

## A Special place, A special Time The Annapolis Boat Shows

By Capt. Rick Franke

Autumn, especially the month of October, has always been a special time on Chesapeake Bay. Cool, crisp nights are followed by warm, sunny days. Gone is summer's enervating heat, haze and humidity, replaced by blue skies filled with skeins of honking Canada geese on their annual southerly migration. In 1970 something new was added to this special season; the Annual Annapolis Boat Shows.

Prior to 1970 most major boat shows were held indoors in the winter months in drafty armories or coliseums in major cities. The show venues were far from the water and visitor had to either clamber up shaky ladders or stairs to board a boat or be content with strolling by keels and bottoms. It required a lot of imagination to translate the feeling of sitting in the cockpit of a boat on a trailer without a mast into the feel of the boat rocking gently on sunny waters.

The first Annapolis boat show changed all that. From the very beginning, boats were displayed in their element, the water. Boating is, after all, an outdoor sport, and now prospective buyers could see their favorite boat outdoors, fully rigged and operational, and most important, experience how the boat felt actually floating in the water. The idea was an instant hit. The timing of the show also coincided with, and no doubt contributed to, a period of tremendous growth in recreational boating. The expanding use of fiberglass to produce relatively low cost and low maintenance boats and a rapidly increasing standard of living gave many prospective buyers the chance to experience boating for the first time.

The Annapolis Show was an all sailboat show. The show was so successful that two years later the Annapolis Powerboat Show was established and the two shows have been held on successive weekends ever since. The impact of the shows on the city of Annapolis was immediate and enormous. The influx of exhibitors, vendors and show attendees turned what had been a slow pre-Christmas season into what has become one of the busiest times of the year for hotels, retail shops and restaurants. There is a local legend that the unexpected crowd was so large on that first weekend that the downtown restaurants ran out of food. The popularity of the shows no doubt also accelerated the change, already underway, in the city's maritime character from commercial seafood packing and processing to recreational boating.

The first part of October has become a very special time for boaters. A time to attend what, in the small town which bills itself as America's Sailing Capitol, has become one of recreational boating's major celebrations. Perhaps Mayor Josh Cohen of Annapolis expresses it best when he says, "Certain traditions define the Annapolis experience, few more so than the boat shows. Fall isn't fall in Annapolis without the hustle and bustle of the boat shows. The boat shows are an opportunity to showcase our beautiful downtown and our marine industries, and they reinforce Annapolis as one of America's premier maritime destinations".

Each October thousands of boat owners, shoppers, dreamers and the just plain curious come to the quaint historic town of Annapolis to see, hear and touch the boats, equipment and accessories which are the objects of their affection. The shows have gone on without interruption through good economic times and bad, energy crises, the Beltway Sniper, September 11 and several hurricanes. The fact that through all this history the tradition of the fall boat shows has continued is a testament to the loyalty and dedication boaters have to their avocation.

A major component of the success and longevity of the boat shows is the show location on the city dock and harbor of Annapolis. Bentley Collins, Vice President of Marketing and Sales for Sabre and Back Cove Yachts, who has been coming to Annapolis almost since the beginning of the shows says, "To me the perfect show is always found in a desirable location. We do a lot of shows in such places and we do shows in the 'not so great' destinations. In the winter months especially some locations are just cold and without any soul. Annapolis is a winner in this respect. Folks from all over the world trek to Annapolis and they do it because it is a great destination with all of the history and romance that such cities offer. From the Naval Academy to the shops and restaurants on Main Street, Annapolis offers more than just a show. It's a weekend getaway to a great destination. The fact that there is a terrific array of boats and equipment on display makes it complete but the destination gives it all a home".

Sabre exhibits in both the sail and power shows, reflecting a trend in the industry to diversify into both sail and powerboats. One of the effects of the October date of the shows was to influence the timing of the introduction of new models in the boat building industry. By allowing buyers to make decisions at the end of one boating season, the builders were able to gear up early enough to deliver the boats at the beginning of the next boating season.

Aaron Krenzer, National sales Manager for the Luhrs Group explains both the importance of the location and the timing of the shows, "The October US Powerboat show in Annapolis Maryland creates a type of atmosphere that attracts people from all over the country to visit, stay, dine and shop for their new boat. The town is a boat haven with everything geared towards boating. The Annapolis Boat Show is early enough in the model year to debut and promote new models for manufacturers and dealers. By attending the show, you will be the first in the country to view new models. This show is a well respected show in the industry in that the people behind the show work with the manufacturer, dealers and vendors to put on the best show possible".

The Luhrs Group includes Silverton Yachts, Ovation Yacht, Mainship Trawlers, Luhrs Sportfish as well as Hunter Marine, America's largest sailboat manufacturer.

Boat US is proud to once again be a premier sponsor of the 2110 Annapolis Boat Shows. When the gates open on Thursday October 7, the 41<sup>st</sup> edition of an Annapolis tradition will begin on an upbeat high note.

Dee Newman, Show Manager, is looking forward to two good shows, "There is a strong feeling of optimism among our exhibitors this year. Many seem to feel that we have at

last turned the corner on the recession," she said. "Space sales are strong, we have already surpassed last year and we still have more than a month to sell. We expect both shows to be bigger and better than last year. For example, more than twenty new sailboat models are being introduced this year, including the Beneteau Sense 50, the Hunter 50 and Prout is debuting a new Prout 50 sailing catamaran. At the Powerboat show, many new models are also being shown for the first time, including the Corvette 320 and the Palm Beach 50 Motor Yacht. Between the two shows we have over 1100 exhibitors this year and many seminars and educational opportunities for show attendees."

In addition to boats and accessories, both shows feature unique and valuable learning activities. Both shows will offer the "Take the Wheel" interactive workshops which include on the water boat demos. Both shows will have seminars presented by Chesapeake Bay Magazine and the Sailboat show will also feature daily seminars presented by Cruising World Magazine. The Powerboat show will include a large antique and classic boat display sponsored by Hackercraft and a unique Green Boating Section displaying state of the art electric, hybrid and solar powered boats. Both shows also feature a grand prize drawing for a Moorings charter in the British Virgin Islands, including air fare.

The United States Sailboat Show begins on Thursday October 7, 2010 with VIP and Trade Day. General admission days are October 8 through 11. The United States Powerboat Show opens with VIP Day on October 14 and runs through October 17.

VIP day tickets are \$35.00 and adult general admission is \$17.00. Children ages 6 to 12 admission is \$4.00 on general admission days and children under 6 are free. Various special combination tickets are available and there is an additional fee for the "Take the Wheel" workshops. Tickets may be purchased on line at [usboat.com](http://usboat.com). When planning to attend the shows, please plan to park at the Navy Marine Corps stadium and ride the shuttle busses to and from the show grounds. Shuttle busses begin service an hour before the show opens and continue an hour after the show closes.

This October join the thousands of other boaters celebrating boating in what is indeed a special time in a special place: The 2010 Annapolis Boat Shows, sponsored by Boat US.