

## A Day In The Life Of A Live-Aboard



We wake with the sun rise. There's no alarm clock, and we don't miss it. Mary uses the facilities on the boat. Sometimes she takes a morning exercise stroll around the marina.

I prefer to walk up to the bath house that's by the swimming pool. I shave and brush my teeth and then, usually, I take the one mile walk around the marina as the "long way" back to the boat. It's good exercise. By the time I'm back, Mary has breakfast ready.



After breakfast, we share some quiet time together in the cockpit of the boat. We read a few chapters of the Bible each day, on a schedule to read through it in a year. Afterwards is our prayer time together. After a check on the morning news and weather, we start our chores.



Chores for a live-aboard couple? Isn't this supposed to be like a permanent vacation? Not hardly. We're living in a vacation paradise, but we're retired on a fixed income. There's a constant need for maintenance and upgrade work on a large sailboat. The professionals get \$75 an hour. Most live-aboards do as much work as they can themselves. We'll probably do "less" when we're anchored out, and we do "more" while we're in a marina.

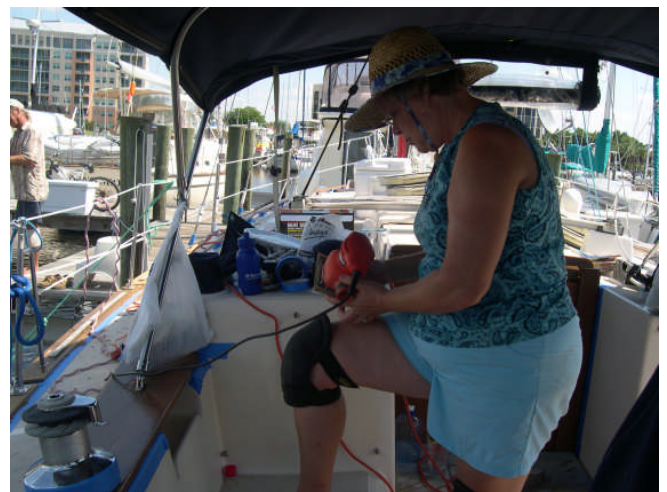
This month we're in Burnt Store marina, Punta Gorda, Florida, so the mornings are work time. Mary spends several hours using acetone to clean upholstery and the life lines and

plastic fittings, and scrubbing off corrosion from some of the exposed metal parts. My job today is to replace a drain hose in the forward head and a damaged flag staff.

The scope of the chores varies. Some days it may only be a couple of hours of electrical work. Last week it was three and half days to replace the bilge pump hose. The damn thing cost \$168 just for the hose! ( 21 feet at \$8 a foot ). It took me three and half days working long hours to finish that one. Here's photos of me "wrestling the anaconda" to get it installed.



Another big project is refinishing our wood work. This has been hot, heavy, exhausting work. Here's some photos of stripping the old coating with a heat gun, and Mary sanding the wood to refinish it.





Refinishing the wood has taken two weeks. It's exhausting. Your hands and arms get tired from the unaccustomed strain. Your legs and knees are sore from kneeling for hours. But, you're working on "your own boat" and you know you'll see the reward when it's done.

A typical day would be four to six hours of chores followed by some personal time or relaxation in the afternoon. It varies a lot depending on the tasks. Some days are 10 hours of work followed by showers and dinner. Other days we run errands to get parts for the next project, or "take the day off" and just relax or go on a drive. My personal time is either reading or self study education. Mary enjoys sewing and reading. We both enjoy going up to the marina swimming pool in the late afternoon.



The common misunderstanding about the cruising live-aboard life is that it's like a vacation. Nope. You usually spend several hours a day working on boat maintenance. Also, on a vacation, you get to eat out a lot. Most nights, we eat our meals at home on the boat. We can't afford to eat out like on vacation because it would totally blow our budget.

A better conceptual reference might be if you think about living in a really small primitive cabin in the woods. You are space constrained; there are always chores to do each day; you rarely get to eat out; and there are inherent difficulties with water supply, bathroom facilities and in doing things like laundry. Think about it! If you're anchored out or on a mooring ball, then take it a step further... imagine being a camper where you are miles from any facilities. You must get in your car / dinghy to get groceries, fetch water, or do ANYTHING!

The flip side is that you're in the middle of paradise. There are nice marinas, often downtown in quaint small towns. When you are traveling and anchoring out, you're surrounded by the majesty of God's creation. It's wonderful!

Still interested? If I haven't discouraged you yet, then please consider: how much change can you handle? Change is a stressor. As we get older, most of us are less able

to cope with the stress of change. For Mary and me, we retired, sold our home, moved, and bought a live-aboard boat all within a few months. That's BIG stress! I didn't think of it at the time, but I did after moving onto the boat. It was weird... I remember loving change when I was in my twenties. But it wasn't as much fun now in my fifties. After a few months to acclimatize, I'm feeling better about it and enjoying life more.

Most evenings are "quiet evenings at home". You don't have cable TV or Tivo. Maybe you can get a few programs with an antenna, but you won't get the cable channels. Sitting in the cockpit and enjoying the sunset with a drink is a lot like sitting on the front porch back in the 1950's. Life in the slow lane has it's advantages.



*There it is... just beyond the marina entrance. The "far horizon" that calls us...*

## **POST SCRIPT:**

So where is "Gideon" going? Here's a forecast of our plans.  
We can look back later and see how accurate this is:

through year end 2007:	Burnt Store Marina, Florida
Winter - Spring 2008	North on the ICW
cruising "one state a month"	
January	Florida Keys
February	Florida east coast
March	Georgia
April	South Carolina
May	North Carolina
Summer 2008	Chesapeake Bay
Fall of 2008	South on the ICW
Winter 2008-09	Bahamas
Spring 2009	North on the ICW
Summer 2009	Chesapeake Bay
Fall 2009	???

    Return to Bahamas ?  
    or join the Caribbean 1500 Rally to the Virgin Islands ?  
    or follow Van Sant's so-called Thornless Path ?  
    We'll see... ( Smile! ).

This is the baby steps plan for us as new sailors. First coastal cruising, then gradually going over to the Bahamas, and later as we build experience, going further into the Caribbean. We'll get there !

**Roy & Mary Stegall aboard S/V Gideon**