

# The Watchhorn

March 2010

Holiday Harbor/Cabrillo Marina

March is by far my favorite month of the year. Although it is the month of my birthday, a date which becomes less and less fun with each passing year, to me it signals the beginning of the end of winter. (Not that we can complain much about the weather here in sunny Southern California, I've seen it hit eighty degrees at the marina in January.) March is also the only month that celebrates a particular holiday by drinking green beer, an idea I can really get behind. But best of all, March signals the beginning of the boating season. That's right; sailboat rides, quick hops to the island, ice cold cocktails and sunny evenings full of tall tales and long naps. What could be better? But before you crank over that motor and head for oblivion, there are a few items you should pay attention to:

- 1) **Batteries.** Just because you haven't flipped on a light in your boat recently doesn't mean that your batteries have been unused during your absence. More likely than not, you've still left your charger on, which will continue to cycle on and off as the charge in the battery drops over time. As this occurs heat is created, which sometimes can cause the water inside the battery to evaporate. Should the water level get low enough, flammable vapors can build, sometimes resulting in dangerous explosions. Please make sure you check these water levels before you start the motor the first time (AGM or other "maintenance-free" batteries do not have this problem). Also, it is important that you house your batteries in a flammable resistant, waterproof box that is not affected by our extremely corrosive and wet environment. If your battery is in a wooden box or in no box at all, it is suggested that you purchase a simple and cheap plastic box to contain it.
- 2) **Bilge pumps.** Although countless ships have been saved by the presence of a simple bilge pump, little respect is given to these hard workers. Please make sure that not only your bilge pump works, but that the float switch works as well. In my experience, it is the switch that fails more often than the actual pump. I would also seriously recommend that every boat has at least two active pumps on board, if not three or four.
- 3) **Dock lines.** Every minute of every day your dock lines are working hard at keeping your boat in its slip. Over time this friction damages the lines, plucking individual strands apart until the day of the big storm when they fail completely. Do not let this happen to you. Check your lines regularly, replacing those with a cut strand or an exposed inner core. Installing chafe guards is recommended as well, which will act as a sacrificial fabric that can extend the life of a line by years.
- 4) **Power cords.** A loose power cord connection can cause a short in the plug, which can damage the plug and even cause a fire. Please make sure that your cord is corrosion free and installed in a way that keeps it out of the water and away from the walkways before it becomes a trip hazard.

*D.H. Jr.*

## Real News

- As I'm sure most of you are aware, for the better part of a year our gates have been equipped with a mechanical closing unit. These units are capable of both closing the gates as well as controlling their rate of return. Please allow these mechanisms to do their job. By forcing the gates shut, we run the risk of damaging critical parts to the units, creating unnecessary wear and tear that can be detrimental to them in the long run. Open them as quickly as you like, but let the units do the closing.
- Please remember to put all dock carts back at the base of the gangways when not in use. The more our carts are left in the parking lot, by the bathrooms or along the public walkway the more likely they are to end up in the hands of boaters from other marinas. Taking a few extra seconds to put the carts back where they belong saves marina staff and other boaters a great deal of effort and time.