

The *Liveaboard* Lifestyle

By
Jo Bailey

There's something very special about liveaboards. It's an almost indefinable quality, but ask any liveaboard and the answer begins with one word: freedom.

Just knowing you can cast off the lines and take off anytime, anywhere, and with your home surrounding you, adds joy to life. Maybe that's why so many liveaboards are carefree and laid-back.

That's how Emmett Anderson of Novino, Ken and Josh Burns of Breeze Along and Nan Mader and Ted Leader of MikFin said they all feel. Three different sets of liveaboards in three different boats, all with similar attitudes, all based on freedom.

Emmett Anderson

Anderson, 71 years old, moved permanently aboard his 26-foot Bayliner *Novino* eight years ago. A retired master craftsman in metal finishing and plating, Emmett lives at the Port of Kingston marina.

When we spoke, he was sitting in the enclosed cockpit of the boat, sun stream-

ing through the plastic ports, watching his cat Callie (Calamity Jane) bounce from the settee to the bulkhead. She bounced back again and out the unzipped plastic door to the dock.

"This is the life," he said, rolling a cigarette. "Why just this morning I was out fishing. I fish every morning unless the weather's bad. I do more fishing than catching, though. I just loosen the lines

and go. I love the freedom, the scenery, the sunsets and sunrises, the changes of weather. This boat is my cathedral."

He does his own cooking on either his electric hot plate, the kerosene stove or with his microwave. He has a refrigerator, TV, VCR, telephone, depth sounders for fishing, VHF and CB radios to keep in touch.

And he spends his days fishing, puttering around doing all the little things that



must be done on a boat, working crossword puzzles, walking to the post office. About the only negative Anderson could think of was having to walk up to the port showers on land.

"I have no regrets at all," he said. "I wouldn't have it any different. I wouldn't live in a house if you gave me the best house in Kingston."

"You've got to like yourself and learn to live with yourself in such a small space," he said. "It takes a certain breed. You've got to get along with the basics and not too much luxury."

At one point he said, conspiratorially, "If I were 20 years younger I'd buy a sailboat and head south."

Ken and Josh Burns

Heading south is exactly what the Burns, father and son, plan to do in the summer of 1994.

Ken and Josh, a 10-year-old fourth grader at Poulsbo Elementary School, live on *Breeze Along*, a 33-foot Cheoy Lee clipper ketch at the Port of Poulsbo. They've been living on board for six years.

"Living aboard helps satisfy my wanderlust," Ken said. "And you meet real interesting people."

Their dreams of sailing to Hawaii, Fanning Island, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Western Samoa, Fiji and New Zealand are more realistic than for many wannabe cruisers. Ken's been to many of these places before. Josh was pretty young but he does remember Fiji.

"I want to live there and sleep on woven mats," Josh said. "I liked the beaches and the reefs and snorkeling."

Ken's experience is extensive: he's made a number of crossings, has a 1,000 ton

master's license, was with a Navy intelligence ship, knows celestial navigation, and ran a survey ship for several years in the 1970s, re-surveying the Great Barrier Reef off Australia.

"As a result, I have 'reef cruising disease' that can only be cured by doing some more reef cruising," he said. They're waiting until next year to give Josh a chance to finish 5th grade and acquire a little more muscle. Ken says the plan is to home school Josh through 6th and 7th grades while they're cruising, and then return for the rest of his junior high and high school classes.

So far, Josh thinks living aboard is pretty

great, except that there aren't many other kids on the dock in the winter to play with. When they first moved aboard there was another family at the port with kids for Josh.

Not having other kids around is tough, according to Ken. "But living here has helped Josh to be outgoing. He's real friendly and talks to everyone."

As Josh has grown, living arrangements have changed. Now Josh and Ken each have their own space on the boat.

"We both slept up forward in separate bunks, but Josh said last year he wanted his own place," Ken said. "So we made him a little spot in the main cabin and



Josh was almost born on the boat. "Josh was due any day and we were sailing on this broad reach down the Sound when my wife's contractions started," said Ken. "I panicked and pulled into Kingston. We got a ride to Harrison and within a couple of hours he was born." When Josh was about a year old Ken had full custody of the baby.



Ted Leader and Nan Mader, aboard the Mikfin.

turned the forespeak into my space.”

Josh’s responsibilities have also grown. “Sometimes,” Josh said, I take the helm and stand watches. Then I take a Nintendo break.”

“There is a downside to living aboard,” Ken said. “This is the only form of lifestyle in the U.S. where law-enforcement officers can come into your home without a search warrant. As a boat they have a right

You have the universe to yourself...

to come aboard at any time. It makes you feel very vulnerable.”

He said there are 12 liveboard boats in the Port of Poulsbo because there are just 12 parking spaces at the port docks—the big issue that liveboards occasionally gripe about.

“We’re called the 12 disciples,” he said. “We have a special contract with the Port commissioners to liveboard under certain conditions.”

“Much less than 5 percent of liveboards are millionaires or drug addicts,” he said. “We’re just real independent. It’s almost like being on a space ship... you have the universe to yourself.”

Nan and Ted

For seven years Nan Mader and Ted Leader have lived aboard their 37-foot Lord Nelson cruiser, the *MikFin*, hull No. 51, in the Port of Poulsbo.

“I’m Irish, a mick,” says Ted. “She’s Finnish. That’s where we got the name.”

The spacious, comfortable boat is beautifully built and maintained. All the interior teak is from one log, so all the teak matches and is solid, not veneer. The cabin sole is all teak and holly.

The couple, both divorced, had lived on Bainbridge Island for 20 years. They had a little boat they loved and decided they would love to liveboard, and bought the cruiser.

Nan and Ted are comfortable, with a beautiful galley including a microwave, pressure water system, TV, VHF, CB and autopilot.

“We always wanted to be on a boat and we were both tired of yard work and house upkeep,” she said. “Being self-contained is wonderful. We have the freedom to go where we want to go and we both love to travel. All we do is put a few knick-knacks in boxes, loose the lines and we’re on our way.”

They love to cruise, especially Hood Canal and Puget Sound. They cruise at about 7 or 8 knots with their 150 Cummins turbo engine. They have slowed down a bit recently after Nan took a job in Seattle, and is now commuting five days a week.

“She’s crimping my travel,” Ted said, not unkindly. He’s 67, a retired mechanical engineer, who obviously loves the lifestyle.

“He’s wonderful,” she said. “He cooks and shops.”

Ted’s presence during the day also aids marina security, though both Nan and Ted contribute.

“We just check people out, and we’ve stopped a number of people from going aboard other’s boats,” Nan said. But there was one time when someone tried to break into their boat.



Emmett Anderson provides stability at the Port of Kingston.

It was about nine in the evening when they felt the boat rock as someone stepped on deck. Ted was in the main cabin aft. He went warily up the wheelhouse where he found a man stuck in a window, half in, half out of the boat.

"I yelled at him," Ted said. "And he said he was 'after stuff.' He somehow got unstuck and leaped off the boat onto the dock. We never did catch him."

Some problems are fairly unique to boaters: Nan was taking a shower at 4:30 one morning recently, all soaped down with shampoo in her hair, when the water quit—totally. She climbed the companionway steps from the shower up forward up to the wheelhouse, then down again to the galley in the main cabin, where she filled a teakettle full of cold water and proceeded to rinse off. Liveaboards tend to be resourceful.

"To live like this you really have to be compatible," Nan said. "Ted and I have never fought. We just have no disagreements. People visit and say how small our living space is. We think it's great."

Future plans?

"Well, I think we'll probably live aboard

until we can't walk down the dock and get over the rail onto the boat," Nan said with a laugh.

Port managers

While there are rumours of stricter zoning enforcement along public waterways to reduce their number, liveaboards are generally well-liked by port managers. Neither Kingston nor Poulsbo charges an extra liveaboard fee, although most marinas do.

In both Kingston and Poulsbo, the boaters have individual electric meters and pay their own power bills. All boaters also pay a leasehold tax to the state Department of Public Resources, which amounts to about 12 percent of their monthly moorage rate.

"There's good and bad about liveaboards," said Bud Kirkman at the Poulsbo port. "The good thing is the security. One liveaboard caught two people stealing dinghies and he called the police. And they tell us if a boat is sinking or there's something wrong. And I suppose the only bad thing is pollution if the boats don't have treatment plants. We've had

druggers and dopers in the past but they're gone."

Kirkman said there used to be three or four families at the port, but most have moved out.

"We have a good group here. Most are singles and couples and we don't have any problems. They're a real good bunch," he said.

Gary Johnston at Kingston thinks liveaboards are a plus.

"They're pleasant to have around and do help with security and watch out for others," he said. "They seem to have a personal interest in the marina and want to see it do well—although we do have a policy that no more than 10 percent of the marina can be used for liveaboards."

Johnston pointed to Emmet Anderson as one of those 10 percent he values.

"Emmett Anderson is an ideal liveaboard," Johnston said. "He's friendly and pleasant, watches out for others and is just in general a great person to have living here."

Jo Bailey was a liveaboard in Friday Harbor for 11 years in the late 1970s and 1980s.