



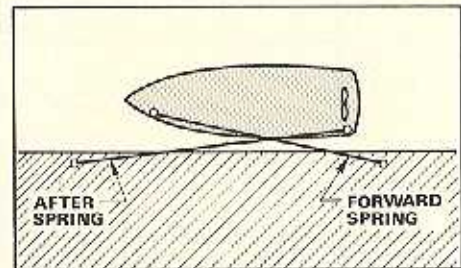
Springing in and out

with John Campbell

One of the joys of sailing on a small boat, is that if, or should I say *when*, you make a mistake, a judicious shove off with a well placed welly can often save the situation. When you move up to a larger vessel, boats can get squashed by several tons of boat. There soon comes a point with larger vessels, when you're forced to use technique rather than strength.

While our own relatively small boat has been swinging patiently at her mooring, waiting to take us cruising again, we've been sailing other larger boats — and discovered the obvious — that 30 or 40 tons is too much for us to push about physically. We've had to develop techniques to use the boat's own momentum to guide her where we want her to go. Our favourite and most often used weapon is a judiciously placed spring line.

Let's define our terms, so we are all calling each line the same thing, then we will relate some of the ways that our ubiquitous spring has got us out of many literal and metaphorical tight corners.



From the drawing, we can see that a spring can be led aft, from the forward part of the boat (a forward spring) or it can be led forward, from the after part of the boat when it's called an after spring. There are some situations where the spring is better led from amidships, but it's still a spring, and the principles are the same.

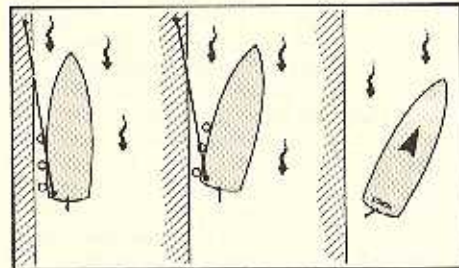
One of the first situations that we faced was how to get the boat from alongside a dock, with a bit of a breeze holding her on. On our own boat, a hefty shove at the bows

or stern would usually get the appropriate end pointed in the right direction, and off we would go. Now, with the heavier boat, we had to do the job properly. The technique we learned proved useful on our own boat in windy conditions, when the well placed shove was insufficient.

When the boat's alongside a dock, and there's not much room in front of or behind the boat, which is the best end of the boat to try and get pointed out into the stream? The answer naturally depends on the conditions. First look to see if there's a current. If there's any sort of flow past the boat, unless there's a howling gale blowing the other way, then the end that you want to move out first is the upstream end.

In each of the following cases, let's assume that the boat is port side onto the dock. For most of the examples, everything is simply reversed if the boat is starboard-side-to.

So, let's take a look at a boat portside-to, facing into a fairly strong current, with not too much wind.

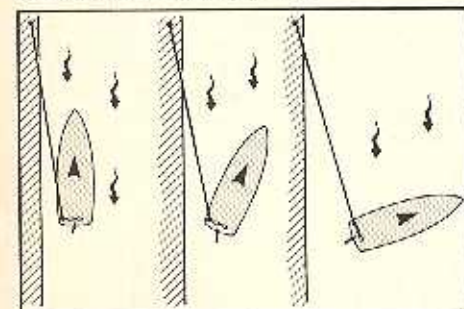


What we do is rig an after spring, running it well forward. Remember to rig some fenders well aft, because the stern is going to swing in towards the dock once the manoeuvre starts. If all the other lines are taken off, and a small amount of starboard helm applied, the bows will start to swing out into the stream. As soon as the bows begin to move out, if you go slowly ahead on the engine, with some port helm to straighten the boat, it's possible to move the boat bodily sideways into the stream,

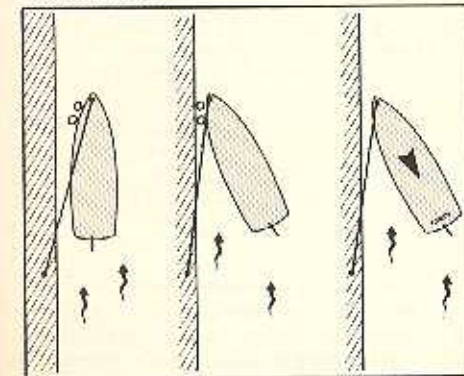
still held by the spring. Once the boat is far enough out, the spring can be cast off, and you're on your way. One point worth remembering in the heat of the action is that if there's nobody ashore to let the line go, and the rope is insufficiently long to double back on board so you can release it yourself, then it can always simply be thrown off, and recovered later using the dinghy. This may seem obvious, but believe me, it can easily be overlooked in the excitement.

If you're going to head up stream, it's vital that the bows are not allowed to swing out too far, otherwise the current will spin the boat round, and you will be headed downstream. Of course, if that's what you want, then use that spring to help you to turn.

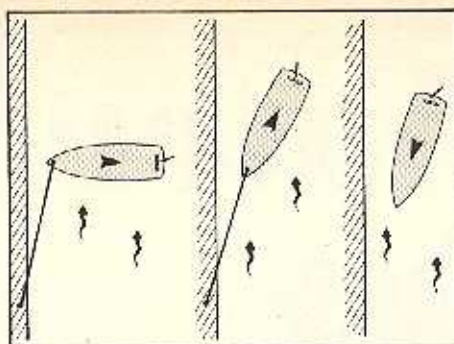
Once the boat is far enough out to clear any obstacles, a little starboard helm will start the bows swinging out. Keep the engine running slowly ahead to keep the spring tight, and the current will push the bows round quite quickly. Once the boat is more or less round, cast off the spring. In a strong current, things will happen quickly at this stage, so be prepared to cast the spring off from on board if any problem develops ashore. If the spring is not cast off in time, there's a strong possibility that the boat will continue to swing, and you could well find yourself back alongside the dock, starboard side to, assuming there's nothing else to hit along the way.



If the boat is moored stern onto a current, the procedure is somewhat similar. This time, of course, we will be using a forward spring, and the fenders must be moved up near the bow. Once the other lines are off, and just the spring is holding her, a little starboard helm will let the current push the stern out away from the wall. Running the engine slowly in astern will help to hold the bow off the wall while she swings. Once the stern is far enough out, release the spring and back out into the channel.

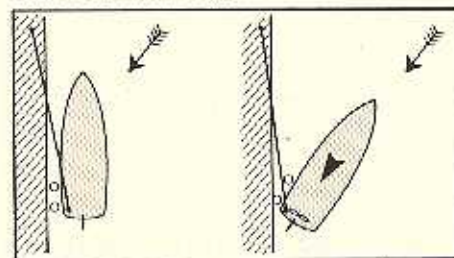


If you want to turn the boat round, and head upstream, hang onto the spring a bit longer. Keep going slowly astern until the current has turned the boat almost completely around, then cast off the spring, and go astern a little more, until clear of any obstructions. Then it will be easy to go ahead and motor upstream.



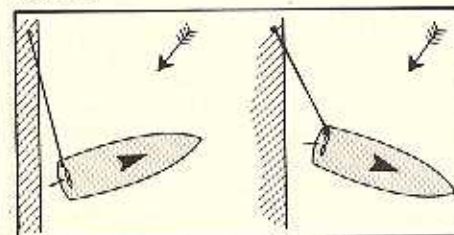
Now, let's consider the situation when there's little current, but the wind is holding the boat onto the dock. It's fairly unusual for the wind to be exactly on the beam. Most times it will be coming from a little ahead, or a little astern. In either case, it's the upwind end of the boat that we move out first.

If the wind is coming from forward of the beam, then we will need an after spring, and the fenders rigged towards the stern.



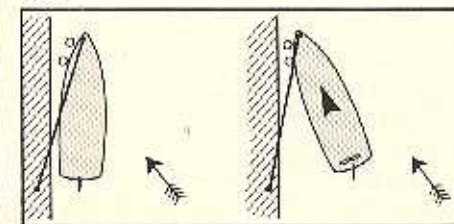
If we go slowly astern with the helm amidships, the bows should start to move out away from the dock. Once the bows are far enough out to clear obstructions, then start to go ahead, and cast off the spring.

If your course is going to be downwind when you leave the dock and there's not a lot of room to manoeuvre, then again you can use the spring to help turn the boat round.

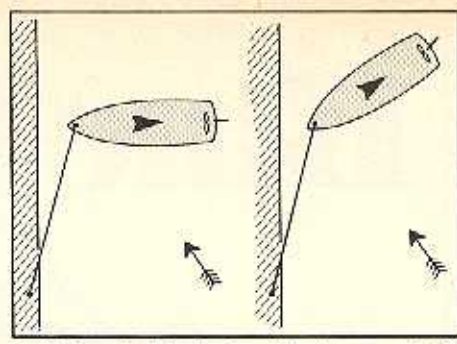


Start the manoeuvre in the same way, but keep the boat turning until she's past head to wind. It's usually possible then to go slowly ahead to keep the stern off the dock, and the wind will blow the bows round until you're facing in the new direction.

When the wind is abaft the beam, rig a forward spring and the fenders near the bow. Then, with some port helm on, go slowly forward and the stern will swing out.



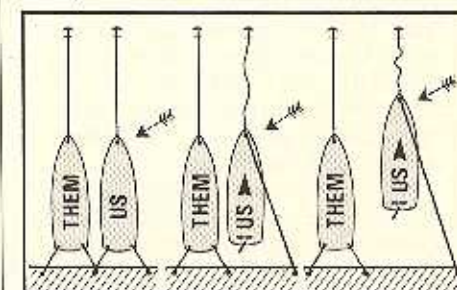
Again, if you're trying to turn the boat round, avail yourself of the spring. Keep going slowly ahead until the boat is past stern to the wind, then go very slowly astern to keep the bow off the dock, and let the wind blow the stern round.



If the wind is dead on the beam, opt for going ahead whenever possible, and moving the stern out. For most boats it's easier to get the stern to move out than the bows. The wash off the propeller flowing onto the rudder, with the engine going ahead, will push the stern sideways.

We did use a variation on this theme one day. We had berthed stern to a fuel dock, for fuel and water. There was a very large and expensive looking yacht on our port side, but we had got in to the dock quite easily, because we had moved our boat in very early in the morning before the wind had got up. Unfortunately, when leaving time came, there was a stiff breeze blowing on our starboard beam. I could see that the moment we slackened our stern lines, the wind would blow us down onto our big expensive neighbour. What did we do? We used a spring!

We had lots of room on our starboard side, so we rigged a very long spring to the shore, off the starboard bow. We set the spring up as tight as possible, so it was impossible for the bows to blow down onto the other boat. As soon as the stern lines were cast off, we went slowly forward, with almost full port helm on. As the boat moved forward, the spring pulled the bows to windward, while the prop wash onto the rudder pushed the stern to windward. The boat moved bodily sideways as we went forward and, by slowly easing out the spring, we could move forward enough to recover the anchor, without risk of blowing down onto the other boat. Once the anchor was up, we cast off the spring and, much to the relief of the owner of the other boat, we were able to motor clear.



Another situation where a spring is invaluable, is when coming alongside and, for whatever reason, you can't go as slowly as you may wish. Normally we would choose to go alongside facing into the wind or current. Ideally we would also choose to go starboard side-to in a vessel that kicks to starboard when going astern. From time to time conditions conspire to make things interesting. We may be faced with making a downwind approach, and have to go port side-to in a boat that kicks to starboard in astern.

The dilemma here is that you have to go in with enough speed to be able to steer, but when you go astern to counteract the effects of the wind, the stern kicks to starboard, away from the dock. The result is

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SHORT-HANDED SYSTEM SAILORS

After the recent YM Triangle raced over three legs from Torquay to Treguier, Crosshaven and back to Torquay, we wish to congratulate "Foxee B" a Gib'Sea 106 sailed by Norman Betts and Nick McGill. She won her class and came 6th overall in the fleet. Using new sails from SYSTEM SAIL she reported that her tri-radial *Tack-Spike* Genoa proved a real winner on the windward legs.

Congratulations are also in order to two monohulls in the Carlsberg Single-Handed Transatlantic Race. "Alice's Mirror" sailed by Jeremy Heal was the



"Maccabi"

first monohull in Class 6 and set a new record for the class. Also in Class 6, was "Maccabi" (Clive Shelter) a modified Contessa 32 — the Israeli entry in the race. She finished in 32 days, 16 hours and 10 seconds. Both have told us they were delighted with the performance of their SYSTEM sails.

We would have liked to tell you about other SYSTEM entries but the whales took their toll. At SYSTEM we are all for "Save the Whale" but we do wish they would stop humping our boats!

HOT AND COLD SYSTEM

"Superyachts" with System-Stak mainsails among their inventories are plying their way along the hot and sunny East-West charter strip from Turkey to the Caribbean; whilst now in South Africa, after a filming trip to Antarctica, is "Pelagic" built and owned by Skip Novak and his partners. Being shorthanded, these boats all find System-Stak the easy answer to the mainsail handling question. In addition to these rather adventurous types, other yacht owners all over the world are enjoying the benefits of the full battened System-Stak main. Some lofts blow hot and cold. SYSTEM SAILS have actually 'been there and done that'!

'GET ON THE RIGHT TACK'

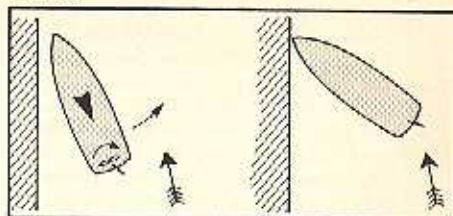
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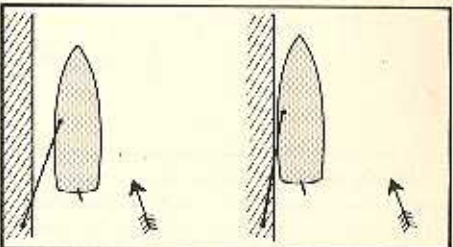
Better Boat Handling

often that the bow hits the dock, and the boat is at right angles to her intended berth.



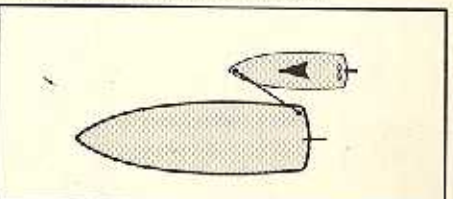
The answer, in case you haven't guessed it, is use a spring. There are two secrets to success here. First, don't use the spring from the bow. If you do, then as strain comes onto it, the bow will be pulled in, and you will hit the dock anyway. It works much better to run the spring from somewhere amidships, then the strain on the line will tend to pull the boat bodily sideways, for (hopefully) a nice graceful landing.

The second secret is not to trust the fellow ashore. He may not know a bollard from a bowline. If you must, then throw him the line with a good bowline tied in it, and give specific instructions about placing the loop over a particular post. Then have your own crew ease out the line as the strain comes on, to slow the boat down gracefully. The very real danger is that your helper ashore will cleat the line off short, and the boat will be brought up all standing like a swan flying into a set of telephone wires. If the situation is at all tricky, and you have a crew to spare, then consider sending somebody ashore to handle the lines. At least that way they can be properly briefed about what to do.



Last but not least, if faced with towing a boat with a smaller boat — towing the yacht with its dinghy for example — then rather than trying to use a line over the stern of the towing craft, try a spring. A light dinghy has so little grip on the water, that if you try and tow something behind it, it tends to yaw about from side to side. It will be difficult, or impossible, to steer.

What works much better is to take a spring from the stern of the towed vessel, to the bow of the towing vessel.



Optional breast lines can be rigged, but it will be the spring that does all the pulling. The towed craft can do the steering, and the whole thing is surprisingly manoeuvrable. Using this system, quite a large vessel can be towed by quite a small craft.

Hopefully, this has provided some food for thought. Don't be shy about practising some of these manoeuvres with your crew. Someday you may find yourself in a situation when a well placed shove with the boot won't do the trick and you have to resort to the spring.