

What time is it?

Ahhh Morris Day, the man sure had some pipes. If anyone wants to buy me a present, the Ice Cream Castle album would be most welcome. OK enough of the 1980's I'll put my parachute pants and leather tie back in the closet. But thinking of Morris leads me to his band The Time, and what exactly does "time" mean to you the consumer?

We boaters use all sorts of different terms to describe time and distance. Some boaters prefer speed to displayed in statute miles (MPH) while others reference nautical miles (Knots).

Just so its clear a statute mile is 5,280 feet while a nautical mile is 6,076 feet.

Is your fuel consumed in miles per gallon, gallons per hour or heaven forbid, gallons per mile?

Is your boat maintained by engine hours or calendar time? Or both?

Is your GPS plotter configured in course up or North up?

Because I am a simple man I prefer to keep my nautical things nautical and land based things on land. I find they don't mix very well. There is a comedian I saw once (cant remember his name) who does a show where he describes a mans' brain as a closet full of boxes. We open one box at a time and only one. We don't do well with several boxes open as once. So while I'm putting away my '80s gear in the closet Ill pull out my boat box and open it up.

I learned to navigate with a Sat Nav and RDF, then came Loran A, then Loran C, then de-tuned GPS. All of these navigation aids had one thing in common; they provided you two lines of information. Latitude and Longitude. You then took this information and plotted your position on a paper chart. From your last position you figured set and drift, distance made good and true course. Those little tidbits were used to determine magnetic heading and set the course for the next leg. I raced close course Olympic triangles and crossed oceans using two lines of information. So the base line here is the paper chart. Today I will use a plotter to establish a route for the sheer ease of it then transfer those points to a paper chart to double check. A chart plotter will navigate you right over dry land if your not careful.

So where is "North" on my paper charts? UP! That is where North is on my plotter as well.

So if I were navigating in nautical miles why would I want to measure speed in statute miles? I have no idea but it does make it look like your going faster!

Fuel consumed is determined by experience, distance and clock time for me. I know from doing it over and over how far and fast I can go on a certain amount of fuel. Fuel gauges in boats tend not to be the most accurate of instruments.

So when your engines' owners manual specifies a certain service to be done at "100 hours or annually" just what does that mean? As a surveyor I have noticed that the average SW Florida boater puts about 35 hours a year on their boat. The charter captains will push or exceed 1,000 hours and your author hovers around the 200-hour mark. Does that mean that the average boat owner should only service his boat every 2.8 years? Does that mean I have do it every six months? Does Capt. Fish pay that bill 10 times a year? Wow, no wonder it can cost so much to go fishing! The service books were written as guidelines and as warranty protection and to some degree to generate service work. Everybody reading this remembers when your cars oil was recommended for change

every 6,000 miles. Now oil is supposed to be super advanced, costs 6 times more to buy and is recommended for change at half the interval. What gives?

What gives is Time. We (my family) use our boat a lot and I use the best service materials money can buy. And that buys me time. I start planning my next service at around 150 hours and get it done by 200. By using the boat I'm burning off moisture and keeping things moving. The same goes with the charter boys. They run their boats and adjust their maintenance schedule accordingly. However, like on a good Morris Day record there is always a "B" side. Atrophy is a real and present danger in boats. Diligent neglect is the fastest way to wreck a boat that I know of short of sinking or fire. When a boat sets idle, moisture collects in the oil, acids and solids settle into corrosive pools. Propellers freeze to shaft splines and water pump impellers take a compressed shape and crack. Electric pumps get stuck, seals dry out and crack, steering and controls get stiff and all the while the sand bars are shifting and your local knowledge is becoming obsolete.

So the moral of the story is that crazy as it sounds, the less you use your boat, the more care she needs.

I am seeing some great deals on boats right now. Our Island dealers and brokers can put you in the boat of your dreams for less money now than I can ever remember. Go shopping, make an offer and get out there!