

Entertaining Annapolis Harbor

On Thursday, September 29, 2016, Tenacity, Silent Running and Elsie's Phantasie were returning from the Fall Cruise, traveling north from the Choptank River and Oxford in Gale Force winds and rain with four foot waves. Tenacity decided to take a slip at Port Annapolis Marina, Silent Running headed to Harness Creek on the South River and Elsie's Phantasie headed for Annapolis harbor to take a mooring.

It seemed like everyone in the harbor was watching as we picked up the mooring ball three times, and each time the 30 to 35 knot wind blew us away from the ball making it impossible to pull it in to slip a line through the eye. At some point we called the Annapolis Harbor Master's office and asked for assistance and were only given suggestions on how to secure a mooring (try to bring it abeam). The Harbor Taxis were not allowed to pick up anyone who wasn't already on a mooring. Our third attempt was from the lifeline gate near the cockpit, with a plan for Steve to jump out of the cockpit to attach the line as soon as I caught the ball with our floating boat hook. Once again the wind blew us away from the ball, bending my arm backwards around the stanchion and forcing me to drop the boat hook which was caught in the eye of the bridle on the mooring ball.

We circled around, as I rushed to the swim platform and retrieved the boat hook. Someone in the harbor called us on the radio and suggested that we try to catch the mooring ball from the stern of the boat. Steve backed toward the ball and I attempted to grab the pennant as we approached it. Before I could pick up the line the ball was swept around the port side of the boat and disappeared. The pennant was now wrapped around our propeller and the mooring ball was pulled under the boat.

Although we were now securely attached to a mooring at our stern, our boat was not in the correct staggered position that would result from attaching the mooring at the bow. Steve rushed inside and put on his wetsuit, ran to the swim platform, went into the water and swam to the nearest mooring ball with the end of the 100 foot anchor line that we saved from my father's first boat while I watched from the starboard deck. While all of this was going on I heard somebody on the radio calling the Coast Guard to report a person in the water. Steve attached the line, swam back to the boat and climbed aboard and tightened the line on a stern cleat. He was thinking about going under the boat to assess the situation, but decided not to do it. I was happy for that decision. When I looked at the parking lot between Pusser's and the burned Annapolis Yacht Club building I saw the flashing lights on several police cars and an ambulance, and another ambulance in the parking lot near the Harbor Master's office.

The Coast Guard announced a PAN PAN reporting a person in the water in Annapolis Harbor. I heard someone say the Coast Guard was on their way and they were sending a helicopter. I looked over the port side deck and an old man from the Harbor Master's Office was standing in a bouncing dinghy holding onto our rub rail. I told him we didn't need the coast guard or the ambulances, and that nobody had fallen overboard. He saw Steve and began yelling at him for going in the water, and told him not to dive under the boat. I told the man from the Harbor Master's Office to sit down and be careful as he drove away, and he replied "Yeah, I'm an old man".

With everybody in the mooring field watching us, we provided the entertainment on a dismal rainy and very windy day.

We called TowBoat US and they sent Rob who is stationed on Spa Creek. He took the line from the mooring at our stern and moved it to a different mooring turning our bow into the wind. He also put a second line on the mooring just in case the first one broke loose. He said the water was too rough for him to dive under the boat, but he would return to remove the mooring line from our propeller when the wind died down.

The old man from the Harbor Master's Office came back several times to yell at us, saying that we had to get off of the mooring, and get the other mooring ball freed from our propeller so they could bring in the boat show boats and begin setting up the docks. It seemed as though he didn't understand why TowBoat US hadn't freed us, even though he had told Steve the water was too rough for Steve to go under the boat.

The gale force winds continued until close to midnight, and we spent a stressful night attached to two moorings. Early the next morning, the winds had died and another man from the Harbor Master's Office came back to our boat telling us we had to move to another mooring. We called TowBoat US on the radio just after 9 AM, and nobody answered our call. Steve called them from the cell phone, and received a return call from Dale Plummer at Baltimore Marine Recovery. He said he was on his way and that Rob was coming from Spa Creek to dive under our boat and cut the mooring ball free and remove the line.



About an hour later the two boats were rafted off of us, and the diver located the ball under our port side. He dove down with a knife, freed the mooring ball and then went down two more times to cut the pennant off of our propeller. The diver informed us that he saw no damage to our boat, and the damage to the mooring ball appeared minimal. Dale Plummer assisted us in retrieving the 100 foot anchor line and the long dock lines that were joined and tied to the other mooring ball on our bow, and slipping two lines through the eye on the pennant and back to our bow. Before they left they handed me the tattered pennant cut from the mooring ball to keep for a souvenir of our calamity. Dale helped us to and to retrieve the 100 foot anchor line and attach two stronger lines to the mooring .



The man from the Harbor Master's Office stopped by again to tell me that he had been wrong and we could stay on the mooring until noon on Sunday when the harbor would be turned over to the Boat Show crew. We will have to pay for a new pennant and possibly a new mooring ball plus the cost for a diver to inspect the mooring to make sure it was not loosened or damaged by the pennant being wrapped around the propeller.

Once all of the excitement was over we launched our dinghy and picked up Bill and Linda from Silent Running, who had joined us in Annapolis Harbor just before the TowBoat US boats arrived. We went to the dinghy dock, walked around and did some shopping and finally had our morning coffee at 3 PM while we relaxed at a table in the Marketplace. After doing more shopping the four of us got back into the dinghy and crossed over to Second Street on the Eastport side to have dinner at the Boatyard Bar and Grille. Upon returning to our boat, we went right to sleep to recover from the stress of the previous day and a half. The next morning we departed along with Silent Running on our trip back to our slips.