

The Diary of a Harassed Marina Club Manager

The random jottings taken from the diary of a harassed marina club manager...

Little did I know what I was letting myself in for when I accepted the post of Marina Club Manager at one of the largest live-a-board marinas in Asia, and although I had spent some 10 years at sea in both the military and merchant navies in the past, it was nothing compared to what I was about to encounter!



With the luck of only attainable to managers my first day was on 1st of April and that was the day that the hierarchy above decided that there would no longer be an absent membership category for club members.

This as you can imagine hardly endeared me to the membership as I proceeded to write to all Members informing them of the situation. You can imagine that led to some fairly interesting emails and letters. Overall the policy turned into a good one with the price of the debentures increasing over time.

I was busy in the office when a member came in with a bag of dog poo and slammed it down on my desk and asked me what I was going to do with it? I can't print what I was thinking I might like to do with it, apparently it had been found on the pathway around the marina. I suggested DNA testing to see who was spreading the sxxx around the marina but we both realized that this would only hinder the problem.

Dog poo on the docks was an ever ongoing problem and let this be a lesson to you if you are considering running a marina do not allow pets, if it wasn't dog poo on the docks or cat wee on someone else's boat it was ferocious guard dogs leaping out at you as you passed a boat.

One evening as some members children were walking back along the dock when they saw a snake, and the parents insisted that I go along and investigate matters, one of the members came with me the only thing of significance was me slapping him on the back and accidentally knocking his brand new glasses off and into the marina. The snake turned out to be a hose!

On my regular daily walks around the docks its seems that some rules are there to be broken and no less was the riding of bikes on the docks and it occasionally gave me great mirth to see people go sailing off the end of the docks into the water and bikes never to be seen again. I often considered taking up diving to go scour the bottom of the marina for the "lost treasures" until the day I saw a massive garoupa fish floating around the marina with its head taken off in one bite!

I am busy doing the paper work in the office (translated that means reading the newspaper) when someone stormed angrily in and asked why a maid was allowed at the pool and I better get down there and do something about it! I resigned myself to the task of dealing with the matter and as luck would have it the solution was very simple. I shall use the names Smith and Jones not real names"" Mrs. Smith I asked "who is it?" and she replied "that person over there" so we went over and I said introduced Mrs Smith to Mr and Mrs Jones, Mrs. Smith would like to say something to you, but when I turned she had disappeared in a puff of an embarrassment! One should never assume anything until one knows the facts.

I was summoned to the change rooms because a members child had lost his new jandals (Australian for sandals) and had assured his mum that he had left them in the changing rooms, they weren't there so obviously they were stolen.

On arrival I was asked what I was going to do about the stolen item. My first comments are you sure that the items were left there? The reply from the mother a snarly "Yes of course I am sure that is where my son left them and they are not there now," rant, rant, rant... away she stormed telling anyone who would listen about the crummy security at the club. I patiently explained that loss of property was not the clubs responsibility... was possibly inappropriate at that time and caused strips to be torn off me by this irate woman shouting at me for all to hear.

My staff and I searched around leaving no shrub or bush unturned in our search for the missing jandals. As luck would have it when I looked in the children's playroom believe it or not sitting in the shoe rack was a brand new pair of jandals.

I went back out to the pool and asked the irate Mum if these were the lost jandals, would you believe it, yes they were and when I advised that they were in the play room the mother of all mothers was a very embarrassed mother.

My reaction to that moment was one that has assisted me to that day by calmly waving off the profuse apologies, buying her a drink and stating stuff happens, let's get on with life and forget it.

There are three types of clubs in the Far East, being residential clubs found these days in all the new residential buildings. Secondly proprietary clubs whose main concern is the bottom line and finally Members clubs, which are run by the members themselves creating policy and employing a management team to enact policies.

The marina club being a proprietary club, had an advisory committee who could make recommendations to the club management; but the club management didn't necessarily need to take any action.

I remember well the first meeting we had fortunately the nibbles provided and the liberal amount of drinks softened the edge off all of us. Me who was nervous at this first confrontation (I mean meeting) and the advisory committee made up of members of the marina who were ready for a fight!

It must be noted that during the cocktails before the meeting that both my colleague and myself complimented the waiting staff on the fish strips only to be told that they were chicken strips.

The meeting started the drinks flowed and I think everyone was surprised at the cordial meeting which progressed, key points that came up from that meeting and meetings during the course of time consisted of a number of key points:

Docks – when would they be repaired?

Security – what was being done?

Television – when would it be put onto the marina?

When would a sewage system be installed?

On a serious note I am quite satisfied that the docks, security and TV issues were largely resolved and I hear that the sewage problem has long been solved.

The TV issues were rather amusing and at the time could have been easily solved but I am reliably informed that the main delay for the marina members getting Cable was the fear by the operator that the “renters of the equipment” may up anchor and sail off into the sunset with their equipment. Obviously the operator had not been on these boats before; these boats were going nowhere anytime soon!

Another big issue of the day was security and the fisherman, with the marina being a haven for fish, it attracted the local fisherman from far and wide... and it was often not unusual to find the fisherman perched on the end of a member's boat. Many hours were spent chasing these guys away and we did manage to improve the security and there is many a local fisherman who will remember that crazy manager chasing them out of the marina! I do recall members taking things into their own hands sometimes and chasing fishing boats out of the marina not the wisest of things to do and in hindsight some of my actions may have been any wiser but it solved the problem.

The year of the last great typhoon in the region was a memorable one and I have often told this story. Whenever there is a typhoon the club goes to 24 hour standby as our marina was used as a typhoon shelter for local fishing boats during these times. About 9pm someone came up from the docks and with a loud voice at reception informed me that “D Dock was coming apart” and what was I going to do about it? Of course heads appeared from everywhere at that news and in my mind visions of D dock drifting off into the ocean totally torn apart. Reality check the person in question had tied his boat to the mooring cleat vertically so that it ripped the cleat out of the dock instead of tying his boat horizontally which is where the dock has its strength oops.

The typhoon by this time had gone to a signal 9 and the wooden docks were rolling with the waves often with waves breaking over the docks. The problem at D dock was now solved and it was not drifting out to sea!

We were called on the radio of another problem at the end of F Dock which was right at the

end of the docks! The conditions were now so bad that the marina foreman decided we must rope together and crawl along the docks to get to the next place for safety reasons. This was no laughing matter and I was pretty scared about it all!

As we approached our next destination on our hands and knees, walking towards us was a member who was out walking his dog! I was flabbergasted at the sight here is the marina team crawling along the dock clad in full safety gear and a member was out walking his dog – good evening I found myself saying as we passed.

We reached the end of the dock where new owners were having difficulties getting their boat moored properly, with others living nearby already helping we provided the extra hands, eventually helped solve the problem and secure the boat, but it was no easy task and did I mention it was now a signal 10 ? With the rocks only a few feet away from the dock and the constant wave surges pushing the boat forwards, eventually all was secured, we then trudged and crawled our way back to the clubhouse

Fire was a constant worry in the marina and we did regular drills with the fire department. One day I had to call a Member on their boat about a matter and after the phone answered I heard some say “just a moment oh my god the boat has caught fire!” Without further ado I dialed 999 and alerted the marina team and we raced down to the boat. All appeared normal and then fire department arrived and finally the boat owners appeared looking surprised; there was no problem, no fire, it was there telephone message on their answer system. Not a wise message to have and implored the family to change their phone message!

So just a few stories of life as a club manager, how does one cope with these numerous issues that crop up? Experience, take each situation as it come and there is always a solution!

Mr. Harassed

Somewhere in the Far East