



Meet Mark Erway, Commander of the Seneca Sail and Power Squadron...

1. Describe Your Business:

The Seneca Sail and Power Squadron, a local chapter of an international organization called United States Power Squadrons, is a 501[c]3 non-profit that was established in 1914. It is one of 12 squadrons active in New York State. The local Squadron was started in 1960 and though the 72 members have a regional footprint, the majority of activities are centered in and around the Village Marina in Watkins Glen. "We are a civic service organization that offers a wide variety of boater education through our nationally certified local instructor-members including classes for the Boaters' Safety Certificate," Mark explained. "We also have members who are Coast Guard Certified Vessel Safety Examiners who provide free Vessel Safety Checks, which, while not legally binding, inform the Skipper of the boat whether or not their boat meets federal and local guidelines. Best of all, we are a social organization that plans activities on and around the lake as we enjoy boating together."

2. Tell us your story:

The Erway family is from the Hector area, having settled there in the 1800's. "I am a life-long resident of Chemung County and graduated from Horseheads High School," Mark said. "Our family had a cottage on Starkey Point for many years and it was there that I learned to swim and boat and fell in love with the crystal blue waters of Seneca Lake. While serving in the Navy as a radioman aboard the U.S.S. Little Rock CLG-4 during the Viet Nam War I married my high school sweetheart, Annie, and together we have two sons. Retiring from the Hillard Corporation after a career in Production and Inventory Control allowed for an eight-year stint to serve as a United Methodist Local Pastor and help our church plant new congregations at the Arnot Mall and the Glen Theater in Watkins."

Mark's life-long dream of having a sailboat on Seneca Lake was realized in 2011 when a friend, who was also a member of the Seneca Squadron, helped him find and refurbish a sailboat. "He connected my wife and I to the Squadron, through whom we took a series of boating courses, which included on-the-water training sessions," he explained. "We were so impressed by the knowledge and friendliness of the people we met that we both joined and have been active members ever since."

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

"A drive to do new things, to meet new people, and to not be afraid to go places," Mark said. "And because I don't have a college degree, I've done a lot of self-educating. The school of hard knocks, if you will. I read a lot, and I research a lot online now. I'm always learning, always volunteering, helping where I can. And having a loving family. I come from a family of 6, and we were always doing things and going places. I think that shaped the way I approach life."

4. What inspires you?

Mark says that he is inspired by people who are passionate about what they do, and people who are passionate about their faith. "I'm Vice-President of Border Buddies Ministries, a 501[c]3 not-for-profit, which has a Christian missionary program in Honduras, refurbishing schools and supporting students. We've been there for fourteen years. When I am around people who have a passion like these missionaries in Honduras I kind of catch that passion, and we're able to build and support each other through that," he elaborated. "And boating too! I've met people who are passionate sailors, and we can sit and talk and encourage each other and educate each other and share stories."

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

"One thing that keeps me up right now is figuring out how I'm going to get all the work done on my newly-acquired sailboat, a 1963 35-foot Pearson-Alberg, homeported in Ithaca on Cayuga Lake," Mark said. "It's in fairly good shape, but it needs a lot of TLC and some updating. The other thing too, with the Seneca Sail and Power squadron, is how to make us better known. That is one of the reasons we joined the Chamber. To get our story out so that people see us as an educational and training resource for boaters. "

6. What is your favorite local activity?

While Mark's favorite thing to do in the area is sail on Seneca Lake, a close second is driving around the Finger Lakes with his wife in their 1969 MGB roadster with the top down. Other activities that keep Mark busy are: being a member of U.S. Coast Guard Flotilla 2-2 in Ithaca; continued active involvement in the church where he served as Assistant Pastor for 8 years; and serving as the District Six Secretary for U.S. Power Squadrons.

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

"I couldn't serve as a volunteer without support from my wife Annie, who for 48 years, has been the love of my life," Mark said. "For many years we have participated in the Vintage Races with the rally group sponsored by Glenora Wine Cellars with our 1969 MGB roadster. Annie is the owner, but she lets me be her driver and mechanic."

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