

Product Review...FreedomLift

...Carry Your Dinghy in Style

By Marshall Solomon, Marsh Marine

Dinghies are a mix of pleasure and pain. No question a good tender can greatly enhance one's cruising experience, plus provide an additional measure of safety should the mother ship become disabled or worse, sink. The big dilemma is how to bring the thing along. Towing is common, but the seemingly magnetic attraction for props to eat the tow line creates a big risk. Backing into a slip is virtually impossible and the bump, bump, bump chorus of dinghy hitting against the hull can make for a restless night's sleep. Loading the dinghy completely aboard usually involves a hinge or hanging mechanism attached to the stern or swim platform. Often davits, a lifting boom, or a hydraulic hoist are employed. With any of these devices there are trade-offs and problems, most commonly, losing precious deck space and stability by having added weight aloft.

Recently, I had the opportunity to install a clever product called a **FreedomLift** for Cape Fear Yacht Sales broker, Captain Bobby Gregory at the Charleston City marina, Charleston, SC.



Captain Bobby's client wanted a better method to carry, load, and launch an inflatable for his new Cruisers 455 motor yacht. After carefully considering what the marketplace offered, Bobby recommended the **FreedomLift**. This lift attaches to the transom and uses strong hydraulic cylinders to raise and lower a cradle upon which the tender nestles. If a swim platform is present, it mounts underneath using extension arms to place the dinghy aft of the platform. What is particularly unique about this lift is that it takes up no deck space and is operated by either a corded control or a nifty wireless keychain remote. By simply releasing two safety locks and pressing the DOWN button on the remote, one can easily launch most any dinghy or personal watercraft in less than 15 seconds. If your wife is like mine, we always go through her dread of boarding or disembarking a floating dinghy. I suppose it's the fear that the boat will drift away before she is safely across the watery gap between. With **FreedomLift** this is a snap since the cradle holds the dinghy securely in place. This feature also makes loading bulky stuff like groceries and boating gear so

much easier. When it comes time to load the dink aboard, just drive it onto the partially submerged cradle, step off, and press UP on the remote. **FreedomLift** does all the work with no loss of swim platform space. Let me tell you, it does not get any easier.

From an installer's standpoint, I was very impressed with the company and their product. For starters, their phone was answered by a real person who was informed, helpful, and patient. This alone is a rare occurrence in our menu driven, impersonal world. Company rep, Bob Zwiers tells me each **FreedomLift** is pre-designed for the specific brand/model boat intended. Because of its modular components, a broad variety of stern configurations can be accommodated without the need to completely redo the unit for every new situation. At present there are some 45 different boat brand designs available, and the company is happy to work with clients to meet virtually any need. According to Bob, the lift was introduced about five years ago and has been used on boats from 32 to 85 feet. Sales are made directly from the factory or through boat yards and marine installers.



The **FreedomLift** can handle dinghies and PWCs up to 800 pounds and is made from powder coated, high grade T-6 marine grade aluminum with all stainless steel hardware. The lift uses a small electro-hydraulic pump unit which generally can be installed inside the boat's stern. **FreedomLift** is conscience of the environment and uses special biodegradable hydraulic oil should a leak ever occur. Construction is beefy and solid, yet light weight. The company provides a very complete installation package including fasteners.

The installation manual is thorough and fairly straightforward, but installation is best done by marine professionals. There are many considerations to be taken into account and drilling holes in the stern of one's boat is best left to those who know what they are doing.



Over my years in the marine industry, I've installed pretty much every type dinghy transport device made, and for my money **FreedomLift** has a solid product that nicely solves the tender storage problem and works effortlessly. If you are considering some way to bring along your dink or PWC, checkout **FreedomLift**.

For more info contact: Bob Zwiers at **FreedomLift**, 5340 6 Mile Court NW, Comstock Park MI 49321. Phone: 616-784-8759, 866-543-8669 toll free, 616-784-0349 fax or their web site: www.FreedomLift.com

See you next month with another topic of boating interest.

Marshall Solomon is a forty year veteran of the marine industry and owner of Marsh Marine located in Charleston, SC. His company is an AlgaeX service dealer for diesel fuel and tank cleaning, a service dealer for Barnacle Buster AC cleanout, and a general marine repairs and installation specialist. Please feel free to contact him at 843-813-8181 or email: yachts@bellsouth.net