



THE LIGHT LAGUNA MADRE YACHT CLUB

July 2008



Old Dog, New Tricks *Brian Mikiten*

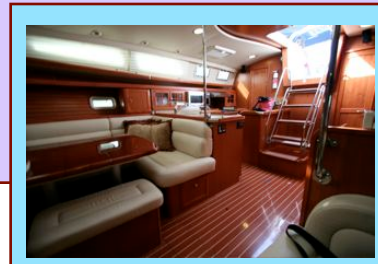
I have a few sailing goals in my life and I was recently able to check one off the list - I received my certification for bareboat and offshore sailing at a national sailing school. I mention this because I learned some very valuable lessons both on and off the water that I'd like to share with everyone.

The class was designed for people who had sailing experience, had passed a few other ASA or US Sailing courses and could provide a decent sailing resume. Among the four students, two had limited experience and one had just finished two other courses with no prior experience. As a result, I was, even with my limited time on the water, the Old Dog on the boat - a brand new 50' Hunter. The teacher was a highly experienced ocean racer, transatlantic sailor and overall nice guy who had more patience than any single person I have ever met.

During the one week course, our days were split between teaching, chalk board sessions, sailing and maneuvers. Many of these maneuvers done over and over until everyone could execute them without any errors and occupied most of the class time on the water. The concept was simple - everyone can sail in a straight line but docking, man overboard, heaving-to and other techniques were far less common skills. We covered diesel engine design and maintenance, plumbing systems, offshore rules, Coast Guard regulations, heavy weather sail-

Hurricane Season Is Here

Don't forget that hurricane season is here and there have already been two named tropical storms. Your local news station may or may not cover these storms until you don't have a chance to prepare. Monitor NOAA and the Weather Channel for more detailed and early information. Keep lines ready on your boat, stow the bimini and be prepared to act quickly if you need to respond. In a perfect world, you'd have a back up helper lined up if you can't get to the boat in time.

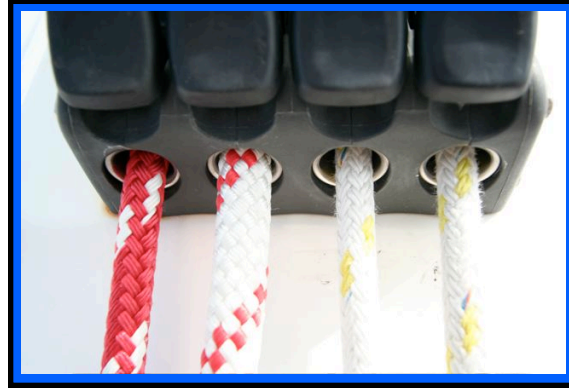




ing and an array of practical boating techniques. It was, at times like drinking out of a fire hose.

Everyone Can Sail

Everyone there had a simple goal - be able to bareboat a sailboat anywhere in the world without a courtesy Captain. After taking the course, the certification extended to boats just over 50' LOA. These were not people who had spent years on the water and felt ready to graduate to a larger boat - these were just people off the street who had studied, and wanted to do the big boat thing.



This was my first lesson - the fantasy and lure of sailing is everywhere and has little to do with actual experience. Big boat access isn't limited to people who hang out a West Marine in their days off or hop on their boats every weekend just to be on the water. I was struck by the fact that so many people have gone through the school (over 100,000) with little experience in the beginning but with the explicit goal of being able to pilot a large vessel. On one hand, it says a lot about how simple it is to learn but on the other hand, you'd be smart to keep that fact in mind when you are on the water and expecting everyone to mind the rules of the road! It was my only real criticism of the course - the lack of experience required to gain access to such a large and expensive boat. Keep in mind, the instructor was very clear about practicing and spending many hours sailing before headed out to the BVI alone with the kids.

I know that cruising boats in charter fleets are often built to tougher standards with reinforced hulls, smaller sail plans and shorter masts. It is certainly a different environment from a racer's goals of more sail, deeper keels and higher performance hulls. Quite honestly, while the Hunter 50 wasn't a boat I'd purchase, I can imagine how easy it would be to get used to sailing without worrying about perfectly set sails or a high performance hull. Sailing took on a different and very satisfying feel when time wasn't a factor. I had forgotten that. I took my family out on Saturday, sailed to an island, anchored, swam ashore and walked on a beach finding sea shells. It was just like a vacation poster and probably the best time any of them have had sailing with me in years. That was an important lesson. Fun first, fast second. I'll be doing more cruising around SPI in the near future.



Recent SPI Memorial Day Cruise
Fun, relaxing and a great time!

The Man Down Lesson

The next lesson had to do with the proper execution of the various man overboard recovery methods. Many of us at LMYC remember the man overboard drill from last racing season. It wasn't my shining moment. We practiced the figure 8 and life sling procedures but also added a new one sanctioned by the RYA and soon the US Coast Guard. The method is simple - call out the man overboard and assign a spotter, heave-to with the man to leeward and motor to the man in the water. It turns out that this procedure is not only the fastest I've ever seen but it can be done by just about anyone on the boat regardless of sailing level. The teacher made a good point - most boats have an engine of some type and in a life threatening situation, all means are acceptable. Our recovery times were less than a minute or two compared to much longer times for any other method.



Watching Others Sail

Because of the student count, everyone took on a different task. I'm used to being the skipper but in this case, 75% of my time was spent doing fore-deck, sail trimming and other jobs. I learned that I'm guilty of not giving my crew enough time to think and finish their task at times. I also assume certain things and probably need to be more clear when issuing commands from behind the wheel. Communication was a critical issue. A bigger boat leads to greater distances between the crew and clear direction and acknowledgement of the skippers commands

is important. Take some time to crew on another boat and remind yourself what it means to take commands from the back of the boat.

Sometimes Things Go Wrong

On the first day, we discovered that the boat had a manufacturing defect allowing the motor switch to be kept in the start position for extended periods of time which, in turn, burned out the starter solenoid. It was a lovely smell and the smoke was a nice addition to the cool morning air. Without a starter, we were stuck and I was ready to spend time at the dock or in class while repairs were made. My mistake. A tow off the dock had us on our way. Repairs would be made later that day when we returned.

On the second day, an attempted repair from the previous day resulted in the loss of most of the electrical system and the ability to turn anything on except for the radio which was wired permanently on. No problem, we can practice our dead reckoning skills and navigation with charts. Off we went again.

Docking around other boats (often \$4M power yachts) certainly made you think hard about wind and currents before heading to the dock. My favorite line from my instructor was "now just drop the sails and pilot the boat so that you slip in between that big Hatteras and the Hinkley over on G dock."

The lesson here is to be prepared and have your boat handling skills sharp enough to be able to get in and out of a marina even if your engine fails. Keep those dividers and charts ready just in case your GPS fails. Know your spring line techniques and understand how tides, currents and other factors affect you when you are under bare poles. I was ready to give up but instead found a set of experiences that reminded me that it is possible to sail in an out of a tight area as long as you plan and know your boat.

In the End...

It was an amazing experience and one that I would do again in a heartbeat. On the first day the instructor said "if you think this will be a vacation, I want to assure you that it isn't. It will be fun but each day will be full of new information and many, many hours of work". That was an understatement. I'm a better sailor because of the class and my experience with others that have very different backgrounds and sailing resumes.



~ Fleet Captain's Report ~

July Fleet Captain Report

SPI Gulf Boat Parade

Sailors from the Laguna Madre Yacht Club enjoyed a perfect sail on the first day of summer this year. About 5 boats met near the jetties and sailed up the island in an easy 10 knot breeze out of the east. I wouldn't exactly call it a parade but the skyline was full of beautiful sails. The day couldn't have been better. Afterwards the gang met at the club house for an impromptu cocktail party and dinner. A good time was had by all.

July Activities

July 4th – Informal “anchor out” to enjoy the fireworks display on the bay.

July 19th – Raft-up in the Turning Basin in place of the scheduled Lady's Day race. Let's meet at 1:00 PM in the Port Isabel Turning Basin near South Point Marina for an afternoon of swimming & relaxing. This is always a popular event with lots of food, beverage, and camaraderie.

August Activities

The Ocean Challenge racing program will resume August 2nd with a day long ocean race in the Gulf. Hopefully this one will go off without a weather hitch. Look for the Notice of Race in your email box soon.

August 16th is the night of the full moon and time for our annual sunset/moonlight cruise. We'll meet between the bridges near sundown and enjoy the sunset and full moon rise. It's always a delightful time of day so come out and join us. Look for more details in your email box in August.

August 30th is the scheduled start of a new event for our club – The SPI Cup Racing Series. If we can get this organized, we are planning a weekend of racing off South Padre Island. Look for more details later.

HEAR YE! HERE YE! HERE YE!

**It's time again for our annual Work Party.
"Cleanup, Paint up, Fix up Day"**

Saturday, July 26 - 9:00 A.M. - Until ???.

**The clubhouse belongs to all of our members,
so we'd appreciate your help.**

If you can't make it in the morning, come in the afternoon.

Let's get the clubhouse in shipshape condition!

New Member Update

Please welcome these recent new members to the Club. We hope to be seeing them out on the water and at the club socials and races.

You may want to add their names and information to your directory.

Chauncey and Jane Murphy

226 Rainbow Dr. #12691
Livingston, TX 77399

(281) 798-9643
jmurph613@yahoo.com

Great Dane – "Danish Star"

William Rushfeldt

4200 Boca Chica
Brownsville, TX 78521

(956) 266-3789
ioniaguy@yahoo.com

Balboa 23 – "Calypso"



2008 Flag Officers

- COMMODORE..... Wes Thom 956-233-7628
- VICE COMMODORE..... Rocky Poovey 956-943-1540
- REAR COMMODORE..... Brian Mikiten 210-863-5245
- SECRETARY..... JoAnne Lesieutre 956-761-3169
- TREASURER..... Tom Gossman 956-371-9299
- FLEET CAPTAIN..... Jim Godfrey 956-943-4718
- STEWARD..... Peggy Godfrey 956-943-6427
- FLEET SURGEON..... Bob Christenson 956-486-7360
- FLEET BARRISTER..... John Pinkerman 956-943-1082

Social announcements will now be made via email to ensure that they are timely. If you are not getting them, please contact Peggy.

Thanks to Jim for his photos and regular contributions. Special thanks to Benjamin Mikiten for his photos for the Old Dog, New Tricks article.

Brian Mikiten - Editor and Rear Commodore

For changes or comments email bmikiten@idworld.net

Queen Isabella Causeway (east end), Texas

July 2008

