

Willard Says.....

SOMETHING YOU
MAY NOT HAVE
CONSIDERED

ON BOARDING A DREDGE

Getting aboard a dredge is not always convenient, effortless or safe.

A few dredges feature boarding platforms located at a height that makes it convenient to step off a service boat, grab a handrail and go up steps to the dredge deck. Little effort. Sense of balance intact. No fear of falling. Safe.

Many dredges require boarders to take an awkward, high step—some would say a leap—from a rocking service boat to safety on access stair or deck. Convenient hand holds or railings are not always provided.

Others have no landing stages only a break in the hand rail where the service boat customarily ties up. Boarders have to hang onto the railing post(s) and surmount a BIG step up to gain the deck.

Few boat-to-dredge boarding arrangements provide the convenience of passage found when moving about office or home.

So much for boarding a dredge from a service boat.

MAN OVERBOARD!

This chilling announcement is meant to rally all hands to the task of finding and getting the victim back aboard. Imagine the alarm sounding on a ship in storm, darkness, arctic cold or some such dire circumstance that threatens successful rescue.

Less traumatizing, but of equal urgency would be the situation when a non-swimmer falls off a small boat that can quickly turn about and help the victim back aboard.

But what if someone goes overboard and the cry of alarm is not sung out? Is not heard? Is not responded to? Someone like a lone operator who falls off his dredge?

Someone like the dredging daredevil shown in *Figure 1*. Perched precariously. All alone. No life vest.



*Evel Knievel, Dredge Operator
Figure 1*

Picture the guy in the water. Conscious, uninjured, water up to his neck, next to the dredge and seeking to get back aboard his now, unmanned dredge. Hopefully, if the ladder is down, he can grapple his way aboard.

Maybe there is no way to climb aboard. There are some dredges where he would have great difficulty unless he was in excellent physical condition. Especially, if the ladder is hoisted out of the water.

Recently this question came up, what happens if someone falls off the dredge into the water—how do they get back aboard?

That is a really good question! One not asked very often and one that every dredger should ask himself and find the answer to.

One suggestion is to board the service boat as a means of reboarding the dredge. That's a possibility, however, climbing back into a tippy little V-bottomed row boat without upsetting it might require some practice.

Most dredges have landing stages of some description located a foot or so above water. Others have one or more stairways that extend downward with the lower step fairly close to the water. Such access routes are provided for those seeking to board the dredge from a service boat, not from the water. Those landings probably look a whole lot different from the perspective of being in the water and looking up at them. Even if a boarding stage or ladder can be grasped by the "wet one," does he have enough upper body strength to pull himself up onto it?

CONCLUSION

Take a look at your dredge. Could you get back on board after falling in?

Perhaps a couple of ladders, one at each end of the dredge, extending from two or three feet below water to deck level would remove any doubt.

Contact willard@willardsays.com with questions, comment or criticism.