

# KEVO'S BOATING TIPS & MORE

BY  
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## **Onboard Powerboat Instruction**

**G**reat... Now show me how to dock 'The Beast' in a 20 mph wind on my starboard beam with a 4 mph current going in the same direction as the wind without crashing into my neighbors or the marina docks like the last time!"

This is the request many boaters have after completing classroom boating instruction and before they inquire about onboard boating instruction. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for classroom or Internet boating instruction for the purposes of understanding the law, safety issues, basic navigation, rules of the road, Coast Guard requirements and VHF operation. We need more California recreational boaters taking these courses (63 percent of California recreational boaters have not taken a boating safety course).

Awhile ago I found myself (by chance) crewing on a large twin-screw trawler on San Francisco Bay with Mr. Ray Tsuneyoshi, Director of the California Department of Boating and Waterways. I'd never met the man and decided to strike up a conversation about how I do onboard powerboat instruction on the Bay and Delta. He seemed very interested. Indeed, it seems the Cal DBW is extremely interested in (and promotes) boating education and safety.

After listening to my explanation detailing the parameters of Pacific Powerboating's onboard powerboat instruction, Mr. Tsuneyoshi boiled my services down to the following: He said I teach "competencies." I had never thought about it that way.

Classroom instruction is all well and good. Again, as I've said before, I encourage all recreational boaters to get classroom or Internet (written) instruction before engaging onboard powerboat instruction services. Pacific Powerboating clients get more out of their lessons having gone through basic "America's Boating Course," "California Boating Law" and "Rules of the Road" courses.

Many states (36) in the U.S. have mandatory boating instruction and issue licenses for operating recreational vessels. California is not one of them. Although lately there has been a lot of interest in how best to inform boaters of the laws and rules of the road with the goal of reducing boating accidents, injuries and deaths on all California waterways and lakes.

The U.S. Coast Guard recently released a study that concluded that 88 percent of the boating accidents reported in the last 10 years in California were due (at least in part) to a lack of knowledge about the law and rules of the road. (Yikes!)

## **Start with the Basics**

A typical onboard lesson from Pacific Powerboating starts with showing proof of insurance. Neither my imaginary employees nor I will board a

vessel that is not insured. Next, all onboard need to sign a liability release form. This document is worded much like the verbiage on the back of the ticket you get when you enter a parking garage. Then I do a simulated Coast Guard/US Power Squadron safety check. I go over all of the items required by the CG/USPS to safely operate the vessel. After that, I drill deeper and do a Pacific Powerboating safety check, which is even more stringent than the CG check. One of the purposes of this is to identify where things like flares, fire extinguishers and life jackets are located in case of an emergency.

After the safety check I give the form to the client. All items checked are good to go. Those circled need to be addressed. Although I cannot issue the Coast Guard/US Power Squadron annual safety sticker, I can prepare the client so that the vessel will pass the check the first time. (Our vessel *Her Way* gets a USCG/USPS safety check every year.)

After this I do an (optional) machinery/systems orientation. Most clients find this very valuable. I go over the master control panel and identify all switches and what they are for. (On nearly every vessel I find at least one switch the purpose of which the client has no idea!)

Next is the hard part: Descending into the engine compartment and identifying all systems and how they operate. After that I open up all floor hatches and access ports and identify all valves and systems. This is usually very interesting. I find all sorts of goodies in these compartments like replacement parts and sometimes really expensive tool kits. I also advise my clients to go to [www.pacificpowerboating.com](http://www.pacificpowerboating.com) to read any relevant *Bay and Delta Yachtsman* magazine articles I've written such as "VHF Operation" and "Trim Tabs."

## **The Main Event**

OK! Now it's down to the main event: "How do I dock this beast?" This is by far the most important (and highest priority) competency for my clients. Actually I call this competency "Close quarters maneuvering/docking." Every boat is different, every marina is different and wind/current issues vary widely throughout the Bay and Delta, so there are many different close quarters maneuvering/docking strategies I employ given the cards I'm dealt with in terms of where the vessel will be docked and what kind of vessel I'm dealing with. (Excuse the pun!) I usually offer at least three different strategies for any given circumstance. Many times, the situation leaving the dock is completely different from what you encounter coming back, so having multiple strategies at the ready is important to safely docking the vessel in all foreseeable circumstances.

There are many different ways to approach close quarters maneuvering/docking when encountering wind and current. The conventional wisdom is that it takes a 10 mph wind to neutralize a 1 mph current in the opposite direction. There are many ways to use the wind and current to your advantage. I have strategies for virtually all conditions (including abort!) HA!

After the initial close quarters maneuvering/docking segment, which in some cases entails multiple lessons, clients usually schedule follow-up sessions on things like anchoring, man overboard procedures, basic navigation, rules of the road and so on.

## **Client Appreciation BBQ**

One of my biggest problems with this business is that my clients inevitably become my friends. This means I can't charge them anymore for my services and expertise. (My wife, Susan, the Admiral hates that.) Having said that, it should come as no surprise that I have started a yearly tradition of hosting a Pacific Powerboating Client Appreciation BBQ.



**Pacific Powerboating hosts its annual Client Appreciation BBQ.**

This year's BBQ was held on Saturday, July 29, at the Delta River House. More than 100 guests attended. Big City Wally from the Shoals restaurant just down the street on the Delta Loop provided the catering for this event. (The Eggs Benedict weekend special at the Shoals is to die for!) The food was great and the venue spectacular. I've driven by this house about a thousand times, but never knew you could rent it for events and



**Rolland Peck and Collette Carroll (proud new owners of a Grand Banks trawler), Kevo and Susan O'Leary, and Uncle Bob.**

vacations. The Delta River House is located on the north fork of the Mokelumne River next to the Riverboat restaurant on the Delta Loop at 106 Brannan Island Road, Isleton, CA., 95641-9713. For more information on vacation/event rentals, go to [www.deltariverhouse.com](http://www.deltariverhouse.com) or call 916/777-4843.

Special thanks to Chris Lamanna and Bonnie Granados of Riverboat Marine Center for helping pull off this caper.

**As always, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or [kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com](mailto:kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com).**

**Be safe and happy boating. ☞**



**Aerial view of the Delta River House.**



**The pool view at the Delta River House.**



**Fun times at the Delta River House.**