



HOW TO BENEFIT FROM A BUSY BOAT SHOW SEASON

by Ben Stein, BWI President



We are deep into show season and as I write this, less than a week has passed since FLIBS and the 4th Annual BWI Technology Breakfast. Hopefully you were able to attend, hear from our sponsors, Seakeeper, Raymarine, Navico, Garmin, and Avikus, about their latest technology, and maybe even take home one of the phenomenal prizes that included a FLIR thermal monocular, a Garmin Watch, a Simrad chart plotter and a big gift card from Avikus. Plus, Seakeeper held their own raffle for a Seakeeper Ride system and installation. In a last-minute twist, Seakeeper announced that rather than pick one winner from the list of writers with compatible boats, they would give all six a system and installation. I'm not trying to tell you how to spend your time at FLIBS, but with well over \$50,000 in prizes awarded and an update on the hottest new technology in the industry, BWI's breakfast (where the food was first rate) is always a great way to get the most from a boat show.

And speaking of big benefits, let's look ahead to Miami where we will have another breakfast and awards for the 33rd Annual BWI Contest. As you will read below, the contest kicks off November 15.

This is our opportunity to celebrate the best work done by our membership. I hope you're already thinking about outstanding examples from your 2025 portfolio to enter.

BWI members judge the contest and without those volunteers, we can't run the competition. Please contact email Steve Davis at sdsails@gmail.com to be assigned a category. Anyone who enters the contest will automatically be added to the roster of judges - we must all give back for this to work.

Speaking of the contest; the cash prizes awarded to first, second, and third place winners come from our category sponsors without whom, there would be no contest. This year, the Photography category is open and available to a new sponsor. It's a great category so hurry because this will be awarded on a first come/first served basis. Please email Zuzana Prochazka at newbwiinfo@gmail.com for details of sponsorship.

Lastly, as 2025 wraps, several board member terms are also coming to an end. There are more specifics about joining the BWI board later in this newsletter.

We're looking for new board members who can draw on their vast knowledge of the marine industry and their relationships with their colleagues to help BWI grow and continue to serve our membership. See below for details on running for the board.

Thank you all for your continued trust in the organization and I look forward to seeing you at Metstrade, MIBS, and many other events coming up fast.

Inside this issue:

Page 02-03

Writer's Tip

Page 03

General News

Page 04

Member News

MAXIMIZING YOUR BOAT SHOW EXPERIENCE

Boat shows are a great place for boating writers to generate content, gather ideas for future articles, and get their name out there. But wait, there's more (read until the end)!

It's only the beginning of November, but I've already logged three fall boat shows: the Annapolis Boat Show, IBEX and the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Each one has been a different experience and rewarding in its own way. These days, I am focusing on generating boat reviews, and I have totaled 19 boat tests from these venues. In all, I estimate this brings my lifetime total to around 1,219 sea trials over the last three decades.

Boat shows are great hunting grounds for assignments, editorial relationships and swag. Let's look at how to maximize your time and money at the next show.



Networking

The marine industry is all about people, and the more movers and shakers you know, the more dialed in you'll be. I take advantage of every opportunity to connect with old friends and to also meet new people. While press events in themselves are valuable, they don't give you the one-on-one experience with the ones that matter...especially if you run to the next event as soon as it's over. Stay around and shake hands with the presenters and other company representatives. It lets them know you attended their event and gives you insight into their boat or product. If you have to run, circle back later, introduce yourself, and chat about what you saw.

Attend as many after-show parties as you can. Some of the best and most insightful conversations I've ever had have been while we were both holding a drink. In vino veritas was true in Roman times and it's still a thing. The bonus is that hors d'oeuvres cut down on dining costs.

Pro Tip: I am the absolute worst at remembering names and faces, and this hack makes it easy to recognize them next time. Take a photo of the people you meet that also shows their name tag. After the show, I put all these photos into a separate file and review them before the next show to refresh my memory. People warm to you if you remember their name without glancing at their nametag first.

Trend Spotting

At shows, it's almost comical to see the herd of writers shuffle off to the next event en masse, like a rugby scrum. Often, we get caught up in just getting there and ignore the scenery along the way. Always have your camera/phone ready to shoot and take a photo of anything that looks interesting or new. Don't forget to take a few shots that convey the essence of the event. At the Fort Lauderdale show, I always go to the top floor of the Bahia Mar and step out on a balcony to shoot an overhead view of the show. But don't forget to use your backpack to keep the door from closing behind you because it doesn't open from the outside (lesson learned the hard way).

As I walk around a show, I try to discern new patterns. Last year, I noticed that almost every day-cruiser had drop-down gunwales/terraces to expand partying space. This year, I am seeing more electric boats than ever.
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cont. from page 2...

The Best Reason For Attending

This is what they call burying the lede: At FLIBS, the BWI Tech Breakfast featured many high-quality raffle items as Ben noted above. There was a Simrad 10-inch NSS 4 chartplotter/fishfinder, a FLIR Ocean Scout Pro thermal monocular, a Garmin Quatix 8 smart marine watch, a Sea Tow Gold membership and a \$500 West Marine gift card from Avikus, totaling more than \$8,000 in prizes.

Seakeeper, the presenting sponsor, conducted its own giveaway, offering an installed Ride system to qualified journalists who would use it as the basis for an editorial project. Six of us qualified, and after the Seakeeper team headed by Chief Commercial Officer Will Cimino and Kelsey Barrett deliberated, they decided that all six of us would receive installed Ride systems. Needless to say, the room was stunned.

BWI holds another breakfast at the upcoming Miami boat show, sponsored by Suzuki. The prizes are also expected to be off the hook so join us at 0800 on the first day, Wednesday, at the convention center when we will announce the 33rd annual writing awards. While I can't promise we can top FLIBS, I guarantee it will be worth the early wakeup if only for the amazing breakfast – no stale pastries for our members!

Alan Jones is a past BWI president and our prize meister extraordinaire.

GENERAL NEWS

CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR BWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elections for BWI Director seats will be held in January 2026. Three seats (that each carry a three-year term) are coming open. Active members may run for director spots and only active members can vote in the election.

Successful candidates for the BWI board usually have a depth of knowledge in the recreational marine industry and well-established relationships with marine journalists. The board is active with each member contributing time on specific projects and drawing on their experience within the industry. Duties include 1) participation at two in-person director meetings per year (no expenses paid), usually held in conjunction with the Miami and Ft. Lauderdale boat shows, 2) availability for as-needed conference calls (2-4 per year), 3) committee work, and 4) serving as a BWI contest judge.

Candidates need to provide a brief summary (150 words) by December 20, 2025 detailing their experience, qualifications and ideas to help BWI grow. A ballot will be available when voting commences in early January. Voting closes mid-January. Winners are announced at the BWI Breakfast at MIBS and a board meeting welcoming the new members will follow. For more information and to submit summaries, contact Zuzana Prochazka newbwiinfo@gmail.com.

BWI IS SOCIAL!

BWI has an expanded presence on social media. Be sure to give us a follow on Instagram @boating_writers_international, on Facebook at Boating Writers International and on LinkedIn @boating-writers-international.

Don't forget to tag us in your posts too, so we can share and repost your stuff. The more we're connected, the more we can keep the world informed about what's happening on the water. For questions, contact Pete McDonald at pete.mcdonald@firebrand.com.

BWI 33RD ANNUAL CONTEST OPENS NOVEMBER 15 AND CLOSSES DECEMBER 15, 2025

As usual, the annual contest opens November 15 and closes December 15. The contest recognizes exceptional creativity in boating journalism, photography and videography. Entries are being accepted in 16 categories which translates to \$16,000 available in prize awards. This electronic [entry form](#) details the process.

Only BWI Active members are eligible to enter. As a member, you get two free entries. Additional entries are \$30 apiece. Entries in all categories are welcome in a digital-only format including blogs and on-line videos, or traditional print sources. Category definitions and sponsors are detailed in the [contest brochure](#).

The contest recognizes the best marine writing and imaging and presents cash awards for first (\$500), second (\$300), and third place (\$200) in each category. Each year, the awards are presented in person at the Miami International Boat Show during the BWI Annual Meeting in February.

PLEASE – contact Steve Davis (steve@southernboating.com) to volunteer to judge. If you enter, your name will automatically be put into the judging file – just tell us which categories you entered and therefore aren't eligible to judge.

We really need everyone to give back.

Contest Categories & Our Wonderful Sponsors

- Boating Columns – by KVH Industries, Inc.
- Boating Lifestyles – by Discover Boating
- Boating Profiles – by Nautical Ventures
- Boating Travel or Destinations – by Dometic
- Boating Adventures – by Yamaha Marine
- **Boating Photography – TBD - YOUR NAME HERE - First Come/First Served - great category!**
- Environmental Awareness & Education – by ePropulsion
- Fishing – by Suzuki Motor Corporation
- Boating Issues, News and Analysis – by Mercury Marine
- The Business of Boating – by BRP
- Seamanship, Rescue & Safety – by Sea Tow Services International
- Boat Tests & Reviews – sponsored by Volvo Penta
- Gear, Electronics & Product Tests – by Xantrex by Mission Critical Electronics
- Boat Projects, Renovations & Retrofits – by Boats Group
- Boating Videos – by Boat Owners Association of US
- Women in Boating – by Marine Business Unit/Yamaha Watercraft

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WELCOME

New Members

ACTIVE

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The BWI Journal is produced by and for members of Boating Writers International and can be found at www.bwi.org. Send items to be considered for publication to 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.