

Boating Tips

Delta Adventure 4.0

I arrived at 1 p.m. to get the boat ready for a 2 p.m. departure from Loch Lomond Marina in San Rafael. This was to be our fourth trip to the Delta with one of my VIP clients, "Mr. G." (I could tell you his real name, but then I'd have to kill you.) HA!

After removing the covers from the boat, loading the coolers with ice and disconnecting all unnecessary lines, I started the motors in order to warm them up at 1:50 p.m. At 2 p.m., the starboard motor started overheating and the alarm went off. I shut down the motors and started assessing the situation. Mind you, I'm not a mechanic and don't pretend to be one. My immedi-

ate suspicion was that one of the raw water intakes on the Volvo Penta outdrives was clogged with marine life (barnacles).

So I called Mr. G and gave him the news. He said to go ask Harbormaster Pat Lopez for help. So I walked up to the office and inquired as to the location of Pat. He was "around" the marina. That was all I got.

Then this guy walks into the office and I ask if he is Pat. Turns out he is a diver. What are the chances? I need a diver on a moment's notice and I've got one standing right in front of me ready to go!

Simultaneously, Pat walks in. Mr. G had already contacted him and he was a man with a mission to



get Mr. G and his entourage on their way to the Delta.

Now that I had everyone's attention, we set out with a plan to scrub those nasty barnacles off the bottom and get going. Fifteen minutes later, Dave Hook, owner of Captain Hook's Dive Service, arrived at the boat on his skiff with his dive gear on. Sure enough, the boat was in need of a good cleaning.

We all thought the problem was solved and I started the starboard engine only to see the needle move slowly into the red zone indicating the motor was still running hot.

By now it is 4 p.m. on a Friday afternoon in the middle of the summer. I'm sitting at the helm and everyone is giving their two cents worth as to what the culprit might be. Pat gets on the phone and starts talking to the owner of the mechanic outfit located at the marina. To my amazement he actually gets a mechanic (Ricardo Acosta) to show up in 10 minutes toting his tools. Talk about "juice"!

The mechanic deduced that the impeller was the problem and proceeded to replace it. Sure enough, he was right, it was bad. Within an hour he was finished and we were ready to embark.

By now it is 6:30 p.m. and we are running out of daylight to make the



Loch Lomond Marina General Manager/Harbormaster Pat Lopez.



Dave Hook of Capt. Hook's Dive Service.

trip. We thanked and waved goodbye to Pat and were on our way, or so we thought...

As soon as I got out of the 5-mph zone I lit those puppies up and we started to get on plane. Next thing you know, the port motor starts backfiring like a son of a (gun). I couldn't believe it. What else could go wrong?

Then the port motor died altogether and we putted back to the marina on one engine. Mr. G calls Pat again.



Marine Mechanical Repair Inc., from left, Ron Phillips (co-owner), Ricardo Acosta (mechanic) and Gil Munz (co-owner).

By now he is long gone and at home, but agrees to come back to see if some starting fluid would do the trick. Once again I'm sitting helplessly at the helm feeling not too optimistic about our prospects for getting underway before dark, which is something I am definitely not looking forward to.

All of a sudden Pat, who is in the engine compartment, says, "Wait a minute... try it now." The motor

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fired right up and is running perfectly. Apparently, while working on the starboard motor the mechanic accidentally loosened a connection related to the electronic ignition on the port motor, which caused the problem.

You should have seen the look on Pat's face. He did it!

By now it is 7:30 p.m. and the seas are still rough. We took off again and this time all went well. I knew the trip would take at least two solid hours of hard driving and there was no way we were going to arrive at the Riverboat Restaurant before dark.

Oh, did I mention there was no moon that night? Ouch! I thought to myself I'm going to earn my fee tonight. Sure enough, by the time we passed under the Antioch Bridge it was totally dark. Luckily, we had a very good GPS onboard and I am very familiar with the route; however, I am reduced to navigating between the red and green lights of the channel markers and checking the GPS every 30 seconds or so to make sure we were still on track and navigating in the channel.

Luckily, due to the roiling seas there was no nautical traffic on the river. Even so, I slowed down to about 20 mph, just barely on plane, stood up at the helm seat and kept my eyes glued to the horizon in front of us looking for anything out of the ordinary for navigating at night with no moon.

I don't recommend attempting this to anyone who doesn't have intricate knowledge of the waterways and the lateral buoyage system along with a working GPS. Radar would have been helpful, but we did not have it.

Once we turned onto the Mokolumne River, we lost the navigation aids and had to slow down to bare steerageway for about one-quarter mile until we reached our destination. We arrived safely and I let out a sigh of relief that the trip was over. My client had no idea how precarious the last 30 minutes of the trip was and that was fine with me! We all had a late dinner at the restaurant and headed for bed.

Stefan arrived at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday with his new 22-foot Cobalt to take Mr. G, his guest and myself skiing and wakeboarding for the day. Mr. G and his guest had a blast on some perfect glass. We had a late lunch at Sugar Barge on Bethel Island and headed back to the mother ships for cocktails and dinner.

Sunday we went back to the same area on the north side of Mildred Island to ski and wakeboard, then headed

to Garlic Brothers at Village West Marina for a great (late) lunch. After lunch, we headed down the San Joaquin back to home base.

Mr. G's ride home arrived by car at 7 p.m. to take our guests back to Marin while I put my boat, *Her Way*, back in the slip and I drifted off to sleep. Monday morning I woke up and started getting ready to deliver Mr. G's boat back to Loch Lomond. I waited until 7:45 a.m. to leave, because I wanted to fuel up at Pittsburg and I knew the gas dock did not open until 8:30 a.m.

The seas were choppy even at this early hour. I made it to Pittsburg, docked at the fuel dock and started my fueling procedure by stopping both engines and closing all hatches. Next I took the keys out of the ignitions.

Both keys and the fuel cap tool were attached to the same "floatie," making it difficult to get the second key to spread far enough to reach the second ignition.

While removing the fuel cap, something incredible happened. The "beaded" chain holding all essential keys to the floatie came apart and



Beaded key chain with floatie.

right before my eyes one of the ignition keys fell off and after striking the gunwale went right into the water. My immediate thought was: Dude, you are so screwed!

I walked into the Harbormaster's office like a beaten dog and asked if they had a magnet I could borrow to try to retrieve the key from 7 feet of water. To my amazement they had one! I attached a dock line to the magnet and proceeded to plunk for the key.

After about 10 minutes and no luck, Harbormaster Van DePiero came down to say hi and learned

of my predicament. Right then I thought: Wait a minute; let's put the magnet near the remaining ignition key and sure enough it was not magnetic. (I am so screwed!)

Right then, Van had a brilliant suggestion to try the remaining key in both ignitions. It worked! Both keys were the same cut! Van grabbed the key and took off for the hardware store to get another key made. Ten minutes later he returned with keys in hand.

I thanked Van, started both motors and was once again on my way. The going was rough all the way to the Carquinas Straits and I thought the worst was yet to come in upper San Pablo Bay. To my amazement it was flat calm all the way to San Rafael.



Pittsburg Marina Harbormaster Van DePiero.

Kevo's Tip:

On most boats these fill caps are near or on the edge of the boat. Keep ignition keys separate from the fuel/waste/water cap tool on a floatie and always carry a spare set of ignition/hatch keys onboard.

Be safe & happy boating!

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