



Nautical Musings

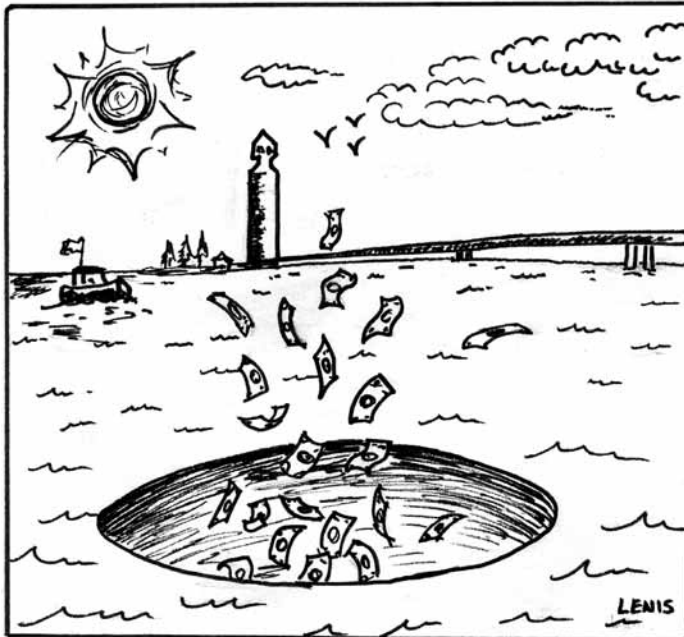
by Captain Stan Glatzer

Boating, The "Hole In The Water" Is Getting Bigger.

I always thought that horse racing was the "Sport of Kings". As the last boating season closed and the new season begins, I am left, after perusing the new prices being quoted by the various marinas for dockage and boat haulers for launching and retrieving, with the sensation that my participation in recreational boating in my 26-foot sloop classifies me as a member of the upper economic strata. The days of \$2.75 per foot for visiting overnight marina fees and \$400, circa 1952, a season for dockage has become as extinct as the dodo bird. What with insurance, dock fees, storage fees (includes hauling), fuel (I use 12-15 gallons per season), maintenance costs and having NO boat payments, I own a boat, for \$2,000 dollars a year. Considering the fact that the last two years I averaged three days sailing each year, my daily cost for boating was \$666+ per day; the number coincides with a strong negative connotation and makes me think..

I own a sailboat for the love of silence and the closeness I feel with the environment when underway. Just "being out there" is all a cruising sailor really needs to feel content. I also own a sailboat because the cost of fuel is almost non-existent if you sail from place to place and utilize the engine only when in close quarters or emergencies eg: heavy weather.

Most powerboat cruisers are in a class of boaters who love the convenience of speed, trawler owners excepted. Destinations are prioritized over the actual voyage, where you go and when you get there is paramount to the boat contributing to one's pleasure. Drift fisherman excepted, for the bulk of power-boaters a good deal of the seasons expense is on fuel. It is not out of the ordinary for a family aboard a 30-foot sedan cruiser who spend a few hours "tooling about" on the water to run up a fuel tab of \$125-\$150 a day. An avid fisherman zipping 30 miles offshore in a 30-foot sport-cruiser could spend \$250-\$300 a day between travel to and from the fishing grounds and four to six hours trolling for fish. Add this to the items enumerated earlier, still with NO boat payments, and you realize that you might require a part time job to enable you to enjoy the avocation of recreational boating. This said, the time spent on the water is re-



duced and the cost per day increases drastically.

I have checked the cost for summer dockage of a 26-foot boat at several private marinas around Long Island and found the range of rates quoted to be from under \$80/foot to over \$140/foot, with the average about \$100/foot. Some marinas quoting rates at the higher end of my survey also mentioned they had a waiting list for summer dockage this season.

One option to reduce expenses is to trailer your own boat. This precludes that most families own an automobile capable of towing the vessel they own. A larger boat requires a larger vehicle, equals greater gas expense. There is a small group of haulers who will tow YOUR Trailer with their vehicle and launch and retrieve it at a reasonable cost. The use of a vessel that is on a trailer is approximately 20-30 percent less than that of a vessel docked. (Less if you include all the times you just sit on your boat at the dock and enjoy a quiet sunset or some other quiet time.) Averaging out a per-day cost will indicate whether or not the savings warrant the use of a trailer against docking the boat.

A new type of ownership has recently come on the scene - the concept is that of "Time Sharing" a boat, just as there is Time Sharing for vacation homes. It is like taking all your credit card

bills and consolidating them into one "easy" payment. All you have to do is call, reserve the boat and cruise. No hassle over all the problems of ownership such as launching, maintenance, insurance, storage, winterizing etc., only the joy of experiencing the glory of recreational boating. The monetary cost, averaged over a three-year contract, about \$12,000+fuel, will approximate that of operating a vessel of equal size (you no longer have payments to the bank for purchasing the boat). Beware, however, that those Skippers (S) who revel in puttering around on their own vessel and deriving pride in all that goes with the sense of commanding one's own sanctuary from the world, will lose a large part of their pleasure in boating.

I know of one marina that rents powerboats from 17-21 feet in length and has rates of \$4,000-\$10,000 per month. Daily rates are from \$325-\$595 per day.

With the closing down of marinas for condominium development and the increase in hauling costs by fewer and fewer haulers (especially for sailboats), the future of recreational boating looms costly for those blue-collar families in the under 35-foot class of boat owners. Though the mega-yacht and 45-foot-and-up classes of boats are seeing an increase in production, indicating a definite growth in the wealthier social class, the \$20,000-\$65,000 families will find that the formula stating that recreation should not exceed 10 percent of the family budget cannot be applied to their income strata, that they will have to down-size to a vessel without dockage and commercial haulage costs. The choice may be well be to forego the boating scene entirely. The dilemma is one that has not been discussed openly, but there are sporadic rumblings amongst those down on the docks. I, for one, will attempt to maintain my boat and dock space by partnering out my boat with another family to cover the current increase. The boat will see more use and not withstanding the increase in yearly costs, the per-day expense will be less. This year I will try to put a bottom to the "Hole in the Ocean".

Let's hope that recreational boating is not also known as the other "Sport of Kings".



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