



Don't Make Me Yell

By Mark Einstein

Over the years, I have come to love the sound of “marina music.” The hum of wind in the wires, the chime of bells jingling from the masts, the cadence of wavelets tapping on the hull, accompanied by a chorus of seagulls are Mother Nature’s magnum opus. However, like a sudden squall, the song of the obnoxious marina camper often interrupts the composition. The more dissonant cacophony is conducted by the demons of ego, impatience, and inexperience. Specifically, I am referring to communication problems that beset men and women under sail, almost always sparking a downward spiral in the romantic dreams they may have originally sought.

I have found that sailing a boat can be easy, as long as no one is watching. The difficulty emerges as the proud commander brings his ship back from the open sea, successfully traversing the channel between the day marks and buoys, entering the safety of his port.

It is happy hour. The wind is up, marina music fills the air, and the ever-faithful mate, usually the captain’s wife, stands watch from the bow eagerly awaiting instructions. The marina is packed tightly with a flotilla

of boats, squeezed snugly up against each other, their cockpits crowded with spectators enjoying their cocktails.

The wind is coming from behind as the captain makes his turn into the fairway. Passing his narrow slip about halfway down, he slows to a crawl. He is going to back her in. Suddenly, he is slipping sideways in the direction of the defenseless flotilla. He barks a command to his wife on the bow who turns and hollers that she cannot understand him. He yells back that she needs to fend off, “NOW! *@*#!”

They are on a collision course with a neighboring yacht whose protruding anchor reaches out into the fairway. The helm won’t respond in reverse. She shoves hard against the first victim’s bow rail but is overpowered by the momentum of the wind-driven assault. Crash! The captain explodes into a tirade as the sharp flukes of the anchor scrape deeply into his shiny fiberglass hull. He abandons the helm, screaming, as he frantically stumbles to the bow throwing his mate out of the way. His language is atrocious. His incredulous neighbors stow their cocktails, leaping from their cockpits onto the dock to lend a hand, but it’s too late. The

damage is done. The captain’s ego has sunk, and his marriage may be on the rocks.

Such battles for sexual supremacy on a boat can also present great hazards to life and limb as I personally discovered one day while performing a routine repair on a boat at Beach Marina on Barnegat Bay in New Jersey. As the “man on the scene,” I often found notes and reminders taped to my boat for my “immediate attention.” These were sometimes invitations to dinner or dockside parties. More often, they were requests for favors, advice, or some kind of repair needed on a boat. This particular day, I discovered a note asking me to fix an anchor light on a Catalina 34.

The owner easily winched me to the top where he held me in place by tying the main halyard line around a cleat on the deck. His wife stood next to him in the blazing sun, holding a large glass of red wine, squinting up at me as I completed the task. A sudden powerboat wake rolled in from the fairway. The boat lurched, knocking her off balance, and the wine went flying. The glass slipped out of her hand smashing into the metal cleat where the line was tied. Out of nowhere, and as if possessed by some sort of

evil spirit, her husband began to scream uncontrollably, calling her names and blaming her for staining *his* boat and saturating *his* halyard line with the dark red wine. Looking down from the masthead, I thought he had lost his mind.

He flew into the cabin, forgetting about me, looking for rags and cleaning supplies. The problem was that if he let me down, the dripping stain on the halyard would travel back up the mast, out of his reach, then set and dry in the hot sun. I tried to yell down that he could lower me first, and then we could tie another line to the halyard to get the stain back down. He would have none of it as he insisted he needed to hose and scrub the mess before he could let me down. The entire coil was drenched, and he was afraid the line would stain his mast as well as drip down all over the cabin top. He continued to scold and berate his wife as he mopped up the mess.

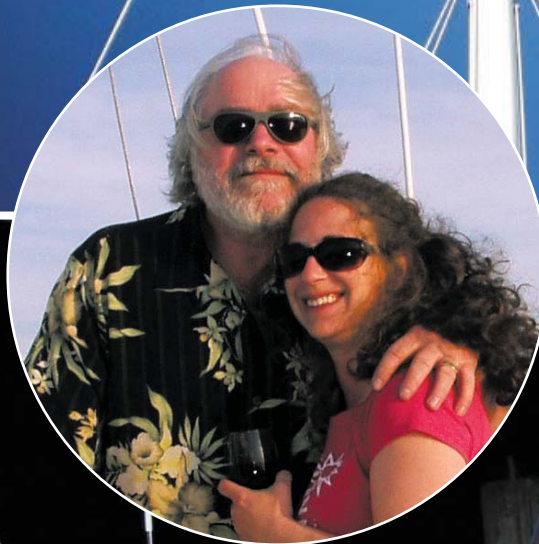
When he was finally satisfied with his work, he prepared to release the halyard. He unfastened the wet, soapy line and then sliced his hand wide open on a piece of glass he had missed from the cleanup. His hand snapped open and he let go of the line, sending me free falling toward the deck 50 feet below. It happened so quickly that the best I could do was get my arms around the mast and wait until I slammed into the spreaders halfway down, grabbing on for dear life. I hung on for a second or two while the owner and his humiliated spouse eased me the rest of the way to the deck. By this time, the halyard *and* the deck were stained with blood.

There is a wonderful sailing school in Annapolis called Womanship, whose patient curriculum is designed to give women the confidence to sail without fear of humiliation. Their motto is "Nobody Yells." Unfortunately, I am sure there must be a school somewhere called Manship. And far too many sailors have graduated with flying colors. Their motto seems to be, "Don't Make Me Yell!"

About the Author: Mark Einstein, a high school history teacher, was born and raised in Baltimore. He has operated sailing charters since 1984, covering the Barnegat and Chesapeake Bays as well as the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. A licensed captain, he and his first and only mate Suzanne run charters aboard their 36-foot Watkins departing from Waterman's Crab House out of Rock Hall. "Don't Make Me Yell" is an excerpt from a collection called "No Cruise, No Crab Cake."



Red wine, cranky couples, and anchor light repairs do not mix well as Mark Einstein learned the hard way. Photo by Jay Lloyd.



← Mark and Suzanne Einstein run sailing charters departing from Waterman's Crab House out of Rock Hall. Photo by Jay Lloyd.



Now *that's* marina music! The author rockin' in Rock Hall. Photo by Jay Lloyd.