



## Happy Trails While Trailering – Part I

by VINCENT T. PICA, II

U.S. Division Captain, Division 18 (ISR) - United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



Back on October 1st, we wrote about de-commissioning (winterizing) the boat for the dark and cold months ahead. For some, this means getting the boat from the marina to the back yard. Let's start this column with making sure that the trailer is capable of safely transporting your boat home. Since this is a topic that can take up lots of space just due to safety precautions, this is Part I of a two-part series...

### Safety First!

I have an uncle that drives his boat pretty hard – WOT (Wide Open Throttle) and dead-stop are his two favorite speeds. As you might expect, the boat is wearing out around him from stress and strain. When he complained to me about it, I said, "If you constantly drove your brand-new car at full speed over a bumpy road, would you be surprised that it might start to shake loose?" He said, "hmm..."

Well, that started me thinking about trailering – when you are driving your boat over many types of road (how about those winter-created pot holes?) at relatively high speeds...Stresses from over-the-road travel can be more punishing than normal operation. A boat is designed to sit in water, along her waterline. While the manufacturer may even put some markings along the waterline that say "trailer strap goes here," nothing "extra" is there – it is simply a mathematical recommendation about the weight displacement of the boat. And that is before you added all that gear... (see *SSP*, 5/23/07, "We all Get Heavier With Age – Including Our Boats!") So, trailering is, by its nature, more stressful on the boat than riding at anchor...



So, start with making sure that what the boat sits on isn't adding to the stress. You don't want your rollers or bunkers stressing, scratching or gouging the hull. Make sure that the tie-downs (and engine support) do not permit the boat to bounce on the trailer. How can you be sure? Well, you aren't going to be able to lift the boat up to see – too heavy by far. Unfortunately, the only way to be sure is by testing... Have someone follow you over a course and watch the boat. Speed limit only! If any air shows, stop and adjust the straps. Then, once all is secure, make some marks or apply some tell-tales so you can consistently have the boat sit snugly on her trailer.

But first – be sure she is sitting properly in the first place! What does that mean? No more than 7-10 percent of the total weight of the boat should be on the trailer "tongue" – the part that attaches the ball and coupler together. This means that a 3,000 pound boat, including engine, cooler, etc, can have no more than 210 lb. to 300 lb. on the tongue. Well, how do you tell that? You'll need a couple of bathroom scales and a strong friend. Each of you stands on the scale(s) while lifting the tongue together. Note the combined

weight. Step off, weigh yourselves and subtract... if that comes to more than 300 lbs, the boat is too far forward. If it is less than that, it is too far aft. Why is that important? Well, too much weight at the back (too light at the front), will tend to pry your car's rear tires up. Less traction than designed by the manufacturer! Too much weight on the tongue (too heavy at the front), will tend to pry your car's front tires up. Less steering control than designed by the manufacturer! Neither is going to be good for you...

### The car must be properly configured:

1. Engine of adequate power.
2. Transmission designed for towing.
3. Larger cooling systems for the engine and transmission.
4. Heavy duty brakes.
5. Load bearing hitch attached to the frame, not the bumper.

The tow ball and coupler must be the same size, exactly – not closely – exactly. Why? Did you ever have hand-me-down mittens from an older sibling? After how many snowballs did the mitten fly off with the snowball? Not many – and the ball is your hand

and the coupler is the mitten. They have to match – exactly. The boat may be properly secured to the trailer but the trailer has to be properly secured to your car or you may see her pass you on the highway...

The safety chains are attached and crisscrossed under the coupler to the frame of the tow vehicle. If the ball and coupler were to break apart, the trailer would fall into the chains, which now are a safety net.

### Underway, Making Way...

Now you're ready to go. Before going too far, be sure that the lights on the trailer function properly. Remember, each time you come up that boat ramp, your lights have been in (cold) salt water. As have your brakes – so check them too. Drive forward and apply the brakes several times at increasing speeds to determine a safe stopping distance.

Check tires (including spare) and wheel bearings for proper inflation – and remember that the trailer tires are likely to be far smaller than the car or truck tires. This means that they will be spinning faster just to stay in place. Faster equals more stress on the bearings. And don't forget that the aft-most set of tires have been in salt water...

Well, that will get you thinking. The next column will be on things to think about from the launch ramp to the house...!

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at [JoinUSCGAux2008@aol.com](mailto:JoinUSCGAux2008@aol.com) or go direct to Lisa Etter, who is in charge of new members' matters, at [FSO-PS@emcg.us](mailto:FSO-PS@emcg.us) and we will help you "get in this thing..."

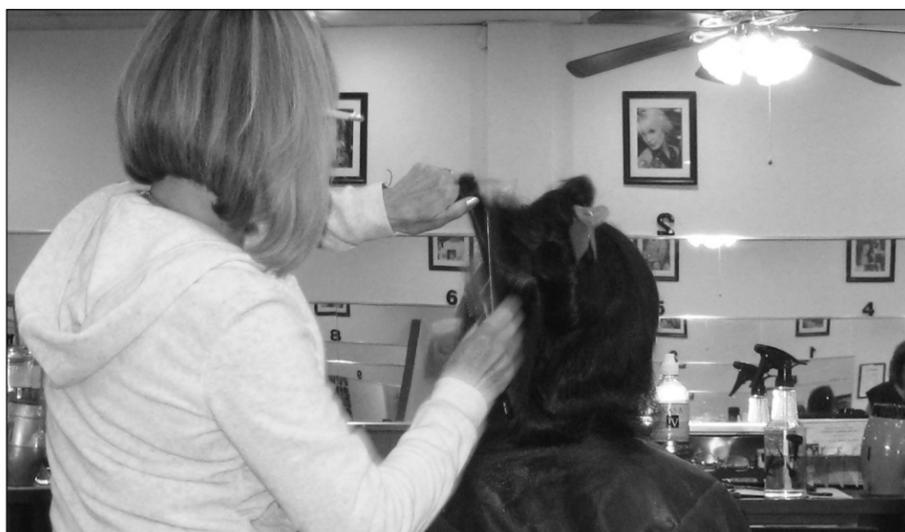
## It's Just Something I Noticed...

story by RITA M. DiBELLA

Recently I went to a performance enrichment class. OK, it was a class on hair products and new cuts and so on. (We established in article 2 that I'm a hairdresser, barber, stylist, whatever!) I was a bit reluctant to go but I'm glad I did! It's not every day that I get to go to Manhattan to a high-end salon/learning center. I met some wonderful people and got to use great products and learn a lot! (Really, if you don't believe me, come in to where I work and I'll tell you all about it!) We were each given a mannequin head to work on and learn new cuts – hands-on too!

(Fine, no tip, but she didn't complain a bit!)

The instructors were great and they even took all of us to lunch. Bonus! I was so excited to be a part of this great experience that I volunteered to have my hair cut by one of the instructors. Whodathunkit! Anyone that knows me knows I have (had) long thick curly (when I'm too lazy to blow it out!) hair. Me, cut my hair, my thing, my comfort zone (article 7). My strength? Na, someone else's story! As it turns out, one of the



"high end" instructors chickened out! Yep, just got cold feet. My hair obviously was too much of a challenge for him. So I left Manhattan a bit disappointed and with long hair.

But I left with a yearning to change my appearance. A new me. OK, maybe a little bit of a mid-life thing going on but I really want a change!

So, I go to work and well, I was busy in the morning but things

slowed down by noon and I was still thinking of my hair. Do I do it? Do I cut my hair, what I've been growing for so long? The possibly one last thing of my so-called youth I have been hanging on to? Sure, why not! So there I go, razor, scissors and combs in hand and I just decide to take the plunge. Hey, I tell my customers all the time that "it's just hair and it will grow back, go for it!" So I did. I pro-

ceeded to razor my sides and then asked a co-worker to go ahead and cut the back. Reluctant, but she did it! Now another co-worker gets in on the task and it's a "family event!" Before long, I have given up the long hair for medium length hair. "Wait, maybe we can go a bit shorter? Just do it!! I'm ready!" It's time for a new me!! (Not that the old me was so bad but it was just getting to be too much of "old me!") So 48 hours and four cuts later I now have short hair. Something I really never thought I would have, not until I was much, much older! OK, much older. Fine, just older!

You may be wondering why I'm sharing my haircut story. I guess it's because it's autumn and the leaves are changing, the air is crisper and we are in a wonderful new season. A bit self-serving but hey, having shorter hair is one way of me helping with the hurting economy! My hair is short so I can use less shampoo and conditioner and I don't have to blow dry it for so long and I don't have to use the curling iron anymore! Can I tell LIPA about this and get a break on my electric bill?? It's just something I noticed!