
LETTERS

Go Cruising Now, My Brother . . .

We are two "baby boomers" who dream about cruising. Our plan was to take off when our daughter, who was in high school at the time, left for college. Our plan was postponed due to an unexpected arrival. He is almost 16 now and will soon be a sophomore in high school. The school he attends is a Catholic military school, and we want him to graduate from there. When he goes to college, we'll renew our plan and fulfill our dream.

We have a 37' trawler, m/v *Y-Knot*, which we have owned for several years. Our cruising is limited to long weekends, as my husband works for a company that gives two weeks vacation and they can't be taken together. Distant cruising is out of the question.

In the meantime our daughter got married, and now we are "grandma and papa." We don't want to live aboard — yet! — but we would like to cruise for months at a time. We love reading *Living Aboard* and dreamin'. There is a poem that we heard a long time ago, and I would like to share it with you as it applies to all our lives:

On an ancient wall in China where a brooding Buddha blinks,

Deeply graven is the message — "It is later than you think."

The clock of life is wound but once and no man has the power

To tell just when the hands will stop, at late or early hour.

Now is all the time you own, the past a golden link

Go cruising now, my brother — it is later than you think. — Marilyn & Al Hernandez

Bigger Is Better

Why did we choose the boat we did? Simply because of its roominess. It is a 50' Gibson houseboat that will sleep eight, has two bathrooms, a good-size galley and a large (11' x 14') wheelhouse. We also like its ability to go on long cruises. It's a boat that leaves the dock! — *Cindy and Bob Stavely, Ship Bottom, New Jersey*

That's What We Call a Good Friend!

Hello! I have just received my first copy of *Living Aboard*, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it from cover to cover. My next-door-boat neighbor bought a subscription for me as a surprise, and I'm very happy about that! — *Carla Cocco, e-mail <carla_cocco@intuit.com>*

Artists

Have you done any articles on artists who live aboard? I am a painter (oil) and will be moving onto a 53' Californian this month. I would love to talk to

someone who has met the challenge of working and living aboard. — *Karen Hewitt Hagan, Johns Island, South Carolina, e-mail <karenhewitthagan@cs.com>*

We bet there are some artists out there working on (in all senses of the word) their boats. We hope they'll get in touch with you and with us. In the meantime, check out writer Michael Fitzgerald's take on the "problems" of working aboard. See "Off the Chart," page 51.

The Santa Claus Defense

We have finally moved aboard here in Long Island, New York. Our boat is new, an Endeavour TrawlerCat 44 with some modifications for heat, office space and other things that make it fit us better. We even made a provision for pumping out into portable tanks that we can dump at facilities on shore. In this part of the country, the pump-out stations close in the winter, and many areas are no-discharge zones where even treated waste can't be dumped.

The trouble here on Long Island is that more and more towns are banning liveaboards. In the few places that do allow it, most marinas don't accept liveaboards. They just don't get it! It's best to stay just below the radar and not provide any reasons for people to dislike the lifestyle. We hear of more and more areas where liveaboards are challenged and are tired of the same old argu-



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ments. I may explode if one more person says, "So, you don't pay taxes." My standard response is: "Every apartment dweller in America doesn't pay taxes — their landlord does, and so does mine."

Just the other day I thought, with all the court challenges threatening the liveaboard lifestyle, has anyone ever tried the "Miracle on 34th Street" defense? You know the story: a man claims to be the real Santa Claus, and since the Post Office (a branch of the federal government) delivers mail to him addressed to Santa Claus, how can the City of New York dispute it? Here's how it works with liveaboards: The I.R.S. (a very strict and feared branch of the federal government) allows me to deduct the interest on my boat loan as residential mortgage interest. They also allow me to deduct a portion of the property tax that the marina pays (equal to the percentage of the property that we use) if the property owner will provide a statement of the taxes and the percentage. This is the same rule used for apartments. So, if the I.R.S. recognizes a boat as a legitimate residence, why are all these local municipalities willing to dispute the I.R.S.? — *Glen Sherman, lying low on Long Island, e-mail <glensherman@excite.com>*

Thanks — That's What We're Here For

I want to start by saying I love your magazine. My husband and I both love sailing, and we have learned a lot of useful things from your magazine. A few things I have learned on our sailing trips might be useful to someone else, so I thought I would share them with you.

For weekend trips I cook everything I can ahead of time, and it has worked very well. I try to cook ground beef and anything else I can before we leave to cut down on the time I have to spend in the galley. Also for long trips — we went to the Bahamas this summer — any food that is in boxes I take out and put in Ziploc storage bags. You would be surprised how much this cuts down on trash. Since we take a lot of long weekend trips where we can't get rid of trash, this has been a great space saver. I also wash dishes in lake water and rinse them in fresh water. Joy dish detergent works great in any kind of water.

I hope these ideas will be of help to other people.

We have 4 years, 9 months, 18 days and 9 hours until we will be liveaboards. We have a 26 Hunter sailboat, and, if we could, I would move onto it today. — *Anita Baumgartner, aboard Baum's Rush, High Point, North Carolina, e-mail <LKYmylady@aol.com>*

Your Prayers Have Been Answered

I am new to living aboard and would greatly appreciate some "wintry" ideas. I live aboard my 40' Silverton AFC. The winters here in Connecticut get cold, and those cold months are fast approaching. The boat currently has reverse cycle heat that I've read only operates with water temps above 40 degrees.

I am hoping — praying, even — that you may have ideas or suggestions as to how I can safely and cost-effectively heat my new home. Does anyone know if it is possible to install a pellet stove? Anyone ever heard of this? — *Bill H., e-mail <whicks@sikorsky.com>*

You couldn't have asked at a better time! This issue features veteran liveaboards who give good advice about surviving and, yes, enjoying a northern winter aboard.

Gently with the Tides

I've been looking for Michael Frankel's book *Gently with the Tides* and found a used copy at Amazon.com — for \$143.50! Can you help me find one that is more reasonably priced? — *Donna Millenson*

Hang in there — we'll be reprinting *Gently With the Tides* early in 2004. And we can assure you that it will be



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available at a much more reasonable price (not that Michael's fine book isn't worth every sou!). In the meantime, we can't resist plugging *Escape from Someday Isle*, the most recent anthology of *Living Aboard* articles. It's available now for \$18 plus shipping (\$3 inside U.S.; \$4 outside U.S.). To order, call toll-free 1-800-927-6905, or visit our website at <www.livingaboard.com>.

Insurance

We have just purchased a 1975 model 50' Burns Craft and are having extreme difficulty getting insurance. You would be surprised and probably disturbed if you knew the responses we were receiving. We have yet to get one quote from these people. Can anyone help? — *Jim & Lolita Holmes, Aurora, Indiana*

We always direct folks to Acordia's "Quartermaster Liveaboard Policy" (see inside front cover). Also, Al Golden of International Marine Insurance Services has been recommended by several *Living Aboard* friends. If readers send in their ideas about where to find liveaboard insurance, you'll read it here.

Sounding Out

In our September/October issue we asked you how to make sleeping arrangements more comfortable onboard.

We purchased our 1983 25.5 Chris Craft Catalina because we wanted a boat we could trailer and comfortably live aboard. The problem was that my husband had to bend either his head or his body in order to fit in the bow V-berth. This was not going to work because if we're going to use this vessel for its intended purpose, we would have to enjoy a comfortable night's sleep.

In the original design of the Chris Craft's V-berth, the top of each leg of the "V" (the end where our heads laid) abutted a waist-high wall. The port side

wall was at the end of the counter in which the sink and fridge were housed. On the starboard side the wall was a divider doubling as the back rest for the dinette's bench seat. (Luckily, the bench seat was the same height as the V-berth.) We reasoned that if we could sleep diagonally, instead of along the centerline of the boat, we would have plenty of room. So, we removed the divider and filled in the resulting space with an appropriate-sized cushion, thus adding the space of the bench seat to our V-berth. Then we filled in the space between the now lop-sided "V" with a cushion that ran out to the edge of the dinette's bench seat (imagine a triangle). To stabilize this cushion, we mounted a folding leg so that when not in use it can be placed out of the way in the bow.

To add a little more comfort, we added an "egg crate" foam cushion, cut to fit the new dimensions, to the top of the berth. For bedding, our foam egg crate is placed in a queen-size duvet. This serves as our bottom sheet. A regular queen-size sheet and quilt serve as our cover. When not in use, the egg crate rolls up nicely and the insert is removed. — *Winter and Michael Robinson, aboard Searchin' (every chance they get in the summer months), Portland, Maine, e-mail <winter@winterrobinson.com>*

Our 35' trawler came equipped with a V-berth with no filler cushion. The cushions were just that — cushions. And while this was all right for short overnight trips, when we planned our Nova Scotia to Keys and Bahamas cruise we decided that these accommodations should be updated. We ordered a queen-size regular bed mattress of 6" foam specially cut and tapered to fit along the hull sides and into the "V". Monarch mattress of Ontario was very obliging and was the first company we contacted that understood what we were trying to do. Mike simply removed the "fiddle" rails that kept the old cushions in place and put a sheet of plywood over the entire V-berth area.

The queen-size width left an area at each side of the mattress for reading materials, etc., but completely filled the rest of the space. We had to remove the door (not a problem since we are the only ones on board, but I did sew a curtain that we can put up with a tension rod if we have guests), as it opened into the "V" that now no longer existed. Regular double-size flat sheets work fine, but I did sew a fitted bottom sheet from a double flat, which is better. We are delighted with this new arrangement as the mattress is very comfortable. We leave the bed made up with the sheets and a comforter (also cut to fit), which looks nice and is much more comfortable than a sleeping bag. We anchor out whenever possible so that we get a fresh breeze. We don't have opening ports but do have a hatch with a scoop and a fan. — *Darby & Mike Goode, cruising on Some Goode, 35' Rosborough custom trawler*

We sleep athwartship in the aft cabin of our 1975 Whitby 42, *Free N Clear*. When we first bought the boat in 1999, I believe it came with the original foam cushions. We replaced the foam and the upholstery. After sleeping on the 5-inch "firm" foam for three years, we opted for something a little more comfortable, as we found the spaces between the cushions a problem, even with a "cut to fit" egg carton-type foam on top. We now have a latex foam mattress from Handcraft Mattress Co. <www.boatbeds.com>. Our aft cabin was measured by an employee of HMC, and the new mattress delivered within ten days. Originally we had thought to buy an inner-spring mattress, but being limited in available height, we chose a latex one instead (hypoallergenic, no mildew) which came with a lifetime guarantee.

The mattress is covered with vinyl on the bottom and comes with quilted damask ticking on top. It also has a hinge fold in it, for access to storage and the emergency tiller below. We are very satisfied customers! We live aboard, but do a lot of traveling with

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my husband's job. It is such a pleasure to "come home to our own bed."

With a mattress shaped like a trapezoid, it is difficult to keep the mattress pad in place and sheets on the bed without going to the expense of having a custom pad and sheets made. Once cut to shape, I sewed two long zippers (from the old bimini) into the forward and aft edges of a standard mattress pad and the mattress edging (use a sewing awl for the mattress). Once I zip the pad in place, I never have to adjust it when making the bed in the morning.

I use Jersey sheets from Bed, Bath & Beyond <www.bedbathandbeyond.com>. With one little "tug" in the morning, the bed looks as if it was never slept in! The sheets <www.bedbathandbeyond.com/product.asp?order_num=-1&SKU=102743&RN=18> stay on the bed, and fit over each corner (difficult with a 102-inch-long mattress).

All of this, without the expense of buying custom-made sheets! — *Deborah Streeter, Tavernier, Florida*

My husband and I live full time on a 50' Gibson houseboat. We have the rear bedroom, which accommodates a queen bed. We brought our bed from our old house. We had an egg-crate foam pad on it, and I already had heavyweight and lightweight down comforters. In the winter, I have the egg-crate pad on the mattress (which is a pillowtop), then I have a heater mattress pad and my heavyweight comforter with a flannel duvet cover. In the spring I remove the mattress pad and change to my lightweight comforter with a 100 percent cotton duvet cover. You cannot

possibly match the comfort anywhere. I just provided the same for the twin berths in the front of our boat for our guests' comfort, as well. We love our bed and wouldn't trade it for anything. — *Lori & Ed Muhlenbruch, Wilmington, Illinois*

On my boat the berth is forward, and it's a wide, tall, fairly open space (not a V-berth). When I bought my boat a little over a year ago, the former owners had an actual double-bed mattress in there, but I threw that away and replaced it with a double futon that I already owned. I kept thinking I'd get something more comfortable eventually, but you know how it goes.

After five months of sleeping miserably on the hard futon, I learned from my sister about Swedish foam mattress toppers. I ordered a double-bed size for about \$200, and I swear I sleep like a baby now. No more pressure points or tossing and turning. It's about 2 or 3 inches thick and goes right on top of my futon. It came with a washable cotton cover. I use regular double-bed sheets which go right on top of that. I highly recommend it. I believe it can be cut to fit whatever shape berth you have. It's been comfortable both on cold winter nights and on much warmer summer nights. You can order one online easily; just do a search on "foam mattress toppers" and you'll see plenty of choices. I don't want to recommend one brand over another.

Also, on my dock we have quite a lot of foot traffic at all hours, and my marina hosts weddings year-round, right next to my dock. The noise from conversations and music often goes on un-

til the wee hours. So I bought a small clip-on fan, hooked it to the doorframe of my berth, and once I turn it on at night, I don't hear the voices or the music anymore. On nights when the swell is really coming through the marina, and the lines are really thumping and creaking, the fan even covers up the worst of that noise, too. It makes the perfect amount of white noise for sleeping, yet you can still hear important things like the phone, or your alarm clock. I sleep very soundly now.

I live aboard full time, and my boat is located in San Diego's Mission Bay. I'm embarrassed to say that my boat doesn't really have a name at this time, but I'm working on it! — *Carla Cocco, e-mail <carla_cocco@intuit.com>*

In our July/August issue we asked about your boat's library:

Being on board my boat always gets me in the mood for any book with a nautical theme. Books about maritime history, shipwrecks (the Great Lakes variety), how-to books about boats, and boating magazines (especially *Living Aboard*) all give me great enjoyment and relaxation. Often I even learn something useful that I can immediately put to use. They are also the ones that are essential to a boater whether living on a boat full time or just occasionally. — *Dennis Andrzejak, Royal Oak, Michigan, e-mail <dandrzejak@msn.com>*