



San Francisco Bay sailor, Wally Bryant, documents the refit of Stella Blue, his Landfall 38 (left) on www.wbryant.com.

Measuring the Depth of a Passion

If you had the prescience to sell your home for a tidy profit and stuff your life savings into your mattress before Wall Street began to crumble last year, then you might well be looking for a better boat.

It is, undoubtedly, a good time to be shopping, and an even better time to go cruising. There doesn't seem much sense in sticking around, fighting for scraps on the job market, or pumping your cash into a volatile market when you could be stretching those now mildly fortified greenbacks in some

tropical port.

The used-boat market is particularly enticing these days. For a fair indication of just how sharply prices have fallen on some classic cruising boats, you need only to look at the online listings for the nine boats profiled in this month's cover story ("Bargain Voyagers," page 8). When we began researching this story more than a year ago, we set a target price range of under \$75,000. This was the going list price for some of the better boats featured in this story. When we recently carried out another price survey on these boats, the upper end on many fell closer to the \$60,000 mark.

While falling prices are a boon for the buyer, they are also worrisome for anyone considering cruising as a temporary escape—a three-year "sabbatical," for example. When it comes time to return to the realm of dirt dwellers and downsize the boat, you don't want to take a big hit, or be stuck waiting a year or more for a buyer.

"Can you recommend a good used boat for me?" is by far the toughest question we get from readers. It's also one of the most interesting. Except for the essentials like seaworthiness and sailing ability,

the qualities that one sailor values highest often don't matter one whit to another. Even if you are sure you are looking for that last boat (or at least one that will carry you into trawler-tirement), resale values are worth considering. Not only is a boat that holds its value a better investment, it is usually a better boat. Classic boats are classic for a reason.

Thanks to the Internet age, potentially good used boats are becoming easier to find. If the designer and builder have good reputations, and the model is supported by an active and informed owners' association, you know you are on the right track. Granted, there are boats that have loyal followings by virtue of their sheer numbers, but there are many others like those featured in this month's issue, boats in limited supply that have drawn a passionate group of devotees. A few hours on the Internet spent reading about the people and stories behind our three featured boats this month—the Niagara 35, Landfall 38, and Tartan 37—makes me believe that there will be a market for these boats well into the future. It also reminds that—sadly—there's nothing more than stuffing in my mattress.

Darrell Nicholson
Editor

Cover photo: A far horizon calls Tom Wells' Tartan 37, Higher Porpoise.

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EDITOR

DARRELL NICHOLSON

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

JUDI CROUSE

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ANN KEY

TECHNICAL EDITOR

RALPH J. NARANJO

EDITORS AT LARGE

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PUBLISHER

TIMOTHY H. COLE

EDITORIAL OFFICES

7820 Holiday Drive South, Suite 315
Sarasota, FL 34231
practicalsailor@belvoirpubs.com

SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT:

800/829-9087
www.practical-sailor.com/cs
Box 420235
Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235
for Canada:
Box 7820 STN Main, London, Ontario
N5Y 5W1

WEB, BACK ISSUES, FAX SERVICE OR CUSTOMER SERVICE:

PO Box 5656
Norwalk, CT 06856-5656
800/424-7887
customer_service@belvoir.com



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Contact Jennifer Jimolka, Belvoir Media, 203/857-3144

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