

At Home at Olverson's

Olverson's Marina on Lodge Creek off the Yeocomico River offers covered slips and casual charm.

by Jim Stalnaker

MY WIFE BETSY AND I FIRST VISITED OLVERSON'S MARINA several years ago. We had been shadowing another boat all the way up the Potomac, and when we both turned into the mouth of the Yeocomico River the other skipper hailed us asking our destination. Hearing we had none, he replied, "Follow me to my marina—Olverson's. It's the friendliest spot on the river." His words had proved true then, so we returned this fall to see if this quiet marina was as we remembered it.

Early in the last century Albert Olverson was a quartermaster on Bay steamships. When he retired to the Northern Neck of Virginia, he bought a farm at the site of an old steamship landing. The land included a mile of deep waterfront along the southeastern branch of the Yeocomico River just off the southern Potomac. Now 102 years old, Olverson still lives in the old white farmhouse that overlooks the marina he and his son Fred built in the 1960s.

Olverson's is situated about five miles from the river's mouth, along the east side of Lodge Creek, the Yeocomico's southeastern branch. Two other boatyards, as well as a number of houses, lie on the well marked channel up the creek on the approach to Olverson's, where five docks lie perpendicular to the shore. The 200-slip marina measures 10 feet of water along its docks, all of which end in 110-foot tees.

The first pier we came to was new when we visited and had no fuel sign, but there is diesel and gas, along with a pump-out station, on the southern side close to its inshore end. This pier also has slips 24 feet wide to accommodate multihulls. The inner halves of the remaining four piers are covered powerboat slips. All the piers have covered walkways.

Everything at Olverson's has a casual and homey feel to it, which is part of the marina's charm. Among the resident boats were a number of old wooden Chris Crafts and Egg Harbors. A variety of sailboats slumbered in the outer slips. None of the vessels were posh machines, but most were reasonably well maintained. We noted that many of the companionways lacked locks, which spoke well of the location's security.

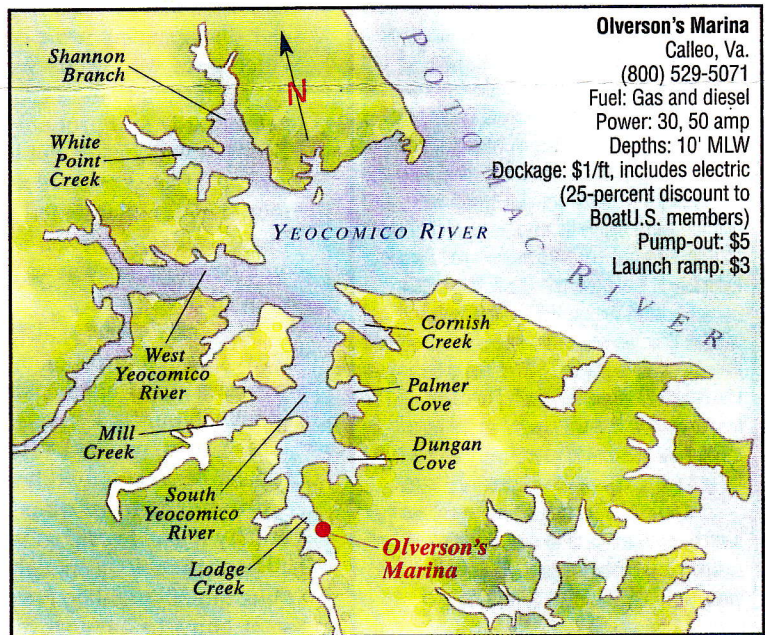
For those wanting more than peace and quiet, the marina has courtesy cars available, and the towns of Calleo and Lottsburg are both only five minutes away. Each town has some interesting older houses, shops and both have good restaurants: Bambery's on the Green, in Calleo, is reputedly the best on the Northern Neck. Also, had we brought our clubs, we could have played Calleo's public golf course.

Suddenly we heard a booming voice welcoming us to the marina. A round, middle-aged man with a big smile walked up, hand out, and introduced himself as Freddie Olverson. Behind him waddled Clementine, the one-eyed resident basset hound, who followed Freddie everywhere.

Olverson obviously took pride in his marina. He pointed out that the power and water lines all run in the overhead supports of the dock roofs so that a high tide never results in the power being turned off. Water outlets and plugs are set waist-high for easy access. He showed us the marina "yacht club" that houses the heads (basic but clean, and one with handicapped access), a laundry room and a simple club room and kitchen (each month a different dock is responsible for dishing up dinner). A covered pavilion with enough picnic tables to accommodate all 140 marina members adjoins the club. Everything can be reached by covered walkways, except the pool (heated and always 84 degrees), situated on a small hill just above the marina.

There is no repair service at Olverson's, but we were assured that several skilled mechanics are only a phone call away. If you're really stuck, a cute little marina tow boat will get you to one of the yards downstream.

We found Olverson's just as friendly as it was in the past, and I suspect you will too. If you're looking for a fancy resort-style marina, Olverson's isn't it. If you want someplace off the beaten track, where the loudest sounds on a fall afternoon are from birds overhead, Olverson's will be just right. ■



KARENASHLEY