



JAMES RIVER REACH

A Boater's Hurricane Experience

By Kevin Seeber, Parade of Lights Chairman

For over a week, boat owners, including me, had been preparing for what the National Weather Service said would be a "serious weather event". Expectations were for 40 to 50 MPH winds and 4 to 5 inches of rain. We have all weathered storms worse than that and came out wet but none the worse for the wear. We knew there would be rising water because of the storm surge that major storms develop in advance of their arrival and the resulting floods from the intense rainfall. If the water level increased more than we thought, we would rise above the pilings and stand a chance of holing the boat on the top of submerged pilings in what was certainly going to be murky water. To that end, we left our marina knowing that we would be safer at anchor. The ensuing flood would force us to leave as well so we stocked up on food, water, and fuel and motored to our safe haven for the next week or so.



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There is a saying in the marine world, "Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning, red sky at night, sailors take delight". It was Wednesday, September 17th and the beautiful blue afternoon sky with wispy white clouds turned to a soft red sky as the sun set. The winds were more than normal but still not unpleasant. We were ready for the worst yet we all hoped Mother Nature would make all of our preparations unnecessary.

Thursday, September 18th started out like any other windy day but without a red sky. We hoped this would be the only thing that went wrong today; the satellite images were telling us to "take warning" in spite of how the ancient saying went. Before noon the clouds had rolled in, the wind increased, and we sat at anchor thinking of how we would soon be back to our normal routine at our safe marina.

By 6:00 p.m., the winds and rain were heavy and gusty. Waves seemed to come out of nowhere in increasing size and frequency even though we were relatively close to shore. The prediction for wind and rain increased with each passing hour then by each passing minute. By 8:00 p.m., we had recorded gusts of 60 plus miles per hour and the rain was horizontal and very heavy. The electronic equipment we were relying on to stabilize position was blinded by the intense rain. The lights from Richmond disappeared leaving us in total darkness with no landmarks visible to insure position. We were lucky on our boats because we could not hear the trees cracking and crashing to the ground. By midnight, we began to disbelieve our depth finders as they now flashed depths almost 10 feet above normal high tide. The winds violently threw us around causing movements that we had only felt while underway in an unfriendly sea. The marine radio was filled with cries for help as people's boats crashed through marina roofs, anchors were dragged sending homes away from homes on to the rocky shorelines, and announcements were made of "another one" that just went down.

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River Advocate: Bill Trout

Of all the James River conservationists in Richmond, surely Bill Trout has made the greatest contribution to the historical, geographical, and cultural knowledge of Virginia's rivers and canals. Not everyone knows, however, that he has come to these accomplishments from a distinguished scientific background.

Dr. William E. Trout, III was born in Staunton, Virginia in 1937. When he was ten, his father joined the faculty of the University of Richmond. Shortly thereafter, he became a Boy Scout, hiking and camping along the James River and the Kanawha Canal in Old Westham. His scout leader, who was also a biologist, inspired him to learn all he could about these waterways. It was the beginning of a lifetime enthusiasm.

Trained as a scientist, Bill graduated from the University of Richmond, where he was a member of both the Biology and Mathematics honorary societies. At Indiana University, he studied *Drosophila* genetics under Nobelist H.J. Miller, earning a master's degree in zoology and a Ph.D. in Genetics in 1964.

After a year at the Biology Division of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, under a National Institutes of Health postdoctoral fellowship, he joined the laboratory of W.D. Kaplan in the Biology Division of the City of Hope National Medical Center in Duarte, California. His publications there include pioneering works on the genetic study of nervous diseases, aging and behavior. He was listed in WHO'S WHO IN THE WEST (1974+) and in AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN OF SCIENCE.

Even in those years, he spent his summer vacations in canoes and libraries studying the historic rivers and canals of Virginia. With the close of the laboratory in 1982, he returned to Virginia to take over the presidency of the American Canal Society and to devote full time to historic canals. When asked why he gave up a career in genetics research, he says that there were plenty of people to do research on genetics, but not many to work on historic canals. He adds that (as one might guess), research on canals and rivers has always given him great pleasure.

It is his fondest hope that sharing his knowledge of these waterways will lead to a greater appreciation of them, ultimately aiding in their restoration and enjoyment much like England and Europe where cruising rivers and canals are a favorite pastime. His vision is to inspire people to experience canals and rivers not only as the rich recreational resources they are but also as historic byways to the past.

Bill was a co-founder of the national, international, and Virginia canal historic societies. A past president and currently a member of the Board of the American Canal Society, he was also a board member of the Archeological Society of America. For more than thirty years he has been carrying out basic field, archival, preservation, and park planning work on historic rivers and canals. He is one of those lucky people who are doing the kind of work they most love to do.

He has published over two hundred articles and notes documenting river and canal archaeology, history, preservation, and parks. He is the author of the [American Canal Guide](#), the American Canal Society's five volume series of regional inventories of America's historic canal resources. He is also the author of the Virginia Canals and Navigation Society's (VC&NS) series of historical river and canal atlases, in which he has mapped the waterways in detail, identified important historic sites and enlivened all with historic anecdotes and reproductions of old engravings. These atlases, currently in the archives of the VC&NS, constitute an invaluable resource for history buffs, river corridor planners, and anyone wishing to explore the rivers from the water or shores.

In 1983, his discovery with historian Jimmy Moore of sunken boats in Richmond's canal basin led to the James River Bateau Festival and a revival of interest in the recreational potential of early canal and river historic sites in the American South. He currently works with historical groups and agencies to rediscover, evaluate, and interpret historic

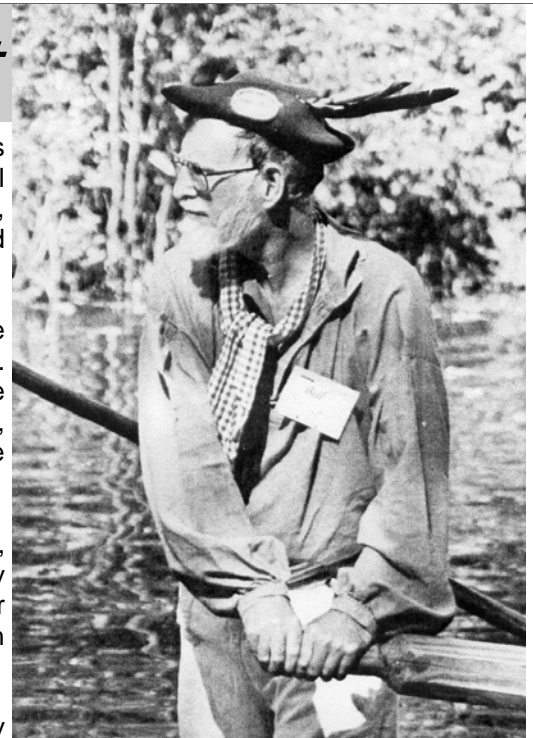


Photo by F. V. Sheffield, Sept. 2000

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canal and river foci as potential canal and river sites. The goal of these relationships is the creation of parks, trails, and open space of exceptional value -- a primary goal of his river and canal research and his many publications.

Bill's awards include:

- ✓ Historic Fredericksburg Foundation-E. Boyd Graves Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation
- ✓ Historic Petersburg Foundation-Heritage Award
- ✓ Preservation Alliance of Virginia-Katherine Glaize Rockwood Distinguished Preservation Award
- ✓ Council of Virginia Archeologists-Virginia Sherman Memorial Award
- ✓ Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities-Mary Mason Anderson Williams Award
- ✓ James River Association-Guardian of the River Award.

Bill's wife Nancy is a descendant of early settlers who navigated some of these rivers long ago. Sharing his interests and enthusiasms as a friend, she began to help him in his work and continues to do so as his partner.

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Call for Articles

Is there something about the river that you know? Does your organization have an event that may interest our readers? If so, let us know! Contact Dan Caston at 501-5807 or cas12@co.henrico.va.us and we'll work toward getting it published in an upcoming edition of the REACH!

Death Toll High on James River

The James River in Richmond saw an extraordinarily high death toll this season.

According to Ralph White, Park Manager for the James River Park System, the average number of deaths occurring within the James River Park is less than one death per year for the last ten years. However, this year there have been five deaths within six months. The obvious question-why?

The common characteristic of the victims is that they all involved males that were not frequent park users and thus unfamiliar with the inherent hazards of the river.

The first occurred in late March involving an overweight male in his early 40's from Washington, D.C. who was on a raft trip with VCU's Outing Club. Wearing the appropriate safety equipment, he was tossed out of the raft in a rapid. It is suspected that the victim suffered a heart attack or stroke as he had indicated verbally to the guide that he was fine. The guide rescued two others who had also fallen out and upon returning to the man, found him face down in the water.

The next incident occurred in early May on the South Side of Belle Isle during high water (11 ft). An adult male was fishing near the dam at the west end of the island. He fell in and apparently hit his head, knocking him unconscious. The two friends that were with him attempted to grab him but the current was too swift. His body was retrieved near the 14th Street Bridge.

Then in early June, a homeless male was wading above

well.

In August, five adolescent males from Chesterfield County decided to wade to William's Dam from the south side of the river. Two of the boys did not know how to swim and when they hit a deep spot, both went under. Fortunately, one was rescued by his friends. The other boy was not so fortunate. He was swept down stream and through Pony Pasture Rapid before being retrieved, by which point the boy had drowned.

Lastly, in mid September, an adult male was seen in the river very early in the morning near 14th Street Bridge. His body was later recovered just below 14th Street. Very little is known about this incident except to say there were no drugs or alcohol involved and the man was in average condition. It is thought that he was a homeless man living on one of the islands, but this has not been confirmed.

It's easy to say that the increased frequency of water over six feet in the James is the primary reason for this phenomenon, but this is only one contributing factor. As noted above, all of the drownings occurred with males who were not frequent river visitors. Another quick assumption is that deaths occur with a direct relationship to alcohol or drug use with young males. Four of the five deaths were adult males, not youth. Excluding the suspected heart condition, all of the victims were healthy males. Additionally, none of the deaths were linked to drug or alcohol use.

(Death continued on page 5)

Scenic River Legislation Update

In the last issue of *Reach*, we reported that HB 1627 had passed both houses of the General Assembly and that the Governor was expected to sign the new legislation. The Governor did indeed sign and the legislation took effect on July 1, 2003. The new Scenic Rivers Act:

- Creates the Virginia Scenic River Board composed of 15 members appointed by the Governor.
- Eliminates current local scenic advisory boards.
- Authorizes the Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to appoint local Scenic River Advisory Committees to consider and manage local scenic river interests and issues.

Those steps have now been taken. The members of the Virginia Scenic River Board have been appointed by the Governor; the Board has yet to hold its first meeting. Locally, the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Board was replaced by the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee with members appointed by the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Under prior legislation, four members of the Falls Board were appointed by the Governor and five by the Richmond City Council. The Falls Committee held its first meeting on September 11, 2003.

Virginia Scenic River Advisory Board Members

- Henry R. Broaddus, Mechanicsville
- James A.L. Daniel, Danville
- Richard G. Gibbons, Richmond
- Ralph Hambrick, Richmond
- Robert G. Harrison, St. Paul
- Patricia A. Jackson, Mechanicsville
- Mark Merhige, Richmond
- Shelton Miles, III, Long Island
- Ralph L. Moore, Drakes Branch
- Mary Lily Nuckolls, Galax
- Cardell C. Patillo, Sr., Portsmouth
- Christopher B. Rivers, Richmond
- Gordon Shelton, Fredericksburg
- Porcher L. Taylor, Jr., Petersburg
- Richard B. Taylor, Petersburg

The Scoop on Poop

by Bonnie Phillips

Urban areas with large pet populations have problems with pet waste ending up in waterways. Picking up our pet waste and throwing it in the garbage or burying it is excellent prevention for this problem. Many communities have laws requiring pet owners to pick up and dispose of pet waste for this reason. I first learned the importance of "scooping the poop" as a member of the Richmond Dog Obedience Club. With so many households and yards that drain into the Chesapeake Bay, it's important for each household to use pooper-scoopers. It's easy to clean up by carrying small plastic bags which can be secured and thrown in the garbage. Ten reasons to scoop the poop:

- Storm water carries pet waste and other pollutants directly into waterways.
- Animal waste adds nitrogen to the water. Excess nitrogen depletes the oxygen in water necessary for beneficial underwater grasses, wildlife and fish.
- Animal waste may contain harmful organisms such as Giardia, Salmonella and E. coli that can be transmitted to humans and other animals by ingesting contaminated water.
- Roundworms and hookworms deposited by infected animals can live in the soil for long periods of time and be transmitted to other animals and humans.
- It's the law! Many urban and suburban areas require pet owners to pick up after pets. Even if there is no restriction, cleaning up after your pet is always the right thing to do.
- Joining the growing number of responsible pet owners may encourage hotel managers to accept pets when you are traveling and help keep fees to a minimum.
- No one likes to step in pet waste and spread it into homes, cars and businesses.
- Scooping on a daily basis and applying lime will help prevent odors.

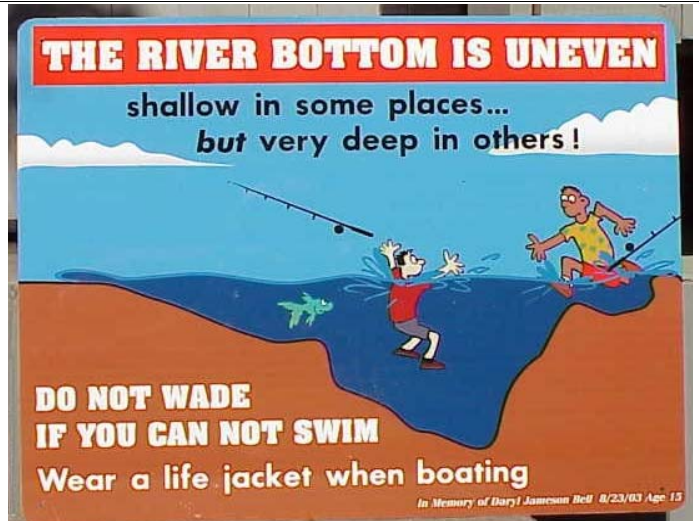
Your neighbors will appreciate your good manners!



(Death continued from page 3)

On a positive note, since all of the victims were not frequent river visitors, it is assumed that the aggressive educational program implemented over the last ten years for frequent river users seems to be working. Signs indicating water level based PFD requirements and high water permits for boaters encourages a responsible use of the river.

The gap now seems to be the visitor with no relationship to the river. The answer is education. Immediately after her son died, the mother of the boy who drowned initiated the design and installation of two signs to be installed around Pony Pasture (see picture at right). Unfortunately, this was a reactionary solution. It is now imperative to take a proactive stand in this education effort. To this end, Ralph White intends to produce a 30-second video to air in the spring on local public access, government and school cable channels. Also being considered are more signs indicating the inherent hazards of the river. These signs will be placed at heavily used access points. Lastly, river hazard information will be included in a new, updated map for the park currently being developed.



*New sign to be installed near Pony Pasture and other popular river areas.
In Memory of Daryl Bell-age 15*

Miss an issue of the Reach? Past issues are posted on the JRAC website:
www.jamesriveradvisorycouncil.com

2003 Citizens for Water Quality Outstanding Citizen Activist Award



Peggy Sleevi has been a water quality monitor for the Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront since the program was initiated in the fall of 2000. Peggy and her students at Trinity Episcopal School perform quality assurance on all the weekly data collections for the six sites sponsored by Friends. She also enters the data from monitors who don't have access to the database for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. This past year, in addition to monitoring at Robious Landing Park on the James River, Peggy agreed to take over the administration portion of the Friends monitoring program by directly receiving data from all our volunteers and tracking the data sheet. Currently, Peggy is working on data analysis of the data for the six Friends of Chesterfield's sites to report in a special feature newsletter on Water Quality Monitoring.

In recognition of all her hard work, Peggy received a outstanding citizen activist award from *Izaak Walton League's Save Our Streams* at the *Citizens for Water Quality Annual Summit* held in Charlottesville on Saturday, July 26. Congratulations Peggy!

2004 James River Advisory Council Meeting Schedule

- Thursday, Jan 22 - 8:30 a.m.
 - Thursday, April, 22 - 8:30 a.m.
 - Thursday, July 22-noon
 - Thursday, Oct 28 - 8:30 a.m.
- All locations to be determined.*

For more information, contact Kim Conley at 748-1567 or conleyk@chesterfield.gov

Reflections...

I was born upon
thy bank,
river,
My blood flows in
thy
stream,
And thou
meanderest



Recycling Initiative an "Unqualified Success" in the James River Park

In 2001, the James River Park System, with the assistance of the James River Association received a \$2000 grant from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. These funds were made available for the express purpose of encouraging recycling within the park. Three Eagle Scout candidates designed and constructed different style receptacles. After several months of monitoring, the design by Eagle Scout William Lassard was chosen as the most effective style. The receptacles cost approximately \$250 each. The James River Park Fund provided additional funding for a total of twelve units to be constructed and installed at various locations throughout the park system.

The James River Park System has maintained a recycling process for years. Trash receptacles were dumped into a trailer after which recyclable materials such as glass, plastic, cardboard and aluminum were separated out by hand. The park staff had perfected this tedious task but it was still time consuming and more importantly, did little to involve or educate the public.

According to Ralph White, Park Manager, the value of the new receptacles revolves around a change in user attitude. Park patrons consciously decide to recycle or



not thus shifting the responsibility to them. The staff benefit as well with less frequent trash collection and reduced time to collect and sort the trash from the recyclable materials. This leaves more time for other responsibilities such as educational programs and staff/visitor interaction.

Simply providing the option is not enough. Key to the success of the program has been the educational wording on the receptacles. *Trash for the Landfill* sends a very clear message and listing the types of recyclable materials accepted reduces cross-contamination. The wording helps the patron make an informed decision and includes them in the process, ultimately fostering a sense of pride and ownership in the park. All this-just from a recycling program!

The decision to implement a recycling program can be difficult. Financial considerations, changes in management and front line protocol, and disposal issues must be addressed. Ultimately, it comes down to one fundamental question: "What type of community do we want to foster within our parks?" The

choice to promote and support patron initiated recycling sets a very distinct tone that promotes a welcoming yet responsible use of our park lands.

Virginia Water Monitoring Day

On October 17th, citizen organizations, water quality agencies, students and the general public gathered together across from Tredegar Iron Works in downtown Richmond to test the water quality of the James River. The tests for water temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity form a "snapshot" of the water quality on the James, which will eventually be combined with results from around Virginia, the United States and the rest of the world into an international database.

School groups gathered in the morning and experienced hands-on methods of how to test the water quality. Secretary of Natural Resources W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr. assisted the children in collecting water samples to gauge the river's health before saying a few remarks. The general public also participated in the water sampling in the afternoon.

The *James River Association* and the *Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay* sponsored the event with support from a number of participating organizations. If you are interested in viewing the results, visit the USGS at www.va.water.usgs.gov.

New SOLs Provide Educational Outreach Opportunities

On August 27, Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront provided watershed training to sixth grade teachers at the Chesterfield County Public Schools 2003 Science In-service at Monacan High School. The training session focused on the new sixth grade SOL dealing with water and watershed education (SOL # 6.5 & 6.7). Friends provided materials and hands on lesson plans along with several audiovisual educational pieces as part of teacher training. Partnering with the Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront, Chesterfield County Public Schools demonstrates its commitment to the use of local resources in providing quality instruction as building blocks to student success.

New Water Main to Cross the James

Southwest Richmond will soon be served by a new 36-inch water main crossing the James River just east of the Huguenot Bridge. Drinking water for this area of Richmond is currently supplied by pumping water from the treatment plant on Douglasdale Road east to the downtown area, across the river, then south and west to the Huguenot Road and Bon Air areas of the City and Chesterfield County. This circuitous route required three pumping stations and a much longer transmission time than service to other parts of the City.

On the north side of the river, the new pipe will be connected to an existing one presently serving western Henrico County. The new City main will extend west and south tunneling four feet beneath the river bottom at Huguenot Woods, under Riverside Drive and Huguenot Road finally terminating at Chippenham Parkway where it will be connected to the existing local distribution system.

According to the City Department of Public Utilities (DPU), the purpose of the new main is to improve and augment the water supply to this area and increase its reliability during times of high water use. Other benefits cited include improved water quality, reduced pumping costs, enhanced fire protection, and greater pipeline security because it will be a buried system. It will also meet an increased need for water by new developments, such as the Shops at Stoney Point.

Construction started in September from Riverside Drive north through the Huguenot Woods to the river. Except for the removal of trees along the route, most environmental impacts are expected to be temporary. The project is scheduled for completion in the early spring of 2004. Restoration measures will include removal of temporary causeways and seeding where the ground has been disturbed.

For questions, DPU suggests contacting Edward Alleyn or Janice Baily at 646-8502.



A new statewide campaign to encourage and recognize voluntary activities that have a tangible impact on Virginia's natural resources was kicked off by the state's natural resource agencies. Stewardship Virginia will run through Oct. 31, encouraging Virginians to participate in activities such as stream restoration and adoption, habitat improvement, trail repair and historic restorations.

"Stewardship Virginia is designed to encourage groups and individuals to organize or join activities that have real, positive impacts on our lands, waters and cultural resources," said Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources, W. Tayloe Murphy Jr. "It also recognizes these works. Everyone who participates in a registered Stewardship Virginia project will receive a certificate of appreciation from Gov. Mark Warner."

"Our goal with Stewardship Virginia is to help connect the people of Virginia and their natural resources," said Joseph H. Maroon, director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). "But we want to do it with projects that make a lasting difference." DCR is coordinating the campaign.

Events can be registered and more information on Stewardship Virginia can be found at:

www.dcr.state.va.us/stewardship
or toll-free 1-877-42WATER

(Hurricane continued from page 1)

It was Friday, September 19th and adrenaline was our friend; we were all wide-awake after spending a sleepless night with Isabel - a lady no one would want to bring home to meet mother. We were lucky, we were still floating, our generators had kept our food frozen, our water tanks had fresh water. We could see the pain and suffering others had endured as we watched televised reports of damage left in Isabel's wake. Our first chore was to get back on land and see what had happened to our marina. We were delighted to see it was still intact although we did have to retrieve our 120-foot long floating dock from the adjacent property. The other marina close to us had some boats damaged, one had sunk, but over all was in good shape. As we snaked our way around downed trees, we were determined to see how our other boating brethren had fared further down the mighty James.

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Nothing could have prepared us for the total devastation we saw as we arrived at Jordan Point Yacht Haven. Every piece of horizontal wood had been ripped from its structure, which was so heavily damaged that it was only a mere shadow of its former self. All of the boats had been carefully removed from the water prior to the storm to insure their safety from the high winds and rough water. Unfortunately the much higher than anticipated storm surge had brought those very rough waters onto land causing the unmanned boats to crash into each other while floating only a few feet above what was yesterday a parking lot. Unsecured and unprotected they beat each other to pieces as if entered in some kind of perverted demolition derby. This event had no winners as was evidenced by the sickening remnants when the high water receded back into the James River. Further up the James into the Appomattox River, Hopewell Yacht Club apparently sustained enough damage to warrant permanent closure. Boat damage was minimal but the aging marina had finally been pushed past the brink by its final storm. Hopewell Yacht Club marina was not Isabel's last victim, reports of lost boats, destroyed roofs on marinas, and erosion never seen before by even the most experienced boaters became standard items of discussion.

The impact of Isabel will be felt for a very long time by many of the boating community. The second guessing and misplaced optimism of the storm's effects will haunt many. Many boaters will utter "maybe next time" followed by a statement involving some action that could never be anticipated. We learn by experience, a 500-year storm is too rare an event for any of us to understand the true impact. Those who escaped damage were lucky; those who lost their boats were not. Sometimes it is just that simple.

Our loss as boaters has had a future effect on many others as well. The 2003 James River Parade of Lights will not be seen by over 10,000 people as it was last year. But, as we boaters reflect the spirit of us all in the United States, we will be back in 2004 to give the citizens of the region a light parade that will brighten our spirits far more than Hurricane Isabel darkened our skies.