



# Nautical Musings

by Captain Stan Glatzer

## Profitable Outings

Wind, the catalyst that either makes or breaks a boater's day. An old adage employed by a novice sailor for determining whether to leave port or not is, "Light a match and see if the flame flickers, if it does, it is too windy to venture out. If the flame remains steady, the wind is non-existent and we cannot set sail." Another golden proverb is, "White-caps make one wary" and gives advice to small boat skippers to respect the existing wind and wave conditions.

Leisurely spending a day on the water fishing, drifting, or socializing with friends are the most common methods of boating, water skiing and tubing a close second. Every (S) Skipper feels happiest when those on board have a sense of security in his/her competence to deliver a safe outing. Knowing that he/she possesses the skills to handle any adverse situations that may appear, will allow the Skipper (S) to enjoy the day along with the guests.

There are a number of skills that should be practiced when the breeze is strong enough to test you ability, lifting you a little above your comfort zone. Preparations of the following type will enable the vessel to survive and

help prevent the unexpected occurrence from escalating into a rescue situation or worse, had the skipper (s) waited till the incident is upon him/her before attempting to accomplish the skill. Being "caught out" is a term used by the unprepared. Being prepared is what separates the (bo) boat owner from the (s) skipper and the two from the (S) Skipper. Preparation is what turns a potential disaster into an adventure.

Experienced boaters who have earned their capital (S), for a rank of Skipper, consider venturing out on a breezy day to be exhilarating and an opportunity to practice some heavy weather skills. Man-Overboard (MOB) retrieval, docking from a different approach than your favorite one, so that you will not be overwhelmed when the wind or current conditions result in your being required too abandon your fa-

vorite approach and reefing for sailors are the most common skills to brush up on.

There are no warnings for a MOB prior to the incident occurring. The ability to assess the situation promptly and arrive at the best method to approach and to successfully retrieve the victim does not come from reading your favorite boating or sailing magazine on the topic alone. There is no substitute for physically and mentally experiencing the decision-making process first hand. Your vessel has individual handling characteristics when affected by varying wind and wave conditions and you must adapt what you read with what actually works best on your vessel.

Brisk breezes and lumpy seas provide the classroom for exploring methods of coming home utilizing an emergency tiller or even a jury rigged rudder, How many small vessel (s) skippers know where the emergency tiller is located or how to affix it to the rudder stock? If they do know this, can they describe the vessel's steering quirks when using the tiller? I have seen emergency tillers where the steersman is below decks and has to be instructed by a crewman on deck as to which direction to steer. Consider the situation where this vessel is single-handed and the need for the emergency tiller is required.

Very High Frequency (VHF) radio antennae are susceptible to and often break from fatigue or someone grasping it to maintain their balance. How many vessels are equipped with an emergency channel (16) antenna? They are available in a rubber duck or coiled steel format and could be the lifesaver of the cruise. If you have one have you ever attempted to broadcast on it? Cell phones have limited areas on the water and have been known to loose their charge just when you need them. Be advised, cell phones are between you and ONE other party. VHF radios are listened to by scores of boaters and one may be closer to you than the party you called on the cell. Your rescue could be a lot earlier.

Skills for the more advanced Skipper such as the setting of a storm anchor or a two-anchor moor, (one anchor is being anchored, two or more anchors is being moored), the deployment of a drogue off the stern or a sea anchor off the bow should be on the schedule. Being equipped with a second anchor for use as a "lunch hook" (usually lighter than your working anchor), and/or a heavier storm anchor is fine, but if you have never deployed these anchors in various configurations: (eg: tandem two on one rode, Bahamian moor, {180 degree twin moor) etc., the time the @#\$% hits the fan is not the time to practice.

Abandon ship procedures should be discussed and if you have a dinghy or an inflatable stowed you should practice to see if you can abandon ship in under (2) minutes. If a "ditch bag" is non-existent than you should be able to collect the necessary equipment for survival within those (2) minutes.

No one is suggesting that your afternoon cruise be burdened with dismal thoughts. You have car insurance, Homeowner's insurance and boat insurance. Do you have survival insurance for the unexpected on the water? Your skills and your mental attitude are the tools that will turn that potential disaster into an adventure to remember. You must occasionally hone these skills when you are out for an outing so the will be second nature to you. Remember Prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

If you do not personally possess a sea anchor or a drogue, contact a local Captain Instructor or Boating School for the chance to practice the above skills either on your vessel or theirs. An experienced Skipper (S) can show you how to jury rig these devices from material you have onboard regularly.

A quote that hangs above my desk reads, "A competent (S) Skipper possesses all the skills required to successfully weather any adverse situation and commands his vessel in a manner that precludes the need for implementing those skills."



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