

THE TRIDENT

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DSPS DISTRICT 2

It's Been A Dangerous Summer On The Water

There was a boat-buying boom at the beginning of this summer as many families cancelled their vacation travel plans because of the pandemic and bought a boat instead. A July 2 *New York Times* article quoted one boat dealer, who said, "In this social isolation, there's so few things you can do that are exciting, and boating is one of them."

Unfortunately, many of these first-time boaters seemed to believe, in the words of the article's author, "In comparison to other big-ticket items like planes or even cars, there is surprisingly little to learn when driving a boat; [one dealer] sends a captain out with clients for a single four-hour tutorial. [A new buyer] took a six-hour boating class online."

Not surprisingly, there have been some unfortunate boating events – although not all – or perhaps not even any – of the following mishaps involved new boaters. The following all happened in our local waters.



On May 6, a 39-foot power boat being ferried from Florida to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, sank after hitting a submerged rock the area of Great Reef, just south of the western point of Sheffield Island. <https://tinyurl.com/y3f4fh2o> Interestingly enough, the same unfortunate boater had ripped a hole in the bottom of his previous boat by running onto a ledge while entering Rye Harbor, NH. <https://tinyurl.com/y4vnck2k>

On July 27, a Donzi 23 sank in Ziegler's Cove because everyone aboard was sitting in the stern. See page 3 of last month's *Trident*: <https://tinyurl.com/y6bxn2u8>



On August 13, an Egg Harbor Sportfish 33 "exploded" in Norwalk Harbor and burned after the skipper attempted to return to the dock after experiencing "issues with the engine."

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On August 15, a sailboat of unspecified size and make sank off Copp's Island, one of the Norwalk Islands. The two men aboard were rescued by the Norwalk Police Marine Division boat just before the boat went under. According to one of the rescuers, "In my whole career this was one of the worst ones, one of the most dangerous ones because of where we had to go, on top of the reef, and the sea conditions — the water was really cold."

"There's more to safe boating than pointing the bow in some direction and pushing the throttle forward. Darien Sail & Power Squadron hopes to restart our educational activities soon, including our **Coastal Boating Competence** course that qualifies graduates for the Connecticut Safe Boater Certificate, the new and improved **Boat Handling** course, and the **Marine Navigation** course (which will teach you how to avoid those submerged rocks and ledges).

When Things Go Wrong on a Boat



This has been an unusual year. I have a Marshall 18 ft Catboat, which is a great day-sailer. It has a large cockpit and is comfortable for 4 adults plus a couple of children. It also has a berth for two people, and I've spent a few nights aboard, either moored or anchored. Some people have cruised on these boats, but my normal use is to go out after work and sail for 3-4 hours and then have dinner at home.

This year, most of my sailing has been alone; single-handling this boat is fairly easy. This day, I was by myself. I motored out of the mooring field, pointed the bow to the 10-12 mph wind coming out of the south-east, pulled off my sail ties, and started to hoist my sail. On a gaff-rigged sailboat there are 2 halyards, the main halyard to raise the sail, and a gaff halyard to raise the gaff, and you pull them together. Just as the main halyard got tight, I heard a terrifying screech, something like dragging all ten fingernails across a blackboard but only much more painful: the sail had ripped!

I surveyed the damage and determined that it was torn due to the failure of the fastener that holds the head of the sail to the gaff. The force of hoisting had torn through the luff of the sail. I dropped the sail, tied it to the boom, and proceeded to start the outboard motor. It didn't start; I used half-choke and it didn't start; I talked nicely to it and it didn't start; then I swore at it and it didn't start. This was the third time this season. After the second time, I had left the motor in the boat shop where it was repaired, but the mechanic's evaluation was that the motor was old and tired.

Here I was somewhere off Smith's reef without power and the only thing left to propel me back to the mooring was a paddle. I didn't cherish the idea of paddling back. I could have called for a tow on my VHF radio, but didn't want to explain my dilemma. I had a roll of self sticking sail repair tape, but that would not be strong enough to hold through hoisting the sail. After taping the tear, I used an awl stitcher to put 15-20 stitches across the tear through the tape. I've carried the tape and stitcher in my sail bag for many years and this was the first time I had used it. I gently hoisted the sail and happily sailed up to my mooring.

A few days later a friend commented, "I've seen your boat out there without a motor it, and then I've seen it without a sail on it." Well she has a new motor, and her sail has been well repaired, and every fastener has been inspected.

Mark Dam, Cmdr DSPS

Forty-three years Living Aboard Sailboats

Part 1 – A Columbia 9.6

This fourth of July found us, my wife and first mate Susan and me, celebrating 43 years living full time on my boats and 35 of marriage. The story starts in 1973, when my brother and I purchased an old house on Keeler Avenue and a new power boat from the White Bridge Marina, as it was then known. He used it to fish and I liked to water ski. Unfortunately, I worked nights and my friends worked days, and during the week I could not find someone to drive and another friend to be the watcher.

I found myself driving the boat around looking at sailboats. A friend at White Bridge Marina was finishing a kit Westsail 32 that looked interesting as a boat someone could live on. I saw Tartan TOCKs, Morgans, Pacific Seacrafts, Catalinas, Pearsons, and many others. I drove through marinas and yacht clubs from Greenwich to Westport just looking at sailboats. In December of 1976, my brother got engaged. I got the powerboat and he got the house. Now I began looking for a live-aboard sailboat more seriously.



My first new sailboat was commissioned in July of 1977. It was a Columbia 9.6 (31.5 feet). That summer was great sailing around with charts, VHF radio with 6 crystals for the channels, and a compass on the binnacle. I sailed to Newport, Rhode Island, with one stop at night. That was fun. I watched the chart and had fixes from sights on landmarks and buoys. I left Newport for Cockles Cove on Shelter Island at seven in the evening.

When the sun went down, the fog rolled in. It got very cool and the condensation was on everything. I had to wipe off the compass often. The fun was gone. It was awfully hard to steer a straight course. If I took my eyes off the compass for a minute, I was 30 degrees off course. Two minutes and I'd be doing circles. I had marked many buoys to sail by, but I did not see any. I tried to use the contour line to tell me where I was. My depth sounder showed the water was getting thin. I was cold and tired. I dropped the anchor and went to sleep.

In the morning, I was woken by the sound of a foghorn. The fog was gone, and I was anchored 200 feet from the Shelter Island Light. My last fix was obtained when passing Point Judith Light. The next time I travelled forty miles at night in the fog I would want a better way to navigate.

In the following years, Loran-C prices came down as Texas Instruments came out with a unit that only gave you four best time TDs (time distance). North Star, Trimble, and others came out with units that gave the boater Lat/Lon coordinates.



My first winter living aboard was another new learning experience. My 32-foot sailboat carried 40 gallons of water. A week's worth for dishes, teeth, and hands. To get our tanks filled, the half dozen live-aboards would put our hoses together to get all the boats filled. For showers and bathrooms, we used the marina facilities. My ice lasted a week in the winter. One morning I got up, put on my sweat suit, and grabbed my toiletries to go up to the shower. I pulled back the companionway and the snow fell in. That was my first and last winter without a cover.

The following summer I added Loran-C, a wheel, and a bead chain autopilot. The Loran-C was great. Now with a little work I could plot our fixes, even if not every hour. The autopilot was not that good. The box that had a compass control and also housed a small slow motor was not as waterproof as I would have liked. I did get a course to Block Island, Menemsha, Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown. Gentlemen cruise

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down wind; I am not sure who has to go back home.

The '78/'79 winter found a full Fairclough cover with door and windows over Gandalf. It was then two degrees warmer. Now that is relative, as it was a cold winter. Pilings had to be cut free from the ice with chain saws. The boat that was supposed to keep the Norwalk river open could not get through. A Coast Guard ship came in for a week to do the job. That winter, I took my first Power Squadron course in East Norwalk.

For the summer of '79, our planned course would be south around the Delmar peninsula. Atlantic City has a genuinely nice state marina right in front of the Trump Taj Mahal. For a dollar and a quarter with brand new docks, it was great. The next day we headed south to Cape May. The water was a bit thin but with only a 5.5' draft, we got into Cape May.



The first thing you see in Cape May is this hundred-plus-foot schooner converted into a sea food restaurant. Our slip for the night was just past the schooner. The restaurant also had a sea food store with both fresh-cooked and raw sea food to take out. Our crew chose the restaurant. A nice dinner and a nice night. Off in the morning to Ocean City, Maryland. This port offered an easy to see way in, but with a current of 5.5 knots we were there at the wrong time. You don't learn everything in one year.

Heading south for a day and a half under sail, we reached the Chesapeake. We entered on the east bank and pulled into a port just north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. We tied up on the wharf and went to sleep.

We woke for dinner hoping to find a restaurant in town, but in 1979 this fishing town did not have electricity. Where were we? In the morning we left long after the fishing fleet. They must have headed south, and we headed north up the Chesapeake Bay. With little wind, I had the motor on most of the way to Annapolis, but the batteries were not getting charged. By the time I pulled into a slip and plugged in, I had almost dead batteries. I removed the alternator and walked three miles to a marine electrical shop. They replaced the diodes but that was not it. I made the walk six times in three days to just end up with a new alternator. The crew loved Annapolis.



We stopped in the Sassafras River before heading home through the C and D canal, out the Delaware, and north. The auto pilot went south again as we headed north with the wind close hauled. Hands on steering again. Entering New York Harbor is always hard with the wind on your nose and a steep chop. Ten hours 'til we saw Greens Ledge Light.

1980, I saw a fair winter now back in Rowayton. Spring came and I raced on Tuesday evenings in Stamford and Wednesdays in Rowayton with the Norwalk Yacht Club. Weekends was reserved for cruising.

But I was still looking at every sailboat I passed. I liked the Columbia 9.6, but it was too small. I think I need a bigger boat. During boat shows I saw my next thirty-five-foot boat. Three and a half feet are not that much, or is it? I know I could not afford three and a half feet.

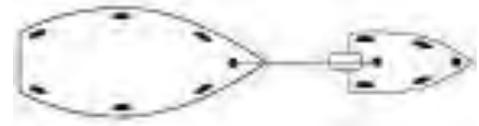
To be continued next month.

— *Marc Cohen, AP*

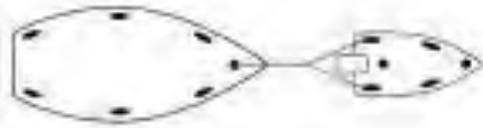
There's A Knot For That

A few years ago, on the morning of our annual on-the-water Spring Refresher, one of our volunteer boats suffered mechanical difficulties on the way from Stamford to Noroton Yacht Club. The students assigned to that boat were redistributed to other boats and the rescue boat (the Noroton YC work boat) was dispatched. The club work boat had a high-powered crew: D/2 Cdr Howard Sklar, AP, R/C George Hallenbeck, AP-IN, P/D/C Jeff Gerwig, AP, and P/C Frank Kemp, JN-IN.

When they reached the stricken vessel, it quickly became clear that they would have to tow it back to its slip. The problem was: how to rig a tow line. The ideal place to attach a tow line is near the tow boat's natural pivot point, which for small powerboats like the work boat is about 1/4 to 1/3 of the boat's length ahead of the transom. If you take a close look at a ski boat, you'll see a towing pole or arch right around this point; on a big tugboat, the bollard is in the middle of the aft working deck, just above the rudder post. This configuration keeps the tension on the tow line from having much of an effect on the tow boat's maneuverability. Here's a picture:



Unfortunately, like many of our members' boats, the work boat has no towing pole. The next best option is to use a bridle, like this:



How do you make a towing bridle? Here's how George Hallenbeck did it: Start with a knot that we all learned in the DSPS Coastal Boating Competence course, the bowline:



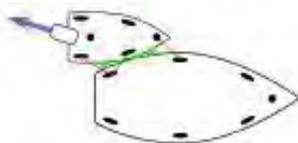
Now tie another bowline through the first bowline, making a full round turn with one of the lines as it goes through the other line's loop or the chafe will be severe (not shown here):



Finally, cleat the standing part of each bowline to a stern cleat (one on the port side and the other on the starboard side), tie the tow line to the junction of the two bowlines (with another bowline), and you're ready to go.

The tow line should be fastened to the towed boat as far forward as possible, and along the center line or with a bridle. The towed boat should have some drag aft and very little forward. For example, on a small boat, you can place some weight in the stern; if there's a centerboard, raise it.

As the work boat approached the narrow channel to the disabled boat's slip, the long tow was replaced by a "hip" tow:



This was very effective in delivering the boat right to its dock (on the first pass!). If you want to know more about towing, including the hip tow, be sure to sign up for the next Squadron **Boat Handling** course – stay tuned for dates!