



PS Editor Darrell Nicholson leans in to last April's big project: scraping, wire-brushing, and then sealing and painting the iron keel on Misty, a 14-foot O'day Javelin.

April Attitude Adjustment

For the northern sailor, April is the cruelest month.

It's been five years since I moved back to Florida, but I remember those Rhode Island winters well. With the morning chill and evening darkness coming still too early, it is a dispiriting time to get real work done. The false hope of April, more than anything else, chafed upon my psyche.

On the warmer days, I'd almost fool myself, "Yes! Now is the time to pull back her tarp." But then grey rain would creep in, along with a north-clocking wind. The wood pile would offer only wet orphans and a few hopeful daffodils.

So I'd spend my Saturdays hovering close to an electric heater in the garage, brushing another coat of varnish on *Misty's* tiller, or helping a friend refinish his weathered Peapod. Later, I'd dig through the box of old blocks and lines

to make another handy-billy (one can never have too many) or open a box of sailing books still packed after the move ashore.

In a few short weeks, April will be forgotten, as distant as last summer seems today. But for now, it is a burden, what with so much work to be done. A great shift in latitude, it seems, can't kill old habits. My old yellow legal pad, divided down the middle, is smudged with grease. On the left side are things I must do; on the right, the things I must buy to get them done. I've neither the time nor the money to put a dent in either column, but this doesn't stop me.

I can't say exactly when the next thought first struck me, but I'm certain it was April. All of this—the small projects, the long lists, the ticking clock—this is sailing, too. To lean back in a comfortable chair, gnaw on a pen-

cil nub and carefully consider what's important and what's not, this is part of the passage.

Much of what makes a cruise successful depends on what happens ashore. The well-chosen boat, the careful refit, and the endless shopping trips are the inglorious side of sailing away that you seldom read about. Every dreamer of an endless summer must face his own private April.

Done right, even the cruelest April can bring satisfaction. The trick is not to rush her or expect too much. Some days, I'll get nothing done, some days will feel complete. But eight weeks from now, when the afternoon sun warms my skin, and I'm reaching across the bay, not aiming for any particular spot, just holding a course that feels right, I might remember April. And it won't seem so cruel after all.

Cover photo: U.S. Coast Guard rescue swimmers from Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City conduct rescue training off the coast of Atlantic City, N.J. (Photo by PAC Tom Sperduto, courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard)

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