



Nautical Musings

by Captain Stan Glatzer

Foredeck Safety

It is my contention that any voyage that leaves the dock and returns without incident is a successful voyage. The joy of the voyage comes from the Skipper, the crew and the passengers all participating in and returning from a safe trip. After all, recreational boating is one of, if not the best endeavor for a family to enter into. I know of no other recreational activity encouraging a total way of life that when practiced with responsibility and prudence, fosters more meaningful and practical solutions to everyday problems. Preparation, anticipation, teamwork, and mental alertness are all attributes that are required for successful boating and dealing with everyday situations.

With that prologue, let's review some basic safety precautions for moving about a boat in various situations and conditions.

Walk on your hands and knees! These directions have become the norm for Skippers to issue on most of today's modern Euro-styled power cruisers when it is necessary for the crewman to go forward and tend the anchor, regardless of how much money is spent on Docksidiers, Sebagos, or Sperrys, etc. and electric windlasses. The forward decks of most of these vessels are not the most comfortable or **safest** places to be if

the vessel is rocking from any wave action.


Rails are either extremely high, allowing one to slide under and go overboard, or extremely low, requiring the crew to sit and use the rail as a foot brace. Access to the deck and movement when on the deck, at best, are somewhat precarious. Alertness and good safety procedures are definitely required. The days of wide side decks that allowed for quick and easy access to the foredeck have given way to the design wherein side decks have been eliminated completely to satisfy the increasing demands for cabin space and luxuriousness. As a result, tasks such as going on the foredeck to tend the anchor in the middle of the night with the vessel rolling and not being completely aware of your safety open the portal to a man-overboard situation.

I asked a student of mine if he had ever anchored his brand new 29-foot cruiser that he had owned for some three months. He responded, "I have, and I find that I sometimes have to go forward to help cast off the chain from the bow roller when I depress the down button for the windlass." He also claimed that he had to go forward to help the anchor lie properly in the roller when he raised it. On occasion, the anchor rode will, if released too rapidly, loop and lock in the paws of

the windlass, necessitating a trip forward. Electric windlasses do not by the fact that we own one rule out our responsibility for knowing how to set or weigh an anchor the manual way, by hand, which might require us to go forward on a sloping and occasionally pitching and rolling deck.

There has been more than one skipper who purchased a vessel and found out that he could not access the foredeck through the forward hatch because his girth was too large. To venture forward through the open windshield even while at the dock requires careful and deliberate action as to where and how you place your hands and feet when stepping on some of the so called "steps" molded into the contoured sliding hatches to the cabin below. I personally have struggled to maintain a foothold on some of the curved surfaces provided for these steps, especially when returning from the foredeck. Going up or going down a ladder is always done facing the ladder and placing your feet securely on the steps. Coming down from the deck facing aft is an invitation to an accident. Heels easily can slip off the step, and there is no way to prevent yourself from falling forward should the vessel pitch

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