

Rules on the Road – A Wife’s Experience

By Pamela M. Bossard-McDanolds

It’s 4 a.m. Normal people refer to it as the “middle of the night”. Normal people are tucked in bed with visions of sugarplums.

Here I am, sitting next to my husband in the bouncing SUV. We are towing 3000 pounds of old fiberglass and old engine parts drenched in “eau de high octane” towards some dark cold lake.

“Isn’t this great?” He shouts above the pounding of an old Van Halen CD.

Yea, great. I tightened my grip on my spill proof coffee mug. It was too hot to drink, and because of the insulation, it would probably be too hot until at least noon. I am not a life-long boating veteran. I like swimming in pools. They don’t open until 10 a.m.; they have snack bars and picnic tables. There are no creepy-crawlies in the water, and the bottom is nice clean cement. But, I married into this boat, so here I am.

It’s 4:15 and he is now playing the drums on the steering wheel.

Mr. I-need-12-hours-of-sleep-every-night-to-function is wide-awake. He’s got the three “C”s: chipper, cheerful and chatty. That can only mean one thing, I have the three “S”s: sleepy, stubborn and silent. It’s going to be a long day.

“Now honey, when we get to the lake, remember the islands have sandbars extending at least 50 feet at both ends.”

Yea, okay.

“And honey, remember to pause for a second in neutral before jamming it into reverse.”

Yea, okay.

“And honey, try not to run over the tow rope this time.”

“And the buoys marking the rocks are red.”

“And if you’re going with the wind, the ride will be smoother than going against it.”

“And don’t bury the bow, and remember to throttle up in the turns, and be up to speed when you enter the gates, and use the left speedo because the right one is blocked...”

Oh god, how many more days until winter?

This happens all the time. The on-the-road boating class is now in session. For fifty miles, we go over boating tips. He talks; I barely listen. I’d look out the window, but there is nothing to see. The sun won’t be up for another 2 hours.

David Lee Roth is singing about teachers.

What teachers?

Oh yea, my teacher.

“Now honey, when you back up, the trailer will go the opposite way that you turn the wheel. But, if you hold the steering wheel at the bottom...”

I can see my reflection and his in the glass. His mouth is still moving but I am not paying any attention. Just burnt my mouth on the coffee.

It's 4 p.m. We had a lovely day on the water. We skied, had a picnic lunch, made some new friends and swam on the beach. I just pulled the boat out. My husband is wiping down the hull.

He jumps in the SUV to drive home. I am sitting next to him, tired, but happy. It's been a good day. I reach for my coffee mug. Finally, it's perfect to drink. Maybe, just maybe, getting up at 4 a.m. isn't so bad.

“Honey, you did a great job driving today.”

“Thanks, I really tried.” Yes, I could get used to the boating life.

As we are pulling away, the truck engine roars. He looks down. “Why is it in 4-wheel-drive?”

“To pull out of the ramp.”

“You don't need 4-wheel-drive on this ramp. See, this ramp has a nice, even slope to it and 2-wheel-drive is fine. However, if the ramp was steep or the water level was low...”

Here we go again. How many more days until winter?