

# Boating Tips

## Props Part II

It was billed to be one of the best raft-outs of the year. Our club, the Sacramento Bayliner Club, was going to make our yearly (and sometimes more often than that) gathering way up in The Meadows State Park at a spot affectionately known as "Herman's Lost Slough." And, no, you won't find it on the map!

Our flotilla planned a 10 a.m. departure from the Riverboat marina, Willow Berm and Korth's Pirate's Lair marina. At about 11:30 a.m. (Delta time) we actually shaped up and headed upriver on the north fork of the Mokelumne River. *Her Way* was designated the "lead dog."

We proceeded to the Mokelumne River Bridge as a group and got the "go ahead" from the bridge tender

to come on at speed from the south. We realize the "carbon footprint" by opening the bridge can be managed and greatly reduced by voluntarily grouping our vessels together allowing all to pass with just one opening (in a hurry). Depending on the bridge, nautical traffic can stop vehicular traffic for miles in each direction just to let one boat pass.

Next stop: Miller's Ferry Bridge, just before Giusti's Restaurant & Grill. After that we cruised past Walnut Grove Marina and then to the entrance to The Meadows.

Whack! Right off the bat we (*Her Way*) struck an underwater obstacle at the entrance to The Meadows. Mind you, we were 15 feet off the southern levee. This was "supposed" to be the safest route. But nooooo... We had to hit something



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

that caused a vibration in the port powertrain. Before the day was through, four out of 17 boats in our group struck underwater obstacles in The Meadows.

So it's right before Labor Day. I thought Wes Williams, manager of Delta Boat Works, would laugh in my face if I told him I'd like to have the boat worked on near Labor Day. To my amazement he had that puppy out of the water the same day.

Concurrently, the "prop guru" one Mr. Steve Thomas of Thomas Marine Propeller, showed up to fulfill the second half of my article on props. He was eager to show me what his computerized "Prop Scan" system could do for the performance of our boat. The entire operation took four working days (very impressive)!

## Typical Excellent Customer Service

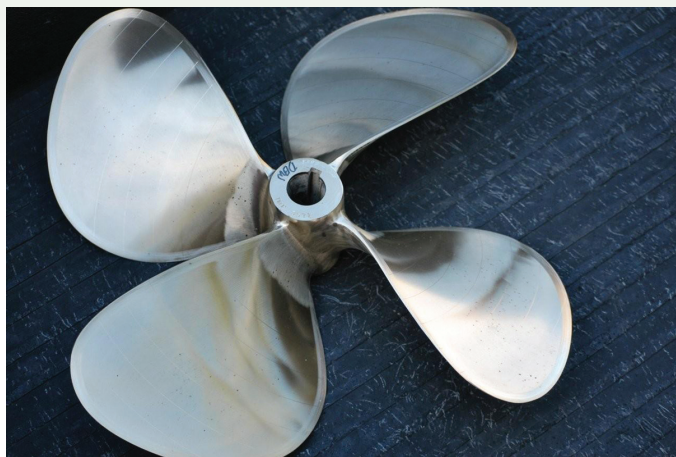
So I asked Steve to describe a typical conversation with a prospective client and the following is pretty much what my experience was dealing with Thomas Marine Propeller:

Steve Thomas:

"Yes I'm sure we can repair your props. Why yes, we have about a 99.5% success rate. Missing blade area is usually not a problem as we can weld that back up. Yes sir, I can



From left, Steve Thomas of Thomas Marine Propeller, some "Kevo" impersonator and Wes Williams, Manager of Delta Boat Works.



pick them up on Tuesday as we have a route that day in the Delta. Yes, of course we can have it done in a week. If you want to bring them into the shop today or tomorrow we can have them back to the boat yard next Tuesday. Oh, you have other work that needs to be done in addition to the bottom job? Well it is nice to not be in a big hurry, so thanks and I have you in the schedule.

"There is the matter of a bit of homework for you to do, though. I need some accurate information about your boat, and you can download the sheet that specifies that information from our website. Oh, you're on it now? Great, get that filled out and back to me ASAP so I can get the calculations done and we'll be ready to get to work on your props as soon as we get them in the shop..."

Such is the marine propeller business. They are here to make an unpleasant part of boating as painless as possible and increase boat performance in the process. Increased boat performance doesn't always mean going 75 knots everywhere, either. (Although, they can help those guys, too.)

Better marine propeller performance means less fuel burned, smoother running, better handling, and a longer lasting powertrain.

### What Did You Find And What Was The Solution?

Steve Thomas:

"On arrival in the shop, Kevin's props were measured and evaluated using our Prop Scan equipment. The port prop had obvious damage and needed what we refer to as light welding (15 minutes or less) and his starboard prop was in a poor state of tune and did not match the port prop's pitch. In conversations with Kevin I discovered his boat would attain maximum RPM quite readily even with a few passengers and provisions onboard. To me that meant his props were most likely under pitched for the boat, engines and gearbox combination.

"Using UCalc and information gleaned from the 'propeller analysis form' I had Kevin fill out on our web-

site, I determined that he could indeed use more pitch to get his engines to transmit power to the water more efficiently. He would gain speed and use less fuel in the process. The mismatched pitch his props had before I got my hands on them certainly didn't help efficiency as it caused his engines to load each other rather than transmitting power together to the water.

"I input the desired pitch and propeller blade cross section design into our Prop Scan machine and then David (my lead propeller technician) input that design into the props with the skill that comes from 20-plus years of using Prop Scan in Australia and the USA.

"Kevin's props were then finished using our propri-



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# K E V O ' S *Boating Tips*



*Her Way* reaching 22.2 mph. Notice how well the boat is planed out.

etary system, and zero tolerance balanced. At this point I was really looking forward to the sea trial as this was one of those jobs that would result in a big smile on the boat owner's face!"

## **Kevo's Tip:**

The sea trial went great. Steve was right when he said I would feel the difference right away. I feel it was a good idea to get the props tuned on *Her Way* while she was on the hard.

The service I received from both Delta Boat Works and Thomas Marine Propeller was outstanding. *Her Way* idles faster, runs smoother, handles better and has a noticeable increase in top end performance at the same RPM as before.

I'm certain that the cost will be absorbed by greater fuel economy over the long haul. I also believe the noticeable decrease in vibration is a good thing for the longevity of the powertrains.

Be safe & happy boating.

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