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DeFever TECH

YOST, Ralph & Celeste (#1138)
SAY GOODBYE Linwood, NJ

1982 • Defever 41 •

Trawler Dog Lift

*(Images by Betsy Barron Photography © www.thebetsy.com
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My wife and I began trawler shopping in January 2007 and soon recognized cruising with Striper, our 45-pound Portuguese Water Dog, might present a problem getting her on and off the boat and into the dinghy while anchored. We looked at basic boat designs including pilothouse trawlers and trunk cabin trawlers. The pilothouse trawlers allowed the dog to simply walk from the deck level through the stern door onto the swim platform and into the dinghy. However, the pilothouse boats also had a flying bridge that required climbing a ladder, something the dog could not do on her own. She is too large and heavy for us to carry up and down the ladder. The trunk cabin trawlers however, offered a flying bridge that allowed relatively easy access for the dog. She could use the steps



from the deck onto the trunk cabin top and easily make her way up the two or three steps to the flying bridge area. We felt it important to have a boat layout that allowed the dog to be with us and to move about the boat on her own. The trade-off is that the trunk cabin trawler has a deck level that is about three and a half feet above the water. This meant that our challenge was to figure out the best way to get her to and from the dinghy from deck level. *(photo 1)*

We read many articles and books and had personal and online dialog with other cruisers traveling with pets. We gleaned a lot of great information, but really nothing that would quite work for us. Next we consulted various



Photo 2



Photo 3

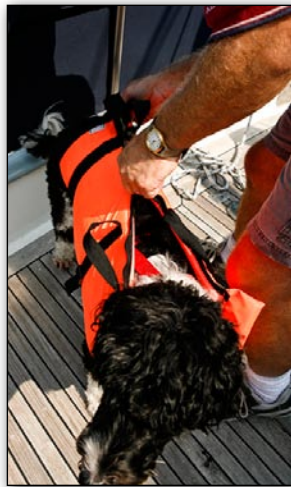


Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

ramp, stair, and float manufacturers and concluded the safest, most easily stowable, and efficient means would be a ramp. Piece of cake, I thought since I had already built one a few summers earlier for my Parker fishing boat. A few limited modifications and we'd be good to go.

That June we took delivery of SAY GOOD-BYE, our 1982 41' DeFever. It became obvious there were no modifications that could be made to our existing ramp that even came close to fulfilling our needs. The freeboard was too high, the swim platform too narrow and slotted, and a set of St. Croix davits protruded from the transom just above two staggered steps leading to the opening to the aft deck. Placed sideways across the stern with the lower end of the ramp on the swim platform, it slanted upward to rest on top of the uppermost staggered step. It was heavy, very steep, and very unstable. I intended to provide stability by building a hinged brace that the ramp would connect onto. We set it up as a prototype experiment to see if the concept would work and if it warranted the fabrication of the hinged brace. In doing so, we discovered that the davits protruded over the ramp near the top and the dog had to crouch abnormally and then hop on board. It was totally unsafe for her and for us assisting her. We discussed ordering a lighter weight customized ramp, but the other issues remained the same. Scratch that idea... on to "Plan B".

We were stymied until a logical idea struck me to simply transport Striper in much the same manner that livestock are offloaded from ships. Using a customized reinforced doggie life jacket and a block and tackle system on the boom, we hoist Striper up and over the stern rail, drop her down to the swim platform, and into the dinghy. Here's how we do it.

The life vest we purchased is a Fido Float Life Vest from www.arcatapet.com for just under \$20 (photo 2). It's a padded floatable doggie life vest with mesh underbelly support that zips up the back. The dog steps into two front leg holes in the mesh underbelly (photo 3) and the vest is zipped snugly (photo 4). The original design of the vest had one woven adjustable strap handle sewn onto the front of the vest near the collar and a second strap handle located near the hind leg area. The front strap goes around the dog's chest, forming a "handle" on her back near her head, but lifts her from underneath. We had The Ship's Tailor (a local canvas and sailmaker) add a woven adjustable strap just in front of the dog's hind legs going around her belly area, thus reinforcing the second "handle" on her back near her tail. This modification affords total support from underneath and distributes her weight evenly between the two handles. The woven straps are adjustable to fit comfortably - not too tight or too loose.

We feed a heavy line with spliced eyes (photo 5) at either end through both handles of the vest and attach both line eyes to a shackle. Using a block and tackle attached to the boom, we attach the snap shackle to the two eye splices of the lifting line (photo 6). Then I go down to the swim platform where I control



Photo 8



Photo 9

the 4:1 block and tackle that hangs from our lifting boom. I carefully hoist the dog from the aft deck up and over the stern rail (photo 7), then lower her to the swim platform. My wife assists from the deck level by ensuring that the dog is guided up and over the stern rail (photo 8) so I don't snag her legs on it! A lightweight Rubbermaid container lid approximately

2'x3' is all that's needed to cover the slots in the swim platform, allowing her a solid place to "touch down" (photos 9-11). The line is unshackled and removed from the life vest and attached to one of the davits temporarily while we are ashore. Striper gets a dog treat, then hops into the dinghy and we're off (photo 12). The container lid can remain on the swim platform or be stowed on the aft

deck for the return, which is done in the same manner. This method is safe, efficient and easily stowable... and best of all, she likes it!

One caution for dog owners: don't just lift your dog with the boom and expect the dog to cooperate. Training is essential so the dog knows what to expect. We started by putting her in the vest, then manually lifting her a few inches off the deck, allowing her to hang while holding her. We rewarded her with a treat, petted her, and verbally reinforced the good behavior. We repeated this several times so that she associated getting into the vest and being lifted with a fun and rewarding activity. Next using the block and tackle, we lifted her higher to the level needed to get her over the stern rail. Again we reinforced the maneuver with a reward and repeated it several times. Finally, we went for broke and lifted her up, over, and down, disconnected the apparatus and she hopped into the dinghy.

Your dog will soon learn that the process enables her to go with you in the dinghy where more fun activity takes place... exploring the land areas, beaches, the essential personal relief... and of course, all those dog treats!



Photo 10

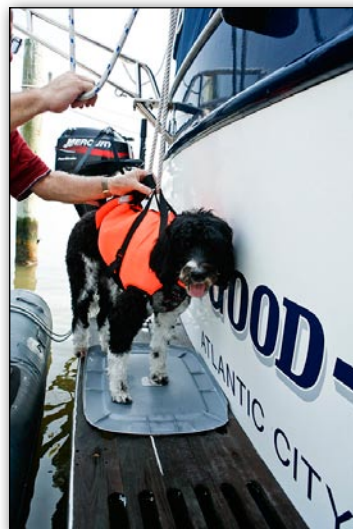


Photo 11



Photo 12

