



The Lighthouse

Ghost ship off Barbados

*Courtesy TheGuardian
www.theguardian.com
Reprinted from May 2006*

The white ghost ship rolled in the Atlantic swell as the rescue boats approached it 70 nautical miles off Ragged Point, one of the most easterly places on the Caribbean island of Barbados.

The yacht was unmarked, 20-feet long, and when Barbadian coastguard officers boarded it, they made a gruesome find. The boat's phantom crew was made up of the desiccated corpses of 11 young men, huddled in two separate piles in the small cabin. Dressed in shorts and colorful jerseys, they had been partially petrified by the salt water, sun and sea breezes of the Atlantic Ocean. They appeared to have come from far away.

The sea-battered yacht, identified by one local ship's captain as of French design, was towed into the port at Willoughby Fort, Bridgetown, and the bodies, by now wrapped in plastic bags, were heaved on to the quay.

In a part of the world where legends and myths have often been furnished by the sea, the mystery of the dead men soon provoked curious speculation.

An air ticket from Senegal Airlines and a tragic note written by one of the men as he was preparing to die have, however, helped investigators from several countries set about unravelling the mystery.

For, although the floating coffin appeared off the coast of the

Americas, those on board had set off four months earlier from the Cape Verde islands, off the African coast, and had been heading for the European soil of the Canary Islands.

The evidence reportedly points to them having been cut adrift in the Atlantic and left to drift off to a slow, painful end. Barbados police have said the cause of the deaths was starvation and dehydration.

Please excuse me . . .

"I would like to send to my family in Bassada (a town in the interior of Senegal) a sum of money. Please excuse me and goodbye. This is the end of my life in this big Moroccan sea," the note said, according to a Barbados paper, the *Daily Nation*. Relatives of those aboard had been contacting the Barbadian authorities from as far afield as Senegal, Spain and Portugal. They added pieces to the puzzle — based on telephone calls with relatives before they boarded, and with people who stayed in contact with the boat during the first stage of the voyage.

The story of the 11 dead and some 40 other would-be immigrants from Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Gambia started on Christmas Day at Praia, a port in the former Portuguese colony of Cape Verde. There, for \$1155.27 U.S. dollars each, they were promised a trip to the Canary Islands by a mysterious Spaniard.

Their boat was to be a motorized

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October Happenings

Dungeon of Doom Haunted House, October 1-31

Terror rains during October with the Dungeon of Doom, as you stroll through the dark side of reality.

As you come across the inhabitants of the Dungeon, please do not touch or interrupt them in their ghoulish pursuits. After all, you may not want to draw attention to yourself. But don't worry, they don't touch "outsiders."

The Dungeon of Doom is located in the breezeway under the Boardwalk Inn. For more information visit <http://www.dungeonof-doomkemah.com>.

Original Greek Festival, October 6-9

Celebrate the 48th Annual Houston Greek Festival on the grounds of the Annunciation

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Happenings

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Greek Orthodox Cathedral. Authentic Greek food, wine, dancing and artifacts for the entire family.

Bayou City Art Festival Downtown, October 8-9

The fine juried art show in downtown's Hermann Square and Tranquility Park spans several blocks filled with art, jewelry, and music, plus great food, wine cafes, beer taverns and a kids zone.

Festa Italiana, October 13-16

Houston's Annual Italian Festival on the campus of St. Thomas University features authentic Italian food, wine, music, dancing, arts and crafts and entertainment for all ages.

Annual Puerto Rican and Cuban Festival, October 22

With over 20,000 participants each year, the Puerto Rican and Cuban Festival is an iconic Houston event! This festival includes great local food, live music, vendors, and a car show.

Wings Over Houston Airshow, October 22-23

This airshow takes off and lands at Houston's Ellington Field. The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and the Navy's Blue Angels have wowed onlookers in past

years with aerial acrobatics, while aircraft from current Air Force and Navy inventories is on display.

Texian Market Days, October 22

At the George Ranch Historical Park, more than 200 costumed interpreters bring to life all that is Texas, complete with children's activities, an antique tractor show, and a parade. Guests can indulge in a one-of-a-kind celebration of our great state's history.

Untapped Music and Beer Festival, October 22

Three years ago two friends that shared a passion for craft beer and live music founded the Untapped Festival, a craft beer & music festival series.

Texas Renaissance Festival, October 8 - November 27

Starting in October and continuing for eight themed weekends in Plantersville, the Texas Renaissance Festival recreates an English village of the 16th century. Magicians, jugglers, minstrels, troubadours and comedians perform on six stages.

Día de los Muertos, October 27 - November 5

Lawndale Art Center presents the 29th Annual Día de los Muertos series of programs. Join the art center as they celebrate the art, music, and folklife of Mexico through an exhibition of artist-made retablos, student installations, workshops, and performances.

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The Lighthouse

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Ghost ship

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yacht, recently repaired but bearing no name and no flag. They paid to make the voyage, assuming that the Spaniard — a mechanic based in the Canaries — would be skippering the boat. At the last moment, however, a Senegalese man took over and the Spaniard disappeared. Several then refused to make the journey. One, according to the El Pais newspaper, jumped from the yacht as it set sail. It is by no means clear what happened next.

Somewhere near the Mauritanian port of Nouadhibou the yacht ran into trouble. Another boat was sent to its aid, apparently after the skipper had contacted the Spaniard. The yacht was towed but, at some stage, the line was severed. El Pais reported that it had been hacked with a machete. With no fuel left and food and water running out, the migrants' fate was left in the hands of the sea, the weather and luck. The latter soon ran out.

The yacht drifted into the stormy Atlantic and, it is assumed, people were tossed or washed overboard as they died.

The 11 last survivors, huddled together against the elements, were reported to have died by the end of January. At that stage their yacht became a ghost ship, battered by



Photo Chris Brandis/Associated Press

Police and forensic experts inspected a boat in Bridgetown, Barbados, May 2006 where 11 bodies were found in the cabin of the unnamed 20-foot boat.

storms or winds until it appeared 2,800 miles away, on the other side of the Atlantic. A Barbados fishing boat was the first to sight it on April 29, 2006 — 135 days after it had set sail. The coast guard vessel HMBS *Trident* was sent to discover its awful secrets.

Last letter . . .

I am from Senegal but have been living in Cape Verde for a year. Things are bad. I don't think I will come out of this alive. I need whoever finds me to send this money to my family. Please telephone my friend Ibrahima Drame.

Signed Diaw Sounkar Diemi.



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Take care of your outboard engine

By Charles Plueddeman
courtesy boats.com

Outboard engine owners looking to save a few dollars on an oil change should resist the temptation to re-fill with automotive oil. Yes, your four-stroke outboard engine is a similar design to the engine in your road vehicle, but it operates in a much different environment. And that environment requires a special lubricant.

Consult your owner's manual for the exact oil specification, but in almost every instance the manufacturer will require that engine oil meets the FC-W certification, a minimum standard devised by the National Marine Manufacturer's Association (NMMA) for marine engines. Make sure the oil that goes in your outboard is the correct type and viscosity as specified by the owner's manual, and that it carries the NMMA FC-W label. Note that FC-W is a minimum standard. The oils sold under an OEM label, like Yamaha YamaLube or Mercury Precision oil, generally exceed those minimum requirements and are worth the price premium over a "store brand."

An outboard operates in one of the harshest environments imaginable for an engine. It's constantly near water and with each piston stroke draws in very humid air directly off the water's surface. This humid air also gets inside combustion chambers through open valves when it's not in use. And in a saltwater environment, that air is even more corrosive. When the engine is shut down, air remaining inside the engine can condense on bare-metal surfaces and cause corrosion on components like valve springs. The FC-W spec adds a rust-protection requirement that does not exist for automotive engine oils, and no automotive oil on the market could pass the FC-W test, in which samples cut from actual cylinder liners are exposed to a 24-hour salt-fog test.

A marine engine is also a real torture chamber for oil. Unlike automotive engines, which operate at peak power for just a few seconds at a time — as you accelerate on a freeway ramp, for example — a marine engine may run for hours at high RPM and under heavy load. This extended high-RPM operation can literally shear (or split) viscosity modifier molecules in ordinary automotive oil, reducing lubricity. Under shear stress, oil can become thinner and lose its ability to separate moving parts, leading to greater wear or even catastrophic failure in extreme cases. The FC-W spec imposes a higher minimum viscosity level, which means that FC-W oil will not thin out as much as automotive oil of the same viscosity under identical heat and RPM conditions.

A four-stroke outboard also operates at a much cooler temperature than an automotive engine, especially during periods of extended idle, such as trolling or long no-wake zones. An outboard also runs cool by design because saltwater will begin to crystallize if its temperature is raised above 170° F, potentially causing blockage in the cooling.

Marine oil contains additives that help it provide adequate lubricity at a cool temperature, and resist the effects of fuel contamination which can occur during long periods at idle when unburned fuel condenses on cylinder walls.

The final thought about marine oil. An outboard motor is an expensive piece of equipment. There's really no economy in saving a few dollars on a less-expensive oil for a \$20,000 marine engine. My advice — skip lunch and buy the best marine oil you can find.



Fall boat maintenance tips

For most boaters, autumn is a time when boating activity starts to wind down and folks begin to prepare their boats for the long cold winter, especially if they live in areas where freezing temperatures approach. Obviously, the main goal of winterization is to prevent freeze damage in engines and their components, as well as in water and waste systems. It's also an important time to guard your boat from the icy elements, which can ruin the glossy shine on your hull, damage brightwork, and more. Here are some essentials to take note of, when things start to turn cold and it's time to put your boat to bed.

- Arrange to have boat hauled, or put it on a trailer if you plan on storing it out of the water. Make special preparations if you keep your boat in the water over the winter.
- Winterize all mechanical systems such as plumbing, sanitation, and engine(s).
- Clean, remove, and stow canvas and Eisenglass panels at home.
- Remove tackle and gear from boat if it's better suited for indoor storage.
- Clean the decks and topsides, and cover your boat or have a pro shrink-wrap it.
- Consider removing batteries from the boat — if feasible—and storing them at home on a trickle charger to keep them topped off all winter. Check electrolyte levels if you have lead-acid batteries.
- Change engine oil and filters, lower unit oil and primary fuel filters as needed.
- Fill fuel tanks at least 90-percent full and stabilize with an appropriate fuel additive.
- Perform an end-of-season trailer check, if you're a trailer boater.



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—Jean-Paul Sartre



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