

MM Summer Blue Sheet #1 from Puget Sound Washington

PREPARING FOR SUMMER PART I THE TRUE STORY OF LAUNCHING SAY YAY!

Sailors on my list...past, present, wanna be's and dreamers may be interested in this report...or not.

If you want a more religious approach to sailing adventure you can't beat the tale at the end of the Book of Acts. My story is not religious, although it occurs to me that some religious words were possibly used out of context.

Let me say that we have launched off the sandy spit near the ferry dock a half mile from our cabin for more than 50 years. There have been occasional misadventures, but more often it only takes a few minutes.

There are details no one notices, of course. Checking air in trailer tires, greasing the wheel hubs, loading the motor on to the boat. Giving the motor a test pull to get a burp that tells me it will start.

So we had a neighbor friend, Rick, set to tow and launch. We had a post-launch party all arranged. The boat had been loaded with all the seat and bunk cushions, all the deck cushions and life-preservers, tools and on board equipment.

I gave the motor its test pull. It always burps on the first pull. It has started on the first pull for each of its 15 years. No life on first pull...or 5th...or 10th. All my years of tricks working on outboard motors. Nothing.

The boat can't be launched without the motor. We cancel the launch, but decide to have the party anyway.

In the morning the only question was where to take the motor. Beach neighbor Victoria came to help move the motor from the boat to the car. She suggested that I get out of the way while she picked up the motor herself.

She asked where I planned to take the motor. I knew a place in Gig Harbor. She knew a place in Tacoma where she lives. In fact the owner was a good friend. Would I mind if she called? I would like her to call. I didn't really want to go to Tacoma but a personal contact sure wouldn't hurt. An outboard mechanic usually has a waiting list two weeks or more long in the summer. I was mentally thinking maybe I would have to buy another motor.

Victoria's friend said, "Send the motor over." She told them I would be there in an hour.

I GPS'd right to the Hilton Outboard place which was packed with boats and motors either for sale or waiting to be repaired. I was pessimistic. I stood looking for someone in the shop area when a man appeared who said he worked there. I told him about being sent by Victoria. He said he had taken the call. In a minute he was unloading the motor from my car, wheeling it to his testing tank. I was telling him that I had put in new gas, new plugs and that the motor ran well when I winterized it in the fall.

He pulled the starter. Didn't start. Doubled checked my fuel and plugs and looked over everything. Then he picked up a can of starter fluid. I used to use that stuff myself on some old motors, but never on this one. Two small squirts into the carburetor and one pull and it purred like a charm. He put the motor back into my car. I had been there only 20 minutes. I asked what I owed. He didn't think I owed anything. I asked Alie, the owner. She agreed, no charge. I insisted that I pay something. She accepted a donation to their coffee fund. I wrote a check for \$50. I should have paid \$100.

I called Jean to re-schedule the launch. I picked up a couple of bottles of champagne for a second launching party, with a special bottle for Victoria whose friend connection saved weeks of precious summer time and possibly hundreds of dollars. And I picked up a can of starter fluid. \$2.49!

Rick and his Jeep appeared just before high tide. We mounted the motor, towed the boat to the launching place, backed into the water and floated off. I boarded and gave the motor one pull and headed for its mooring buoy in front of our cabin. This is only Part I of start a summer. Stayed tuned for Part II.

Art Morgan, June 1, 2014