiative gift is very much appreciated and we will put it to good use.

2025 ended on a positive note.

- Bill McManimen, our committee chair, sent our Merit Mark candidates to National early and our club had 30 Merit Marks approved. Thanks Bill!
- The annual Veterans' dinner was a great success, read the article by Ed White.
- Our Vessel Safety Examiners completed 122 inspections!

2026 is upon us and we began the year by advertizing our spring classes in the Chesapeake Bay Magazine - check it out.

We held our annual election in February and we

have excellent leadership taking over our squadron on March 22. Be sure to attend the Change of Watch, more information below.

It's time to sign up for the 2026 cruise with Russ Jones and make your slip reservations. Fill out the form and send it to him.

We have heard about orcas attacking sailboats off Gibraltar. Now we have a first hand account of such an event from a member of the Corinthians, Robert Osborne, read his article below.

This has been one of the coldest winters we have had in many years, and many tributaries to the Chesapeake are frozen over. Check your boat. I found a broken line on ours, but since we double tie our dock lines we had no damage. Although the boat was covered with ice, John was able to board it and set another line.

Please feel free to attend an Executive Committee meeting, in person or online — all are welcome.

- John Juzbasich, AP

Volunteers needed to work the exhibit at the March boat show,
contact juzbasich@abcvalleyforge.org

ExCom Meeting information

Our policy is to hold our Executive Committee meetings in person and online via Zoom, thus more people can attend. Non-ExCom members may participate in the meeting discussions, however, as per our bylaws, they cannot vote.

In person meetings are held at: Paoli Presbyterian Church, 225 S Valley Rd, Paoli, PA 19301. The Zoom link can be found in the Monthly ExCom Agenda. If you need the agenda contact Barb Jones at bjone-sann@verizon.net. The Zoom session begins at 6:30 (because it always takes some time to actually set up that connection). Social time begins at 6:45, and the meeting at 7:00.

Please keep phones and microphoness on mute when not presenting.



ABC - Valley Forge 2025 Boat Show Exhibit

Upcoming Events:

Philadelphia Boat show, Oaks, PA. March 13-15, 2026
Hours: Friday 12pm – 7pm, Saturday 10am – 7pm, Sunday 11am – 5pm.

ABC - Valley Forge Change of Watch, March 22, 2026 at the Desmond Hotel, Malvern, PA, 3:00-7:00.

D-5 Spring Conference

Location: Holiday Inn - Ocean City
Start Date & Time: 2026-03-26 16:00:00
End Date & Time: 2026-03-29 11:00:00

ABC - Valley Forge Chesapeake Cruise, June 19-28, 2026; see flyer below.

The dates and location for the 2026 District Five Summer Rendezvous are set. The location is Lankford Bay Marina, Rock Hall, MD. The dates are 28-30 August 2026. As we move closer to this event, more details will be forthcoming.

Educational Officer Report

America's Boating Club Offers Courses and Seminars for Every Skill Level

Whether you're new to boating or looking to sharpen your skills before the season kicks into high gear, spring is the perfect time to invest in your on-the-water confidence. America's Boating Club – Valley Forge is offering a full lineup of boating courses and seminars designed to help boaters navigate smarter, safer, and with greater ease.

From in-depth classroom courses to convenient online seminars, these programs are built for real-world boating on the Chesapeake and beyond.

Build a Strong Foundation with Weekly Boating Courses

America's Boating Club's seven-week boating courses meet once a week for two-hour evening sessions, making it easy to fit learning into your schedule while still gaining meaningful, hands-on knowledge.

This spring's offerings include:

Marine Navigation, March 17 – April 28, Downingtown West Middle School. Learn how to confidently plot courses, understand charts, and make smart navigation decisions underway.

Marine Electrical Systems, March 18 – April 29, Peirce Middle School, West Chester. A practical deep dive into onboard electrical systems, troubleshooting, and maintenance.

America's Boating Course (ABC), March 19 – April 30, Stetson Middle School, West Chester. A comprehensive introduction to boating safety, rules of the road, and best practices for boaters of all experience levels.

All courses begin at 6:30 PM and are ideal for power and sailboat owners alike.

Sharpen Specific Skills with Online Boating Seminars

For boaters looking to target specific skills, America's Boating Club also offers two-hour Zoom seminars, perfect for brushing up on essentials or filling in knowledge gaps before launch season.

Upcoming seminars include:

- Weather for Boaters – March 26
- Crew at the Helm – April 9
- Knots for Boaters – April 23
- Docking and Undocking – May 7

Each seminar starts at 6:30 p.m. and delivers practical, easy-to-apply instruction you can put to use immediately on the water.

Learn More and Register

Course and seminar descriptions are available at abcvalleyforge.org, and registration is handled through chestercountynightschool.org.

Have questions? Contact Larry Hartman at 717-860-8577 or lhartman1958@gmail.com for more information.

Please help us advertise them to your family and friends! For more information go to our website <https://abcvalleyforge.org/>.



2026 ABC Valley Forge Cruise

Our America's Boating Club Valley Forge (aka Main Line Sail & Power Squadron) 2026 Summer Cruise itinerary is finalized. The dates and the marinas were chosen by our cruisers and commander. We are estimating that about 5-10 boats will join us this summer. If you would like to crew on a boat, please let me know.

There will be many interesting activities on the cruise, all of which are optional. Look for details about the cruise activities in a subsequent Pilot article. We always have fun activities, and hopefully that will influence your decision to join us this year. These will include a beach party, a cookout, dinner at great restaurants, and several guest speakers, more of our celebrated boat crawls, the infamous "forward throttle award" ceremony, of course, and other interesting activities still in development. You can sign up for the activities at our May pre-cruise dinner meeting.

Don't miss our annual cruise! Something exciting always provides wonderful memories. If you are new to boating, we can team you with another similar boat.

The marinas have requested a list of the boats that will require slips. Please complete this form indicating the marinas for which you will require a slip for our records. The list of boats that we will provide to the marinas is NOT official.

You need to reserve slips directly with each Marina on or after January 2.

Be sure to mention that you are with Main Line Sail & Power.

Please email your reply to wrjones3@verizon.net or send the completed form to P/C Russ Jones, 115 Oak Street, Downingtown, PA 19335. No deposit required.

Boat Name: _____ Captain: _____ Cell number: _____

Boat Make: _____ Boat Model: _____ Length: _____ Beam: _____ Draft: _____

Type: Power; Sail Electric: Single 30; Dual 30; Single 50; Dual 50

Friday, June 19 – The Yacht Basin OR on a mooring, Annapolis

Saturday, June 20 – Bay Bridge Marina, Kent Island

Sunday, June 21 – Bay Bridge Marina, Kent Island

Monday, June 22 – Cambridge Yacht Basin, Cambridge

Tuesday, June 23 – Cambridge Yacht Basin, Cambridge

Wednesday, June 24 – Herrington Harbour South, Herring Bay

Thursday, June 25 – Herrington Harbour South, Herring Bay

Friday, June 26 – Haven Harbour Marina, Rock Hall

Saturday, June 27 – Haven Harbour Marina, Rock Hall

Vessel Safety Examinations

In 2025 we completed over 122 Vessel Safety Checks. We could use your help in 2026, we have 130 decals. To become a VSE you need to read a manual and take the online test. After performing five vessel safety exams with a certified examiner, you will become a Certified Vessel Safety Examiner! For more details contact Maryanne at mboettj@gmail.com. It is very gratifying, because the boat owners truly appreciate our efforts and are happy to display the decal, knowing their boat meets USCG requirements.

Many thanks to the ABC-Valley Forge VSE team:

Bill McManimen
Wayne Barrett
Nick Montalto
Chris Dome

Meridith Barrett
Russ Jones
Maryanne Boettjer
John Juzbasich



JOIN US, Become a VSE!



Veterans Christmas Party 2025

The day began at the Giant Food Store, where volunteers picked up 50 freshly baked pies along with two trays of delicious holiday cookies at 2 PM. This marked the final step in months of preparation and set the tone for a meaningful evening ahead.

Once again, America's Boating Club - Valley Forge had the honor of hosting a Christmas dinner and celebration for the veterans residing at the Whitehall Veteran Apartments. This special event was the culmination of months of planning, coordination, and dedication by our volunteers, all focused on creating a warm and joyful holiday experience for those who have served our country.

At 3:30 PM, the advance team arrived to begin preparing the community room. There were 2 fully lighted and decorated Christmas trees. The community room TV was streaming Christmas themes. Tables were arranged, the buffet area was set, and additional tables were positioned to hold the gifts and pies. The room gradually transformed from an ordinary gathering space into a festive holiday setting.

By 4:30 PM, the remainder of the team arrived to complete the final setup. Decorations were placed, the buffet was finalized, and every detail was carefully checked. At 4:45 PM, the great brass quartet arrived, tuned their instruments, and began performing Christmas and holiday songs that filled the room with lively, joyful music. This was a first-class performance by the S.O.S. Quartet, led by our commander, and it immediately elevated the atmosphere and energized the room with holiday spirit.

Also at 4:45 PM, the food arrived hot and ready and was transferred into waiting chafing dishes to ensure everything remained at the perfect temperature. At exactly 5:00 PM, the veterans began to filter into the room. With festive decorations glowing, the aroma of a home-style meal, and the brass quartet's music playing, the atmosphere was electric. Smiles spread quickly, conversations sparked, and the room filled with warmth and celebration.

Each dining table was dressed with a tablecloth and adorned with a small green tinsel Christmas tree at the center, surrounded by softly glowing, battery-operated Christmas lights. The smiles on the veterans' faces said everything, they were happy, relaxed, and truly enjoying themselves.

To keep the evening comfortable and personal, veterans were invited to the buffet one table at a time. They were served spiral ham, homemade mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls, and butter. For dessert, the holiday cookies were available for everyone to savor and enjoy.

Each veteran was also sent home to their apartment with a thoughtfully prepared holiday gift. They were given a pie of their choice of ; apple, apple crumb, blueberry, peach, or pumpkin. Every pie box was decorated with a label thanking the veterans for their service, a festive holiday bow, Christmas stickers, and a candy cane. In addition, each veteran received a Christmas card containing a warm holiday message of gratitude and appreciation.

- Ed White, PC

See the photos on page 11

America's Boating Club – Valley Forge would like to express our heartfelt thanks to The Saarthee Company for their generous donation in support of the Veterans' Christmas dinner at the Whitehall Apartments. Their contribution played a central role in making the event both meaningful and memorable. Because of Saarthee's support, we were able to provide a full holiday meal, festive Christmas decorations, including the decorations for the pie boxes, as well as the décor throughout the room, which created a warm and joyful holiday atmosphere. Thank you for helping us honor and celebrate those who have served our country.

America's Boating Club – Valley Forge would like to extend our sincere thanks to Giant Food Company for the generous donation that helped offset the cost of 50 assorted pies for disabled veterans at the Whitehall Apartments during their annual Christmas dinner. We are deeply grateful for Giant Food's generosity, community spirit, and support of those who have served our country.

Change of Watch Commander's Dinner

in honor of

John Juzbasich

March 22, 2026 at 3:00



The Change of Watch ceremony gives America's Boating Club – Valley Forge members an opportunity to support our organization and to honor our leaders. The Change of Watch marks the official installation of the new Bridge Officers for the upcoming year. The ceremony also allows us to thank the outgoing officers, especially our **Commander, John Juzbasich**, and others, for a job well done.

Our club will also have the honor of the presence of **James Heckman** to assist in the installation of our next commander, **Dana Hummel**. Please attend to show how our squadron's members support our boating club by coming out for the Change of Watch. The Change of Watch ceremony will be a brief highlight of an enjoyable evening with delicious food.



The Desmond Malvern
One Liberty Blvd. Malvern, PA 19355
610-296-9800

Menu

Choose soup or salad from the menu
Entrée Choice of: crab cake, shrimp scampi, pasta bolognese, or chicken parmesan
Choose cheesecake or bread pudding for dessert

Amount: \$40. pp

RSVP to: Susan Woron at sworon54@gmail.com or
484-467-6705

Mail checks to: 207 Chandler Drive
West Chester, PA 19380

Checks payable to MLSPS.



ABC Valley Forge, a.k.a. Mainline Sail & Power Squadron, is a member of the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Clubs Association and our members can visit many fellow clubs on the Chesapeake. Enjoy a meal at their restaurant or stay overnight for a reasonable slip fee.



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Fleet Captain's Report

Choptank River buoys 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are all off station.

Alligator River Light 26, day beacons 3, 5, 45, 9, 35, 45 and light 26 are all off station.

Ice is now melting on the bay.

P/C Jim Friedrichs, SN

February Dinner Meeting Photos



2025 Veterans' Party - A Great Success



A catered dinner and fifty assorted pies for the veterans.



Orca Attack in Gibraltar

By: Bob Osborn, S/V Pandora

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After a week at sea from São Miguel, the last of the Azores behind us, we were feeling pretty good about our near thousand-mile passage to Spain. During our last night before reaching Gibraltar, our next landfall, Pandora had handled some very rough weather, gusts on the beam in the mid-30s and big seas that broke over the deck several times over night. By morning, the worst had eased, and soon the coast of Morocco was just visible off the starboard bow. We were tired but relieved—and the remaining dozen miles looked easy but that was not the case at all.

For months I had been following reports of orca attacks on sailboats along the Iberian coast—rudders broken clean off, stainless rudder posts bent and a few boats sunk. The Strait of Gibraltar has been the epicenter of this strange and unnerving behavior since it began around 2020. There is a dozen or so individuals, mostly juveniles, believed to be involved. Scientists think they are “practicing” hunting or simply playing, attacking rudders for sport. The adult female leading one of the pods has even been given a name—Gladis.

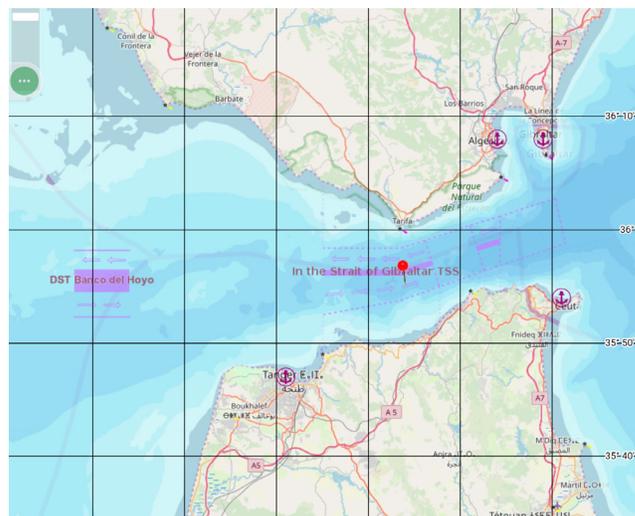
Before leaving the Azores, I had done my homework. I studied www.orcas.pt, a comprehensive site that tracks orca sightings and attacks, and planned a route that seemed the least risky. The data showed very few recent encounters along the Moroccan coast, compared with many farther north where the orcas had followed the tuna. I figured we would slip through safely on that southern track.

The Hit

We were within a few miles of the narrowest part of the strait of Gibraltar, making about ten and a half knots over the ground, with a push from the current, when it happened. The boat shuddered violently, the wheel spun out of my hands, Pandora lurching to one side, and again, and again...

For a few seconds, none of us knew what had happened. Had we hit something? Then a massive black-and-white shape slid beneath the stern. An orca. And then another. And another. In total, maybe four or five of them, each easily fifteen to twenty feet long, closing around us, taking turns striking the rudder.

One of my crew grabbed his phone and started filming. The footage is grainy, but it captures the chaos—the sudden



jerks of the wheel, the froth behind us, the unmistakable fin slicing past the transom. All I could think was “will Pandora sink?.” You can watch the short clip here: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Rxh_pDQn384.

It is hard to describe what that moment felt like—equal parts awe and terror. These are magnificent animals, but knowing that one well-placed hit could snap the rudder post or crack the hull was sobering.

Damage Control

Pandora’s rudder post is carbon fiber, oversized and strong, and it held. But the orcas managed to rip away the bottom third of the rudder, leaving it hanging by a flap of fiberglass. Later, I learned that this was a blessing in disguise: my rudder was built with a sacrificial lower section, meant to shear away cleanly in a grounding—or, apparently, an orca encounter. I have heard that once the damage is done, a portion of the rudder snapped off, that they often lose interest but keep pounding on rudders that resist their efforts, leading to more substantial damage.

Many boats are not so lucky. Yachts with stainless rudder posts often end up with bent shafts that jam against the hull, leaving them without steering entirely. Once the orcas sense movement, they tend to keep hammering until something gives.

Our Hydrovane, wind vane steering, did not escape either—the reinforced plastic rudder was cracked and bent 90 degrees. Fortunately, there was enough of our primary rudder left so I could still steer, if sluggishly, so we limped on toward Gibraltar at reduced speed, dragging the remnants of both rudders through the water, substantially cutting our speed.

We tied up just before sunset, shaken but grateful to be in port. The next morning, I put on a wetsuit, fired up my hookah dive compressor, and went over the side with a handsaw to finish removing the remains of the primary and Hydrovane rudders. The section of the primary rudder that had snapped remained attached by its fiberglass skin, which turned out to be fortunate as the yard in Almerimar, Spain was able to rebuild and re-bond the damaged section once we hauled out.

Lessons from the Attack

Looking back, there is a lot I might have done differently had I known then what I know now. The first and most obvious lesson is that while I thought they were farther north; it turns out, they were waiting right where we made landfall.

The orcas.pt site is an excellent tool for sailors crossing this coast. It offers an interactive map of sightings and attacks, depth data, and Telegram groups where cruisers share real-time positions. Before transiting the Gibraltar or Portuguese zones, it is worth checking the latest pins and adjusting your track. Data from hundreds of sailors show that most interactions happen in water 20 to 100 meters deep, where the orcas hunt bluefin tuna. Inside 20 meters, encounters are less common.

So, when approaching ports like Lagos or Cadiz, the advice is to hug the 20-meter contour—close enough that the orcas do not typically frequent those areas. Safety is not guaranteed, but statistically it reduces risk. And if you do see orcas:

- Disengage the autopilot so the wheel can spin freely.
- Keep hands loosely on the helm—a hit can whip the wheel dangerously.
- Power toward shallower water as quickly as possible.
- Don't use fireworks, or noise-makers—they're illegal in Spanish and Portuguese waters and may aggravate the whales.
- Document and report your encounter to Orcas.pt and local maritime authorities. Every report improves the database for future sailors.

That is the playbook today. A few years ago, sailors



Pandora under sail

were told to stop engines and drift, but research now suggests that quiet, stationary boats may encourage more prolonged interaction. Better to keep moving, steadily, toward safety.

Putting Pandora Back Together

From Gibraltar, I motor-sailed east to Almerimar, Spain about 150 miles, where she was hauled for the season. The yard there was able to repair the rudder and Pandora is as good as new once again.

For sailors used to worrying about weather and gear failure, the idea of being attacked by whales feels almost absurd. But for now, it is part of the calculus of cruising these waters. The reports continue: dozens of boats each season, mostly between May and October, as the orcas follow the tuna migration north and south.

Looking Ahead

Would I do it again? Yes—but I would plan differently. Instead of being concerned about making landfall in Gibraltar on a particular day, I would hug the shore and be less concerned about keeping a schedule to satisfy crew plans.

There is still a lot we do not understand about why these orcas are doing what they do but the prevailing theory is that they are just out for a good time. But to be on the receiving end still seems like an attack rather than fun, more like a bunch of young thugs breaking windows on a Saturday night than play.

One thing for sure, that as an apex predator with an abundant food supply, they have plenty of time on their hands to pursue “hobbies” and hopefully they will soon decide that there is something even more fun than damaging cruising boats.

In the end, I count myself lucky. Pandora did not sink, the crew came through unscathed, and I have a great story to talk about, again and again.

Broken rudder and bruised pride aside, the run to Spain was memorable. And, with cruising the Med for the next few seasons, Brenda and I are looking forward to this next chapter, hopefully somewhere with fewer “playful” whales.

For updates on Pandora’s ongoing adventures—and a few lessons learned the hard way—visit my blog at www.sailpandora.com and sign up to get a message when I post. There are more than a thousand posts so far, proof that even after all these miles, there are still plenty of places to explore and more than a few surprises in store.

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Bob Osborn on Pandora with his broken rudder

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Nomination Committee Candidates

Five of the nominees will be elected to serve on this committee

- John Juzbasich
- Russ Jones
- John Beardsley
- Patty Pezely
- Ginny Parry
- Nick Montalto
- Rich McLaughlin

The vote will take place during our membership meeting on April 16, 2026.



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Log Ahead

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| March 2026 | |
| 4 | Hybrid ExCom Meeting, 7 pm, Paoli Presbyterian Church, and via Zoom |
| 13-15 | Philadelphia Boat Show - Oaks, PA |
| 22 | COW and Monthly Membership Meeting, 3:00 PM at the Desmond in Malvern. |
| 26-29 | D-5 Spring Conference, Ocean City, MD |
| | |
| April 2026 | |
| 1 | Hybrid ExCom Meeting, 7 pm, Paoli Presbyterian Church, and via Zoom |
| 16 | Monthly Membership Meeting, TBD & Nominating Committee Election |
| 20 | Planning committee meeting |
| | |
| May 2026 | |
| 6 | Hybrid ExCom Meeting, 7 pm, Paoli Presbyterian Church, and via Zoom |
| 21 | Monthly Membership Meeting, TBD |
| | |
| June 2026 | |
| 3 | Hybrid ExCom Meeting, 7 pm, Paoli Presbyterian Church, and via Zoom |
| 19-28 | Chesap[eake Bay Cruise |
| | |
| July 2026 | |
| 15 | Delaware Rlver Educational Cruise |



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Email Your Ad to Pilot Editor John Juzbasich at juzbasich@abcvalleyforge.org

Publications and Articles of Interest

Chesapeake Bay Magazine
<https://chesapeakebaymagazine.com/>

MD Department of Natural Resources
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
has a wide variety of articles that may be of interest



MD State Police heading out on patrol



The Pilot

Editor: John Juzbasich (juzbasich@abcvalleyforge.org)
Assistant Editor: Ginny Parry
Photographers: Meridith Barrett, Rita Rossi and John Juzbasich

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