

# Boating repair tricks of the trade, from store-bought to home-grown

Posted on 26 October 2015 *Written by Tom Neale*

**Tom discovered that there's a better way than this to break the iron grip of 3M 5200 adhesive.**

I've always assumed that Murphy's Law had to have originated with a boater. After attending Google University, I understand there was an Edward A. Murphy whose name has been associated with the law, and that he was an aerospace engineer. Good grief!...

I've picked up some tricks of the trade over the years, and I like to share them so that people might help me out of my messes with their ideas. These tricks usually fall into the categories of neat tactics and neat products. Here are a few.....

## Neat stuff

I've always been amazed by what ordinary "stuff" can do if used with imagination. My old friend Phil Rosch, who lived aboard for a very long time, told me his solution for freeing rusted nuts and bolts. This is the bane (well, one of many banes) of boating. We know about such products as WD-40, Kroil and PB Blaster. Phil, and apparently many others, use a 50/50 mixture of acetone and automatic transmission fluid. He swears by it. And when Phil swears by something, I listen.

He keeps it in a quality plastic bottle with a spray top and shakes it well before using because the ATF will settle out. This, he says, has been tested by different groups with good results. I'm sure if you use it improperly or do something stupid you can get into trouble, but what else is new? Go to Google University, and you'll see plenty of opinions on this brew.

There are also products that we can buy that make life much easier and safer on boats. These products are often hard to appreciate until you've had to use them. Here are a few that have turned me on lately.

A moment ago I spoke of freeing frozen nuts and bolts, a job to make you look for a stick of dynamite if there ever was one. There's long been another job that gives the same degree of frustration. It's undoing the job you did years ago with 3M's 5200 adhesive and comparable products. You use the stuff knowing it's forever, but you don't think at the time that you could possibly live long enough for this to matter. Well, I've lived long enough, and yes, it matters. But now I use DeBond.

This product is patented and has been around since 1999. I'd never used it because it sounded like one of those things that's too good to be true. Boy, did I suffer unnecessary grief over those years. DeBond works. It will debond 3M 5200, 4200 and a lot of other bonding material. According to the manufacturer, it has won quite a few converts over the years. After the last two or three jobs I've used it on, I'm one of them.

I should stress that it's important to follow the instructions. I succumbed to my inherent stubborn streak and tried to use my old familiar tactics with the product. You know, the ones that are tried and not true. I found I didn't need all the brute force, hacksaws, razors, screaming, etc. I just scored the 5200, put on some DeBond, let it sit for a short while and gently popped the fitting (an old porthole ring) off with a putty knife. Other jobs may require other methods, but, as they say, DeBond works.....

I'll share other tricks and products from time to time, and if you've found a great idea, please let me know. If we're going to stymie Mr. Murphy, we need all the help we can get.

*This article originally appeared in the Soundings November 2015 issue.*