

Winter Holidays

We get a lot of questions about how it's going during our first winter aboard the boat. In summary: it's been great with some hiccups along the way.

Staying warm and dry:

We get a LOT of comments like, "Oh, isn't it cold on the boat!" along with questions about humidity and condensation. Salish Aire has a lot of heating options including heating with the main engine via hot water distribution (not very useful at the dock but great when we are underway). We can create heat when we are plugged in to shore power (or using our generator) by reversing our air-conditioners (this has been our main source of heat but we are concerned that as the water under the boat gets cooler that freeze ups may become more common – its already happened once when we were in a marina in Seattle that must have more fresh water intrusion than we are used to – the sea water froze in the heat exchanger.) We had planned on using our diesel water boiler system but as of yet it has not proven reliable despite MANY hours of labor and a LOT of cash instillation through parts purchases. We are seriously considering buying a new unit of a different brand with the expected cost being about \$3200 (ouch). Finally, we've been surprised at how effective small space heaters are at keeping us warm (and they do a nice job of heating my feet whereas the air-conditioning units put the heat out closer to the ceiling). So we have been keeping the boat about 70 degrees F with little trouble underway and at the dock.

Folks from the East Coast of the USA don't "get" humidity in the "always raining" Pacific NorthWest (PNW) since our humidity seasons are exactly opposite of theirs. During the summer it is rare (as in maybe a day or two a year) to have both heat and high humidity. During the winter we frequently have 100% humidity in the form of fog or rain but because it is cool outside it seldom creates "drippy air". Even with humans and a dog on the boat we seldom have our air humidity meter go above the bottom of the comfort level line. When it does go up enough to fog our windows we simply turn the air conditioners on cooling cycle and in short order they dry the air and send the water into the bilge to be pumped overboard. On the other hand our hull sits in very cool water and is solid fiberglass. Thus, any moisture that contacts the hull below the water line quickly condenses to water. We are learning to monitor for the formation of mildew under the sinks and make sure cushions get pulled away from the wall to dry periodically (we are looking into marine products designed to provide air space as a way to combat this common problem). We obviously still have a lot to learn about condensation control. As far as the mildew, Clarice has found that a periodic wipe down with white vinegar works well.

Decorations:

I don't know how many times I was asked if we had a Christmas Tree. The answer is yes we planned ahead. Our terrestrial house had a very tall ceiling and, since my allergies won't let me have a real tree indoors (when you grow up in the PNW, real trees are evergreens that you may have cut yourself so they are really really fresh), we had a fairly tall artificial tree. After a couple of tries at getting a really nice one in the after Christmas sales we finally found something we were both pleased with a couple of years ago. When we were getting rid of our "stuff" we looked at the tree and realized that the top

section was just about right for a boat. We tossed the bottom sections and kept the 4 ft top section which worked great on the back deck protected by our cockpit enclosure.

Inside we didn't have room for much but Clarice came up with the idea of a garland (again, artificial to protect my tender sinuses) decorated with lights and ornaments around the top of the salon. Add a small poinsettia and a manger scene our daughter had purchased years ago in Bethlehem and you pretty much have our indoor décor for Christmas year #1.

For the outside of the boat I bought several strings of lights and we had a nice wreath (real !!!). There were a number of decorated boats in the marina so it was really quite festive. We weren't able to join the decorated boat parade as we had another commitment but we watched them head out and were impressed by the number of participants and the extent of the decorations on some of the boats. Clarice has since learned that the Port of Everett offers a prize for the best decorations in Marina and she is now inspired for next year (she's a *bit* competitive when it comes to this kind of contest).

Lack of Light and Darkness of Mood:

At this latitude the shortest day of the year gives us 8 hours and 25 minutes of sunlight most of which comes when I am in an enclosed office or its hidden behind the eternal cloud cover. I have a history of moodiness in the winter and I try to stave it off with artificial sun lights and trying to keep busy. This year I felt it worse than usual and Clarice now tells me that she felt it as well. In retrospect we both expected to experience "boat shock" (similar to the well documented experience of culture shock) caused by a major change in location, and life style. Since we didn't feel it at 3 – 5 months, we thought that our expectation had nicely been wrong. We now believe that it did sneak up on us when it had the extra push of winter darkness and weather to help it along. We also believe that we may have gotten past the worst of it – maybe. For those looking to learn from our experience before moving aboard, this is something I would expect is likely to be a fairly common experience (based on what we learned talking to folks and our own experience before we became missionaries in Belize for a year).

Visitors:

Our daughter and her husband and 3 children now live in Ontario Canada. They had planned to visit us for 3 weeks over Christmas as a break from their home cold and snow and so they could visit with friends and family. The cost of airfare with 3 kids is high enough that they didn't want to spend a lot on lodging. Erin laid out a plan where they would spend the first week with us, the second at a friend's house (house sitting while the friend was out) and the final week with us. We also added a plan to have our son's son visit from Portland for a few days so he could spend time with his cousins. If you are doing the math, that adds up to 8 people and a dog on the boat for an extended time. Two of whom (myself and my son-in-law) need private time and space periodically.

We kept our bed in the front berth area, littlest Lyttle Valerie slept on the upper bunk in the guest room above her parents on the lower double bunk, middle Lyttle Henri slept on the settee in the salon when his usual bunk was taken by his cousin, biggest Lyttle boy Carter slept on the bunk at the back of the

pilot house and Etienne slept on the pilot house settee. Jarvis kept his usual bed on floor at the foot of our bed.

Jarvis readapted to having lots of kids around and obviously missed our son-in-law as evidenced by him going nuts when Paul came to visit after everyone else had left (Paul stayed to curl in Seattle as part of his teams successful bid to qualify for the USA curling nationals – obviously he is the native Canadian.)

After they left we agreed it was nice to have our space back and to get access to my tools stored in the guest berth but we had a great time with the kids and grandkids. The grandkids think the boat is the coolest thing so no problem there other than they were showing signs of being ready to return to their regular routines. We were most concerned about Paul adapting to the very crowded space and was pleasantly surprised when he asked to bring some friends over to see and go for a ride on the boat before he headed back eastward. While he was here he told us that he had enjoyed the time together.