

V.O.: How Not To Sail. Sponsored by...Latitudes & Attitudes. They ruined my life. So why not let 'em ruin *yours* today...at LATS ATTS DOT COM.

SFX: SAILING/MOTORING

V.O: So it's Day Five of my solo sailing trip from St. Pete to Miami. As always, I encourage you to start with Episode One if you haven't already.

Actually, it's late in the evening of Day Five, and after spending all day dodging crab pots, I'm trying to make my way through Seven Mile Bridge to anchor for the night...

MUSIC STARTS AND BUILDS

Now I'm through the old bridge, and almost home free.

But wait...under the center span of the *current* Seven Mile Bridge--the span that I need to pass through--is...

MUSIC STOPS ABRUPTLY

...something.

BRADFORD: What the f--- is that?!??

V.O: What could possibly go wrong?

MUSIC: DRUNKEN SAILOR THEME



BRADFORD: What the f--- is that?!??

V.O: I must be losing my mind. At first glance, it looks like the bar in Porky's, parked under the center span. Is that flashing neon on the top?

I swear to Pete, that looks like flashing neon on the top, reflecting off the bottom of the bridge.

I can't figure out for the life of me what it is, or whether there's something I should know about it. But there's not a lot of room to maneuver. At all. And there's a current running.

I bail out at the last second and circle around above the entrance, looking over *the thing*.

~~It's like a small building or a super large storage shed...or a construction trailer. But two stories tall, with a steel tube handrail around the edge and flashing neon flames or something on the roof. And it's taking up half the channel.~~

Am I not supposed to go through here? I wonder. There's no sign or anything that I can see. But then again, with all...THIS...going on at night, after a long day, it's entirely

possible that I missed something.

*Well, what the hell, I decided. There's room for me to pass.
Let's do this. I never was the brightest fella.*

(SOMEWHERE IN HERE, MUSIC AND/OR SFX,
MAYBE REVVING ENGINE, ADD A LITTLE REVERB/
DELAY FOR BRIDGE?)

BRADFORD: This time I got through the cut in OLD Seven Mile Bridge, and then under NEW Seven Mile Bridge, there was some...monstrosity parked there, that...I didn't know what it was. [It] was like some sort of construction shack...meets tugboat, with--I thought it had some kinda neon stuff on it. [And, uh..] made a couple of passes before I decided to go through very slowly.

V.O: Sometimes in cruising--and in life--things don't go like you planned. I certainly didn't plan to find some kind of floating building sitting right there in the channel. You just have to be able to adapt, and to know when to bail out.

Anyway, now I'm south of the bridge, and we're *all good*...

...almost.

BRADFORD: And there's another crab pot. I'm gonna check the depth again.

V.O: Yep...even in the home stretch...

TAKE 28

BRADFORD: *Enough* of f----- crab pots already! Jesus! 's another one just went right next to me...

V.O: It's enough to make a fella tired. But now that I've cleared the bridge, I just have to creep over a couple of miles east, toward Marathon itself, making sure not to get too close to the bridge and the shallows near it.

By the way, our eagle-eared listener Wayne Stinnett pointed out that there's no such thing as Marathon Key. Marathon is a city located on Vaca Key. And that's where I'm headed.

I see an anchorage on the south side of the Boot Key Harbor entrance channel, but I don't feel like getting in among a dozen other boats at night. Nobody's anchored on the north side of the channel...so you can guess where I drop the hook. Yep...on the north side of the channel, in front of what I'm gonna call Knight's Key, but which may be Hog Key...or god knows what. (Wayne, text me!)

TAKE 29

BRADFORD: [Unwrapping plastic]. Okay. So we're at anchor. I'm laying in the short berth, with...some sort of protein bar. And I am tired. Opened up all the hatches and portholes to let some fresh air in, because it smells very much like diesel. Diesel

exhaust. I need to air this b---- out. [pause] So it's about 10:40 at night, and I finally made it. I'm anchored in front of Knights Key. In a dubious spot, but hopefully it'll be all right. Should be protected from the east wind that they're predicting, and...yeah.

V.O: Apparently fortune continues to favor the stupid, and fifteen hours after raising the anchor, I've set it down again. Of course, I set it down just a couple hundred feet from where the chart shows an underground cable...but I'm sure that's okay.

I'm now just a quarter mile from one of my favorite places...where I have a slip reserved for tomorrow...

Marathon Marina.

LEA Ad (and Show Notes plug)

BOSSA ELEVATOR MUSIC

V.O: But speaking of *Favorite Things*, it's time to pay the bills for thirty seconds...and I'll be right back.

LATS & ATTS COMMERCIAL

ERIC STONE (SINGS): *Smooth seas and blue skies, palm trees and sunshine...*
[FADES UNDER]

V.O: Bob...had a problem. You see, Bob had a magazine. And then Bob ran into some trouble and lost his magazine *Latitudes & Attitudes*.

[MUSIC UP]

But guess what? America's number one boating lifestyle magazine is back again...

...as Latitudes & Attitudes.

ERIC STONE (SINGS): *Latitudes & Attitudes will help me find me way...*

V.O: Check it out today at LatsAtts dot com.

ERIC STONE (SINGS): *...with my loving cup, a little salt and a lick of lime.... [FADE OUT]*

V.O.: Yeah. So that's pretty much the story. The cruising magazine that I got into cruising with, *Latitudes & Attitudes*, transformed into *Cruising Outpost* after Bob Bitchin got screwed over by a very unscrupulous fellow who shut down their offices and moved to South America. Or something like that.

But now they're back as *Latitudes & Attitudes*, and we are super happy about that.

SFX; STUDIO AUDIENCE APPLAUSE

...and *don't forget*, be sure to check out the show notes for this episode at HowNotToSail DOT COM...forward slash...SEVEN--that's the number SEVEN--for photos, the *script* for this episode, the full interview with "Fuel Dock Debbie" and all kinda stuff.

SFX: CROWD "AHHHHHHHHH!"

V.O: So, in the morning, I was greeted by a sound nearby on Knight's Key. A sound that I'd be growing more and more familiar with, on the water in South Florida.

SFX: BEEP BEEP [BACKING UP]

V.O: Yep. The sound of construction. Apparently they were building or remodeling something on Knight's Key.

SFX OUT

V.O: But either way, I was in *Marathon*. (Or at least, *near* it.) And all I had to do was wait for check-in time, and by this afternoon, I planned to be enjoying the saltwater pool at Marathon Marina, overlooking the sunset with a frozen adult beverage in my hand.

SFX BREAKFAST PREP

V.O: I was so motivated, I fixed myself an omelette and sausage patties, which I enjoyed in the cockpit...not realizing that my cotton shirt wasn't exactly sunproof. Which I discovered later when I noticed I had a red chest but a white belly where the

cockpit table blocked the sun. Which there's a lot of down here. (Sun, not my belly. Although I did kinda resemble a whale with a beard last time I was here.)

SFX OF CLEANUP?

V.O: Eventually, I cleaned up my repast, and hailed the marina on the VHF radio, where immediately came across the airwaves from just a quarter mile away, the long-awaited voice of my friend Fuel Dock Debbie.

SFX OF DEBBIE DAVIS DOCKING CALL?

MUSIC?

~~V.O: _____ The *First* time I came to Marathon, I didn't stay at the marina. I anchored just north of the bridge next to a sandbar called Knight's Key Bank and dinghied into Sunset Grill a couple of times a day to eat and take a dip in their pool.~~

~~I still maintain it's not bathing if you have clothes on.~~

~~My engine cooling system had crapped out again—this time on Labor Day weekend—so I was "stuck" in Marathon for a few days.~~

~~I actually dinghied right by Marathon Marina on that trip, although I wasn't paying attention. It's actually the first thing on your left as you head into the channel toward Boot Key Harbor. (Which is a place I've heard much about, but so far I~~

haven't been terribly inclined to join all the folks anchored there.)

V.O: ~~ANYway, the *next* time I came to Marathon, I was with The Admiral. And we had just got our asses handed to us making the leap from Marco Island amidst some serious thunderstorms.~~

(ANYTHING FROM VIDEO WE CAN USE?)

~~At three o'clock in the morning after dodging the usual crab pots we finally had to drop the hook near Bullard Bank. By dawn, we had a brief break in the lightning and *with great difficulty* weighed anchor in the wind. In the distance we saw what turned out to be the Coasties taking a man *and his pit bull* off another boat. He'd had enough. (So had we, but we weren't abandoning ship.)~~

V.O: ~~I was unable to get hold of a marina on the north side of Marathon, but I *did* manage to get hold of Marathon Marina on the south side, where a reassuring voice told us yes, we could get a slip there.~~

~~That would be Fuel Dock Debbie.~~

DEBBIE: I am Debbie Davis. I am a fuel dock manager. Started working here in 2008.

V.O: Debbie' s been a fixture at Marathon Marina, and as far as I

could tell, everybody loved her.

DEBBIE: I was like, "Well what are you hiring for?" and they said, "fuel dock." I said, "Well, what does that mean?" [Laughs.] And... Almost 11 years later, here I am.

V.O: From center cockpit fishing boats to hundred foot motor yachts, Debbie patiently and expertly helped them get safely into the fuel dock or into their slip, always in good humor.

My entrance into the marina ~~today~~ would test that.

MUSIC: COMIC OOMPAH

I decided I wanted to back into the slip, against the east wind.

Debbie waited patiently for me to "go around" (as they say in aviation) several times, even though as always, she had several people needing things at the same time.

VHF RADIO SFX OR AMBIENCE FROM WALKING

DOCK W DEBBIE

When I finally managed to get the ass end of the boat (or the stern, as my nautical friends call it) part way into the slip, and with my boat blowing toward a much more expensive boat in the next slip south, Debbie asked me to throw her my bow line.

SFX: DEBBIE FROM SCOUTS' BOAT LEAVING?
TALKING ABOUT LINES?

Oops.

MUSIC (OR MORE SFX CUT IF APPROPRIATE)

It was then that I realized (for the umpteenth time) that a solo sailor should have lines attached to the boat and ready to deploy when he comes into a slip. I'm not sure why I hadn't done that. I must have thought for a moment that I was a world-class acrobat and sprinter. (I am neither.)

MUSIC OUT

If I were Debbie, already spending more time on a simple tie-up than should be required, and with people waiting on me to do other stuff, it would be about at this point that I would be tempted to cuss me out.

But Debbie didn't cuss me out, of course. She supervised me getting bow and stern lines attached to the boat and tossed to her, where she promptly tied them perfectly to the dock cleats and pilings.

Then she made sure we had a good spring line attached, asked me whether I needed shore power and what variety, told me the electrical guy would be by shortly to test my system before the marina would let me plug in...and finally hustled back to the fuel dock.

SFX? DEBBIE TELLING ME (OR SOMEONE SHE'LL
BE BACK AFTER DOING SOME OTHER TASK,
ETC?).

V.O: ~~Later on, she was more than gracious.~~

DEBBIE: Actually, your landing was very good. Most people don't realize that you only come in as hard as you want to hit the dock. So that's one of the first rules of thumb.

V.O: As you can maybe tell, Debbie had a way of accentuating the positive.

DEBBIE: But you know, I noticed when you came in, you came in slow and easy. You backed her in, you did an amazing job. One of the few. I don't have any good stories to tell on [you]. But of course you haven't left yet, either. So all that could change.

V.O: Beneath the sunny exterior, though, was a supremely competent *marinera*.

DEBBIE: When I saw him leaning over the rail then it was like instant because of my fireman background and it was like, you just jump into action. And we realized that we, he was not going to be able to pull himself from the water. Then I just jumped in and between all of us, we team worked and got him out of the water...

V.O: Yep, you heard right. She said "fireman." Debbie's bio is

definitely interesting.

DEBBIE: Moved to the mountains of Colorado. Beautiful. Fished. Bow hunted. Everything you can imagine. Loved it. Woke up one morning and decided, I'm cold.

V.O: So after a brief stop in her native Texas, Debbie got a job opening in paradise. Or something like that.

DEBBIE: Once I got back to Texas, I realized that our job had another opening for a campground manager in Florida. So I moved to Florida. Wauchula. Good ol' Wauchula, Florida. Lovely little town.

Spent about four years there. Go through that midlife crisis again. This time, sell everything and buy a boat. Wonderful words, ain't they?

V.O: I couldn't agree more. ALthough The Admiral might quibble with the "sell everything" part.

DEBBIE: I bought my trawler in 2008, a 1987 Marine Trader trawler, beautiful boat, loved it. Did not even know how to turn it on. My first experience with a boat: "What is that yellow cord for?" [Laughs.]

V.O: And of course, once you buy a boat, the next question for most people--if it's a nice big hefty boat, anyway--is "Where am I gonna dock it?"

DEBBIE: Finally made it down here to the keys. Pulled in and loved it. Fell in love with it. The water is amazing, the people are amazing.

And walked in the office to pay for my slip, and they said they were hiring.

* * *

CLIP BELOW COULD BE REPLACED W SUMMARY
BY DEBBIE IF SHE DOESN'T WANT TO V.O. HER
POST?

V.O: And so Debbie had been working and making new friends at Marathon Marina for the last eleven years.

But sometimes in life--just like in cruising--things don't go like you planned. I certainly wasn't expecting what I saw in a Facebook post not long after my visit with Debbie.

DEBBIE: "It is with heavy heart that I announce I am no longer employed at Marathon Marina. My adventure began July 1, 2008 and has been a wonderful experience! The memories will fill my heart forever! ~~I love you all! With that being said, I will be shutting down these facebook pages, since they were opened under my personal page. I am sure the marina will re-open a FB page for you all to enjoy, so stay tuned. You can always reach the marina at 305.743.6575~~ Hugs to you all, Fuel Dock Debbie signing off..."

BRADFORD: ~~I didn't even realize at first that Debbie was running the marina's page, but I should have guessed.~~

~~"They sure are responsive," I thought, when I would post something about being at the marina, and most of the time I'd see a friendly reply within a day or less.~~

I don't know what Debbie's plans are, but I know any marina worth their salt oughta be bangin' her door down.

Maybe I can catch up with her soon, and see what happened and how she's doing. I hope she's getting some fishin' time.

SFX: MARINA AMBIENCE

V.O: But for today, as I walk down the dock toward the bar and the pool, Debbie is not yet gone, and I still have some substantial sailing to do to make it to the boat show. (And plenty of work to do to launch this podcast.)

But for today, after the Great Leap Forward from Marco Island yesterday, I have only one assignment: To have a frozen beverage and enjoy sunset from the saltwater pool.

MUSIC: "I DON'T WANNA BE BUFFET" [FADE UP]

MIXED W MARINA AMBIENCE

V.O: And at the end of the day as I walk along, I hear the familiar sound that you hear in every marina and anchorage from here to St. Vincent ~~near the end of the day:~~

The sound...of *Trop Rock*.

Outro

MUSIC: DRUNKEN SAILOR THEME

V.O.: Be sure to join me next episode... Where we'll finally get a chance to appreciate the very special music of cruisers and would-be cruisers. (And that would be...*Trop Rock*.)

As I alluded to, I have a big announcement to make: The *How Not To Sail* **book** is now available on Kindle and in paperback. If anybody'd like to grab a copy and write a nice 5-star review, I can't promise you a beer or anything...but it could happen! Or you can stay subscribed to the podcast, the email list, or the *private* Facebook group at How Not To Sail dot com, slash "Community" for info on how you can get the Kindle version for FREE in a couple of weeks.

V.O.: I sure appreciate you listening, and I'll see you next time on...

How Not To Sail. Screwing up is part of cruising. Let me show you how!

MUSIC: I DON'T WANNA BE BUFFET ENDING