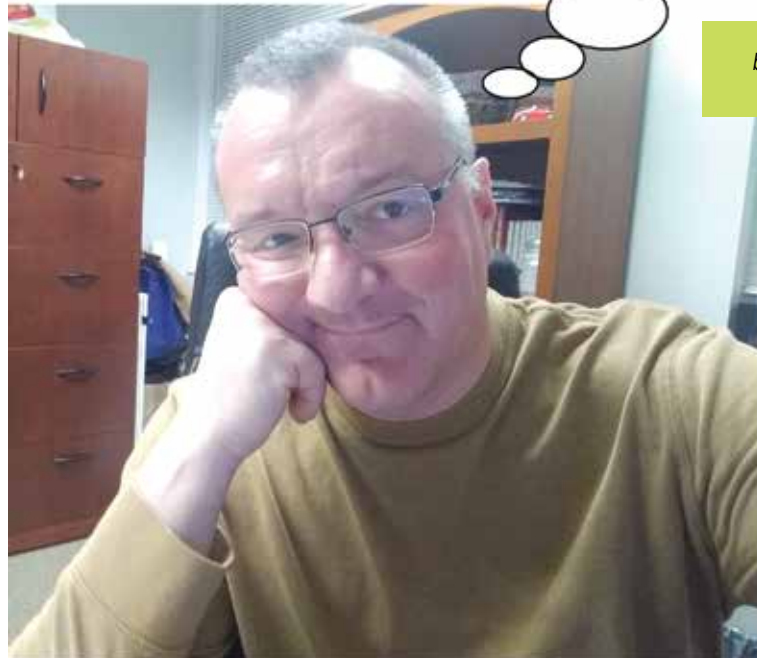


# Upstate Boating Just May Be The Best “Social Distancing” Activity



by **Pete Bardunias**, Senior Vice President, Community Advancement, Capital Region Chamber

At press time, there is a lot of uncertainty as to how long the various social distancing and quarantine restrictions will be in place. Whole communities are closed up in their homes awaiting the all clear. We as a nation have endured attacks against our citizens, our military bases, and our possessions around the world, since 1776, but this time the assault is by a hidden, unseen foe. This is something we haven't seen before. But there is every reason to believe that the American spirit will prevail just as it always does.

Readers of this magazine are participants in a very American activity – pleasure boating. We have the opportunity to see the world through a different lens than most, as sights on land and sea flash by, the wind in our face, the fresh air adding to a sense of belonging to our surroundings unparalleled in the human experience. There's a reason we are boaters, and we are truly fortunate to be able to have such an experience.

The good news is, this experience is still ours to have, even with the current national health crisis, and with the downward trends in the price of fuel coupled with very low interest rates our chosen hobby is more affordable than it has been in years! Boating is, for the most part, an activity enjoyed with at most a few friends and often alone, outdoors, in the fresh, warm air, and getting at least a little exercise, so it's the perfect social distancing practice! We may have to give up a few parties at the yacht club for a while depending on how long the ban on group activities lasts, but

Pete may be inside practicing social distancing like everyone else right now, but his mind is somewhere on a favorite body of water. What are your boating daydreams for this summer?

This has been a challenging start to the year. In our last issue we were excited to share the story of planned events such as the Waterford Canal Festival and others. Unfortunately, national and world events have overtaken the 2020 boating season and altered much of the calendar for this year. Still, there are a lot of great activities one can do aboard the boat this year.

From the New York State Canal Corporation Facebook Page: “Social Distancing will help flatten the curve of Covid-19, but you can still head outside to get some Vitamin D – Governor Andrew Cuomo has waived all state and local park fees. Be sure and check out the vast NYS Trail System with many trails along the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.” Boating is not only a robust outdoor activity, its also a way to stay safe and be healthy, even in a national crisis!



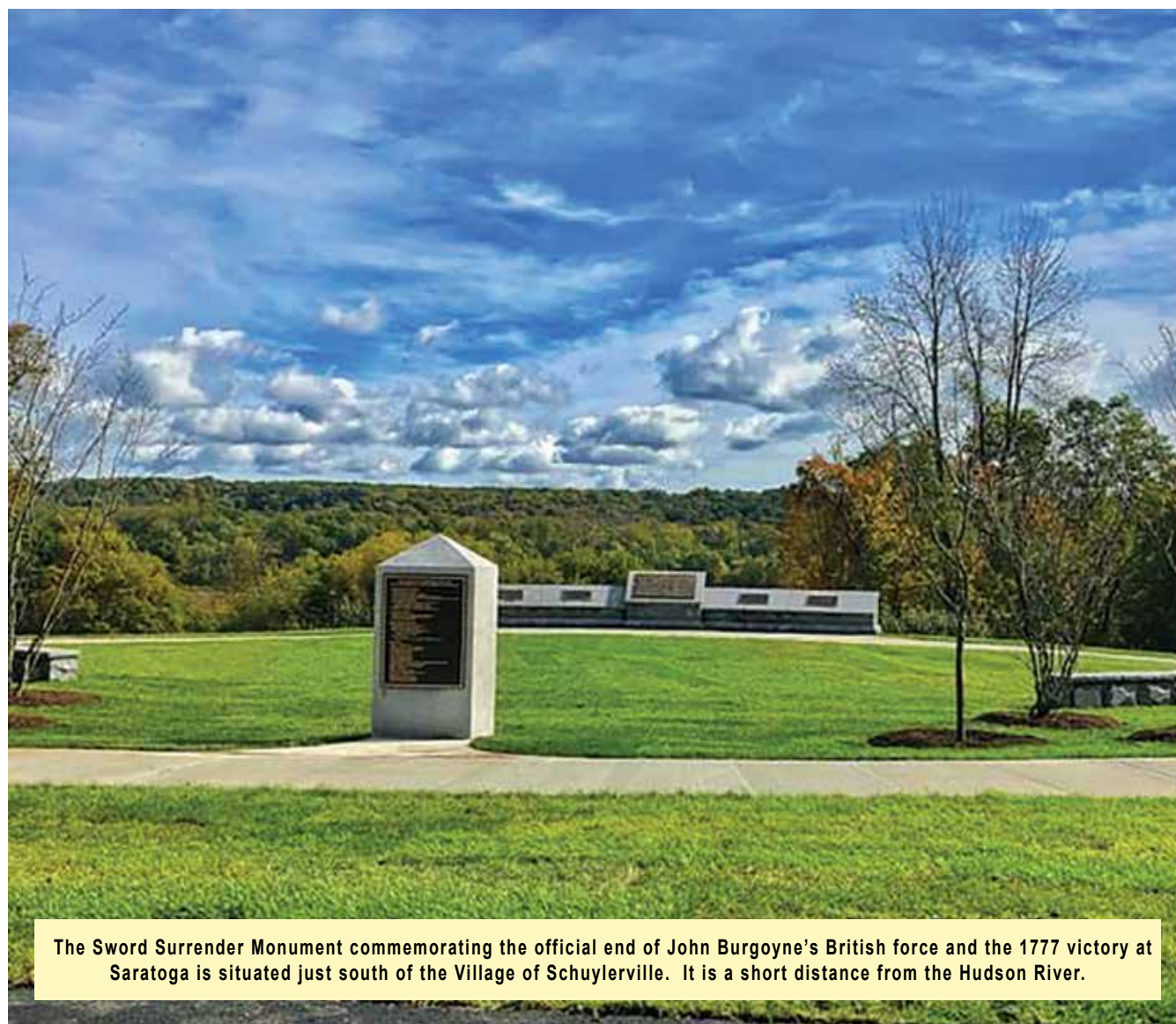
A New York State Canal Corporation buoy boat as seen at the annual cardboard boat races at Fort Hardy Park in Schuylerville. Such boats were used to transport workers to job sites and to look for tree limbs and other floating debris. Originally, they were used to service and refuel lighted buoys back in the days of oil lamps

The ship's bell of one of America's most storied aircraft carriers, the USS Saratoga (CV-3) is on display just a short bicycle or Uber ride from the docks in Schuylerville. The three men pictured in this photograph were aboard the ship 75 years ago this past February, when kamikazes heavily damaged the carrier off Iwo Jima during the closing months of World War II.



maybe its time to do something different anyway! On the canals, there are always new experiences to be had. Nearly every Lock has an expanse of green space adjacent to it, and some of them are quite large and/or adjacent to local or even state parks. Have you ever been on the Champlain Canal just north of the Village of Stillwater and seen the cannons aimed at you from the top of the hill on the western shore? No, we Saratoga County people aren't that hostile. You are passing in front of one of the most hallowed, historic places in all of America, the Saratoga Battlefield. Without the events that happened off your port beam over 240 years ago, there would be no America and you wouldn't be on your boat to enjoy it. Similarly, Hudson Crossing Park just north of Schuylerville is called that because it was literally the crossing where General Burgoyne led the British army to its date with destiny in 1777.

Sometimes the attractions are much smaller, but no less interesting. For example, there's an interesting 18th century military blockhouse in the Village of Stillwater on the shores of the River, adjacent to some interesting, venerable buildings, one of which houses an interesting small woodworking business. In Waterford and Schuylerville, one can see a preserved "buoy boat" that was used to put the channel markers in place and service them throughout the year. There are farmers markets in many waterfront communities. And in Clifton Park, on the Mohawk River just east of Lock E-7, a new kayak hub and bicycle rack are going to be installed near the picnic area we reported on in earlier issues. More ways to enjoy the water and get exercise, fresh air and sunshine!



The Sword Surrender Monument commemorating the official end of John Burgoyne's British force and the 1777 victory at Saratoga is situated just south of the Village of Schuylerville. It is a short distance from the Hudson River.



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