

Six Things Worth Giving Thanks For

Of all the lessons the sea can teach, one of the greatest is humility. For going to sea is an act of submission, exposing ourselves to the mercy of the wind and waves with the hope that we and our boat are worthy. In truth, we are never fully prepared, so going to sea also involves a leap of faith, a belief that a greater force or plain dumb luck will make up for our shortcomings.

Though I'm sure one exists, I've yet to meet a sailor who isn't guided by a sense of humility. Some more readily admit their faults, but all I've known are quick to downplay their achievements and give due credit to others.

It was this thought, and the coming feast of Thanksgiving, that prompted my reflection upon all that sailors have to be thankful for. It's easy enough to forget our blessings on a tradewind passage—with the log ticking off the miles, and cloud streets stretching above us—but when the black frontal line rolls in, we can still draw comfort from small things that make the sailing life grand. The exercise also gave me an opportunity to map out the course ahead for *Practical Sailor*, as we launch into our 36th year of publication.

Here then, are a few of the things I am thankful for:

- A working head. From experience, I can say that 11 years of living aboard with only a bucket is quite enough. My esteem for those who still abide this regimen remains undiminished, but

I'm simply not made of the right stuff anymore. For those readers who still regard their toilet as a curse, and not a blessing, our study of marine toilets next year should provide some relief.

- A crisp, new mainsail—at a bargain price. As my long-suffering wife will surely attest, a head-to-leach tear in the mainsail takes much of the thrill out of a landfall on Tahiti. It's hard to raise a toast to success when your fingers are gnarled from punching a No. 16 sailmaker's needle through three layers of cloth. For those who are considering a set of new sails for next season, our account of a foray into the world of bargain sails—coming this spring—should offer some valuable guidance.

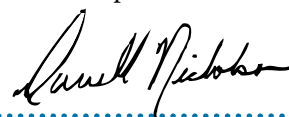
- DIY boatyard gurus. Angels appear in the strangest of places. Mine emerge from the dusty back lots of boatyards, often on their lunch hour. They offer patient advice—or a charitable critique—and lend a tool if needed. Over the years, *Practical Sailor* has been fortunate to earn the support of some of the most knowledgeable experts in the industry, people who put far more energy into a project than we ever expected, simply because they believe in our cause. Our popular *PS* Advisor column will be calling on Technical Editor Ralph Naranjo and our other boatyard geniuses more frequently next year, amplifying the hands-on elements of our gear reviews.

- Paper charts. As convenient as it is

to wander familiar waters while guided by an LCD screen, paper charts still have a place on the modern cruising boat. Aside from the fact that they stand up to electrical gremlins better than plotters and computers, paper charts help keep our piloting skills sharp and allow us to quickly survey the near and distant details of our surroundings. As *PS* dives deeper into the next generation of digital plotters and high-definition radar, we'll also be looking more closely at how to integrate them into real-world piloting problems.

- Paper magazines (and the people who read them!). The digital age is a marvel, but there is still a need for publications like *Practical Sailor*. Beside the tactile satisfaction of flipping through pages, there is something nice about a magazine you can shove in your briefcase, roll up in your coat pocket, or read in the head (preferable one that is working).

And last but not least, I am thankful for the friends and family who share a healthy obsession with boats, the ocean, and the magic and mystery they hold. Without them, no Thanksgiving feast would be complete.



Cover photo: George Dunigan's Pearson 41 Lightfoot cuts a fine form on Chesapeake Bay. (Photo by Ralph Naranjo)

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