

CAPT'N KEVO'S

Boating Tips

Marine Canvas

Marine canvas has always been very popular in the Bay and Delta. One of the reasons is that many Nor Cal boat-

ers want to use their vessels nearly year-round (myself included). So, they set them up for shade in the summer and button them up with isinglass curtains to be nice and cozy



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

while cruising during the winter.

Recently, I was instructing some clients on close quarters maneuvering around Tower Park Resort & Marina in Lodi and we decided to take a break. I took the opportunity to visit with Mr. Curt Page, president and founder of West Coast Canvas, which is located right in the marina.

There are few people on the Bay and Delta with the name recognition that even comes close to legendary longtime *Bay & Delta Yachtsman* magazine contributing editor Mr. Hal Schell. Curt Page is one of these few.

Curt Page grew up on the Delta right in Antioch. At age 15, he took a job sweeping floors and taking out the trash at Delta Canvas. Along the way he took a keen interest in and learned the intricacies of fabricating and installing marine canvas.

In 1982, Curt opened up for business at Tower Park with the "lofty" name West Coast Canvas. This "empire" consisted of him and a seamstress. It didn't take long for the business to take off.

West Coast Canvas is located at 14900 W. Highway 12, Lodi CA 95242. You can reach Curt at 209/333-0243 or sales@westcoastcanvas.com or visit www.westcoastcanvas.com.



A 59-foot Marquis gets a bridge canvas/isinglass upgrade.



Aft deck seat and table get redone.

So I asked Curt, "To what do you contribute to your success?" He replied that his success is due to his energy, enthusiasm, creativity, follow-through, communication skills, commitment to customer satisfaction and the "can do" attitude of his team. Curt personally designs and inspects the work of his team and if something doesn't meet his high standards, he'll tear the whole thing off and redo it even before the customer has a chance to approve it.

Caring For Marine Canvas

There are three names to remember when it comes to choosing a canvas brand: Sunbrella®, Sunbrella® and Sunbrella®. The fact is Sunbrella supplies 90 percent of marine canvas fabric nationwide.

So how do you clean canvas? Sunbrella recommends using a mild detergent such as Ivory Snow. Sunbrella canvas is impregnated with a water-repellant treatment right in the weaving process. If you use harsh detergents, the water repellent qualities of the fabric will deteriorate prematurely.

Marine canvas is best stored rolled up, never folded. Don't store your canvas in the bilge area or anywhere excessive heat, cold, moisture or mildew might be present. A good trick is to put a tube such as PVC tubing at the center of the roll in order to keep any kinks out of the fabric. After about three years, it's a good idea to take your canvas down and treat it with a water repellent. (303® High Tech Fabric Guard is the recommended product for this.)

Caring For Isinglass

Isinglass (pressed, polished, clear/smoked vinyl) should never be folded or rolled. The best way to store isinglass is to lay it flat with fabric between the sheets. Our vessel, *Her Way*, has 17 pieces of isinglass. I store mine in our garage rafters on a sheet of 4-foot by 8-foot plywood. I went to the local fabric store and asked for the cheapest fabric I could get. Then I cut it to match the size of the isinglass sheets and put it between each curtain.

Isinglass can be cleaned with the same mild detergent used on the canvas, but this will not "treat" the isinglass. For this you need to coat it with a product called Plexus®. Meguiar's Plastic Polish or Brilliance® (available at Tap Plastics) are both just as effective as Plexus.

Zippers And Snaps

Deploying marine canvas and isinglass curtains can be a very frustrating experience. If you're like me, and insist that all snaps and zippers function properly,



A Sea Ray Sundancer 34 gets new "Delta Canvas."



A Sea Ray flybridge gets a new bridge enclosure.

it can get personal. I've had many a client at Pacific Powerboating who has, after enduring countless hours trying to get their canvas and isinglass deployed and after many hours of trying, accepted defeat.

When I get to their yachts and show them my tricks, they can't believe it! It usually takes me about 5 minutes to fix the problem they have been working on for hours, even days.

Zippers and snaps should be lubricated with parafin wax, which you can find in the baking aisle of any supermarket. Never use products like WD-40®, which will stain the fabric. Just rub some wax on the zippers and snaps once per year. You'll be amazed at how effective this is!

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If you are trying to get snaps to snap and they seem like they won't match up, try starting at one end of the snap line and snapping the first snap. Then go all the way to the end of the snap line and do the last one. Most times this will line up the rest of the snaps. The trick is to use the (maximum) stretching abilities of the piece by increasing the distance from the start of the stretch to the other. (Does that make sense?)

Don't force the issue. If snaps or zippers don't snap and zip, you need to reduce the tension on the fabric and isinglass. Sounds simple enough, huh?

Take for instance the front of the canvas/isinglass. If you can't get it to come together, pull the pins on each side of the rear of the base of the frame and/or the front. (Be careful not to scratch gel-coat or rip upholstery with the ends of the frame.) This will dramatically reduce tension on the entire structure.

Next, start all zippers but zip them only about 2-3 inches. Then snap the first snap in the line of

snaps on one curtain at a time. Alternate between port and starboard curtains. Go to the other end of the snap line and snap the last one. By doing this you will be taking advantage of maximum stretching ability of the snap line. The middle snaps will now be easier to snap.

Now it's time to zip those zippers. Take it slow and easy. Don't get frustrated. If one won't zip, move to another. With the pins out of the frame, the zippers should (ultimately) cooperate.

Finally, lift the frame back into place and reinsert pins. You may need a screwdriver to boost the frame into the right position for the holes to align with the pins. Putting the pins back in is remarkably easy on most boats; however, with some vessels you may need your first mate to help with this.

What's New And Exciting In The Marine Canvas World?

Fabric:

Sunbrella controls 90 percent of the marine boat canvas market, but they do much more than just boats. In fact, Sunbrella is the largest fabric maker in the world. Over time, Sunbrella has reformulated the fiber content that they use. The results

have been impressive; Sunbrella now warrants all of its marine canvas for 10 full years up from the industry standard of five against fading, mildew, shrinkage and rot.

They've also expanded their color line quite a bit by blending different-colored fabrics together. Along with these developments, there have been parallel improvements to (home) computer monitors in terms of color resolution. So, if you go to www.sunbrella.com you can now get really accurate views of the canvas fabric you are considering for your vessel.

Isinglass:

Manufacturers are constantly improving their products. Material used in the past sometimes had blotches on it, was distorted or gave what appeared to be the "fun house look" when you looked through them.

Also, they are using heavier material than before resulting in a doubling of the thickness of the isinglass used in marine applications.

They have also come up with treatments for these new products that will protect them from scratches and make them last longer. Strataglass™ is the recommended product for the new thicker isinglass.



A houseboat gets a new bimini.

Kevo's Tip:

Marine canvas is a big investment. Protecting this investment takes time and patience. The materials used in today's canvas have been vastly improved. Be kind to your canvas and isinglass and it will pay you dividends in the form of more boating enjoyment (rain or shine) for years to come.

Be safe & happy boating!

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