



## Gowrie Group Welcomes Spring with Offbeat Maritime Tradition: Sock Burning Bonfire

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*SUMMARY: Gowrie Group, a prominent independent insurance agency, paid tribute to the first day of spring this week with a spirited sock burning bonfire. While it remains a relatively unknown tradition, annual sock-burning parties are hosted by marine businesses all along the East Coast on March 21<sup>st</sup> to welcome the start of the spring season.*

The sky hung dense and gray on the spring equinox this year, but for the employees of Gowrie Group, a prominent independent insurance agency, a stirring of anticipation filled the air. Still clad in vests and winter coats, at workday's end the team circled around a flickering bonfire, eager to leave a winter of record-breaking snowfall behind.

Carter Gowrie, Gowrie Group's CEO, began a spirited sea shanty that soon reverberated across the company parking lot. "Burn them socks!" chanted Director of Operations Lenny Bellet, who added his own solo as he dropped a pair of thick woolen tube socks into the flame. Other employees followed, triumphantly setting dozens of socks alight.



Gowrie's insurance team watches their winter socks burn on the first day of spring.

While it remains a relatively unknown tradition, annual sock-burning parties are hosted by marine businesses all along the East Coast on March 21<sup>st</sup> to welcome the start of the spring season. This quirky rite of spring began in the salty town of Annapolis, Maryland, where, as tradition goes, sailors wear their boat shoes sock-free during the summer months. The eventual appearance of socks on sailors' feet come fall symbolizes winter's advent and the unwelcome end to the boating season. This tradition spread, and sock-burning has since become a favorite way for boating towns across the country to mark the beginning of spring.

For Gowrie, a company well-acquainted with New England's maritime tradition, it seemed the perfect way to cast off a long and onerous winter. First had come Sandy, the late-season hurricane that tore through the Atlantic coastline. In January, weeks of single-digit temperatures descended upon the Northeast, followed by the gales of the historic blizzard Nemo, which blanketed the region with three

feet of snow and ice. Weeks of recurring slush at winter's end dealt the final blow, leaving Puxatawny Phil's early spring prediction unfulfilled. By late March, Gowrie's insurance team was more than ready to welcome spring.

So on the vernal equinox, Carter Gowrie, a lifelong competitive sailor himself, gathered his team and a trunkful of beer to honor the old tradition. Looking to the sky in hopeful anticipation, the workers of Gowrie sang a round of the company's slogan, "*Sense of Calm.*" Ed Gumbrecht, Gowrie's President and COO, had penned this original song. "*There is a sense of grateful relief that comes along with spring, especially this year,*" he added as he led the refrain, "*It's certainly something to celebrate.*"

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