



## LEARNING TO WELCOME ALL FEEDBACK

by Brady Kay, BWI President

One of the best parts about working in our industry is the actual boaters who we get to interact with on a regular basis. I've been fortunate to interview countless owners over my decades in the industry and have discovered boaters to be some of the friendliest and most helpful people you'll ever come across. What's in their cooler is yours and if you're having a problem with your engine, they're quick to grab their tools and offer to take a look. Forget your sun block? It's not a problem; some boater will have your back and will be glad to lend you a bottle.

But have you noticed that something happens in the winter months to some of these happy-go-lucky individuals? There is an odd transformation when these same goodhearted people set foot on land and get on their phones. As a long-time editor it seems my inbox heats up this time of year with extra "feedback" and I doubt I'm the only one who has noticed this winter trend.

Message boards and comment sections for our articles are just part of game these days, but I'm convinced cabin fever is real. Until the weather warms up, there are a lot of split personalities that we have to deal with. It's almost like you get two different perspectives from the same person when you

compare "online boater" to "summertime boater."

The key is to not let any criticism you might receive from your articles affect you personally. There is plenty to gain by being open to all feedback that you might receive, but that of course is something you learn through your own experiences.

We're told as journalists to have "thick skin" and while I personally welcome all feedback, I must admit it took a few years to truly be open to criticism. What helped me was my perspective of how some friendly boaters turn downright mean during the winter months when they're not able to get out on the water. Living in a sun-starved state myself, I can completely relate. Their nervous energy has to be directed somewhere and sometimes it shows up in a comment section. That anonymous reader who has nothing good to say about your review in January, would probably be your biggest fan in July if you were to see him out on the water. I guess it's just part of passing the time for those who aren't able to boat year-round.

Keep an eye out for those "online boaters" and don't worry, "summertime boaters" will be back before you know it.

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## DIVERSIFY YOUR WRITING GENRES

The Miami International Boat Show has passed, and Palm Beach is up next. When attending a show, do you ever feel limited in the products you can write about? If your forte is writing boat reviews, would you feel uncomfortable writing a technical column on how MFDs work or their new capabilities? If you love to write about travel and new destinations for vacationers, could you also write an itinerary for boat cruisers on the GICW, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and tell first-timers where to anchor, or where to find the best marinas, or what obstacles they may encounter along the way, such as shipping traffic or dam and lock systems?



The point is, we all get comfortable writing about certain topics, but to get more assignments (and more income), step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself to learn about MFDs or what it's like to travel a waterway from one location to the next. Expanding your genres allows you to grow and strengthen your writing skills.

When I was a single dad, I never thought about writing as a profession, but did consider it when trying to assemble some of the toys my son received for Christmas. You know the saying, "So easy a child could do it." I thought, I could write better instructions than these. When I found myself as a freelance writer for K-12 educational materials (that's another how-in-the-world-did-you-get-into-this story), I wanted a more-full-time position and applied as a technical writer for a marine waterproof door manufacturer in Oregon. That position couldn't have been more different than the 5th-grade readers and grade 11 social studies writing, but I felt my boating experience would help. When they showed me the manuals that came with the doors, the technical level was way beyond anything I'd seen before, which made feel nervous about going after the job. Fortunately, or unfortunately, they hired from within, so I didn't have to face my initial fear. That's one emotion that keeps many writers away from expanding their skills...fear.

"I was nervous about being up to the magazine's standards despite having regularly written for a marina magazine for eight years as well as other outlets from time to time," says Ellen Honey, a freelance writer on her first assignment for me. "It wasn't so much the genre, but rather the addition of more on-the-water info specific to boaters. I usually do destinations, but you wanted more navigation info. The biggest fear is giving someone incorrect advice. Research is the key to writing about anything or anywhere. In-person is best, but not always possible."

Honey was familiar with the area I asked her to write about because she lived there, but her boating experience was slim. However, she accepted the assignment and through her diligent research, was able to write an itinerary through the waterway. She took on the challenge by following some key concepts: researching and asking for help from experts.

- Research your topic. Read about the topic or the product from multiple sources and verify the information. If you're writing about a product, connect with the manufacturer, not just the salesperson. Look for images to see what you're writing about (the satellite view on Google Maps works wonders for a destination).
- Ask for help. "Whenever I felt stuck and feeling inadequate, I'd call a marina, a local charter captain, or a restaurant in the area," adds Honey. "They are usually happy to give me more details than I need and always make me feel more confident."

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Allow yourself to take on a new genre. Remember that in the recreational boating industry, new boat owners enter the lifestyle daily and look for those informative, easy-to-understand articles to help them get started. Take a chance and write about the features of an MFD or a cruise down the ICW. Practice, listen to feedback from editors, and stick with it. You'll gain more confidence as well as more assignments.

*Steve Davis is a long time BWI board member and editor-in-chief of Southern Boating.*

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## BWI ANNUAL CONTEST 2022

The winners of the 2022 BWI Annual Contest were announced at the BWI membership meeting and awards breakfast on February 15 in Miami.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR BREAKFAST SPONSOR - YAMAHA WATERCRAFT who continue to support the writers in our industry in so many ways.

We had 267 entries from 79 entrants and we awarded 22 Certificates of Merit. More details in the press release ([click here to download](#)), which was distributed and will be up on BWI.org soon. Congratulations to all.

Also, a great big thanks to all the chairs and judges as well as our 15 contest sponsors who made it all possible. As they say, the check (and plaque) are in the mail.

## BWI CONTEST CHANGES GOING INTO EFFECT 2023

There are two big changes coming for the BWI Annual Contest so keep them in mind when writing this year's articles:

1. The 2023 contest (and all subsequent ones) will open November 15 and close December 15. This moves the contest up two weeks from what it has been so don't miss out by waiting until the latter half of December to frantically enter as this will be a hard deadline like it always has been.
2. New contest category: Yamaha Watercraft has generously offered to sponsor a 16th category - "Women in Boating". This category will feature women who are actively involved in boating or programs designed to encourage participation and boat ownership by women.

## BWI SHIRTS

Because you're a current member, we want to give you a free BWI T-shirt like the ones the board members were wearing in Miami. Thanks to the generosity of Techron Marine Fuel System Treatment from Chevron, all you have to pay is the shipping, which is \$5.75 (U.S. only). Just sign into your BWI account by going to [www.bwi.org/memberDB/tshirt.php](http://www.bwi.org/memberDB/tshirt.php), select the T-shirt size you want and one will be mailed directly to you. It's really that simple and if you wear it to the BWI Annual Contest breakfast in Miami or the BWI Tech Breakfast in Fort Lauderdale, you'll be eligible for additional and exclusive prize drawings.

## BWI NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Three open seats have been filled by a re-election of Kim Koditek, Lenny Rudow and Brady Kay. The slate of officers continues with Brady Kay (second year president), Kim Koditek, (1st vice president) and Ben Stein (2nd vice president). Congratulations to all.

# MEMBER NEWS

## SUZUKI CLEANS UP

Suzuki Marine USA brought together volunteers from around the world to clean up Miami beaches on Saturday, February 18. Participants from the US, Japan, South Africa and Puerto Rico joined the public in removing 150+ pounds of trash near the Rickenbacker Causeway over a two-hour period. Locals who joined were offered free boat show tickets.

Suzuki's CLEAN OCEAN PROJECT initiative was designed to protect the planet's oceans and coastal ecosystems. Key parts of this initiative include reducing the use of plastic in the production and shipping of Suzuki Marine products, parts and accessories, increasing emphasis on recycling, and most importantly, taking action to "rally the troops" and involve the public in grass-roots programs across the country to remove trash and debris from the environment. Congrats Suzuki!



## WINDEX HIRES MARTIN FLORY FOR PR

Windex Development AB, manufacturer of the original mast-mounted wind indicator, has hired Martin Flory Group to increase market visibility, share its corporate news and assist in expanding the Swedish company's roster of US and Canadian dealers and distributors.

### *BWI Officers*

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# WELCOME

## *New Members*

**Jacine Marois**  
*Madeira Beach, FL*

**Jaclyn Trop**  
*St. Petersburg, FL*

**Dominique Salandre**  
*Hendersonville, TN*

**Will Sofrin**  
*Santa Barbara, CA*

The BWI Journal is produced by and for members of Boating Writers International and can be found at [www.bwi.org](http://www.bwi.org). Send items to be considered for publication to [newbwiinfo@gmail.com](mailto:newbwiinfo@gmail.com). 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, videographers and broadcasters. Supporting members are usually manufacturers or marine organizations.