

Newsletter

EDITOR'S WATCH ... by Marilyn Guille

There are some unique challenges to living on a boat during our West Coast winters.

When people visit us in the summer months, and the romance of living aboard is self-evident, I always suggest (especially if they're considering the lifestyle) to come back and visit us in January – when the low tides have us packing our laundry up a 45-degree dock in the rain, and the new leak in the aft cabin has us suffering the liveaboard version of Chinese water torture in the dead of night. When we have to wrestle the 20-lb propane tank down off the bridge (because it NEVER runs out in the summer!), and take a hair dryer to the frozen water connection we forgot to turn off in time.

The #1 question I get asked about living aboard, though, especially during the winter months, is this... "But aren't you cold?"

The first thing I explain to those curious folks is that, first of all, I have less than 400 sq ft to heat – it doesn't take much. And then I remind people that we are on a dock ... so I have all the 'comforts of home', so to speak, just like they do. High speed internet to the door. Cable TV. Newspaper delivery. And electricity. Finally, since I do live on a classic wooden boat, I concede that it is occasionally drafty – especially when the temperature drops below zero and it's windy, too. But for those occasions, I have a lovely little Dickinson marine woodstove – and I can snuggle with my sweetie and watch a good movie with the best of them, just like landlubbers on a stormy winter night.

A woodstove is just one option for staying warm in the winter months on your boat ... and our feature article this issue, by board member Ken Lund, explores some other options. The bottom line is that having to figure out how to stay warm has never convinced anyone that I know of, who has that magical passion for the liveaboard life, to change their minds. ☆



Photo by Devin Milner

It might look like this outside, but... inside I'm toasty!



Photo by Marilyn Guille

Inside this issue:

EDITORIAL	1
FEATURE ARTICLE	2
RESOURCES/TIPS	3
AGM REPORT	3
INFO/CONTACT	4



Photo by Judy Brooks

SEE this issue's feature, "BOAT HEAT" on p2.

## FEATURE: BOAT HEAT by Ken Lund

Ah remember those hot summer days when keeping warm on the boat was the least of our concerns? For those of us who like to enjoy our boats those other months of the year, having some heat is a must.

But which heat source? If you are plugged in at a marina or dock that choice is likely electric. For those “on the hook” or away from that umbilical cord we have some choices to make. If we don’t use electrical heat do we go with oil, propane or wood.

On an earlier semi-liveaboard experience (5 days on, 2 days ashore) the wharfinger was kind enough to not charge me for electricity if I was just running the occasional power tool. I was asked NOT to use one of those black box electric heaters or I would have to pay for hydro. As winter approached and nights got colder, I shivered myself to sleep under several layers of blankets. I resisted cheating with the black box; instead I had some halogen lamp work lights and began warming up with those. 2 lamps at 250 watts each was a 500 watt heat source, about half that of the black box. It worked for a while but hard to sleep with all that light.

At the time, the Viking 1 was equipped with a Dickenson Atlantic oil cook stove; I decided to fire it up. These stoves were commonplace on many commercial fish boats up and down the coast. Mine was a larger model and did throw a fair bit of heat — in the wrong part of the boat.

These stoves mostly burn diesel and many fish boats had their fuel system set up so that when the engine was running it went through a “return tank” on top of the cabin and gravity fed to the stove. This became an easy way to always have a supply of oil in the “day tank”. Some of these stoves require a 12 volt pump

to keep fuel supplied to the stove if they don’t have a gravity supply. I was confused at first because my tank was much larger than I was used to seeing, about 60 gallons. Seemed like a lot of weight up high but the fisherman who had it before me had it set up to burn stove oil, which was a better burning fuel. For some time I ran that stove by carting fuel up top to refill the tank. Another boat, after a week of packing oysters across the nearby waters, would raft beside me on weekends; he was not too fond of the soot from my stove accumulating on his aluminum boat.

I had to ask myself “is this what my life is really about? Spending my days trying to stay warm?”

Obtaining stove oil was also becoming more and more difficult, and rather expensive. I finally broke down and went electric and paid the few dollars more for the luxury of having the oil filled electric heater aboard, and no

more sooty oil stoves. Worked great.

After 4 years at the dock with excursions away during the warm months, I found myself once more in need of a heat source as the next cold season approached. I was moving out “on the hook” and would need something other than electric heat. I choose a top-loading woodburning stove that I acquired through a newspaper ad; I had heated a number of homes in the past with wood and liked that special warmth that only wood heat gives you.

Over the next few years the old stove served me well; it was centrally located and easy to attend to. I spent many an enjoyable day on several beaches simply collecting firewood. It became an obsession. One friend asked how I spent my winters out on the hook, and when I admitted to spending much of it collecting fire-

wood I had to ask myself ‘is this what my life is really about? Spending my days trying to stay warm?’

Fir bark was one of my woods of choice — easy to gather and easily reduced to useable sizes without a chainsaw. At times I would also load my dinghy with long slabs of wood. I’d fire up the genset and cut them into firewood lengths using my trusty skillsaw on the back deck. Wood was never wasted and I helped to clean the beaches.

On a few colder winters I resorted to adding some used canola oil which was available free. There was an art to this so as not to get the stove too hot. I used to soak smaller pieces of the bark in the oil or simply pour small amounts of oil on the fire; then I created a small burner within the firebox with a simple tin can. Worked great! I would add limited amounts of oil to the can by ladling it from another container. When the fire was out and it looked like the can had served its purpose I would replace it with another can. I did have some neighbours complain of the smell, however. When other wood was readily available and a chainsaw handy, I would resort to the less smelly wood when I could.

The disadvantage, of course, is one must be around to tend the fire. I came aboard a cold damp boat on too many occasions to remember! With a constant supply of hot water in the kettle and a coffee pot on the edge, the stove and I got along very well. Occasionally when I found myself tied to a marina I was made aware of rules against using woodstoves. That’s when the little black box came in handy!

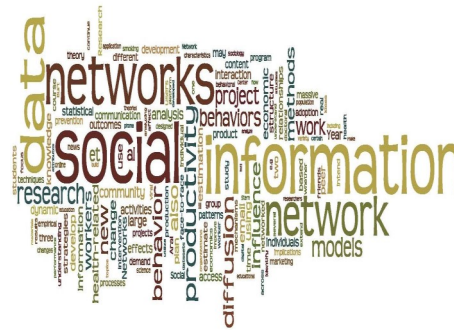
Now I’ve purchased a sailboat, from California, which has never had a heat source other than a kerosene lantern. I tried that — the heat was minimal for BC winters. I wondered about all those other heat sources I had run across. *(Continued, next page....)*

**BOAT HEAT by Ken Lund, continued**

I wanted to go with a wall-mounted oil heater, but the configuration inside was not making it easy. Many of the setups for a small Dickenson, eg., had the added puzzle of where to vent the chimney out without creating other problems.

In the end I decided to go with wood again. I also installed a catalytic propane heater to take the smaller chills off. These things work well until it gets a bit colder, then the additional humidity they create becomes an issue. I now have a lovely little cast iron Shipmate stove aboard and feeling comfy again. At least until the stove goes out!

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Do you know of a great website, book, or online group that would be useful to liveaboards? Or a great tip you'd like to share to make our lives easier or more comfortable? Tell me about it, and I'll feature it in future issues — editor@bcnr.org. Thanks!

Check out this Facebook group, called Coastal Mariners, and get info, or share your own stories and pictures!  
**BC Coastal Mariners Community**

Also on Facebook, a liveboard forum... (there are several, so do a search to find one that suits you if this one doesn't....)  
<https://www.facebook.com/LivingOnABoat/>

## BC NAUTICAL RESIDENTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

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### The BCNR held its 2016 AGM in November in Canoe Cove.

Current directors Tim Finley, Ken Lund, Bill Sassaman, David Brand and Rick Schnurr were re-elected; new directors are Marilyn Guille, a freelance writer and long-time liveboard on Salt Spring Island; Amanda Glickman, local Harbour Authority board member and liveboard on Cortes Island; and Cecil Oakes, businessman and liveboard in Sidney. Non-directors Judy Brooks and Donna Sassaman retain their Board support positions as Chair and Secretary, respectively.

### In brief, 2016's issues included:

- long-term anchoring issues continue, specifically the Gorge, Victoria; Brentwood Bay; False Creek, Vancouver; and Deep Cove and Port Moody, outside of Vancouver.
- liveboard fees are an issue at many marinas, with nautical residents wanting to know what the fees are for. Hornby Island, for example, is reportedly charging a \$400/month liveboard fee. Directors are making inquiries.
- Efforts by municipalities, spurred on by waterfront landowners, to evict liveaboards from marinas and safe anchorages are a concern in Brentwood Bay and other coastal communities.

### On a positive note:

Directors attended public meetings representing the BCNR in Saanich, Victoria and Ladysmith. The Association is gaining credibility with local municipalities for presenting issues in a balanced and respectful way.

### Board functioning:

The Board's goal is to have more representation from other areas of the coast; currently, all Board members are located on the Island. Attending electronically makes it theoretically possible for coast-wide representation.

### Updates on Ongoing Initiatives:

**Derelict/Abandoned Boats.** The BCNRA supported former Nanaimo MP, Jean Crowder's, private member's bill regarding the clean-up of derelict boats.

**Harbour Authorities.** Liveboard prohibitions at public docks. Directors continue to explore options that will encourage HA's to open their docks to liveaboards. ★





## BC NAUTICAL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

**WE'RE ON THE WEB:**  
<http://www.bcnr.org>

**WE'RE ON FACEBOOK, TOO:**  
British-Columbia-Nautical-Residents-  
Association

**BECOME A MEMBER:**  
[http://bcnr.org/about-us/  
become-a-member/](http://bcnr.org/about-us/become-a-member/)

The BCNR's mission statement is to:

1. Preserve and support the tradition of living aboard one's vessel;
2. Promote environmental awareness among liveaboards;
3. Establish effective communications;
4. Resolve issues of concern to liveaboards;
5. Serve as a voice for liveaboards regarding activities that affect BC waterways.

With a mandate to liaise with community and government groups regarding development and activities that affect BC waterways and the people who live upon them.

Membership is open to all BC liveaboards: fresh or salt water, tidal or non-tidal, sail, power, or floathome.

**COMING EVENTS:** BCNR participates in the Maritime Museum's Annual Marine Garage Sale, to be held at Ogden Point in Victoria on April 22nd this year. Please start putting aside your donations now ... mark it on your calendar to attend, and let us know if you can volunteer to help take care of the table. [info@bcnr.org](mailto:info@bcnr.org)

## YOUR 2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Director

Bill Sassaman  
Rick Schnurr  
Tim Finlay  
Ken Lund  
David Brand  
Amanda Glickman  
Cecil Oakes  
Marilyn Guille

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Victoria  
Nanaimo  
Esquimalt  
Cortes Island  
Sidney  
Salt Spring Island

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The BCNRA needs your ideas, suggestions, and critiques.

Contact us at [feedback@bcnr.org](mailto:feedback@bcnr.org). Thank you!