

## **SAFE BOATING AND THE DRY TORTUGAS**

This is what safe boating is all about and why we go on our adventures as a group.

As you all know, Bob Burns lead a Weekend Trip to the Dry Tortugas on May 18th There were eight boats making this voyage. The trip down was splendid. This was the Burns fourth trip to the Dry Tortugas. We all arrived safely Friday afternoon. However, Sea Ghost reported that his engines weren't operating properly. Nevertheless, Sea Ghost went out fishing Friday afternoon and Jim Mueller reported that the boat was responding fine.

On Saturday morning, many of us went ashore to take the tour of Fort Jefferson and have lunch on the beach. Several of us were going to go snorkeling in the afternoon when we learned that a cold front was coming out of the North East and the weather was going to be bad on Sunday for our trip home (lots of wind and very rough seas) So regrettably, we decided as a group to leave within the next hour. Everyone readied their boats and we started for home.

The first boat to have problems was ours "The Bobber". After the Bobber switched fuel tanks, our engines died. Everyone bobbed around us while I tried to get them started. Sea Ghost was concerned because he wasn't sure that he had enough fuel to get all the way home. So, Sea Ghost, Denise's Hope, and the Rising's friends Chuck and Diane Rowe started off as one group.

The second group to leave was: Marco Motion (Edgars) and Marcia Ann (Orsolini). We could certainly understand their concerns, as the weather forecast was predicting that the winds were going to pick up all night and the size of their boats. This was the first group to arrive safely on Marco.

Meanwhile, the Molly B and My Ruthie accompanied the Bobber back into the harbor so that I would have calmer seas by which to continue to get the water out of the engines. Finally, about 4:15P.M., the last group left Garden Key.(About two hours after the first group). Not wanting to arrive home after dark, we decided to leave because of the weather reports. The small craft warning was up and predicted to get worse.

About three hours into the trip home, we ran across the first group to leave the island. Denise's Hope was towing Sea Ghost who also lost power to his engines. There wasn't much we could do to help. My Ruthie offered to radio for help as soon as we got closer to Marco Island. John was able to get the message to Sea Tow.

Meanwhile, we (Molly B, My Ruthie and The Bobber) continued on. The seas got worse as the sun was setting. The last 10 miles to Marco were terrible. It started to rain and we could barely see. We stopped and tried to clear out windshield. In those several minutes, we lost sight of Molly B and My Ruthie. We had to slow down to 10 knots. The Molly B and My Ruthie had trouble finding the markers to the pass. Thank goodness for GPS.

Getting into Caxambas Pass was very difficult I lost one of our spotlights overboard. Ginny thought that I was going to go overboard and did not want to drive the boat. I guided her through the pass, using a hand held radio on 68, continually telling her to steer right but the wind was taking her left. (John thought that our conversation on Channel 68 was pretty funny, later of course). John and Bob stayed with us until we were safely through the Pass. We arrived home safely at 10P.M.

Meanwhile the saga continued for the first three boats that left Garden Key. Se Tow finally arrived but they were unable to get lines to Sea Ghost due to the rough seas. Denis Rising therefore continued to tow Sea Ghost. Denis reported that they experienced 8 to 12 foot seas and did not reach Marco until 3:00A.M. (13 hours after leaving Garden Key).

As Vice Commodore, I take my hat off to the Risings for doing what had to be done in a very scary situation. (And, also to the Rowes who hung in there with Sea Ghost and Denise's Hope). I want to personally thank the Burns and Putnams for staying with Ginny and I until we could get underway and the trip through the Pass. All eight boats arrived safely. A great team effort and thank you to all!

Bob Vroman, Vice Commodore