



LARGER THAN life

MEET SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE MADE BOATING A MORE FASCINATING SPORT OVER THE COURSE OF THE PAST CENTURY.

...years of boating experience, evolution and...
 ...some, as blue as a yacht club blazer, and...
 ...HARLES F. CHAPMAN It's two inches thick and then...

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CHARLES F. CHAPMAN It's two inches thick and then some, as blue as a yacht club blazer, and when it hits your chart table it does so with the authoritative thwack of 93 years of boating experience, evolution and enthusiasm. It is *Piloting: Seamanship And Boat Handling*, although most people know it by the name of the man who started it, Charles F. Chapman. What most people probably don't know is that Chapman's famous book—called by some the Bible of Boating—

began in the pages of this magazine in 1912. It was the nation's first boating education course, a correspondence course at that.

As a boating educator, Chapman was generations ahead of his time. His legacy is evident throughout the nation's waterways today, whether in the smartly snapping ensign of the United States Power Squadrons he helped organize in 1914 or in the satisfied face of a helmsman who's successfully put his know-how, derived from the big blue book, to the test. Chapman's desire to teach people good seamanship was driven by his unadulterated love for the sport and his certainty that everyone—not just the wealthy—would be better off for experiencing it. In this, Chapman was not unlike his book—grounded in tradition but always responding to change, and full of enthusiasm for simply being out there.

"I think he would be very pleased with the way boating has grown and how it has become part of the lives of so many millions of people," says Elbert S. "Mack" Maloney, to whom Chapman handed over the reins of his book in 1965 and who remains its editor. "But I think he would also be distressed at the lack of knowledge and ability of many of those people. I think he would still be saying the same thing. It's a sport that anyone can do, but they should do it well if they're going to do it."

CHAPMAN WAS BORN IN NORWICH, CONN., IN 1881, and grew up near the Thames River, where the uneasy duel between the eras of sail and steam played out daily. At Cornell University, he studied naval architecture and mechanical engineering; he moved to New York City after graduating in 1905. Although recreational boating at the time was associated primarily with large yachts and wealthy owners, Chapman's attentions lay elsewhere in the sport right from the start. "I became intensely interested in small craft and boats that plied the Hudson River, Long Island Sound and so forth," Chapman told Robert A. Green in a 1972 interview published in *The Ensign*, the U.S. Power Squadrons' magazine. He joined the New York Motor Boat Club and bought himself a boat, a 16-footer powered with a one-lung Detroit engine.

Chapman became chairman of the club's race committee and found a passion in competition. This would lead him in the 1920s to racing in top national events as navigator with the legendary Gar Wood and becoming deeply involved with the American Power Boat Association. (In 1953, Chapman and Wood were among ten charter members of the APBA's newly formed Honor Squadron recognizing those who've made distinguished contributions to powerboat racing.) His growing reputation on the racecourse caught the eye of Albert Hunt, a staff member of a fledgling magazine called *Motor Boating*. The magazine's publisher, William Randolph Hearst, asked Chapman to become its editor in 1912, a position he would hold for 56 years.

From the start, Chapman turned *Motor Boating* into a bully pulpit for what he called "this greatest of sports." Whether urging the industry to be more responsive to customers ("Ser-

vice for boats already sold must become more and more a duty of the seller") or chastising intolerant attitudes ("The unreasoning antagonism of the fanatical sailing man or motor boat enthusiast for the other branch of the marine sport wears our mind and gives us severe pains in the neck"), Chapman clearly enjoyed extolling the virtues of boating for the common man (and woman) and the common good. He believed in the sport as a basis for experiences that would benefit all other aspects of a person's life. The term "boater," however, was "forbidden in his lexicon," Maloney says. "A boater was a flat-brimmed hat."

CHAPMAN ALSO BELIEVED BOATMEN had a responsibility to their sport to enjoy it properly, safely and well. This was partly a matter of necessity. Chapman was among those who formed the U.S. Power Squadrons in 1914 primarily to ensure that operators of small craft would conduct themselves ably, since those who governed navigation at that time—commercial steamship operators—argued that they were a menace. Not surprisingly, Chapman used the pages of *Motor Boating* to promote the concept and values of the USPS. (He became chief commander in 1946 and remained active in the organization until his death.) He also began publishing "The Correspondence Course." Based on what were then the USPS entrance requirements, the course was a monthly examination of a particular subject with a series of questions. Readers would send in answers and those who passed received a certificate.

"We had so many requests for copies," Chapman said in the 1972 *Ensign* interview, "that we put it in book form, which was the original 'Piloting, Seamanship and Small Boat Handling,' first published in 1914."

In 1917, at the request of then-Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Chapman offered the Power Squadrons' help to train men for naval coastal defense. Schools were organized from Washington, D.C., to Boston; in New York City alone more than 3,000 people enrolled. Similarly, during World War II, Chapman helped enroll boats and crews for the Coastal Picket Force—essentially civilian boaters who used their vessels and skills to help patrol the Eastern Seaboard.

In 1971, Chapman cofounded with Glen D. Castle the Chapman School of Seamanship, which continues to offer training for recreational as well as professional mariners.

In 1976, at the age of 95, Charles Chapman died at his home in Essex, Conn. His commonsense, egalitarian approach to making boating accessible to more people thrives in the pages of his book, which continues to be used in boating classes nationwide and can be found at helm stations around the world. For those who enjoy the sport he loved and supported, his praise for its virtues still rings true: "Contact with nature—out on the open sea, the bays, rivers and lakes—broadens the perspective and breeds a comradeship among men which they inevitably carry back with them into their daily tasks." —Wendy Mitman Clarke

100 years

100yearsonthewater.com



GREAT MENTOR: Chapman's desire to teach people good seamanship was driven by his unadulterated love for the sport.