

August 2007

WE'RE LIVE ABOARDS NOW!

We've taken delivery of the boat, and had some initial work done at the yard where it was surveyed. The boat was in exceptionally nice condition, but the surveyor always finds something! Listed below is a breakdown of the costs to get moved aboard. Living on a boat is a little like being a kid again. You're living in a small area, with almost no storage space, and you have lots of "stuff" that won't fit. Ah, the sacrifices we make for adventure!

Here's the boat leaving the yard, with the new name on the stern. A couple of new friends came over to help move the boat back to Burnt Store marina. They're boat owners on our same dock. Cruisers seem always willing to help each other out. Notice the dock hands being solicitous and helpful. Yes, tipping helps!



I had a new bottom job done, plus a "few other items" as shown on the survey. The bottom job was quoted as \$1,600 to \$1,800. Of course, a real hard core cruiser would do it themselves and just pay \$250 for the haul out and \$300 for the paint. I don't mind light maintenance, but I'd rather not do the heavy stuff myself. Guess what; adding those "few little things" from the survey bumped the cost to \$4,928. Wow... \$5K to get the boat out of the yard! That's another reason the yard boys are being helpful; the boss is standing behind them, grinning like a cheshire cat!



The next step is moving aboard. You've heard of 10 pounds in a 5 pound bag? We got rid of 90% of our stuff in Atlanta, and brought "only the things to go on the boat". We still brought too much! There's limited storage space on a boat, even an Island Packet. There's nooks and crannies under the seats and bunks, but it's still finite. We wound up doing another reduction as we spent a week ferrying things from the trailer to the boat. The local Goodwill got several more car loads of stuff!

Finally, after a week spent "moving in" it was TIME TO GO SAILING ! Yeah, I know, you'd think you'd go right away. But moving our stuff on board was time consuming and exhausting. Plus... wow... looking down the deck of a 38 foot boat is a bit intimidating. I'm gonna drive this thing? The "air

craft carrier" syndrome comes to mind. We did the prudent thing and got some professional help. I arranged for an instructor from Windsong Sailing Academy to help us on this. C. J. Coulson is familiar with the Charlotte Harbor area, and with Island Packet sailboats. He spent several days with us providing private lessons. It was a chance to become intimately familiar with the boat, without the stress of thinking I'm-going-to-crash-this-thing! C. J. gave us a refresher on our sailing skills; he helped us do a once-over of the boat and made suggestions on equipment and rigging; and, most importantly, he helped us develop confidence in sailing our new home. It was a great help to have a Windsong instructor with us for that critical first week. Mary and I both loved it!



Capt. C. J. coaches us as we sail our Island Packet in 20 knot winds under reefed sails as a thunderstorm comes through Charlotte Harbor:



Mary is at the helm, during the same thunderstorm. Notice the hair blowing, but the boat doesn't heel much. Island Packets with reefed main and staysail are very stable.

Here are more photos in fairer weather:



Capt. C. J. and Mary in reciprocal poses above.



Here's Roy learning how to sail his new yacht. Capt. C. J. from Windsong did a great job in building our confidence in sailing our new home! See the big smile? I think this was on the last day of our training.



Time for a reality check? Here's some numbers for anyone thinking of following the road less traveled, and retiring as live aboards on a sailboat:

Island Packet 38	\$140,000
Sales Tax	\$ 8,400
Survey	\$ 570
Yard work	\$ 4,928 (new bottom job plus survey corrections)
Insurance	\$ 3,907 (per year)
Boat Store	\$ 2,311 first several trips to Boaters World and West Marine



The "yard work" is actually low for buying an 18 year old boat. Most of the systems had been upgraded in the last two years, including an engine overhaul, new sails, new running rigging, new air conditioning, new refrigeration, new electronics, and two new heads installed. The cost to bring an older boat up to current maintenance can easily be tens of thousands of dollars if things have been neglected. OK... you've been warned.

Costs are relative. You can cruise on a \$50,000 boat or a \$250,000 boat. That's up to you. Also, talking with other cruisers in our marina, I've heard of some couples with cruising budgets of \$5,000 per month, and others with cruising budgets of \$1,500 per month. The key issue seems to be motivation and the willingness to "do it". Both had smiles on their faces as they talked about where they had been and where they were going.

And, here's the lighter side:

Top Ten
Second Thoughts
About
Full Time
Cruising

10. You hear brokerage stories about lemon boats. (And the cost of fixing them!)
9. When it rains, you, your wife, and all the pets are stuck in a single small space below decks.
8. Your kids say you don't need to visit them at college or check on them...
"just set up an automatic deposit for the money, and I'll be fine!"
7. If the water depth is less than the length of your keel, you have surely run aground!
This isn't just your boat, but your "home"!
6. You pay additional postage, at first class rates, to have junk mail forwarded to you.
5. When cruising, there are limited choices for women's hair care.
You may have to let your husband cut your hair!
4. Your wife asks for the insurance policy info... "just in case" you fall overboard.
3. You want to go shopping? You get out and walk. And walk... and walk... and walk.
2. Boats don't have dishwashers. Cruisers wash the dishes by hand!
1. You have to get rid of 80% of your "stuff".
Everything must be sold, donated, stored, or go on the boat.
(And only about 5% of it will fit on the boat!)



Final thoughts after two weeks of yacht ownership: It's both a joy and a challenge. Remember it's not the destination, it's the journey. We all need to find and face new challenges to stay young. As for Mary and me... we're outta here !

Mary & Roy Stegall

aboard S/V "Gideon"

Burnt Store Marina

Punta Gorda, Florida.

