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## Who we are; where we're going

Michael Verdon championed an ethics clause for BWI, Roger Marshall envisioned a mentor program for young marine writers, Kim Kavin ushered us into the world of blogs and digital. Zuzana Prochazka strengthened BWI's role in the Innovation Awards. John Woolbridge brought stability during a time when the industry was clawing back from low tide. Over the past decade or so these past presidents have all lead BWI through an ever-changing business model.

Today BWI is like the boat industry itself, noticing a tad more grey, an appreciation for a well-placed boarding handle, yet a ferocious spirit for our joie de vivre on the water.

Five years ago members completed our last survey that helped BWI's Board of Directors chart direction. Webinars were coming into vogue; with the help of supporting member Dometic Marine, BWI met with some success on a variety of topics.

As we all recognize, disruptive technology continues to redefine our professional lives. Eight years ago I listened to fellow board member Alan Jones lament being thrust into the role of a video producer and TV host in addition to his



editor role at *Boating World*. Today he's a star.

For we editors, staff writers, freelancers, bloggers, life doesn't get better by chance, it gets better by change.

The same is true for BWI as a professional organization. The question is what kind of change makes sense? From a leadership perspective, change should include a platform that provides a succession plan for the millennial generation that can't wait to take over.

Your board has already identified one area of concern: professional development. That term needs some definition. Does it mean the mechanics of measuring fuel consumption and speed on a boat test? Or does it mean editing video on an iPad and posting to your company site? The definition may well cross a number of topics and platforms and that's one reason we need input.

One proposal being explored is to create a professional development day into IBEX. This annual trade show is North America's best access to every major and emerging vendor in the business, all in one, easy and affordable location. Will you be there to cover the

event? Manufacturers put on training sessions at their plants all the time to help educate staff – why not create a similar program for BWI members?

What other areas should this volunteer organization tackle as a group to help you tomorrow, while creating an inviting BWI for the next generation of writers?

Look for an email soon with a link to the BWI membership survey. And if you know someone who is not a member of BWI, invite them to become a member. You'll be amazed at how the power of one can add to the group's success.

Thanks in advance for your time to respond. You can reach me at [Alan@wendt-productions.com](mailto:Alan@wendt-productions.com).

*Alan Wendt*  
**BWI President**

# Ellison's 9 Year Blogging Pays Off

By Ben Ellison

I lucked out! Oh, in retrospect it was smart to specialize in marine electronics early in my freelancing career. While I had the experience and enthusiasm to write about many boating topics, it quickly became obvious that focusing my reporting on one subject and selling the results to multiple magazines made more time/money sense. (It also helped that my kids were done with college.)

But it was sheer luck that a Dutch Internet geek started a blog about marine electronics in 2004, largely to explore what was then a new content management technology, and that I became editor a year later. Neither of us saw PANBO.com as a significant income source, and my main motivation was the hope that writing frequent short pieces would help me write longer magazine pieces faster.

I quickly came to appreciate the near instant feedback my blog entries received, via either comments or email. And I developed a routine where the Panbo entries were often writer's notes eventually re-fashioned for print. That way reader feedback got incorporated in the finished article, and technical mistakes usually happened online, where they were easily fixed.

I persuaded some of the magazines I worked for to sponsor Panbo and/or syndicate it on their own sites, plus I worked with services that placed banner ads on my site without me having to sell them. But I didn't truly understand where this was headed.

Today I'm not so much a

freelancer as the editor/publisher of a micro publication. About one third of my income comes from syndicating Panbo content and about half from direct ad sales to marine electronics companies. I was quite reluctant to make the ad change, but dealing with advertisers turned out to be much less difficult than I'd feared. Online phenomenon like Amazon reviews and anything-goes boating forums really have changed the landscape. These days advertisers not only realize that criticism is part of the game but that the most passionate and influential audience for their products tend to congregate on sites that host open discussions. (See *Sailing Anarchy* with its rude forums and raft of advertisers for an extreme example.)

I've never felt so editorially independent. About the only pressure I feel from advertisers or other companies I cover is when I make factual mistakes, which I'm happy to correct. The independence extends to my relationship with AIM Marine Group. The AIM publications go beyond our contract to credit my syndicated content back to Panbo and when they edit that content for print I get to sign off on the results. I comfortably represent both AIM and Panbo at boat shows and product demos because they treat me as a partner.

Now here's the best part: I'm positive that there's room for more Panbo-like niche web sites in the boating world, even in marine electronics. A writer/photographer with a passion for small



**Ben Ellison, tinkering with electronics and on "Gizmo," his test boat (right, photo by Dan Corcoran).**

## Share Your Story

Have a writing craft story you'd like to share? Send it to [info@bwi.org](mailto:info@bwi.org). We only need 500-ish words and an image or two. The offer is open to all, including those engaged in communications or marketing.

boat fishing electronics could build a significant audience which would be followed by advertiser and big media interest. Or it could be racing sailboat electronics or even marine plumbing. Our world is full of product categories that aren't covered anywhere in depth, the tools for putting quality content online keep getting easier and less expensive, and meanwhile more and more consumers use Google to research purchases. Opportunity knocks!

Moreover, I'll put a little money where my mouth is. Panbo needs more voices and the writer doesn't have to be an electronics expert. Solid reporting on an interesting product or install, a basic "how to" piece or a well-grounded rant are possible entries. The reward will be a small stipend, a large immediate audience, and hopefully a taste of how satisfying a niche web site can be. Please pitch me! -- [ben@panbo.com](mailto:ben@panbo.com).

## Skip Allen, Sr. Passes On

Industry promoter, publisher and cruising yachtsman George Lyle "Skip" Allen passed away March 23 in Fort Lauderdale, FL at the age of 84. Born in New York City and raised in Larchmont, NY, he found his love of the water and all things boating there. He joined the Merchant Marines during WWII, was involved in promoting the America's Cup campaigns and participated by driving photography and committee boats, and worked for Charles Chapman at *Motor Boating & Sailing*. Allen was also a founder of *Popular Boating* magazine, which became *Boating*. He relocated the family to Miami Beach in

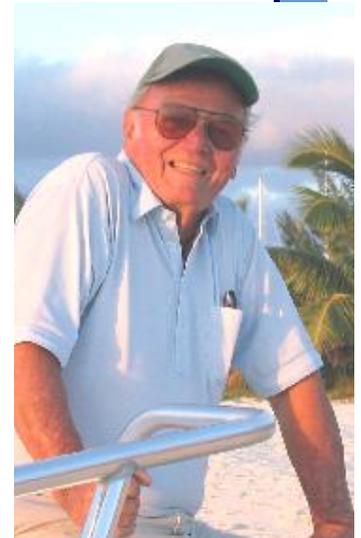
1967, where he worked for Bertram Yachts.

In 1972, Allen founded *Southern Boating* magazine and in 1980, the first U.S. Spanish-language boating magazine, *Mar Abierto*, also widely distributed in Latin and South America. In 1986, he launched the *Marine Business Journal*, a trade publication. During the '80s boom years he hosted numerous industry celebrations and led flotillas of recreational boat owners to the Bahamas.

Allen was a friend and mentor to many in the marine industry and recognized with the first Monk Farnham Award, the NMMA Directors Award, the Marine In-

dustries of South Florida Golden Anchor Award, the Charles F. Chapman Memorial Award, and the Cacique Award for International Writer of the Year presented by The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism.

Several members of Allen's family joined him in his Florida publishing endeavors and all shared his passion for boating. He is survived by Helen, wife of 14 years, son Richard John "Skip" (current publisher of *Southern Boating*), daughters Cathryn Allen-Zubizarreta, Jody Lewis, and Paige Conlan, and son George. His wife Joanne and son Frederick George "Rick" Allen predeceased him.



Skip Allen

## ABYC Offers Free Standards Access

Many BWI members have written about, referenced or included photographs of the American Boat & Yacht Council and its standards. ABYC's mission is to be the essential source of technical information for the international marine industry. It develops product safety standards, credentialing, education, training, and other tools to equip members to be successful and to achieve the goal of making boating safer.

Learning about and referring to the standards can be a little tricky, notes Nina Ullrich, ABYC's director of marketing. "Writers know it can be cumbersome to break down a specific standard without referencing another, or many others. This can be



even harder when copy is limited. To help writers better understand the standards, ABYC offers BWI members direct access to current and archived standards for free."

Writing about Electric Shock Drowning? The reference is ABYC Standard E-11. Writing about Rigging? There is an ABYC technical board investigating the possibility of developing an informational

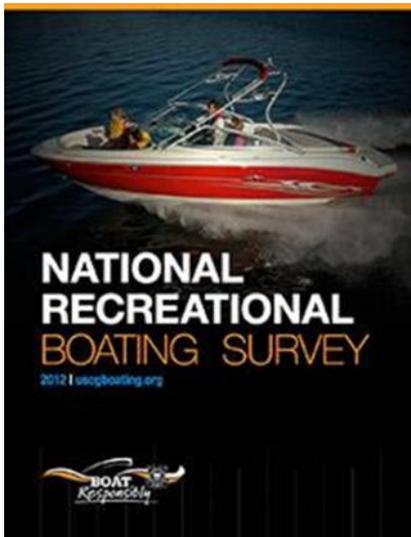
report on sailboat rigging and inspection. Standards access is normally limited to ABYC members and technicians. President John Adey, educational director Ed Sherman, technical director Brian Goodwin, and other technical team members can provide concise quotes when needed.

BWI members can contact Ullrich, [nullrich@abycinc.org](mailto:nullrich@abycinc.org), for a Standards' access code. She is also the Editor of the "Reference Point," ABYC's quarterly news journal, and looking for relevant technical articles. "Contact me with your story idea to discuss it; Reprints will be considered," she advises. The journal reaches more than 4,000 marine industry personnel.

# Latest National Boating Survey Data

Results from the just-issued National Recreational Boating Survey have been issued in report form with a downloadable copy posted on the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety homepage, [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org). It is the second such report produced (data is from 2012, previous data was collected in 2011 with somewhat different survey methods), with the next survey scheduled in 2015.

Much of the information is new and expected to be useful in measuring boating activity and safety, along with improved quality of the data gathered. Information includes how many people participate in boating, the numbers of types and sizes of vessels owned in different regions of the country, how often vessels are used, and more. With this data, the Coast Guard and partners expect to better measure the



effectiveness of strategies they implement and then refine them to create a better boating environment through safety programs, new or improved boating facilities, improvement in the boating industry, or other initiatives.

The latest survey produced the following key findings:

- About 27.3% or 32.3 million of the estimated 118.1

million U.S. households had at least one member who boated in 2012.

- Of the 22.2 million boats owned in the U.S., 51% of households owned powerboats, 3.7% sailboats, 8.5% personal watercraft, 12.6% canoes, 19.7% kayaks, 4.3% pontoon boats, and 8.8% rowboats or inflatables.
- Women comprised just under half (45%, 33.3 million) of the almost 74 million U.S. boating participants.

Boating participants include 57.9 million adults and 15.6 million children.

Almost 42% of recreational boating participants are ages 35 to 64; 16.3% are 45 and 54 years old. Only 9.1% of participants are 65 or older.

- Average risk ratios for the U.S. in 2012 were 18 deaths/100 million exposure hours and 101 casualties/100 million exposure hours.

## Calendar & Events

### Boating Congress Has 36 Industry Co-hosts

The American Boating Congress (ABC), to be held in Washington, DC on May 5-7, reports that 36 industry partner organizations, up from 31 a year ago, are working together to strengthen the industry's collective advocacy impact. ABC brings the industry together to help influence public policy and present a unified front on issues that impact the recreational boating industry. It offers attendees an opportunity to

discuss and learn about state and federal legislation, get first-hand insight from policymakers and network with others in the marine industry. Visit [www.nmma.org/abc](http://www.nmma.org/abc); contact Lauren Dunn, [ldunn@nmma.org](mailto:ldunn@nmma.org).

### NMEA's Conference Returns to Fort Myers

With a focus on new products and technology developments, The National Marine Electronics Association has announced that its 2014 NMEA International Marine

Electronics Conference & Expo will return to the Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort, in Fort Myers, Florida, on October 8-11. "Our 2014 NMEA conference and expo will focus on training, new product introductions, and developments in the technology of marine electronics," said Johnny Lindstrom, NMEA's chairman of the board. The conference and expo is the largest event in North America for the marine electronics trade. Details posted at [www.NMEA.org](http://www.NMEA.org).

# Supporting Member News

## KVH Film A Finalist For Safety Award

"The Human Element," produced by KVH Media Group, is a finalist in the "Safety at Sea" category of the Seatrade Awards. The Awards recognize those in the shipping industry who have demonstrated innovative solutions for safe, efficient, and environmental operation, and whose actions support goals and objectives of the International Maritime Organization. The film is a video within the KVH Media Group, a provider of news, entertainment, and training content to the marine trades. Contact Jill Connors, [jconnors@kvh.com](mailto:jconnors@kvh.com).

## Discover Boating Adds Country Artist

Discover Boating has announced that it will join country artist Jake Owen for his nationwide "Days of Gold" tour as presenting sponsor to inspire his fans and concertgoers to discover life on the water. An avid boater and angler, Owen's music is described as influenced by "what it feels like to

be out on the water." Each of his shows, taking place in boating-centric markets nationwide through October, feature video screens with footage of him boating, as well as special Discover Boating videos. The in-show video screens will also incorporate interactive social media elements to encourage fans to share their boating stories and join Discover Boating's Facebook page and [DiscoverBoating.com](http://DiscoverBoating.com).

## Disney Guests Get Boat – Fish Intro

Take Me Fishing™ and Walt Disney World Resort are helping families connect with the outdoors through fishing and boating. Beginning in April, The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation is offering catch-and-release fishing and boating experiences to guests at the Resort in Lake Buena Vista, FL. In addition, visitors to the Fort Wilderness Resort can go dockside fishing, while visitors at Port Orleans Resort can try cane pole fishing. Those who do will be encouraged to connect with [TakeMeFishing.org](http://TakeMeFishing.org), to get information about boating and fishing at home. Contact: Stephanie Vatalaro, [svatalaro@rbff.org](mailto:svatalaro@rbff.org).

## Sea Tow Partners With USPS On Safety

Recognizing their mutual goal of promoting boating safety, education and enjoyment on the water among recreational boaters, Sea Tow Services International and its

nonprofit Foundation and United States Power Squadrons (USPS) have formed a strategic partnership. The organizations will work together to provide boating safety resources and education to the public, while USPS members and boaters who take a USPS Boating Safety Course can get discounts on Sea Tow memberships. The Foundation will also create education and safety content to reach boaters by local Sea Tow operators, Power Squadron and community outreach efforts. Contact Cindy McCaffery, [cindymccaffery@seatow.com](mailto:cindymccaffery@seatow.com).

## BoatUS Cautions On Oil Spill Cleanups

The BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water recently tested oil spill products and found that many claiming to remove or render harmless spills of oil, gas, or diesel don't deliver on their promises. The full report and video can be found at [www.BoatUS.org/findings/53](http://www.BoatUS.org/findings/53). Some highlights: be wary of wording such as "EPA-classified for use in US waterways" since the EPA does not classify products for recreational use; 'Contained' products like absorbent socks, pads and pillows that encapsulate oil are the practical answer for most boating needs; Under U.S. law, only "professionals" may legally use many oil spill products such as granules and liquids. Contact: Scott Croft, [SCroft@BoatUS.com](mailto:SCroft@BoatUS.com).



**Duke University and the BoatUS Foundation simulated testing on use of oil spill products.**



**Country artist Jake Owen**

# Safe Boating Week Materials

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Boating safety advocates across the U.S. and Canada are teaming up to promote safe and responsible boating, including consistent life jacket wear, during National Safe Boating Week, scheduled for May 17-23. NSBW is the official launch of the 2014 North American Safe Boating Campaign.

The yearlong campaign will highlight stories of real boaters whose lives were saved by wearing a life jacket. In addition, the campaign will remind boaters of the importance of boating safely, including consistent life jacket wear, boating sober, knowing navigational rules and having a proper lookout.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that drowning was the reported cause of death in almost three-fourths of recreational boating fatalities in 2012, and that 85 percent of those who drowned were not wearing life jackets. That's why boating safety advocates continue to push for increased and consistent life jacket wear on the water.

The campaign unites the efforts of a wide variety of boating safety advocates, in-



cluding the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, Canadian Safe Boating Council and many members of the Na-

Other events that tie into the safety campaign include the following:

• Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day (May 16)

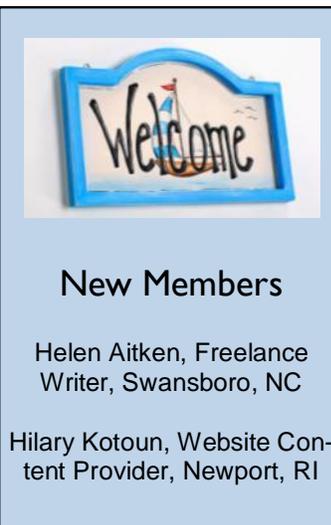
• Ready, Set, Wear It! Life Jacket World Record Day (May 17)

• National Safe Boating Week (May 17-23)

• National Fishing and Boating Week (June 1-8)

• Operation Dry Water (June 27-29)

Media will find resources at [www.safeboatingcampaign.com/2014press/2014-Press-Kit-WearIt.pdf](http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/2014press/2014-Press-Kit-WearIt.pdf). Contact Yvonne Pentz [ypentz@paulwerth.com](mailto:ypentz@paulwerth.com).



## New Members

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The **BWI Journal** is produced by and for members of Boating Writers International, 108 Ninth Street, Wilmette, IL 60091. (847) 736-4142. [www.bwi.org](http://www.bwi.org).

Send items to be considered for publication to Greg Proteau, [info@bwi.org](mailto:info@bwi.org). All information contained herein is meant for the use of members, is in their best interest, and appears in as true and accurate a form as possible.

Membership in BWI is open to anyone involved in the recreational boating industry. Active members are generally writers, editors, photographers and broadcasters. Associate members are generally P.R. or communications firms. Supporting members are usually manufacturers or ad agencies.

