

I rolled over the coaming, pulling and unzipping the dockline behind me. The line jumped free and I halted the boat's remaining headway with the bow end of the line and pushed gently with my foot against the gunwale. As the stern found it's way across the wind, the boat swung to align nicely with the slip.

Hauling in on the stern and paying out the bowline put the boat into the slip perfectly. I cleated off the stern, but the boat still had a nice strong wind on its stern, pushing it toward the forward wall of the slip.

Fortunately, I had anticipated that in my dream-state as well, and already had one of my short docklines secured to a cabin top winch. I grabbed that line and led it aft to a dock cleat, using it for a spring line, still hanging on to the bow line, keeping the pointy end from swinging out from the dock.

Once the spring was cleated I was ready to walk forward and secure the bow. That's when the most amazing thing happened.

I became aware of the sound of running feet just as the first of a very friendly crew came to rescue me. A little out of breath, he said, "I'll get your bow line."

"Thanks," I said, and handed him the line. That's about when he seemed to realize I was already docked.

I asked him, "Did I do OK on this leeward slip?"

As I dockside comedian I never expected I would hear that kind of comment - "Awesome."

Chapman's suggests motoring into a slip at a 20 degree angle in these conditions, stopping your boat with a spring line led back from your bow. That's a good plan, but hard to pull off alone.

Another accepted plan is to approach from upwind, traveling at right angles to the open end of the slip, and assist your turn and stop your boat with a spring line. That's basically what I did, I just hopped off my boat to handle the lines.

Good lessons learned, and lessons I would have missed if I had gotten a slip pointing politely windward. A little adversity is not a bad thing.

Prop walk is something to consider, and is really noticeable when the wind and the walk are both heading the same way.

On my boat, for the tightest turns, turn to port under power, turn to starboard while idled in neutral. Remember that turning towards the wind will take more momentum to coast through.

One long dockline is really convenient. Once led aft from the bow and tied off, it won't wander inboard of shrouds or fenders. If you drop the stern line in one hand, you've still got lines to both ends of your boat in your other hand.

When the wind's a-blowing, spring lines are nice to have in place before you dock.

And think while I sleep, perchance to dream of sailing, perchance to witness while I dream a perfect balance between earth, the dock I tie to, water, the ocean I ride, air, the wind that both confounds and delights me, and fire, the noisy motive force in my auxiliary.

And through it all, music, the sound of one line docking.