

Silver Lining



The world watched as Hurricane Harvey unleashed hell upon the Gulf Coast of Texas. Footage of senior citizens wading in waist-deep water, men straining to free horses from their corrals, and SUVs bobbing in the streets like bathtub toys played on a loop on the news and across social media. The loss of life, property, and infrastructure rose like the floodwaters. It seemed as if the water would never recede. It would be weeks before *recovery* could even be uttered.

Despite the despair and destruction there was a silver lining. We heard of a Lowe Boats dealer who drove his entire fleet of aluminum boats to Houston to be used by emergency workers. There was another story about a man named J.C. Urban, who rescued a family by PWC; and Jeremy Sparkman, a health-care worker who led a volunteer flotilla to rescue flood victims. The news praised the efforts of The Cajun Navy.

“I usually just use this boat for drinking beer,” Sparkman told Reuters as he steered his flat-bottomed boat around submerged pickup trucks. “But we come together when we need to—that’s what Texans do.”

I dare to correct Sparkman: That’s what *boaters* do.

Then came Irma. The Category 5 hurricane leveled entire islands in the Caribbean and claimed more than lives. The storm could have been worse in Florida; the predicted storm surge did not reach the heights forecasters initially predicted, but the Keys were battered, beaten, and left without power for weeks.

Videos from the Coast Guard showed popular cruising destinations like the Bitter End Yacht Club in the BVI looking more like war zones than the postcard pictures we typically imagine.

Again, boaters answered the call. Recreational builders like Contender teamed up with a group called the Caribbean Club to run water, non-perishables, fuel, and other supplies to the Keys. Bertram offered to travel to the Keys and bring boats to its Tampa location for service. “We are fortunate enough to have sustained minimal damage from the storm and it’s our turn to help fellow boaters,” the company wrote. Stories of yacht owners running supplies to those in need, and taking refugees to safety flooded the Internet.

We’ve seen it time and again, boaters stepping up when needed most. From the rescue of the British army with the help of recreational boaters in Dunkirk in 1940 (recently recounted in the Christopher Nolan-directed movie) to the heroic efforts made on September 11, when recreational and commercial boaters sped—through a thick cloud of debris—to the bottom of Manhattan to evacuate thousands, there are countless examples.

When the world thinks of boaters, scenes of idyllic days in a secluded cove or in the cockpit with cocktails is what comes to the minds of many. Fair enough. But when town-drowning waters and building-toppling winds rise, we do what we’ve always done: Come together.

I’ve seen it my whole life. Whether it’s grabbing a line for the stranger in the next slip, lending a hand to someone that can’t start their outboard (I’ve been there), or pushing pause on a vacation to divert to the location of a boater in distress, it makes no difference. Whether you’re a superyacht owner from Bermuda or a flats fisherman from the Gulf Coast, you likely feel the pull of responsibility for your fellow boaters. I suspect that pull stems from the fact that when there’s an emergency on the water, boaters are often the first responders.

These recent storms—as well as hurricane Maria, which ravaged Puerto Rico—filled me with sadness for those who lost so much. The road to recovery will be long and painful. But more than anything I am proud to belong to a tribe that supports each other in a time of need. I’m proud to be a boater. □

LOGBOOK

Catching Memories

The picture hangs in the hall of my parent's home. I can see it when I lean back in my old seat in the dining room. Surrounded by shots from graduations and vacations is a framed photo of a shark. I'm standing in the middle, weighing all of 100 pounds with braces, sunglasses, and a backwards cap. (I remember that being a much better look for me.) Flanked by my old man, family friends, and my high school wrestling coach, we all smiled proudly as the 211-pound Mako was weighed in.

I was looking at the picture recently and thought about how I remember the shark being so much bigger.

That trip was memorable not because it was the grand-prize catch of a tournament. In fact, only a couple dozen people today can recall the "First Annual Shark Shootout," out of Long Island's Wantagh Park Marina. The fleet consisted of two boats, our friend's Boston Whaler and the family Egg Harbor.

The rules of the tournament were simple: biggest shark wins. Then we'd have a big party back at the clubhouse, where we'd charge admission and cook up our catch. All the proceeds went to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, a charity that's close to the hearts of both crews.

I had been fishing for years by then but this trip was different. It was my first *real* encounter with the camaraderie, smack-talking, and competitiveness that comes with such an outing. It was a small charity trip out of a quiet marina that's better known for its swimming pool than for its anglers; but make no mistake, both crews wanted to win—and it was exciting.

The day of the tournament was perfect. We pierced Jones Inlet at zero-dark-thirty and ran offshore. The morning was filled with small blue sharks and bad Quint impersonations. In the afternoon we hooked up with the Mako. We passed the rod around thinking it was another small blue shark. That's when it jumped.

Makoooo! Whoa! My dad yelled from the flybridge.

The deck was cleared and the focus intensified. As the shark was brought closer to the boat, the bluefish we used as bait slid up the line to the surface, where hungry blue sharks circled. If they bit what remained of our bait we'd lose the best fish of the

day. We weren't fishing with piano wire No. 12 after all! (See what I mean about the bad Quint impersonations? They never leave you!)

My dad handed my old coach a box of sinkers and told him to "hit them" while pointing at the circling sharks. I don't think Sal pitched that hard since his days playing college ball.

A short while and a couple swings of the gaff later, we had the beast secured.

We returned to the dock and enjoyed what felt like a heroes' welcome—the other boat didn't catch anything worth weighing. People posed with the shark, snagged a few teeth for necklaces, and enjoyed a barbecue that was everything you could hope for in a boyhood memory.

The icing on the cake was the money we raised for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. That feeling of giving back made that memory all the sweeter. Fishing while giving back; it's a great feeling, and likely why so many tournaments around the country now feature a charitable component.

At the time of this writing, Managing Editor ---- is on assignment in Charleston, South Carolina, profiling a group called Operation WetVet. Formed by a (don't call him former) Marine who'd seen combat, his goal is not just to take veterans fishing, but to get them out on the water, offer therapy in the form of a trained professional, and to retrain them—(many who suffer from some form of PTSD)—that an adrenaline rush isn't always connected to bad memories; it can be associated with happy, fulfilling ones, too.

After a few days on a charter filled with Purple Heart recipients, I'm sure ---- will return with a sense of satisfaction, having helped to raise awareness for a great cause—the same feeling I had after our mini, hometown tournament.

Sure, that Mako looks smaller today, as I look at it through adult eyes, but the memory of giving back will forever remain a giant. □

LOGBOOK

New Adventures, Same Kid From the Boatyard

Like many of you, I was born into boating. Much like eye and hair color, or country of origin, I had no say in the matter, yet—perhaps more than any other trait—it was a defining characteristic that set my life upon a certain course.

In my younger years that meant, instead of Saturday-morning cartoons, my brother and I, when we tired of waxing the boat (almost immediately) would run off and explore the boatyard. Stacked trailers became jungle gyms, or battleships, or anything else an imaginative mind can conjure.

Summer camp for us consisted of cruising aboard and scrubbing down our family's 33 Egg Harbor from top to bottom, concluding with a final sweep of the windows with a squeegee, a chore we for some reason fought to do. You could tell me that there's a better way to grow up but I would be forced to look you in the eyes and call you a liar.

When I wasn't running up and down the docks somewhere between Maine and the Bahamas, I could often be found with my face in a notebook, scribbling and logging my boating adventures. Many entries read something like: *Arrived in Block Island. Played Gameboy and read Hardy Boys. Raced crabs on the dock with Ryan and won. Forced to bed early while mom and dad went to The Oar.* My readership (consisting solely of my grandmother) praised my rudimentary tales.

The act of keeping a journal and blogging would continue when, inspired by tales of adventures found in this very magazine, I bought and restored a seasoned old boat in which to properly chase the horizon.

Caring for an old boat, I'd learn, was a lot like caring for a brand like ----- . First you learn about her past. Old surveys and past stewards provide insight but only when you crawl through the bilge and peel back paneling do you really learn her history. And as you work on it, replacing old lights and wiring, and replacing old systems, you learn to love it.

Then you plan for the future; there are projects you put on your list that you need to get done and others that will likely remain dreams. If you put in the work, you'll be rewarded with new friends and enough memories to last a lifetime. And when that sad day comes when we move on from the boat, you can only hope that because of all you poured into her, she's better off than you found her.

The good ship ----- is like that boat. Thanks to stewards like the late ---- and -----, and the salty crew of -----, the brand has established itself as the foremost authority on power boating.

That is a proud tradition that I look to continue.

As I take the helm of this respected marine title, I can't help but think back to that skinny, sunburned boatyard explorer, proud captain of a 7-foot Zodiac inflatable with an old 4-horsepower Evinrude outboard, who penned stories only a grandmother would love.

I imagine he's just put down that Gameboy and is sitting starry-eyed as I share with him stories of recent adventures like running a restored Bertram race boat or testing 12 Chris-Crafts in a day. I imagine telling him about delivering a Kadey-Krogen 55 to North Carolina, a Duffy 37 to Maine, and an old, restored Grand Banks to Florida. And at the end, I imagine him leaning in to ask, *What's next?*

I can't wait to find out.

See you around the boatyard,