

Boating Tips

Vessel Assist 3.0

So there I was at the gas dock explaining the proper way to fuel a vessel when the hose clicked off, indicating the tank was full on the vessel we were fueling. Although the attendant did not initiate the fueling procedure, he did retrieve the nozzle from the fill pipe on the boat after it stopped.

I was explaining to my client how there are four (4) places to put fuel in a boat. You can put it in the fuel tank, the water tank, the holding tank or, if you are really ignorant, a fishing rod holder. This is why marine gas attendants won't pump the gas for you.

One day I was minding my own business on my last boat at a dock in front of a restaurant on the Delta when a large express cruiser

pulled up to the gas dock. The guy instructed his (female) companion to put 40 gallons of gas in the boat. Then he walked away to use the restroom.

After awhile I started to smell gas. I got up and looked overboard only to see a huge gas spill coming my way with the current! The lady had actually pumped 40 gallons of gas into a flush-mounted fishing rod holder mounted on the gunwale of the cockpit! Meanwhile, the bilge pumps are pumping the gas overboard and the harbormaster is going nuts!

This is why it is so important to personally take control of the fueling procedure on your vessel. Ask any marine gas attendant and you will hear story after story of people pumping gas into the wrong



receptacle. Talk about ruining your day!

But I digress... I was performing a lesson/delivery from Stockton to Discovery Bay. The client wasn't sure the gas gauge worked, which is why we stopped for gas at the first opportunity. Just as she suspected, the gas gauge read one-half tank after we "filled" it. Since we knew we had a full tank, all was good.

We delivered the boat to a brand new HydroHoist® located behind her house. Next we scheduled our next lesson. I wanted her to get some helm time on a Saturday when there would be more nautical traffic, so I could teach her the rules of the road in real time as well as many other competencies.

So we headed out of Discovery Bay and took the back way on Middle River to the San Joaquin and then up the Mokelumne River to do some serious close-quarters maneuvering/docking at Korth's Pirate's Lair, Riverboat Marina and Willow Berm. After a vigorous training session, we stopped for lunch at the Riverboat and reviewed/evaluated our progress so far.

On the way back to Discovery Bay, we took the fast and direct route through Washington Cut and then south on Holland Cut (or Old River). The best thing about the day



Vessel Assist cruises past the Marina District in SF.

was the confidence in knowing that we had enough fuel to safely get back to port. After all, we did “fill it up” just the other day so I’m guessing we have about two-thirds of a tank left for the trip back home. We made it home safely and the client is excited about the progress she is making getting proficient at operating her vessel.

My next encounter with this “filled up” vessel was to deliver it to Bethel Harbor for service from Discovery Bay. I started at noon on a beautiful spring day. Although it was a little windy, I anticipated no problems with the trip. I had to travel at hull speed on account of a dinged prop. I was enjoying the solitude of a Wednesday on the beautiful Delta by myself and getting paid for it. (It doesn’t get any better than that!)

About a mile north of Holland Riverside Marina, I heard the familiar sound of the sputtering of an engine out of fuel. Been there/done that more than once. After a few futile tries to get her started, I looked around, assessed my situation and dropped the bow anchor right in the middle of Holland Cut.

Since I had no power, I had to make this one try at setting the anchor and by now I had a 20-knot wind on my bow. So I let out at least a seven-to-one scope, which is the recommended scope, and the anchor set perfectly. You can tell if you have enough scope by observing the rode just as the anchor sets. If the angle going into the water is very soft, you’re usually good to go. If you have a 45-degree angle on your hands, it probably indicates your scope is approximately two-to-one, which is usually insufficient to hold the boat.

I hit the Vessel Assist® app on my iPhone and it connected me directly with Vessel Assist dispatch. He took my name and location and put me on hold for about a minute or so then came back on the line and said his guys would be there in a jiffy (45 minutes). I said: “Great!” Then I sat back and watched the world go by.

Did you know that most boats, when on a single anchor, will swing 45 degrees off center on both sides for a total of 90 degrees when little or no current is running? So if you have a stern-facing seat, you can watch a good portion of the world around you go by without even moving your head. I love that! What does this have to do with the story, you ask? Not a darn thing. I just thought you’d like to know. So there you have it!

OK. Where was I? Oh yeah. So the Vessel Assist guys show up ahead of schedule packing a hefty towboat. I told them the situation about the gas and they asked me if I wanted gas for the boat. I said I had to travel at about 5 mph due to the bent prop and would just as soon accept a tow to Bethel Harbor. Then I watched as these two professionals did their jobs.



4th of July 2011.



Vessel Assist with a sailboat on the hip.

First, we had to retrieve the anchor. So they hooked a line with a carabineer to my bow eye and steered toward the anchor while I worked the windlass. Slowly but surely we got the anchor squared away without wrapping the prop on the towboat. After that they let out about 50 feet on the towline and we were on our way.

An advertisement for Captain Kev's Boating Instruction. It features a photo of a man wearing a green shirt, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses. The text includes "CAPTAIN KEV'S Personalized BOATING INSTRUCTION", the phone number "925-890-8428", the website "www.pacificpowerboating.com", and logos for Delta Yachtsman, Visa, and Mastercard. It also mentions "U.S.C.G. Lic. Captain" and "LEARN BY THE HOUR • Satisfaction Guaranteed! • Over 500 Satisfied Clients!".

CAPT'N KEVO'S *Boating Tips*

There is something serene about being towed on the water. You can relax and take in the scenery without any engine noise. Once, right in the middle of Lake Tahoe, my ignition modulator crapped out and I needed a tow back to Camp Richardson on the South Shore. The seas were rough and the going slow. So me and my guests just fired up the BBQ and had a fine lunch all the way back to port. (I'm rambling again aren't I?)

The point is that being towed isn't really a bad experience. That is unless you don't have tow insurance. This leads me to the point of this story.

Kevo's Tip:

Most marine insurance policies come with a towing allowance of about \$500. This seems fine, but in reality it is woefully inadequate for the needs of most recreational



Vessel Assist tows a disabled vessel.

boaters. If you haven't already done so, go to www.vesselassist.com. It's like AAA on the water. Buy a policy. You'll be glad you did.

Be safe & happy boating!

As always, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com. ☞



Captain Joey Delano, left and Bill Fitzgerald of Vessel Assist.