

## Milchidika with Marty: Don't Wash The Decks Before You Sail

Years ago, one of my partners had just bought a sailboat and was immensely proud of it. Each weekend during that summer, he would invite another one of the partners and his spouse to go sailing with him and his wife. As he went through the list of partners, my wife and I received our invitation. Not ever owning a boat, I was not too sure that I would really enjoy it, or not get seasick.

He told us to meet him at a certain marina on the south shore of Long Island, where his boat was kept, and we would spend the day sailing on "Great South Bay." We met at the appointed dock where we were greeted by my partner and his wife. They helped us "landlubbers" aboard the boat. After a quick tour of the boat, he cast off the lines holding us to the dock and motored out of the marina. Once we were out on the Great South Bay, he showed me how to hoist the sails while he handled the tiller. Soon we were sailing with the boat slightly keeled over and just the wind powering us. My wife and I were just passengers enjoying the sun, snacks, and conversation.

After a while, my partner announced that he had to go the bathroom down in the cabin and that I should take the tiller and steer the same course that he was on. A little apprehensive, but not wanting to be viewed as a coward, and what else could I do, I agreed.

So, I took the tiller in hand, felt the power of the wind moving the boat, and thought this is surprisingly good. I think I will take sailing lessons and buy a boat for myself. I do everything spontaneously, including getting married.

I talked my son into taking sailing lessons with me and in a few weeks, we had graduated from sailing school having mastered the rudiments, but not much more. I knew enough to say port and starboard, not left and right. I sometimes even said fore and aft instead of front and back, "Downstairs" was "Below Decks."

Now it was time to buy a boat. I had no experience with boats but thought that a used boat would be somewhere within my price range.

We scanned the newspapers and saw that there was to be a boat show at a marina in Stamford Connecticut and decided to drive there and to look over all the boats that were for sale. As we walked through the marina, we realized that all the boats for sale were brand new and way out of my price range. But on the last dock was a small used boat at a price that was what I felt I could afford.

The boat had an interesting history. It was presently owned by a woman who was divorced. It was really her ex-husband's boat and she took it as part of the divorce settlement, just to prove to him that she could sail on her own and did not need his macho baloney. She had recently met another sailboat owner, they were getting married and now she no longer needed this boat.

The boat was 28 feet long and bigger than any boat I had ever been on, since my entire experience had been with row boats and canoes. I was thrilled. It had a shower, a toilet, two bunk beds, a small stove and an icebox. A whole new life was about to begin.

We agreed on a price and arranged that I would come to the marina the next weekend; pay for the boat, and it would be mine to sail away. I had planned to leave the marina in Stamford Connecticut and sail across Long Island Sound to the town of Oyster Bay, where I would temporarily store the boat overnight in anticipation of the next day's sail to a yacht club in Port Washington, Long Island.

When we arrived at the docks in Stamford and looked across Long Island sound for Oyster Bay, I had no idea of where it was. We had a chart of Long Island Sound and when I looked at it, I saw three small circles on the Long Island side and realized that must be the symbol for some

exceptionally large chimneys. And then again when I looked out over Long Island Sound, I could see the three chimneys of an electric generating plant on the Long Island side of the sound. Oyster Bay was just south of those chimneys, so we should be able to find it.

We bid goodbye to the lady who sold us the boat and her boyfriend, and began motoring out of the marina full of confidence and off on a new adventure. All of sudden we heard shouting and screaming from the dock from our recent acquaintances with hand motions for us to turn around and come back.

They said horrified, "You can't just go sailing straight out of here, there are rocks all over the harbor. You will wreck the boat. Don't you know anything about channels?" I said, "No I don't know what a channel is." They explained that there were floating red and green buoys that mark a safe path out of the harbor. Red buoys on the left and green buoys on the right. I should just steer the boat between the buoys to get out safely.

I did as they said, and we got out of the harbor safely and made it across to the marina in Oyster Bay. A day's adventure. The next day we planned to sail the boat from this marina to the yacht club that I had joined in Port Washington. Probably a one-hour drive by car, but a full day's sailing in a small boat.

My son Larry and I arrived at the marina the next morning bright and early, ready for our first long journey. I looked around at the boat's deck and said to Larry, "It's kind of dirty. We ought to wash it before we leave. After all there will be friends at the yacht club wanting to see our new purchase and we really want it looking spiffy."

I had seen pictures in the newsreels of sailors on big war ships washing the decks by throwing a bucket attached to a rope overboard and hauling up water to clean the deck. And so, I told Larry, "We ought to do that."

We rummaged around the boat for a while and ultimately found a bucket, some rope, scrub brushes and laundry detergent. And so, we did what I thought was real seamanship sort of stuff. Hauling up water, sprinkling the deck with laundry detergent and scrubbing away.

After a while I said, "You know it is getting late, we ought to get going. It looks like the sun is drying off the decks. So, let us put away the buckets and scrub brushes and get going."

And so, we stowed everything (just to show off my seamanship language) and started on our first long distance sail, which I estimated would take us three or four hours before we reached Port Washington.

As we left the marina in Oyster Bay, the sunny sky began to get cloudy, but I did not pay too much attention to the weather. The sail was exciting, but after an hour or so, the sky clouded up, and it soon began raining with thunder and lightning. Nothing to bother us intrepid sailors.

We put on our yellow rainsuits, pants and jackets, hauled down the sails, and turned on the engine. After about ten minutes of rain we noticed soap bubbles beginning to form all over the deck, with everything getting slippery.

And our grand arrival at the yacht club where our friends were all gathered to greet us, was pretty hilarious, because entering the harbor was this little boat with soap suds pouring over the sides and two sailors slipping and sliding all over the deck.

The first of many misadventures.