



The Smoke Signal



Newsletter of the **BLACKHAWK CHAPTER-ACBS**

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 2

March/April 2012

A Life-Changing Journey (by Alex Watson)

Part 2 - Surviving Hell

It was a deeply personal experience hearing him re-tell what happened that day. Even though 7+ years had passed, Jeff's emotions ran so high, at times it was painful just listening to him.

This is not some reality TV show, or dramatization of events to trump up interest. These ARE the events, without any embellishment. These are Jeff's words about what it was like to experience unimaginable fear, pain, and panic, and what it was like to negotiate with, and fight, Death.

It was INSTANT.

It wasn't like the boat had a hole punched in it and water was coming in. It was INSTANT. The cabin went from dry to filled with water. And it was VIOLENT! Mattresses, suitcases, everything was whipping around. It felt like I was in a washing machine.

It was freezing cold.

And, it was dark.

The sound of the motors was gone. In their place, the noise of water under pressure; this thrashing around, under-water noise.

I can remember my hands reaching out. I couldn't even think. This all happened in seconds. A few seconds. That's all.

I kept trying to make sense of what was going on. Nothing would stay still for me to get my bearings straight. It was dark, and it was just getting darker and darker. My eyes were open but I couldn't see. I couldn't make any sense of things.

You know...? I can talk about this today, but let me tell you, initially, I had a hell of a time even getting through this with people. It took me years to be able to talk about it.

I had reached a point where I was saying goodbye. I was in between... Terrified, and I remember being so angry that I couldn't get out. I couldn't believe I was going to die this way.

And then "NO!" The incredible adrenaline going through my body... I wasn't working on normal systems, you know. I remember going between fighting and "accept it, accept it." Then fighting more. It was that back and forth. I got to the point where I just put my hands out in front of me. The burning was so incredible. My lungs burned so badly.

[By now, Jeff's tone had become way more intense. Just describing this was making him re-live it. His sentences were incomplete. He was repeating himself. Especially the words "fighting," "burning," "anger."] – Alex

And I'm just there, trying to make the decision on inhaling water. I knew it was going to be over.

[Jeff broke down. He could not continue the story. It then hit me how indescribably terrifying this must have been, and that any words, even his own, fell short of articulating the emotional torrent

he must have experienced at the time. There was a pause before he could continue his story.] – Alex

At that point, I'm getting ready for it...

[Much longer pause.] – Alex

When I go through this story in this amount of detail... when I think what I went through...

Until you've been put through something like this, you have no idea... You know"...?", how I was thinking... You know... My wife... I could not... my kids! It was horrible... ..HORRIBLE!

Then, by the grace of God, I saw a little bit of light percolating through some part of that boat. It was barely... It was something other than pure darkness. It showed itself just for a moment. I reached... And as I started to paddle myself up, I realized "I'm out of it."



Freighter Gemini From Behind - Image Courtesy www.boatnerd.com

I remember coming up from that river, from the bottom of that river, with, you know, NOTHING! I had NO air. It was like... And I remember literally moaning coming up from the bottom. Realizing I'm getting out. I'm going to live. I AM going to live. I went from one extreme to another in a matter of seconds. It was incredible!

BLACKHAWK CHAPTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow Blackhawk Members:

The 2012 season is well underway with two events behind us now! With our first workshop and the spring dinner in our wake it's time to focus on boating! We have been busy at our house this spring getting boats ready and in the water. So far the Carver is in and three more to go. The Century should be ready to go this week. We are also working on reconditioning a mid 1980's 8' sailing dinghy and restoring a 15' Milo Craft we acquired earlier this spring. It has been fun to watch the progress and work toward the target launch dates.



The next major event on the calendar is the Father's Day Cruise down the Fox River to Port Edward for brunch on Sunday June 17th. We will get together at Turnkey Classics at Route 176 and the Fox River. We will head down the river at 9:00 AM. Details and registration are later in this edition of the Smoke Signal. Additional events include the Fox Lake Show on Saturday July 14th, the Milwaukee Tall Ships event August 9th to 11th and the Geneva Lake Show September 28th to 30th. As always watch the website www.blackhawkacbs.com for details and registration information.

In an effort to help make communication more efficient we created an email address for the Blackhawk Chapter president. Add president@blackhawkacbs.com to your email address book. As we continue to enhance our digital capabilities this will allow me and future presidents to better serve our membership.

An idea that I would like to propose to the membership is an adult restoration project. The youth group is doing great and they have just started their next project, a 1960 Correct Craft Atom Skier. I would be interested to know if there are a group of members that would like to participate in a restoration project that the club would fund. Similar to the youth group we acquire a worthy project, complete the restoration and sell the boat at the completion of the project. We would need a place to store the boat and do the work as well as a group of members that would be interested in the hands on effort to get the boat finished. This is a great opportunity to put into practice skills that you acquired on your own projects or new skills that you would like to learn to assist you in future projects. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating.

Now that spring is here and summer is right around the corner I am looking forward to our in-water events and the opportunity to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of antique and classic boating. Take a minute to visit our web site www.blackhawkacbs.com for the latest information on club events and meetings. I look forward to see you all out on the water this summer.

Best regards,

Mark Svoboda

I believe I was down there somewhere between one minute and one and a half minutes.

I know you might sit there and say it was probably less, because holding one's breath feels like an eternity. You are probably also thinking you can't hold your breath that long. Maybe if you hyperventilate for a while, and then take a huge breath, and sit totally still... And maybe if you had somebody counting...

Now, take that scenario, and make it a lot worse. The air I had in my lungs wasn't after hyperventilating. It wasn't even after a deep breath. It was however much air I had in them when the water burst in. It was not even a full breath. And instead of sitting still, holding your breath and knowing you'll live, imagine thrashing around under water because you're trying to get the hell out of whatever mess you're in. But you can't get out. And you kept thrashing — feeling around...

When I got to the surface, as soon as I was able, I just started looking around. At this point, I heard my Dad screaming. Because I hadn't been "up," you know...?

[Jeff's Dad was experiencing a different kind of terror -- thinking his son had been killed.] – Alex

And I see them, and they're in a... there's, like, two debris fields. And I see him and I see all of the debris, of the wood, and all of our stuff, and I see the three of them together over there and I'm like, "WHAT IN THE HELL DID YOU HIT?!" And I'm in the water, facing downriver. And then I kind of turned... and I see the back of this freighter which is leaving me... And at that point I realized "Oh my God, we got run over by a freighter!"

[I asked Jeff how close the stern of the freighter was to him at that point. I speculated he surfaced right after it passed over.] – Alex

By the time I turned around, that freighter was probably at least 1/2 to 3/4 of a football field away from me. I was thrust down low, under the boat. I have come to learn the freighter had stopped its engine(s). So he was gliding over me. But it wasn't until the turbulence... I still wasn't able to get out of those pieces of the boat that I was in until they settled to a point where they had stopped moving. I mean, the current, or whatever was going on there, still kept this gerbil-type wheel going with me in it down there that I just couldn't...

Gemini The Freighter That Ran Over Jeff And His 36' Grand Banks - Image Courtesy Of Mike Nichols.com

At that point I started swimming over to what was left of our dinghy. It was still tied to the railing it had been tied to. I pulled myself on. The others were grabbing things that were not sufficient to keep them afloat, you know, debris, just to float. So I was trying to get the dinghy over to them.

[I asked Jeff about the water.] – Alex

It was darn cold. October 23rd, Detroit River. It was drawing the heat out pretty good.

[Water temperatures that time of year are in the low 50's. Compound the cold water with the shock of the collision, the physical injuries, and the fatigue after 9 days of 24/7 travel and you realize these men were far from "ok."] – Alex

Luckily, there were two guys in a small aluminum boat, fishing north of where we got hit. They came down into the debris field. They came to me first, and I told them to drag me over so we could get the dingy to the others and get them out of the water. When we got over there, the three others started trying to climb into that aluminum boat. The fishermen got really worried about getting swamped. I think we never did climb into that boat. We were just hanging on...

I just told you what I had experienced. Here's what the others told me happened to them.

My Dad was at the helm, with John and Jim. He started to talk to John about this freighter parking area, just north of Fighting Island.



Point of Impact



Map Of Accident Location On Detroit River

He was just rounding Fighting Island, heading North East. He and John were analyzing whether the freighters they saw along the side of the River were moving or parked. Then, at

that point, my Dad felt the wheel pulling. He was trying to correct it, but the wheel was pulling hard, clockwise. He told John “the boat won’t steer.” And John said “what are you talking about?” Seconds after that, the boat was rolling on the bow wave of the freighter, and was caught in that current. Our boat was in a bad position to get t-boned. Jim told me, that when the boat started to turn and roll, he looked all of a



The Huge Bow Wave of Gemini, the Freighter That Hit Jeff’s Grand Banks - Image Courtesy of

sudden out the starboard window, which was now facing down the Detroit River. And there, he saw the freighter, bearing down on them only about 30 feet away. That was the yell I heard.

You know, when the freighter hit us, it actually hit on my side (starboard), the side where I was sleeping. The boat actually held its structure as it rolled over. But then, the freighter punched clean through the middle of the other side. That was probably the only thing that saved me. That the boat got flipped over to the opposite side of me before it busted open. That section of the boat washed up later on. The hole in it was about 4 feet high by 12 feet long.

[The failure of a 1-1/2 inch through-hull fitting, 4 feet below the water line, will allow 3,600 gallons per hour. You can imagine how instantaneously a 48 square foot one fills.] – Alex

When my Dad and the others went over upside down, the pilot house crushed. My Dad told me it felt like he’d been pinched really badly. Their section of the boat was underwater for a while, but came up alongside the freighter and started to float for a moment, and that allowed my Dad and the others to get out.

My Dad’s shoulder had been pulled so hard it tore muscles away from his sternum. So there, in the water, he had a hematoma in his neck that was blowing up. John and Jim had lacerations from the pilot house glass so they were bleeding... their heads were bleeding. So while the others got the more physical part of being hurt, I just had the, you know, “I’m dying by drowning” type thing.

So there we were hanging on to the fishermen’s boat. The 432 foot freighter? It turned around and then came back to us.

[Turning a freighter 180 degrees and then inching up on people, means Jeff and the others were in that cold water a long time, hanging on to the fishing boat.] – Alex

The freighter crew were throwing blankets down to us. And we were stunned to hear the captain up there yelling, literally yelling at us: “Why did you cut right in front of me?”- type talk.



Gemini, Detroit River - Image Courtesy Mike Nichols.com

As soon as they had hit us, the freighter had called the US Coast Guard. So it wasn’t much longer until the Coast Guard boat arrived. We all got into that boat, and they took us to shore. The ambulance was already there, ready for us. They rushed us off to Henry Ford Hospital, Wyandotte. We were all hypothermic. I remember the adrenaline, and the cold, and everybody was just shaking, this heavy fluttering.

The scene in the emergency room was traumatic. I was pretty much ok, other than hypothermia and a sprained wrist. John was getting stitched up. But my Dad was pretty beaten up. He was cut, bruised, and had that internal bleeding. He kept passing out. He was in his middle 60s at the time which added to the risk inherent to his injuries.

But you know, we all lived.



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BICENTENNIAL OF THE WAR OF 1812

August 10, 11, 12 2012



The Glacier Lakes Chapter and The Blackhawk Chapter have been invited to participate in the Celebration of "Navy Week" at Discovery World. **BRING YOUR BOAT!** Three Navy Vessels including the USS HURRICANE a 170' Cyclone class patrol craft to be docked at Discovery World's Cruise Ship dock. Other water craft will include the Milwaukee Fire Boat and the S/V Denis Sullivan. We have also been asked to do a boat flyby during the Milwaukee Air Show off Bradford Beach.

For more on the War of 1812 go to: <http://ourflagwasstillthere.org>



All classic boat participants will have free access to Discovery World during open hours (wristbands). Because of multiple events, commitments, and limited parking, Discovery World is unable to offer free parking at Discovery World. If a parking space is available, they can stamp the ticket so the fee is only \$5 for the day. Boats that need to be displayed on trailers on land can be kept at Discovery World in their Turn-around drive. Evening security will be on site each day of the event. The classic boats may arrive anytime on Friday August 10 during the day. Launch site suggestions: South Shore Park, Bruce Street Launch and McKinley Marina.

ACCOMODATIONS: You may want to find a hotel/motel for Friday and Saturday night. Some of the closest to downtown are: **The Astor**, 924 East Juneau; **The Knickerbocker** 1028 E. East Juneau; and **Comfort Inn**, 916 E. State St. **Double Tree**, 611 W Wisconsin Ave. Put in your browser: Milwaukee downtown motels/hotels

**REGISTER BY
MONDAY JULY 9 TO BRING YOUR BOAT**
Email or Send this information to Wil Vidal
wvidaljr@wi.rr.com OR

MAIL TO Wil Vidal
c/o BICENTENNIAL OF THE WAR of 1812
W298 N1875 Lost Tree Ct.
Pewaukee, WI 53072

Name (first & last) _____ (Shipmate) _____
 City, State Zip _____
 Boat Mfg/year/length _____
 Boat Name _____ Include very short history _____

 Phone# _____ cell# _____ Email _____

In early June, I will meet with event planners for Discovery World/War of 1812 Celebration and the Milwaukee Air Show. The specific logistics will be worked out and forwarded to you as soon as you register. We'll figure out the best launching site. It will be a fun weekend, lots of people and activities. There will be room for kiosks/displays in the promenade area. Discovery World is open to the public Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 10-5pm. It will be important to bring the boats as early as possible on Friday. You will get the specifics later. Friday evening we can eat at Discovery World or go to one of the restaurants on the river. An itinerary will be worked out. The key is to register before the deadline so you can get in on all the events and activities.

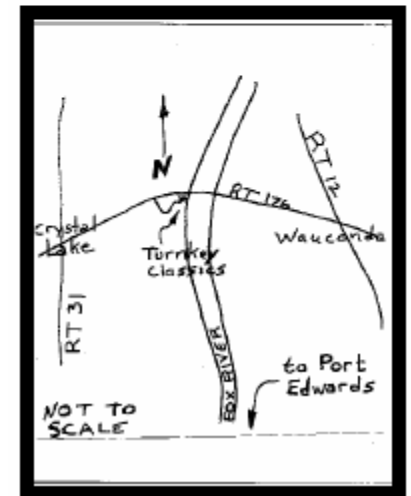
Wil Vidal

Annual Father's Day Port Edwards Champagne Brunch & Fox River Cruise Sunday June 17

The Blackhawk Chapter is pleased to announce the annual Father's Day Cruise to Port Edwards Restaurant in Algonquin for the sumptuous Sunday champagne brunch. For those of you not familiar with this cruise, it's not one to miss. The lower Fox River is always calm, the brunch at Port Edwards is extraordinary and the atmosphere is very nautical. This is also a good early season shakedown in the company of helpful companions.

The cruise will start with a free launch at Turnkey Classics in Burtons Bridge, Highway 176 and the Fox River, courtesy of member Chuck Kelley.

Plan to be launched and ready to run by 9:00, at which time we will head south to Algonquin. We will be seated for brunch around 11:00. After gorging ourselves, we have the whole day for the leisurely trip back north. Brunch, includes coffee, brunch, champagne...the works! Look for a registration form and pricing info in the next issue of the Smoke Signal.



Name _____ Number Attending _____

Name of boat _____

Total enclosed (**\$37.00 x number=**) _____

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FOR SALE: 1955 Chris Craft 20' Continental. Original KLC 125 HP engine. Updated upholstery, custom cover, original but tight bottom, single axel trailer \$25,000 Ron (708) 442-9753, Lake: (262) 275-2475.

FOR SALE: 1960 Chris Craft Sportsman; 24 ft; Twin V-8s; Complete rebuild with 5200 bottom; New interior-2006; includes trailer; Has won several awards; \$59,000. Call Dave at 309-360-1918

FOR SALE: N.I.B.Federal Equip-Poise super cup prop. NiBari Bronze 14X3 -1" \$350.00; 2005 Jersey Skiff (J.S.44) 350 CU Engine -Built crate-Approx 395 H.P.-3/8' Marine Plywood Deck Frest Water Only-(Asking 23,900) Pictures are available email sunny-girl4110@yahoo.com; 2 Hobbs HR meters N.I.B. 2.5" Hole fg 1960 25.00 each. Please call Bill @ 847-436-4975 with questions

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FOR SALE: 1955 20' Chris-Craft Continental, Loadmaster trailer 4 yrs old. New cover, stored 25 yrs in barn in Indiana. Stored indoors now. Asking \$14,500. Call Ray 847-854-6608

Blackhawk Road Trip!

A group of Blackhawk members are organizing a group trip to the 2012 International Boat Show in September. This years event is being hosted by the Heartland Classics chapter at Big Cedar Lodge near Branson Missouri. Big Bear Lodge is about a 10 hour drive from the Chicago land area. For more information of the International boat show visit www.tablerock2012.com. If you're interested in joining the Blackhawk caravan contact Mark Svoboda at msvoboda@ameritech.net or 630-208-1775.



**The 28th Annual Antique &
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at FAMOUS FREDDIE'S
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\$17.00 per person for BBQ Buffet (**must pay for buffet by 7/9/12**)

There is no launch ramp at Freddie's, you could launch at any of the other Marinas around the Lake. Ben Watts Marina ramp is 3 minutes by car or water. NOTE: A Waterway Permit Sticker is required, it can be purchased at Watts Marina.

For more info: Ron Van Horn 708-347-8951 or Ted Cartner 847-395-8902

NAME: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ MFG BOAT _____

MODEL _____ YEAR _____ LENGTH _____

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Send to: Ted Cartner PO Box 683 Antioch IL 60002
MAKE CHECKS OUT TO "The Blackhawk Chapter"

Promise of Lost Treasure

by Jeff Rogers

That single goal sent Columbus to the New World, "forty-niners" in search of California gold and wildcat Texas oil men looking for the next gusher. In this case, however, the explorers in question were three determined WWC members on a mission: Chip DeBoer, Hal Muenchow and Jeff Rogers. Our goal was simple enough --- to be in search of anything even slightly related to old wooden boats. That this venture would require a day's drive to the east coast in early April was only a minor challenge.

Arriving at the DeBoer's home in Kalamazoo the night before, much time was spent contemplating the rare gems we were undoubtedly about to stumble across: vintage hardware to a 1920s Hacker, boat catalogs in pristine condition and abandoned, but pedigreed boats yearning for new owners. Would we need a trailer? Should we rent a Ryder truck? By this time the next evening, we would know for sure (or so we thought).

Arising early and after a quick breakfast, we were ready for departure by 6:00 AM Sunday morning. Knowing the severity of our collective addiction to wooden boats and their assorted accessories, Ann DeBoer made one last search of Chip's briefcase for contraband credit cards, stacks of unmarked bills or the deed to their house. Finding none, we were cleared for takeoff and made our way through the pre-dawn silence of Kalamazoo headed east. The journey had begun.

Having grown up in northern New Jersey, Chip was voted in as the official trip tour guide. He had traveled the route between Michigan and the east coast numerous times before, visiting friends and relatives. It was, in fact, during his most recent visit east that he had stumbled upon the marina to which we were headed and made the initial arrangements for a return trip. In all his arrangements, Chip was very meticulous in planning our "mission". Several letters had been sent, spelling out in great detail our schedule of arrival, goals and expectations. Not one detail had been left out (at least on our part).

Hockenjos Boat Company, on the eastern shore of Lake Hopatcong, had sold its first Chris Craft in the early 1930s. Only an hour from Manhattan, the lake proved to be a popular resort area throughout the early decades and continues in that respect today. We would most likely find boat after boat, all tucked away in some nondescript barn, having long since parted company from their original purchasers. The possibilities were endless.

After driving through the mountains of Pennsylvania in near-blizzard conditions, followed shortly by a torrential downpour an hour later, we arrived in New Jersey on Sunday evening. Rather road-weary, but still anxious to embark upon the search, plans had been made to take a preliminary tour of the marina that night and after dinner, we hoped to do just that. Due to inclement weather and a busy schedule at the marina, however, this was not to be the case. Finally at 9:30 PM, we were able to meet the marina owner for dinner, giving us a chance to acquaint ourselves better, which upon later thought, worked out well. After all, from his perspective, here were three strangers from Michigan, wanting to rummage through his business on a late Sunday



night looking for antiques. Although spirits were somewhat dampened, we nonetheless looked forward to Monday morning and the possibilities that would certainly unfold. About the word "certainly". The truth in the adage of "nothing being certain but death and taxes" was proven correct once again. Although arriving at 7:30 a.m. due to a number of difficulties on the part of the marina owner (both real and imagined) the bulk of the first three hours was spent wandering the parking lot. When we were finally able to tour the facility, we found to our dismay, that his inventory had not been sorted or categorized as had been promised, but in fact, remained on the same shelf as it probably had since Eisenhower was in the White House. Moreover, nor did said inventory contain some of the more valuable relics that had piqued our interest in earlier conversations.

Although the excursion was not a success under our initial definition of the word, the "Trip to Hockenjos" (Hal used slightly different words to describe it) was nevertheless worthwhile in terms of camaraderie among friends, a chance to travel to new regions of the country and a great number of stories for years to come.

And, by the way, if you ever receive a call from someone proposing the idea of a similar road trip, it may be time to set aside all ideas of practicality and common sense and pack your bags.

Whether or not you "strike it rich" may remain to be seen, but the trip itself will still have been worthwhile. And who knows, you just might find that one-of-a-kind Chris Craft or Gar Wood after all.

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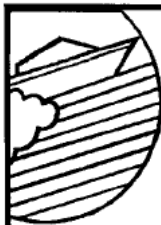
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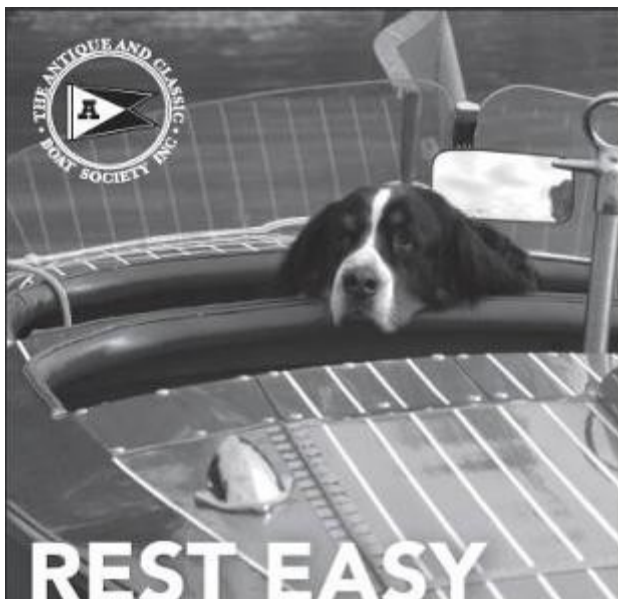
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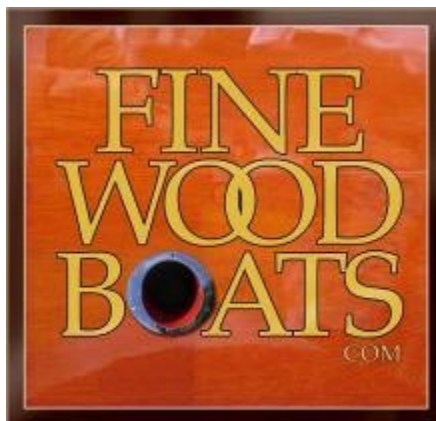
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Event Calendar

June 17 Father's Day Fox River Cruise and Brunch

July 14 Fox Lake Boat Show, McHenry, IL

August 10-12 Tall Ships Milwaukee, WI

September 19-22 ACBS International Boat Show hosted by the Heartland Classics Chapter
www.table rock2012.com

September 28-30 Geneva Lakes Boat Show, Fontana, WI