

## **Rafting**

### **Squadron On-Water Social Activity**

by P/C Phil Lloyd, SN

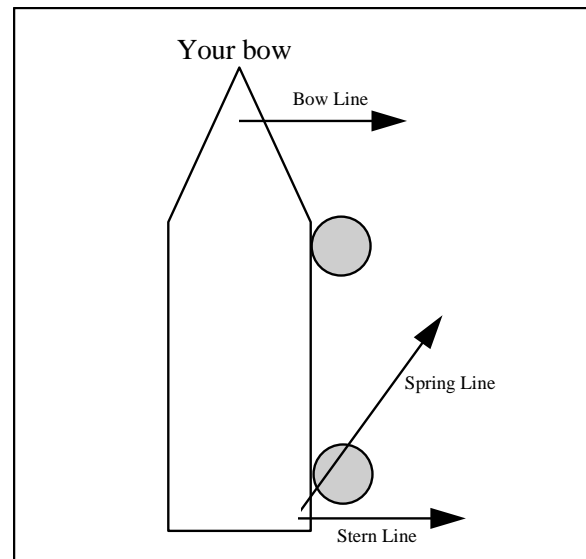
One of the most looked forward to social activities sponsored by the Squadron is that of the **Rendezvous**. It is this activity where us members and our families, and guests, can actually attend by **boat**. Admittedly, a number of our members either don't have access to a boat, or the time to attend by boat, so several of the **Rendezvous'** are held where the *option to attend by boat or car is available*. Notables being the first one of the year, (traditionally at the Lighthouse Point Marina in Toms River), the Atlantic City *Trump Castle* Labor Day trip, and the Forked River *Captains Inn* trip. There are other rendezvous' held during the boating season where a boat is a must. These are called **Raftings**. Rafting is the topic of this article.

The basic reason for the rafting, as well as a rendezvous, is the opportunity to enjoy the fellowship of other Squadron members; in other words, "**Party Time**". It is expected that each attending boat bring sufficient snacks and liquid refreshments to provide for the people on their boat and possibly a little extra for the drop-in guests which you will surely get as a result of the nature of the rafting. Remember, it is a party.

Now that you've decided to attend a rafting, let's cover a few of the basics; how to join a rafting, how to leave a rafting, and a few unusual situations.

First, how to join a rafting. When you reach the designated location

(Applegate's Cove, Silver Bay, Tices Shoals, etc.) establish contact with the rafting committee by radio using the designated working channel (generally 68 or 72). They will most likely ask if you are staying over and then direct you to tie up on either the port or starboard side of the rafting. Let's say you were told to come in on the port side of the rafting. While hovering about 50 yards off the sterns of the boats already rafted, you would rig your fenders and lines according to Figure 1.



*Figure 1*

(Naturally, if you were told to come in on the starboard side, you would rig your boat the same way, but on your port side.)

Once rigged, you would approach at idle speed. I like to approach parallel to the boat I'm to tie up to, aiming to have about a 3-5 foot gap between us when I stop headway. The first line that is handed over is the bow line (1). The second is the stern line (3). With these

two lines your boat can be manually pulled closer till the fenders are almost touching the other boat's hull. Please keep your engine(s) running, but out of gear. To make fast, first, the spring line (2) is adjusted such that for power boats, your transom is even with the other boat's transom; for sail boats the adjustment is made such that the spreaders on the main mast clear other spreaders or fly bridge hardware, etc. The spring line is the first one made fast. Next, adjust the bow line until your boat is riding parallel with the other boat. The bow line is the second line to make fast. Lastly, the stern line is made fast. The end result should be that your boat is riding parallel to the "anchored boat and such that there is an inch or two space between your fenders and the other boat's hull. Now you can shut down the engine(s) and relax at the party.

To leave the rafting, the order of releasing the lines is as follows: first is the stern line, second is the spring line, and last is the bow line. The reason for this sequence lays in the fact that at anchor, your bow is into the wind. Therefore the real working lines are the spring and the bow lines. The stern line should have little to no strain on it so it can be taken off first. The real load is being carried by the spring line. When this line is released, your boat will move towards the stern, angling in towards the other boat. Your fenders will become important at this time. Your bow line, still made fast, keeps the bow into the wind. When the last line, the bow line, is released, gently back away from the rafted boats. (Going forward

immediately runs the risk of fouling the anchor lines of the rafting.)

Reviewing the line sequences:

<u>Approaching</u>	<u>Joining</u>	<u>Leaving</u>
Bow	Spring	Stern
Stern	Bow	Spring
	Stern	Bow

A word concerning fenders. At a rafting, the only thing that prevents damage to your boat and your neighbor's boat is a fender. This is especially true when the rafting has to ride through wave action caused by the wakes of passing boats or winds. So to minimize the risk of damage to either boat, the fender diameter should be as large as practical with an 8" diameter as a minimum. You should bring to the rafting a minimum of 2 of these size fenders. Four fenders are better, just in case the boat rafting next to you didn't read this article and doesn't have adequate sized fenders.

These techniques are applicable to any rafting situation, whether it's Squadron, Yacht Club, or just with friends.

Next month's article will talk about a few "special situations" and present some Rafting etiquette considerations.

**Rafting**  
**Squadron On-Water Social Activity**  
**(continued)**

by P/C Phil Lloyd, N

Last month's article covered the basics of answering the questions, What is a rafting?, How do I approach it?, How do I tie up?, and How do I leave it? This month's article will present some recommended courses of actions to take in special situations that may arise at a rafting and some of the etiquette expectations when participating.

**Special Situations**

There are only a few special situations that may arise, but among the more likely to happen are; you are alone but wish to attend anyhow, you need to leave but are in the middle of the rafting, mis-matched gunnels, and a dragging rafting anchor.

*Situation:* You are alone. While it preferably that a second person be on board to handle the lines at a rafting, one can show up alone to enjoy the company of friends. In this situation, you need to inform the committee of the fact that you are alone when "checking in". There are really two alternatives open to the committee; one of them can board to assist and the other is to approach closer than the recommended 3-5 ft so that boat hooks may be used to snag lines. So listen carefully and follow the committee's directions.

*Situation:* You need to leave, but are in the middle of the rafting. Again, confer with the committee prior to when you have to leave. What they will do is rig a

loose bowline and a very loose stern line between the boats on either side of you. The very loose stern line will be passed in front of your bow such that it won't snag on your boat as you back out of the rafting. Your departure will then be normal. As you back out, the committee will be tightening up on the loose bowline, drawing the rafting back together and as you clear the rafting, they will similarly draw in the very loose stern line. It also goes without saying that your vessel should not be an anchor boat. If you are, then the better way is to break up the rafting to allow you to leave and then re-constitute it afterward.

*Situation:* Mis-matched gunnels. This situation arises when your gunnel height is mis-matched on **both** sides, such as you're a small boat with 40 footers on either side. If only one side is mis-matched, generally your fenders will alleviate the situation. The idea is to avoid the situation of a smaller boat being sandwiched by larger boats even to the extent of the small boat temporarily leaving the rafting. After the bigger boat is tied up, then the smaller boat rejoins the rafting. The general rule of rafting is that the biggest boat is the center boat with the boats placed on either side in descending length with the smaller boats (and sailboats) at the outside edges of the formation, i.e., the rafting must be a balanced formation. The rafting committee, upon your check-in, will place you with this consideration in mind. If you are a larger boat you may have to linger awhile until the smaller boats break away, allowing your entrance. If you are a smaller boat and

an early arrive, be prepared to have additional practice in leaving and entering a rafting.

*Situation:* A dragging rafting anchor. In this situation, every Captain should start engines and remain at the helm. The “Admiral” of the fleet is the Captain of the central rafting anchor vessel, generally a rafting committee member. The admiral issues the orders either over the radio or hand signals. In any maneuver, it is up to each Captain to adjust his engine RPM such that a little tension is maintained on the spring line positioned toward the center of the rafting. By keeping just a little tension on this spring line, the line won’t fall into the water risking fouling props. That event would make a bad situation worse. At the same time just a little tension means that the interior boats aren’t trying to pull the entire rafting through the water.

### **Etiquette Expectations**

*Consideration:* The fenders you bring to a rafting should be “reasonably clean” or have a cover. It is considered bad form to have your fenders leave “grunge” marks on your neighbor’s hull.

*Consideration:* Approaching and departing a rafting should be done at a slow (no wake) speed. Nothing short of a collision will leave a lasting impression on the rafting participants as have to scramble to protect the rafted boats from wake action.

*Consideration:* The Captain is still Captain and remains responsible for the safety of his/her vessel and passengers. This responsibility can not be delegated

to the rafting committee. The rafting committee assists the Captain and Mate with entering and leaving, but the Captain must be comfortable/satisfied with the overall safety situation.

*Consideration:* Boat hopping is encouraged. Asking permission of the neighboring Captain to come aboard or pass through is nice but not necessary under the circumstances. However, the **boat cabin is out of bounds** unless specifically invited by that boat’s Captain or Mate.

*Consideration:* Children are most welcome. However the parents remain responsible for their safety and manners. This responsibility can not be delegated. A specific instance is that for safety reasons all persons should be out of the water when boats are arriving or departing. It is the parents responsibility to insure that their children are aware of, and adhere to, this safety rule.

*Consideration:* It is expected that each boat will show up with sufficient food and drinks to satisfy their own needs. However it is also expected that each Captain/Mate will wish to host a mini-party on their boat and therefore should be prepared to be hospitable to guests. As an aside, it may be appropriate to invite the rafting committee members for such a session in view of their efforts. They may be too busy to avail themselves at the moment, but be assured, they will be back.

Rafting is fun. It has been my experience that it’s more fun when you are aware of what is expected. Hope you agree, and we’ll see you at one, or more, of the BBPS raftings.