



THAT TIME OF THE YEAR

by Ben Stein, BWI President

For many marine journalists, myself included, the flip of the calendar to September brings a familiar rhythm. Until about Thanksgiving, we have a show nearly every other week and find ourselves waking up in random hotels in random cities. If I may be so bold, I have some suggestions for what you do while attending at least one of those shows and perhaps a way to pass the time on the inevitable airplane rides to and fro.

With the changing of the leaves, if you live in such climates, comes preparation for the BWI Annual Contest. The contest recognizes the best writing, photography and videos in 16 different categories. So, next time you're on a long plane ride, take some time to review what you've produced, spend a few minutes redacting the identifiable information and get your best work ready for judging by your peers.

First prize in a category pays \$500 with second place taking home \$300 and third place \$200. The contest is BWI's biggest event of the year and a great way to be recognized for the excellent work you do all year. Best of all, your membership includes two free entries.

As long as I'm telling you how to spend your time, let's talk about

the upcoming Annual BWI Breakfast at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. This year, will be our fourth. We are excited to welcome Seakeeper as the presenting sponsor of the breakfast. Seakeeper's support means we will be able to significantly up the quality of the breakfast and set you loose on the show fueled, caffeinated, and ready to go.

Our launch sponsors, Garmin, Navico, and Raymarine, will be back for another year to tell us about their latest product developments and introductions. If you've attended the breakfast before, you already know about the generous raffle prizes provided by our sponsors. In previous years we've had chart plotters, watches, gift cards, and more. Your odds of walking out of the breakfast with a valuable prize are very high so come fuel up for the day, listen to some cool tech news and meet the BWI board.

I'll be at the NMEA Conference, IBEX, FLIBS, Metstrade, and Miami in the spring. I hope to see you at some of these shows. In the meantime, get busy on your entries and circle that Thursday, October 30th at 8:00 am on your calendars for the FLIBS technology breakfast.

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MAKING IT COUNT: TIPS FOR THE BWI ANNUAL CONTEST

The Boating Writers International (BWI) Contest is held annually to recognize journalists for their literary and artistic work related to the maritime way of life. We all love recognition for our work, but to win the prize money, \$16,000 awarded this year, features, columns, pictures, and videos really need to stand out.

All of you know what it takes—compelling openings, clear, informative, and inspiring content along with well-flowing narratives with vivid, original detail, not to mention proper grammar and punctuation. Contest judges are looking for all that with a focus on the quality of writing, not the nature of the content, or in the case of an image, the story told by compelling composition and a unique perspective.

First and foremost, you have to enter. BWI members get two free entries, so there's no reason not to enter. The process is fairly simple through the BWI website, but there are some requirements necessary for your entry to qualify.

The biggest faux pas from the 2024 Contest was entries that didn't pay attention to the "obscuring rule." This is when the byline, author, author image, name of publication, and date must be obscured, including any mention made within the article text or captions. This will keep entries anonymous to avoid any favoritism or conflict of interest, but know that the judges are fair and communicate with the category chairperson if the conflict arises, such as recognizing a feature from their primary publication. **What's really important about this requirement is that failure to obscure the information completely will disqualify the entry, so don't forget it. If you have trouble obscuring, you can contact me.**

As Lenny Rudow of Marine Editorial Services and editor of *Rudow's FishTalk* magazine noted in the lead-up to last year's contest, "A pet peeve of mine is when I see scans of printed pages that are visually difficult to read. Nothing is printed without a digital PDF file these days, so I know an entrant could have gotten one if they tried. As a judge, even though I try to base my scores solely on writing quality, if I'm squinting and straining to read the words, it's hard to overlook."

Another tip is to make sure you're entering your feature or column in the right category. There are 16 categories, and some stories could work in more than one category. A fishing adventure may sound good for the Boating Adventures category or a Boating Travel or Destination piece, but because its focus on fishing, the Fishing category would be best. Judges are instructed to consult with the category chair if they feel a feature is in the wrong category and it is a cause for disqualification.

The latest aspect affecting writing these days is the use of AI. As BWI's president, Ben Stein, mentions in this newsletter's opening page, artificial intelligence is becoming more of an influence in everything happening these days. BWI has deemed that AI has no place in the authenticity of an author's work, meaning that BWI wants to preserve the integrity, creativity, and fairness of the Contest. Yes, AI can be helpful as a tool for research, but entries that include content generated by AI is strictly prohibited. The Contest celebrates the human aspect of originality in writing, a quality that machine-generated content can't match.

The BWI Contest opens November 15th with awards presented at the Miami International Boat Show in February. Be sure to review the [Contest brochure](#) for a more detailed look at the how-tos and requirements.

Steve Davis, BWI Board 1st Vice President

GENERAL NEWS

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

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.

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. We need 48 judges in addition to our 16 chairs.

Contest Categories & Our Wonderful Sponsors

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



4TH ANNUAL BWI TECHNOLOGY BREAKFAST AT FLIBS 2025

If you missed it last year, you're going to want to put it on your schedule for next month. The Fourth Annual BWI Technology Breakfast at FLIBS will be held at 8:00 on Thursday, October 30 aboard the South Beach Lady which will be located on the Face Dock inside the FLIBS show. Come upstairs to airconditioned comfort and a free breakfast this year sponsored by **Seakeeper** and hear some great tech information from our sponsors which include **Avikus, Garmin, Navico** and **Raymarine**.

We will be done before the show opens – promise. Don't be late and bring some business cards for the great raffle because you'll NEVER HAVE BETTER ODDS OF WINNING!

DON'T FORGET TO POST & TAG AT THE BOAT SHOWS

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.

THE 2025-2026 DIRECTORY IS OUT

All members should have received an email with link to the BWI Annual Directory. This is reference material for all members in good standing and it's an exclusive benefit so please don't share this information. Thanks to all ad sponsors/advertisers - we are always grateful for your continued support: Suzuki, BoatUS, Boston Whaler, Duree & Company, Dometic, Kicker Audio, and Yamaha.

MEMBER NEWS

IN MEMORIAM: JIM FULLILOVE 1947 - 2025

Respected editor and accomplished writer, Jim Fullilove passed away on August 3, 2025, at the age of 77. For more than 40 years, Jim worked as senior editor of several international trade journals, including National Fisherman, WorkBoat Magazine, and Marine Electronics Journal. Through rounds of chemo, Jim led the search for his replacement at MEJ and worked to meet his final deadline at the magazine. Many of us wrote for Jim. He was tough but fair, demanding but respectful, and he always elicited good results from all of us. He will be missed by the entire industry.

BWI Officers

President
Ben Stein
ben.stein@panbo.com

1st Vice President
Steve Davis ('28)
steve@southernboating.com

2nd Vice President
Pete McDonald ('27)
pete.mcdonald@firecrown.com

Executive Director

Zuzana Prochazka
newbwiinfo@gmail.com

BWI Directors

Lenny Rudow ('26)
ultangler@gmail.com

Ron Ballanti ('28)
ron@strike-zone.net

Alan Jones ('26)
boatscribe@comcast.net

Kim Koditek ('26)
Kim.koditek20@gmail.com

Kelsey Bonham ('28)
kbonham@geico.com

Brady Kay - Immediate Past Pres.
blk@harrispublishing.com

WELCOME

New Members

ACTIVE
Kristen Ordonez
Jamesburg, NJ

Lori Capullo
Pompano Beach, FL

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.