Good Old Boat wins BIG at the 2022 Boating Writers International awards

Good Old Boat

Inspiring hands-on sailors

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The sailing magazine for the rest of us.

2022 BWI WINNERS SPECIAL EDITION ISSUE

On Feb. 15, 2023, at the Miami International Boat Show, Boating Writers International (BWI) presented its annual awards for boating journalists, photographers, and videographers. Awards were presented in 15 contest categories to recognize entrants for their "Excellence in creating compelling stories about boating through entertaining, educational, and inspiring journalism." The 2022 BWI awards attracted 79 participants submitting 269 entries. *Good Old Boat* is thrilled that our writers took home five awards across six categories. To honor their work, this special *Good Old Boat* issue contains all five of our writers' winning articles.

Evolving into E-Power

Sailing with a diesel auxiliary, as well as engineless, led one couple to make a third choice: fully renewable electric propulsion.

BY ADAM COVE

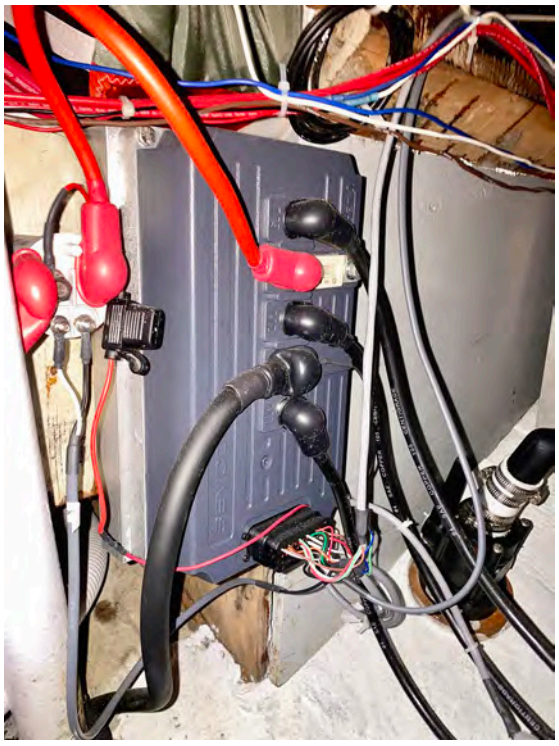
As far as I can tell, my fiancée, Alison, and I aren't typical sailors. On our 1969 Luders 33, *Ben-Varrey*, it's not unusual for us to sail when others would fire up the engine. Instead of racing to the next anchorage, we pull out a book, splice a line, clean the decks, or make a nice meal while underway. True, there are times when we are entirely becalmed while some slow sea creature, like a sunfish, does laps around us. But we spend more time on the water and let the journey create an incredible experience.

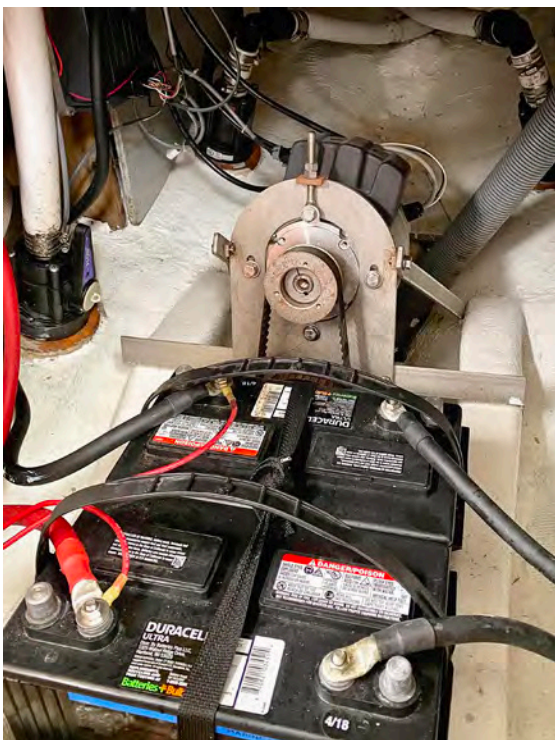
This philosophy has driven the changes over time in our relationship with *Ben-Varrey*'s auxiliary propulsion, from diesel, to no engine, to an electric propulsion system. When we bought her, she had a 28-hp diesel that possessed its own personality and demanded regular attention to keep running smoothly. That game lasted for two years before the desire for simplicity and the need for a new challenge took over. We went engineless. Yes, I hauled a perfectly good engine out of the boat, sealed up the shaft log, and bought a sculling oar.

Sailing on and off anchor was standard practice already, but this change did force me to refocus on light-air sailing. There was no option other than to sail or scull up to docks for water or pump-outs. It was a quick way to get to know intimately how the boat handles and to develop new skills in the warping department. *Ben-Varrey* was noticeably lighter and faster, thanks to that 550-pound diet. And a spacious new storage area for folding bikes was a bonus!

Granted, it takes a special mix of patience, experience, and craziness to enjoy it, but I would rather work hard to keep the boat sailing than spend time buried in the engine compartment. And the change came with unexpected benefits. Every trip required better planning; wind was always helpful, and current could be an ally or enemy. This level of forethought led to quick local sails and a great head start on anything with distance. It was also safer navigationally. We didn't tempt a lee shore with an engine not starting, and any oncoming traffic earned high attention.

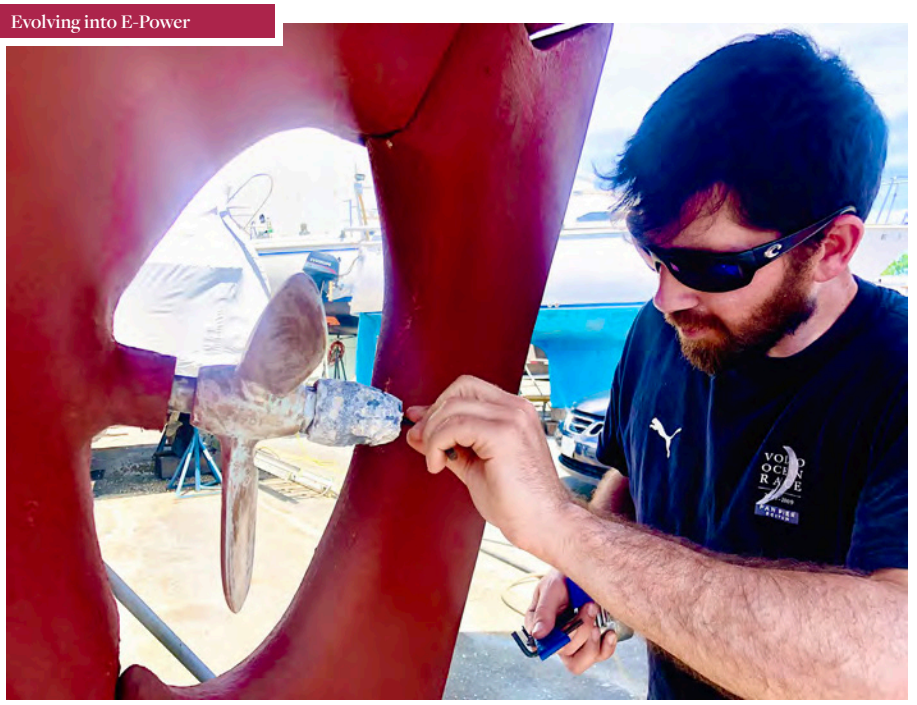
But, after sailing for three years with only a sculling oar for auxiliary power, Alison challenged me to come up with a solution to expand our cruising options. There are some channels that are just too tight to short tack and days when the breeze is just out of reach. It was a matter of convenience. There was always the option to wait for conditions to change, but perhaps there was a better balance—a level of modest convenience? The solution would also need to be as environmentally ethical and thoughtful as possible.





The controller is mounted close to the motor to keep wire runs to a minimum, which helps prevent voltage drops caused by high current flows, at far left.

The new motor and four batteries fit neatly into the space the diesel engine had occupied, at left.



Adam performs some annual maintenance on the propeller, replacing the zinc and applying a new coating of Propspeed.

The Calculus

Regardless of what we would install, we would not fall into the trap of relying on it to get us out of trouble. All navigational decisions would still need to be sound, and we would preserve redundancy through our main propulsion system: sails and rigging.

We needed to maintain simplicity and keep maintenance and operational effort to a minimum. All avenues led to an electric propulsion system that was self-sustaining while on a mooring, anchor, or underway. It needed to be charged by renewable power. This represented complete independence.

An electric motor doesn't have a crankshaft, pistons, injectors, a fuel pump, fuel valves, a camshaft, rocker arms, or a crosshead bearing, among many other common moving diesel engine components. The only moving parts to wear out on an electric motor are a set of bearings and potentially a belt if a gear reducer is used. As for electrical components, modern diesel engines are just as dependent on them as a full electric propulsion system. Combine these two factors, and an electric motor is fundamentally more reliable and requires less maintenance. It also eliminates issues like contaminated fuel that will stop a diesel engine.

Another bonus is the cleaner boat environment. Nothing makes me seasick faster than being trapped in a hot, small compartment that reeks of diesel while rocking back and forth and getting covered in oil or grease. Likewise, no exhaust in the cockpit. We'd experienced the clean boat smell after we extracted the diesel engine and were not willing to go back.

Finally, there was the money factor. Since we were looking at a partially self-built electric system, the cost was well under half of the cost of a new diesel.

With our commitment to wind propulsion firm, this new system was to be a true auxiliary. Range would be limited by our battery capacity. We wouldn't get anywhere close to the power density of diesel with a similar volume of batteries, but given our goals, this concern could be left ashore. With our intentions clearly defined, the system began to take shape.

The Motor

The heart of any propulsion system is the power plant. This is where I began the project's design: the electric motor. When sourcing a diesel, the language is horsepower; when selecting an electric motor, it is kilowatts (kW). Some translation was needed to determine the size of the motor I would need, and it's not as simple as multiplying by a conversion factor.

There are two approaches to this. One is what most sailors probably will use, a table that electric propulsion manufacturers provide to help determine the conversion's parameters. The second requires more work but is more accurate. However, it also requires a four-year degree in naval architecture, or at least the ability to follow a set of formulas from a book on yacht design. I took the second route, as I'm a bit of a boat nerd; that degree was expensive, and I need to make it count anywhere I can!

The process also provided me with a propeller and shaft specification, which made it simple to order a new Campbell propeller. After crunching the numbers, I knew that the 28-hp diesel that I once had could be replaced with an 11-kW electric motor, with the added benefit of instant torque.

With the power determined, I narrowed the search by choosing between a brushed or brushless motor and the voltage. Brushed motors were less expensive, but a brushless motor carried significant advantages, among them higher efficiency, higher torque-to-weight ratio, increased reliability, a longer lifespan, and no ozone production. Why worry about ozone? In addition to higher concentrations being harmful to humans, it posed

a risk to a fair amount of equipment on board. Ozone can quickly break down certain rubbers like nitrile, which was the material of the diaphragm for my primary bilge pump (close to where this engine would be installed). I'd look for a brushless motor.

In the brushless family of motors, I could opt for a brushless DC motor or an AC motor with a DC controller. The voltage would need to be much higher than the existing 12-volt power in the boat, as the current draws would be too large for any reasonably sized wires to handle without suffering major voltage drops. Existing electric vehicles and boats had a range of voltages, but 48 volts seemed to be emerging as the leader on the marine front.

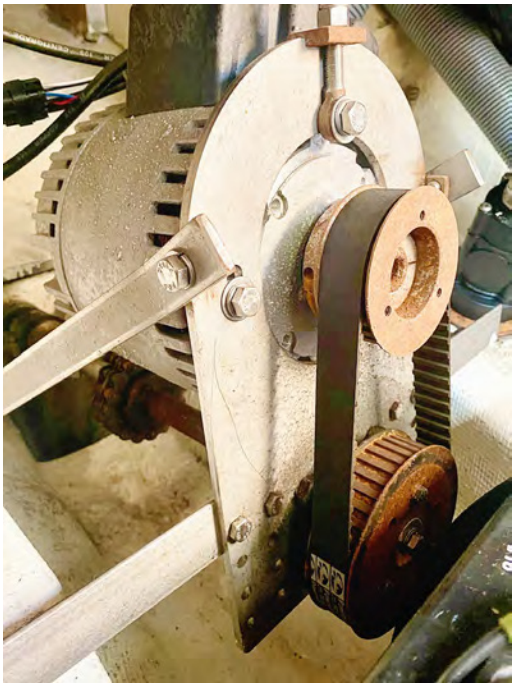
As I dug deeper into options, I came across Thunderstruck Motors (thunderstruck-ev.com), a California-based operation specializing in DIY electric drive systems for vehicles and boats. They offered kits for boats that included a 48-volt brushless motor, controller, and throttle, all bench-tested before delivery. They also had gear reduction kits, which I would need to reduce the rpms on the propeller shaft per my earlier calculations. I purchased the 10-kW kit, as the next size up, 12 kW, required water cooling for the motor, an added complication not in line with my propulsion needs of occasional and light use.

Adam fabricated a small, weatherproof compartment in the cockpit to house the throttle and main power switch for the motor.

The gear reducer acts as the primary frame of the installation. The motor is bolted to the upper smaller gear, and a coupling secures the propeller shaft to the lower gear. The two gears are connected by a carbon-reinforced rubber belt. Installing the gear reducer frame required custom brackets that my brother, Ryan, fabricated (he's a marine mechanic, machinist, and boatbuilder). He also assisted with some custom tools for the propeller shaft installation. The alignment of the gear reducer to the propeller shaft frame is critical and made slightly easier by the flexible shaft coupling provided. A few dry installations went a long way in making sure that all the components would line up correctly.

We built a custom box to house the throttle, accessible through a latched waterproof door in the cockpit. This also housed the main power switch for the engine, which activated a solenoid to allow power to flow to the controller. I installed a second, manual, switch in line with the solenoid to ensure the power was off when I was doing any maintenance.

I mounted the motor controller safely to the side of the motor but close enough to minimize the distance of the wiring runs. Such high current flows can result in large voltage drops if wires are not large enough and if wiring distances are too long. By keeping the components in proximity, I could maximize efficiency with heavy-gauge wire. And, since the new electric motor configuration was so much smaller than a diesel, I could install the batteries right next to the motor, allowing for another short wiring run to the controller.



A carbon-reinforced rubber belt connects the motor's two gears.

The Batteries

Aside from emissions considerations, we also wanted the life cycle of the entire system to be as environmentally responsible as possible; each component should be as low impact as possible to manufacture and be readily recyclable. If the batteries were just going to end up in a landfill, require a tedious recycling effort, or run the risk of poisoning the environment, we missed our goal. That immediately removed any form of lithium batteries from the list, despite their capacity and efficiency. This technology is still young, and I bet there will be appropriate and widely available recycling, especially for the LiFePO4 versions, in the near future. It's just not available today. And although the mining performed to create any battery is far from ideal, that is universal.

At the top of the list were flooded and AGM lead acid batteries. They are almost entirely recyclable (and previous emissions from the process have been greatly reduced by regulation). We settled on flooded lead acid batteries for the cost per amp-hour and relative cost of the efficiency when compared to AGM. A Duracell group 27 flooded deep-cycle 90-Ah marine battery cost slightly over $100. There is undoubtedly a performance difference when compared to other battery types, but as with any outfitting choice, we compromised based on our priorities.

The motor required 48 volts to operate. Shy of power loss through a DC-to-DC converter, that means that the boat needed a power bank comprised of intervals of four batteries. So, would we have four, eight, twelve batteries? At 50 pounds each, this needed to be carefully considered. This was altogether separate from the existing solar-charged house battery bank that already included three of these batteries. It was effectively replacing the long-forgotten full diesel tank and the single engine starting battery (330 pounds).

Ben-Varrey **at anchor in Cutler Harbor, Maine. In this photo, the solar panels on either side of the pushpit are raised to capture maximum sunshine.**

Battery bank capacity needed to be equated to range. Also, since resistance is not linear but rather exponential for this and other displacement boats, I needed to determine the range at different speeds. The motor could deliver a maximum of 10 kW. Using the vessel's particulars and a velocity prediction program (later verified by sea trials), I estimated this to equate to 6.4 knots in flat water.

In a 48-volt battery bank, 10 kW requires approximately 208 amps. Given that flooded batteries should not drop below 50 percent capacity, a bank of four 90-Ah batteries (using only 45 Ah) wired in series would provide just under 13 minutes of motoring at 6.4 knots, or a range of 1.4 nautical miles. Pulling that many amps out of a deep-cycle flooded battery will cause sulfation on the plates and reduce battery life considerably, even with occasional equalization, but since I had no interest in motoring that fast, I wasn't too worried about this.

The table at right breaks down the calculated range at other speeds following the same logic.

With eight batteries, multiply the ranges by two. With 12 batteries, multiply by three. Most importantly, this is based on calm water (if it were not calm, we would be sailing), and slow and steady winning this distance race.

Based on our minimal engine use and the desire to be able to charge this battery bank entirely on renewables in a reasonable period of time, we opted to install just four batteries. In existing space within the engine compartment, I fabricated secure foundations for the batteries using wood, fiberglass, aluminum flat stock, and nylon webbing. Fitting additional batteries would have been possible but challenging. And remember the weight factor. Lighter means faster, so why add more weight to slow us down? The future of energy storage is promising, and we will be keeping a close eye on what is coming next.

Renewable Charging

Any battery storage bank still needs to be charged, and we wanted our installation to be fully off the grid. That meant solar, wind, or hydro generation specified such that the batteries could be recharged within a short passage.

Expanding our existing solar array would be the most cost-effective first step. We opted for twin Renogy 175-watt solar panels, the largest we could fit on board. These replaced our existing twin Renogy 100-watt panels that charged just the house bank and moved us from a combined 200 watts to 350 watts. The panels are attached to the pushpit, port and starboard, with customized adjustable rail brackets. The panels tilt to help optimize power generation and fold all the way down for docking.

The panels are connected in parallel and linked to a two-way switch. One mode charges the house bank with a 12-volt charge controller (Victron 100/30) and the other charges the engine bank with a 48-volt boost charger (Renogy Rover Boost). The generation varies considerably with the time of year, cloud cover, and point of sail. For example, sailing south in the fall wing-and-wing with a northerly breeze is tough on generation. Alternatively, a completely clear summer day at anchor will provide the maximum amount of energy. The panels can add anything from a few watts into either bank to our current best of 1.75 kW in a day. Just like any exchange, you must budget use based on generation. A series of cloudy days equates to less motoring unless there's another charging source.

A wind generator was next. This took a fair amount of research and would be a completely new form of power generation for *Ben-Varrey*. The wind generator would be dedicated to the engine battery bank, and a 48-volt unit would offer the best charging efficiency. The market is flooded

Engine Power	Speed	Range (Time)	Range (Distance)
10kW	6.4 kts	13 min	1.4 nm
8kW	6.1 kts	16 min	1.6 nm
6kW	5.5 kts	22 min	2.0 nm
4kW	4.7 kts	32 min	2.5 nm
2kW	3.5 kts	65 min	3.8 nm
1kW	2.3 kts	130 min	5.0 nm
.5kW	1.4 kts	259 min	6.0 nm

with options but shrinks considerably when looking for 48-volt models. (On a side note, I installed a crossover switch that can charge the house bank from the engine bank via a Victron 75/15 charger, allowing the wind generator to effectively charge the house.)

After focusing on efficiency and noise level, we installed a Silentwind 400-watt model that included a charge controller specific to the unit. It consistently scored well in professional reviews and in various forums, with an emphasis on decent generation at lower wind speeds and quiet operation. Shortly after installing it, we were in the Vineyard Haven anchorage among a few other boats with wind generators, one at least a thousand feet away. From our cockpit, we easily heard the others above ours. Along with Silentwind's great customer service, this performance reinforced the choice.

I mounted the wind generator on a 9-foot-tall, 3.5-inch-diameter aluminum Edson pole secured to the deck and the reinforced pushpit using Edson Marine's stock fittings. The height places the spinning blades out of the way of any person or sail, yet I can just reach it when standing on the pushpit. This maximizes wind velocity while also ensuring that I can physically secure the blades in heavy weather or during maintenance.

A wind generator's power generation is exponential relative to wind speed, and it does not start generating any power until a certain wind speed. In most sailing environments, it's the lower wind speeds that count. A wind generator's ability to produce an impressive number of watts in 40 knots isn't all that helpful (although on a recent heavy-air passage, I had the entire boat running off of the wind generator, but that's a rare exception). In most cases, we were concerned with how much power could be generated in 5 to 22 knots of breeze—at least 90 percent of the sailing conditions we experience. The Silentwind 400W estimated production as follows, and has proven very accurate based on our four years of use:

Wind Speed	Power Generated
6 kts	6 W
8 kts	15 W
10 kts	25 W
13 kts	50 W
16.5 kts	100 W
21 kts	170 W
23 kts	220 W
24 kts	250 W
25 kts	300 W
26 kts	350 W
27 kts	400 W
28 kts	420 W

We didn't expect the wind generator to hit the same power generation peaks as the solar panels, but because it can generate power anytime, it becomes competitive in total generation. On a cloudy and windy day, it will be doing almost all the work. On average, we generate 1.1 kW per day with the wind generator.

A third possibility would have been a hydro generator, which uses a propeller to generate power while under sail. Unfortunately for us, the math didn't work out. It was too costly for our budget to go with a separate unit, and using the new propeller and motor was equally problematic. The ideal propeller design for driving a boat forward is very different from the optimal design for power generation under sail. With the fixed-blade propeller that was in our budget, and consideration of the aperture in which it would sit, regeneration by the motor wasn't worth the effort to develop.

Time with this renewable package has taught us that we still need to be conscious of our energy use, but we have sufficient generating ability to fill our needs. The solar is directed approximately 90 percent at the house bank, as the wind generator charges the engine bank well on its own. We have increased our house electrical usage with time and find that we have topped up batteries earlier in the day. Combined, we generate a typical 2.2 kW per day, split evenly between the generation sources over a long enough period. This number will be lower when cruising in Maine (1.8 kW) and higher when wandering in the Caribbean (2.6 kW)—a perfect fit for the additional refrigeration draw in warmer waters.

With our occasional usage of the electric propulsion system (typically five to ten minutes at low speed), it can easily be charged up within the same day, typically in a matter of hours. If we were to run the engine batteries to our imposed minimum level of 50 percent, it would take a couple of days for them to recharge, on average. Under certain weather conditions, that could be shortened to only a day or lengthened to a week. Therefore, we remain conservative with usage, which fits well with our sailing style.

We are still sailing with this system four years later and we love it. Maintenance has been nearly nonexistent, we sustain adequate power levels on a mooring and at anchor, and there seem to be no limits on our sailing destinations.

This has been our experience, and we hope it inspires others to think about breaking through resistance to change and innovating when it comes to repowering.

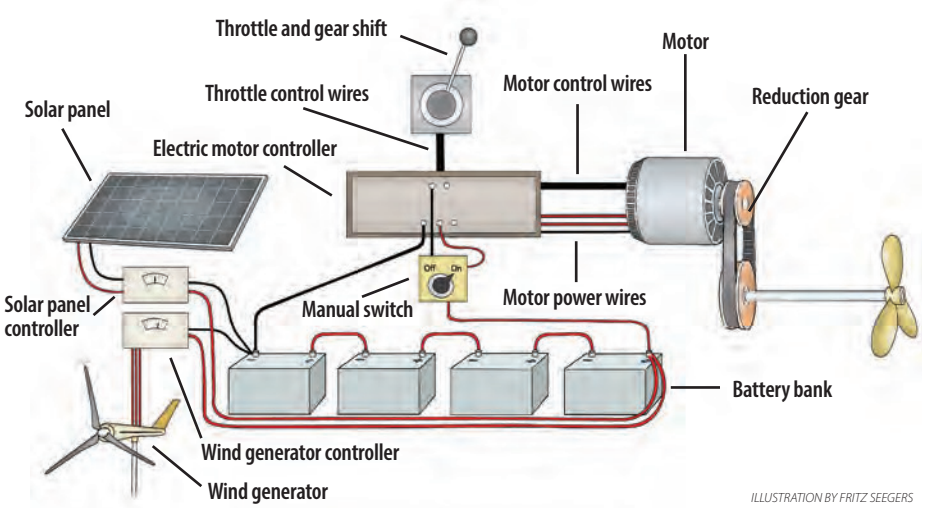


ILLUSTRATION BY FRITZ SEEGERS

Adam Cove is a naval architect and former CEO of Edson Marine. Now a marine consultant, he lives aboard and travels with his fiancée, Alison, on their Luders 33 Ben-Varrey. *Check out their latest travels at www.adamalison.com.*

The Noob Cruise

A first-time passage to Catalina Island serves up wildlife, outboard hijinks, starry nights, and happiness.

BY DAVID BLAKE FISCHER

I was getting pretty good at the marina thing.

Nine months after getting *Delilah* (see "Hey There *Delilah*, May/June 2021), I was settling into that unsettling period just after one realizes their midlife crisis dream. To onlookers, I was a real-life sailor with a zinc-slathered nose and a capable little 1972 Cape Dory 25. But I had no real chops at ocean sailing.

Twice a week, I went to the boat. I'd bring along a VHF radio, a life vest, and a few magazines. So my wife would think I was a serious sailor, I'd also pack a small cooler with drinks, chips, dip, and some moist towelettes. At the dock, I'd pull out the cockpit cushions, warm the outboard, and chat with neighbors. Then, when they were out of sight, I'd turn off the motor, apply sunscreen, and nibble on snacks.

Also, my slip was located between a Trader Joe's and a nautical-themed restaurant with old photos of John Wayne, Ben Stiller, and Goldie Hawn laughing, drinking, and eating fried food. So, no, I wasn't on the open ocean, per se, but the smell of fish sticks, the photos of the cast of "Overboard," and the fact that I could see my boat from the restaurant's patio meant I was almost sailing.

"What are you gonna do?" a dockmate hollered at me one morning. The guy was maybe 70. He held a paint brush and a coffee cup filled with epoxy. It looked to me like he was transforming his Catalina 25 into a Hawaiian-themed houseboat. "You gonna cruise that new boat of yours? Anchor at Malibu? Take it to Catalina? What are your plans?"

I poked my head up from the cockpit. "Well, I've got a lot to learn before an adventure like that," I said.

"You know more than you think you do," he shot back.

When I first got here, the thing that struck me was the size of things. Marina del Rey is a city and a marina and a condo development. On weekends, 20-somethings charter megayachts to take TikTok videos of themselves twerking on the bow of a boat.

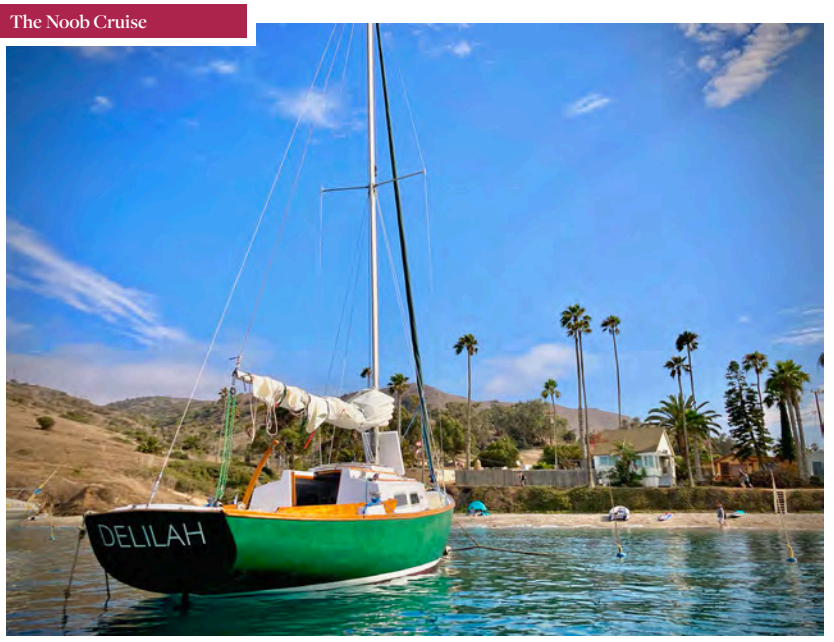
The other thing that struck me was the size of the Pacific Ocean. Each time I sailed *Delilah* beyond the breakwall, I got the sinking feeling that I was entering into danger. Over some months, that fear faded, though by summertime it still hadn't disappeared, and I still hadn't sailed beyond the Santa Monica Bay.

Then one evening, I met a guy on a Catalina Capri 18. *That's a small boat for an ocean*, I thought. The boat isn't really that small; my 25-footer is just 18 feet at the waterline. Anyway, we talked on the dock and exchanged info. A couple of weeks later he texted.

"Hey, it's Jordan on the Capri 18," he wrote. "I'm sailing with my buddy Dan to Catalina Island in August. Would you like to come along on your boat?"

Santa Catalina, aka Catalina Island, is one of the Channel Islands, a 21-mile-long volcanic remnant off the coast of Southern California renowned for its rugged beauty, rare

David and *Delilah* head into the morning light leaving Marina del Ray.



Delilah **rests on a mooring at Catalina Island, at left.**

DK and David (L to R) enjoy a nice reach on *Delilah,* at bottom left.

species, and OK restaurants. Two Harbors is a village on its skinny northern end, 18 miles from the island's only city, Avalon, and 31 miles from Marina del Rey. To get there, sailors cross one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and areas of ocean where water depths reach 3,000 feet.

I bit my thumbnail and considered Jordan's text. Then, I wrote back: *I'm in.*

The summer heat was searing. A couple of weeks before the trip, I took my son to the pool. I was floating on my back, lost in thought, when the lifeguard stopped me. He was just a teenager, but he was in that little tower and he had that whistle. Pool rules: He said I'd have to pass a swim test to be in the deep end. I was 39; the pool's depth maxed out at 5 feet 5 inches, but I respected it.

And, so, here's the thing I want to mention about sailing: Unlike at the 5-foot-deep pool, anyone with a boat can simply float out onto the ocean, totally unsupervised, and go.

When I'm nervous, I bite my fingernails. Sometimes I eat chips or make lists. As the Catalina adventure neared, I made an inventory of everything one might want on a weekend cruise. Typing with a single, Dorito-stained finger, I searched for chart plotters, biminis, and outboards. As my list grew, it migrated from scrap paper, to cell phone, to laptop.

A few days before departure, I was resting on my kids' bunkbed, using a magic marker and writing *cool dinghy with drink holders* on my hand when I had an epiphany. Maybe I didn't need this stuff. Maybe the boat was ready. Maybe I was just...nervous.

That night, I went down to the water, tidied up *Delilah*, and rehearsed some things. *Here's hot dogs on top of beer in the cooler; and here's hot dogs beside beer with lunch meat on top.* "What do you think?" I asked my wife.

"You're going to have fun, David." Emily said. "Do you have gas for the outboard? Have you downloaded Navionics?"

"You read my mind," I said. "It's literally next on my list."

An experienced sailor might wait until there's wind to sail to Catalina Island. I lacked that particular insight. So, we left at 8 a.m. and motored through soupy seas and light fog—Jordan and Dan on their Catalina 18 and my buddy, DK, and me bobbing along on *Delilah.*

"Point the boat about 2 inches to the right," I told DK, squinting at my iPhone like an Angelino in traffic. This exchange repeated every few minutes. Between intervals, I'd spill a coffee, sit on my sunglasses, or drop my phone, then glance down at Navionics and announce, as if for the first time, "OK, let's head about 3 inches left. Yes, DK. Hold it right there!"

This story might be titled "Amateur Man Goes Motoring" were it not for the fact that, with each passing mile, a sense of flow took over, and my anticipation of the trip was replaced by the real-time experience of it.

"Oh my god!" DK said. We were about 7 miles out. A pod of bottlenose dolphins, numbering perhaps in the hundreds, was stampeding at the surface. DK went to the bow. I held the tiller between my legs and shot some video. Most of my life, I've seen protected or institutionalized expressions of nature: zoos, stocked fishing ponds, cats playing keyboards. To encounter this many dolphins, from a small sailboat, with the cliffs of the Palos Verdes Peninsula behind us, was wild.

"Did you get a good video?" DK asked afterward.

"No," I said. "But not to worry. It's a thing now."

"What's a thing now?" he asked.

"Unfocused video," I said. I told DK how kids who've grown up with cell phones consider sharp, focused photos boring. "They post blurry stuff as a sort of middle finger to the tyranny of perfect pics," I explained. I looked down at my phone. "*Damn.* I forgot to hit record."

"So, no video?" DK asked.

"Right," I said.

"Well, that's probably cool now, too."

We started sailing about midway through the shipping lane. The fog was gone. The island was in view. On the horizon, a smattering of container ships was faintly discernible. *Delilah* has no radar or AIS, but Jordan had a free mobile app called Ships Near Me that reveals the real-time position of the big ships.

"Is that the far end of the island?" I asked Jordan over VHF.

"No, that's a container ship," he said.

"Is that a distant rock formation?" I asked.

"No, that's a container ship," he said.

The final ship we passed was stacked implausibly high and had the letters COSCO splashed in big red letters across the side. DK got excited and grabbed the VHF to radio Jordan and Dan. "Capri 18, when you get close, we'll take two 20-ounce Pepsis and a couple of Kirkland Signature all-beef hot dogs. Thanks!"

> **For years, I'd dreamt of this sort of experience, and now I was doing it.**

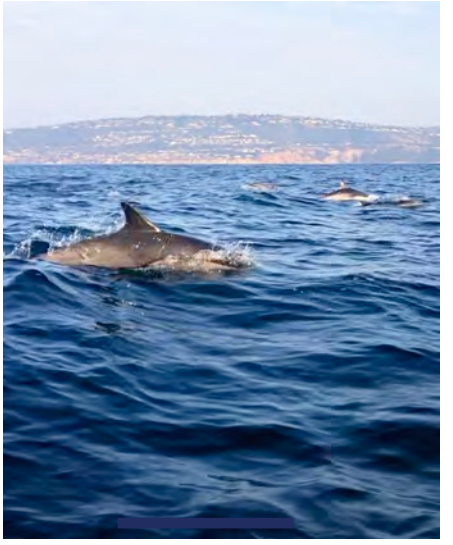
The wind was rushing through the island's isthmus as we approached the outer anchorage at Two Harbors. I dropped the mainsail and steered. I hailed the harbormaster on channel 9 but got no response. Were we too far out? Was our radio garbled? I tried hailing them again, only this time in a deeper, more masculine-sounding voice. Nope. I tried a British accent. Still nope.

"Well, we've done everything they tell you to do in the sailing books," I told DK. Then I had a horrifying thought: *Was this God's punishment for enrolling in AAA insurance instead of BoatU.S.?*

If leaving the dock was the hardest part of cruising, coming into harbor was second. Moving closer, DK and I explored the various downsides of motoring through a busy mooring field in a strong headwind with a 3-hp outboard. When the motor began acting flakey, I readied the sails and sent DK forward to prepare the anchor.

"Just in case," I told him. Outwardly I was a man in control; inwardly, I was teetering on the edge of an emotional break.

"Sailing vessel *Delilah*, this is the harbormaster," a voice suddenly cracked over the radio. "We're sending a boat." Minutes later, a calm young woman in a patrol boat appeared. This is just like



Before heading back to the mainland, the guys took a side trip to Big Fisherman's Cove for some snorkeling, at top.

Seeing a pod of dolphins in the wild and so close to *Delilah* was a highlight of the outbound trip, above.

David's 25-foot Cape Dory floats happily among the catamarans and big cruising boats visiting Catalina Island.

that episode of "Baywatch," I thought as she led us to our spot on the string line.

"You'll want to go ahead and grab the pickup pole," she said after our bow had floated over the hawser.

DK looked at me.

"How do we do that?" I asked her.

"You pick it up," she said.

That night, we enjoyed cold beer and OK burgers on the patio at the village restaurant. But something felt different. Was it endorphins? Was it the fact that four first-timers just sailed two small boats 31 miles to an island? Or was it the super-spreader event that was now unfolding on the restaurant's crowded dance floor: *Conga line in the time of COVID?*

I slept like a baby that night to the sound of gentle moving water and the Macarena. At sunrise, I woke to the snorted rattle of DK snoring. I snuck out to the cockpit, brushed my teeth with no paste, splashed a little lemon-flavored La Croix under my pits, then—after landing a few contact lenses on my cheeks—put on glasses.

Nearby, Jordan was in the cockpit of the Capri 18, waking too. I used an ancient maritime method of boat-to-boat communication called whisper-yelling where one airs one's grievances without using vocal cords. I told him about DK's snoring.

"You're kidding me," he said, using only his breath. "That's why I'm in the cockpit. Dan snores, too!"

Jordan swam over and together we shared instant coffee under the shade of a wet towel hung from *Delilah*'s boom. Nearby, families cruised the cove in fancy dinghies with sunshades and steering wheels. When DK was up, he and I floated around on a pair of five-dollar inflatables from the kids' toys section at Target. We met a few cruisers; we also made some friends. Two of them, buddies on a Catalina 30, joined us aboard *Delilah* on a short shlep over to nearby Emerald Bay where we saw the famed Indian Rock and some remarkably translucent green and blue water.

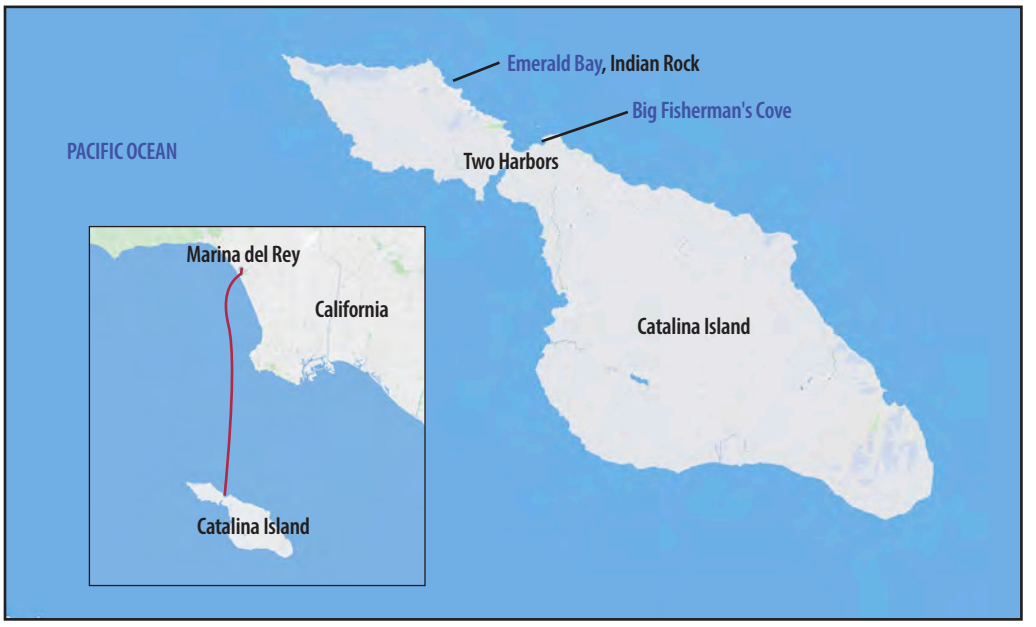
That evening, Dan, Jordan, DK, and I climbed an isolated trail, high above Two Harbors. We saw Catalina Island fox—found on Catalina Island and nowhere else in the world—stood awed at the moonlit California coast, and witnessed the kind of jaw-dropping shooting star one can typically see only with the aid of psychedelics.

I slept in *Delilah*'s open cockpit under a huge sky. For years, I'd dreamt of this sort of experience, and now I was doing it. Does it get any better than this? I wondered.

On Sunday, I rose at sunup and discovered that our Tohatsu outboard had gone kaput. Was it a clogged carb? Bad gas? Gluten? I said these questions aloud to impress DK with my motor maintenance knowledge, which is about as deep as an *Us Weekly*. The best you can do in these situations is to pull yourself together and look helpless, I told myself.

And, it worked. A nosy neighbor on a dinghy—who

A vaguely rumpled Jordan awakens in the Capri 18 after a night under the stars (and escaping his friend's snores below).



I should mention had been snoopy from the start—instantly appeared and taxied me and my injured outboard to shore. But the shop was slammed and couldn't help. Add the fact that the coffee shop wasn't open yet, and now we had a full-blown crisis.

I was lugging the outboard back to the dock, sweating, and bearing my burden for the world to see when the guys from the Catalina 30 appeared. "Do you want to borrow our dinghy motor?" Hudson offered. What a dream! We dropped their propane-fueled outboard into *Delilah*'s motor well and, just like that, we were jamming again—but, not so fast.

Before leaving the island, Jordan suggested one last adventure. We sailed over to nearby Big Fisherman's Cove and anchored the boats, then snorkeled in the warm August water, surrounded by cavernous rock and volcanic caves. Dan pointed out kelp, crab, garibaldi, and sea bass, along with a variety of marine macro algae, plants, and invertebrates. Then, after he spotted a large bat ray, Jordan surfaced from the water.

"Can you believe it?" he said. "Most guys are on the couch, eating chips, and watching football. And we're doing this! And afterward, we're gonna go sailing!"

"Yeah, but what kind of chips?" I asked.

We left the island at 1 p.m. in the Pacific sun and a 10- to 12-knot breeze. And, boy, was it magic. We sailed seven hours on a single tack back to Marina del Rey, all the while smiling, snacking, and jabbering like Chatty Cathys.

Of course, this was a high point; it hadn't been a perfect trip and we weren't perfect sailors. In fact, one of these days, I'll probably scribble down a long list of lessons learned and potential upgrades. Maybe next time, we'll sail more than we motor. Maybe I'll have a cool dinghy with drink holders, a cockpit table, or a heated towel rack. A guy can dream. Until then, though, I'll probably just wing it, grab a few friends, a couple of small sailboats, and go cruising.

On day two of the Catalina voyage, *Delilah* sails into Emerald Bay, below.

David Blake Fischer lives in Pasadena, California. His writing has appeared in McSweeney's, The Moth, *and* Buzzfeed, *among others. Follow his sailing adventures on Instagram at @sailingdelilah.*

Hit the Road, Jack

After thousands of ocean miles, a Nor'Sea 27 finds more waters to explore via highway.

BY ED ZACKO

The burgundy-colored jug, bearing the logo of a winery somewhere on France's Canal du Midi, had been sitting next to our woodstove for seven years. Filled now with Bahamian sand, the jug and its contents served as a memory of what had been a solemn promise that my wife, Ellen, and I had made to return, someday, to France or the Bahamas—it made no difference, as long as it was by sea.

It had been another long day of work on *Entr'acte*, our Nor'Sea 27 huddled on her trailer under cover beside our house outside New York City. The sound of snow falling heavily on the shelter seemed totally out of place with the Bahamian music on our tape player. Tired and cold, we returned inside to regroup. As we sat and gazed at the fire, our eyes fell to that wine jug full of sand and the idea suddenly hit us: "The boat and trailer are ready to go. With the proper tow vehicle, we can be back in the Bahamas in no time."

So began a new chapter in the story of our relationship with this remarkable "small" boat, a story that opened when we were young newlyweds with bluewater dreams. We had searched the East Coast for a suitable vessel without success until we saw the ad for the Nor'Sea 27. Designed by Lyle Hess, it embodied everything we desired in an ocean-going vessel and seemed like an affordable option because we could buy a bare hull and deck and complete it ourselves. It was love at first sight.

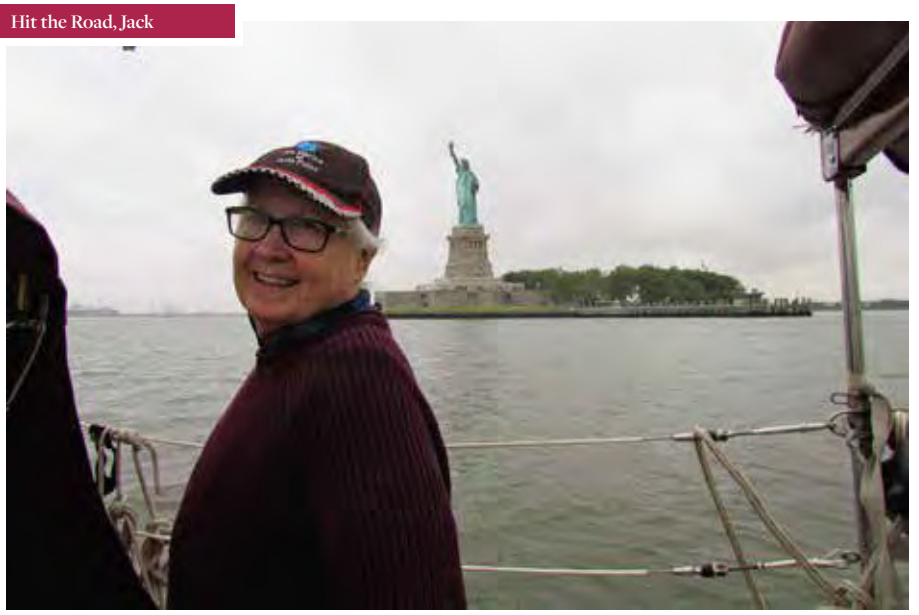
The "asphalt yacht" with *Entr'acte* rigged for land travel, above.

Back in the Bahamas, *Entr'acte* and crew take a break from the workaday and return to the cruising life, at right.

That the boat was advertised as a seaworthy trailer-sailer seemed a stretch—and why would we want a trailer anyway? We dreamed about crossing oceans, not interstates. But as it turned out, purchasing a trailer with the boat was the smartest choice we could have made. Not only did it enable us to work on the boat where we wanted, when we wanted, it has given us the flexibility to continue to develop our careers while also letting us quickly return to places that we love, as well as discover destinations we had not before considered.

We dreamed about crossing oceans, not interstates.

It took us awhile—about 30,000 bluewater miles, and that jug full of sand



Trips past the Statue of Liberty became regular as the Zackos cruised the Hudson River and then Long Island Sound, above.

***Entr'acte* shows off her Nor'Sea 27 bluewater chops, at left.**

holding us to our promise—but we have grown to fully appreciate bluewater trailer-sailing, and the Nor'Sea 27 has proven over and over Shakespeare's observation: "Though she be but little, she is fierce."

Bluewater Sailors

Truth is, the trailer almost sunk the whole deal, at first. We loved the design, and while we could afford an unfinished hull and deck, the trailer and other associated costs—including shipping her from California to our home—quickly drove her out of range budget-wise. We were heartbroken.

Then a company representative called and told us that they had a trailer coming east with a new boat that would tour the New England boat shows by land. They planned to launch the boat after the show in Stamford, Connecticut, and demonstrate its passagemaking ability by sailing to the Annapolis show. They offered us the used trailer at a reduced price.

This changed everything. Not only did we save half the shipping charges, now we could build our dream at home. By October 18, 1976, hull #44, which was to become *Entr'acte,* sat regally beneath a pine tree in our backyard. A mere two months into our project, we realized that had we tried to do this in a boatyard, our work schedule, coupled with the complication, inconvenience, and costs of boatyard storage and commuting to work on the boat, would have eventually worn us down and buried us.

We launched *Entr'acte* in the spring of 1980, during the last snowstorm of the season. A year later, after a long winter of final, frantic preparations, we were ready. Young, fearless, and reasonably well-capitalized for what was supposed to be a one-year voyage, we departed New York. After a summer warm-up in New England, we made for the Chesapeake Bay, then the Bahamas, Caribbean, Bermuda, the Azores, two years in Europe, the French Canals, then back across the Atlantic to see every island from Martinique to Florida.

We returned to the Chesapeake Bay in October 1986, and after 13,000 miles, *Entr'acte* was reunited with her trailer. It was time to get serious about working again, and we could not afford any distraction. It seemed prudent to leave her with friends on the Chesapeake's Eastern Shore, where she might be out of sight, out of mind, but she would stay secure in a field, quietly awaiting our return. And, we wouldn't have to sell her, as did so many of our cruising friends when they returned to land.

Highway Passagemaking—EZ

Many people we meet express trepidation over towing anything such long distances, but we actually find the road trips quite relaxing. We approach these "land passages" with the same preparation, detailed planning, and execution as we do our ocean passages.

Our asphalt yacht (truck and trailer) is given the same attention to detail as *Entr'acte*. Maintenance is proactive; we keep logs and refer to them often. We keep spares and tools onboard for easy access.

On the road, meals are planned, as is a change of watch when Ellen and I trade driving duties. We plan our daily departures and routes according to weather forecasts, and we weather route while traveling to avoid the worst. On one passage across Texas, *Entr'acte* hove-to for three hours in the lee of the large brick wall of a church to wait out a hellacious thunder-and-hail storm.

Our daily run begins at 4 a.m. traveling with the professional truck drivers until 2 p.m. We enjoy sharing the road with these pros who understand and adjust to each others' problems as we all dance our way through this over-the-road ballet. A good cup of coffee and plenty of fine country music complete the recipe for a relaxing day.

The Asphalt Yacht—EZ

When it comes to your tow vehicle and trailer, don't scrimp. You need the power to pull your load at a safe highway speed. If you cannot comfortably keep up with traffic, you are a hazard to navigation. You also need brakes to stop you safely.

Our tow vehicle is a 1997 Dodge Ram 2500, ¾-ton pickup with four-wheel drive. This is certainly the ultimate in tow vehicles, but a brand new one is extremely expensive, so looking on the second-hand market is an option.

Don't get hung up on horsepower. Plenty of torque, a large cooling system, and good brakes are far more important. Four-wheel drive isn't a necessity but it's nice to have. We use this feature perhaps a total of 15 minutes every year, but during those minutes we are extremely thankful for it.

Our original trailer had two axles with surge brakes and was rated to carry 10,000 pounds. The Nor'Sea 27 and its mast weighs close to that. The 2,000-pound weight of the trailer must also be considered part of the load, thus, on paper, we were overloaded by 2,000 pounds. While we never saw any evidence of overloading, we were uneasy. We also disliked the surge brakes because they make using an equalizer hitch more complicated, contributing to swaying especially when braking downhill. They are also illegal in some states.

A triple-axle trailer would be rated for 12,000 pounds, but the third axle increased the trailer weight to 2,500 pounds—close but not good enough. We also dislike triple-axle trailers because they are difficult to maneuver in confined places like filling stations, boatyards, and parking lots.

We eventually had a trailer custom built. It retains two axles for easier maneuverability, electric brakes on all four wheels, and weighs 3,000 pounds. Fully galvanized, it is rated to carry 14,600 pounds, which gives us a good margin for safety.

It is possible to launch and retrieve *Entr'acte* on a ramp. We have helped other Nor'Sea owners do this, but we make a practice to never immerse our trailer, which has greatly extended its life.

The first tow vehicle was a 1986 Suburban, barely adequate to haul *Entr'acte* long distance. The Zackos learned that plenty of torque and a large cooling system are more important than horsepower, at top right.

***Entr'acte* fully rigged on the original trailer in Ed and Ellen's yard. They also made a simple rig that let them raise and lower the mast while on the trailer, at right.**

Three years later we were financially and professionally in a position to hire a friend with a Suburban to bring *Entr'acte* home. After cleaning her up and making a few improvements, we moored her in a marina on the Hudson River just 10 miles from home, where we could unwind for a few hours here and there and sometimes grab several days in a row.

The Hudson, while beautiful, quickly became confining, and next season found us back on Long Island Sound. It was wonderful to return to real, open-water sailing, and for a while, this became an annual ritual. But it simply wasn't enough.

We longed for the adventure and independence that comes with crossing oceans, but we were also hitting our stride professionally and needed to take care. We remained stuck in this limbo until that snowy day, when the wine jug full of sand prompted the revelation: If we had our own tow vehicle, we could go anytime.

Road Warriors

The plan was simple: one week to Florida, one week to commission, three weeks in the Bahamas and a week to get home. We could safely arrange that much time away from work. It would have to do.

After weeks of serious searching, we found an '86 Suburban that we felt could pull our 10,000-pound boat—after replacing a suddenly locked-up rear differential.

Our first road trip to Florida was an adventure itself. With barely enough power to maintain highway speed, the big, burdened V-8 guzzled gas at 8 mpg, and its engine temperature gauge hovered far too close to the danger zone for comfort.

Still, we made landfall at Indian Harbor Marina on day five of our overland passage. Despite our relatively slow average highway speed over ground of 50 mph, it was 10 times faster and 100 times more comfortable than sailing that same distance to windward.

The moment *Entr'acte* splashed, we immediately transformed from "house people" to ocean sailors once again. Two days later, truck and trailer in storage, the last of the provisions stowed, it was as if we had never moved ashore.

The rest was easy. We knew where we were, where we were going, and most importantly, how to get there. One day on the Intracoastal Waterway found us at

West Palm Beach inlet waiting for our next weather window to cross the Gulf Stream. It arrived a few days later, and we left for Grand Bahama Island, 60 miles east. We took up a heading of 135 degrees magnetic to compensate for the northward flow of the Gulf Stream and immediately settled into our old routine.

We motor-sailed into a light south-easterly breeze under a nearly full moon, and our landfall just after sunrise the next morning was as magical as our first one had been 10 years earlier. Our anchor went down, and that beautiful, clear, turquoise water danced in our eyes to the rhythm of Bahamian Goombay coming from our FM radio. We were home again!

Expanding Horizons

Over the next several weeks we enjoyed fabulous reunions with old friends. Somehow, what was supposed to have been three weeks stretched well beyond into August, where we found ourselves down in the Exuma Cays—a long way from home with a due date for being back at work in September and hurricane season upon us.

It took more than a month to meander from Grand Bahama all the way to Georgetown, Exuma, but in one day with a 15-knot trade wind astern, we rocketed

(top to bottom) **Solitude at anchor was one of the greatest benefits of trailer-sailing to the Bahamas in the summer. More open weather windows also meant that the Zackos could drive to Florida from New York City, launch the boat, and be across the Gulf Stream and checking in to the Bahamas in as little as three days.**

Ellen pops up from the hatch during a rollicking downwind passage back to Florida from the Bahamas.

Collecting conch for dinner is just one of the pleasures of making the transition back to the cruising life.

Resources—EZ

Nor'Sea user group: groups.io/g/NS27/topics

This is a group forum of Nor'Sea owners and is open to anyone who is interested in boat building, repair, trailering, and voyaging. A wealth of information and experience is available in the archives.

Turbo Diesel Register: turbodieselregister.com

This is a magazine and accompanying forum for fans of extreme tow vehicles.

Turbo Diesel Buyer's Guides: turbodieselregister.com/Issues/BuyersGuide2008.pdf

If you are looking for a second-hand tow vehicle, this is one place to start. It includes torque and horsepower specifications of various years.

Triad Trailers: triadtrailers.com

Custom crafted boat trailers. Built to your specifications

to the top of the Exuma chain. The second night found us anchored in Nassau, where learned that Hurricane Andrew was coming.

The story of our encounter with Andrew must be saved for another time. We survived it, but we were later than ever. Now we really had to make tracks. Under full sail with the trade winds and Gulf Stream astern, we flew back to Florida at a speed over ground of over 14 knots. We stopped just long enough to clear customs, and as *Entr'acte* redlined it, we placed a call to the marina.

When we arrived, the lift was set and running, straps in the water waiting. We flew into the slipway at full throttle making a full-astern crash stop. Twenty minutes later, *Entr'acte* was on her now-beloved trailer, and three hours later, Indian Harbor Marina was, sadly, far astern. Three days later, *Entr'acte* sat next to our house, the truck empty, the storage shed full. We were home a scant six hours before we had to return to work.

Our experiment had been eminently successful. In addition to the supreme enjoyment of returning to our life at sea, we had learned a few things. First, *Entr'acte* was, as advertised, an oceangoing vessel that was seriously trailerable. Second, trailering wasn't that bad! (We quickly purchased a Dodge Ram pickup with a diesel engine that could easily tow 10 Nor'Seas.)

The greatest success of this voyage was the certainty we could survive a few more years of working before we took off on another long cruise. Now, when work seemed unbearable, our safety valve was knowing that in only a few days we could be back in the Bahamas or anywhere else we wanted.

The winter work schedule of '94 was so wild and tense that by spring we were truly motivated. The moment our obligations were satisfied, we exploded out of New York on a Friday, and on Monday afternoon, an astonishing three days later, set the anchor at West End, Grand Bahama Island. The almost total silence of our anchorage was in stunning contrast to the chaos of the preceding winter and spring. Completely alone, speaking in barely a whisper, we simply sat there for an entire week, decompressing.

Weeks later, instead of going directly home, we decided to carry on and relaunch on Long Island Sound to enjoy the fall sailing through September and October as our work schedule permitted.

Well and truly hooked on this trailer thing, we settled into an annual routine of working all winter to the max with the goal of summer in the Bahamas followed by fall in New England as our reward. This served beautifully until 2002, when we finally set off once again to see the world.

Now firmly based in Arizona, *Entr'acte* and her crew are not as far from the sea as one would imagine. After her refit in a community indoor workspace, (see "Testing Their Metal," May/June 2021, and "An Encore for *Entr'acte*, September/October 2021) she finally explored San Francisco Bay and the following year saw a reprise of the Bahamas-to-New England route.

This past season, *Entr'acte* once again took to the road for a herculean, 4,000-mile, land-and-sea passage. After driving from Arizona to launch in upstate New York, we cruised down the Hudson River into Long Island Sound, sailing Down East to Maine, then finally hitting the road back to Arizona.

Where to next? Who knows—from here, the Sea of Cortez is a mere five hours away. Twist my arm!

Good Old Boat *Contributing Editor Ed Zacko, a drummer, and his wife, Ellen, a violinist, met in the orchestra pit of a Broadway musical. They built their Nor'Sea 27,* Entr'acte, *from a bare hull, and since 1980 have made four transatlantic and one transpacific crossing. After spending a couple of summers in southern Spain, Ed and Ellen shipped themselves and* Entr'acte *to Phoenix, where they have refitted* Entr'acte *while keeping up a busy concert schedule in the Southwest U.S. They recently completed their latest project, a children's book,* The Adventures of Mike the Moose: The Boys Find the World.

Bluewater Trailer-Sailers—EZ

We always knew that a large, expensive boat was not a requirement for successful cruising. In our zeal, however, what we failed to fully appreciate was that a trailerable boat does not prevent you from enjoying the same cruising lifestyle or making ocean voyages to exotic places. The only requirements are a good, strong boat, and a well-found trailer and tow vehicle adequate for the load.

While the Nor'Sea 27 is trailerable, it is also without doubt the extreme upper limit for this endeavor. No longer commercially built, they are also somewhat rare. But take heart— following are just a few viable contenders. These designs have proven themselves many times over to be well suited to ocean passages. We have seen each of these boats sail into ports all over the world from the Mediterranean to Fiji and in between. Several have circumnavigations to their credit as well. Their dimensions make them eminently trailerable, and best of all, having finally reached good-old-boat status, they can be found at attractive prices.

What makes a boat trailerable? If your boat is no wider than 8 feet 6 inches (102 inches), and less than 12 feet high, it is legal to tow through most states. Standard height for overpasses and power lines is 14 feet; anything less must be clearly marked.

Entr'acte's 8-foot beam, 11½-foot height, and 13,000-pound load are easily negotiated on main highways and through most towns. For safety and peace of mind, we make a practice of following truck routes. If a commercial big-rig truck can go, so can we.

Examples of fine ocean-capable boats that are trailerable include:

	LOA	LWL	Beam	Draft	Displacement
Albin Vega	27.08 ft	23 ft	8.08 ft	3.67 ft	5,070 lb
Cape Dory 26	24.83 ft	18 ft	7.25 ft	3 ft	4,000 lb
Dana 24	24.16 ft	21.42 ft	8.58 ft	3.83 ft	7,400 lb
Dawson 26	25.70 ft	22.17 ft	8 ft	5.33 ft	4,000 lb
Flicka	20 ft	18.17 ft	8 ft	3.25 ft	5,500 lb
McGregor 26	25.82 ft	23 ft	7.82 ft	1.5 ft (5.5 ft)	2,250 lb
Stone Horse	23.33 ft	18.33 ft	7.08 ft	3.5 ft	4,500 lb
Contessa 26	25.5 ft	20 ft	7.5 ft	4 ft	5,400 lb

Small Boat, Big Love

If one Bristol Channel Cutter fulfilled their sailing dreams, two could only be better.

BY NICA WATERS

"This poor, poor boat," I thought, looking at the forlorn Bristol Channel Cutter tied to the dock, mold-stiff lines heavy with barnacles where they sagged in the water. Varnish peeled off the bowsprit in sheets. At the waterline, crabs foraged in the forest of swaying, dark-green moss. Wasps flew in and out of the sail cover; the once off-white deck and cabin sides were black with mold.

It didn't get any better below, my husband, Jeremy, and I gagging on mildew and diesel fumes when we opened the companionway. Water stains spread on the wood under each porthole. A monstrous snake of plastic and wire ran along the cabin sides to a cockpit chart plotter. The keel-stepped mast sat in 5 inches of standing water, oxidized aluminum visible under a water-saturated fiberglass cast.

It was a horror of a project boat. But it was a Sam L. Morse Bristol Channel Cutter.

So, of course we bought it.

And if this sounds a little crazy, consider this: *We already own a Bristol Channel Cutter*. *Calypso* has been in our lives for 30 years, having taken us on extended cruises twice already. We're finishing up a long-term refit that has left no system untouched. We're well aware of the pitfalls of a project boat; there's barely enough time to do the work on the boat we already have. Why on earth would we add another?

The simplest explanation is the most honest one. It must be love.

First Love

There's no mistaking a Bristol Channel Cutter. The short rig and long bowsprit, the wineglass transom. The planked bulwarks and outboard rudder. At 28 feet long on deck and 37 feet overall, she looks like she belongs in a different era, one steeped in romance and possibility.

In 1975, Sam L. Morse commissioned Lyle Hess, designer of Lin and Larry Pardey's *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin*, to draw a 28-foot version of those wooden classics to be built in fiberglass. BCCs, as they're known, are based on old Bristol Channel pilot cutters, work boats that needed to be fast and seakindly. Full keels, a long waterline, and impressive sail area are part of their pedigree. Early hulls were sold unfinished, but eventually the Morse company turned out completed boats. These featured interiors with a pull-out

***Calypso* shows off the sailing skills for which the BCC is known.** Photo courtesy S/V *Prism*.

***Calypso* sails off St. Lucia in 1995. The island was among the many stops on the Waters' first three-year cruise in the 1990s after buying *Calypso* and spending two years refitting her.**

double bunk in the main saloon, a workbench in the forepeak, water tanks in the bilge, and storage everywhere.

When we first set our sights on going cruising in 1991, we weren't looking for a forever boat. All we wanted was one that could take us to the Caribbean for a couple of years on the pulled-from-thin-air budget we'd conjured up.

When we saw the Sam L. Morse Company ad with the line drawing of a small, sturdy, salty-looking sailboat, it instantly made our short list. It ticked all the boxes: less than 30 feet, shallow draft, strong, seakindly, and by all accounts a good sailing boat. The only drawback was finding one we could afford.

Eventually we found hull #006. One of the early, home-finished boats, she was in rough shape. Opened blisters pockmarked the hull. Underneath threadbare blue tarps, raw wood formed the bulwarks. The interior had been essentially gutted of all but the bulkheads and the settees. Still, the light streaming in from the center hatch bounced off the honeyed tongue-and-groove cedar strips. Curved mahogany, varnished to a gleam, edged any opening. It was relatively easy to envision a finished cozy space even if some things needed to be changed right off the bat. (Three-gallon stainless steel lobster pot for a head, chocked into its own perfectly built teak cabinet? See ya!)

We weren't looking for a forever boat.

We named her *Calypso*, invoking both Odysseus' nymph and Trinidad's music, and, with island music playing on repeat, tackled the first of our refits. Over the next two years, she got a full galley, a new forepeak area that included a double bunk and manual head, and a table big enough to seat six comfortably.

When we left in October 1994 with our beagle, Toby—whom we'd adopted the same day we bought the boat—we'd finished the last, gotta-be-done-before-we-leave projects just the week before, including installing the head through-hull at the dock. And despite more than a few people shaking their heads when we shared our cruising plans, we couldn't stop grinning as we tucked docklines and fenders into the lazarette. We were off!

We were 25 years old and living large in the boat we'd chosen in part because it was small enough to afford and to maintain. While college friends financed new cars and wondered aloud how we could drop any semblance of employment and sail off—if not into the sunset, at least across it—we were snorkeling, laughing, and marveling at the world that opened to us just by pointing our bow in that direction. Our days centered around basics like weather, food, and friendship, with a good dose of boat projects sprinkled in.

A barely toddling Bee Waters learning how to stand with the help of *Calypso*'s interior.

Julian and Bee Waters playing on board in 2002.

The BCC more than lived up to its reputation as a good sailing boat. Give us a breeze, even a small one, and off we'd go. Once we turned the corner on the trades at Saint Martin and didn't have to claw to windward for every bit of easting, it really got memorable. The sailing surpassed our wildest dreams, whether we were beam reaching on passage between Caribbean islands at 7 knots or tacking slowly in and out of shallow bays along Venezuela's coast, making a knot or two and loving it.

True Love

That first cruise, a three-year jaunt from Texas to Venezuela and Bonaire via the Eastern Caribbean and up the U.S. East Coast to Virginia, taught us a lot about hard work and reward. At the center of it all was *Calypso*, that 28-footer we hadn't thought was going to be our forever boat.

And so, we kept her. The freedom that little boat represented was too precious to sell off, even if we were living a couple of hours inland and only able to spend weekends working on her. Kids came along, and we made the changes to the boat to make it work for them. Lee cloths on the settees formed safe sleeping spaces, the cockpit made a perfect playpen. Legos took over the storage space in the table that once held wine bottles. Our son, Julian, first steered the boat when he was 2; our daughter, Bee, learned to stand up under the chart table.

We talked about taking the kids cruising, but the time never seemed right. And while we thought the boat was too small, it was never the right time to sell or to buy a different boat, and so we sailed on her and worked on her and lived on her at the dock on weekends.

Then, on our 15th wedding anniversary, what began as the "we're not going cruising any time soon" lament became an animated discussion about leaving for the Bahamas in 10 months. To hell with the idea that *Calypso* was too small for a family of four. We had the boat and were all used to spending time on her. Let's go.

It took surprisingly little to morph *Calypso* into a proper cruising boat once again. Kids' books took over the bookshelves, games filled one locker behind the port side settee. We found kid-sized harnesses. Two kayaks joined the 10-foot RIB we'd purchased in a prescient fit of budget-busting in Venezuela, all those years ago. I practiced my nonexistent sewing skills by making cushions for the quarter berth; once the

When Nica and Jeremy found hull #006, the interior was essentially gutted, above right.

***Calypso* sailing in the Chesapeake Bay, at right.**

The BCC that would become *Mischief* was sitting neglected at a dock on the Chesapeake when Nica and Jeremy found her in 2021, below.

Nica and Julian in 2001. The kids grew up spending weekends sailing *Calypso*.

boat's garage, it would be Julian's bunk while Bee had the port side settee.

Once again, naysayers rolled their eyes. "You're going in *what* size boat?" This time when we left the dock, in September of 2009, it was the kids who laughed with glee as they tucked lines into the lazarette. While their friends back home threw snowballs, Julian and Bee kayaked in the marshes of South Carolina, swam with feeding dolphins in the Abacos, eyeball navigated along the Devil's Backbone of Eleuthera. Watching them internalize the sense of freedom and empowerment that comes with successful cruising was a highlight of our parenting lives.

One major change we noticed on this cruise was that the average boat size seemed to have grown considerably. Our best buddies sailed a 45-footer; other friends were on bigger boats or catamarans. There just weren't many small cruisers out there.

But that cliché that says the sunset looks just as beautiful from the deck of a 28-foot boat is accurate. And sometimes, it felt like we had the advantage. We may have had to leave a couple of hours before our friends to make it to the next anchorage at optimum light, but with a mast 45 feet off the water, raising the main was a two-minute job. Tacking was so easy that we frequently chose to weave our way through the anchorage under sail, extending a gorgeous sailing day with some close-quarter maneuvering. And we still entertained with abandon, including a memorable birthday feast with six adults that culminated with a late-night dishwashing gabfest in the cockpit.

When we returned to land life this time, Jeremy and I had realized that cruising was the goal, and we had no desire to spend the next 25 years of our lives working. But, we also came back to the same question that had pushed back cruising with the kids for so long. Is this boat big enough? Can she accommodate the changes we want?

Spreadsheets gave way to more spreadsheets. We cross-projected until we saw numbers in our sleep. Keep the boat. Sell the boat, buy a different one. Spend money on a refit, spend money on insurance, spend money on maintenance. The answers all kept guiding us to the crux of the matter: *Calypso* was ours already. We knew what she needed, we knew how to live and sail on her. And, no small consideration, we loved her.

We were four years deep into her complete overhaul, prepping her for long-term life aboard and crossing the Pacific, eyes firmly on that prize. And then...

More Love

"Hey. Did you hear about the BCC that's up the Piankatank?" said a fellow owner who cornered us at the yard one day. "Apparently, it's been kind of rotting at the dock for a while. It can't be in *that* bad shape. It's a BCC! Someone could get a killer deal."

Which brought us to the dock where she sat, her lovely lines still apparent beneath the neglect. We'd already decided we were going to buy this boat before we stepped aboard. The lichen-encrusted bulwarks and coamings, the water damage, even the uncertainty of whether the engine would fire—none of these things deterred us. The Sam L. Morse company built 121 BCCs. Losing even one was too sad to contemplate.

And, unlike *Calypso*, this BCC had been completed at the Morse yard. The touches noted in Ferenc Mate's *World's Best Sailboats*, which highlights the Morse

Jeremy and Nica Waters grab a selfie while passing the Statue of Liberty during their summer cruise of 2021.

boats—details like brass ventilation plaques at the lockers, the swing-up counter extension linking the stand-up chart table with the sink, the side table where a cabin heater could sit—this boat, unlike *Calypso*, has them all (along with standing headroom for my 6-foot-2-inch-tall husband).

After looking at old Bristol Channel pilot cutter names, we named her *Mischief*—a little sneaky, a little joyful, a little sassy. Kind of like these boats themselves.

In many ways, our two boats are flip sides of the same coin. They're both the same sturdy, classic, overbuilt fiberglass hull and deck. With *Calypso*, though, we needed to build her, more than once, from the inside out. Along the way, she's taught us about patience and joy, hard work, and the deep satisfaction in sailing a boat you know intimately. She is memory and stories and laughter in every angle.

Mischief needs some love and care to bring her back to her true self. The thorough cleaning has already begun. Her external woodwork needs sanding and cleaning; the mast likely requires either replacement or massive repair. She needs a bottom job and maybe a blister one. I'm sure that's just the start of the project list. It's a boat, after all.

Once again, friends and family are scratching their heads: Just how does *another* BCC fit into our long-range plans? His-and-hers BCCs? A parts boat for *Calypso*? A fix-and-flip? None of the above.

Calypso will be the go-far boat, and *Mischief* will be based on the U.S. East Coast, a boat to restore to glory and explore parts of the Northeast we haven't seen yet. We get that it may sound crazy. But for us, it's quite clear.

Love is love. More can only be better.

Nica Waters and her husband, Jeremy, sail their Bristol Channel Cutter, Calypso, *when they're not refitting her. Now that they've added a second BCC to the fleet, the ratio of work to sailing has increased, but they still hope to head for the Caribbean on* Calypso *in autumn 2022. You can listen to more of Nica on The Boat Galley podcast at theboatgalley.com.*

Julian and Bee on the foredeck in Eleuthera during the cruise to the Bahamas in 2009-2010.

Confessions of a Boat Rat

A boat's small spaces and singular scents are alluring and memorable.

BY CRAIG MOODIE

I must have been a stowaway rat in a former life. Why else would I have a nose for the dim, fragrant (usually cramped) recesses unique to small boats, much as I revel in the elements topside?

Aboard *Sea Hunter*, a 35-foot Maine-built fishing vessel I crewed on back in the 1980s, the portside berth held a special allure for me—even though I usually occupied it while the diesel, inches away, bellowed at battle speed, blaring through the engine box so loud my ears still ring to this day. You had to wedge yourself between the oak planks and ribs on the portside and a slag heap of equipment ranging from coils of line, extra handlines, and fish totes to tools, clothes, and life jackets filling the starboard berth. The wall of gear and the hull formed a kind of hibernaculum—or sarcophagus.

Roaring engine aside, I loved to burrow into the khaki-colored Army surplus sleeping bag and doze off in the boat's embrace. Rough conditions could play havoc with sleep, but usually my exhaustion from handlining codfish all day, especially after back-to-back trips with little shuteye, brought sleep on in a blink.

Carousel, a 35-foot wooden Ohlson yawl my family owned during my boyhood, could have been named *Nirvana* from my point of view. She embodied the ideal of a beautiful yacht—and of a floating paradise of hideaways for a rat boy like me. My sisters and I would vie for the right to sleep in the quarter berth, a slot beneath the starboard lazarette so tight you would graze your nose on the ceiling if you flipped onto your back. Even while we were under sail, I sometimes crawled in there to fantasize about sailing solo around the world while listening to the waves cluck against the hull and the rigging creak above.

The forward cabin captivated me as much as the quarter berth, especially when my sisters stayed ashore and I had its snuggery of V-berth and forepeak to myself. That compartment became my nest: I could close the door and hole up among sailbags and kapok life jackets and seabags and coils of line, the funk of salty damp canvas enfolding me. I could open the hatch and watch the stars swim through the square of sky. My transistor radio might catch phantom snatches of an Orioles game—this was in some backwater cove or creek on the Chesapeake—its oscillating reception feeding my sense that I was the last sailor on the planet.

Our 12-foot Barnstable catboat, *Finn*, affords no such belowdecks accommodations as a quarter berth or a V-berth. You'd have to be a bona fide bilge rat to squeeze below her floorboards. But I have been known to channel my former ratdom and inch beneath her foredeck between the centerboard trunk and the gear—ditty bag, cushions, life jackets, plastic milk bottle bailer, hand pump, tool box—and listen to the water clap and lap against her hull while she hobby-horses on the waves. Squeezed into the semidarkness, I breathe in her signature bouquet: the aromas of decaying canvas, mildewed cushions, soggy rope, paint, and varnish suffused in salty stagnant dampness. One of our nieces used to shimmy under there when she was young and fall asleep cradled within the boat as we tacked around Megansett Harbor and Buzzards Bay. Maybe the musk mesmerized her as much as the motion.

This is not to say that I'm nostalgic for all of my experiences below on boats. I've spent many a long hour cantilevered in bilges and holds, shivering or sweating, knuckles bloodied and clothes slime-soaked, hands begreased and muscles cramped. But as my beard grows saltier, even the trials retain an air of mystique.

If "petrichor" describes the fresh scent rainfall creates after a dry spell (released bacteria is said to be the cause), what word or phrase captures the magical combination of paint and rope and salt and mildew and canvas small boats produce below their decks? Call it "boat's breath" or "bouquet de bateau." Each boat possesses one as distinctive as its hull number.

To appreciate it, of course, you must cultivate a finely tuned nose—that of a stowaway rat.

Craig Moodie lives with his wife, Ellen, in Massachusetts. His work includes A Sailor's Valentine and Other Stories *and, under the name John Macfarlane, the middle-grade novel* Stormstruck!, *a Kirkus Best Book.*