

AFTER WORD

A BOATER WANTS TO SHARE HIS LIFELONG LOVE WITH HIS FAMILY.

TEXT BY PETER A. JANSSEN

High Hopes

Boating, so the theory goes, is good for kids. It brings families together, it builds quality time, it creates memories. All great concepts. But, from my experience, be careful what you wish for.

Many years ago I brought three of my four children along for a long-planned, much-anticipated vacation on my new boat, a Grand Banks 36. I'd just been divorced, and I thought the boat would be the platform for us all to be together again. I had dreams of blue skies, lots of laughter, warmth, and family bonding. We would all start a new portion of our lives together, afloat. The possibilities were endless.

The boat was in Fort Lauderdale, and I flew them in from various points on the East and West Coasts so we could go down to Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo for a few days after Christmas. Once we cleared Port Everglades Inlet, I realized that the seas were a bit lumpy but sitting happily on the flying bridge, that didn't bother me. Until I realized that one by one the kids had gone below. I looked down. All three of them were lined up on the leeward rail, sick as dogs. I headed inside at Baker's Haulover, and we stayed inside the rest of the voyage. They all were heartened, to say the least, when we tied up at Ocean Reef and then later back at Fort Lauderdale. Boating clearly was not going to be a family endeavor.

I kept trying. After I brought the boat up to Norwalk Cove in Connecticut I took my son, then 13, for a weekend cruise up to Essex. Just the two of us; a father-son weekend. When we got there, the only space was a tight fit on the face dock behind a big Hatteras. If this was going to work, we needed to get a midships spring line around a piling before the current pushed us into the Hatteras. (Did I say this was a single-screw Grand Banks, without any thrusters? Docking was interesting under the best circumstances.) My son was on deck, line in hand. I nudged us into position, just right, and said, "Now." Immobile, he said, "No." No? Fortunately, I hit reverse before we hit the Hatteras and we went around again. Needless to say, we had a fairly tense father-son



discussion that evening. This bonding thing wasn't going so well.

Obviously I'm a slow learner. After I remarried, my wife and I took my youngest daughter, who was then about nine (too young for the earlier Ocean Reef trip) on our summer cruise to Nantucket. She was a good sport, but boating clearly was not her thing. Boring. The mere mention of Buzzards Bay, with its infamous chop, would make her sick. Terra firma beckoned.

But time passes, things change. Last summer I had an offer of a Grand Banks 36, a sistership to our old boat, from Northwest Explorations in Bellingham, Washington, for a charter in the San Juans. My wife couldn't go, so on an off chance, I called my daughter, then a junior in college in Los Angeles. Sure, she said. When we climbed on the boat she headed for the forward cabin, her cabin, and settled in as if she'd lived there forever. Over the next few days she drove the boat, navigated, helped tie up. An old salt. We had a great father-daughter reunion, one of the best times ever. When we climbed off the boat back in Bellingham she asked if we could do this again. Maybe I could get a boat in L.A., and we could go out with some of her friends... PMY

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