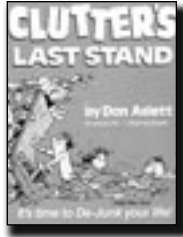

BOOK REVIEWS

Clutter's Last Stand

by Don Aslett

Though not specifically written for liveaboards, this is a philosophical work of great importance for



anyone who wants a simpler, more satisfying life. The subtitle says it all: *It's Time to De-Junk Your Life!*

Aslett has a reputation as America's foremost guru of housework, but this

book contains no advice on how to more efficiently store your possessions, no formulas for homemade cleaning supplies, no tips on ways to recycle otherwise-useless debris. In this book, Aslett focuses all his considerable powers of persuasion on one theme: unless you're a Buddhist monk of a particularly ascetic order, your life is most likely burdened — and subsequently lessened — by useless possessions. In other words, junk is the Great Satan.

Among the many charms of this book are the witty illustrations, in which junk is represented by dark, shifty-looking sacks, equipped with insectile legs and sly expressions. Junk is devious; junk is sinister. Aslett doesn't want you to hide your junk, or store your junk, or compress your junk into a slightly less inconvenient form. He wants you to get rid of it entirely, and he makes a very good case for doing so.

His definition of "junk" is surprisingly broad. He makes fun of the more egregious forms of clutter, such as the 600 grocery bags stuffed behind the refrigerator, or the boxes of 10-year-old magazines in the closet. But he also points his crusading finger at things we don't always recognize as junk. Most knick-knacks are junk. Many labor-saving devices are junk. Junk can include too many family photos, books we have never read, gifts we wish we hadn't received, and a vast array of other marginally desirable stuff. Aslett tells us where to look for it and how to get rid of it as painlessly as possible.

For the prospective liveboarder, the applications of this wisdom should be obvious. When we contemplate a move from a house to a boat, it's clear that a lot of stuff has to go, unless we can afford to rent a house-sized storage facility. Aslett shows us how to pare down our possessions to the most precious and significant items, the things we really can't live without. When the junk-dumping is done, many of us will discover that what's left will fit into a boat-sized life.

— Ray Aldridge

Clutter's Last Stand, by Don Aslett, Writer's Digest Books, ISBN 0-89879-137-5, \$12.99, softcover, 275 pages.

Cruising in Catamarans

by Charles E. Kanter

Charles Kanter knows a lot about catamarans, having spent many years cruising aboard them, delivering them, selling them, and talking about them. He writes with impressive fervor about two-hulled sailboats, and if you're a diehard monohull sailor you may find



his enthusiasm somewhat overwhelming. Even trimaran partisans, who usually approve of anyone who goes to sea with more than one hull, may react with hostility to Kanter's relentless thesis: that catamarans are the best cruising boats (even though he does review several cruising trimarans).

He makes a pretty good case for his beliefs. Monohull believers may find his arguments difficult to refute on strictly logical grounds, and may have to rely on less-substantive rebuttals involving history, tradition and aesthetics. Kanter is not impressed by such concerns. Pretty is as pretty does, he says, and many will find his arguments convincing.

Once convinced, or at least intrigued, readers will discover in Kanter's book an almost encyclopedic

source of information about cruising catamarans. He describes in general terms the good and bad of catamaran design, citing specific examples on every page. He discusses outfitting a cruising cat for sea and how to get the most out of a cat in terms of speed, comfort and safety. He covers a vast array of information and opinion, from rigs to engines to the various amenities that contribute to cruising in comfortable style. He supports every opinion with a story, and this is one of the most entertaining aspects of the book. For example, in debunking the myth that catamarans don't go to windward well, he mentions the 1990 America's Cup, in which Dennis Connor's 60-foot cat pointed higher (and sailed faster) than New Zealand's 120-foot monohull.

Even more stories add spice to the second half of the book, in which Kanter reviews a number of production and legacy catamarans in great detail. The tales range from brief anecdotes to lengthy accounts, from backing a cat into its slip under sail to surviving three gales during a January delivery from Annapolis to the Virgins. For each boat reviewed, Kanter provides all the vital information a prospective boat shopper needs to get started — everything from cabin layouts to sail plans.

If the thought of cruising in a multi-hull appeals to you, read this book. For sheer volume of information, it has no rival.

— Ray Aldridge

Cruising in Catamarans, Charles E. Kanter, Sailco Press, ISBN 0-961840658-X, \$29.95, softcover, 406 pages.

Ray Aldridge is an author and artist. He has written three science-fiction novels — now being republished as e-books at <<http://ereads.com>> — and a number of short stories. He has a handcrafted pottery shop that you can visit on the Web at <<http://goodpots.com/>> or <<http://handmadeknobs.com>>.