

Good Planning + Poor Implementation = Disappointment

by *Domenic and Cherie Mantoan*

Cherie and I had planned to go from Baltimore, MD to Sodus Point, NY in early May. We had made the cruise several years ago, so we had some idea of what to expect. I began the planning in early February, laying out the route and planning our fuel stops and where we would stay each night. I even planned our meals, beverages and snacks. Cherie planned our entertainment by picking up several DVDs. She also took care of planning our bill payments while underway.

I updated my Nobeltec charting software for my laptop and picked up several new cruising guides. I updated the worksheets I had developed with a list of the fuel stops we would need and the marinas' phone numbers. Oh, by the way, I forgot the worksheet in the car. Luckily, I had it on my laptops' hard-drive.

The next item on the plan was getting the *Mon Cherie* shipshape. I dry docked her at Tidewater Yacht Service in Baltimore, MD. The owner (and visionary) Bob Brandon has developed a topnotch boat yard. When the boat was pulled up, I could not believe all the barnacles on the props and shafts. The bottom was not bad and needed only some touch-up paint. Then I checked the extra items such as fuel filters, oil, etc.

The day finally came for us to go to Baltimore and finish the last-minute shopping. On Thursday the weather forecast was not good, with small craft advisories for Saturday from the Chesapeake Bay to Atlantic City, NJ. By Friday afternoon the weather forecast improved for Chesapeake and Delaware Bay. So, we changed our plan and would stop in Cape May, NJ instead of heading to Atlantic City.

On Saturday the skies were clear and the wind was only about 10 knots. As we cleared the Key Bridge, my expectation was exceeded because Chesapeake Bay was very smooth and virtually debris-free. Even Delaware Bay was somewhat smooth.

Then it happened on Delaware Bay (poor implementation; I did not change the fuel filters as originally planned) as the starboard engine began to sputter and then stopped. I had checked the fuel filter for water and thought it would be OK without changing the fuel filters even though it had been almost two years since they were changed. We were only halfway down Delaware Bay, so I decided to try to change the fuel filter as Cherie drove the boat with one engine running.



This was not easy in four-foot waves. I thought I had it under control, but I obviously did not get all the air out of the filter because the engine started and ran for all of two minutes. I could not get it started again, so we had to limp in on one engine and the winds were picking up.

When we got to Cape May Channel, it was low tide and the winds had pushed a lot of water out so that it was SUPER LOW. Had we made it in our planned time, we would have come in at high tide. With just one engine, it was hard to steer since the wind and tide were working against us. I did not make the turn sharp enough at one of the day markers and ran aground in Cape May Harbor. I was able to get off, but then I had even more trouble turning. As we came into South Jersey Marina, I could not get the boat to turn in.

We were lucky that the winds pushed us against an open pier next to the Lobster House Restaurant. Then the South Jersey Marina sent a workboat over to pull us into a slip. All I could think was that I had bent the props or the rudder. It was too late to get a diver to come out, but we arranged for one to stop by Sunday afternoon.

As we waited, Cherie helped me bleed the air from the starboard engine. I loosened the fuel tubes on each cylinder as Cherie cranked the engine over. We got it started and it kept running. This took us about 45 minutes.

The marina had free WiFi, so I checked the weather on the Internet and the next several days looked great. But when I checked the NY Canal web site and "Notice to Mariners", I found out that the canal was closed from guard gate 5 to lock 18 indefinitely! I was again guilty of poor implementation, because I did not check the notice to mariners on Friday afternoon. So, now what to do on Monday? I decided to call the canal office on Monday to see what the real scoop was.

Shortly after that the diver showed up. Within a few minutes we found out that the only problem was a big burlap bag that had gotten wrapped around the operational engine's prop, hence the prop would not move the water efficiently so that I could control the boat. All in all, the entire ordeal cost me \$80 for the diver. Had I changed the fuel filters, though, none of this would have happened and we would not have been concerned all night.

With the engines running and the running gear in good shape, Sunday night we were able to relax. We headed to the Lobster House and had a great lobster dinner. We decided to go on to Troy, NY, and if the canal was not open, we would stay some place along the Hudson River. When I called the canal's main office, I was surprised pleasantly to learn that they hoped to have the canal open sometime between Wednesday and Thursday. This would work out well since we would not reach that area of the canal until Thursday anyway.

When we left Cape May Harbor, the ocean was only three to four-foot rollers and the sun was shining. We had dolphins jumping alongside of us. We had not seen dolphins the last several times we were on the ocean. Everything was going well, at least then.

More on my good planning + poor implementation = disappointment next time. So, until then, happy and safe boating to you, your family and friends. Oh yeah, good planning + good implementation = a lot of fun!

Domenic & Cherie will be boating out of Sodus Point, NY, Katlynn Marina for the season aboard the *Mon Cherie*, their 40-foot motor yacht. They can be reached through www.boatingcruising.com email link.



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