

BY DIANE SELKIRK

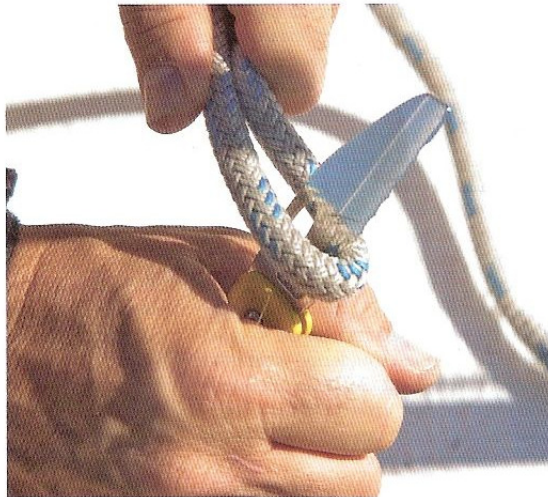
A Few of Our FAVOURITE THINGS

13 seasoned boaters reveal their must-have cruising accessories and why they won't leave the dock without them

STILL RECALL THE FEELING of walking into the boat show just a few months after Evan and I bought our first boat. It was a combination of exhilaration and apprehension, much like when I was a kid in a candy store, clutching my quarter and trying to decide exactly what to buy. Boat gear can be expensive stuff. And as I moved past the displays, admiring the equipment and trying to picture myself using what was then a new-fangled GPS or wearing the latest thing in foul weather gear, I wanted to be sure what I spent my money on was just right.

Evan and I have completely different ways of selecting gear. He's the methodical type. Once we've decided to get something for the boat, Evan will comb through back issues of magazines looking for reviews, search websites for statistics and information, and then ask at online forums for feedback and suggestions. This meticulous searching brought him to his favourite piece of gear—a handcrafted Boye Rigging Knife with a folding dendritic cobalt blade. The knife has a tough, ultra-sharp blade

→ **Right** This Boye Rigging Knife has an ultra-sharp blade, compact enough to fit into any pocket.





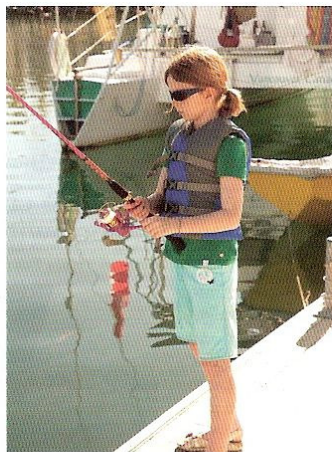
that is compact enough to fit in any pocket and has proven its worth on more than a few occasions. Most recently Evan used it to slice through an unmarked crab trap line that became snagged on our propeller.

My method of shopping is less systematic and more impulsive than Evan's. I'm the type to be swayed by sales pitches, interesting displays and bargains. I'm less likely to hunt something down and more likely to shop on a whim, which is how we came to own my favourite piece of gear: an inflatable kayak. The kayak ran the risk of being one of those novelty items that takes up locker space and rarely sees daylight, but instead it has offered up so many hours of enjoyment that it soon found itself sharing the locker with a mate.

Despite our differing shopping styles, it took Evan and I only a few seconds to come up with our favourite pieces of gear (a close second for both of us was our new fibreglass propane tank—I love that I can see when it's getting empty and that it doesn't leave rust marks on the deck, while Evan appreciates the weight savings over the steel version). This left me wondering what other boaters raved about. So, in an admittedly non-scientific poll, I asked a variety of other boaters to give a shout-out to equipment they've found and love.

Maia (age 8): crew on *Ceilydh*, our Woods Meander 40

Kids and fishing just seem to go together, and when you add a good quality fishing rod that also happens to light up when you're reeling in fish (like Maia's pink Roddy Lite



spinning reel)—Maia says you have the perfect set-up needed to spend a great afternoon on the water. Maia says she also loves her Puddle Gear foul weather gear because they are comfortable enough to play in, while being durable and waterproof (and I love that they are PVC and phthalate-free).

Vince den Hertog: owner of *Merganser*, a Hullmaster 27-foot sailboat

Vince den Hertog, who often singlehands his sloop out of Vancouver, says the most useful equipment he has is his new Standard Horizon CP-300i chartplotter. "This is confessed with some sheepishness, since our sailing heroes of yore—Slocum Voss and Ersikine Childers for example—certainly

↑ **Above** The author's favourite piece of gear, an inflatable kayak, was such a hit that she now owns two.

← **Left** The Roddy Lite spinning reel is great for kids on the boat.

↓ **Below** A quality chartplotter, like this Standard Horizon CP-300i, can be essential for safety.



didn't need such a thing. Nevertheless, I bought it shortly before my trip to Alaska this past summer and never looked back." Den Hertog says he became pretty addicted to watching the screen while weaving through the yellow islands and passages like some slow-motion computer game. But he says the plotter was also instrumental for safety when he had to short tack through a reef-strewn entry with a broken engine.

Den Hertog also gives a nod to a piece of boating equipment from the other end of the technology scale, "A Den Haan brand, Trawler Lamp, bought years ago from Steveston Marine on one of those dreary winter days, while I dreamed of sailing trips to come." He says the simple lamp hangs in the cabin, and lighting it is an evening ritual: "The ›

anchor is down, sails have been stowed, the sun has set, and the evening ahead promises relaxation with a good book and a drink or two. Surely, oil lamps like this warmed the cabins of *Spray*, *Tilicum* and *Dulcibella* too, and it's probably that connection, cheesy as it may seem, that makes it so important to me."

Damon and Joanna Eng: owners of *HaiKai*, a 26-foot Sea Ray Sundancer

Last year the Engs bought a Garmin 4008 GPS for day trips on *HaiKai*, which they keep at their cabin up in the Pender Harbour area. Joanna says the GPS is user-friendly and very intuitive, but her favourite part is the Blue Chart vision card that provides aerial pictures of harbours and channels: "I like that we can view photos of certain moorages rather than just seeing them from the chart perspective."

Joanna says they also really love their dinghy, "After doing some research, we purchased a 10-foot rigid-hull Walker Bay dinghy that we use all the time for everything from crabbing and fishing for cod, to just exploring the shoreline. We were going to wait to buy the inflatable pontoons that attach to the dinghy, but decided to splurge and get them

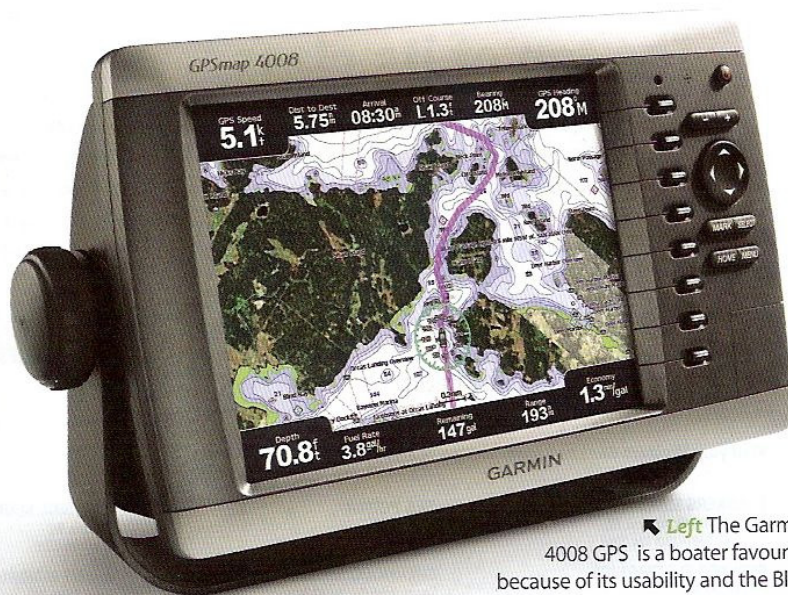
at the same time. Thank goodness we did as they make the dinghy way more stable, and give us an additional measure of safety."

Wayne and Leslie McFee sail an Island Packet 350 named *Evening Star*

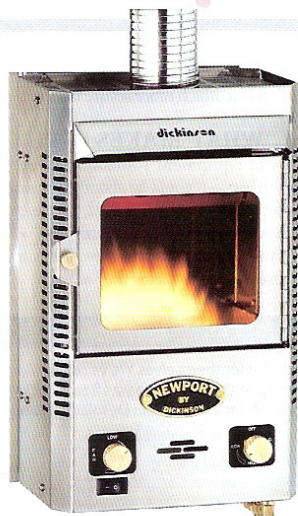
Wayne and Leslie McFee, who are based in Birch Bay, Wash., have been bluewater sailing for years, and Wayne says the most valuable and essential piece of equipment he has is radar. "If I had to choose whether to have a GPS or a radar, I would most likely choose the radar." Wayne (who has spent hours figuring out how to get the optimal performance out of his unit) suggests spending time practicing with radar during the day, when there is good visibility to get an idea just how valuable radar can be, because "set up correctly, my unit has shown me birds sitting on the water."

Wayne says the second item that has been very useful, both afloat and ashore is a little flashlight called the "Stinger," which is made by Streamlight and "available from police supply houses." Wayne says the LED, rechargeable, small flashlight is even bright enough to be used as a spotlight when entering anchorages at night.

“The “Stinger,” an LED, rechargeable, small flashlight is bright enough to be a spotlight when entering anchorages at night.”



Left The Garmin 4008 GPS is a boater favourite because of its usability and the Blue Chart vision card that provides aerial pictures of harbours and channels.



↑ **Above** In the Pacific Northwest, having enough heat is key, and Dickenson always delivers.

Ken Fellows on *Discovery*, a Contest 35

Having a way to keep the boat warm was a common theme with the boaters I spoke with. But finding the right heater for your boat can be a challenge. Ken Fellows, who sails out of Tacoma, says he went through months of trouble with his first "bargain" heater before giving in and buying a more expensive Dickenson propane fireplace. "It always runs, provides lots of heat, is well-crafted and even has a cool window to view the fire. Heat in Washington is critical, and the Dickenson delivers!"

Dennis and Gail Gatehouse had a share in *Meriah*, a Hughes 31

Dennis Gatehouse says it isn't always easy to splurge on good equipment, and that sometimes you need a nudge. He and his boat partner, Mike Hoskins, were trying to decide if it was worth the money to buy an oversized CQR for their boat when Dennis's wife, Gail, spoke up, "How much did this boat cost? You guys would be nuts not to make such a small investment for a ton of peace of mind." Dennis says her argument convinced them, "We slept much better at night with that anchor."

Heather and Tim Lochner aboard *RoShamBo*, a Custom Kennedy 48

The Lochners spent years struggling with where to stow their dinghy while under way on their sailboat. "We had been either towing the dinghy or storing it on the bow, but >

both options had problems.” Heather says they decided to build a stainless steel arch on the stern of *RoShamBo*, but were concerned about the cost. “So, Tim designed the arch he wanted himself and approached Steve White Rigging to do the work. Steve delivered! The arch is awesome and has made our cruising a lot more enjoyable.” Heather explains that dinghy storage, “which once took us 30 minutes (we had to take the engine off as well)

now takes just five minutes.” And she says the solution is so much more secure than towing.

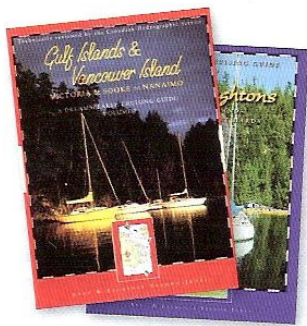
➔ **WHAT MAKES A PIECE** of equipment someone’s favourite tends to vary—it could be about the measure of safety a high-tech GPS adds, or the comfort a well-designed heater provides, while other times things become a favourite simply because of the fun-factor they offer. ☺

GREAT BOATING GIFTS

Not every favourite item is something that boaters pick out for themselves. We’ve received a few well thought-out gifts that suit our boat and our climate. One favourite was fleece socks by Polar Feet—we were each given a pair before setting off for a summer in Desolation Sound. They turned out to be perfect for chilly mornings.



↑ **A good quality first aid kit**, great for both new boaters and folks who have been at it for years and may have depleted theirs.



↑ **Guidebooks** to the local seashore or local area. What can be more fun than learning more about the places you visit?



↑ **Stainless steel wine glasses.** These are sturdier than plastic and personally, I like the way they feel better than plastic.



↑ **Guest or kids’ binoculars.** We had a friend who gave our daughter, Maia, her own set—which also doubles as a pair for guests and saves our good ones for our use.