

A Maryland Tradition

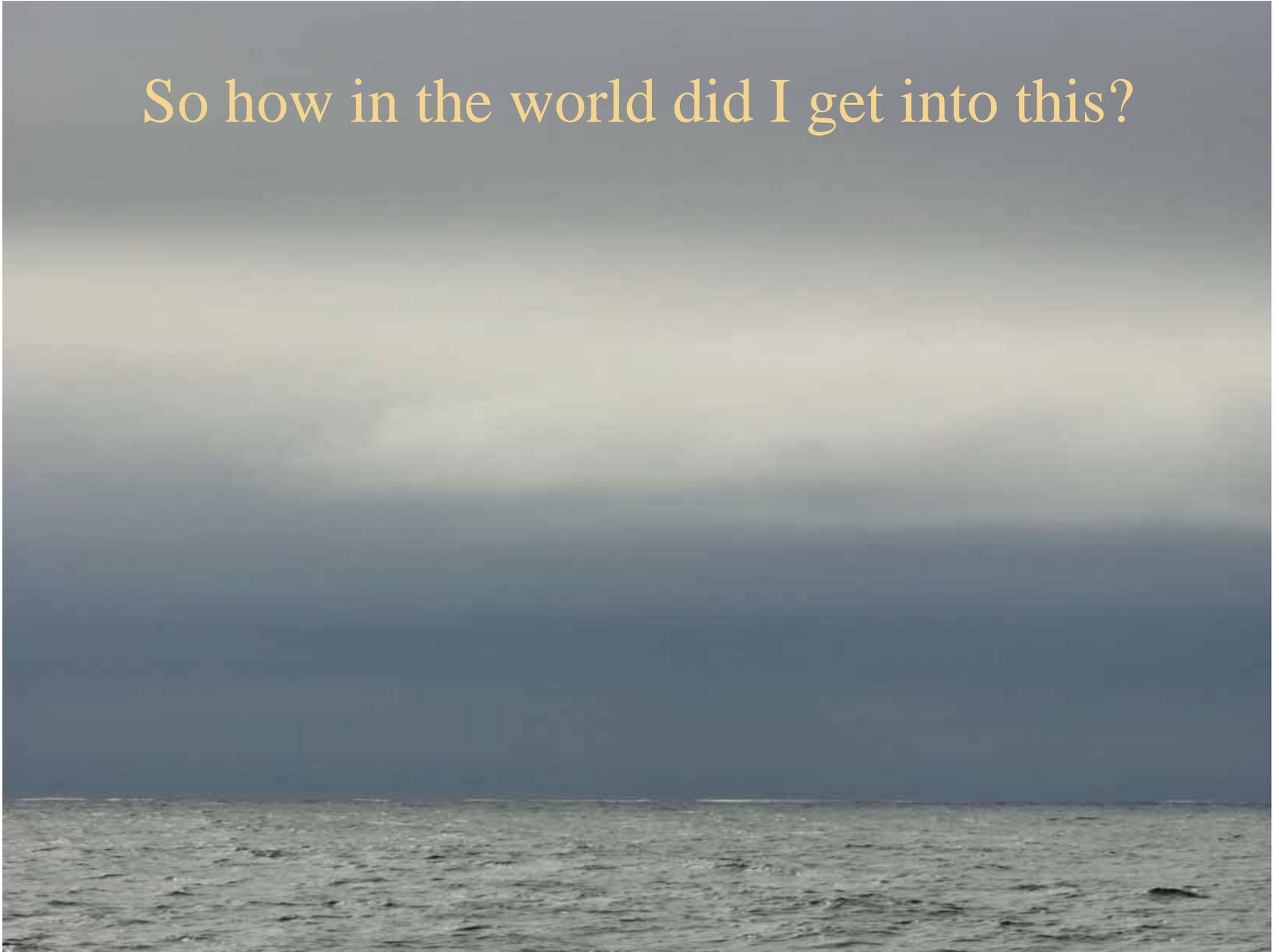
St. Mary's College of Maryland

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a bright orange orb just above the horizon, casting a long, shimmering path of light across the water's surface. The sky is a gradient of dark orange and brown. A small red buoy is visible on the horizon line.

The Governor's Cup Yacht Race is the oldest and longest overnight race on the Chesapeake Bay. The 2009 year marked the 36th running of the race from Maryland's current capital city, Annapolis to its first capital in St. Mary's City.

The Governor's Cup was conceived and founded by three SMCM students and has been sailed every summer since 1974. The first race attracted only 47 boats. The start gun was a sawed-off shotgun, and the start shapes were handmade out of cardboard boxes covered in plastic and beach towels. The race covers a 70-mile course with more than 150 boats competing in recent years.

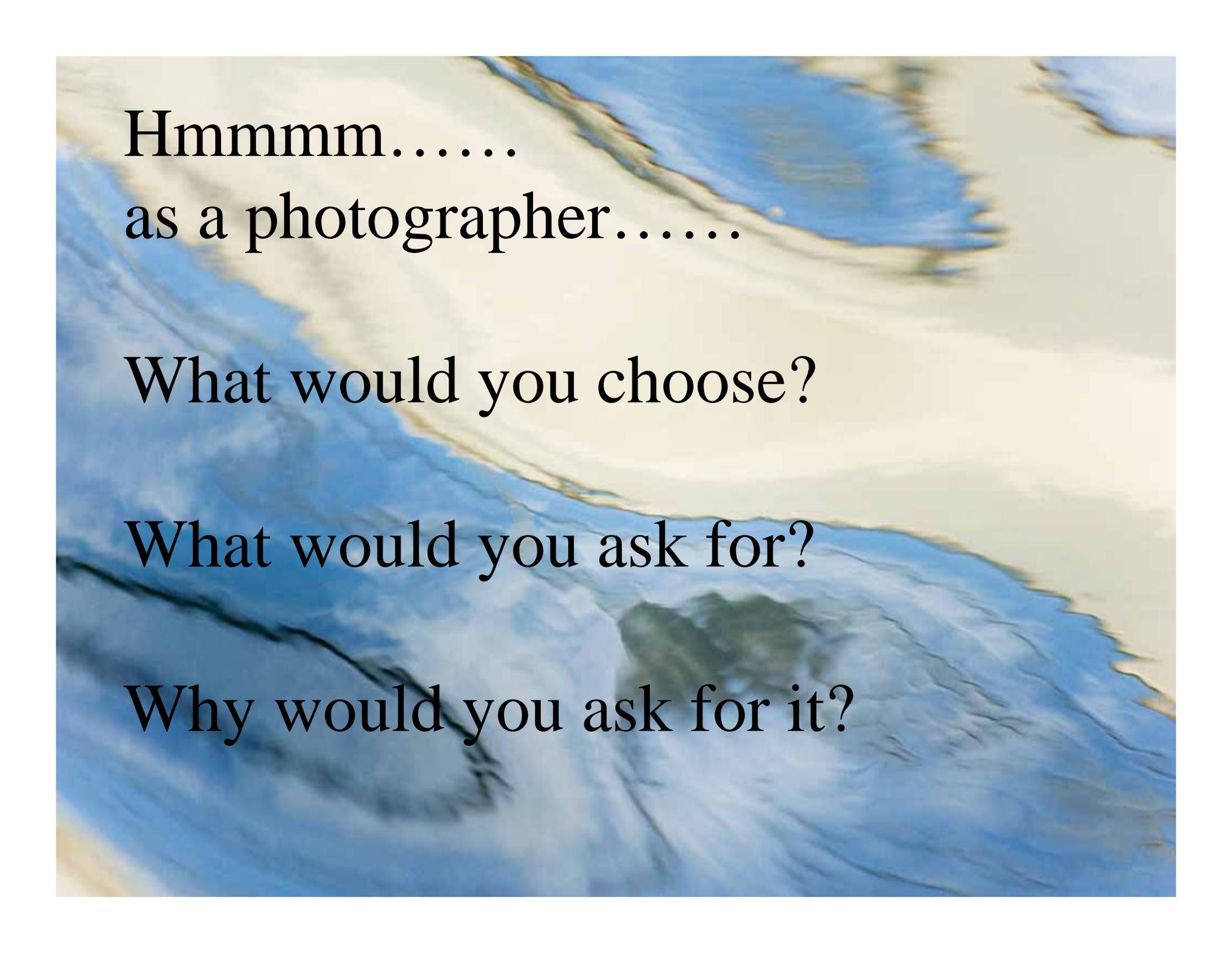
So how in the world did I get into this?



Where did I start? I received an e-mail from St. Mary's inviting professional photographers to enter the Photography Contest...

There were three choices to capture photos of the race:

1. Ride the Press Boat from 5-7pm the start night.
2. Race aboard a competing Yacht from your home town.
3. Ride the finish boat, and cover the day long activities.

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half of the image shows a wide, light-colored sandy beach. Below the beach is a narrow strip of blue water, likely a lagoon or a bay. The bottom half of the image shows a larger body of blue water with some darker patches, possibly rocks or submerged vegetation. The overall scene is a natural coastal landscape.

Hmmmm.....  
as a photographer.....

What would you choose?

What would you ask for?

Why would you ask for it?

So I sent an inquiry with my choice!  
I want to be on board a race boat.....  
was I crazy?

Why: Well I never did that..so why not?

Oh sure I spent the night on a sailboat before, and even spent the night on Lake Michigan on a motor boat with one engine, traveling in the dark with a four foot chop.....I was not worried.

Why: Who wants to stand in a Press Boat with other photographers fighting for deck space and the same shot?

Why: I wanted to experience the guts of the race, the people who make it happen, the team that wins or loses....I wanted to be IN the Race! Not fighting for any shots with any other photographer!

I looked at images on the St. Mary's site and found these first.



I thought OK I can do that!  
Then I looked at all the images Photo Boat had posted, and got more ideas.



Then I received a phone call from St.Mary's Office of coordination. They had a few questions for me?????



Could I swim?????????????

Sure I can swim! But.....

My Nikon can't...and I don't think  
I can teach it!



So..After a few more questions, and cautions: I think I had convinced her that I could do the sail!

But I did not want to crew.....

I wanted to take pictures!

A couple days later she called and told me

I had been assigned to **Der Baron...**

and I should give the Captain Don Wagner a call.....so I did.....

Don answered the phone and I introduced myself. He questioned me too!!!!!! Did I have boat shoes? Yes!!!! Sperry Topsiders! THEN he asked: Did they have tread?

And during our conversation...he said we had met.. And sure enough...on the Chestertown Down Rigging the year before....taking pictures...Don likes to take pictures too, and he is a member of the Annapolis Digital club!

I asked how he did in the previous races and he said he had some good results. After our conversation I felt pretty good...about the race...

Afterwards I Googled the name of the boat and Don's Name, only to find out that he won first place in 2008!!!!  
Whoa.....

Now;  
I was worried that I might interfere with  
The teams desire to win...but Don had a  
plan...so he called and invited me for a  
Wednesday night race in Shady Side.....  
Before the Governor's Cup.....

What a great idea!

I could meet the team,  
Get familiar with the boat,  
understand what the Captain expected of me,  
and figure out what Camera Gear I would  
Need for the “BIG RACE” and more....

So off I went to Shady Side.....



A storm was brewing as the crew prepared the boat I took a few shots.  
F11: ISO 200: 1/500sec



My first sight of.....

Der Baron: F~11: 12-24 mm lens: ISO 250: 1/750 sec



I was warming up my eyes!

No they were not cold...

I just need to put the camera to

My eye and start shooting..

It may not be an awesome image

But it warms me up!

Gets me thinking...

The crew was getting the boat

Ready!



We headed out as the clouds darkened, I realized getting Horizon lines even was going to be a challenge!



Especially  
when  
Shooting  
Vertical!

Not so easy!

I am rocking,  
the boats rocking the  
wind is blowing!

A steady hand is  
hard to find!



Still working on  
those  
Horizon lines!

The boats were  
gathering for  
the start...I was  
shooting!



As the crew readied the sails,  
I began shooting.

I was in the sitting position  
under the boom as the sails were  
Rigged..ducking and switching  
From starboard to port as  
Directed...a bit of a challenge  
With a camera around your,  
Neck...I didn't want to bang the  
Boat or the camera.



Thinking about principles of composition all the while, diagonal lines.



Three dominant subjects in the frame are better than two or four! Odd Numbers are better than even.



I am thinking about  
The goal in the  
photography competition:

Capture images that  
Represent the challenge  
Of the race! This includes  
the Crew! So I was  
looking at the  
opportunities on board to  
Capture some of those  
images...practice makes  
Perfect...so I have heard.



When the wind blew..



What would a shot look like from this perspective? Taking shots just for fun..just to see...



Trying to get some more  
Crew in action shots!

Shooting...

And gaining an understanding  
of the opportunities.



Trying to keep the subjects separated; grabbing the shot when it happened.



Doing what I always  
Do if it's a good subject,

Shoot both ways:  
Horizontal and  
Vertical!

Horizon lines are tough!  
Yes I could straighten this one  
As its not too bad,

But I wanted to share the  
Photographers challenge too!



My thought as the sail opened..  
Oh this is good,  
I heard red is always a good  
Thing in an image to make it  
Pop...so I tried it..

I am not sure this image  
Works....But I wanted to share  
it.

Might have been better if I had  
Bright blue skies!

But I was experimenting to see  
What might be an idea if it  
Presented itself in the real race!





Ok this is working,  
I liked the repetition of angles,  
From the lines, to the sail,  
To the boat in front....

All....

While keeping the horizon line  
Level, and in the lower third  
Part of the image, and having  
The lead boat in the lower  
Power point position,  
Considering the rule of thirds.



Crew working the lines..



Loved this shot..filling the frame with the sail and my subject in the Power position with the wind in her hair..but who stuck their hand up?



Catching some action shots  
While keeping an eye on  
The horizon..is challenging..

But better to take the shot  
Than lose the moment!

Still learning for the real race!



Thinking..

Horizon line level,

Front boat, separated from the  
Lines for a clear subject,  
Leading lines...

Nice diagonal, ..yeah,

I like that shot!

OK now I am getting it..



Hey,

That's a little close!..

Think: horizon straight..

Lower third, think vertical

Orientation, think moving

Into the frame, think, don't

Fall over!!!!

But I wanted to get that shot!

Love the water on the bow.

Ok,

That's the pre-race photo shoot! I guess I did OK

Don, said he would see me at 3:30 in Shadyside

On Friday..we had a nice dinner with the crew that  
Night and I headed home..tired..

I downloaded my files and began to analyze them!

What went wrong, what went right..what were

The opportunities I missed?

On to the Governors Cup.....

## Captain's Notes Race Report:

The weather predictions for Friday night included lots of thunderstorms, with heavy rain as a front was expected. Fortunately the front was fairly weak and the rains and all had passed through, while we were motoring up to the starting line in Annapolis.

The crew for the race included; Don, Steve, Bruce, Cathy, Gary, Frankie, Brian, John, Karen, Robin, Ryan, and Karen Messick (a photographer).



And it rained.....



We departed Shady Side after loading all personal effects and gear. Don had cautioned me to pack light! So I had 2 lenses, 12-24mm, 70-200mm and some memory cards. No flash allowed...





I didn't bring rain gear  
And it was raining when we left  
So I was shooting from  
the cabin steps. Turned  
out it was a...  
Pretty good perspective.

And then the sun broke out..  
With Gary at the helm.







Waiting for our class to start gave me opportunity to photograph other boats as they came about.







And the crew waiting for the  
Start ...hey whats everyone  
Looking at???????



## Captain's Notes:

Following the storm, we all were prepared for the worst as the race began, Winds were ~ 15kts from the NW, so we set the #2 genoa, and prepared for our 6:15 PM start. Oops!!!

Somehow we got the times/horns mixed up, and our class, PHRF Class A2, started, and we were now terribly late-- maybe about 3.5 minutes.









## Captain's Notes:

We certainly did get a clear air starboard tack start, as we followed the fleet heading down the middle of the Bay, attempting to ride the ebb tide. Soon, it was clear that we could set the 3/4 oz spinnaker and pick up a bit more speed, and maybe overtake a few of our competitors. The set went fine, and soon we were on a close spinnaker reach doing ~ 9 kts and slowly passing some of the slower boats.









## Captain's Notes:

By dusk,  
everyone  
including us were  
on the Eastern  
shore, still in the  
ebb tide, with the  
spinnaker and a  
spinnaker  
staysail flying.









Night was falling and  
The light was getting  
Faint..

with my ISO  
Unsatisfactory above  
250 I stopped shooting  
As the sun set.



## Captain's Notes:

Sometime, much later, we headed across the bay, for the Patuxent River buoy PR1, and rode the Western shore side to avoid the worst of the now flooding tide, which was running at 1 kt or more in places.

Crossing the Patuxent River, we saw the wind drop, and shift, but we still managed to hold to the rhumb line course for the Point no Point Lighthouse.

## Captain's Notes:

As we neared the US Navy target area, the wind dropped enough, that we dropped the spinnaker, and set the # 1 genoa, but still holding to the rhumb line course. The winds really died for a bit, and our GPS ground speed went to about 1 kt for a while, but eventually the breeze filled in and we were off at ~ 6 kts or more again. We held that course, as we passed Pt no Pt , and headed for Pt Lookout, now riding the new ebb tide.. We couldn't quite fetch Pt Lookout, so we tacked early for it, hoping the tide would carry us to it. Aargh!



There was not much to photograph at night, so I took a nap and  
Woke up when the boat stopped moving.....it was just so still..

## Captain's Notes:

Der Baron, along with a lot of the fleet, were apparently caught in the dreaded "Rotary Current" This phenomena exists when you have a current going down the Bay, joining with a strong contrary current going into the River. In the now light air, it took us several tacks to eventually pass the Pt Lookout light, but we made it at ~ 4:20 AM, and headed up the Potomac River to the QFL buoy in the middle.

So I stayed awake, changed lenses down under to the 70-200 2.8 and headed topside to watch the dawn arrive. My first good image of the day was made at 6:15am. It was shot facing the bow of the boats behind us. The light was soft, the wind and water were still.



## Captain's Notes:

We were still passing boats on this beat into the river, as the winds dropped some more as the sun began to rise. The winds shifted some, and we flew the 0.5 oz spinnaker, at times. Rounding the QFL mark, we flew the # 1 and/or the 0.5 oz chute, working our way thru the fleet for the final several miles into the St Mary's river.

## Captain's Notes:

Foxtrot Corpen gave us the most trouble, as he covered us several times, sitting on our air, gybing on top of us, etc, but eventually we prevailed, and pulled ahead in the really light air during the final leg.













Thinking Horizontal



Thinking Vertical



Thinking separation between subjects



Thinking put the polarizer on and what glorious light on the sail.







## Captain's Notes:

We finished @ 9:10:32, and to everyone's delight (and surprise) got the "gun" as we crossed the line set by the Committee, aboard the Dove, just off of Church Pt in the St Mary's River.

## Captain's Notes:

It had been a long night, with lots of good crew work, with very little sleep. Bruce, Steve and I had alternated on the helm, and navigation, with everyone else working hard navigating, trimming sails, changing sails, keeping watch for marks, boats crab pots, etc, and moving around to maintain proper trim on the boat through out the night.

## Captain's Notes:

We were 1st boat in our class to tie up at the dock, and everyone was excited to finish 1st in another Governor's Cup Race. A few reporters came by for short interviews, and pictures of the crew.



Karen Messick of Baltimore snaps a picture of the Der Baron crew during a post-race celebration at St. Mary's College. (By Mark Gall — The Washington Post)



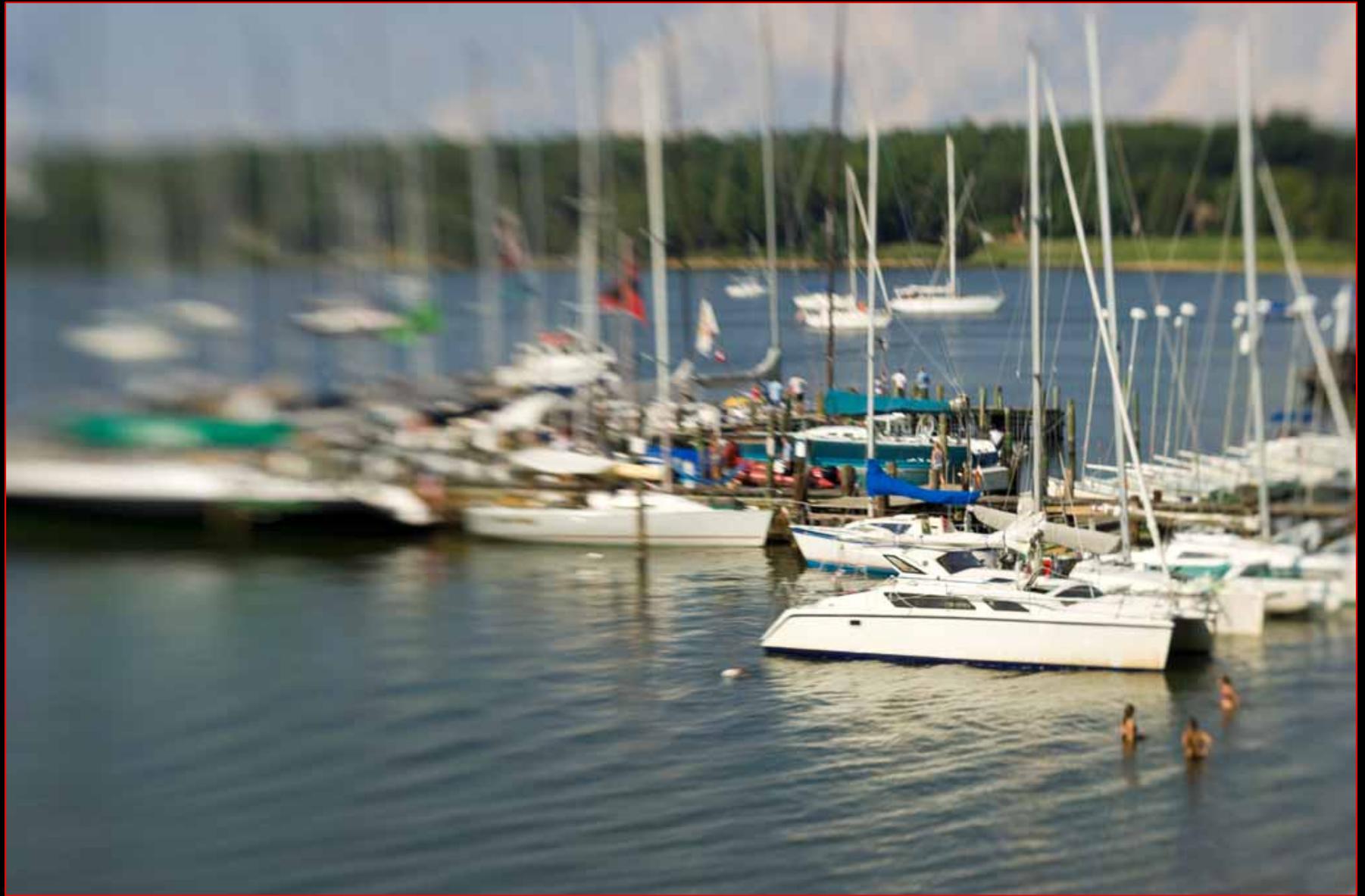
## Photographer's Notes:

I was so excited that we actually took first place!

I could breath easy that my presence did not interfere with winning, and I could say I was on the winning boat!

But boy was I tired! I could not wait to lay my head Down on a dorm bed (imagine that) and shower!

So I rested a couple hours and then headed out for The awards ceremony!



I was goofing around shooting some harbor shots with the Lensbaby.



And the celebration begins!!!!!!



Don accepts the  
award!



The Dinner Tent

Then:

Karen goes home still tired I might add,  
down loads her images,  
processes her images, selects images for  
submission, prints her images and  
drops the prints in the mail.

....months later Karen gets an e-mail.....

# Congratulations!

You have won first place in the black and white category for “Stowing the Jib.”

You also received second place in the color category for “Ready for the Start” and honorable mention for “Reflection.”

The final winning images.....



Second place color

READY FOR THE START



Honorable Mention Color  
REFLECTION



First Place B&W

STOWING THE JIB



Thank you for inviting me to speak!

I hope you enjoyed the show!

**Karen L. Messick Photography**

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