

# The Pilot



[www.kspss-usps.org](http://www.kspss-usps.org)

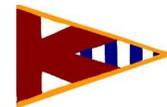
Serving Southwest Michigan

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*Kalamazoo Sail & Power Squadron*

a unit of the *United States Power Squadrons®*



**KSPS Commander  
Jim Johnston**

Spring, a theoretical date on the calendar, has now become a reality in our area. The summer birds have begun nesting, flowering bushes and plants are in bloom, and the marinas are open and welcoming us back for another boating season. Transformations are also evident with KSPS as we complete our winter classes this month, and shift to public relations events in May.

One such event is the **Portage Family Fishing Fair** on Saturday, May 16. Boating safety, especially for youngsters, is the overall theme. We fit PFD's or life jackets onto eager kids, and demonstrate safe forms of retrieval that the smaller folk can use in a rescue situation. As part of National Safe Boating Week, a group picture is taken of everyone wearing a PFD, which is subsequently submitted to national. A potluck picnic ends the event

in early afternoon. You are welcome to stop by before noon, don a PFD, and enlarge our group picture to promote Life Jacket Awareness and kick off **Safe Boating Week**. Stick around for a bite of lunch with us if you wish.

1st/Lt. Paul Walker has invited KSPS to a late afternoon event on Wednesday, May 20 from 3 to 7 pm, as the Marshall Community Foundation hosts a volunteer appreciation/promotion event at the Frank Center called "**Celebrating People in Action**". Non-profits, service clubs and other organizations can set up a table to promote their group/work/projects and also maybe recruit volunteers, etc. KSPS will be represented there through our Sea Scouts.

Our Spring District 9 conference has just drawn to a successful close; new officers have been elected, information and ideas exchanged, and awards/honors received. You commander was privileged to receive a number of honors on behalf of the squadron once again this year. Among them, for 25 Merit Marks, was a life membership awarded to LOIS WHITMORE. Join us at our May general meeting as we celebrate this lifetime achievement with her!

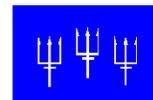
The guest speaker for our May meeting is a member of the U.S. Coast Guard who AO Jim White has arranged to be with us for the evening. His presentation and Q/A segment should bring us up to date as we head into open waters this year (details pg 2 under Events Calendar).

Remember, the boat is not really ready for summer until it's had an annual **Vessel Safety Check**. The inspection is free and ensures that you have all the safety equipment required by law on board and in working condition. You may call any of our Vessel Examiners to set up an appointment. Look at page 2 and our website for upcoming dates and locations. Many thanks to our members who perform this valuable service! (Bill Soule, Gary, Lyn, E-J, Harold, and Nils)

Our national squadron motto is "**Come for the boating education, stay for the friends.**" KSPS is here as a valuable resource for both: come join us as we celebrate another boating season.



KSPS Cdr Jim Johnston, P (right) accepts Life Member award for P/C Lois Whitmore, SN from USPS Nat'l Rep V/C Peter Mitchelson, SN



*Jim Johnston  
KSPS Commander*

**Calendar: KSPS Activities, Events and Meetings**  
 (mark your personal calendar or  
 post on fridge or mirror)

At General meetings speaker / presentation follows dinner. Executive Committee: - business meeting after dinner. Order off the menu (range \$8 - \$26). Prices higher at conference, COW, and holiday party. RSVP required at these last three. Be sure to check this month's location. RSVP if indicated. RSVP not needed at Brewsters, Gull Lake View or Moonraker. Qs: Lyn (269) 731-5601, Cdr 375-8441, Jim W. 345-5136

**Tues 12 May / 6:30 social time, 7 dinner**  
**General Meeting - Moonraker West - Battle Creek**  
 Presentation by US Coast Guard  
 Senior Chief Petty Officer Wesley E. Haslam  
 He is the Officer in Charge of the St. Joseph CG Station  
 SCPO Haslam will be speaking on a variety of topics including missions, boating safety, rescue and America's Waterway Watch.

**Safe Boating Week / Portage Family Fish Fair & Nat'l Life Jacket Awareness Photo Shoot**  
 Saturday 16 May Time: 10 am—noon  
 Ramona Park  
 8600 S. Sprinkle Rd , Portage MI  
 KSPS members help parents and children select and put on different styles and sizes of life jackets, as well as, teach "Reach and Throw, Don't Go In" Water Rescue Techniques.  
 Come for the Life Jacket Photo Shoot at 11:45

**Our Sea Scouts will have a booth**  
**Celebrating People in Action and Non-profit Organizations**  
 Wednesday 20 May Time: 3 - 7 pm  
 Frank Center for the Arts  
 214 E. Mansion St. Marshall, MI 49068

**Vessel Safety Checks**  
 Call any of our VEs for a boat inspection appointment or come to one of two planned VSC days.  
**Saturday 13 June Time: 9am - noon @ Gull Lake**  
**Sat 27 June Time: 9:30am - 2 pm @ VSCs, Boats and Brats South Haven MI**  
 Brats at the Black River Yatch Club, end of Oak St.  
 VSCs only at public launch on Dunkley @ drawbridge

***Spotlight on Vessel Safety***

Now is the time to get your annual FREE boat inspection or Vessel Safety Check (VSC) Details at [www.ksps-usps.org](http://www.ksps-usps.org)

We check equipment required by the **U.S. Coast Guard and State of Michigan** based on the length and type of boat.

**Items checked include:**

- PFDs Personal Flotation Device / Life Jacket
- Proper placement of Registration ID numbers
  - Fuel tanks, bilge
  - Electrical systems
  - Proper ventilation for engine spaces and enclosed fuel systems
  - Fire Extinguishers
- Lights for operating boat at night or in fog
- Sound producing & visual distress devices
  - Requirements for marine sanitation

**Schedule a VSC almost anywhere** go to USPS.org click on "I want a Vessel Safety Check " Put in zip code **location of boat**  
 If you do not receive an email within a week, then do again with 49012 or 49083

Call any of our certified Vessel Examiners. They can come to your dock for boats with permanent slips or to where you store your boat or meet half way between. (All area code 269)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Gary or Lyn Bleyer</b> 731-5601<br>Gull Lake, Barry, Calhoun and Kalamazoo Counties. | <b>E-J Ohler</b> 760-5862 / Paw Paw, Mattawan, western Kalamazoo County, Van Buren & So. Haven. |
| <b>Harold Hladky</b> 274-1995<br>Branch, Calhoun, St. Joseph, and Kalamazoo Counties.   | <b>Bill Soule</b> / South Haven & Lake shore (269) 370-2795<br><b>Nils Strand</b> - Pennfield   |

**In three words, I can sum up everything I've learned about life . . . "It goes on". Robert Frost**

**Birthdays**

Birthday not listed? Please let Lyn know.

**May Birthdays**

- 4 Kent Choate
- 12 Judy Dorais
- 14 Ron McPhee
- 16 John Goes
- 23 Dieter Valk
- 26 Gary Bleyer
- 26 John Penniman



**June Birthdays**

- 6 Evan Walker
- 6 Richard Walter
- 10 Roger Kilbourn
- 12 Maurizio Galbreath
- 16 Bruce Dorais
- 19 Maris Soule
- 20 Susan Norrod
- 25 Diana Goes
- 26 Jane Chappell

## Low Head Dam Danger By Scott McFetridge AP



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Photo left with permission of the Associated Press

A sign warns of the dangers of the Scott Street dam in Des Moines, Iowa. (AP)

For the better part of a century, submerged dams were workhorses of the American heartland, harnessing the power of rivers to run grain mills, generate electricity and keep lakes and ponds full of water as a hedge against drought.

These walls of concrete, called low-head dams for their minimal profile, outlasted their original purpose long ago. Today, they are better known for creating the type of wide, smooth waterway that invites city planners to turn an urban river into rustic recreational space. But beneath the seemingly gentle cascades and quiet rumble, the dams hide a sinister secret: They have dragged hundreds of unsuspecting swimmers and boaters into their churning waters and drowned them, sometimes within sight of busy sidewalks and cafes.

“The builders of these dams have created an elegant trap for human beings,” said Nate Hoogeveen, who heads river programs for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “Once people go over the dam, it’s impossible to climb out.” Now a spike in deaths is inciting a debate about whether the dams should be ripped out, even if it means letting scenic riverbanks turn to mud.

Since the 1950s, at least 441 people have died at 235 low-head dams in 38 states, according to researchers at Brigham Young University. More than one-third of the deaths have occurred in Iowa, Minnesota and Pennsylvania. Other top states for low-head dam deaths are Illinois, California, Maryland, Ohio, Texas and Virginia.

About half of those deaths occurred in the past 15 years—a period when many cities have sought to repurpose their rivers into picturesque attractions that would draw tourists. Many rivers once used mostly by fishermen are now teeming with kayakers and rowing teams and used as the site for summer festivals.

The dams, typically built in the early 1900s, can look harmless, especially from upriver. An approaching boater or swimmer often sees nothing more menacing than a gentle drop, perhaps as little as 4 or 5 feet.

But once they fall into the roiling water below, people find themselves pounded by a never-ending wave of water that forces them to the bottom.

If they can bob to the surface, the re-circulating current carries them back to the face of the dam and the nightmare begins again.

Experts say the number of dead is undoubtedly higher than the confirmed cases. No government agency tracks the deaths, and it’s unclear how many low-head dams even exist. Estimates range from 3,000 to 5,000.

It’s unclear what’s behind the increased deaths in recent years, but Bruce Tschantz, a Knoxville, Tennessee, hydraulic engineer, who has become an expert on the dams, believes it’s a combination of people spending more time on rivers and not understanding the power of the churning water.

While trying to learn how many such dams might exist in Michigan, I wound up at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The following Michigan information is from the DEQ webpage and an employee who was kind enough to respond to my questions by email.



From “*Living with Dams: Know Your Risks*” April 2012 - Department of Environmental Quality [www.Michigan.gov/deq](http://www.Michigan.gov/deq)  
According to Lucas A. Trumble, P.E., Hydrologic Studies and Dam Safety

Unit (MI-DEQ), there are approximately 90,000 dams of all sizes and construction styles in the US. In Michigan, there are 2,600 dams tracked in the MI DEQ database of varying size and style. The hydraulic roller condition, or boil, exists at the base of many dams, even larger dams, and can be very dangerous for people recreating near a dam. The problem is exacerbated by small or low head dams, because they seem less threatening from the surface. In other words, no one would paddle up to, or over, a large dam with turbulent flows at the surface. But, a small dam with seemingly calm flow over top is more inviting for folks to paddle up to the base and/or try to pass over the top. A hydraulic condition can exist under the surface at dams and can throw paddlers from their boats and trap them underwater.

**Dam Safety Tips:** ♦ Always stay outside booms and away from all dam structures.

♦ Never swim above a dam or dive from a dam structure. Because currents can pull you through the dam or pull you against flow structures with such force that you could not escape.

♦ Never fish, boat or swim below a dam. Water levels and flows can change very quickly and you may not be able to react in time to avoid danger.

<http://www.usbr.gov/watersafety/lowheaddam.swf>



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**Come for the Boating Education ...**  
**Stay for the Friends <sup>SM</sup>**

## 2015 Bridge Officers - Kalamazoo Sail & Power Squadron

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<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	P/C Lyn Bleyer, P	269-731-5601 (home)	bleyer@wmich.edu

### Jay Stevens' last speech as D9 Commander

Just before installation of the newly elected bridge at the Spring conference, P/DC Jay Stevens gave a memorable farewell speech that included a recitation from memory - without any notes - of the following poem.

#### Sea Fever by John Masefield

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,

And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;  
 And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,

And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide, Is a wild call and a clear call, that may not be denied;

### And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying, And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life, To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;

And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover, And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

Best wishes to Jay and Hazel.  
 May they now have time to sail.

