



Volume 53, Issue 5

September 2008

DECK WATCH

Official Newsletter of the Milwaukee Sail and Power Squadron

A Unit of District 10, United States Power Squadrons (USPS) ~ America's Boating Club ~

USPS Mission is to promote recreational boating safety through education and civic activities while providing fellowship and

UPCOMING EVENTS

September

2nd- 7th—USPS Governing Board Meeting at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI

8th (Mon)—Executive Committee Mtg, 7 p.m., South Shore Yacht Club 2300 E. Nock St., Milwaukee

16th (Tues)—Squadron Members' Mtg, 6 p.m., Golden Mast, Okauchee

24th (Wed)—Using GPS Seminar, 6:30 pm, Cabela's, One Cabela Way, Richfield

October

1st (Wed)—Using a VHF & VHF/DSC Radio Seminar, 6:30 pm, Cabela's, One Cabela Way, Richfield

8th (Wed)—Squadron Boating Course begins, 4-6 weeks, 6:30 pm, Cabela's, One Cabela Way, Richfield

13th (Mon)—Executive Committee Meeting, 7 p.m., Lake Express Ferry Terminal, 2330 S. Lincoln Memorial Dr., Milwaukee, WI

21st (Tues)—Squadron Members' Mtg, 6 p.m., Location TBD

24th- 26th—District 10 Fall Conference at the Stone Harbor Resort & Conf. Center, Sturgeon Bay, WI

November

10th (Mon)—Executive Committee Meeting, 7 p.m., Lake Express Ferry Terminal, 2330 S. Lincoln Memorial Dr., Milwaukee, WI

18th (Tues)—Squadron Members' Mtg, 6 pm, Location TBD

19th (Wed)—On-Board Weather Forecasting Seminar, 6:30 pm, Cabela's, One Cabela Way, Richfield

For more information on these events, please contact Ted Smyczek at 262-786-2599

www.milwaukeepowersquadron.org

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



I hope you all have had a wonderful boating season, but as it draws to a close it is time to think about the fall. Putting the boat up on the hard is always a sad time. The Milwaukee Sail and Power Squadron has ways to keep the boating fun alive all throughout the long fall and winter season—take a class to learn new skills or brush up on old ones!!

All of the USPS classes have been revised over the last few years, so if it has been a while since you have taken a class, consider a refresher course. This fall we will be offering the Seamanship, Advanced Piloting and Marine Electronics class to our members. Later in 2009 we will be offering the Piloting, Engine Maintenance, and Sail classes. Throughout the winter we will also be offering the USPS Seminar Series programs. Enjoy boating 2 hours at a time with these informative USPS University seminars.

We will also be scheduling the New Navigation Class when the new material becomes available, and again in January 2009 we will be offering a public Boating class during the Milwaukee Boat Show.

Another exciting development in the educational collaboration program we have with Cabela's in Richfield. Thanks to the effort of Tom Raveret, we will be holding a series of seminars and a Squadron Boating Course at their store, easily accessible off HY 45, in Richfield. Beginning on Wednesday the 24th of September and continuing Wednesdays until Thanksgiving. Come join us, or better yet, volunteer to help the squadron conduct our classes.

All of our class schedules and contact information is available at our squadron web site at www.milwaukeepowersquadron.org. Visit our site and click the "Classes" button for all the latest information. The web site is the best place to visit for information on the class syllabus, instructor, registration contacts and last minute changes to the class schedule.

I hope to see you in a class.

Stf/C Mike Wiedel
Squadron Educational Officer

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The United States Power Squadron is America's number one boating organization. If you would like information about membership, please contact: Ted Smyczek at 262-786-2599 or tmsmyczek@netzero.net

Please send questions, comments, Roster contact information updates/changes, opinions, photos, news, articles, story ideas, etc. to: Deckwatch@milwaukeekeepowersquadron.org

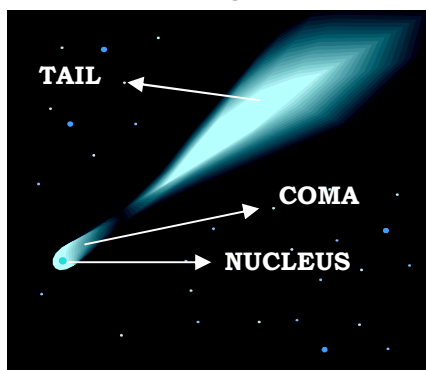
STAR GAZING



Comets have fascinated and frightened humans for centuries more than any other objects that appear in the sky. Comets were considered as omens of death and destruction, and in general a sign of bad things about to happen. Some people wore charms as protection against them. I'm sure some of the large bright comets that have passed did look pretty scary.

Astronomers have determined that comets are leftovers from the formation of our Solar System. Most comets are thought to originate from the Oort Clouds that surround our solar system, it extends half way to Proxima Centauri, the closest star to Earth and to a lesser extent from the Kuiper Belt located just beyond the orbit of Neptune, and is believed to be the source of short-period comets.

Astronomers best guess is that there are about 100 million comets orbiting the Sun.



A comet is basically a "Dirty Snowball" made up of icy chunks, frozen gases and bits of embedded rock and dust known as a nucleus. As a comet passes near the Sun, solar radiation causes the frozen gases to turn into a vapor forming into a hazy coma surrounding the nucleus that makes up the comet's head. As the comet nears the Sun the solar winds push the dust and vapor away from the coma and stream it into space and in most cases form the comet's tail. The solar winds cause the comet's tail to point away from the sun. Some comet tails can be as long as 200,000,000 miles long, others can have very short tails or

no tail at all. Comets have no light of their own, what is seen is the reflection of the sun off the comet's head and tail.

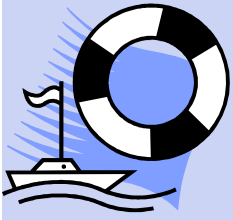
Depending on the distance a comet travels on its elliptical orbit they are classed as a short-period if they return within 200 years and long-period over 200 years after their first sighting.

One night in October 2007, I spent some time observing with my telescope two bright open clusters of stars in the constellation Perseus. I have not spent much time observing this constellation so I started to snoop around Perseus. As I moved my telescope around I noticed a star-like object that looked a little odd, I noted its coordinates and later checked it out on my star chart. I couldn't find it on my chart. The next night I set the telescope to the same coordinates and it wasn't there. I slewed the scope around a bit and found it. I repeated this exercise for a few nights and discovered the object was moving a few degrees each night. What I had stumbled onto was the short-period comet 17P/Holmes. This comet was first discovered in 1892 by British amateur astronomer Edwin Holmes. This comet comes our way every 6.88 years and has a magnitude of only a Dim 17, much too faint to be seen in my telescope. For some unknown reason this normally very faint comet nightly became brighter and larger. In my telescope I could see a fuzzy coma forming around its nucleus growing in size until it became so large I could track it with my 7x50 binoculars. On October 24th it underwent an astonishing outburst in brightness and size becoming visible to the naked eye (Professional astronomers have not determined the cause of the huge outbursts). With my binoculars I tracked this tail-less comet nightly watching change from disc shape to a large oval. As the comet expanded in size the dust cloud surrounding it slowly spread out decreasing the brightness of reflected sunlight. I tracked this comet until December 5th. After that date I could no longer see it with 7x50 binoculars.

It's nights like this that make amateur astronomy a fascinating hobby!

Boating Safety

If you must give up the ship, a life raft is a must!



Every boating rule says: "Stay with your boat until it sinks out from under you. Your chance of survival is almost always greater with your boat." However, there comes a time when you have to abandon the boat. To prepare for such an event it is in your best interest to make sure your boat is outfitted with an inflatable life raft.

Many different types of life rafts are available. The main difference among them is the amount of balance in the bottom of the raft. Balance prevents the raft from overturning, thus keeping you and your crew from being forced into the water again to face the risk of drowning or hypothermia.

Many life rafts today are stored in rigid containers that occupy little storage space on deck. Life rafts should never be stored below deck, where they would be difficult to retrieve in an emergency. Most are activated automatically when a boat sinks. A rope attached to both the raft and your vessel becomes taut, causing the raft to inflate. These rafts can also be activated manually by pulling the rope after the canister has been tossed over the side.

In reality the chances of ever using a life raft are slim. Many damaged vessels will float indefinitely. Never abandon ship until you are certain your boat is going to sink or some other emergency forces you to leave your boat (or your boat to leave you). You are much safer aboard a half-submerged boat than in a life raft. Before abandoning your boat, put on your life preserver and send a distress message. Do not waste signal devices when there is no assistance nearby.

Also, have an abandon ship bag handy. This should include medication to combat seasickness. A life raft is often enclosed and in constant motion, so seasickness can happen even to an experienced boater.

Be prepared!

Gisela Murray, SN
Safety Officer

Tiki Tuesday



**Fun was had by all at this years
Tiki Tuesday outing.**

**Join the FUN and come with
us next year!**

An advertisement for Nautiking Professional Marine Products. The background is a blue sky with a sailboat. The word "NAUTIKING" is written in large, stylized letters at the top. Below it is a circular logo with a sailboat and the text "NAUTIKING" and "PROFESSIONAL MARINE PRODUCTS". To the right of the logo are three small images: a sailboat, a tube of product, and a boat. At the bottom, the text "A New Approach to Boat Repair" and the website "www.nautiking.com" are displayed.



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Milwaukee Sail and Power
Squadron
A Unit of District 10,
UNITED STATES POWER
SQUADRONS

Membership Director
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Please note: If your address, phone number, or email address changes or you get a new boat, be sure to contact Ted Smyczek at (262) 786-2599.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

"Year in Preview"

DATE: SEPTEMBER 16

LOCATION: GOLDEN MAST
W349N5293 LACYS LANE,
OKAUCHEE, 53069



TIME: 6:00 PM—COCKTAILS
7:00 PM—DINNER (CHICKEN OR FISH)
MEETING TO FOLLOW DINNER

COST: \$30.00/PERSON

RSVP: BY SEPTEMBER 12TH TO MEL
262-966-2743 OR LIGHTHOUSE966@AOL.COM