



# Great Blue Hill



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## Commander's Message Cdr. Michael J. Hanlon, JN



Hi Everyone,

### Good bye 2020, and Hello 2021!

2021 is showing positive signs for the remainder of the year!

- ◆ We are beginning to see vaccinations being distributed throughout the US and World to eradicate COVID-19 and save lives!
- ◆ The Sun is rising earlier and setting later each day! (I realize that this happens every year at this time, but staying on the positive theme)
- ◆ And lastly, boating season will be here in a couple months! (Hoping to launch in April, cold but we get to be on the water!)

During our most recent ExCom Meeting, we actually discussed the possibility of having a short cruise in late summer, accessible by boat and car safely. Very encouraging! The next step would be us getting to meet again in person for General Meetings, and resume teaching safe boating courses to all of membership and beyond.

I am very hopeful to seeing all of you in person once again, soon! Till then...

Fair winds and gentle seas.

Best regards,

Cdr Michael J. Hanlon, JN

**Executive Officer's Message**  
**Lt/C David F. Albanese, S**



Greetings everyone!

At last it's March and we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully, we'll see two lights....one for the end of winter and the approach of boating season; and the other perhaps will be a return to somewhat of a normalcy after the COVID pandemic. I can only imagine that this has been a long haul for many of us.

Luckily, through this all, GBH has found a way to persevere. Our virtual meetings have been a great success. Just like our in person meetings at the Legion Hall, we have a cocktail hour followed by an activity. For this past month we played Nautical Trivia. We had previously developed a "Nautical Trivia" game to be played in person at one of our meetings. However, through the technical genius of our webmaster, Gordon, and some brainstorming among Jim Anderson, Joe Kelliher, and myself, we were able to adapt it to a virtual game we played over Zoom. The friendly competition was great and we had a lot of laughs. Hopefully, we'll be back to in-person meetings before the end of the year, but in the meantime I encourage everyone to attend our virtual meetings.

We're looking forward to a great summer on the water. Make sure you get all your spring maintenance done so you can be underway as soon as possible. There's no better way to social distance!

Fair winds and following seas to all.

*Dave Albanese, P*

**Administrative Officer's Message**  
**Lt/C James P. Andersen, Jr., N**



Hello all,

**Nautical Trivia Night!!!** “Eel Rut”? “Snake’s Wedding”? Who knew these were nautical terms? Ridge, what can I say? I learn something new from you each time we meet. Well, that was just the beginning. On February 18th at 1900 hours, thanks to the efforts of Joe Kelliher, Dave Albanese and Gordon Talley, we took to Zoom once again and met the Nautical Trivia throwdown challenge to determine our Squadron’s most “wicked smaht” member. Three brave teams took on the challenge. Joe led the teams through a series increasingly challenging nautical terminology questions. One by one the teams were whittled down to the final group of individuals. In the end our own George Kyte took home the winning prize of a \$100 Amazon gift card. Fun was had by all as we all learned something that we never knew before. We also envisioned the day when we can get together as a group for dinner once again and take on the Nautical Trivia night once again in person.

*Continued on next page ...*

## Administrative Officer's Message ... *Continued*

Spring is rapidly approaching and we are all looking forward to scrubbing our bottoms and splashing in once again. Our boats, that is....

And for those who haven't heard the exciting news, we have a new boat to add to our fleet. As many of you know Mike and Sue Hanlon are the proud owners of a gorgeous new (to them) Oyster 475, named "*Jettie*". Congratulations!

As we continue to hear more and more the news of our members getting vaccinated, it gives us hope that this summer is shaping up to be better than the last. We are keeping our fingers crossed that we might be able to pull off a cruise later in the summer. Whether it will be a simple, single port of call over a two day weekend, or a full week of fun we remain hopeful that we can pull it off.

So let's continue to keep our spirits high and do our best to enjoy our Squadron's upcoming boating season as best we can. We all look forward to being able to continue our camaraderie in person really soon. Together we can get through this.

Fair winds to us all,

*Jim Andersen, N*



### Great Blue Hill Sail & Power Squadron SPRING 2021 CALENDAR

GBH VIRTUAL Annual Meeting, TBD	11 March	2021
GBH Executive Committee Meeting, Via Zoom	1 April	2021
GBH VIRTUAL Member Meeting, TBD	13 May	2021
GBH Executive Committee Meeting, Via Zoom	3 June	2021

**Hope to See Everyone at Live Meetings after the Vaccine is in our Arms!**

## Introducing *S/V JETTIE*, the Next Boat by Cmdr. Michael Hanlon, JN

Sue and I have had 11 wonderful years on our Sabre 36, *S/V Solstice* cruising all over New England's Bays and Sounds, creating beautiful and long-lasting memories with family and friends. She is our first boat and was very daunting to us both when we were getting ready to sail her for the first time. Just like most of us, after reading many books, magazines and taking boating courses with Americas Boating Club, gave us the confidence to release the pennants and sail. One of my GBH Mentors, Ridge White, stated to me very early on, that "boats are great teachers." That phrase has been so true and valuable to me over the years, great advice!

During the last 4-5 years Sue and I knew that we wanted to go further and stay on the water longer, but were going to need a bigger boat, a live aboard. As we are hoping in retirement, to sail south for the winters to the Caribbean Islands, and maybe cross the pond and visit Europe. It has been a very fun and rewarding experience getting to compare and contrast boats and all their features in sailing, seaworthiness and comfort for us. Over the years we kept a long list of the what the next boat would need to have to be in the short list of boats to purchase. The most important ones on the list were, length overall, around 48-50', very sea kindly, traditional transom not carrying the beam to the stern and in-boom roller furling. The two boats that always seem to have the best features for us were the Hylas' and Oyster's.

This past Fall, we found "the Next Boat!" She is an Oyster 475 that recently completed a circumnavigation around the globe, as part of the Oyster World Rally over 16 months from Antigua to Antigua via the Panama Canal. The boat had been on the market for about 8 months, and decided to check it out as it was in Portsmouth, RI, and the owners previously sailed on a Sabre 365, and felt karma like for us, in our similar sailing lives.



In late December, we became the proud owners of *S/V JETTIE*, to be re-named after our beloved golden retriever who passed away last October after nine wonderful years of dotting on our family.

Nervous excitement is the best way to describe how we feel for the upcoming season. We are looking forward to getting to know her, and hopefully launch in mid-April. We hope that we can participate in a summer cruise where we can get to see our friends at GBH on the water once again!

Copy and paste this link on your browser to see a short video on her at the dock:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUacu5dtO\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUacu5dtO_A)

Fair winds and following seas!

Mike & Sue Hanlon

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2021

## COAST GUARD MARITIME COMMONS

THE COAST GUARD BLOG FOR MARITIME PROFESSIONALS

# Final Rule: Certificate of Documentation–5 Year Renewal Fees

POSTED BY CWO KURT FREDRICKSON ON FEBRUARY 17, 2021 • ( LEAVE A COMMENT )

*As a courtesy to our audience, Maritime Commons will provide a daily compilation of nationally-relevant Federal Register Notices, or those notices that may impact a large segment of our readers. To provide comments for the public record, follow the Federal Register link for each individual notice. Please note, the Coast Guard cannot respond to comments on these notices outside of the Federal Register.*

On February 18, 2021 a final rule extending the validity of a recreational vessel endorsement on a Certificate of Documentation (COD) from 1 to 5 years goes into effect.

Congress passed and the President signed the Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018, which requires the Coast Guard to issue recreational vessel CODs for 5 years. By updating the Code of Federal Regulations to reflect this change, the Coast Guard anticipates this final rule to harmonize with the requirements of the 2018 Act that decreased the burden on recreational vessel owners by requiring COD renewals every 5 years rather than annually.

For more information about the final rule, view the Federal Register notice (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/19/2021-00526/certificate-of-documentation-5-year-renewal-fees>) or search docket number USCG-2020-0215 (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/19/2021-00526/certificate-of-documentation-5-year-renewal-fees>) on <https://www.regulations.gov> (<https://www.regulations.gov/>).

## GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

BY CHARLES FORT, BOATU.S. CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



### BoatU.S. to the FCC: 'Don't Mess with GPS'

*More importantly, do you know how a new 5G cellular network may affect your boating? Possibly not in a good way*

**A 5G mobile data network operating near the GPS frequency could have a negative impact for boaters on marine navigation and weather forecasts.**

COURTESY, GARMIN

BoatU.S., the voice of recreational boaters on Capitol Hill, is the only national boat-owner organization with a full-time Government Affairs staff. Visit [Advocacy.BoatUS.com](https://www.boat-us.com/advocacy) to stay informed on relevant federal and state boating issues, and sign up to receive Action Alerts emails so you can take action when important legislative issues affecting boaters arise.

**F**or a long time, GPS has been an integral part of boating. Everything from supertankers to kayaks use GPS for precise navigation, and it would be hard to imagine not having it. Of course, boating is a small niche among GPS users. Newer cars, all commercial aircraft, farmers, the military, and hikers all depend on accurate GPS. Over the years, GPS has changed, from government's intentional error induction (up until the 2000s, but no longer) to the current far more accurate receivers. Twenty years ago, 100 meters (330 feet) was the best accuracy you could get, and that was only guaranteed most of the time. Now boaters can know where they are, nearly anywhere

on the planet, within about 16 feet. Boaters particularly need that accuracy and reliability as they enter an inlet at night, negotiate reefs at dusk, find a fishing spot, or even sail to a faraway island.

Lately, though, GPS is faced with potentially severe degradation in accuracy by another technology that we all want – 5G (fifth generation) cellphone service. 5G promises super high-speed data. When the current 4G service was introduced, Snapchat, Uber, and video calls over cell networks didn't exist and, it's argued, the country needs the much higher speeds of 5G (10 times or more faster than 4G) to continue to introduce new technologies, such as autonomous cars and augmented reality.

## GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Unfortunately, in April 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) said it would grant a license modification to a company named Ligado Networks to allow them to operate a 5G mobile data network in the middle of a critical satellite navigation and communications spectrum. The problem with using radio signals so close to the GPS frequency (GPS is simply a very sensitive and sophisticated radio receiver) is that spillover can cause interference with the very faint radio signals received by GPS. Simply put, while we all want 5G, it can't come at the expense of GPS.

More recently, FCC received letters from major stakeholders, including BoatU.S., objecting to the license modification. As of the end of 2020, FCC is not budging on its decision, despite objections from the departments of Defense, Commerce, Interior, Homeland Security and Transportation. Other stakeholders are frustrated by FCC choosing not to listen to experts from aviation, the military, first responders, the scientific community, and commercial and recreational boating, including BoatU.S., who advocate strong protections for GPS. Instead, FCC is siding with Ligado and the research it has funded.

This is not the first time this has happened. Ten years ago, LightSquared, now Ligado, also sought a license modification for a high-powered, nationwide terrestrial network to serve the surging broadband market. Testing indicated that the modified signals could potentially overload the vast majority of GPS receivers. Back then, FCC immediately put a hold on LightSquared's request, and the company filed for bankruptcy.

Several members of Congress, including Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) and Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), are actively pursuing legislative solutions to protect GPS. BoatU.S. Government Affairs is working with them and other member of Congress to make certain that boaters have a reliable navigation system.

#### Weather forecasts

Will 5G cellphone networks affect the accuracy of marine weather forecasts? You wouldn't think the two would be



Individual boaters should not bear the cost of upgrading equipment to be assured GPS reliability.

GETTY IMAGES/AGATA PERI/APUNTA

related, but the 5G technology that carriers are eager to roll out could have a profound impact on weather predictions in general, and for boaters specifically, especially on hurricane forecasts.

The problem has to do with interference between radio frequencies that may be too close together. NOAA's Advanced Technology Microwave Sounder (ATMS) is an instrument that flies overhead in satellites. It collects water vapor data by sensing changes in the 23.8 GHz emissions of the Earth's atmosphere and surface. Weather scientists say this is the only frequency they can use to observe water vapor in the atmosphere, and NOAA says water vapor informa-

### SPILLOVER CAN CAUSE INTERFERENCE WITH THE VERY FAINT RADIO SIGNALS RECEIVED BY GPS

tion is the single most important data for weather forecasting.

Here's where the problem comes in. While ATMS uses a sensing band of 23.8 GHz, last year FCC auctioned off radio spectrum for 5G wireless transmission in the adjacent 24 GHz band, which NOAA says is so close to the ATMS frequency that it can interfere with the data. NOAA has concluded that the "spillover" limit advanced by FCC would result in about 77% data loss from ATMS. Neil Jacobs, acting head of NOAA, told Congress that 5G interference could set the accuracy of weather forecasts back 40 years because the interference could

result in a 30% reduction in forecast accuracy. As an example, Jacobs said, with such a reduction in accuracy, the most accurate model at the time would have predicted that Superstorm Sandy would have been steered out to sea, rather than hitting the Northeast coast as one of the most damaging hurricanes in history, and preparation for the storm could have been cut short by days.

Other heavy-hitters such as NASA, the Department of Defense, and the American Meteorological Society, which support NOAA's conclusions, have expressed concerns about the potential consequences. The Navy wrote a memo stating the interference would lead to "a probable degradation of weather and ocean models" resulting in "increased risk of ... degraded battlespace awareness for tactical/operational advantage."

According to *The Washington Post*, FCC rejected NOAA and NASA's requests for more debate on the issue. Stakeholders hoped that the World Radiocommunication Conference would vote to restrict the potential for interference last fall, but the delegates decided to continue to allow much more interference than weather organizations suggested.

BoatU.S. has significant concerns with any potential interference with a reliable navigation signal as well as accurate forecasts. We also do not think that individual boat owners should bear the costs to upgrade equipment in order to be assured of the reliability of their GPS navigation systems. BoatU.S. will urge the incoming FCC chairperson to limit 5G interference. Visit [fcc.gov/about/contact](http://fcc.gov/about/contact) to contact the FCC chairman or commissioners. **A**

## BOOK REVIEW - Staying a Fatal Course

How a tragic combination of bad decision-making, poor information, and lax safety standards sealed the fate of a merchant ship and its crew.

By Dennis Drabelle

Originally published in the Pennsylvania Gazette, Nov/Dec 2018

Contributed by P/C Peter Griswold, JN

### **Into the Raging Sea: Thirty-Three Mariners, One Megastorm, and the Sinking of El Faro**

By Rachel Slade GAR'99

Ecco, 2018, \$27.99

**How a tragic combination of bad decision-making, poor information, and lax safety standards sealed the fate of a merchant ship and its crew.**

By Dennis Drabelle

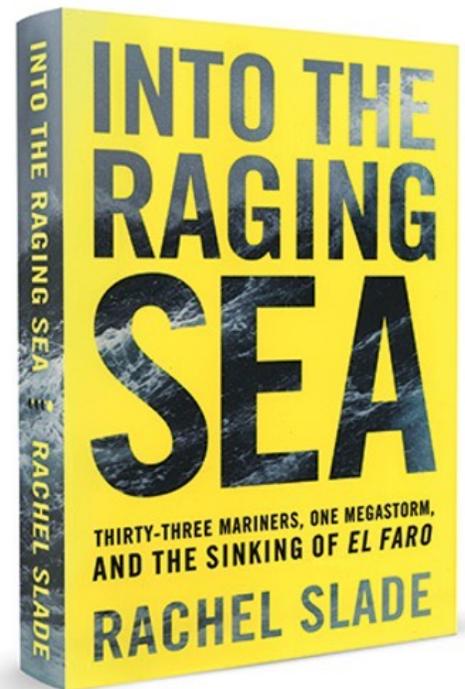
Rachel Slade begins her powerful and gripping first book with an unobtrusive “note on the text”. We’re told that the words she will ascribe to the captain and crew of the American merchant ship *El Faro* before and while it sank on October 1, 2015, are exactly what was said, as recorded by six microphones embedded in the bridge’s ceiling. As the story develops, however, that brief note gains more and more heft. Initially, there was much uncertainty as to how the disaster occurred—one chapter of *Into the Raging Sea* is entitled “Ships Don’t Just Disappear”—and recovering the best evidence, the tape of those conversations, posed a massive challenge.

*El Faro* was an aging vessel that fell short of 21st century safety standards but still plied the seas thanks to the authorities’ grandfathering habit. For example, ships built since 1986 must carry enclosed, “submarine-like” lifeboats rather than the vulnerable open ones of yore. But pre-1986 ships are exempted from that requirement. Toward the end of the book, Slade weighs in on the perversity of such concessions: “Why should a ship’s age preclude it from safety equipment that’s standard on all other vessels? In fact, shouldn’t older ships be better equipped, since they’re more vulnerable?”

Over the years, too, *El Faro*’s on-board safety had been compromised in many ways, some of which led to the hazards that took her down, especially devastating leaks and cargo containers on the loose. Her captain, 53-year-old Michael Davidson, had shaky qualifications and the insecurity to go with them. He coped by displaying a hearty confidence in his decision-making until it was too late.

But none of these flaws would have scuppered *El Faro* if it hadn’t been for another, more egregious failure. From the moment Hurricane Joaquin became a force to reckon with east of the Bahamas until it was ripping his ship apart, Davidson didn’t know where the storm was.

He thought he did, though, thanks to a software program called Bon Voyage System. As *El Faro* steamed southeast from Jacksonville, Florida, toward its Puerto Rican destination, forecasts from the Weather Channel and the National Hurricane Center kept putting Joaquin directly in the vessel’s path. “BVS was the outlier,” Slade writes, the only source saying the storm would swing north before *El Faro* reached it. Several crew members were aware of the discrepancy but either didn’t bring it to Davidson’s attention or did so timidly. Putting all his trust in BVS, the captain stayed the fatal course.



*Continued on next page ...*

## Staying a Fatal Course ... *Continued*

What he didn't know was that BVS had an innate tardiness. Its data lagged behind real time by several hours, and Davidson sometimes exacerbated the problem by not checking his computer. At 4:45 a.m. on the last day of his life, Slade writes, "Davidson downloaded the BVS report that had been waiting for him since eleven o'clock the night before. At that point, the forecast was more than fifteen hours older than the most recent NHC report; it was completely obsolete. The BVS forecast continued positioning Joaquin's eye much further north, giving Davidson false reassurance that he'd successfully steamed below it." Deep in the fine print of BVS's instructions lay a mention of such delays, but Davidson seems never to have got that far in his reading, and no one else had brought the clause to his attention.

The ship's plight was exacerbated by conditions at its parent company, TOTE, which had been reorganizing itself, letting employees go, and reassigning their duties to others who were expected to perform two jobs at once—all in what Slade believes was an effort to squeeze out higher profits. Most of Davidson's mid-crisis attempts to consult with his onshore superiors ended with him being asked to leave a message at the tone. To read the exchanges between him and his underlings as they begin to comprehend what they've done to themselves—steamed into the heart of a monstrous hurricane—is both riveting and painful.

Once *El Faro* has gone down (workers at a nearby monitoring station heard a thud as the ship hit the sea floor), Slade turns to rescue efforts and the attempts to find the tape of those conversations on the bridge, the equivalent of an airplane's black box. I'll leave it to readers to discover on their own how the suspenseful hunt for that item turned out.

Slade comes down hard on US government agencies for sub-par performances—she calls it "an open secret in the meteorological community that the ECMWF [European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts] is consistently better than the NWS [National Weather Service]"—but places the blame where it belongs, with the cheese-paring White House and Congress. The situation has not improved under the current administration. In May of 2017, Slade reports, the budget cuts it proposed for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the parent agency of both the NHC and NWS, included \$5 million that, in the words of the budget's blue book, would "slow the transition of advanced modeling research into operations for improved warnings and forecasts."

The depth of Slade's reporting is impressive (the book grew out of an article she wrote for *Yankee* magazine), her storytelling ability even more so. And she is able to put her material in context as necessary. In the world's greatest democracy, she points out, there is one place where rule by fiat still obtains. "On a ship, the captain reigns supreme. The final word," Slade writes. "That's the one thing that hasn't changed since Herman Melville wrote *Moby-Dick* in 1851."

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Dennis Drabelle G'66 L'69 is a former contributing editor of the *Washington Post Book World*.

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## CLASSIFIED ADS

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**Mercury 3.3 HP Outboard** – Lightweight (28 lbs.), two-stroke, short shaft with F/N shifting. Barely used with recent service. Includes extras: custom stand with casters, service & parts manuals, fabric cover, 50:1 oil, etc. \$599. John Gedaminski, 603-938-2685, [j32080@yahoo.com](mailto:j32080@yahoo.com) (5/19)

**Mooring Ball - TaylorMade 24"** Includes collar and short length of chain. Will deliver to anywhere in eastern MA. \$75 or best offer. George Kyte, 978-475-9432, [gbkyte@verizon.net](mailto:gbkyte@verizon.net) (9/17)

Cost of an Ad is \$15 for up to 40 words. No pictures. Include description, condition, price and contact info. Please send your Ads (with your check payable to "GBH Sail & Power Squadron") to the editor, Jeff Gardiner, 398 Central Ave., Needham, MA 02494.



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# View From The Blue

Great Blue Hill Sail & Power Squadron  
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