

The Aftermath *and "Re-Berth"*

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Several absolutely astonishing survival stories have surfaced since the EF1 Tornado demolished Four Corners Marina K-Dock, 1 March 2017. Looking back, we have realized just how fortunate we really are that no one was injured or killed.

One of the most harrowing stories was that of Ray Pesz and his Sea Ray 43. Ray is a well-known slip renter around Four Corners Marina. He is an honest and talented boat mechanic (which I've quickly found is a combination that is hard to come by). In fact, I hired him to winterize my generator and motors this past fall. Ray also happens to have polio. He gets around the marina on crutches and a maroon colored motorized scooter.

Before the tornado hit, Ray was fast asleep in his cabin cruiser, temporarily moored on our dock while his regular slip was under construction. When he moved to K-Dock, he went to the local big box store and bought some cheap line to tie up his boat so he could leave his heavy duty lines in place when he was able to return to A-Dock. As it turns out, that decision could very well have saved his life! When the wind picked up, those cheap ropes parted and allowed his boat to float freely away from the dock before the roof came crashing down. His boat was originally in one of the hardest hit areas, the boats around him sustained major damage. When he heard the tornado go screaming past, he had no idea he was adrift until things calmed down and he emerged from his cabin. He was able to fire up his engines and motor safely over to the gas dock. Unfortunately his scooter, which was parked on the dock in front of his slip didn't fare so well. It is now resting at the bottom of Percy Priest Lake. A Go Fund Me account was quickly set up by one of our fellow K-Dockers and over \$7,000 was raised. His new scooter soon arrived and all is well.

After we realized everyone was ok, the next question was what is going to happen to all of the boats that were on K Dock? Several of my neighbors started calling around to neighboring marinas for temporary harbor until our dock could be rebuilt. The first call over to neighboring marina which

wasn't going to be a viable option made us realize this was not going to be easy. The next call was a bit more fruitful. That marina filled up all of their available slips with my fellow refugees on a month to month basis until the repairs are done to our home port. Unfortunately, I had gone into work after the storm and missed my opportunity to snag one of those slips. After several stressful days of not being sure what was going to happen to my 66 foot houseboat, Four Corners informed me that they were going to be able to move me to a slip on L-Dock where I would at least be able to get power to my boat. However, it was going to be up to me to get it over there. The weather was not quite spring like so the thought of putting her through the de-winterizing and re-winterizing process just to move her one dock over didn't seem like a very economical solution.

Since I wasn't going to be filing an insurance claim, the tow would be out-of-pocket to the salvage company contracted by the marina.



Jim Grant, Phil Mamano, Rosemary Halderson, Angie Scott, Bill Weeks, and Ralph Underwood assess the situation

Never fear, my Coast Guard Auxiliary shipmates came to the rescue! On a very cold Saturday afternoon, after snow had been falling across Middle-Tennessee all morning, Phil, Bill, Rosemary, Jim and Ralph all came out to get my boat safely off of what was left of my dock and over to my new temporary mooring.

I have to note, this was not an official Auxiliary operation, this was a group of volunteer professionals on their own time out of the kindness of their hearts helping a fellow Auxiliarist.



Utilizing their own facilities they put their Auxiliary training and knowledge of safe boat towing and handling into practice on my behalf. We in the Auxiliary live by the code of Honor Respect and Devotion to Duty, however stepping up to help a friend in need truly shows the heart of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and of its members, men and women dedicated to service while cultivating friendships and devotion to one another.

Moving a fully furnished 66 foot houseboat in close quarters is not as easy as you might think, in fact it was quite a challenge and a learning experience for everyone involved. My neighbors and I got to witness these Auxiliarists working in unison, planning, communicating and accomplishing the mission. The whole operation went flawlessly.

Please direct all comments, suggestions, inquiries and story ideas to Ramon Llorens, Jr. SO-PB RamonLIJr@Yahoo.com

I couldn't be more appreciative of their willingness to do this for me.





One of the last boats recovered from K Dock was "The Cajun Lady." This is the one I mentioned earlier in the story. I thought everyone would enjoy this photo of her after she was freed from the wreckage.



A very reputable dock company has been hired to do the rebuild of the damaged docks. We are hopeful the K-Dock rebuild will be done by Memorial Day and we will all be reunited for another memorable and happy summer out on Percy Priest Lake. In the meantime, we have settled into our new location, made even more boating friends and learned to appreciate the simple beauty of a sunrise a little bit more.

