



The Lighthouse

Celebrate Christmas in League City

by Keith Emmons

The biggest event of the season is the Holiday in the Park Festival and Parade. The sixteenth annual event is set for December 6-8 at League Park. The three-day festival includes shopping, food and lots of entertainment, plus real snow in the park. It will help create memories your children will treasure for a lifetime. The highlight of the festival is the Grand Night Parade, which takes place in Main Street December 7 at 6 p.m., but you'll also want to take part in the holiday movie under the oaks, the children's costume parade, pet parade and the holiday market. A full schedule of Holiday in the Park events is available on www.leaguecityholidaymagic.com.

The parade fun isn't limited to land. Ring in the season by land or by sea with Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce. The Clear Lake Chamber is host to the League City fifty-second annual Boat Lane Parade Saturday, December 14 at 6 p.m. The parade features more than a hundred brightly decorated power and sailboats that will traverse the Clear Lake channel from the South Shore Harbour Marina and the Nassau Bay Lagoon to Galveston Bay. The show ends with a spectacular holiday fireworks extravaganza. Pick a waterfront spot and bring along some holiday treats as you and your family enjoy the sights and sounds of the season League City style.

Speaking of water, take a plunge for polio at the League City Rotary Club's Polar Plunge Saturday, December 7. Brave the winter weather and take a dive into the pool at South Shore Harbour Resort to help the Rotary Club wipe out polio. If you're athletic, but looking for a drier activity lace up your sneaker and join us for the Walk with Santa hosted by the South Shore Fitness Center Saturday, December 14. Fashionistas will fall in love as they get a sneak peek at couture clothing at the Interfaith Caring

HOLIDAY MAGIC SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Thursday, December 5:

Helen Hall Library Holiday Open House with Santa, 5-6:30 p.m.
League City Tree Lighting with Santa, Helen Hall Library, 6:30 p.m.
Festival of Trees Fashion Show & Dinner, South Shore Harbour Resort, 6 p.m.

Friday, December 6-8:

Holiday in the Park Parades & Festivals, League Park

Saturday, December 7:

Polar Plunge South Shore Harbour Resort at 10:30 a.m.
Holiday in the Park Grand Night Parade, League Park, 6 p.m.

Sunday, December 8:

Holiday Golf Cart Parade benefiting Devereux Texas, South Shore Harbour, 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 14:

Walk with Santa, South Shore Harbor Fitness Center, 8:30 a.m.
Breakfast with Santa, South Shore Harbour Resort, 8:30-11 a.m.
Santa's Wonderland Butler Longhorn Museum, 10 a.m.
Historic Homes Tour, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
League City Christmas Boat Lane Parade, 6 p.m.

Saturday, December 21:

Walt and Tina Wilkins and Susan Gibson at TAD AKERS Event Facility, 7 p.m.

Recurring Events:

November 22-December 13: Perry Family YMCA Annual Giving Tree
December 6-8 and 13-15: The Nutcracker, University of Houston Clear Lake, Clear Lake Bayou Theatre
December 14-15 and 21-22: Toys for Tots Softball Tournament, Big League Dreams Sports Park
December 5-21 - Interfaith Caring Ministries Festival of Trees, South Shore Harbour Resort and Chef's Gingerbread House and gingerbread house contest entries on display, South Shore Harbour Resort.

Ministries fashion show and dinner, all while helping to support an organization that works to assist local families in crisis. There will also be live and silent auctions, a mystery wine pull and live music provided by Hollywood entertainer Mark LeVang.

History buffs should take time to stroll the streets of League City's Historic District for the Historic Homes Tour Saturday, December 14. The tour features fascinating stories about six historic League City homes at the turn of the 20th century.

The lighter side . . .

by Keith Emmons

- When launching a boat, always back the boat into the water. Pulling the boat into the water can really mess up your carburetor;
- When water skiing, never allow a feisty duck to hitch a ride on your skis;
- Always stay at least five boat-lengths behind the whale in front of you;
- While sinking to the bottom of a lake or ocean, screaming does not help;
- When boating, always wear a swimsuit with suspenders. This makes

it easier on the guys with the grappling hook when they're trying to retrieve your body;

- Drowning can cause severe shortness of breath. And you don't even want to think about what it does to your complexion;
- Always wear a life jacket in case you fall overboard. Also, it's a good idea to take along something to read, in case you're swallowed by a whale. Most whales seem to enjoy *Moby Dick*; and
- Boating while intoxicated is not illegal in some states, but it's stupid in all of them.

Christmas

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Book lovers are invited to enjoy some holiday cheer at the Helen Hall Library Holiday Open House Thursday, December 5. Santa arrives on a fire truck and takes the time to listen to wish lists and take photos with each of the children before the City's annual tree lighting just outside the library.

There's something for everyone at Holiday Magic. Gather your family, young and old for a month of fun and festivities, each benefitting a charitable cause. Find out more about each of these events on our website www.leaguecityholidaymagic.com.

Hope to see you there!



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The Lighthouse

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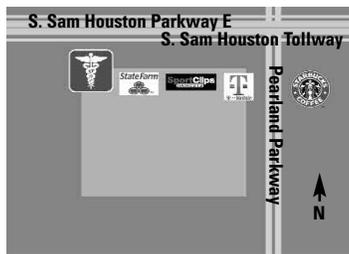
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Urgent Bear Says
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Boat stays afloat with dry bilge

by Keith Emmons

Water in the bilge is just generally nasty, and can be a cause of odors in the boat. Too much water in the bilge will sink you! Keep those bilge pumps working and try to eliminate the sources of water entering there to keep you boat happy and afloat.

One of the biggest sources of water getting into the bilge is the shaft packing gland on inboard boats. On poorly maintained boats, this wears out and a steady drip of water comes into the boat. I've even seen continuous streams of water coming through these.

The bilge pumps can normally pump this water out, as long as there is power in the batteries. The problem gets worse when the shore power goes out for a long time, as in a hurricane. The more the bilge pumps have to operate, the faster the batteries run down. Once they're exhausted, the boat takes on water faster and faster

as the leak gets deeper underwater, until the boat sinks. Take some time to make sure your packing gland is properly adjusted. It should not drip at all at the dock, and should barely let a little water through when underway. There are lots of options for packing, from traditional flax to Teflon as well as some "permanent" solutions.

My favorite is GFO packing made by Gore-Tex. It is not graphite packing as some believe, although it is black. Once you install this, it's about as maintenance free as you can get. I put mine in back in 2001 and after the initial adjustment, I've only had to tighten the nut maybe three times. Each of those was a very minor adjustment. There are also some "dripless" shaft log systems.

While they normally work very well, if they fail, it's catastrophic. They're also expensive, so I prefer to just stick with the GFO packing. Gore's information page is

<http://tinyurl.com/33rvpl>. Visit www.stuffingboxpacking.com for a source to buy it.

Some boats drain shower water down into the bilge to get rid of it. *Phew!* Can you imagine what's growing down there with all that shower water going down there? If your boat is set up like this, think about getting a shower sump that will pump it overboard. Rule and Attwood both make them, and they are a much nicer solution to shower water.

Also keep in mind that leaving your shore water pressurized when you leave the boat can be catastrophic if an internal line breaks. Always turn the shore water off when leaving the boat. I bought a little water "timer" at the garden center, and hooked it up before my shore water hose. I dial it to about 400 gallons, and when it turns off, I just reset it. I can pretty much guarantee it'll turn off while

More Bilge, page 5

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Bilge

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you're in the shower, so you don't really have to wait for it to shut off, just reset it once in awhile. If there is a break while you're up at the pool or out for dinner, at least it'll shut the water off before it sinks the boat.

Your boat probably has an adequate number of properly sized bilge pumps for normal dewatering. One thing I added is a very high capacity bilge pump mounted about 8" higher than the water should ever get. If it activates, that means either that the other bilge pumps have failed, or the water is coming in faster than they can handle. This pump is wired directly to the start batteries, since if the other pumps exhaust the house batteries, it won't help to be wired to those. I also have an alarm wired into that and mounted on the aft deck, so if it does activate, everybody in the marina will know. You can see this alarm at <http://tiny.cc/kkq04w>. With a flashing blue strobe and a 105 db siren, you'll notice this one.

Be sure to test your bilge pumps monthly. Most bilge pump switches have an auto-off-manual switch. There are also bilge pump switches that have

counters, so you can know how often the bilge pump has activated since you last checked. If you keep track of these numbers, you can notice problems before they become major. There are lots of different types of float switches. Some are more reliable than others. Since mercury switches have been phased out, the simplest and cheapest have a little metal ball that rolls back and forth to close the circuit and activate the pump.

These work well, for awhile, but are prone to sticking and corrosion. There are other pivot point switches that work with various types of contact points, reed switches and micro switches. There are float switches that have a float encased in a plastic chamber that activates the switch when they move to the top. The one I use is the Ultra Safety Systems switch and can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/4od62w>. These come in various models to meet your requirements.

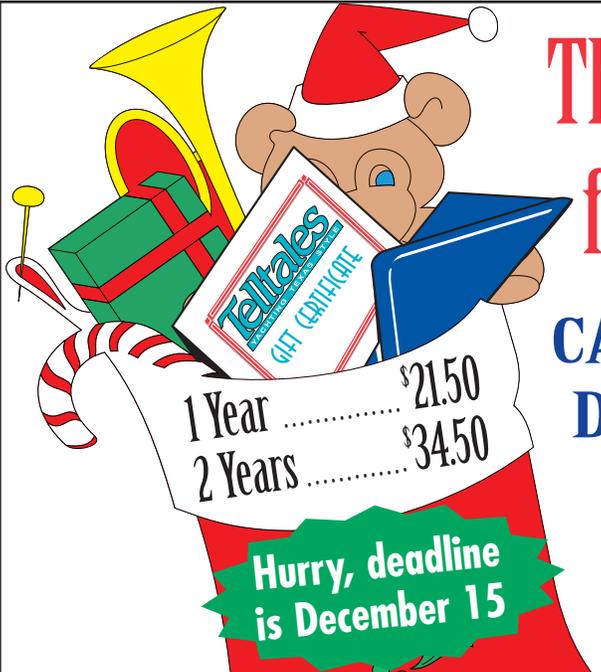
There are air pressure switches that work like a clothes washing machine's level switch. There is a little cage or bell that you mount down in the bilge, with a plastic tube going up to the diaphragm switch. These have the advantage of keeping the electrical stuff completely out of the bilge. Electronic sensor switches such as the Water Witch and Johnson Pump's Ultima switch have no moving parts

at all, and are totally encased to work well in the wet environment of the bilge. One interesting feature of these switches is that they will not activate if immersed in oil or fuel. This could keep such a spill contained and save you lots of money in clean-up costs. They are also "smart" with start and finish delays to prevent unnecessary cycling.

By the way, do not install check valves in bilge pump discharge lines. If you have them, please remove them. They are prone to failure and sticking, and are prohibited by ABYC.

So why don't we just get rid of the switch completely? Rule has a line of microprocessor controlled pumps that activate every 150 seconds. They sense the load on the impeller and if there is none, they shut off. If there is, which means it's pumping some water, it continues until the load is gone. Two drawbacks . . . they constantly use a little power, and they can be a bit noisy at night when you're trying to sleep.

And finally, should everything else fail, you should have an auxiliary dewatering device on board. There are various manual pumps from small to large, and even a big super squirter pool toy can work in a pinch. Remember, there's nothing more motivated than a sinking sailor with a bucket!



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—Mark Twain



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