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Pg. 82

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BOATING SAFETY!

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Pg. 54

BELZONA 40CC

C

CERTIFIED BOAT TESTS

BELZONA 40CC / ANDROS OFFSHORE 32
 CENTURION R1257 / SCARAB 255 OPEN ID
 RINKER Q7 OB / SUNCHASER GENEVA 22 LR DH SPORT

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F

FEATURES



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PHOTO: COURTESY SEA-DOO

ON THE COVER

The Belzona 40CC is a unique center console with plenty of features, starting with the sliding gunwale door and a great running attitude. Photo: Forest Johnson



COOL RUNNINGS

Want to escape reality? Take a PWC tour down the Colorado River to see some incredible sights. BY JEFF HEMMEL

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HITTING LOTO

Our ride-along with Lake of the Ozarks law enforcement on a busy summer day reveals a wealth of legend, lore and law. BY RANDY VANCE

P.82

SEA TOW RESCUE HEROES

Think Sea Tow is only there to give you a tow? Here are five stories where its captains saved the day. BY PETE McDONALD

P.88

Good times are built on
time well spent.



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DEPARTMENTS

C

BOATING CERTIFIED TESTS

P.54 BELZONA 40CC

The 40CC is a versatile mega center console with tons of cool features.

P.58 RINKER Q7 OB

This outboard run-about is built well where it counts, with amenities you need.

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He worked for the old man



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BOATING

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KATIE B. / BELZONA 40CC



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WORDS TO LIVE BY

Boating lessons from history, Hollywood and herself

John Mills was the gunner's mate aboard *HMS Bounty*, a ship that, after two novels, five movies, and not to mention the actual historical account, needs little if any introduction. According to the ship's log, Capt. Bligh's personal journal, and records of the British Navy, Mills was one of the older, more-experienced crew aboard *Bounty*, having served on *Mediator* under Admiral Collinwood (himself a partner with Lord Nelson in many campaigns). Mills apparently lacked a sweet disposition, but as the record shows, he'd spent a lifetime at sea under the command of great mariners. It's safe to say he knew what he was talking about.

I present this curriculum vitae for no trivial purpose. In the 1962 film version of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, the one starring Marlon Brando, the role of John Mills is played by the enduring, acerbic Richard Harris. Harris, as Mills, utters a line in the film — it's just an aside really — but one that caught this lifetime boater's attention.

The words are expressed as sea and wind rise and in response to grumbling crewmen distraught at having to climb into the rigging as *Bounty* slogs through the Tierra del Fuego archipelago at the southern tip of South America.

"Portsmouth or Cape Horn, it's all the same to a seaman."

The understated brilliance of the line, of course, was that whether in a calm harbor or on the wildest ocean imaginable, experienced mariners act in the habitual, businesslike manner that ensures personal safety and the safety of the vessel. There is no distinction made for present circumstance. The best standard operating procedure is the best standard operating procedure, and the distractions of debate, discussion and deciding what alternatives might exist are best reserved for shoreside diversion. Mills' quip reminded me that aboard boats, good habits deliver great rewards, because on the water, we are out of our element. Things can happen quickly. And when they do, there's often tragically little time, and overthinking may lead to analysis paralysis.

I was reminded of the line from the film recently during discussions regarding this publication's participation in boating-safety programs.

"What looks like a perfect day for boating can quickly become hazardous if you end up in the water," said Peg Phillips, executive director of the National Safe Boating Council, the lead organization for the Safe Boating Campaign. "Always wear a life jacket — it is the best decision you can make for your safety while enjoying a day out on the water."

And I thought: Portsmouth or Cape Horn, it's all the same to a seaman.

Kevin Falvey, Editor-in-Chief
editor@boatingmag.com

What Mills meant, of course, was that whether in a calm harbor or on the wildest ocean imaginable, experienced mariners act in the habitual, businesslike manner that ensures their safety and the safety of the vessel.



SAFE BOATING CAMPAIGN

The annual Safe Boating Campaign kicks off the weekend before Memorial Day with National Safe Boating Week and continues throughout the year. Learn more at safeboatingcampaign.com.

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SCAN ME

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John Giglio

President and CEO of
Freedom Boat Club

Freedom Boat Club has introduced thousands of people to boating through its rental clubs around the country, where boaters pay club fees in order to use the company's fleet rather than own their own vessel. We caught up with John Giglio, the company's leader, about the club and recreational boating. —*Pete McDonald*

How many Freedom Boat Club locations are there?

We have 153 clubs in 30 states and Canada, with a fleet of more than 1,600 boats. In addition, we have just announced a very exciting partnership with Jeanneau in Europe.

What's the main appeal of joining your club?

The key factors that attract our members include a very affordable cost of entry that provides access to a fleet of late-model boats, coupled with free and unlimited one-on-one boat training by U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captains.

Do you attract a lot of new boaters?

We have more than 30,000 total members including newcomers to the sport and lifestyle, as well as seasoned boaters including former boat owners.

What's the benefit to someone new to the sport?

The club provides a great way to test the waters and determine if boating is right for you. It also allows newbies to experience a variety of different types of boats to see what is most appealing for you and your family.

ON BOARD WITH ...

CAPTAIN'S TEST

FOR COMPARISON'S SAKE

ONLINE THIS MONTH

NEWS / 5 THINGS

**ON
BOARD
WITH ...**

TRAILERING SAFETY

If you're one of the many millions of boaters who get to the water via trailering, this quiz is for you. How well do you know your boat trailer and trailering safety? It's time to get that rig on the road, so here goes. —*John Tiger*

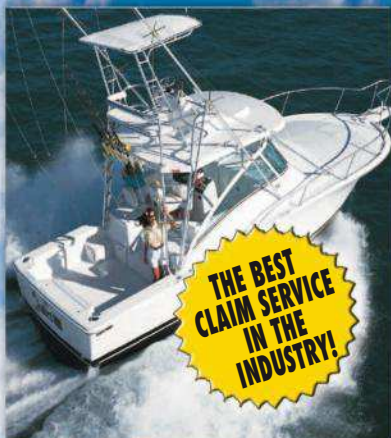
(Answers on page 16)



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- Your vehicle's trailer hitch should be capable of towing:
 - Another vehicle.
 - Gross trailer weight (GTW) exceeding the total weight of your boat, engine, trailer and gear combined.
 - Another buddy's trailer out of the ditch.
 - Tongue weight (TW) of approximately 10 percent of the total GTW of your towed load.
 - All of the above.
 - B and D.
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of roller hull supports versus bunks found on boat trailers today?
 - Rollers tend to make it easier to launch the boat from shallow and otherwise difficult launch ramps.
 - Bunks provide more consistent support because they cover a larger area of the hull.
 - Bunks can scratch the hull, especially if the carpet on them becomes loaded with sand from launching.
 - Rollers can fail, thereby causing a danger of damaging the hull if the roller comes off its spindle.
 - Proper boat tie-downs should:
 - Be used only when towing long distances.
 - Connect the transom eyes to the trailer tie-down eyes, or another suitable strong attachment point.
 - Be installed on every trip, regardless of distance.
 - Be checked for tightness at every fuel and rest stop.
 - A trailer fishtailing at speed could be caused by:
 - Tongue weight too light for the towed load.
 - Tongue weight too heavy for the towed load.
 - Improper loading of the boat on the trailer, causing poor weight balance and load distribution.
 - A and C.
 - None of the above.
 - Trailer tires should be:
 - Checked for age and weather cracking on sidewalls and uneven wear on tread.
 - Checked once per season.
 - Filled to recommended air pressure and checked frequently during your trip.
 - Checked often during your trip for overheating, using your hand as a gauge.
 - All of the above.
 - A, C and D.
- Bonus:** When stopping for fuel during a trip, you should:
- Check tires and wheel bearings for overheating, using your hand as a gauge.
 - Check trailer lights for proper operation.
 - Check tie-downs and tighten if necessary; check load for shifting.
 - Check winch strap, emergency chain, safety chains and coupler integrity.
 - Park in front of both fuel pumps to block others from fueling up behind you.
 - A, B, C and D.

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BOATING SNEAKERS

Topsiders and shrimper's boots aren't the only options for keeping your feet connected to a slippery deck. Check out these three pairs of sneakers designed for marine use. —Pete McDonald



F-1
Siped rubber soles funnel away water



PACER
Light, airy and super comfortable



FIN 3.0
Shock-absorbing tread is slip-resistant

HELLY HANSEN HYDROPOWER SHORELINE F-1

THE GRIP: The most stylish of the three choices, Helly Hansen shoes sport a decoupled flexible rubber tread with a grippy nonslip pattern and siping to funnel away water. The tread is also nonmarking. The lightweight, breathable mesh body dries quickly and provides support while transiting a deck underway. The insole is antimicrobial to prevent odor.

THE SLIP: The most expensive of the trio offers only two color choices.

PRICE: \$110; hellyhansen.com

SOFTSCIENCE FIN 3.0

THE GRIP: Designed for anglers, these shoes are reinforced in the toe, ankle and forefoot areas to help provide stability. They are still incredibly light, with a grooved tread that funnels away water while providing traction on-deck. The bulky, nonmarking tread also features three slots in the forefoot to flow water away from the shoe. The removable Trileon insole acts like a shock absorber.

THE SLIP: The tread is bulkier than the others.

PRICE: \$99.95; softscience.com

CROCS LITERIDE PACER

THE GRIP: These are a long way from the original Crocs, adding style to the brand's renowned comfort. The soles and treads are made from cushiony closed-cell foam that is also extremely lightweight. The breathable plastic body of the shoe is also lightweight and made for wet conditions, like all Crocs, and is so soft that there is no break-in period. Put them on and go.

THE SLIP: While extremely lightweight, they're not as supportive as the others.

PRICE: \$59.99; crocs.com

CAPTAIN'S TEST

(Answers from page 14)

1. F. Though they can usually handle it and are used for this task often, trailer hitches are not designed to pull other vehicles out of ditches. GTW and TW are terms every trailering enthusiast should know.

2. E. All statements are true. Generally, bunk trailers are better for a boat's hull because they provide more support, especially in critical areas like the transom.

3. E. Tie-downs secure your boat to its trailer and can keep it from bouncing off in sudden urgent maneuvers.

4. D. Too little tongue weight, be it from poor trailer setup or improper load distribution, can result in trailer sway at speed and possibly a catastrophic accident.

5. F. Checking trailer tires is something that cannot be done too often.

Bonus: F. Just like a pilot's preflight check, these trailer checks should become habit at every stop.

CAPTAIN'S TESTS ONLINE

Test your knowledge of boating with more Captain's Tests at boatingmag.com/captains-test.

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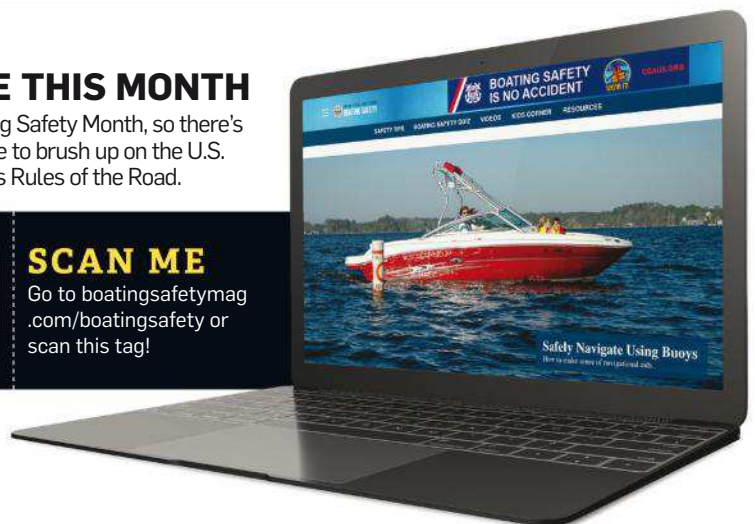
ONLINE THIS MONTH

May is Boating Safety Month, so there's no better time to brush up on the U.S. Coast Guard's Rules of the Road.



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DISTRACTED BOATING. DON'T DO IT.

Distracted driving? Oh, yeah, it can be dangerous, and most states have laws to combat it. Is it easier to avoid distractions while piloting a boat compared to a car? No, probably harder. There are no white lines to follow, other vessels approach from all directions at all speeds, sea conditions

get lumpy, channels narrow, harbors turn crowded, calls come in on the VHF, fish strike trolling lines, and people move around the boat. The list of on-the-water attention diverters goes on and on.

Experienced skippers have learned to pay attention around their boats while underway, but how can new boaters get that experience as safely as possible? And is it possible for experienced skippers to sharpen their situational awareness? The folks at the

National Safe Boating Council asked that question too. To get an answer, the council's director emeritus Virgil Chambers developed a simple protocol called SCAN for keeping a proper lookout: search, concentrate, analyze and negotiate.

It's all common sense, isn't it? Sure, but can it be scientifically proven to help? It can. Look for our full report on distracted boating on boatingmag.com.

—John Page Williams

SEARCH the area all around your craft. This is a 360-degree examination of everything on the water around your boat. Distances away will close or open depending on your speed or the speed of the observed boat or object. The faster you are operating, the farther out you will need to search.

CONCENTRATE on what you are seeing with your eyes and on your electronics. Is it a boat? What type? What is it doing? What is its relative speed? Is it a stationary object? Drifting or anchored? These are questions you must consider while you look at the various observed boats or objects.

ANALYZE what you are watching. Is it closing in on your position or going away from you? Remember, if the object you are observing is at a constant bearing with decreasing range (you are getting closer to it and its relative position to you is not changing), it is on a collision course.

NEGOTIATE What are you going to do? Slow down, turn away from the boat or object, and head in a different direction? Remember the Navigation Rules. Know the proper action to take while meeting head-on, crossing or overtaking another boat. Make your adjustments obvious.

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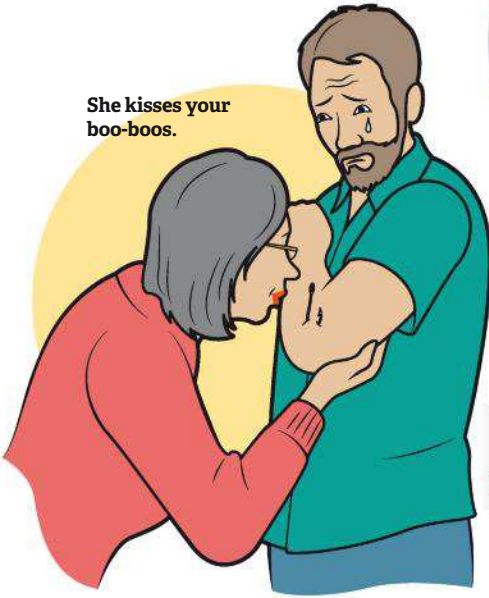
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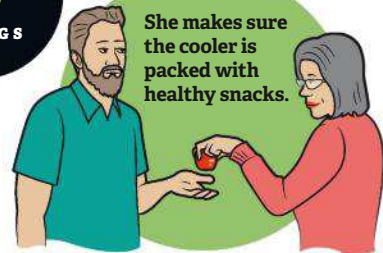


5
THINGS

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ILLUSTRATIONS: COLIN HAYES



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A SEA DOG IS SAVED AND THERE'S NO TRICK

What I learned from what didn't happen

On May 15, 2017, I went overboard into the 36-degree water of Newfound Lake, New Hampshire. If I had not been wearing my 40-year-old Stearns Type III life jacket, I would not be writing this account. First, some backstory.

I am a boating instructor for the State of New Hampshire. I teach the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' curriculum. I've been a boater since childhood. As long as I put on my life jacket, my parents allowed me to take out the rowboat by myself. I was 7 years old. I learned to sail our 16-foot sloop at age 8. My first real job was as a gas-dock attendant. I've cruised lakes Michigan and Huron, the Finger Lakes and the Erie Canal system. I've been at the wheel of a 65-foot schooner off Nova Scotia, and I've

had a couple of "Cheeseburgers in Paradise" on Florida's Cabbage Key, where it is rumored Jimmy Buffet made 'em famous. I'm an Aquarius. Boats and the water are in my blood.

On the day in question, I volunteered to help the staff of a summer

camp transport their boats to a launch site to be inspected for the season. We used a pontoon boat, securing the aluminum skiffs, one on each side. The day was sunny with broken clouds, quite cool, and a lot windier than we had hoped.

Shortly after heading out, the bow of the boat lashed to the port side, broke free and swung away. The young man with me boarded the aluminum boat while I knelt on a bench seat to pass a line to him to resecure the boat. I leaned over to hand him the line, and I went headfirst into the water! The bench seat was not fastened to the deck of the pontoon, and the railing gave way.

I'm a pretty good swimmer at the ripe-old age of 69, but it took all I had to claw my way to the surface. My heavy, soaked clothing was weighing me down. The 15.5 pounds of buoyancy in my old life jacket were just enough to help

me to the surface. I grabbed the deck of the pontoon and gave a couple of forced, loud exhalations to help control my breathing. That cold water was beginning to take its toll. The other man called 911, gave me the end of an oar, and helped me get up the boarding ladder.

Next thing I knew, I was in an ambulance getting stripped down and covered in warm blankets. It was embarrassing to be seen in this condition by one of my marine patrol colleagues, but better to be



THE LIFE JACKET I wore was purchased in 1977 when three friends and I canoed 70 miles of the Allagash River in northern Maine. I didn't need it then; glad I kept it, though!

embarrassed than to drown because I hadn't worn my life jacket.

When I got home, I weighed my plastic bag of wet clothes — it weighed 19 pounds! And they had even drip-dried for a while. Remember: It's better to have it [a life jacket] and not need it than to need it and not have it!

Paul A. French
Bridgewater, New Hampshire

Remember: It's better to have it [a life jacket] and not need it than to need it and not have it!

WANTED: YOUR STORIES Share your boating mistakes and mishaps so that your fellow boaters might learn from your experience. Send us your first-person accounts, including what went wrong, what you'd do differently, your name and your city, to editor@boatingmag.com and use "ILAB" in the subject line. If your experience is selected, we'll send you a \$100 West Marine gift card.





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“We love it!”

“We ‘Wear It’ to be safe.”

“I caught a fish!”

“It’s exciting!”



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

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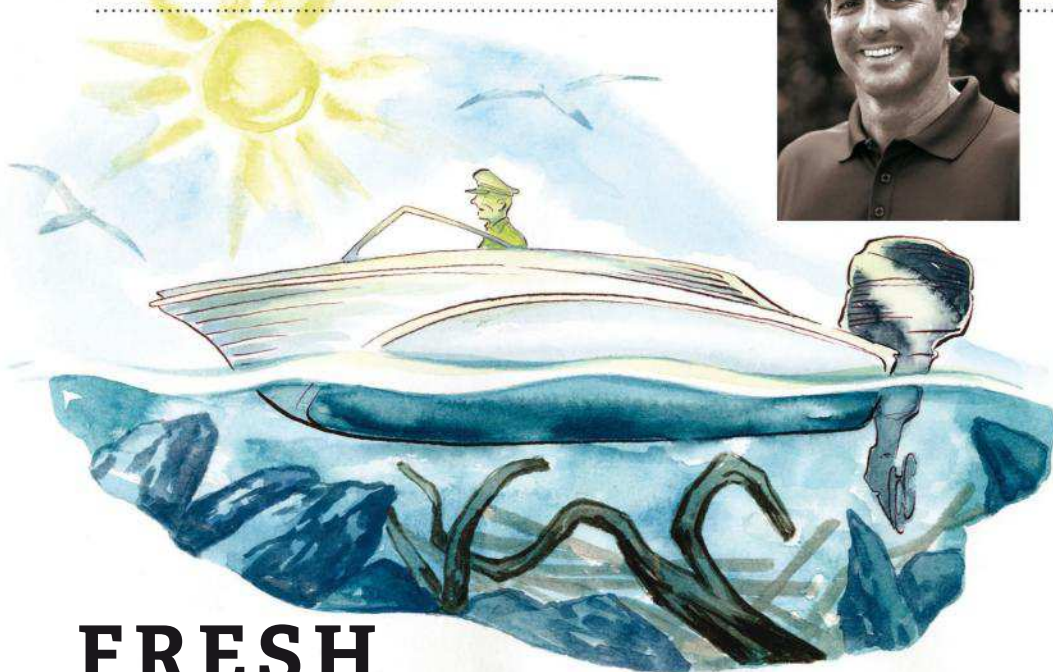
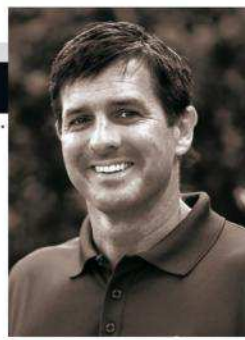
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FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Boating in lakes and rivers has its own set of navigational challenges.

A few years ago, my brother was cruising in our family boat along the shoreline of an island in the St. Lawrence River.

Over the years, all of us have run the boat through the same area without incident. But this time, my brother heard the sickening thud of our outboard's lower unit being sheared off by a submerged boulder. It's a rock that, when water levels are normal, hides below the surface at a deep enough depth to allow safe passage. That season, however, the water levels had dropped to 20-year lows, turning areas we could normally navigate in our sleep into danger zones.

Changing water levels is just one hazard among many on rivers, as well as lakes subject to flow control by dams. Here are a few other things to concern yourself with when boating on lakes and rivers.

UNMARKED HAZARDS

Many smaller bodies of water have not been charted, and on many that have been, the charts do not contain extensive detail in areas outside the main channels. Use extreme caution to avoid shoals as well as unknown obstacles such as rocks, submerged tree stumps and even old dock structures. Rivers with strong currents can also contain hard-to-spot floating debris, or deadheads, which are logs or felled trees submerged just under the surface with only a portion visible. If you spot something small on the surface, remember the iceberg effect and prepare to encounter something much larger under the

water. Slow down and give such floaters a wide berth.

BLIND CURVES

Oxbows and other bends in rivers are great for fishing but can be terrible for boaters trying to pass through them. Why? Sometimes you can't see what's coming around the bend the other way. Navigational rules call for boaters to keep to the right to pass each other, but not everyone follows the rules. Though they shouldn't, I've seen people anchored in blind spots in river bends, focused on fishing, expecting other boaters to watch out for them. Or I've seen giant commercial barges approaching a bend from the other direction, taking up almost the entire width of the waterway. Best to approach river bends with caution, either off plane or at a very slow planing speed, and be prepared to take evasive action if necessary.

ROUGH WATERS

On a narrow body of water with a shallow depth, wind

can churn up tight-period waves at a moment's notice. I've seen it happen on rivers, and on small lakes nestled in low valleys that act as wind funnels when it blows in the right direction. Once, while boating in Whitewater Bay (a shallow tidal saltwater lake in the Ten Thousand Islands in Florida), the winds kicked the waves up so high and tight that we could see exposed bottom in the troughs. We had no choice but to hop up on plane and run along the tops the waves at an aggressive speed. Though the ride proved uncomfortable — jarring even — we managed to keep the keel and the propeller from bottoming out.

COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC

On the St. Lawrence near my family's place, Great Lakers pass through the shipping channel on a daily basis, throwing huge wakes that can swamp small boats if they are unprepared. Boaters at anchor, hopefully smartly well away from the shipping channel, should be at the ready to quickly raise the hook if a ship is set to pass nearby. Boaters underway should approach the rollers like ocean waves, crossing the wakes at an angle and using the boat's trim to avoid swamping, rolling or stuffing the bow. On other small rivers I've boated in the South, barge traffic can cause the same problems while also taking up almost all of the navigable channel. It's best to find a spot in deep-enough water outside their course and let them pass.



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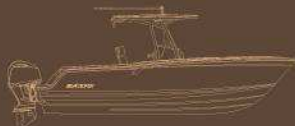
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BOAT DOCTOR

BOATINGMAG.COM
MAY 2018

Q&A

By
Michael "Mick"
Hannock



OPTIMIZED
AGM batteries
require the
correct charger
in order to
perform.

BOAT DOCTOR /// Q&A • WEEKEND WORKBOOK • QUICK STUDY • WHAT TO LOOK FOR • BOAT DOC SPECIAL • BOATINGLAB

Q: CHARGING UP

Hi Mick, I'm a first-time writer but a long-time reader. I have removed my four AGM batteries from the boat and placed them in my basement. How do I properly care for them over the winter? If the answer is some sort of charging, please advise what product(s) you would recommend. Thanks.

Dick Buttrick
Cataumet, Massachusetts

A:

Hi Dick. Batteries should be stored fully charged. I like to charge them, then remove the charger and check the batteries monthly. If they have discharged significantly, I will then recharge them. AGM batteries self-discharge at a much slower rate than standard flooded-cell batteries. Still, if you cannot monitor the batteries monthly, I suggest using a float charger, often called a trickle charger or battery maintainer. A float charge is a small controlled amount of current. In all cases, you want to check the battery-maker's specifications with respect to maximum amperage and voltage ranges. Then select and use a charger that meets those requirements.



PHOTOS: OPTIMA BATTERIES



OVERHEAD LIFE-JACKET STOWAGE The U.S. Coast Guard stipulates that all recreational boats have one properly sized Coast Guard-approved life jacket in good, serviceable condition for each soul on board, and that the jackets are readily accessible, if not already being worn.

If your boat proves short on life-jacket stowage space, consider installing an overhead bag such as the T-Bag from Kwik Tek (\$51.44, jet.com) or the T-Top Marine Storage Bag from C.E. Smith (\$94.99, westmarine.com). These ventilated, zippered bags attach with straps and buckles to the underside of Bimini tops and T-tops. Access is convenient and quick. —Jim Hendricks

Q: STRIPPED!

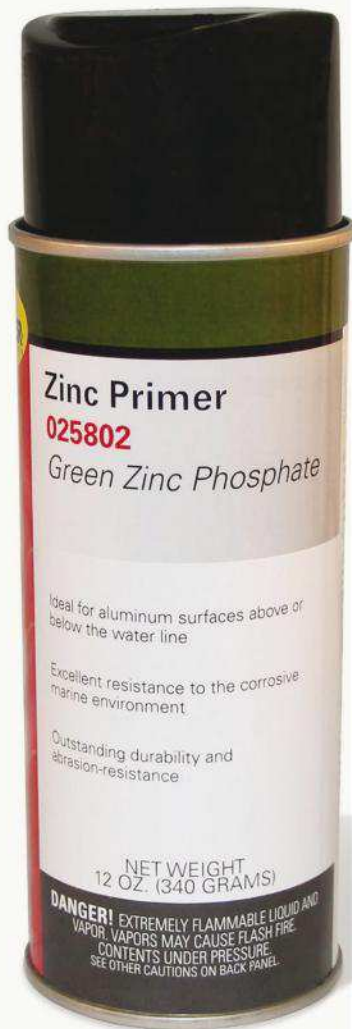
A careless diver cleaned the sterndrive with acid when removing barnacles from my new-to-me 2004 26-foot Sea Ray. The paint layer is thin, and bare metal shows in areas. Do you recommend painting it? Which paint? Can it be a DIY job? The boat lives on a lift above salt water. Thanks.

Miguel G.
Via email

A: Yes, it is a DIY job. Sand/abrade the surface using 180-grit paper or a maroon Scotch-Brite pad until the metal is bright and there is no flaking finish. Clean with soap and water, then dry. Next, wipe down with white vinegar, which is acetic acid. This chemically etches the aluminum; you can certainly use the purpose-made etcher from the paint-maker. Etching must be performed immediately prior to applying the primer, so plan your work accordingly.

Apply three to four coats of zinc phosphate primer from a spray can. Then apply two to three coats of topcoat from a spray can, which in your case will be black, since Sea Ray boats are fitted with MerCruiser sterndrives. You will likely need two cans of primer and two cans of paint.

For a truly pro job — one that will provide the best protection for your drive — apply a two-part epoxy primer after etching instead of the zinc phosphate. I have used Pettit Protect with excellent results. Brush on two coats, following the directions on the can.



can point me in the right direction. Thank you.

David Irvin
Lexington, Kentucky

A: First, I want to thank Randy Vance for the answer to this question. He spoke with Raymarine's tech support on your behalf, David. They said your unit is a 2002 unit. It may have been made later than that, but that was the technology for several years. Plus, the processor is small. So, if you put in a newer chart card, it may not be able to process it due to file sizes. If you are boating on a specific body of water, try to buy a chart just for that body of water.

Regardless, you do need to familiarize yourself with the manual, and you need to be on the boat when you call back tech support so they can talk you through the menus. I seldom wait more than an hour for a callback and often get through on the first ring. They are good at their job.

PAINTED PONY

Q: Mick, I own a nondescript 1960s 13-foot runabout powered by a Johnson outboard. I would like to paint it to match my 1970 Ford Mustang, with which I tow my boat to car shows. Can this be done?

John Stevens
Phoenix, Arizona

A: First, I'd like to note that Johnson outboards of that era bore the Sea Horse marque and hope the irony isn't lost on you — or anybody else! Pettit Paint (pettitpaint.com) and others offer a range of DIY paint products. You can also see a step-by-step guide to DIY hull painting at boatingmag.com/never-wax-your-boat-again.

SHARP CORNERS

Most boaters who have spent time aboard boats in open water will immediately recognize the problem illustrated in the accompanying photo. Taken aboard a twin-

stateroom inboard cruiser, it shows the very sharp corner of the galley counter. Bumping into this while simply passing by would hurt. Falling against it in any kind of wave action while the boat is cruising, or even anchored, or due the unexpected wake of a passing boat is sure to cause injury. Corners aboard boats should be rounded or padded for safety. —Kevin Falvey



NAUTICAL
NO-NO

SOFTWARE UPDATE

Q: Doc, I have been boating for 33 years on an inland lake (Cumberland). I recently purchased a 2005 Rinker 320 with a Raymarine c70 display, but it did not come with a CF card. So I borrowed a CF card from a friend before buying one. I have enclosed pictures of what my display looks like, which is not correct when compared to my buddy's c70 display (2007) with the same card. I contacted Raymarine, who said I would need to update the software of the display, which I did, as evidenced by the software details pictured. I am hoping you might have run across this in the past and that you

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CHEAP? CHIP?

Q: What kind of brush should I use to apply anti-fouling paint? I have always been a trailer boater and will be keeping my boat in the water for the first time this year. Also, can I stir the paint at home, or will I need to take it to the store and have it shaken?

Bob Breen
Portland, Maine

A: You'll be disposing of the brush after use, so buy cheap "chip" brushes — the kind with the unfinished handle and coarse bristles. These work but drop bristles like a shedding sheepdog. For that reason, I source cheap nylon bristle brushes from dollar and variety stores. Often sold three for a buck or two, these tend to shed less than chip brushes.

Anti-fouling paint is heavy, and many stores will not place it on a shaker, though some will. Check in advance. If you cannot get it shaken, invert the can for a day prior to use. This will allow the heavy solids to mix a little. Then purchase a mixing wheel/paddle that fits in an electric drill and use this. Use a stir stick periodically in a scooping motion to pull up material from the bottom of the can. Then resume power-mixing until you are sure the contents are well-mixed. This can take 10 or 15 minutes, so be patient. It's important to the paint's performance.

You will find a useful video tip about stirring anti-fouling paint at boatingmag.com/bottom-painting-tips.

CRYSTAL BALL

Q: Dear Doc, will an oil analysis tell me the state of my engine?

It's running fine but has some years on it, and I would like to gauge the remaining life and reliability I might expect it to deliver. Can you help?

Tom Donohoe
Nashville, Tennessee

A: An oil analysis can absolutely provide an indication of your engine's condition. There are no guarantees about future longevity, but being armed with the knowledge of how much chromium, nickel, silicon and other particulates are present in your oil can help you make better service and purchase decisions. Kits that enable you to collect and ship your oil sample can be purchased from retailers such as West Marine. Read Capt. John Page Williams' article on the subject for more information: boatingmag.com/how-to/benefits-oil-analysis.

TOON SAUCE

Aluminum's property of spontaneously forming a protective layer of oxide makes it durable and ideal for marine use. Heck, lower maintenance and durability are a couple of the reasons why many U.S. Coast Guard boats are built from unpainted aluminum. But many recreational boaters expect a higher level of aesthetics than "dull gray and durable." Even anodized and painted aluminum require cleaning and weather protection.

I applied Toon Sauce to the anodized aluminum pipe work supporting my boat's T-top in order to test it.

First of all, it did remove

stains on the tubing when applied as directed. It also did not appear to harm the anodized finish. (I also applied some to a piece of painted aluminum siding and nothing untoward occurred.) I cannot say how long the protective coating it leaves behind will last because I tested it just prior to deadline. Be sure to shake it well. And do apply from the bottom up as the directions state. (When I applied it from the top, the stuff that ran created streak "shadows.") It supposedly works better on wet aluminum, a feature pontooners will find convenient. It retails for \$19.99 at boatbling.net.

—Kevin Falvey



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK (CRYSTAL BALL), KEVIN FALVEY (HONDA ENGINE, TOON SAUCE)

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WET AGAIN

Q: Dear Mick, we own a 1985 Sea Ray 250 kept on Lake Powell. We have not used the boat for many seasons now and want to get back in the water this summer. It was winterized before going into dry storage. What should be done to ensure safety and reliability after being in storage that long?

Larry and Diana
DiGuglielmo
Lake Powell, Arizona

A: First, make sure there is no water in the fuel. If you boated anywhere but in your dry desert climate, I would recommend disposing properly of the old fuel. There are kits/products you can purchase that allow you to sample the fuel. (Sar-Gel paste is one, spatco.com.) You can also send a siphon to the bottom of the tank, since gas floats on water. Access the fuel tank interior by removing the fuel-gauge sending unit. If water is found, siphon it out. Carry extra water-separating fuel-filter elements and check your fuel filter's drain bowl regularly. Change the element as needed.

Replace the spark plugs, belts and all filters. Lubricate all service points. Change the engine oil and drive-gear oil, and charge the batteries. Start the engine. Make sure the throttle and shift operate smoothly before you head out on the lake.

Go boating, being extra attentive to the engine. I recommend an EPIRB or other rescue beacon when boating in remote locations like Lake Powell. Be safe and enjoy.

FUELED AGAIN

Q: I think the fuel in my boat's fuel tank has turned sour over the winter. The engine starts but doesn't run right or for long, and the fuel filter shows some goop in it. What can I add to the fuel to restore it?

Steve Hess
Armonk, New York

A: There is no additive that can restore bad gasoline. From your description, it sounds like the fuel in your boat's tank has undergone what is sometimes called "phase separation." This is not an uncommon occurrence thanks to the use of ethanol as an extender in gasoline. I recommend you contact an environmental services company to dispose of the bad gas responsibly. Be sure to drain the boat engine's fuel system. Replace

all filters, then refill with fresh fuel.

WAX OR POLISH?

Q: What's the difference between boat wax and boat polish?

John McCaffery
San Francisco, California

A: In a simpler world, wax is a protective coating that goes on top of a substrate and helps enhance and preserve shine. Polish is a substance containing mild abrasives or chemicals that wear a small surface layer away from the substrate in order to allow a clean, bright surface to show. A polish may include some form of wax or other protectant.

In the actual world, the terms are muddled by dozens of makers competing for boat-detailing dollars. Many products are

combination formulas. I suggest focusing on what you want to achieve and then asking fellow boaters what has worked for them.

DRAIN PAIN

Q: I stripped my brass drain plug while installing it. How can I remove the drain plug and rethread the drain?

Michael Bale
Columbia, South Carolina

A: Michael, you may be able to remove the plug and run a thread tap through the drain to clean up the threads. However, I recommend simply purchasing an entirely new drain-plug assembly. Remove the old one and bed the new fitting in a polyurethane adhesive sealant. There's no sense in having to second-guess such a simple yet critical boat fixture.

Q: WHAT'S THE BRIGHT IDEA?

Dear Doc, when I walk around the marina, I notice that a lot of spotlights in the boats are facing aft instead of ahead. Is there a reason for this? Do the lights have a default position? It seems to me that if the light was turned on before being rotated forward, they would blind the skipper and take away his night vision.

Bill Simms
Charlotte, South Carolina

A: Many captains will run with the light rotated to face aft when not in use to prevent the lens from getting coated with salt (although it often does anyway), diminishing the output from the spotlight when it is turned on.



PHOTO: WEST MARINE

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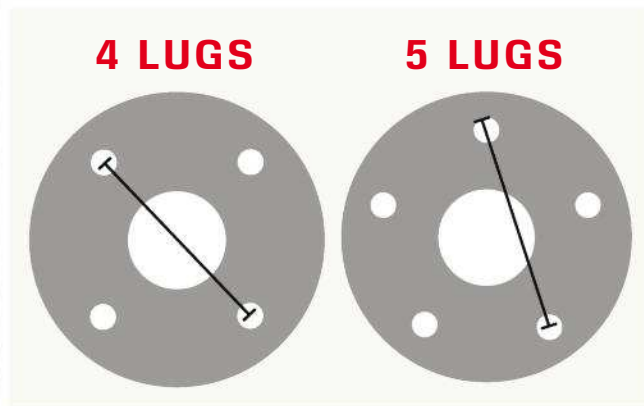


TRAILER TRAVAIL

Q: Hey Mick. I have a 15-foot Boston Whaler on a Venture trailer and do a lot of trailering. The tires are 13 inches and wore out within two years. Can I replace the 13-inch for a 14- or 15-inch tire and wheels as long as the wheels have five bolts? Thanks.

Tony Govoni
Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania

A: You need to make sure of a couple of things before changing wheel sizes on your boat trailer. One: Make sure you have clearance for the height and width of the new tires and rims. Two: Make sure the bolt pattern matches.



The bolt pattern is the diameter of an imaginary circle drawn through the centers of the wheel lugs. For example, a bolt diameter listed as “4 x 4.50” indicates a four-lug wheel with a 4½-inch bolt diameter. You may want to

measure in millimeters for more precision. For wheels with an even number of lugs, measure center to center between opposite lugs/holes in the rim. If your wheel has an odd number of lugs, choose any lug bolt and measure the

distance between the back of one lug to the center of another that is directly across from it.

Of course, since you have the existing wheels, you might try dabbing some chalk or grease on the tip of each lug and pressing a sheet of card stock against the wheel to capture the pattern. Take it to your local marine supply or trailer store and purchase the correct rims.

ASK THE DOCTOR

Send questions to Mick with your name and address to: boatdr@boatingmag.com or The Boat Doctor, *Boating*, 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789.

ILLUSTRATIONS: RYAN SWANSON

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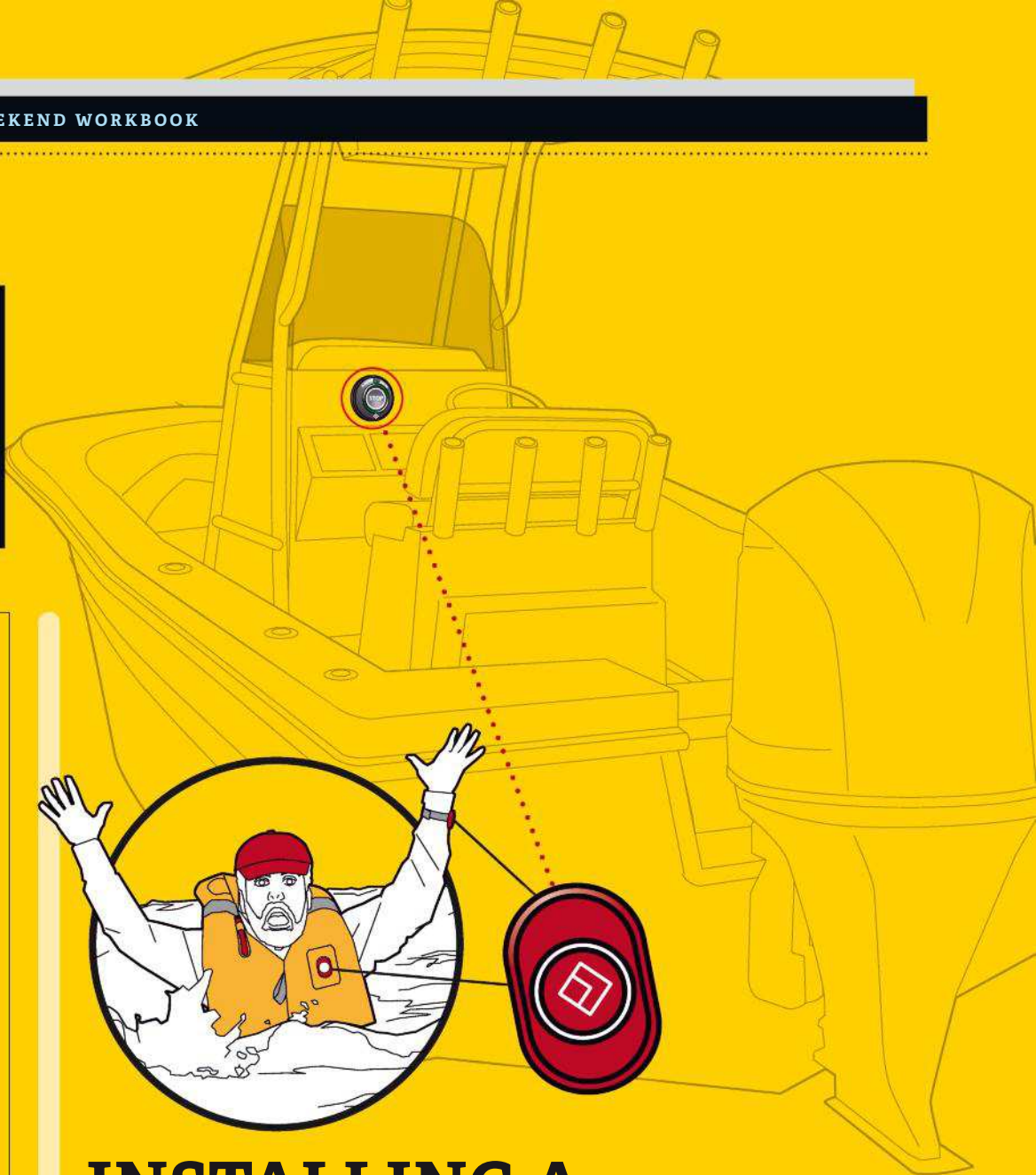
1 OF 5

FINISH TIME

Approx. 2 hours

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

- Fell Marine MOB+ Basepack, includes xHub and xFob Multifob and assorted connectors with heat-shrink collars (\$199.99, fellmarine.com)
- In-line marine fuse holder and 1- to 3-amp fuse
- Power drill
- 2 7/8-inch hole saw
- Crimping tool
- Wire cutters/strippers
- Online manual and videos available at support.center.fellmarine.com



INSTALLING A REMOTE KILL SWITCH

A Fell Marine engine kill switch offers safety and freedom move to about the deck.

A safety-stop lanyard — aka engine kill switch — comes standard with marine power systems to instantly shut down propulsion if the helmsman gets tossed from the boat. Yet many skippers forget that they're tethered and walk away from the wheel, inadvertently killing the engine. It can happen at inopportune times such as while docking.

Fell Marine's MOB+ wireless man-overboard systems resolve this issue. Essentially, a remote xFob that you wear

connects wirelessly using the WiMEA protocol to a Fell xHub on the boat. When a wearer falls overboard, it breaks the signal and the engine shuts down. A shutdown also occurs when the xFob is approximately 50 feet from the boat. The system allows for a restart of the engine with an automatic override function so crewmembers can rescue someone who has fallen overboard.

Here's now to install the Fell MOB+ Multifob Basepack on a single-engine boat. —*Jim Hendricks*



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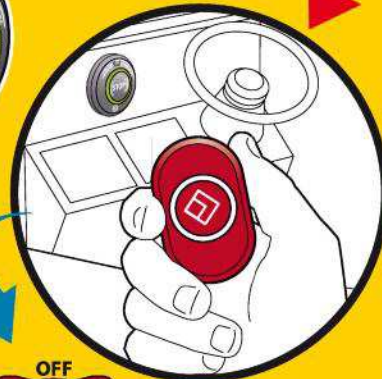
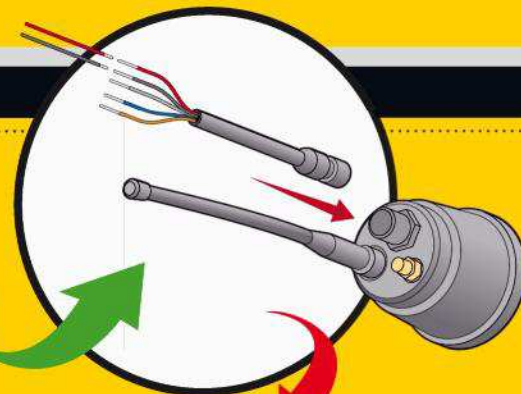
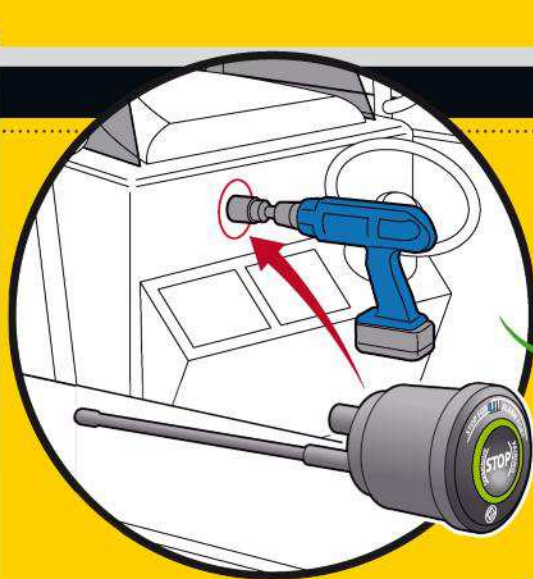
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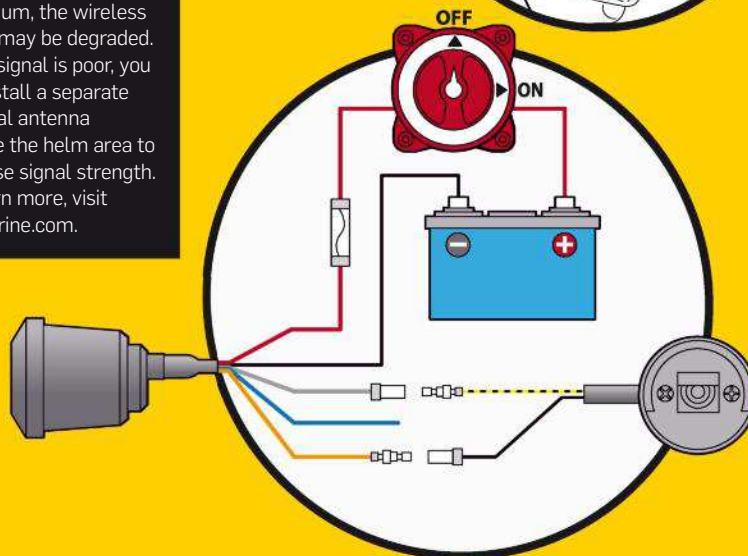
+ MULTIFOB OPTIONS

With this system, up to four xFob Multifobs can be paired to the xHub at the same time, extending safety to multiple crewmembers. These sell for \$39.99 and have a 300-hour battery life. An xTag accessory (\$24.99) lets you wear it on a neck lanyard, your belt or a life jacket. You can also get the xBand accessory in five colors (\$19.99) and three camo patterns (\$24.99) for your wrist.



TIP
On boat helms made of aluminum, the wireless signal may be degraded. If the signal is poor, you can install a separate external antenna outside the helm area to increase signal strength. To learn more, visit fellmarine.com.

TIP
If your boat has an NMEA 2000 system already installed, you can use this system as a 12-volt DC power supply if you have enough power available to extend the NMEA 2000 backbone. Check nmea.org to calculate the power availability in your system.



INSTALL THE xHUB

Select a spot near the wheel and cut a standard 2 1/8-inch-diameter hole, making sure you have clearance behind it for the 6 1/2-inch-long xHub antenna (it is flexible and can bend slightly). Remove the xHub nut and attach the antenna to the back of the unit. Feed the antenna into the hole and place the xHub in the hole, making sure the gasket rests between the xHub and the dash panel and that the battery indicator is at the top. Hand-tighten the xHub nut from behind. Attach the five-pin connector cable to the back of the unit.

CONNECT TO POWER

Take care to turn off the onboard battery power before wiring the connector cable to an onboard power source. The connector cable has a five-wire color-coded pigtail. Connect the red (positive) wire to a stable, positive 12-volt DC source with a 1- to 3-amp fuse with either a marine in-line fuse holder or a fuse block, neither of which is supplied with the Fell system. Connect the black (negative) wire to an onboard ground terminal. If it is necessary to extend the positive or negative wires, be sure to use 16/20 AWG wire at the minimum.

CONNECT SIGNAL WIRES

Two of the remaining three pigtails are used to connect the signal wires to the existing kill switch on your boat. To determine which two, visit fellmarine.com for a wire schematic for your engine brand. For a Mercury Marine engine, connect the xHub gray wire to the black/yellow wire leading to the Merc kill switch; connect the xHub orange wire to the black wire leading to the Merc kill switch. To retain the functionality of the safety-stop lanyard, leave the existing wires connected to the kill switch, but "T" into them with xHub wires.

TEST THE SYSTEM

Test while tied to a dock. Turn on the engine. If you wired the system to the existing kill switch, pull the lanyard to ensure it works. Reconnect the lanyard and restart the engine. Submerge the xFob Multifob in the ocean or lake, or walk with it until the engine stops. The xHub will light up red and emit a sound signal to indicate a man overboard. The automatic override function will engage six seconds after the signal is broken, and you can restart without connecting an xFob. The engine can also be stopped by simply clicking the xFob.

ILLUSTRATIONS: TIM BARKER; PHOTOS: ZACH STOWALL

Personal **HIGHLIGHT REELS**

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212X



242X **4-SERIES**



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CUSTOMIZING A LIFE JACKET

Add accessories and safety items to reflect how you boat.

I own a variety of life jackets for a variety of uses. My belt pack serves for evening cruises and other quiet-water use when I am accompanied. My inflatable vest is great for when I'm offshore fishing with friends. When I'm out on open water by myself, I often choose the vest pictured here. Inherently buoyant, it's reliable and requires little attention, and the pockets come in handy. It's not meant to be presented as the "best" life jacket. Instead, I'd like you to consider the features it possesses and the customizations I've made, in the hope that you might benefit from them in your personal boating situation. —Kevin Falvey

REFLECTIVE PATCHES This vest came with them factory-installed, but companies like ACR make adhesive reflectors you should consider adding to any life jacket not equipped with them. Apply them high on the shoulders and neck to ensure they catch a searchlight beam when you are in the water.

BEACON I keep my personal locator beacon (PLB) strapped to the life jacket I am wearing. Many of these float, but unlike a full-size EPIRB, they must be held so the antenna faces the sky. So, even if I become exhausted, fastening my beacon in this fashion ensures it will continue to send its rescue signal — and

QUICK TIP

Pre-fit and pre-adjust life-jacket straps for each member of your crew. That way, if they are not wearing their life jacket when an emergency strikes, it can be put on more quickly. Every second counts!

WHISTLE No matter how loud you can yell, you can't yell for long before losing your voice. A whistle allows an exhausted person to make a loud noise. This one easily attached to the top strap of my life jacket.

its strobe light will continue to be seen.

LIGHT Shown is a strobe light that is absolutely blinding. But even a less powerful, basic life-jacket light will exponentially increase your chances

of being spotted. The batteries for these are a special long-lasting type.

IDENTIFICATION Writing the names of crew in waterproof marker ensures that each crewmember can grab the correct jacket in an emergency. The boat's name is marked on life jackets, and everything else that might float free in a sinking and provide a clue to rescuers searching for me.

WATER Emergency water packets available from camping-supply

companies ensure I can stay hydrated at least for a time. This means I can stay more alert and be more readily able to make the best decisions to help rescuers find me and my crew.

SUNSCREEN It's not silly to protect your face from the burning rays while floating in a life jacket. Coated as such, my crew and I would be in better physical condition — and thus better able to assist in our own rescue — than if we did not have it.

FOOD I also load the life jacket's pockets with a couple of energy bars and some Life Savers to suck on. At the risk of sounding repetitive, consuming these may help me to better help myself.

LINE I keep a 12-foot-long length of 1/4-inch nylon coiled in one pocket to tie myself and my crewmembers together so we do not drift apart. Staying together is better for morale and also makes a bigger target for rescuers to spot.





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BOARDING LADDER

STEP ON UP

The more steps a ladder has going below the waterline, the better it is.

When buying a boat, most boaters probably view the boarding ladder as an afterthought, if they notice it at all. Most probably don't pay attention to it until the first time they're trying to get back into the boat from the water. Maybe it's not such a big deal if you struggle to climb back in after a swim, but if someone's fallen overboard — particularly when operating the boat solo — and can't get back into the boat, it could be life and death. There are a few different styles to choose from, and not every style is ideal for every boat. Here are a few general rules about ladders. —*Pete McDonald*

➤ **PROP-PROTECTED** The American Boat and Yacht Council guidelines state that stern ladders should be mounted as far away from the propeller as possible. Many builders who place it on the transom or extended swim platform

of a boarding ladder must be at least 22 inches below the waterline while the boat is at rest. The farther down the ladder goes, the easier it is to use while in the water. Look for at least a three-step telescoping ladder on the swim platform

QUICK TIP

When buying a new boat, from the showroom floor check whether the boarding ladder could be easily deployed from the water.

mount the ladder so that it's angled away from the engine.

➤ **GET A GRIP** The steps or rungs of boarding ladders should be slip-resistant. Look for ladder rungs that are grooved or have a strip of non-skid tape. Some have grooved or slotted plastic inserts that serve as a nonslip surface while boarding. This is especially helpful when trying to board in rougher seas.

➤ **IN DEPTH** ABYC guidelines state that the top surface of the lowermost rung or step

and bow platform of any boat you're considering.

➤ **DEPLOYABLE** Boarding ladders should be able to be accessed and deployed by someone swimming in the

water next to the boat. A lot of installations are designed to be hidden under hatches, which helps with dockside appeal due to cleaner lines. But have you ever tried to lift up one of the heavier hatches from the water while bobbing? Look for recessed installations that slide out from underneath the transom or extended swim platform, or from a molded-in recess, where it is still easy to grab and pull into the water.

➤ **HANDLE THIS** Another important element of reboarding is to have a handhold within reach of the ladder, which will help you pull yourself out of the water.

➤ **DIY** Don't have a ladder? Companies such as Garelick and West Marine make stowable swim ladders that hang off the gunwale. Or you can install one. To follow our instructions on how to install one, go to boatingmag.com/installing-boarding-ladder.

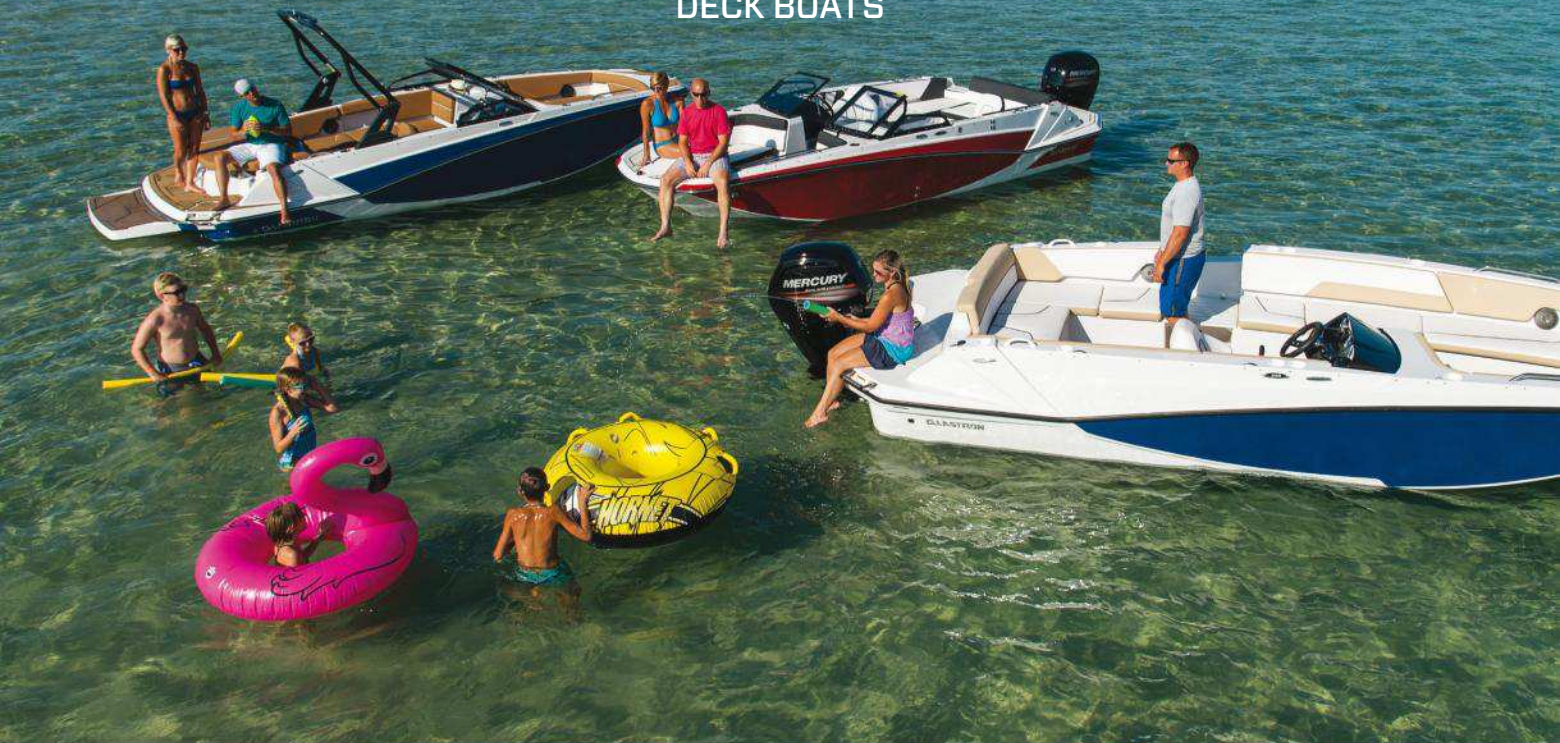


Look for boarding ladders that angle away from the prop, have a grab handle nearby, and are accessible from the water.

RULES OF THE RUNG

ABYC Standard H41 lays out the requirement for boats to have boarding access. H41.4.5 states that boats should have a "rigid or flexible fitting or part of the hull [that] allows a person to reboard from the water without assistance." Every ABYC-approved boat should have a means to reboard from the water built into it. Note that it may not always be a ladder, so look it up in your owner's manual before you head out for a day on the water.

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A



FIXED FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Does your boat need a fixed fire-extinguishing system?

According to both the U.S. Coast Guard and insurance-company claim statistics, a huge proportion of boat fires start in the engine space.

E

Electrical systems and batteries are responsible for triggering 52 percent of those blazes, fuel systems get 5 percent of the blame, and flammable items coming into contact with an overheated exhaust system accounts for another 20 percent. That means Class A fires (combustible materials that leave ash), Class B fires (flammable liquids) and

Class C fires (electrical) are all possibilities in the engine room. The net result? Boats with engine rooms need a fixed, automatic fire-extinguishing system that can handle all three.

SIZE MATTERS

The volume of your engine room or engine compartment is what determines the size of the system you need. "Get more than the minimum, because the minimum is often not enough and more is always better," says Bob Daley, a 26-year veteran captain (retired) of the Montgomery County Fire Rescue. Daley's

own boat is equipped with three times the required extinguishers.

To figure out what size system you need, measure the length, width and height of your engine room and calculate the cubic feet. Fixed systems are rated by cubic feet of coverage.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Fixed marine fire-extinguishing systems commonly contain HFC-227 or FM-200 fire suppressants, which are less environmentally harmful replacements for old-school Halon (which is no longer sold). A newer

Fixed fire-extinguishing systems can be fitted to yachts and in the engine space of a runabout.

option is Novec 1230, a 3M product claimed to be even less impactful on the environment, which is stored in liquid form but discharged as a gas. All of these options are considered equally effective at squelching flames.

These systems trigger automatically via a temperature sensor, and many can also be triggered with a manual

systems are usually easy to install because they consist of just a few main components: the extinguisher cylinder (which usually includes the temperature-sensitive automatic trigger in its nozzle) and, when equipped with manual abilities, the manual discharge trigger and the cable connecting it to the cylinder. Here are some key installation details:

The nozzle and trigger should be

QUICK TIP

When possible, choose a fixed system over installing a port (into which you jam the nozzle of a portable extinguisher); ports can allow additional air into the engine compartment, which only helps the fire burn, and obviously, they can't be triggered automatically if you're asleep or off the boat.

release. It's important to remember, however, that if a fixed system triggers while underway, you need to react quickly to shut off engines, blowers, generators and other equipment, or they may need fresh oxygen to restart while expelling fire suppressant from the intake system.

INSTALL IT RIGHT

Fixed fire-extinguishing

positioned as close to the overhead, centerline, and as far away as possible from air intake vents and blowers. The cylinder must be securely mounted.

Engine, generator and ventilation-system automatic-relay shutdowns should be installed and are necessary on diesel boats in order to ensure ABYC compliance. —Lenny Rudow

PROBLEMATIC PORTABLES

If your boat currently has a portable fire extinguisher made by Kidde between January 1, 1973, and August 15, 2017, you need to check

immediately to make sure it isn't on the list of some 37.8 million plastic-handled extinguishers recently recalled. The affected

extinguishers can become clogged or require excessive force to discharge and may fail. Visit kidde.com to learn more or get a replacement.

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GETTING YOUR BOATER CARD

State boater card programs improve boating safety for everyone.

This year, my home state of California instituted its first-ever boater card program, which phases in mandatory boater education over eight years, eventually requiring all skippers to pass a state-certified boater education course and obtain a card issued by the state Division of Boating and Waterways.

C

California joins more than 40 other states and Canada in requiring some form of licensing or mandatory boater education. To provide you with the scoop about these programs, I pulled up the California Boater Card website — californiaboatercard.com — and filled out the application, which included a \$10 payment via credit card. The site then referred me to a choice of 10 approved boating-safety courses. I chose the free BoatU.S. Foundation online course, which includes seven sections.

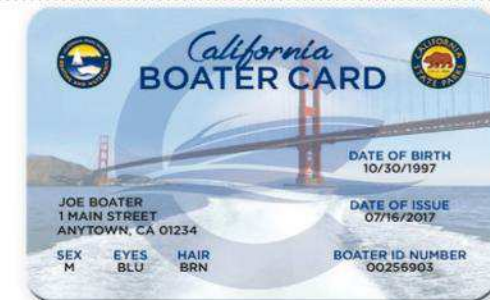
“This will be quick, a slam dunk,” I thought. That’s not exactly the way it went down. The introduction

indicates three to four hours, but I spent seven hours, including a lunch break. You can pause and return hours or days later. The course requires that you spend a minimum amount of time on each page, and each of the first six sections are followed by a 10-question quiz. There’s a 75-question final exam. Despite my 35 years as a boat owner, I learned some things. For example, I believed that sailboats always have the

right of way. But that is incorrect.

The course also emphasizes that you are allowed to ignore such rules of the road if it means avoiding a collision — which is the first rule of safe navigation.

I finished the course and passed the final exam — with a 96. Within minutes, my temporary California Boater Card arrived via email, with the



permanent card on its way via snail mail.

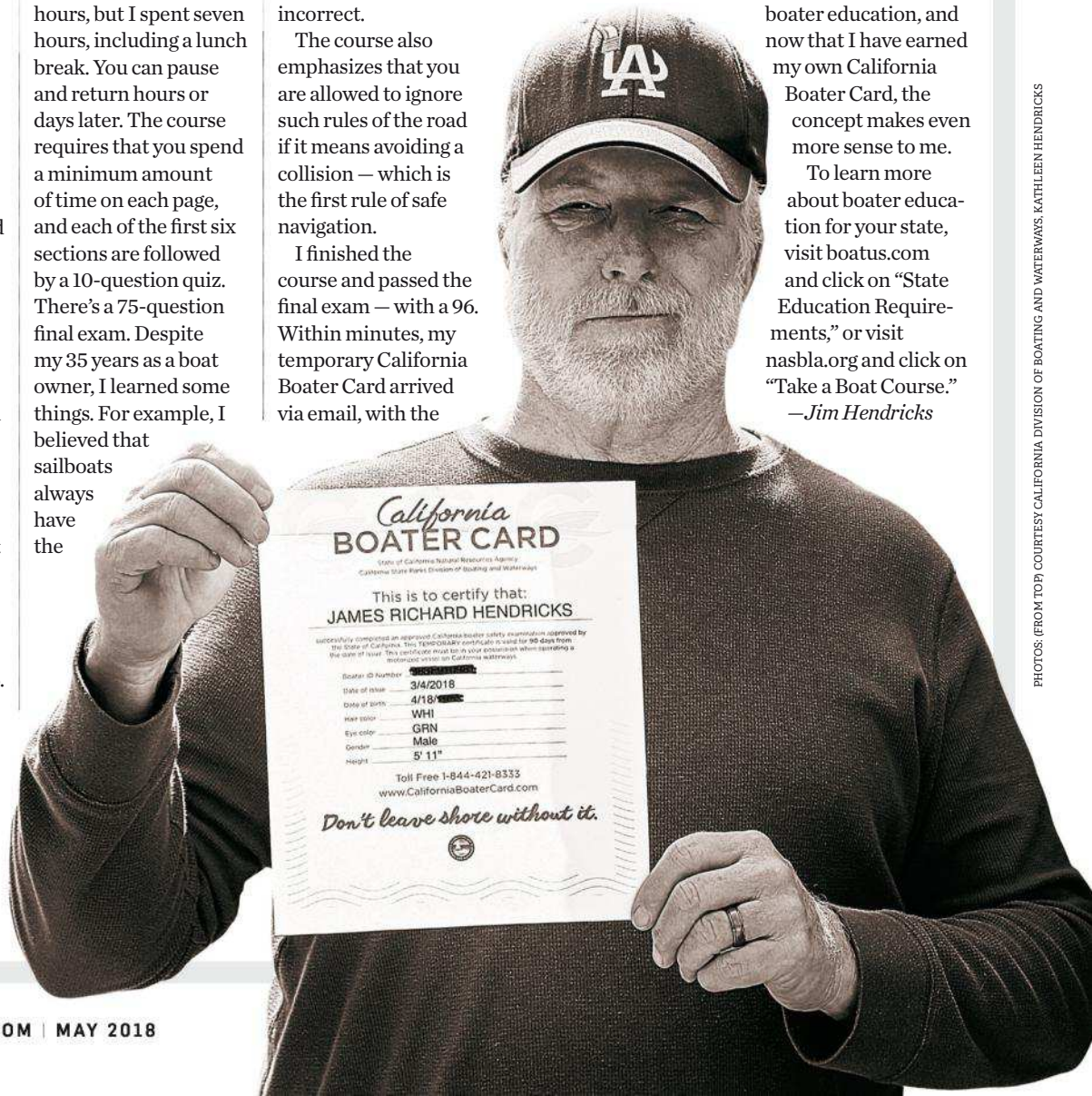
While the course and test proved not very difficult for this boating veteran, it was tough enough that I believe some boaters may find it challenging to achieve the score of 80 required to pass. Those who don’t pass can take

the final exam as many times as necessary in order to pass. Some courses might also require that you review the material again before each exam.

A rigorous curriculum is a good thing, I believe. Knowledge translates to safety. I’ve long advocated for mandatory boater education, and now that I have earned my own California Boater Card, the concept makes even more sense to me.

To learn more about boater education for your state, visit boat.us.com and click on “State Education Requirements,” or visit nasbla.org and click on “Take a Boat Course.”

—Jim Hendricks



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF BOATING AND WATERWAYS; KATHLEEN HENDRICKS

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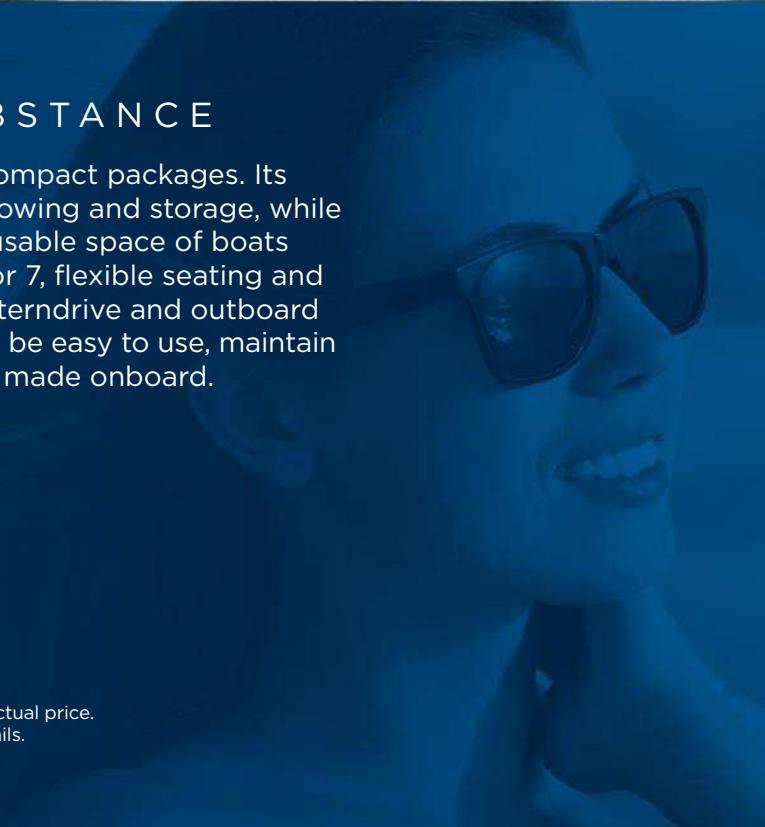
NIMBLE STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

The new VR4 proves big things do come in compact packages. Its overall length of 18 feet makes for effortless towing and storage, while clever design gives this sporty bowrider the usable space of boats up to two feet longer. The VR4 offers room for 7, flexible seating and storage throughout, and is available in both sterndrive and outboard power. And like every Bayliner, it's designed to be easy to use, maintain and afford—and last as long as the memories made onboard.

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BL

BOATINGLAB

By Randy Vance

SAFETY GEAR

With National Safe Boating week occurring this month, we decided to focus all of BoatingLAB's resources on this category of essential gear.

To survive a boating accident, you need to mentally rehearse your responses to as many possible risks as you can imagine. The most important safety equipment on board is your brain. But here are three of the most important safety devices you should carry.

ELECTRONIC FLARES

Pyrotechnic flares were once the only rescue flares approved by the U.S. Coast Guard. Not anymore. Recognizing the inherent risk of burning flares, particularly on small, crowded inflatable rafts, and noting the short burn time, the Coast Guard wisely adopted standards for approved electronic flares. Some have shelf lives of decades, not months, and provide an important cost savings and an extra margin of safety over burning flares. But so far, only one

LED flare meets Coast Guard standards for rescue equipment.

The Coasties require these flares to be visible for 7 miles. We wanted to see how they compared to each other and set up a special test by setting reflective targets at intervals on a 210-yard golf fairway and noting the distance at which we saw the rescue lights' illumination reflected in the targets. These were our top contenders.

WEEMS AND PLATH

SOS DISTRESS LIGHT NO. C-1001

This patented floating device activates with a twist of its Fresnel lens, emitting an SOS signal reportedly visible as far as 10 nautical miles. It satisfies Coast Guard signal carriage requirements, but only for recreational boats and only when accompanied with a day-signal orange flag — which is included in each package. The latter eliminates the need to carry flammable, toxic chemical-fire or smoke flares.

SUMMARY: This signal was simple to activate and required no additional assistance once activated. It is waterproof, floats and comes with a lanyard. The light was far brighter than we

expected from a single LED. Spare batteries in the ditch bag add life, and in our examination, it appeared durable enough to stand up to bangs and knocks during storage and deployment.

COAST GUARD APPROVED: Yes

SOLAS APPROVED: No

SHELF LIFE: Unlimited with periodic battery changes

BURN-TIME SPECS: 60 hours

VISIBILITY: 10 nautical miles

POWERED BY: Three C-cells

BATTERY REPLACEMENT COST: \$6

REFLECTOR RANGE: 210 yards; the farthest reflectors began to show diminishing light but were still surprisingly strong for a single LED.

Can this electronic light eliminate pyrotechnic flares?

OCEAN SIGNAL

RESCUEME EDF1

The EDF1 operates in several light modes, ranging from economy to high to ultra. It emits a red emergency strobe light in a 360-degree hemisphere broadly visible from land, sea and air. When it's fastened to a vest, it also has a beam function that operates the LEDs on only one side. A trigger guard protects the device from accidental activation to protect the batteries. An SOS setting simplifies signaling distress.

SUMMARY: The device is easy to use, the instructions are graphically

printed right on it, and it projects light in a hemispherical orientation to be visible above and at 360 degrees. We liked the automatic SOS function. It doesn't float and can be tethered to a vest but requires attention to keep it visible on the water's surface. Our judgment is it would be a useful addition to a ditch bag, ideal for night distress signaling but unable to meet day-signal carriage requirements of pyro flares.

COAST GUARD APPROVED: No

SOLAS APPROVED: No

SHELF LIFE: Five years (per warranty)

BURN-TIME SPECS: Six hours

WATERPROOF: Yes (10 meters)

VISIBILITY: Up to 7 nautical miles

POWERED BY: Lithium-ion battery

BATTERY REPLACEMENT

COST: \$40

REFLECTOR RANGE: 150 yards

A bright, long-burning life-jacket light.

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PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACONS

At one time, personal locator beacons served only to send a one-way message via satellite to rescue personnel. The wait for rescue is always painful, but more so when you don't know if anybody knows you need it. Today, however, PLBs have improved astronomically because they can also use satellites for other communications, such as texts, family tracking and the

ability to summon non-emergency towing assistance. Some can even receive a message, such as "help is on the way."

We cold-started each device and initiated a test message to see how long it took to link to its satellite constellation and receive the message via Gmail. We assume this process should approximate the time needed to send and receive an SOS.



The ACR
ResQLink+ floats.

ACR

RESQLINK+

The one-way standard for emergency personal locator beacons, it communicates with high-orbit satellites, transmitting the distress signal. General rescue locale is determined mathematically by the satellites and reported directly to rescue operators. Once they're in the vicinity, the PLB is tracked by its locator beacon.

SELF-TEST: Receive an email and/or SMS text message confirming receipt of your beacon self-test using the optional subscription service at 406link.com.

RESCUE NETWORKS:

Cospas-Sarsat, FCC, Canada, R&TTE, Australia, New Zealand

COVERAGE: Worldwide

COOL BECAUSE: The self-test function lets you know the PLB is hooked up and running. A rescue strobe aids night location during rescue. Also, it connects directly to international Cospas-Sarsat rescue authorities.

PROS: It gave the fastest "OK" transmit time in our test and offers free replacement if it saves your bacon. The communications subscription at 406link.com also gives low-battery notifications.

CONS: It's able to send only one preprogrammed message.

BESTS: Communicates with

the oldest, most prestigious emergency rescue response teams from around the entire world

GPS: 66 channels

BUOYANT: Yes

WATERPROOF: 16.4 feet/floats

WEIGHT: 5.4 ounces

BATTERY TYPE: Nonhazardous lithium

BATTERY LIFE: 30 hours

WARRANTY: Five years

RESCUE COMMUNICATIONS:

Cospas-Sarsat
ACTIVATION PROCESS: Register at beaconregistration.noaa.gov/rgdb. Subscribe to communications services at 406link.com.

ACTIVATION COST/YEAR: Cospas-Sarsat, free; 406link.com, from \$40 annually for confirmation emails, SMS and low-battery notice

TIME FOR SATELLITE CONNECTION: One minute
PRICE: \$250; acartex.com

DELORME

INREACH EXPLORER

This device is a handheld three-in-one GPS, PLB and two-way satellite communicator. Save and store waypoints and navigate back to them while tracking progress on a color-coded map. A digital compass, altimeter and accelerometer improve utility. Connect iOS or Android devices loaded with the free DeLorme Earthmate app via Bluetooth and you can download maps, track your progress on the Web, and create and manage routes and navigate to them. The device becomes an operating partner with the InReach.

SELF-TEST: You can send and receive text messages worldwide using the Iridium system. Send 160-character text messages to five established contacts. Link it with the Earthmate app to receive and share your position.

RESCUE NETWORKS: The international GEOS rescue coordination center receives SOS messages 24/7 and arranges local rescue assets.

COVERAGE: Worldwide

COOL BECAUSE: With the InReach service, you can plan trips, routes and messaging online and execute them with the device. Pelagic anglers use the device in partnership with Roffer's sea-temperature service to update custom fishing plans.

PROS: Two-way communications are fun and reassuring.

CONS: The small screen

makes navigation awkward.

BESTS: Most versatile adventure tool

GPS: 32 channels

BUOYANT: No, but a floating sleeve is available.

WATERPROOF: 3.3 feet

WEIGHT: 6.7 ounces

BATTERY TYPE: Lithium

BATTERY LIFE: 100 hours

WARRANTY: One year

RESCUE COMMUNICATIONS:

Iridium satellite network, two-way information

ACTIVATION PROCESS:

Register online, select communications service, and designate contacts

ACTIVATION COST/YEAR: From \$144 (from \$12 monthly)

TIME FOR SATELLITE CONNECTION: Eight minutes (one minute for a reply)

PRICE: \$380; inreachdelorme.com



The DeLorme

InReach Explorer is a three-in-one device.



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SCARAB

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LIFE JACKETS

The numbers are sobering. According to the 2016 Recreational Boating Statistics published by the U.S. Coast Guard, 80 percent of boating deaths are due to drowning, 83 percent of victims were not wearing a life jacket, and two-thirds of drowning victims are good swimmers. While boating deaths have been trending downward, 701 people still died as a result of

boating accidents during 2016. Choosing to wear a life jacket is the best way ensure fewer boating deaths.

But which life jacket should you choose? There are an astounding array of styles and types of life jackets to choose from. To help you make the best selection, we've tested these two highly wearable examples for your consideration.

BASS PRO SHOPS

A/24 IN-SIGHT

You wear an inflatable life jacket because it's like not wearing one, and you want them to look good too. This one is styled up with contrasting colors, plus reflective patches that can be illuminated hundreds of yards from a light source. The neoprene collar adds comfort in the places it inevitably contacts the neck and face. A handy D-ring makes a good place to attach accessories and tools.

PROS: We like its look, feel, and the proven reliability of its trigger system. At 22.5 pounds of flotation, that's almost 50 percent more buoyancy than a standard Type III life jacket.

CONS: The dissolving bobbin trigger takes three to five seconds to inflate the vest — hence, they are only recommended for swimmers.

BUOYANCY: 22.5 pounds

TRIGGER: Dissolving bobbin

CHEST SIZE: Fits 30 to 52 inches

CLOSURE: Hook-and-loop tape (not speaking of the buckle)

REARM: Annually or after use

COST: \$139.99

TEST RESULTS: In most of our tests, the crash-test dummy went straight down to the

bottom, but in this trial, he fell sideways into the water, floundering at the surface. The inflatable bobbin trigger activated just as rapidly as it did in competitors and stabilized the victim.

REARMING: The Velcro collar closures are easier to manage than zippers and were reliable in our testing. Choosing between them is a matter of preference.

CONCLUSIONS: Marketed for inland boaters, it still boasts over 20 pounds of buoyancy, more than standard offshore life jackets.

BEST FOR: Because of its smaller bladder size, it is recommended for inland and inshore boating, where rescue is apt to be faster and seas calmer.

The A/24 In-Sight

offers comfort and high buoyancy.



Mustang's Elite

38 MD5283 is fast-inflating and reliable.

MUSTANG SURVIVAL

ELITE 38 MODEL MD5283

Mustang Survival is the brand many commercial mariners have relied on since 1967. That the jackets are pricier is immediately apparent and supported in style and design. Foremost, the hydrostatic trigger inflates the air bladder the moment it sinks 4 inches below the water, which is when hydrostatic pressure triggers it. Finely woven nylon fabric is tough, the cut minimizes chafing around the face and neck, and rubber reinforcement protects the most exposed areas. The back is wide and soft for support and comfort and ventilated for warm-weather wear.

PROS: Hydrostatic inflators are the fastest inflators and can't be triggered by rain or spray. The provided 38 pounds of buoyancy is enough to right an unconscious person and hold their face out of the water in the roughest conditions.

CONS: The trigger system is heavier and bulkier and costs \$100 or more than lighter-weight but slower-dissolving bobbin-triggered devices.

BUOYANCY: 38 pounds

CHEST SIZE: Fits 30 to 52 inches

TRIGGER: Hydrostatic

CLOSURE: Nylon zipper

REARM: Annually

COST: \$260

TEST RESULTS: The hydrostatic trigger

activated almost immediately after being dunked and surfaced in our test.

REARMING: The CO2 cartridge and trigger are fixed together, and the cartridge fits inside the air bladder. The process is tricky; once accomplished, it's easily repeated.

CONCLUSIONS: Hydrostatic triggers won't deploy because of dampness caused by rain and don't rely on a dissolving bobbin.

BEST FOR: These are the most expensive devices, and the rearming kits include a new hydrostatic sensor, so we recommend them for serious offshore boaters or professionals who are accustomed to detailed maintenance of all their gear.

FISH & CRUISE



236CC DECK BOAT
POWERED BY YAMAHA



FISH & CRUISE While the 236CC was designed for use as a coastal fishing boat, it's really a multi-purpose boat that can be used for lots of activities — pulling kids on a tube, cruising to dinner, or just a leisurely ride along the waterways.

With seating for up to twelve passengers, rod holders and storage throughout, and a changing compartment that can be upgraded with an optional porta potti, the 236CC is ready for a full day of fun on the water with family and friends!

236CC Deck Boat 23' 8" | 101" beam | 3648 lbs (w/ popular engine) | 68 gal fuel capacity | 12 ppl, 3250 lbs

VISIT STINGRAYBOATS.COM/236CC FOR MORE INFORMATION



SETTING THE STANDARD FOR OFFSHORE PERFORMANCE





**BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST**

#3069

BELZONA 40CC

This mega center console really does offer something for everybody.



M

Mega center consoles are no longer new, but the new Belzona 40CC is certainly unique in this increasingly popular class of boats. For one, it's not merely a fishing boat. It's designed to be a dive boat, an entertainment platform, an offshore fishing vessel, and a boat that can make an easy run over to the Bahamas. Its unique feature is the sliding cockpit door to starboard that has become the builder's signature calling card. No other manufacturer builds anything like it, a fiberglass component that slides aft on a stainless-steel trolley system mounted on a self-lubricating track. It's so much more than a dive door. In fact, it's wide enough to accommodate

PHOTO: FOREST JOHNSON



SCAN ME

To view more photos and additional information for the Belzona 40CC, go to boatingmag.com/3069. To view an accommodation plan for this boat, scan this tag!



PHOTOS: COURTESY BELZONA MARINE

wheelchair entry from a dock. But there's more to this boat to consider, starting with its performance.

While the 40CC can be rigged with quadruple outboards, our test boat came equipped with triple Mercury 350 Verados, which did an exemplary job of getting this 16,900-pound boat off and running. When I pushed down the throttles, the 40CC smoothly climbed onto plane with no appreciable bow rise obstructing the view from the helm — aided in part by the aft keel pad that helps

generate lift. The deep-V hull tapers to 22 degrees of deadrise at the transom. Visibility from the helm station, raised 13 inches above the aft cockpit, is excellent at all times through the forward-raked windshield that protects the crew from the elements. With the engines revving between 4,500 and 5,000 rpm, the boat hit its sweet spot, settling into a mid-30s cruising speed that felt smooth and dialed in, tracking straight and true in a tight chop and steady crosswind. We hit 53 mph at wide-open throttle,

never once feeling the 1-foot bay chop we blasted through while underway. Adding the fourth outboard should boost top-end speed by about 5 mph. Turning and handling felt surprisingly responsive for a 40-foot boat. And back at the marina, the joystick control made docking a nonevent.

The 40CC's deck layout is also different than what is typical of the genre. As mentioned, the helm station is elevated from the main cockpit, accessed via walk-throughs to each side. Rather than the stadium-seating arrangement — forward-facing rows of seats — found on competitors such as the Boston Whaler 420 Outrage (\$803,882 with quadruple 300 Verados), the Belzona features a single pedestal-mounted captain's chair in front of the wheel with an L-shaped lounge behind it. Belzona says the design

During the build process, the 40CC is pre-cut to fit a Seakeeper 3 gyrostabilizer upon request, so the boat doesn't have to be altered to add this popular option.

encourages more socialization. The captain's chair rotates so the driver can join the conversation when the boat is at rest. Mount the table there to create a dinette. The steering wheel on our test boat was offset to port, but during the build process it can be shifted to center at the owner's request. A second pedestal chair can be added, and many of the features can be customized to the owner's liking. Belzona will also be adding a lockable glove box in future production, as well as a much-needed passenger grab rail at the helm.

The aft cockpit features flip-down jump seats and a transom bench, as well as a portside walk-through to the extended platform behind the transom. Our test model featured a barbecue on the entertainment center of what would be called the leaning-post station on a typical center console. Belzona will also customize this real estate to suit the owner's needs. A sturdy hardtop covers the helm area, and an electric SureShade extends over the cockpit at the push of a button. Fishy types can add a tower to the hardtop. Our tester's hardtop featured four rear-facing



Bazooka speakers. The hardtop piping also has seven built-in overhead rod holders. Just be sure to remove any rods before you try to deploy the SureShade.

Creature comforts? Coaming bolsters wrap the inwales from stem to stern, and the SeaDek flooring underfoot cushions your feet while providing traction. Perhaps no spot exudes comfort more than the bow area, which resembles that of a European cruiser. It features wraparound seating with a recessed grab rail and strategically placed cup holders and stereo speakers. The area just forward of the helm, elevated to accommodate the cabin below, sports twin sun loungers with adjustable backrests. The front of that area features a forward-facing love seat with adjustable armrests.

The cabin is bright and spacious, with 6 feet 7 inches of headroom. It features a dinette that can be converted to a V-berth for overnighting. The head to port is well-appointed and features a separate shower. The galley on our test model was small, featuring a microwave and refrigerator just below the ship's systems, but Belzona can install a larger galley at the owner's request. Belzona is owned and built by avid boaters who understand that different people like to use and equip their boats a certain way. With the new 40CC, the ways to use and enjoy it are many.

—Pete McDonald

High Points

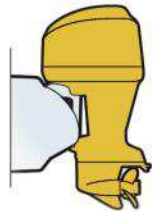
- ▶ Antennas and navigation lights on the hardtop lower with the push of a button for bridge transit.
- ▶ Visibility from the elevated helm is excellent through the wide forward-raked windshield.
- ▶ Sliding dive door to the starboard-side of the cockpit is a Belzona staple.

Low Points

- ▶ Extended engine-mounting platform behind the transom makes it hard to swing big fish around the outboards.
- ▶ Needs an additional grab handle at the helm for passengers, which Belzona says it is adding onto production models.

• LOA: 39'6" • BEAM: 12'0" • DRAFT: 2'8"
 • DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.): 16,900 lb.
 • DEADRISE: 22 degrees • BRIDGE CLEARANCE: 11'0"
 • MAX HEADROOM: 6'7" • FUEL CAPACITY: 500 gal. • WATER CAPACITY: 60 gal. • MAX HORSEPOWER: 1,400 • AVAILABLE POWER: Mercury outboards

Price: \$745,681 (as tested)



AVAILABLE POWER: OUTBOARD

HOW WE TESTED:

ENGINES: TRIPLE MERCURY 350 VERADO OUTBOARDS **PROPS:** REVOLUTION 4 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ " X 17" 4-BLADE STAINLESS STEEL **GEAR RATIO:** 1.75:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 250 GAL. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 LB.

BELZONA MARINE
 Miami Lakes, Florida; 305-512-3200;
 belzonamarine.com



**BOATING
 CERTIFIED
 TEST
 RESULTS**

SPEED				EFFICIENCY				OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	5.21	6.00	2.80	1.86	2.14	838	964	2	66
1500	7.04	8.10	4.40	1.60	1.84	720	828	2	67
2000	8.78	10.10	6.00	1.46	1.68	658	758	5	70
2500	10.08	11.60	9.80	1.03	1.18	463	533	3	76
3000	13.38	15.40	22.00	0.61	0.70	274	315	2	78
3500	17.29	19.90	27.00	0.64	0.74	288	332	2	79
4000	23.46	27.00	32.00	0.73	0.84	330	380	2	79
4500	28.24	32.50	39.00	0.72	0.83	326	375	2	80
5000	33.98	39.10	51.50	0.66	0.76	297	342	2	84
5500	38.50	44.30	63.00	0.61	0.70	275	316	2	87
6000	43.28	49.80	90.00	0.48	0.55	216	249	2	90
6400	46.06	53.00	93.00	0.50	0.57	223	256	0	92

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY BELZONA MARINE

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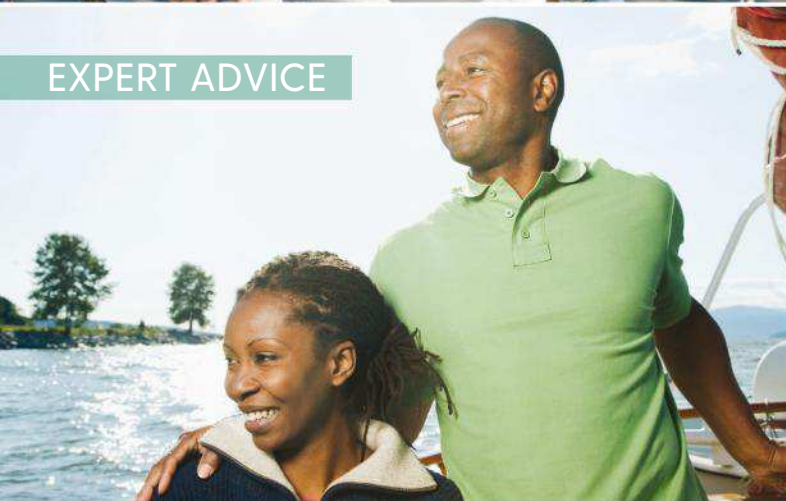
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SCAN ME

To view our online photo gallery of the Rinker Q7 OB, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3070.



W

With its agile hull, clean modern lines, and open, inviting floor plan, Rinker's Q7 OB will likely be a hit not just underway but also at the sandbar. Still, that darn blender will probably overshadow all at first glance. Say what? The blender, a magnificent stainless-steel Waring, pivots out of its hiding space within the cockpit refreshment center's countertop, already solidly mounted to the hatch that conceals it, permanently wired and ready to mix up the boat drinks. That it's not an option on the Q7 but rather a standard feature speaks volumes about the Rinker brand and its designers. Yes, they're not afraid of a gimmick to catch your attention, but they also truly understand how the target audience uses

PHOTO: BILL DOSTER



C
**BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST**

#3070

RINKER Q7 OB

Speedy, seaworthy and, dare we say, sexy, this new Rinker delivers much to recommend it.



its boats. Probably because they use them a lot themselves.

That practical knowledge and attention to detail is revealed throughout. Check out the interior. Forward, the bow cockpit invites a crew to socialize, or just a pair to stretch out against the gently sloping seat backs, but it's the depth that immediately caught my attention. Even at its lowest point, there's still well over 3 feet of interior wall enveloping passengers. That depth sinks bow occupants below the captain's sightline to maintain a safer view. It also offers

security for crew (and peace of mind for parents), especially in the open, rougher waters this boat can readily call home.

Step through the walk-through windshield into the main cockpit and the same secure feeling continues. Captain and mate get twin bucket seats, each with enveloping support and a flip-up bolster. Aft, a 5-foot-2-inch-by-4-foot L-shaped bench awaits to starboard; to port, a 4-foot-10-inch couch completes the social accommodations. Like the bow seating, each features a streamlined

profile, with supportive padding, minimalist accent striping, and a carved-out inwale for storage and the requisite cup holders. Stainless-steel grab handles are located above all seat backs so that no passenger is left wanting for a handhold. Behind the helm, the aforementioned refreshment center includes a sink, stainless-steel faucet, and plenty of solid-surface counter space. Add the side-mounted pedestal table and the optional electric fridge featured on our test boat, and the drinks and hors d'oeuvres are ready to take center stage.

At anchor or nosed into the sandbar, that cockpit crowd will likely spill onto the aft platform. Here, Rinker designers mixed form and function with a unique take on an outboard's seating and swim platform. Recognizing that passengers would most likely trod over a cushioned rumble seat, they maintained the padded seat back but replaced the bottom with an extra-thick layer

The Q Series running surface is based off the former Rinker Captiva 232, the best-selling model in the company's 75-year history.

of EVA traction material, finished with a soft, brushed texture. With the padded backrest, it makes a suitable perch when coving or gearing up for watersports but also offers a smart way to navigate around the outboard motor when boarding or disembarking from the stern. Dual swim platforms flank the bracket-mounted motor and provide a spot for skiers and boarders to gear up or swimmers to come aboard via the three-step stainless-steel ladder.

Dig deeper into the boat and the not-so-obvious details continue to impress. Rather than the typical open cavern, the space below the helm is cleanly finished with composite lumber and features dedicated storage for both the 25-quart Igloo cooler and cockpit table, as well as a shelf and deep cylindrical trash can, which can be mounted to brackets on the door's interior. The 3-foot-10-inch-by-2-foot-2-inch-by-2-foot-10-inch head compartment within the port console features a fiberglass liner, for both showroom appeal and low maintenance, a fiddled shelf and standard port-a-potty. The stowage space below most cockpit cushions is cleanly finished with low-maintenance



roto-molded tubs. The clean dash swaps out multiple gauges for a single Simrad GO7 touchscreen display; lighted rocker switches with resettable breakers are arrayed below. To the left of the Gussi wheel resides the Kicker KMC10 head unit with Bluetooth capability; to the right is a padded vertical mount to secure your phone.

Our test boat was powered by a Mercury 300 Verado Pro, a powerful, quiet motor mounted off the transom on a custom bracket. It pushed the boat onto plane in 4.8 seconds with surprisingly minimal bow rise, and passed the 30 mph benchmark in 8.3 seconds. Top speed peaked at 53.9 mph. Economy? Most efficient cruise occurred at 22 mph, where the engine burned 8.5 gph. The hull handled our test day's light chop with confidence and banked smoothly into turns, holding its line without hiccup.

Overall, it's a design both similar to yet different than Sea Ray's nearly identically sized SDX 270 OB (\$104,593 with Mercury 300 XL Verado Pro outboard). Both craft feature similar profiles and interior layouts. Sea Ray squares off the bow to enhance interior room in the forward cockpit, opts for doublewide helm and passenger seats with flip-over backrests, and sacrifices space in the main cockpit in favor of an aft sun pad and full-width swim platform. The head compartment includes a sink, pullout sprayer and opening portlight, but Rinker's standards list includes the Simrad display, Bimini top, and the wet bar with sink and faucet. And yes, one very cool blender that will make you a hit at the sandbar.

—Jeff Hemmel

High Points

- ▶ Standout details include a full-length padded armrest for your throttle elbow and forearm, molded-in inwale stowage for dock lines along the transom walk-through, gel-coat hull colors rather than stick-on graphics, and seemingly endless cup holders.
- ▶ Generous in-floor ski locker has room for a variety of tow toys; the hatch is finished off with a rubber seal to eliminate rattles underway.
- ▶ Optional watersports tower adds a stylish accent as well as a solid 7-foot attachment point for towing duties.

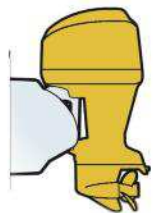
Low Points

- ▶ Portside head compartment door has a small vent but could benefit from a screened portlight, for both additional ventilation and welcome natural light.
- ▶ Pet peeve? Many boaters prefer to run with the walk-through windshield open for ventilation. We would prefer to see a strap or catch to keep it secured in place.

- LOA: 27'2" • BEAM: 8'6" • DRAFT (MAX): 2'6"
- DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.): 4,950 lb.
- TRANSDOM DEADRISE: 20 degrees • BRIDGE CLEARANCE: 5'3" • FUEL CAPACITY: 73 gal.
- MAX HORSEPOWER: 350 • AVAILABLE POWER: Mercury, Yamaha or Suzuki outboards to 350 hp

Price: \$88,612 (with test power)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Mercury 300 Verado **PROP:** Merc EnerTia 14.2" x 18" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 50 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 11 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 360 lb.

RINKER BOATS
Syracuse, Indiana; 574-457-5731; rinkerboats.com



**BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS**

	SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION		
	rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level	
1000	4.34	5.00	1.10	3.95	4.55	260	299	0	56	
1500	5.65	6.50	1.80	3.14	3.61	206	237	1	63	
2000	6.60	7.60	3.00	2.20	2.53	145	166	3	63	
2500	9.12	10.50	4.80	1.90	2.19	125	144	4	67	
3000	13.90	16.00	6.80	2.04	2.35	134	155	5	76	
3500	19.12	22.00	8.50	2.25	2.59	148	170	4	79	
4000	21.72	25.00	10.40	2.09	2.40	137	158	3	79	
4500	27.63	31.80	12.80	2.16	2.48	142	163	2	81	
5000	34.67	39.90	16.50	2.10	2.42	138	159	2	82	
5500	39.89	45.90	20.60	1.94	2.23	127	146	2	84	
6000	44.49	51.20	25.50	1.74	2.01	115	132	2	86	
6420	46.84	53.90	29.50	1.59	1.83	104	120	2	87	

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ANDROS Offshore 32

Bred from stable, modestly powered working craft, designer Michael Peters helped refine Andros into performance outboard fishing machines and developed the Offshore 32. Built for 700 hp and to lope over the roughest seas, the Offshore 32 delivers hardcore fishability, durability and comfort.

It boasts a 24-degree transom deadrise to cleave seas. Though our tests were conducted inshore, the chop

bow flare to throw back seas and a cockpit deep enough to be safe without handicapping the mate's ability to bill a fish and unhook it.

Tackle stowage is plentiful in the rigging station behind the leaning post. A rigging table folds down for convenience and reveals compartments for terminal tackle as well. Livewells in the transom, plus one huge tank in the belly, mean anglers can carry all the tournament-winning ammo they need. Underneath, a carry-on cooler slides

the console and gunwale remains wide and the footing clear, since the hardtop and upper-station supports are fitted to steps on the center console. The optional upper station folded down nicely for trailering purposes.

A raw-water fitting portside amidships made washing the deck easy, and a rack under the gunwale stowed the hose.

On the platform, a walkway between port and starboard landing pads gave good footing for catching a dock line or lashing one to the stern cleats.

The Offshore 32 is the flagship of the Andros line, designed to perform in high seas and fish hard. —Randy Vance

that day was capable of shaking lesser boats to the stringers, and our tester did not rattle or wallow as we created doubled-up wakes, circling back over our own wake, then crashing back through them. We could tell only the direst small-craft warnings would keep the Andros Offshore 32 from reaching the tournament fishing grounds. The boat features plenty of

out of the way on rollers.

It's a three-piece hull with deck, hull and sole. The stringer grid below that is bonded to the hull and sole. Some stowage compartments had fiberglass liners, gelcoated for easy care. The deck is all one level with no step, something a hooked-up angler will appreciate when chasing a fish from bow to stern. The walkway between

High Points

- ▶ Optional upper station offers ample space for two people.
- ▶ Power options include all outboard manufacturers.

Low Points

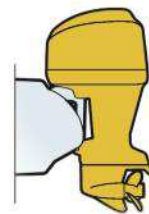
- ▶ Leaning post lacks armrests.
- ▶ Fixed-height leaning-post seats offer an ideal standing position but were high for seated driving. That was mitigated by the console footrest placed higher as well.

Toughest Competitor

- ▶ Bluewater Sportishing Boats skips from 28 feet to the 355e, but its 2850 boasts an engine bracket to provide the running characteristics of a longer, bustling transom hull. The 2850 is sleek and its 24-degree deadrise slashes through seas for competitive fishing. An upper station is available. The base price with twin Suzuki 300 hp engines is \$161,724.

- LOA: 32'9" • BEAM: 9'10" • DRAFT: 1'7"
- DISPLACEMENT: 9,500 lb. (dry without power)
- TRANSDOM DEADRISE: 24 degrees • BRIDGE CLEARANCE: 9'6" (without upper station) • MAX HEADROOM: N/A • FUEL CAPACITY: 300 gal.
- MAX HORSEPOWER: 700 • AVAILABLE POWER: Dual outboards from Evinrude, Honda, Mercury, Suzuki or Yamaha

Price: \$265,870
(as tested with electronics)



AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Dual Evinrude 300 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Mercury Enerertia 14 1/2" x 17" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 150 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 400 lb.

ANDROS BOATWORKS
Sarasota, Florida; 941-351-9702; androsboats.com

To view our photo gallery of the Andros Offshore 32, visit boatingmag.com/3071.

MORE ONLINE



**BOATING
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TEST
RESULTS**

SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION		
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	5.1	5.9	1.4	3.6	4.2	980.4	1128.2	1.0	75
1500	6.6	7.6	2.8	2.4	2.7	636.8	732.9	2.0	81
2000	7.7	8.9	6.0	1.3	1.5	348.0	400.5	3.0	85
2500	9.6	11.1	10.8	0.9	1.0	240.1	276.3	5.0	89
3000	12.4	14.3	12.6	1.0	1.1	266.3	306.4	6.0	89
3500	19.3	22.3	15.0	1.3	1.5	348.0	400.5	6.0	93
4000	28.1	32.3	18.4	1.5	1.8	411.9	474.0	4.0	93
4500	33.0	38.0	22.2	1.5	1.7	401.1	461.6	2.0	92
5000	37.6	43.3	28.6	1.3	1.5	355.2	408.8	2.0	90
5500	42.1	48.5	35.4	1.2	1.4	321.1	369.5	2.0	94
5850	43.8	50.5	48.6	0.9	1.0	243.6	280.3	2.0	98

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY ANDROS BOATWORKS

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SCARAB 255 Open ID

The center console format is associated with fishing, and by adding the Fish Package (\$2,000), the new Scarab 255 Open ID will readily fish. But my test boat did not have the rod holders, baitwell and other gear included in that option. It played into the trend of center console as sport boat. Either way, the 255 Open ID offers wide-open, carefree fun for all.

Because it's jet-powered, this boat can offer a low-

wakeboard, or just diving in. Soft MarineMat decking for the platform and tailgate surface is a \$333 option.

Covered by the standard T-top, the helm on our test boat featured the optional 11-inch-by-4.5-inch touchscreen display (\$3,667) that combines instrumentation with controls for the audio and lights, plus speed-control functions that are an additional \$880 option. There are a pair of clear-plastic phone holders on the dash, and five USB ports that can be used to keep

close to the console for me. The front of the console opens and can be fitted with a portable head. Bottom cushions for the wraparound bow seating can all be removed, and two of those backrests can be placed here for forward-facing support. There's dedicated stowage below the seats for two 36-quart coolers (\$233).

Our top engine option (\$10,000 upcharge) put a pair of supercharged 250 hp Rotax jet drives below the hatch, delivering instant acceleration and thrilling top speed. Alas, with jets there is no trim to adjust to conditions, but the ride on a choppy lake was dry. —Charles Plueddemann

profile aft deck with snap-off pads and four removable backrests that can be configured to face fore or aft. The hinged transom flips down like a tailgate and, in its horizontal position, creates an aft platform that's about 3 feet 7 inches deep and 3 feet 2 inches wide with unimpeded access to the water — perfect for setting up dive gear, pulling a

all devices charged. The T-top and seat-base tubing are finished in wrinkle-black paint, and there's a ski-line tow point on the center of the T-top, accessible by unzipping an opening in the canvas shade. The center section of the elevated helm seat drops down to allow the captain to stand at the wheel, but the outboard sections are fixed, and the seat felt too

High Points

- ▶ Jet power means no props to ding, no trim to master, and self-draining and closed-cooling for minimal maintenance and late-season convenience.
- ▶ Tailgate transom provides wide-open access to the water.
- ▶ Drive-by-wire automatically synchronizes throttles.

Low Points

- ▶ Jet power means no trim to adjust the running angle for sea conditions and a high-rpm engine tone that's harsher than that of a sterndrive or outboard.
- ▶ Helm seat may be too close to the console for some skippers.
- ▶ Snap-on seat cushions must be unsnapped to reach bow stowage.

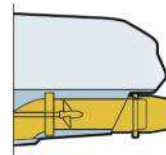
Toughest Competitor

- ▶ The 21-foot-3-inch Yamaha 210 FSH (\$39,499 to \$44,499) is the only alternative center console with jet propulsion. With just a single 260 hp drive, it has a top speed of about 44 mph. The Sport version has a standard T-top, a changing canopy built into the console, the Connex touchscreen display, and a nice combination of fishing and family features but with less room than is offered in the larger Scarab.

• LOA: 25'0" • BEAM: 8'4" • DRAFT (MAX): 1'3"
• DISPLACEMENT: 3,800 lb. • TRANSOM DEADRISE: 20 degrees
• BRIDGE CLEARANCE: 6'7" • FUEL CAPACITY: 56 gal. • MAX HORSEPOWER: 500
• AVAILABLE POWER: Twin Rotax water jets to 500 hp

Price: \$71,250
(base with test power and trailer)

AVAILABLE POWER:
JET DRIVE



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Twin 250 hp 1.5L Rotax 4-Tec ECT
DRIVE/PROP: Rotax jet drives with 155 mm stainless-steel impellers **GEAR RATIO:** 1:00:1
FUEL LOAD: 56 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 lb.

SCARAB JET BOATS
Cadillac, Michigan; 231-775-1351; scarabjetboat.com

For a photo gallery of the Scarab 255 Open ID, visit boatingmag.com/3072.

MORE ONLINE



**BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS**

rpm	SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION	
	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
4000	7.82	9.00	4.80	1.63	1.88	82	95	6	85
4500	10.43	12.00	6.60	1.58	1.82	80	92	6	85
5000	17.38	20.00	8.60	2.02	2.33	102	117	3	88
5500	26.07	30.00	10.60	2.46	2.83	124	143	3	89
6000	30.41	35.00	13.00	2.34	2.69	118	136	3	92
6500	34.00	40.00	17.40	2.00	2.30	101	116	3	93
7000	38.23	44.00	21.60	1.77	2.04	89	103	3	96
7500	43.45	50.00	28.00	1.55	1.79	78	90	3	97
8050	47.79	55.00	35.00	1.37	1.57	69	79	3	99

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED



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PHOTO COURTESY OF SEAN O'BRIEN



CENTURION Ri257

WE SAY First launched in October 2016, the Ri257 was designed to create some of the biggest wakeboarding wakes and wakesurfing waves on the market. For 2018, though, this big boy has gotten even better thanks to the introduction of Centurion's new Opti-V hull. Simply put, the wakes and waves aren't just the best Centurion has ever created, they are among the best available. What's more, by reducing resistance on the running surface, the new hull stays more balanced and improves fuel economy. Better for wakes and your wallet? We'll take it.

Combine the new hull with the optional QuickSurf Pro system and you can fine-tune the shape of the wave or wake to suit a variety of riders' preferences. Our test rider, Sam Baker, almost couldn't believe how big and fun the wave was. Baker surfed at 11.6 mph with

the Ramfill ballast system 100 percent full and extra plug-and-play ballast at 90. The wave has more than enough push for riders of any size or skill level, with a huge pocket that is easy to find and even easier to stay in.

Worried that getting such a big boat with all that extra weight on plane will be an issue? Don't be. Thanks to the QuickLaunch system, the Ri257 gets on plane easily and with little bow rise, due to full deployment of both the QuickSurf blades and the Asymmetric Wing. With the ballast systems full, the time to plane is just under 6 seconds.

—Garrett Cortese

WHO'D WANT ONE

Watersports enthusiasts who want to fit all their

family and friends while enjoying the ride on premier wakes and waves.

ANOTHER CHOICE The Malibu 25 LSV isn't as long but is rated to hold 19.

BOTTOM LINE \$179,907 (as tested); centurionboats.com

• LOA: 25'7" • BEAM: 8'6" • DRAFT: 3'0" • DISPLACEMENT: 6,150 lb. • FUEL CAPACITY: 92 gal.

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: SINGLE 450 HP PCM H6DI **PROP:** 16" X 15" ACME 4-BLADE **GEAR RATIO:** 1.72:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 92 GAL. **CREW WEIGHT:** 550 LB.

rpm	SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level	
1000	4.61	5.30	1.30	3.54	4.08	293	338	0	76	
1500	6.26	7.20	1.80	3.48	4.00	288	331	1	79	
2000	7.99	9.20	3.00	2.66	3.07	221	254	2	81	
2500	9.30	10.70	4.30	2.16	2.49	179	206	4	82	
3000	12.43	14.30	6.00	2.07	2.38	171	197	7	88	
3500	17.47	20.10	7.40	2.36	2.72	195	225	7	87	
4000	20.94	24.10	9.40	2.23	2.56	184	212	8	91	
4500	24.42	28.10	12.10	2.02	2.32	167	192	6	92	
5000	27.11	31.20	14.10	1.92	2.21	159	183	6	96	
5600	29.81	34.30	20.10	1.48	1.71	123	141	5	96	

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: ZACH STOVALL

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SUNCHASER

Geneva 22 LR DH Sport

WE SAY This single-engine 22-foot-length-overall pontoon proved powerful and smooth and offered a lot of amenities at a middle-of-the-road price point. The boat we ran for testing boasted the performance-enhancing X-Treme PR25 Performance Package and a 200 hp Evinrude E-Tec G2 outboard. So equipped, it delivered 42 lively miles per hour and accelerated from zero to 30 mph in 6.8 seconds. Go easy when pulling up novice skiers. As for fuel economy, it delivered 3.7 mpg cruising at 26 mph.

The Geneva's interior layout swallows a large crew. In the bow, curved facing loungers invite relaxation and conversation. A pop-up changing station fits neatly into the rear bulkhead of the portside lounger. Amidships, the helm station is raised for better visibility. A standard Kicker audio system provides

the soundtrack. Captain and co-pilot chairs are plush, high-backed and reclining. Astern, the seating arrangement mimics the bow setup with facing curved loungers separated by a transom access door. At the stern, there's a short swim platform with a watersports tow and aluminum boarding ladder, and a set of speakers for those in the water. Underneath the seat cushions and behind the access doors, assembly and rigging quality met with our approval. Wiring and fuel-line runs proved easy to follow, and access to the batteries is good.

—Boating Tech Team

WHO'D WANT ONE

Boaters seeking to haul a crowd and not break the bank.



ANOTHER CHOICE Bennington's 21 SLX Premium (\$46,219 with a 150 hp Yamaha F150 and the Sport Performance System)

BOTTOM LINE \$49,923 with test power; sunchaserboats.com

• LOA: 22'9" • BEAM: 8'6" • DRAFT: 1'3" • DISPLACEMENT: 2,471 lb. • FUEL CAPACITY: 30 gal.

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: SINGLE 200 HP EVINRUDE E-TEC G2 OUTBOARD
PROP: 15.5" X 15" 3-BLADE STAINLESS STEEL **GEAR RATIO:** 2.17:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 30 GAL. **CREW WEIGHT:** 375 LB.

SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION		
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.2	4.8	0.6	7.0	8.0	187.7	216.0	1	61
1500	5.5	6.3	1.1	5.0	5.7	134.4	154.6	1	64
2000	6.9	7.9	1.8	3.8	4.4	103.0	118.5	2	69
2500	8.2	9.4	2.9	2.8	3.2	76.1	87.5	2	70
3000	14.4	16.6	4.0	3.6	4.2	97.4	112.1	2	72
3500	17.8	20.5	4.9	3.6	4.2	98.2	113.0	2	73
4000	22.7	26.1	7.0	3.2	3.7	87.5	100.7	2	76
4500	26.2	30.2	8.8	3.0	3.4	80.5	92.7	2	79
5000	29.8	34.3	10.6	2.8	3.2	75.9	87.4	2	80
5500	33.8	38.9	12.9	2.6	3.0	70.8	81.4	2	83
5950	36.3	41.8	17.8	2.0	2.3	55.1	63.4	2	83

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: BILL DOSTER

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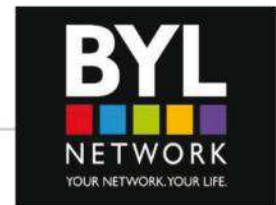
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By Charles
Plueddeman



MERCURY FOURSTROKE 15/20

Are you ready for an ambidextrous tiller?

Here's all we really ask from a kicker outboard: start easy. If you have ever pulled the cord on a manual-start outboard over and over and over in a bobbing boat in the hot sun, you know what we are talking about. Which is why we applaud Mercury for giving its all-new FourStroke 15 and 20 hp outboards electronic fuel injection. Hot or cold, this EFI system, which does not require a battery, will start on the second

pull and often on the first. We can vouch for its startability after a December demo run on a 16-degree Wisconsin afternoon. One pull.

Suzuki has had batteryless EFI on its 15/20 hp kickers since 2012, and Merc has offered fuel injection down to 25 hp. This is not new technology. EFI self-adjusts for changes in temperature and elevation, so response is always crisp. An added bonus: Because the EFI system is sealed and pressurized, it eliminates most fuel-related reliability issues — no

more gunked-up carb after a few weeks of inactivity.

Since the days of inventor Ole Evinrude, we've operated small outboards left-handed because the tiller has been located to port, the intent being to use operator weight to counter prop torque, which wants to twist the boat to port. That made sense when boats were narrow and had round chines. Now more boats are wide and flat, and even inflatable, so why not let us sit over there. In fact, one-third of 2,000 customers interviewed told Merc they'd prefer to tiller right-handed. So, Merc has designed a new ambidextrous

SWING IT Tiller angle adjustment allows operation sitting to either port or starboard.



tiller for these motors that's mounted on center and, after loosening a bolt and a pin, can be adjusted 18 degrees port or starboard (in 6-degree



WHITE ON!

Until recently, Yamaha followed the Henry Ford philosophy on color choices — you could get any color you wanted, as long as it was gray. But Yamaha has finally succumbed, joining other major outboard brands — including Mercury — in offering more than one color. The Yamaha F300 and F350 outboards will be available in pearlescent white, although the gear case is still gray. This color of white thrives in the sunlight and complements all gelcoats, according to Yamaha. The white motors will be available as late-stage customization orders and will be designated as F300NCA2 and F350NCC2. —*Jim Hendricks*

A blue and white Supra boat is shown on a lake at sunset. The boat has "SUPRA" and "SA-450" written on its side. Several people are on board, and a man is standing on the shore to the right. The background features rocky cliffs and a bright sunset sky. The text "LEGACIES ARE BUILT ON PASSION" is overlaid in large white letters.

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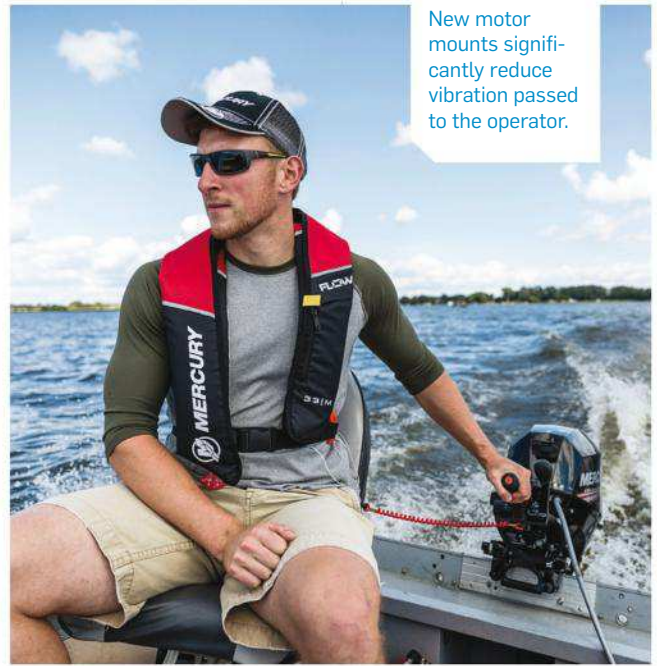
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increments), so it can be operated comfortably from either side of the boat. A thumb screw under the tiller enables vertical adjustment from minus 5 degrees to plus 10 degrees. You can even reverse the throttle-grip rotation. Most people prefer to rotate the throttle down to accelerate, according to Mercury. Combine all of these adjustments and it's possible to set up the tiller for ideal comfort in any boat, for any operator, regardless of arm length and seat position.

Designed by Mercury with its small-motor partner, Tohatsu, an improved intake helps the new 333cc twin-cylinder powerhead produce more torque than the 352cc motor it replaces, according

to Merc, and weight is reduced by a significant 10 pounds to just 99 pounds for the lightest model. The 327cc Suzuki DF20 weighs 97 pounds. The 362cc Yamaha F20/15 has a carburetor and weighs 111 pounds. New motor mounts better isolate vibration of the little Merc from the boat and operator. The "lash for life" valve train never needs adjustment. There's even a drain for the oil filter to make maintenance less messy. The new Merc 20/15 is available in 15- and 20-inch lengths (plus a 25-inch 15 hp version for sailboats), with manual and electric starting, manual or power tilt, and a tiller or remote control. For more information, visit mercurymarine.com.



New motor mounts significantly reduce vibration passed to the operator.

PHOTO: COURTESY MERCURY MARINE



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COOL RUN

The Colorado River is a vibrant blue line cutting through a stark landscape, literally an oasis in the desert.

NININGS

**WANT TO ESCAPE REALITY?
RIDE A PERSONAL
WATERCRAFT DOWN
THE COLORADO RIVER.**

BY JEFF HEMMEL

THE COLORADO RIVER COURSES THROUGH THE SOUTHWEST DESERT LIKE A VIBRANT BLUE LINE, A LINE THAT STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE ENDLESS PALETTE OF BEIGE AND RUST THAT OTHERWISE DOMINATES THE LANDSCAPE. ALONG THE MAJORITY OF ITS LENGTH, IT'S SURROUNDED BY NOTHING EXCEPT SAND AND ROCK, ALTHOUGH THAT DESCRIPTION CERTAINLY DOES NOT DO THE PAIR JUSTICE. THAT SAND AND ROCK MAY COVER ENDLESS MILES OF PANCAKE FLATNESS, BUT THEY CAN ALSO RISE AND TWIST FROM THE DESERT FLOOR TO FORM GEOLOGICAL WONDERS — MOUNTAINS, ARCHES AND BLUFFS SCULPTED TO SEEMING PERFECTION BY THE HAND OF TIME AND THE POWER OF THAT VIBRANT BLUE LINE.

PHOTOS: COURTESY SEA-DOO

IT'S A DESOLATE NO-MAN'S LAND AND YET, AT THE SAME TIME, ONE OF THE MOST TRULY AWE-INSPIRING PLACES I'VE EVER VISITED. AND RIGHT NOW, AS I FLOAT PEACEFULLY WITH THE RIVER'S CURRENT, SURROUNDED BY THIS MAGNIFICENT BACKDROP, I CAN THINK OF NO PLACE I'D RATHER BE.

THE NECESSARY JOURNEY

It's an especially poignant moment given the events of the previous night. Not that long after I flew into Las Vegas to begin my journey, a gunman opened fire from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel, targeting concertgoers below. Nearly 60 people were killed in that massacre, another 546 wounded. That I'm drifting along the river less than 12 hours after the fact seems somehow insensitive and yet strangely appropriate. If there's any time to escape the real world, this just might be it.

My itinerary for the day spans the Colorado River from Laughlin, Nevada, to Lake Havasu City, Arizona, a 60-mile journey that I'll be doing not by boat but Sea-Doo personal watercraft. Launching from the beach at Harrah's Casino, I can't help but marvel at the mini-Vegas that lies upriver. Laughlin started in the 1940s as little more than a motel and bar to serve workers constructing the Davis Dam, gold and silver miners, and fishing enthusiasts. When the workers left in the 1950s, the town withered in the desert heat until Las Vegas casino owner Don Laughlin took interest in 1964. By 1966, the 14-story Riverside Resort had joined that original

motel; others soon followed. Today, the city attracts nearly 2 million visitors annually who casino-hop via water taxi and, when they're not dreaming of hitting it big, soak in the area's attractive mixture of sunshine, low humidity, and beautiful scenery.

The first half-hour on the river is a reminder that we're not alone in seeking escape. Once lightly developed, river homes now pack the Nevada shoreline, serving as vacation getaways for countless California, Nevada and Arizona residents looking to

trade metropolis mania for the river's beauty. When I first visited this area over two decades ago, a fewer number of homes were far more ramshackle in appearance. Today, they're upscale modern-chic, with designer landscaping and toys in abundance. Still, the occasional reality check awaits. Below Laughlin, the abandoned hulk of the unfinished Emerald Bay Resort comes into view, still wasting away 25 years after a boom period went bust.

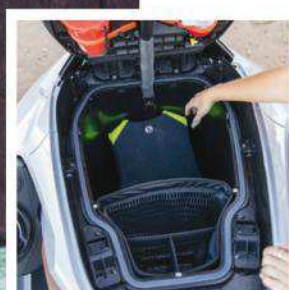
READY FOR ADVENTURE

Beyond Laughlin, development eventually gives way to the desert, and the solitude and raw beauty of the natural landscape return. Make no mistake, it's desolate. Especially in fall, little other boat traffic is found on the water, and there's no such thing as a gas stop or place to grab food and drink. Cellphone reception is spotty at best, meaning you're pretty much on your own. (I suggest packing a personal locator beacon and, in quiet seasons, possibly even a sat phone.) That adds to the appeal of the trip, but it also adds to the need to take it seriously.

While the Colorado River can seem wild and remote in many places, we started our journey from the beach at Harrah's Casino, part of the mini-Las Vegas in the city of Laughlin that resides along the river's banks. The casinos stand out from the desert landscape.



PHOTOS: COURTESY SEA-DOO



BEYOND LAUGHLIN, DEVELOPMENT EVENTUALLY GIVES WAY TO THE DESERT, AND THE SOLITUDE AND RAW BEAUTY OF THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE RETURN.

Thankfully, we couldn't be on more-appropriate craft. With low-water levels, numerous shallows dot our first hours on the river, shallows that would be a serious threat to a prop-driven boat. With our jet pumps protected by intake grates and flush with the hull, we manage to get through without a scratch. The specific models, 2018-vintage Sea-Doo GTX and RXTs, are also tailor-made for adventure. Each features clever mounts on the aft platform, to which we've attached coolers, gas cans, and gear bags loaded with the necessities. When that dry desert air becomes too much, we simply spin around in the saddle and pop open a Yeti cooler filled with ice, drinks and snacks. When a distant gas stop later proves to be unexpectedly out of fuel, we have jerrycans at the ready to top off our tanks. A new storage system, which opens directly to the driver while seated, also made it easy to grab whatever was needed underway without leaving the seat or teetering over the handlebars.

The new GTX/RXT platform also puts a premium on stability, meaning if you had consumed a lot of water on a lengthy ride with no shoreline facilities, you could even briefly drift away from your riding companions, kill the engine, stand on one side of the craft, and relieve yourself without fear of tipping the boat and falling into the drink. Not that I personally know of anyone who would actually do such a thing ...

CALM WATERS AND RED-ROCK CANYONS

After miles of open water and empty desert, our return to the real world is like finding an oasis, a restaurant/bar/store and swimming-pool complex known as Topock 66. Named both for the picturesque gorge that awaited us to the south as well as the adjacent historic Route 66 highway, Topock 66 arrives out of nowhere. One minute you're riding through solitude, the next

The Sea-Doo GTX and RXT-X are especially suited to touring, with an aft mounting system for switchable components such as a touring bag, cooler or gas can, as well as a newly designed stowage compartment under the handlebars that swallows up gear.

you spot the place that bills itself as “your party headquarters on the Colorado River.” For me, seeing the trendy, designer mix of rusted steel and concrete that is the modern Topock 66 is cool but also sad. Like the homes south of Laughlin, I remember the Topock of old, a place where I once desperately needed for gas and food, and one far removed from the current facility. Nevertheless, it’s a fun place to stop, a welcome taste of food after long hours playing on the river, and one of the only places I know that has urinals shaped like open mouths — and bar stools that make occupants look like they’re not wearing any pants.

An hour later, with stomachs filled, thirst quenched and yet another round of sunscreen applied, we once again headed south for the highlight of this trip, the 20-mile passage through Topock Gorge. Nicknamed the “Baby Grand” in reference to its much larger, deeper cousin, the Grand Canyon to the north, Topock Gorge is the centerpiece of the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge. It’s a place where the desert walls literally and figuratively begin to close in on the river, with volcanic red-rock canyon faces

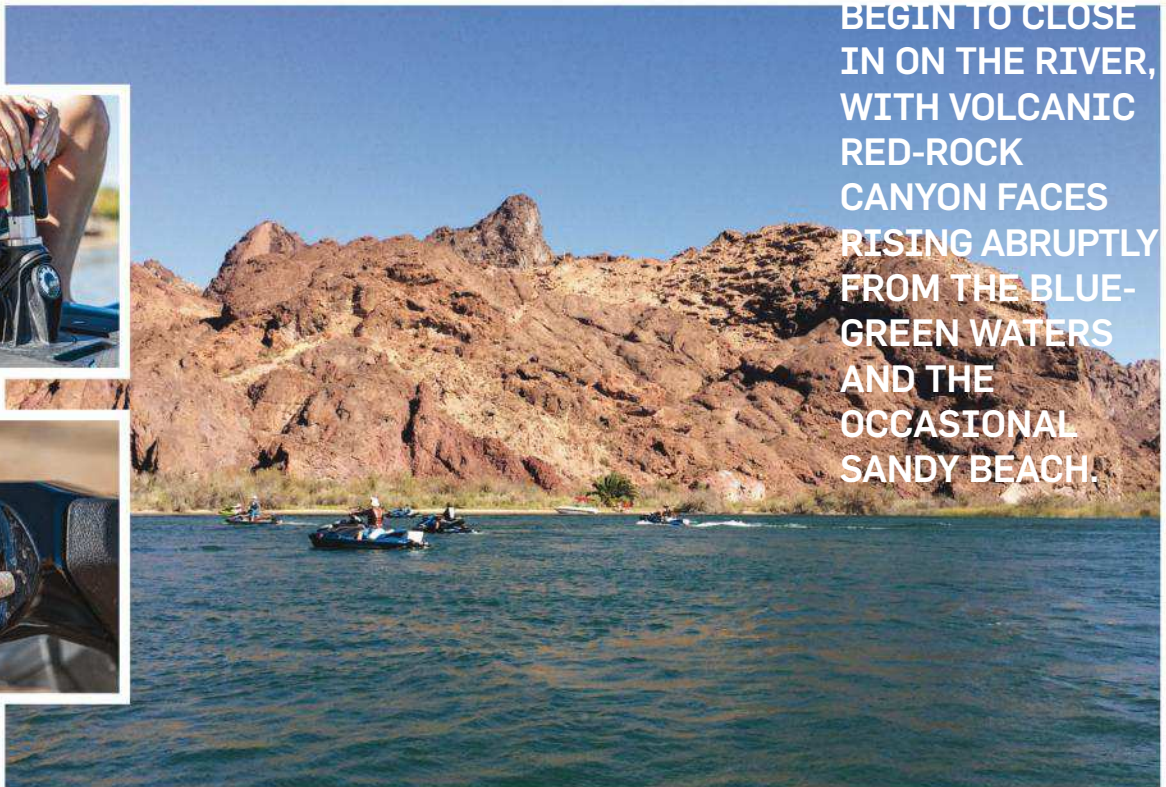
rising abruptly from the blue-green waters, and the occasional sandy beach offering an inviting spot to while away the day in seclusion. Wildlife is in abundance. Everything from bighorn sheep to wild burros and countless bird species can be seen as you drift through the deepest 4-mile section at no-wake speed. We attempt to freeze the moment in endless pictures and gaze in awe at new sights waiting around every corner, then ultimately head to our turnaround point in Lake Havasu City.

Mount the adjustable tow bar and hit the Sport Throttle setting for some fun watersports action.



IT'S A PLACE WHERE THE DESERT WALLS LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY

BEGIN TO CLOSE IN ON THE RIVER, WITH VOLCANIC RED-ROCK CANYON FACES RISING ABRUPTLY FROM THE BLUE-GREEN WATERS AND THE OCCASIONAL SANDY BEACH.



PHOTOS: COURTESY SEA-DOO



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THE REAL WORLD CAN WAIT

Like most of the sights you'll come across on this trip, Lake Havasu City has a story, and a suitably quirky one at that. Like Lake Mojave that lies just to the north of Laughlin, Havasu was created by a dam, in this case the Parker Dam completed in 1938. The dam flooded the surrounding desert, creating a lake with nearly 450 miles of shoreline. In 1963, that lake captured the attention of oil magnate Robert McCulloch as he flew overhead. McCulloch joined with a developer to grow the city into a tourist and retirement destination, and chose a rather random structure as its centerpiece — the London Bridge. Originally spanning the River Thames, the bridge was declared unsafe for modern traffic in 1962. McCulloch bought the structure, had it dismantled and the facing stones numbered, then shipped the pieces to the United States, ultimately reassembling the original stonework over a new concrete structure. The bridge was originally built over land, on a peninsula extending into the lake. Once completed, McCulloch had a channel dredged below to turn peninsula into island — and, of course, make sure his centerpiece bridge actually passed over water.

We pin our Sea-Doo's throttles to skip over the wind-swept surface of Lake Havasu to reach the peaceful bridge channel, then take the requisite cruise under the bridge and its nearby English-themed village, now increasingly giving way to condos. On the far side, we once again get on the gas to travel the remaining distance to the last sight on our ride, Copper Canyon. A baby, baby version of the Baby Grand, Copper Canyon nonetheless features those same towering red-rock walls. It has a reputation as a party spot, with boats rafting up, drinks flowing, and cliff diving being the norm. In fact, MTV took notice of Copper Canyon years back and used it as the location for one of the network's infamous Spring

Break weekends. Today, however, the water is still and the air quiet. We motor through at idle speed and take pictures of the rocks as they're lit up by the blazing afternoon sun, then turn north to retrace our steps through Topock Gorge and beyond.

Theoretically, we could make it back by nightfall, but this isn't that kind of adventure. Instead, we check in to Pirate's Cove Resort, another oasis hidden just north of Topock 66. Here we enjoy cabins along the marina shoreline and later, at the bar, toast the desert sunset. Tomorrow we'll return to the real world and its seemingly endless problems and responsibilities.

But for tonight, the escape continues ...





What the smell?

**No need to find out...
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HITTING LOTO

OUR RIDE-ALONG
WITH LAKE OF
THE OZARKS LAW
ENFORCEMENT
REVEALS LEGEND,
LORE AND LAW

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY RANDY VANCE



Trooper Stacey Mosher scans LOTO on a sultry July Saturday. Light traffic still finds plenty of boaters violating rules.



A

Almost every lake and bay has a party cove, but one body of water bursts into the brain when those words are uttered: Lake of the Ozarks, known by nontourists as LOTO for short.

Located halfway between St. Louis and Kansas City in central Missouri, LOTO is known to play host on any given July Saturday to hundreds, if not thousands, of boats rafted up in a mile-or-so-long cove, filling it from shore to

shore in a spectacle that is ... well, a spectacle.

Some have called this phenomenon legendary. Others have called it notorious. Among locals, it's not popular and never made the tourism brochures. To get the lowdown on it, last summer we asked the Missouri State Highway Patrol if we could hitch a ride on the water. The commanding officers suggested I connect with Trooper Stacey Mosher, a 20-year veteran of lake law enforcement.

We made a date for a beautiful Saturday in July. It was peak tourism season and prime time for large gatherings in Anderson Hollow Cove, the party spot popularly known as Party Cove.

Last time I was in Party Cove, a good 15 years earlier, it was already buzzing by 10 a.m., full of houseboats, go-fasts, runabouts and cruisers. So, I was surprised when Mosher suggested we wait until afternoon.

"It's different now," Mosher said. "You'll have to wait and see it." I figured she wanted to get there about the time when things usually get out of hand.

We settled on a meeting time of 9:30 a.m. at the Moorings, about 2 miles from Party Cove and about 2 miles from the main arm of the lake, the Osage River.

9:30 A.M.

Mosher welcomed me aboard the patrol boat, an aging but well-maintained Donzi center console, handed me a life jacket, and told me where to stow my lunch and drinks. We cast off, and Mosher headed downstream.

The Moorings is on the boundary of a 1.5-mile no-wake zone marked off to protect the shoreline of this narrow stretch of lake from the wakes of the boats that flood the upper reaches of the Grand Glaize Arm, seeking more solitude among its less developed banks — or its Party Cove. Near the boundary a few hundred yards out, Mosher aimed her patrol boat to a sistership idling offshore.

Both chalky Donzis were solid and probably rewired a dozen times since they were built decades ago. The twin Mercury 350s still purred despite the 2,600 hours on them. It's the gear cases that take the



brunt of LOTO patrol duty. The boats go through about two every season.

Today, Trooper Max Lawson would complete his training as a water patrolman. The two chatted awhile, exchanging their itineraries for the day. Then we crept through the remainder of the lengthy no-wake zone.



10 A.M.

Our first stop came right to us and at a high rate of speed, pushing a good wake. It was a pocket cruiser about 28 feet long, and the family on board was enjoying the breeze while increasing the throttle. No ticket here, just a verbal request to abide by the no-wake-zone requirements. Compliance was friendly; the crew seemed relieved.

10:49 A.M.

Just out of the no-wake zone, we moved toward a pontoon sitting in the middle of the Osage Arm of the lake. I couldn't see what they were doing wrong, so I waited while Mosher eased up to them.

"Do you see a skier down anywhere?" Mosher asked me.

"Not a thing."

"Need any help?" she inquired of them.

"No, we are just waiting for a Jet Ski."

"If you could take that flag down, I would appreciate it," she implored.

"We were just trying to play safe for the Jet Ski."

"You only display the flag

for a skier or wakeboard rider, not personal watercraft or any other following vessel."

Mosher inspected life jackets, then requested the skipper's name and address, which she logged along with the violation into the laptop mounted at the helm. She was polite and friendly, but I could tell it burns her up. She's a skier.

"The purpose is very specifically to warn people that a rider is down or coming along behind on a rope so they don't cut him off," she said. "So, if there is a next time, he'll get a ticket."

We'd barely jumped up on plane before another boat caught Mosher's attention. It was an express cruiser, maybe

"I GIVE 100 WARNINGS TO A TICKET. TRAGEDIES ON THE LAKE HAPPEN FROM THINGS PEOPLE NEVER SEE COMING."

Our pontoon stop proved the crew had proper life jackets and a sober skipper to keep the crew out of trouble.



a 40-footer, and perched on its transom seat, a good 6 feet over the swim platform, was a woman enjoying the ride. A single lurch could get her a ticket to the emergency room or, from that height, the morgue. Mosher signaled her to sit inside the boat. Clearly, the lady knew she was in the wrong.

Mosher wasn't eager to write citations.

We left the cruiser behind and noticed a watercraft approach the pontoon, and we

turned our attention to the surrounding traffic.

It seemed like a good time to ask what kind of personal boat she had.

"A 1995 Ski Ray, a Yamaha 1200 and some kayaks," she said. They'd sold a pontoon and a Jet Ski, then indulged themselves with a wakeboard tower for the Ski Ray.

For fun, I asked her about her brand preferences. Her answer was more professional than recreational.

"I like the Yamaha Wave-Runners. They have the jet spray in the back that goes straight up when they are running. That's golden," she said. "It's like a brake light. It gives you a visual cue that the watercraft in front of you is slowing down."



11:10 A.M.

Lake traffic for this July Saturday is still relatively light, but Mosher has no trouble finding boaters who just don't know the rules. Soon another ski-flag waver darted out of a cove with no skier in tow. Mosher gave chase, turning and accelerating smoothly. By the time we caught up, the flag was gone.

Mosher logs a warning in a national database, should the violator be stopped again.

She didn't even bother with a warning.

Then, 200 yards away, a teen boy throttled up a watercraft, carving a semidoughnut turn and doing so right off the dock. Worse yet, he was in a narrow finger of the cove with not 20 yards from that dock to the one on the other side.

Now, I thought, I'd finally witness a citation tendered. Mosher approached the teen, a young man, who gripped the gunwale of the Donzi, holding himself in place to take his medicine.

The doughnut-doer's family eased up in a runabout, and Mosher waved in a friendly way. She was still all-marine with the boy and asked for a picture ID. He was from Washington, Illinois, and his LOTO vacation just wasn't starting off like he expected.

Mosher checked his life jacket to see that it was buckled snugly, and logged the warning. The kid lucked out this time.

"I give 100 warnings to a ticket," Mosher said later. "Tragedies on the lake happen from things people never see coming."

Floating logs, prop injuries (often while the boat is turned off), and even prop and jet wash cause problems.

"I'd rather stop people from getting a prop injury than making a wake," Mosher continued. "Our job here isn't to make people miserable but to help them come home safe, and that takes education. People are receptive to that prevention."

Throughout the day, I saw she was right. Mosher's affable yet firm instruction was practical and reassuring. People responded to her and, at least for the moment, changed to safer operating procedures.

We were at about the 25-mile marker, a description





Anderson Hollow Cove had plenty of open water for peace and solitude on that July Saturday.

referring to our distance along the Osage River to the dam, and about 10 miles plus a long no-wake zone from Party Cove.



1 P.M.

We arrived at the 1.5-mile-long party spot officially known as Anderson Hollow on maps.

Party Cove was a dirty secret, attractive in its salaciousness of thousands of boaters drinking, dancing, sometimes stripping and, not so rarely, other illegal acts. In its heyday, Party Cove might see over 3,000 boats rafted together with a precision that belied the apparent chaos of so many boats and people in one place.

on Party Cove just a few short years earlier. And there were still some secluded pockets of water available.

Party Cove was no more, and no one who lives at the lake is sad to see its demise. I mused that enforcement was working. Mosher disagreed.

“I wish it was something we did, but it was probably more a change in demographics. People just started spreading out. They go to many different places now,” she explained.

With the cost of marine

marker or Ha Ha Tonka Cove in the Niangua Arm.



1:15 P.M.

Mosher stopped a pontoon first in Party Cove because three passengers were dragging their feet in the water at the bow — a clearly dangerous practice. They knew it too as they moved back inside the gate. Mosher reminded them of the risk they were taking of falling into the path of the prop.

“Thank you! We love you!” they yelled back, blowing kisses as one of the crew secured the ladder, which they would’ve likely lost at sea.

We headed out of Party Cove and back toward Red Bud Cove, where we’d meet up with my boat crew, or so I thought. Halfway there, a pontoon boat was cruising along with two men sitting on the sun pad over the motor. The violation was becoming cliché.

Mosher waved them down and pulled alongside. The boat

“IT’S REAL EASY TO FALL OFF OF THE SUN PAD WHEN YOU’RE MOVING. IT’S ALSO ILLEGAL.”

But, as we rounded the point at the mouth of the cove, it appeared deserted but for a few dozen boats scattered deep in the hollow. In fact, there were multiple rafts of fewer boats, not the endless rafts of rub-rail-to-rub-rail partiers I expected. Along each side of the bay, smaller coves offered one or two boats solitude — an unheard of solitude

gasoline (approaching and even exceeding \$4 per gallon), perhaps boaters aren’t willing to travel as far to be in the big raft-up. And Anderson Hollow is a good long cruise from many parts of this 92-mile-long waterway. Then there’s that 2-mile-long no-wake zone. There are dozens of coves closer to home port, like Linn Creek Cove at the 31-mile

We learned not everybody is sad to hear from a water trooper as another boat throttled up at a reasonable distance from the rafted boats.

“Pull your ladder up!” Mosher shouted, pointing to the dragging appendage. She repeated the command in a surprisingly booming voice for the thus far soft-spoken trooper. “Pull it up!”



was a rental from the Fort Leonard Wood Recreation Marina, and its crew were off-duty soldiers. The two on the sun pad clearly didn't realize why they had been stopped or they would've moved.

"It's real easy to fall off of the sun pad when you're moving," said Mosher. They sat down with military precision and she continued, "It's also illegal." You could've heard a pin drop.

Somebody offered her a cold soda. She declined, but her demeanor went from all-business to fun.

"OK, now, you gotta stay inside the boat. You've all got a life jacket, right?" Everybody held one up. Somebody noticed my camera.

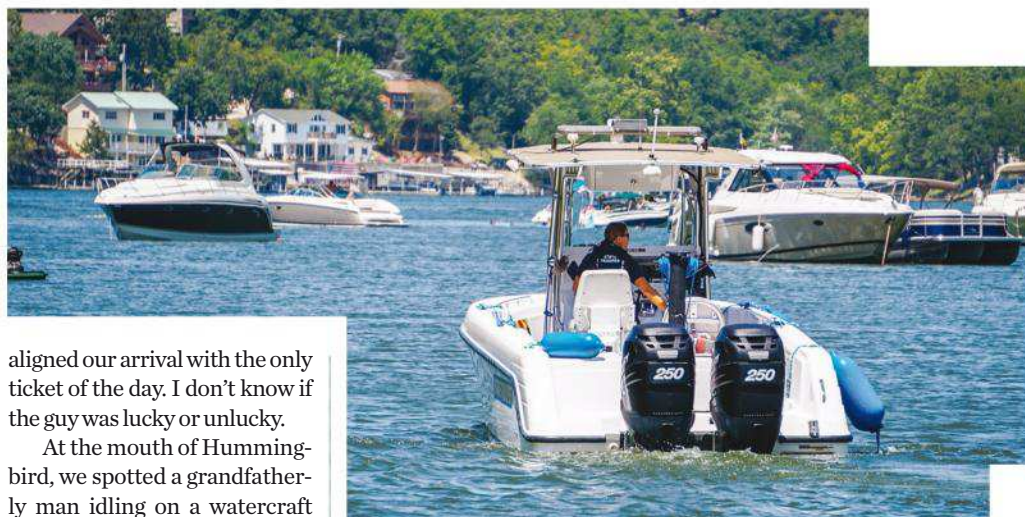
"Can you take our picture?"

I complied and took a full group shot, and we exchanged mobile numbers to transfer it.



2 P.M.

We still hadn't written a ticket. Late to the rendezvous with my relatives' houseboat, I called on the mobile. The location was now Hummingbird Cove, not Red Bud. We were 15 minutes away, and that miscalculation



aligned our arrival with the only ticket of the day. I don't know if the guy was lucky or unlucky.

At the mouth of Hummingbird, we spotted a grandfatherly man idling on a watercraft who, when he spotted us, began shaking his head in dismay. He was pulling two boys on a tube — without a spotter. While we were a couple hundred yards away, she'd watched him pull away from an express cruiser.

"Go on back to your other boat and I'll meet you there," she said. He turned, and the next thing I noticed was his jacket wasn't buckled. Then I spotted a baby dozing between his knees with a loose, ineffective life jacket.

Mosher approaches a boater in Hummingbird Cove, above. A raft-up in Party Cove, below.

"Sir, you're taking on a little too much responsibility there," she said once the watercraft quit rumbling.

"I know. The baby wouldn't sleep, so we thought the ride would help," he said as a woman on board took the baby below deck. I could imagine how hard the screaming must've been to get him to try the old car-ride trick with the watercraft, and I could also imagine the older boys

demanding to go. But he knew Mosher had to write him up, and truthfully, he was lucky we came along before he got farther away from the boat.

I really wanted to take that photograph, but I couldn't. He was in enough misery. But on any given Saturday on Lake of the Ozarks, stopping an event like that could just save a life. And that's all the Missouri state troopers want to do.





SEA TOW RESCUE HEROES

IT'S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT GIVING YOU A TOW.
SOMETIMES THEY SAVE YOUR LIFE.

BY PETE MCDONALD



Last June, Capt. Clay Hughes and his colleague Capt. Kendrick Schwartz were launching a boat from a nearby ramp when Hughes, the owner of Sea Tow Ocean Isle in North Carolina, got a call from his dispatcher. She'd heard a mayday call over VHF Channel 16 from a boat in distress near the notoriously treacherous Shallotte Inlet. Acting quickly, Hughes jumped into the boat while Schwartz jumped into a second Sea Tow vessel on hand, and the two raced toward the boat in trouble. As they approached the scene, Hughes observed a powerless 24-foot cruiser adrift near a sandbar, the waves pushing it closer and closer to danger. A couple with their two young daughters, ages 4 and 5, remained on board as the boat took on water. Hughes and Kendrick had to act fast before the situation spiraled out of control.

What, you thought being a Sea Tow captain was just about bringing you gas or providing a tow? Sometimes they have to save lives too. Here are five stories of Sea Tow captains who went beyond the typical job description, braving rough seas and tough situations to help boaters in danger. Read how they saved the day and what we can all learn from each experience.

POWERLESS

As the 24-foot cruiser drifted closer to the sandbar along the beach, Hughes and Kendrick took different approaches to the distressed vessel. Hughes, more experienced with the local waters, ran outside the bar and tried to approach them from behind. Kendrick approached from inside the bar, hoping to find a way to get close.

"The boat was in no-man's land," recalls Hughes. "I was trying to figure out how to get to them without being stuck in the same situation."

Just then, a set of three breakers rolled in and hit the boat hard to starboard. Overwhelmed, the boat quickly started going down. The whole family, wearing their life jackets, jumped in the water. Fortunately, the outgoing current swept them over to Hughes, who quickly pulled the girls into the boat before helping the parents over the transom. Within minutes, only the bow of the boat remained above water as Kendrick circled the debris field to salvage the family's personal possessions.

Hughes ran the family to a local fire-department boat. The crew rushed them to shore and checked them over; all were unharmed by the incident.

"The Shallotte Inlet is notorious because its sandbars are always shifting," says Hughes. "Unfortunately, we see a lot of this here."

This story had a happy ending,

largely due to the family's actions. "They all had on life jackets. The dad made a mayday call over the radio, not the phone, and gave his exact coordinates from the GPS," says Hughes. "The only other thing he could have done was drop the anchor, but it happened so quickly, he didn't have time."

SEAMANSHIP LESSON

Always bring a GPS and know how to use it so you can provide would-be rescuers with your coordinates.



SEAMANSHIP LESSON

Always wear your safety-stop lanyard (kill switch) at the helm.



LEAP OF FAITH

On a fall day on Shelter Island Sound, Long Island, New York, a crew of six were running across the bay in a 37-foot go-fast boat when the driver suddenly lost control, ejecting himself and his five passengers into the water. He was not wearing his kill switch, and the boat kept running in circles at a speed just over 20 knots. Capt. Bill Barker, owner of Sea Tow Eastern Long Island, headed toward the runaway vessel, accompanied by Capt. Garrett Moore.

When the two arrived on scene, the six boaters had been safely removed from the water, but the boat still spun dangerously out of control right off the busy waterfront of Greenport, with no signs of stopping. Barker, a 100-ton Master and Sea Tow's first franchise owner, deftly matched the speed and course of the runaway go-fast and pulled up alongside it. Moore, in a daring move, jumped from Barker's Sea Tow vessel into the cockpit of the runaway boat and successfully killed the engines, preventing it from causing a serious accident.

The U.S. Coast Guard recognized the two captains with Meritorious Public

“THE BOAT WAS IN NO-MAN’S LAND. I WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET TO THEM WITHOUT BEING STUCK IN THE SAME SITUATION.”

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY WEST MARINE, COURTESY GARMIN

“THEY TOLD ME THEY’D COLLIDED WITH ANOTHER PWC. SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE’D BEEN BITTEN BY A SHARK.”

PHOTOS: COURTESY BOATULS... SHUTTERSTOCK (GAS NOZZLE)

Service awards for their efforts to stop the boat. Had they not done such a stellar job, who knows what would have happened?

COLLISION COURSE

Weekends off the coast of southeast Florida are always busy, and on the morning of June 19, 2016, Sea Tow Capt. Joe Leonardo of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, was already keeping an eye on a boat struggling near a reef just outside of Hillsboro Inlet when a couple on a personal watercraft approached his vessel.

“They were frantic,” recalls Leonardo.

“They told me they’d collided with another PWC.” Leonardo followed them back to the other watercraft, where a woman was bleeding profusely from injuries on her leg.

“She looked like she’d been bitten by a shark,” says Leonardo.

Apparently, the two couples had been joyriding with each other when one PWC stalled out. The other PWC, still going at a fast speed, collided with the stalled one, its bow running right into the female passenger’s leg.

With the help of the stalled PWC’s driver, Leonardo pulled her over the

transom of his boat and brought her to the bow, and used his shirt to wrap her leg and stem the bleeding. Acting quickly, Leonardo first called for an ambulance to meet

him at the fishing docks at a marina just inside the inlet. Next, he alerted the

local port authorities that he would be violating the no-wake zones to bring the injured woman back to the dock.

Due to Leonardo’s fast response and quick thinking, they were able to get her

SEAMANSHIP LESSON

Always be aware of your surroundings and keep a safe distance from other boats.



Capt. Clay Hughes



Capt. Garrett Moore



Capt. Bill Barker



Capt. Joe Leonardo



PHOTOS: COURTESY SEA TOW (6), SHUTTERSTOCK (HAND)



Capt. Les Trafford

the medical help she needed within minutes of his response.

"I'm sure if I didn't get to her," Leonardo says, "she would have been bad off."

ROUGH PASSAGE

The weather could not have been worse off the Atlantic coast of eastern Long Island on Mother's Day 2013. But Stan Stiansen, owner of the 45-foot commercial vessel *Pauline IV*, had gone out anyway, because that's what commercial fishermen do. Upon returning to port after a successful haul, *Pauline IV* got into trouble in Shin-

necock Inlet, and Stiansen put out a distress call.

"I was sitting in the office when I heard the

call over the fire-department band, and I jumped in the boat," says Capt. Les Trafford of Sea Tow Shinnecock. "Nobody else was going out. I grew up here, so I was sure it was someone I knew."

The waves that day, measuring 6 to

“HE WAS CLINGING TO A PLASTIC NET BUOY AND A PIECE OF WOOD. IT COULD HAPPEN TO ANYBODY. STAN GOT CAUGHT IN SHALLOW WATER AT JUST THE WRONG TIME. I’VE SEEN GUYS IN THEIR 20-FOOTERS TRY TO DO THE SAME THING.”

8 feet offshore, doubled in size when they stacked up on the sandbars around the inlet. Stiansen, 85 years old with decades of experience, got hit by a 15-foot rogue wave.

"Stan caught a bad set," recalls Trafford. "The first wave caught him from behind and put the boat on its side. The next wave went over the decks and washed the deck mate, Scott Finne, over."

Trafford, a 19-year Sea Tow veteran

and 100-ton Master, ran his 24-foot Starfire out of the inlet. Its flush decks helped him shed water in the rough surf, and his twin MerCruisers totaling 800 hp helped him plow through the inlet.

Unable to get close to *Pauline IV*, which at this point was stuck on a sandbar, Trafford started circling the debris field, looking for signs of life. A police helicopter arrived on scene and helped guide Trafford to Finne, who had drifted a mile offshore.

"He was clinging to a plastic net buoy and a piece of wood," says Trafford, who pulled him out of the cold water and saved his life. Unfortunately, Stiansen had been trapped inside the boat's cabin, and Trafford was unable to rescue him.

While Stiansen and Finne knew the



PHOTOS: COURTESY SEA TOW (2); SHUTTERSTOCK (OCEAN WAVE, WOOD)



ROSSITER 14
SIDE CONSOLE



ROSSITER 17
CENTER CONSOLE



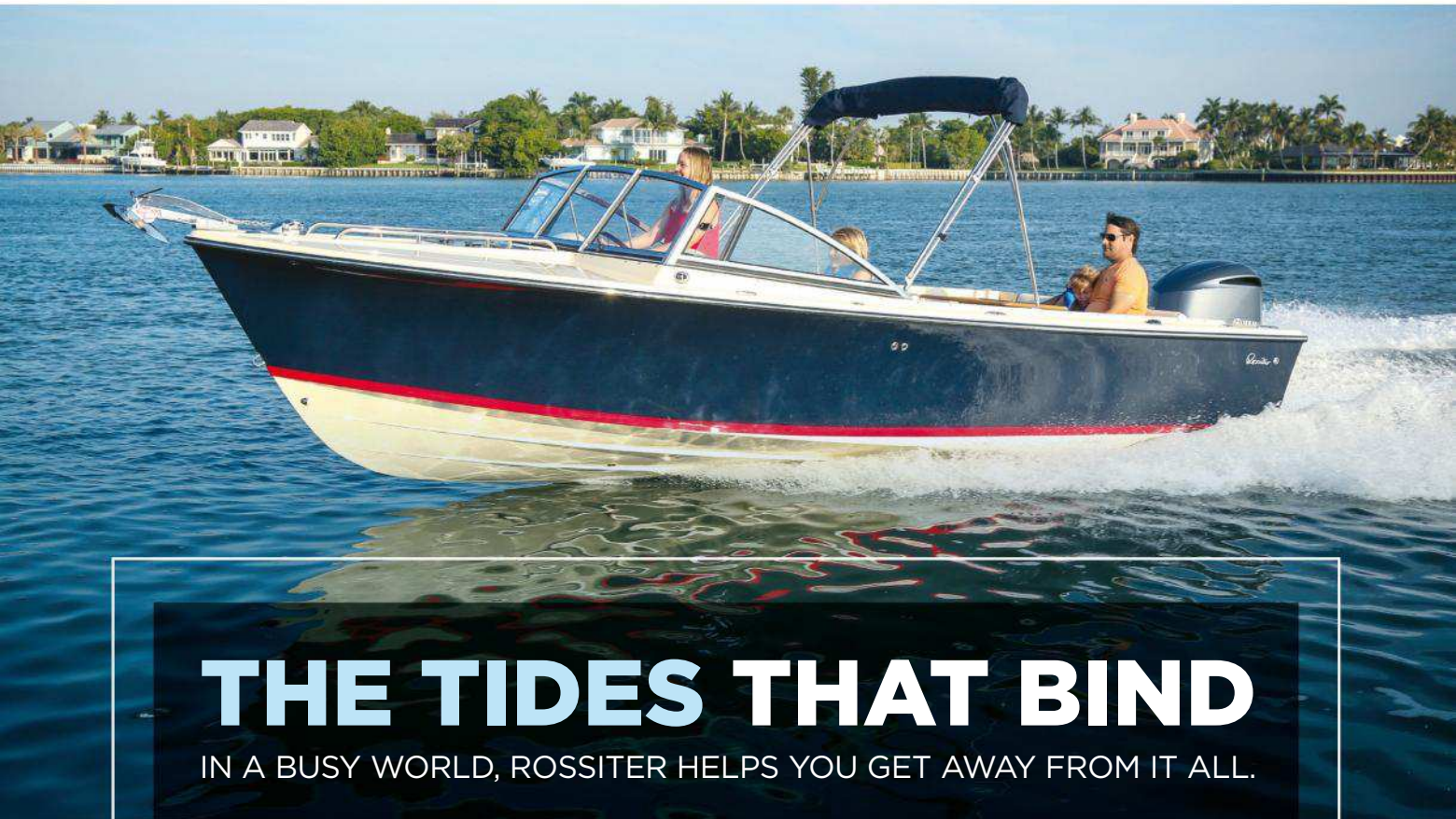
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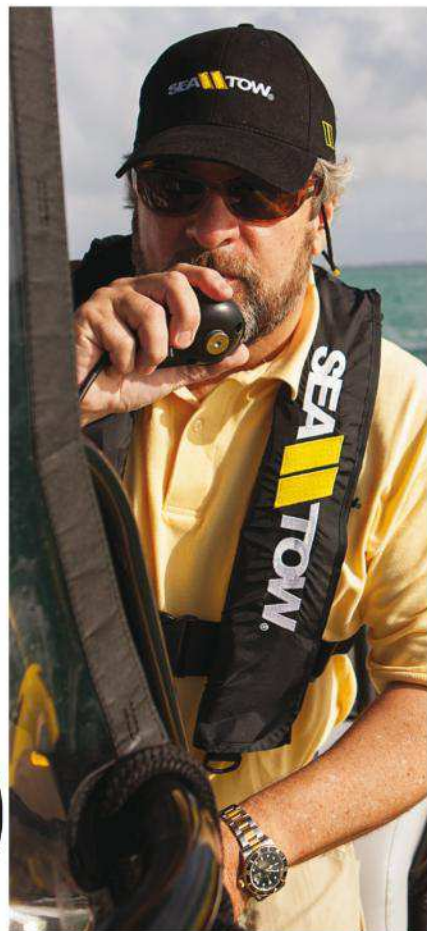
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Capt. Ryan Saporito



danger of running an inlet in rough seas, most people don't. Trafford estimates he's pulled more than 30 people out of Shinnecock waters in his 19 years working with Sea Tow.

"It could happen to anybody," says Trafford. "Stan got caught in shallow water at just the wrong time. I've seen guys in their 20-footers try to do the same thing."

ROCKY SITUATION

Last Father's Day, a dad and his three sons hired a local charter captain for a day of fishing outside Masonboro Inlet, near Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. The captain had them fishing on the tip of the rock jetty, using his trolling motor to keep his 22-foot center console safely away from the rocks. But when the trolling motor gave out, the captain couldn't get his outboard started in time, and the waves quickly swept the boat into the jetty. Another angler, fishing on foot from the jetty, called for help over a VHF radio. Sea Tow Capt. Ryan Saporito just happened to be patrolling the inlet in his 26-foot

“IF I HADN'T GOTTEN THERE IN TIME, THOSE FOUR PASSENGERS WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE WATER AS 4-TO 5-FOOT WAVES POUNDED THEM AGAINST THE ROCKS.”

Twin Vee not 100 yards away from the jetty and heard the call.

"I raced around the corner, and they were already on the rocks," recalls Saporito of that day.

Just then, a set of 5-foot waves rolled in, knocking the charter captain out of the center console and pushing the boat

up onto the jetty at a 70-degree angle. Saporito quickly heaved them a line, hauled each of the four passengers to his Twin Vee and pulled them out of the water. The charter captain was able to swim safely to another nearby vessel.

Thanks to Saporito's decisive action, the whole incident was over in about three minutes.

"The captain had tried to start his engine and drop his anchor, but it all happened so fast," says Saporito. "If I hadn't gotten there in time, those four passengers would have been in the water as 4- to 5-foot waves pounded them against the rocks. It would not have been good."

SEAMANSHIP LESSON Be prepared for equipment failure and have a Plan B. If you lose power, first drop the anchor, then try to restart.



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK (CRASHING WAVE). COURTESY SEA TOW (2). COURTESY WEST MARINE (ANCHOR)

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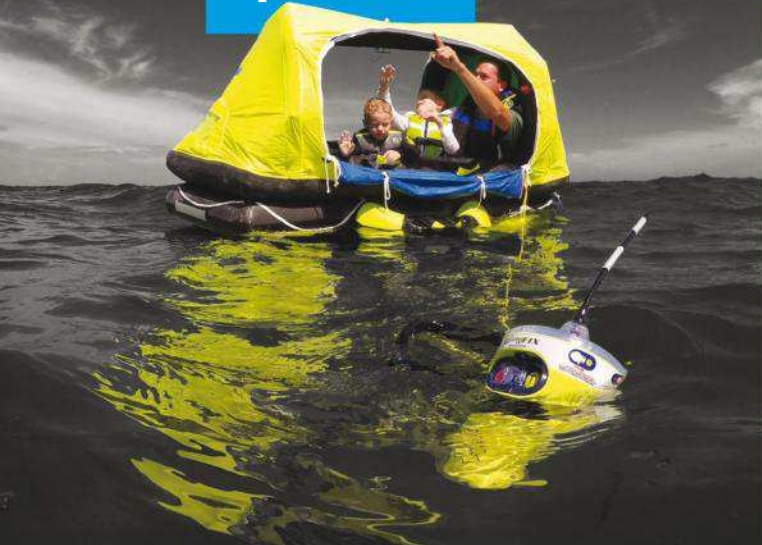
MOORESVILLE, NC
JUNE 16



WARSAW, IN
AUGUST 4



By Jim Hendricks



AUTOMATED MAYDAY SYSTEMS

Alert rescuers automatically when catastrophe strikes.

In a marine emergency, you might not have the time or composure to place an effective mayday call. Your electronics might not work either.

Automated emergency broadcasting devices can alert rescuers and help them find you.

HOT BUTTON

VHF handheld models such as Icom's floating M93D (\$249.95, thegpsstore.com) offer digital selective calling (DSC) and GPS. Press the red distress button to broadcast an alert with your position and boat description. You need to obtain and enter a maritime

mobile service identity ahead of time. Effective range: 4 to 5 miles.

GLOBAL REACH

An emergency position-indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) such as the ACR GlobalFix V4 (\$394.95, thegpsstore.com) uplinks your position to satellites and alerts rescuers. It also broadcasts a homing signal to pinpoint the device's position. EPIRBs



broadcast for a minimum of 48 hours after deployment. Effective range: worldwide.

PERSONAL BEST

Personal locator beacons (PLBs) such as the Ocean Signal RescueMe (\$267.99, wholesalemarine.com) use the same system as EPIRBs but are worn. Battery life is half that of an EPIRB. Effective range: worldwide.

GOING OVERBOARD

Man-overboard (MOB) devices use the automatic identification system (AIS) to locate a man overboard. McMurdo's Smartfind S20 SRS AIS (\$189.95, thegpsstore.com) attaches to a life jacket and transmits position data to AIS receivers in range for 24 hours. They allow AIS-equipped vessels to join the search. Effective range: 4 to 5 miles.



AskKEN Q&A

HOW CAN I ADD A VIDEO CAMERA TO MY MULTIFUNCTION DISPLAY?

Most multifunction displays have a video input on the back of the set or offer a video-adaptor cable option for video cameras. Check with your electronics dealer or marine electronics brand to find out what kind of cable you might need for the camera you have in mind.

The camera you choose should be weatherized for the marine environment and operate on the same voltage as your boat's batteries. It should have a wide enough angle of vision to cover the area you want to monitor.

Cameras looking aft should also have the ability to reverse their image so the picture appears as it would if you were looking at your car's rearview mirror. You will also find cameras available with built-in infrared lighting for use in low-light areas, like in an engine room.

IP cameras can be connected to displays that are networked so the camera's picture can be viewed on all displays. IP cameras can also be used with boat security systems connected with a cellular/internet module so you can check in on your boat visually on your smartphone or computer. —Ken Engert

ASK KEN ONLINE

For more exclusive electronics content, visit boatingmag.com/askken.



DOPPLER ADDITIONS

Both Raymarine and Simrad have announced Doppler features for their solid-state marine radar systems, thus joining Furuno and Garmin in offering the advanced, easy-to-use collision-avoidance radar technology.

Simrad is scheduled to offer owners the ability to unlock the VelocityTrack Doppler feature in its Halo pulse-compression open-array radar systems for a one-time \$500 charge beginning in June. VelocityTrack will highlight moving targets that pose a collision threat in a contrasting color, making them easy to recognize.

Raymarine has integrated Doppler technology into its new Quantum 2 dome radar with chirp pulse compression (\$1,999 MSRP). In addition to identifying and color-coding moving radar contacts that pose a threat, the Quantum 2's exclusive Safety Sector feature highlights targets in the path of your vessel — whether they are moving or stationary.

PHOTOS: COUNTERLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: CRAIG HASHIMOTO, COURTESY MCMURDO; OCEAN SIGNAL; COURTESY ICOM AMERICA INC.; COURTESY ACR ELECTRONICS INC.; COURTESY RAYMARINE



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By Ron Ballanti

NET GAINS

Do you ever wonder why big fish are often lost right at the net? Mistakes become magnified when fish are near the boat. There is very little line between you and the fish to absorb shock if the fish makes a sudden run. The hook may have worn a hole, or the line could be nicked up after a long fight. And then there's the buck fever that comes with having a fish tantalizingly close yet just out of reach.

Having the proper gear, practicing your technique and keeping your cool can help you improve your end-game and get more fish into the boat.

SIZE MATTERS Using a net that is too small is one of the easiest ways to lose a big fish. Make sure your net has a wide enough opening to accommodate the largest fish you expect to catch. The netting also has to be deep



enough to secure and control your quarry once you have it in the net.

BE READY As the fight draws near its end, the net person should be in position, net in hand, securing the netting to the handle with one hand to prevent snagging on cleats, rod holders and other equipment. Don't put the net into the water during the fight; it can scare the fish and creates another opportunity for tangling or breaking the line.

DON'T RUSH IT Trying to net a fish that isn't ready is courting disaster — especially

when fishing single-handed. Don't stab at or reach for a fish that is still thrashing wildly or rapidly changing directions. Instead, wait until the fish turns on its side and seems ready to be guided into the net.

FINISH THE JOB Have the angler guide the fish headfirst into the net. If you try to net a fish tail-first, striking the back of the fish can cause it to accelerate out of the net. Once the fish is fully in the net, the angler should drop the rod tip and open the bail or put the reel in free-spool as the net man lifts up on the net to secure the fish in the netting.

SI-TEX MDA-4

This VHF FM/DSC radio and dual-channel AIS receiver meets military specifications for immersion, vibration, shock, high and low temperature, solar radiation, fluid contamination and more. The large LCD shows both VHF channels and a variety of AIS target data and alerts for safe navigation. It delivers all U.S., Canadian and international channels, Weather Watch and full-range scanning. The 25-watt loudhailer with listen-back and the eight-mode foghorn also prove useful. Learn more at si-tex.com; \$459.



TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER Many anglers enjoy the convenience of fishing with braided line and switching between monofilament and fluorocarbon leader, or dropping to a lighter pound-test, to get finicky fish to bite. They just need to change a few feet of line instead of respooling or changing spools on the reel.

The downside is having loose spools of line all over your boat, or having to fish out the one you want from a tangled mess in the bottom of your tackle box. And if the labels get wet and fall off, good luck telling 8-pound from 10-pound line by sight.

A clear plastic spool box, like those from Plano (planomolding.com), is a great way to keep your leader spools organized and ready to use. It locks securely and provides access holes that make it easy to pull out as much leader as you need without opening the box. I use an office label-maker to show me at a glance the test rating of the leader in each compartment so I'm always ready to tie one on.

PHOTOS: COUNTERLOCK/ISE FROM TOP; RON BALLANTI (2) COURTESY SI-TEX MARINE ELECTRONICS



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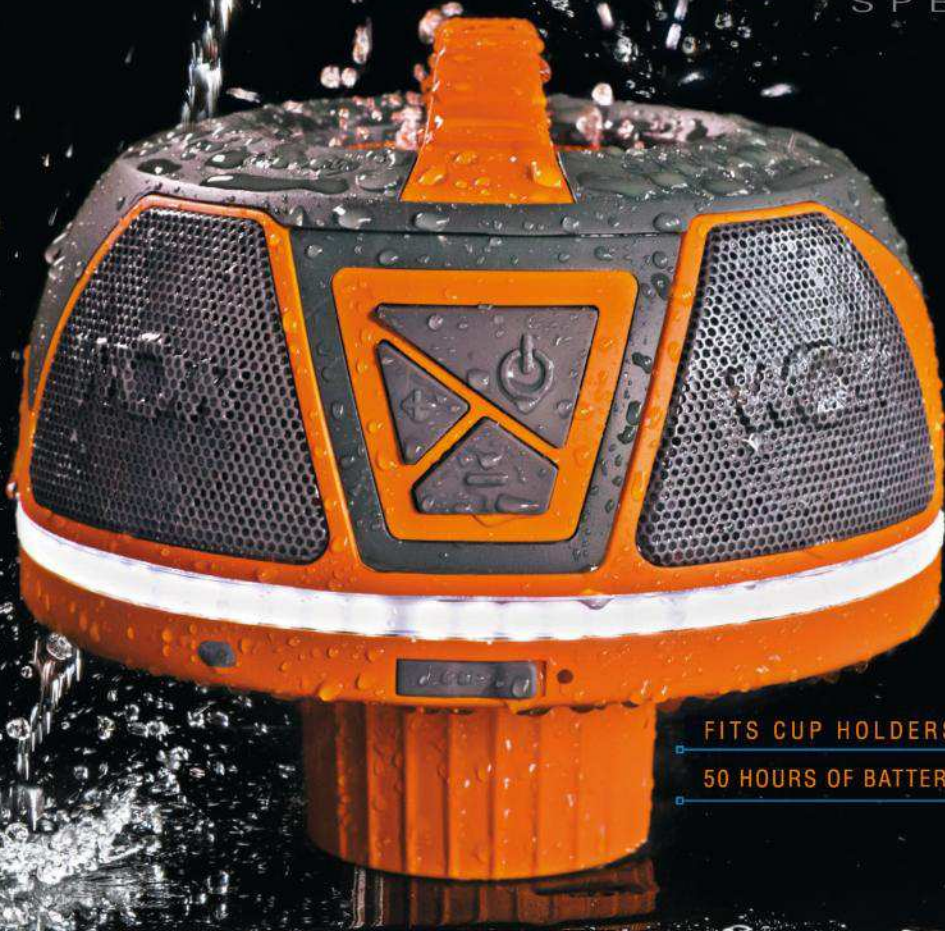
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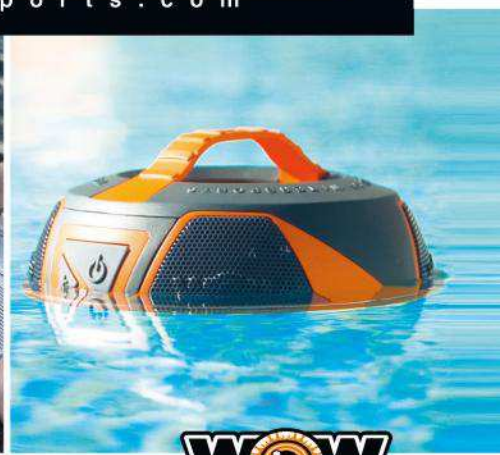
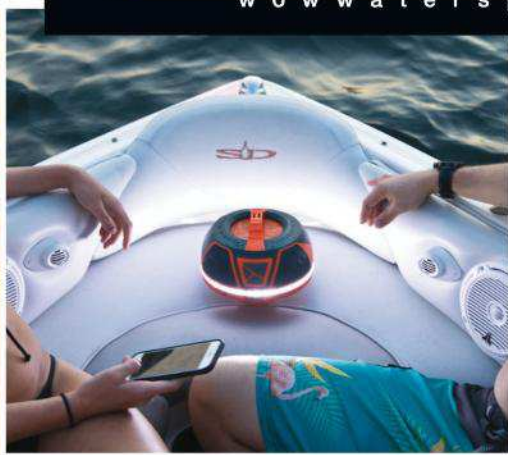
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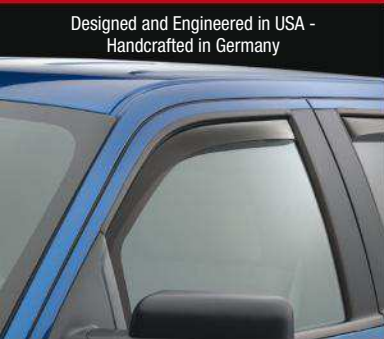


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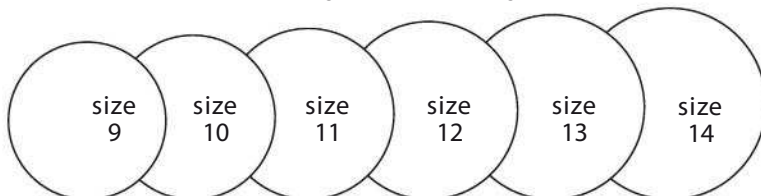
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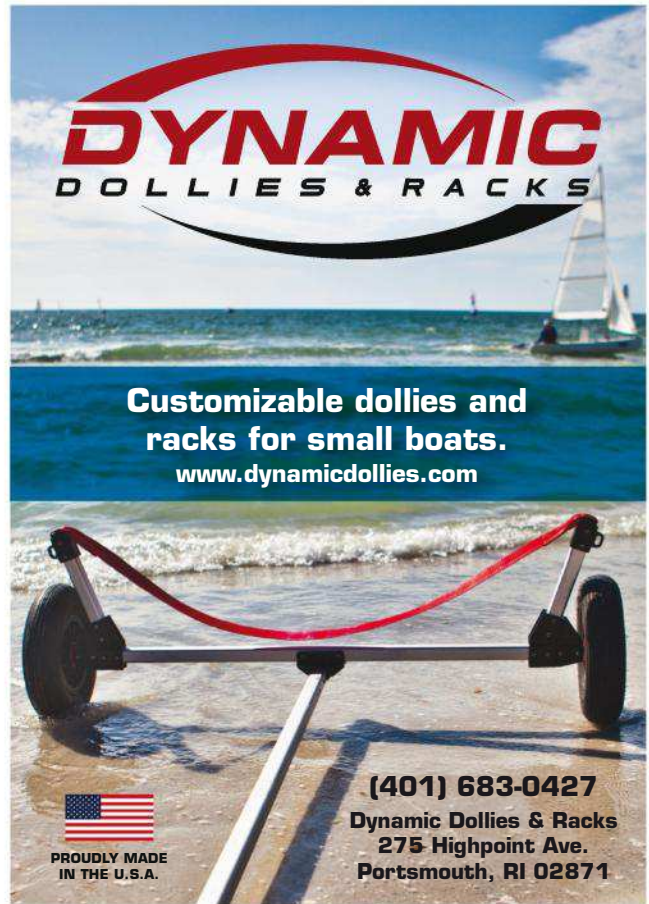


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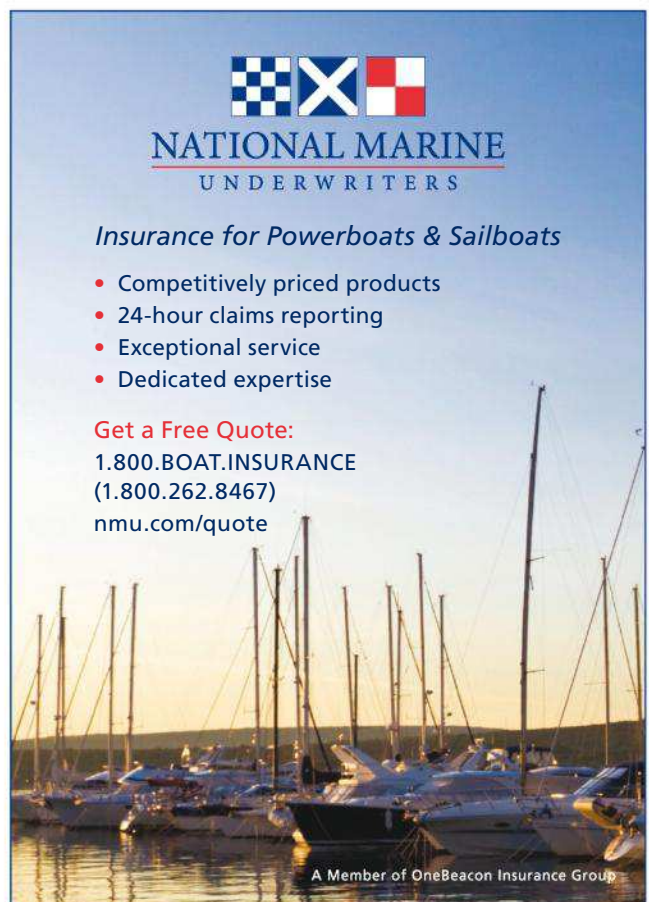
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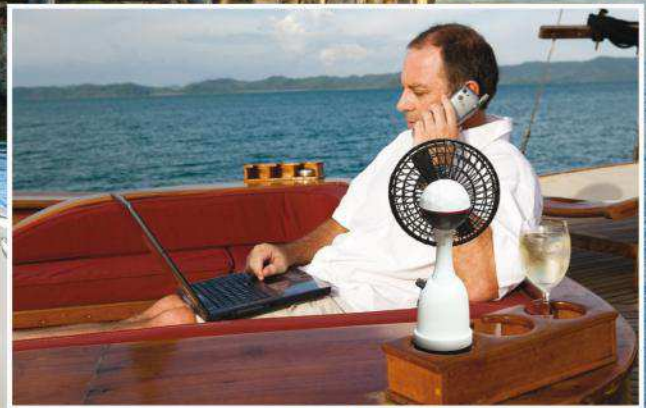
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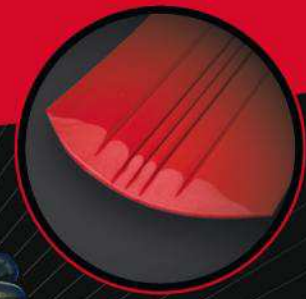




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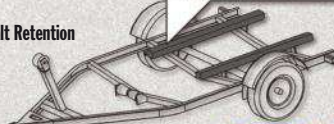
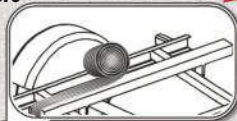
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I WORKED FOR THE OLD MAN

Another close encounter with an outboard legend

Lombardi and Kiekhaefer. It would not be unusual to find a framed photo of either icon in any tavern in Wisconsin's Lake Winnebago drainage. Each was a legend in his own time, each possessed an outsized personality and, decades after both have passed to the great beyond, each remains part of the region's mythology.

For example, there must have been 5,000 altar boys who served Lombardi at Catholic Mass and will tell you about it today over a beer. And at least that many old men claim to have been impulsively fired by E.C. Kiekhaefer from a job assembling Mercury outboards. Or they watched Kiekhaefer fire the Pepsi delivery man.

And so, when I mentioned across the Lake View Inn bar my recent trip to Lake X, the fabled Mercury test facility in central Florida, I was not surprised that someone piped right up with a Kiekhaefer story.

"I once worked for the old man," recalled my good friend Chuck Larson. "In fact, I was a test driver at Lake X."

There was much eye rolling and groaning up and down the bar.

"No really," said Chuck. "I have pictures to prove it."

Chuck's Lake X story begins with an ad in *The Fond du Lac Reporter*.

"It was 1963 and I was 19 years old, and Mercury ran this ad in the paper seeking young men to test boats, and it sounded like fun for the summer," said Chuck. "Six of us got hired, and we piled into my 1957 Pontiac and drove to St. Cloud."

Around-the-clock endurance testing was underway at Lake X.

"Being kids, we usually got later shifts. At night, I could see the eyes of alligators glowing pink in the boat headlights. And it was so boring. If you

had a day shift, you'd take a book along to read. I was running an early four-cylinder sterndrive, and it didn't go too fast. Every once in a while, Mr. Kiekhaefer, who they just called the old man, would land in a seaplane and check up on things."

Ah, I thought, here comes the part where Chuck gets fired by Kiekhaefer, because that's how these stories always tend to end. But that's not what happened.

"After the night shifts, we had to try and sleep during the day in house trailers with no air conditioning, which was like trying to sleep in an oven," said Chuck. "Then one day, as a prank, one of the older guys caught an armadillo, and he let it loose in the trailer while I was trying to sleep. I rolled over in the bunk and put my hand down, and it landed right on the armadillo. That was it for me."

A few days later, I was at Chuck's place and asked to see the photographic evidence of his Lake X employment. From a drawer in the den he pulled out an old picture postcard of an armadillo — *Greetings from Florida!* Because Chuck's a Lutheran, he can't tell those Lombardi stories.

"Being kids, we usually got later shifts. At night, I could see the eyes of alligators glowing pink in the boat headlights."

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