

May 2018

From the Front

Racing Report

From the Rear

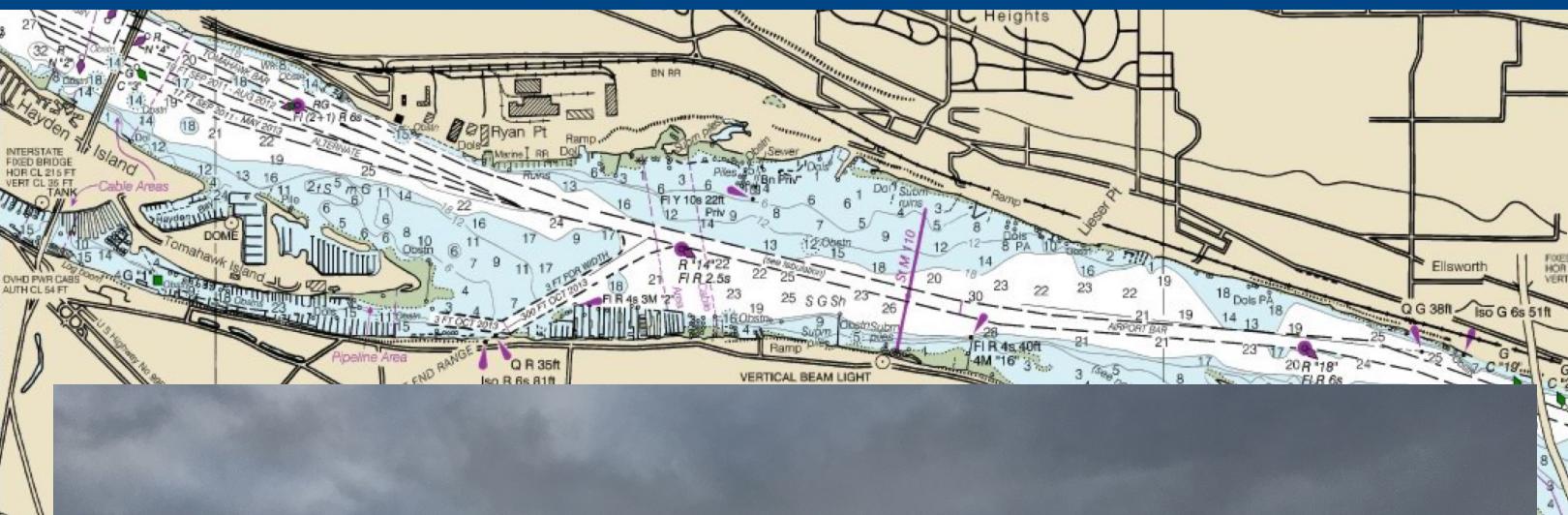
May 2018 SYSCO
Meeting Minutes

Racer's Corner

Editor's Note: To Boldly Go,
Part 3... maybe in June?

Small Yacht Sailing Club of Oregon

STARTING LINE



Slow down-wind journey on Tuesday. Photo courtesy of Ellen Dean.

From the Front

Michael Morrissey, Commodore

Spring Series is underway and with it comes all the things that try sailors' souls. Fickle wind, strong current, barges, and hoping the crew doesn't get stuck in I-5 traffic for the 6:30 pm starting horn. Several of these topics are written about in this month's newsletter. Probably the most important is the section on barges and boat safety by our Race Captain. The first race of the season was a lesson in all the different scoring that can occur in a SYSCO race. There were TLEs, DNFs, DNCs all having a different number attached. Our Rear Commodore does a very good job in running through how these might happen and how it could affect your standing at the end of the series.

Since you've paid your SYSCO and OCSA dues and have signed up for the Spring Series, take a moment to sign up as well for the Summer and Twilight Series if you think you might be doing it. They are free for all SYSCO members and it will help the Race Captain in making the fleets and pennants for the other series. Besides, if you wait until the last minute (24 hr before the race) you will have to pay an additional \$30 for a late fee. So, it makes sense to take a few minutes and register now by going to sailpdx.org.

This past Saturday was the first Beer Can Race, hosted by Island Sailing Club. It was a great day to be out on the Columbia with winds 10-15 mph from the WNW and temperatures in the low 80s; some of the best Spring sailing we have had so far. These just-for-fun races began several years ago so that new racers, who may be intimidated by all the commotion of a typical SYSCO race, can see what a sailboat race is like in an informal setting. These races are intended to provide a casual program for acquiring or polishing skills without the intensity of a serious regatta. In past years, the Beer Can races were held on Friday nights and were sparsely attended. Fighting I-5 traffic when everyone is leaving town was a deterrent, as well as missing the end of the work-week Happy Hour with friends and colleagues. So, the SYSCO Board decided to try a more amiable time, Saturday evening. It is hoped that the kids soccer games would be over, the hike/walk with the dog done, and yard chores finished for the day. The first warning signal is at 5 pm and the Race Committee boat is usually by Buoy 14. So, here is the chance to take your son, daughter or good friend sailing in a casual competition, and better yet have them drive the boat. It is also a great opportunity just to get out on the water. Check the OCSA Facebook for the Beer Can schedule and see you out on the water.



Rear Commodore/Kestrel victory pass by RC. Photo courtesy of RC.

From the Rear

Bruce Newton, Rear Commodore

The first race of the Spring Series was under conditions that strike terror in the hearts of Race Committees – wind due East at 4 to 7 mph and current running at 3 knots. Needless to say, despite a very long starting line and shortening the courses after the starts, most boats failed to finish and some boats failed to even get across the starting line. After the fiasco was over the challenge of sorting out how to score everyone began. The time limit for races and how it affects scoring can be confusing so I thought I would attempt to explain it here.

There are two aspects to the time limits. The first boat in a race must finish within two hours of the start. All other boats must finish within 30 minutes of the first boat or they will be scored Time Limit Exceeded (TLE).

If no boat in a race finishes within two hours, the race has timed out and the race will not be scored. If one boat in a race finishes within two hours, the remaining boats now have 30 minutes to finish or they will be scored TLE. TLE is scored as follows: the number of boats that finished plus one.

On really slow days most of the teams have no idea if any boats in their race have finished or when. Boats that give up, quit, throw in the towel, etc. have an obligation to inform the Race Committee that they are retiring. The Race Committee will record the time that the boat retired. If a boat retired after the 30 minute limit, they will be scored TLE. If a boat retired before the 30 minute limit, they will be scored Did Not Finish (DNF). DNF is scored as follows: the number of boats racing plus one. And, of course, if it turns out that no boat finished, the race will not be scored at all.

Just to add to the scoring fun, that night we had boats starting and subsequently drifting backwards through the finish line. As I'm sure you will recall, the finish line is restricted (see General Sailing Instruction 12.2). A boat that fails to observe this restriction may exonerate herself by making a one-turn penalty. But none of these boats did and there was no alternative but to score them DNF.

Let's hope that, if we have any more East wind races, the wind speed is at least 15 mph.

On another topic, that sucking sound that you hear when rounding our nifty inflatable racing buoys is the sound of the mark attempting to suck you into its grip. They are especially hungry this time of year. As the photo below shows, even a former Olympic sailing coach and current Commodore can fall prey to these tenacious critters. Watch out!



*Commodore Michael Morrissey in the grips of the green one on May 1.
Photo courtesy of RC.*

Race Management Guidance Updated

Ever wonder what goes into putting on a night of racing? SYSCO's guidance document, Fleet Captain's Guide to SYSCO Racing, has just been updated and is available on the SYSCO website at <http://syscosailing.org/resources.php>

Upcoming Dates to Remember

SYSCO Spring Evening Series

(Tuesdays and Thursdays)

April 24 – May 31

RVYC Swiftsure

May 26 – 28

RCYC Medium Distance Race

May 19

SYSCO Summer Evening Series

(Tuesdays and Thursdays)

June 5 – July 12

ISC Beer Can Race

June 9

PYC Mauni Elliot

(Wednesdays) June 6 – 27

SYSCO Single Handed Beer Can Race

June 16

OWSA Beer Can Race

June 23

RCYC Beer Can Race

June 30



Two images (sorta) from the 2018 CYC Oregon Offshore this last week.

Above: Wy'East's view of Astoria as the boat was delivered on Saturday morning prior to the race. Photo courtesy of Kelly Dews.

Right: J/105 Free Bowl of Soup's prop was damaged by floating river debris during delivery pre-race, so was forced to take the land route to Victoria BC. They sent in this photo enroute which was captioned "Stuck in a hole in Anacortes... making the most of it."





Buoy two dragging some sticks it caught in the high current over the winter. Photo courtesy of Kelly Dews.

Racer's Corner – Introduction

Michael Morrissey, Commodore

Tod Bassham and his team aboard Nausicaä has been sailing and winning in the Merit 25 fleet for the past decade and he knows the river well. Tod has also made significant contributions to SYSCO for several years and received the US Sailing Association Sportsmanship Award in 2017 at the SYSCO Awards Banquet. Little known fact: Nausicaä translates to “Burner of Ships”, so pay attention.

The Windward Leg – Tips and Strategies

Tod Bassham

All right! You've crossed the start line, determined that you are not OCS, and are moving down the first windward leg of the course in a pack of boats. What next? How do you sail the first windward leg? The short answer is: execute your plan. Before the race, you scouted/sailed the course, and gained some sense of (1) where the wind and currents are strongest at that time, and (2) the direction, timing and duration of shifts. Based on that pre-race scouting, you formed a strategic plan for the windward leg (subject always to revision based on more recent information or tactical considerations). Your strategic plan tells you where you should position yourself on the course if you were the only boat racing and just trying to sail the course as rapidly as possible, in the absence of other boats. One of your chief goals in starting is to try to set yourself up to execute the strategic plan you made before the race, in terms of (1) position along the starting line and (2) freedom to maneuver. For example, if your strategic plan is to sail the right side of the course, you would position yourself on the right side of the start line, and try to be in a position to tack over shortly after the start and go right.

Ah, but what if you neglected to develop a strategic plan before the race? Well, just find a boat with a strategic plan and stick close. They're easy to spot. They are probably ahead of you.

If you prefer a more seat-of-the-pants approach, here are some considerations.

Let's assume a typical summer wind pattern and course, with NW winds, the start line between B and C on the OCSA course chart, and a windward mark somewhere near the Washington side (e.g., the red-green navigation buoy or an inflatable mark somewhere in that area). Let's also identify some areas for strategic discussion. From north to south we can describe three linear areas: the Washington side, the middle of the river, and the Oregon side. Each has their own characteristics in different conditions, based on current and wind strength/direction. Generally, the shallower Oregon side has less current than the Washington side, where the deep shipping channel is located. (Useless trivia: the technical term for the line corresponding to the deepest part of the watercourse at the bottom of a valley is the thalweg, which is usually near the middle of the watercourse. The Columbia River's thalweg is the dredged shipping channel, which in the OCSA racing area is all the way on the Washington side.) Quite often, the middle of the river has a little more wind than the Washington side (where buildings tend slow and divert the prevailing wind) or the Oregon side (where trees on Hayden Island cause the wind to lift off the water close to shore). If in doubt, stick to

the middle.

We can also usefully describe two other areas from east to west: the Upper half of the course from the start line to roughly halfway to the windward mark, and the Lower course, the rest of the way to the mark. The difference? Sailing choices for the Upper half of the course are relatively unconstrained. Sailing the Lower half your choices are constrained by the paramount need to reach the starboard layline and set yourself up for the mark rounding.

A few other geographic details matter. Ryan Point, on the Washington side, marks the point where there is typically a northerly veer to the wind. The prevailing wind in the region is actually NNW, but the buildings west of Point Ryan tend to back the wind on the water westerly, to NW. This means that going downriver on starboard tack one tends to be headed slightly after one passes Ryan Point. (Conversely, on the downwind leg heading upriver, one tends to be lifted after passing Ryan Point.) In addition, immediately west of Ryan Point there is often a mild countercurrent to avoid on the windward leg (but which you might use on the downwind leg to avoid strong current). Because of the shipping channel, the water is plenty deep all the way to the riprap lining the Washington Shore, so you can sail right up to the shore and pick up some takeout pizza and beer from the restaurants lining the bank (if you time your phone order just right). Finally, although the wind is lighter close to the Washington side, due to deflection from buildings there is often a distinct lift or “shore bend” effect on port tack that you can briefly take advantage of before running onto the rocks.



Upper Half Strategies. In strong current/light wind conditions, the best strategic plan right after the start is often to go right and take advantage of the swifter currents in the shipping channel close to the Washington shore. In all other conditions, it generally pays to go where the wind seems strongest (which is often the middle portion). But there is a tactical premium on clear air, so if your strategic plan is to run up the middle, but you find yourself trapped to leeward of the fleet, it may make sense to tack over just to find clear air.

Another factor that may require you to rethink your initial strategic plan is an unexpected header. In a matter of nanoseconds you and your tactician have to evaluate: (1) how deep/sustained is this header? (2) if it is deep or sustained, how important strategically or tactically is it to remain on the current tack? And (3) what are the negative consequences of tacking over? Other variables include your crew's state of readiness and ability for a sudden tack. If your crew is well-worked up, then tacking even on small headers can be advantageous, if that fits with your initial or revised strategic plan.

Lower Half Strategies. As you approach the bottom of the leg, the critical decision is when to tack over to sail to Washington to set up for the windward mark rounding. If you tack too soon, you may hit the Washington Shore before reaching the layline, which means throwing in extra tacks. Further, if you set up too early on the starboard lay line wind shifts may cause you to overstand the mark. The optimum strategy seems to be to come in on port tack five or six boatlengths below the mark, and look for an advantageous place to zipper into the starboard parade. In picking the layline, keep in mind the strong current in this area. Many boats overstand, thinking only of the wind or worried that a sudden header will keep them from making the mark and force them to tack in the zone. But once on the starboard tack final approach the current tends to “lift” you to the mark, so tacking just shy of the layline as determined by the wind often means a nice tight rounding.

Thinking Ahead. Long before you reach the windward mark you should formulate a tentative strategy for the downwind leg, based on your pre-race survey and more recent experience. Follow that strategy, unless a substantial wind shift right at the mark or some other event prompts re-evaluation. A bear away spinnaker launch is the best choice most of the time. If due to wind shifts or strategic or tactical considerations you decide to gybe-set, avoid gybing right at the windward mark. In lighter winds, gybing onto port while still in the zone can mean sitting there almost motionless in the strong current while a cavalcade of starboard tack boats bear down on you, shouting “Starboard!” It is far better to delay your launch, sail out of the zone on starboard tack, then gybe over.

Final Thoughts. Given the currents on the river, the downwind leg is usually the most determinative leg of the race, and a great deal of attention should be paid to downwind strategies and skills, the subject of future articles. Nonetheless, the positions established in the first windward leg often remain the same for the entire race. A well-executed strategic plan for the first windward leg can be very rewarding.



May 3 race. Photo courtesy of Gretchen Markley.

Racing Report

Jeff Eastes, Race Captain

We're off to a good start and Pancho is fully operational. Buoys inflated, got to check the start buoy that got in a battle with OBI, not sure who won. RC has had its hands full keeping up with ever changing wind. Scoring issues and challenges are getting resolved, a big thanks to Gary Whitney. Sounds like Spring Series racing per normal every Tuesday and Thursday. Good to back on the river.

At the May SYSCO board meeting a number of topics were discussed. Specific to RC these suggestion were made. I sent this email out to the race captains but thought it might be helpful for RC volunteers as well as racers. First of all, thank you for the time you give to SYSCO every Tuesday and Thursday. Racing on the Columbia wouldn't happen without your efforts.

A couple of key points came up at the SYSCO board meeting that should make the things run a little smoother for racers, RC, scoring, data entry, and barges.

- RC needs to make sure that both Check-in and Finish Sheets are used correctly. Both Check-in and Finish sheets are in an orange waterproof box. Check-in Sheets record check-in, starts, OCS boats and whether they went back to start properly, and counts of starting boats. Finish Sheets record start times, courses, RC members, sail number and time of finishing boats. In addition, use the Finish Sheet to record protests, violations of the restricted finish line, retiring boats with the time they called in to retire, transfer OCS information from the Check-in Sheet, and any other important information.
- It's very helpful to have 2 volunteers record check-in and finish sheets separately for a total of 2 check-in and 2 finish sheets. This helps with verification.
- Please record on the Finish Sheets, over early, did not start, protest flags, protests, or withdrawal hailed over the VHF radio. Be sure to record the time that a boat calls in to retire.
- If a barge(s) is between 205 and I-5 bridge please contact the barge captain on VHF radio channel 13 and advise of sailboat races in progress. Also, politely ask the barge captain to make his presence known by a courtesy horn blast.
- If the barge captain blasts 5 times, politely ask him to identify the sailboat or vessel receiving that 5 blasts.
- RC should appoint someone on committee boat to monitor barge traffic and sailboat interactions.
- You have the option of postponing starts to let a barge pass through the race course.

The Fleet Captain's Guide for SYSCO Racing has been updated (thanks Bruce) and is now available at [sailpdx](#). This is a great resource for everyone who volunteers for Race Committee. As the season progresses I anticipate that a lot if these small wrinkles will be ironed out and operations will smooth out. Looking forward to some excellent racing in the Spring Series. Remember to register for the Summer and Twilight Series. Yes, you can do this in advance.

Propulsion can be a very helpful thing when racing. There are two general sailing instructions in the OCSA Racebook that apply to propulsion/motors when racing. Rule 11.5 - A boat that has not started, whether or not racing, may use propulsion without penalty as long as the boat does not start for at least 4 minutes after discontinuing propulsion; and Rule 17.2 - A boat in a position where she may interfere with commercial traffic must clear the danger area, and may use propulsion if necessary to do so, provided she does not improve her competitive position.

Application of 11.5: If a boat is over early or misses the starting line and is carried downriver by the fast spring current it can be difficult and time consuming to fight the current to get above the starting line to start the race. While working RC, I saw a boat go over the start line early and quickly drifted downriver. It struggled against the current to get back upriver of the start line. This process took 2 complete start sequences, 10+ minutes. It made a proper start 10 minutes or more behind its class. The discussion on RC was, why didn't that boat start their

motor/propulsion to get above the starting line and then wait 4 minutes after discontinuing propulsion before crossing the starting line. In this case, it appears that propulsion could have been used correctly and it would've started the boat quicker than sailing upstream fighting the spring current for a proper start. Who knows for sure if it would have been quicker, but propulsion *could* have been used in the situation according to OCSA General Sailing Instruction 11.5.

Barges and application of 17.2: Surprised by an approaching barge? I've been there; too busy racing and forgot to look outside the boat. Don't have time to sail out of its path/danger area? You need to act quickly before you get the dreaded disqualifying 5 horn blast! Use your motor/propulsion to get out of the danger area and keep on racing. As long as you haven't improved your competitive advantage it's within the rules and SAFE.

My wife, sailing partner, and racing crew has a saying on our Ranger 20: There are three things that can ruin your day, Buoys, Bridges, and BARGES. I'll forego 1 and 2 to say something about barges. They scare my wife! Seriously now, barges/commercial ships always have the right of way. Commercial ships are working, and we are playing. They always win because they are bigger and don't have to stop. Please don't put yourself or crew in a dangerous area or situation by trying to "beat the barge". I've heard that at the slips, we can always see them but they can't always see us. Remember instruction 17.2.

By OSCA General Sailing Instruction 17.1, *Competitors have the responsibility to keep clear of all commercial traffic and shall not interfere with commercial traffic. A boat shall be subject to disqualification upon protest for failing to comply with this instruction. The Race Committee may score a boat DSQ without a hearing. Commercial traffic that signals 5 horns indicates a vessel is interfering.* During the first Spring Thursday night race, an incident occurred that caused a commercial barge to give the 5-blast signal of danger twice. The RC decided that all boats under one pennant were in violation of Rule 17.2 and received a DSQ. It was a difficult decision and the incident was discussed at the SYSCO Board meeting (see recommendations above and board minutes).

Sharing the Water with Commercial Ships

Due to their size, commercial ships are allowed only in the deep-draft navigational channel. Consequently, *these vessels always have the right-of-way*. Their size also makes it difficult for them to slow down or maneuver quickly.

Recreational vessels and sailboarders can share the water safely with commercial ships by observing the following.

- Know that a large vessel can "steal your wind."
- Don't expect to have the same wind you started with when sailing near a ship or tug. That includes sailboards also.
- Know the whistle signals. One-three short blasts are warnings. Five or more short blasts mean "DANGER." If the signal is for you, give way quickly. Steer clear of large vessels.
- Keep a close watch.
- Don't pass too closely behind a tug.
- Please be responsible, stay out of the danger area, and make SAFE choices playing/racing on the Columbia River.

Scoring "In the Dog House"

One of responsibilities as SYSCO Race Captain is to verify that the boats racing are playing fair, and abide by the honor system. The honor system means boats are members of OCSA, SYSCO membership \$\$\$\$ is paid in full, and PHRF boats have current certificates. It's my understanding that if a boat does NOT meet those criteria, that boat goes into the "Dog House" where current and future scores are suspended until the boat fulfills those requirements.

May 2018 SYSCO Board Minutes

Gary Bruner

The meeting was held at Elmer's, Delta Park. Commodore Michael Morrissey rapped the gavel promptly at 7 PM and welcomed all. Besides Michael, members present were: Bruce Newton, Scott Stevenson, Jeff Eastes, Fred Hazzard, Mike Daly, Thomas MacMenemy, Bill Sanborn, Jan Burkhardt, Warren Dalby and Gary Bruner.

Membership Report

Chair Jan Burkhardt reported that April was a busy month with 29 renewals and 5 new applications for membership for a total of 119 members, of which 108 are regular and 11 are associate. The board voted unanimously to accept these new members: Colton Gardener, J-24 One More as an associate and full memberships for Chris Bixby and Brandon Gwinner who own the Ranger 20 Vela, Brent Eastes with Ranger 20 Lone Ranger, Jonathan Lampman with Ranger 20 Promise, and Frank and Paula Wertanen with the Cal 20 Reality. Welcome to SYSCO! It is hoped and expected that we will pick up a few more members as later series and events arrive on the schedule so we can reach more normal numbers, which are around 130 in a good year. There was some discussion about membership in SYSCO and OCSA and how bothersome it is for the race captain to assign fleets when information comes in so late. While earlier deadlines were debated, there seemed consensus to leave things as they are so no action taken.

Financial Report

Scott Stevenson reported that SYSCO now has \$7,995 in the checking account and \$3,691 in Pancho savings. Outstanding upcoming expenses include barbeques at the end of series and trophies for the end of the season, budgeted at \$6,000. Currently, SYSCO has spent \$351 from the \$1,200 allotted for meetings and food and drink. There followed a discussion about the OCSA Awards party moving from PYC to Warehouse 23 on the Washington side of the river. Folks were reminded that a membership poll taken a few years ago that showed a clear preference for one awards party rather than 2, and that PYC was the preferred choice for a venue. The main reason for the OCSA decision was that the PYC event has been quite crowded at the last two combined Awards parties and that Warehouse 23 offered a larger space. There was also discussion of SYSCO supporting PYC by hosting some sort of non-awards dinner, perhaps with a speaker, at PYC this fall in Sept., perhaps on a Thursday evening. Michael will

be contacting Frank Bocarde, the PYC Commodore, about possible dates that might be open.

Racing

Race Captain Jeff Eastes reported that the Spring Series is underway, and 'eventful'. He says we have 43 boats out on so far 'windless' Tuesdays and 53 boats on the line on the more fortunate Thursdays. Pancho is running fine. Jeff reported that there have been some SNAFUs with recording of finish times, so he will endeavor to encourage RCs to use the finish sheets and will make sure they are stapled to the back of the check in sheets on Pancho.

SYSCO is responsible to see that everyone racing is either a member or has paid the appropriate fees, to check whether OCSA membership is up to date, and to check whether boats needing one have a current PHRF certificate. One design boats who enter events without 3 entries are required to have a certificate in order to race PHRF, but can enter 'level' fleets when available.

Much discussion surrounded the issue of tugs and barges seemingly upset with sailboats in their path. In a recent race, an entire fleet was DSQed after a tug blew five blasts more than once. It was suggested that communication is a good thing, and that tug captains are sometimes rightfully nervous when there is boat traffic in the area. Jeff will be reaching out to Tidewater and Shaver to get their opinions on how to handle crowded waterways, but, in the meantime, he will suggest to fleet captains that RCs CALL any tugs in the area on VHF 13 and let them know there is a race in process and to sound ONE horn to alert racers. If they can identify which boat(s) don't get out of the way, that would be helpful to us. We were all reminded that the OCSA rules state that any boat getting five blasts will likely receive a DSQ by RC, and that is not subject to challenge.

The COB race had its information about start times posted on the Notice Board of Sailpdx, but some sailors were expecting an email with that information and some confusion was the result. Jeff Eastes will address going forward.

New Business

Naomi Reichmann, social chair, will need some volunteer help with the series ending barbeques. No action taken yet. Michael Morrissey will be contacting Columbia Crossings to reserve the BBQ area on those days (July 10 & 12) and to discuss awards and food following the Dual Bridge Duel (August 11).

Jan mentioned a request for our Awards prizes to include some sailor's bags made from sailcloth. The last ones given out date from about 2000 and are wearing out. This would be a Jim Shaw decision, as he procures the trophies each

year. Jan will contact Jim Shaw, the trophy czar.

Gary expressed some frustration with discussions at board meetings that don't seem to clarify just who is going to follow up when things need to be accomplished. There were some nods around the table that this could be an area of improvement.

The meeting adjourned a bit after 8 PM.

Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Gary Bruner for Secretary Don Woodhouse



Nice night on the river. Photo courtesy of Free Bowl of Soup.