

# Putting the wind in your sails



Beginning sailors Chuck Abela of Plymouth and Kathy Wallace of Redford row out into Kent Lake before setting sail on a windier summer day.

BRIAN TOOVALLIAN

By Carol Azizian  
staff writer

Winds raging at 35-40 knots. White caps on the lake. Boats' tossing from side to side like clothes in a spin cycle.

*"A beginning sailor's nightmare. We were coming about (turning) after we came through the eye of the wind and we got a big gust. We weren't able to release the main sheet fast enough so we capsized. I took the halyards and the sails down. A power boat came by, leaned over the side and picked up the mast. We stood on the centerboard and righted the boat."*

*"We lost a sponge, a pair of sunglasses, the back of an ear-ring. But I never broke my nail and my watch is still ticking."*

Peggy Innes, an instructor with the American Youth Hostels' sailing program, was sopping wet and resting on the Kent Lake shore in Kensington Metropark when she recounted the incident.

Weather conditions like that can take the wind out of your sails, she admitted.

*"I was hiking (leaning over the edge of the boat) out so far that my hind end went in the water," recalled Bob Cowen, 43, of Farmington Hills.*

*"I was laughing so hard that I couldn't ask for help."*

*"They (the other passengers) think it was an accident," he said with a smirk. "But, for me, it was a very refreshing dip."*

**THE MORAL** of this story: When you test the high seas for the first time, you might get more than your feet wet.

Braving the elements isn't always this rough. Sometimes it's so hot and the winds are so light that students drift through their entire class sessions.

Despite the unpredictability of the weather, some 100-125 new students try out their sea legs every year in the AYH sailing program. There are about 400 sailors in all levels — from beginning to advanced.

Classes begin in May and run through September. The last class is from Friday, Sept. 9, through Sunday, Sept. 11, at Proud Lake Recreation Area between Wisnom and Commerce roads off Duck Lake Road.

"A lot of people enroll in fall classes because they don't want to wait until next spring," said Susan Ankom, AYH director. "We'll have boats in the water through October."

Once they complete the course, beginners take two tests — one on the water and the other on paper. If

they pass, they receive a skipper's rating, which enables them to sail the 18-foot Interlake boats docked at Stony Creek and Kensington Metroparks.

Skipper's who want to move up the ranks must complete a boating safety course either through the U.S. Power Squadron or the U.S. Coast Guard.

WITH A captain's rating, sailors can man the AYH's 26-foot boats on Lake St. Clair. An ensign's rating allows them to sail 30-foot vessels.

To qualify for a voyager's rank, ensigns cruise through the North Channel in Canada with an instructor and a crew. Voyagers get special privileges such as chartering boats for family vacations.

All skippers must volunteer a minimum of 14 hours by taking new students out on practice sails or teaching maintenance lessons.

"This is a voluntary organization and it's the only way we can keep the program going," explained Ian Tschirhart, sail coordinator.

Cowen, a computer equipment salesman, and his wife, Karen, sailed through the class, but they haven't taken the test yet.

"My husband and I ski all winter and we were looking for a summer sport," Karen said. "This is the only way to go, if you can't afford to buy a boat."

Chuck Abela, 46, of Plymouth got hooked on sailing eight years ago when he took a Windjammer cruise on 132-foot ship in the West Indies.

He's been on the high seas all his life. As a young boy growing up in Malta, he fished off the coast with his father every day. In 1949, Abela and his family crossed the Atlantic on a passenger liner. When he served in the Marine Corps from 1951-55, he was part of a battalion landing team in the Formosa Straits.

"EVENTUALLY, I want to buy a 26-footer, move down to the West Indies and take people on charters," he said.

But for now, an 18-foot sailboat will suffice. He bought it soon after finishing the AYH class.

"I haven't been certified yet," said Abela, a pressman for the Detroit Free Press. "It's been way too hot to go sailing."

After sailing with a "voyager," Kathy Wallace, 34, of Redford decided to try it herself.

"I don't like hot weather and being on the water seemed like a good way to cope with the summer," said Wallace, a computer operator for Second Century Real Estate. "It's kind of overwhelming," she confessed. "There are so many things to watch for — where the wind is coming from, boat traffic."

## You can still set sail

It's never too late to go sailing. Classes are scheduled in September through both the American Youth Hostels program in Berkley and the Jack Leverenz Sailing School in Grosse Pointe.

• AYH — Introduction is at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at Kent Lake in Kensington Metropark. Lessons begin at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Sept. 9, and continue from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 10, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 11, at Proud Lake Recreation Area between Wisnom and Commerce roads off Duck Lake Road.

Cost is \$100 for the class plus \$17.50 for an associate membership or \$23.50 for a full membership. An additional \$40 covers overnight lodging at the Outdoor Center Lodge.

October. For more information, call 545-0513.

• Jack Leverenz — Evening classes are 6-9 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the first week and Tuesday and Thursday the second week. Next session begins Monday, Aug. 29. Cost is \$175.

Four days a week — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 29, through Thursday, Sept. 1 — costs \$225.

Weekends — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 27-28; Sept. 3-4; Sept. 10-11 — costs \$145.

Boats are Ontario 23s and are docked on Nine Mile and Jefferson. Sailors go out on Lake St. Clair. Participants receive a certificate. If they pass a written test, they will be certified by the American Sailing Association. For more information, call 866-7887.

# Great Lakes are great for salmon fishing charters

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
contributing travel editor

**Q:** A friend is coming up from Florida in September. He's taken us deep-sea fishing in Florida and we'd like to take him salmon fishing in Michigan. Where should we go? We don't have any decent equipment. Can we rent some and go out on our own in a small boat, or should we charter? What does it cost? Are the fish safe to eat?

**A:** Michigan fishing expert Gordon Charles, who writes about his fishing experiences all over the world, has some good advice for you. He writes for newspapers and magazines nationwide. Among other things, he said, "I don't try to go out on a boat by yourselves."

"I wouldn't want to be on any of the Great Lakes on anything less than a 18-foot boat. The fish are so far out they are beyond the safety of a small boat."

You probably know that coho and chinook salmon were planted in the Great Lakes to clean up the alewives. The salmon start early in the summer at the south end of Lake Michigan and migrate north, following the alewives. Lake Superior salmon are smaller, but fishermen say they taste better because they

don't eat quite as many alewives, which produce a thick-bodied, slightly fatty fish.

Salmon and trout are the main attractions in lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior, walleye and bass in Lake Erie, walleye, muskie and bass on Lake St. Clair. Since your main interest is salmon, why not focus on Lake Michigan.

**ACCORDING TO** Gordie Charles, "In Lake Michigan, the salmon migrate north to Petoskey and then swing back into Grand Traverse Bay, which is like a small lake of 200 square miles. If a fisherman is based in Traverse City, he can almost always get out on Grand Traverse Bay. If you hire a charter out of other places, you take more chance on the weather."

Most of us define weather as hot or cold, wet or dry, but it means more than that to real fishermen like Gordie Charles.

"Winds go from west to east. The warm west wind creates warm water, which meets and mixes with colder water as it goes east. That means the water is layered. You may have to go out 18 or 20 miles to find the right mix of warm and cold water in Lake Michigan."

"Fishermen are looking for the thermocline. The top layer may be

too warm, but the deep lower level may be too cold or not have enough oxygen for the fish. We're looking for a middle layer. That's why you must go out a fair distance to find the fish.

"Lake Huron is the opposite. Warm west winds start on the Michigan shore, so you don't need to go out so far to find the thermocline. Great Lakes charter boats use a lot of equipment to measure temperature, depth, etc."

Weather sometimes keeps charter fishing boats from going out far enough to get the big fish. I went out of Manistee on the Ginger Brandy last year at this time. It was a beautiful August day, but the water was choppy enough beyond the breakwater to make me seasick.

CHARLES SAID he wouldn't be afraid to pick any charter boat out of the yellow pages, but you can do better than that. Call toll-free (800) 5432-YES for a state tourism booklet listing fishing and specialty charters, which includes boat size, passenger levels, etc. Don't be afraid to ask how long they've been licensed and how much experience they've had.

The average charter charges \$60 per person for half a day, with a minimum of four fishermen.

Charles said that if you charter a half day, pick the morning and go early. And he means early — "You

should be 20 miles out on Lake Michigan by 5 a.m." (For those of you who can't stand early mornings, I offer this encouragement. We started out at 9 a.m. and caught our limit before 11 a.m. You might or might not be that lucky.)

Your Florida buddy might like to know that Great Lakes fishing is very similar to deep-sea fishing, except, of course, the fish are smaller — no sailfish in these waters.

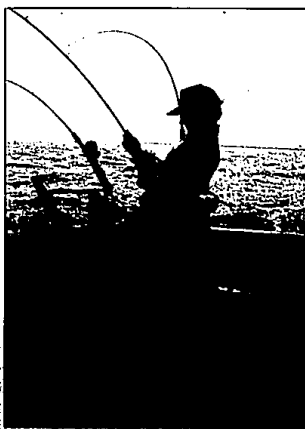
Charles told me that we might be catching 100-pound fish a few years from now. The state record now is about 50 pounds.

"Charter fishing is one of the safest sports," Charles said. "Nobody runs a charter boat for hire without passing strict safety rules by the Coast Guard, which makes annual inspections."

Can you eat the fish you catch?

CHARLES SAID that he would eat the fish out of any of the Great Lakes.

The government tests them by gridding up the whole fish, skin, bones, meat and all. Charter captains trim all the bones, skin, fat, etc., off the fish, so you end up with lean fillets. I heard a scientist say that you would have to eat 200 pounds of those fillets before you'd be in trouble!"



Reeling in a salmon on a charter boat of Manistee can be an adventurous as reeling in a sailfish in the Gulf of Mexico.

STEVE DOWNS