WHAT TWO CIRCUMNAVIGATORS LEFT OFF WHEN THEY EQUIPPED THEIR DREAM BOAT

Sailing, like life, is about tradeoffs. One of the most basic tradeoffs has to do with when we stop working and start cruising. If we buy into the boat show hype and the "must-have, can't leave without" equipment advertisements, for many of us the "when" will fade to an "if"—and eventually into a "might-have been." A second basic tradeoff, as we discovered over the course of our three-year circumnavigation, has to do with how much time we spend seeing the places we sail to and how much time we spend in chandleries, boatyards, freight offices and on our stomachs in the bilge of the boat. The more comfortable and convenient a boat, the more complicated—and the more time will be spent fixing it instead of sightseeing.

If we had put aboard everything we "couldn't leave without," we'd have spent another two years ashore and at least twice as much of our time on maintenance once we left. Those were two tradeoffs we weren't willing to make. Most people look at *Hawk*, our new Van de Stadt Samoa 47, see her high-performance hull design and her powerful, fractional rig and assume she carries a complete list of all the modern equipment aboard. But for the most part she is actually simpler than the Shannon 37, *Silk*, we sailed around the world.

The twenty things we chose to leave off—and why—reflect not only what we learned over the course of 35,000 nautical miles, but also our approach to the cruising lifestyle, our cruising itinerary, our budget and our (lack of) mechanical aptitude. We're not purists nor are we Luddites. We don't have any deep philosophical opposition to the majority of the items on this list, and we reserve the right to add things later if we feel the need. But we most enjoy our comforts when we can have them for a minimum of cash, care and complexity. At least so far, we're glad these twenty things got left off.

1. **Exterior teak.** *Silk*, our Shannon 37, had a graceful, traditional look accented with a fair amount of teak on deck. We never found an acceptable way to preserve that teak against the rigors of sun and salt over the course of 12,000 offshore miles a year. As a result, no exterior teak came near the top of the list of criteria for the new boat. The Van de Stadt Samoa 47 design included teak decks, but we substituted a non-skid paint used in industrial applications which has worked very well and allowed us to avoid the weight, cost, hassle and maintenance of teak decks.

2. **Through hullside ports.** The Van de Stadt plan called for two portlights through each side of the hull in addition to a total of four portlights through the cabin trunk and seven opening hatches in the deck. By going with aluminum as a hull material and welding on as much deck hardware as possible, we hoped to achieve a leak proof boat. Every offshore sailor we've ever met with through hullside ports has experienced leaks, and we questioned the safety of a portlight which would be below waterline when we were heeled over. The other ports and hatches have provided more than adequate ventilation in the temperate latitudes, and in addition to the dorades should offer sufficient airflow even in the tropics. Large expanses of white and light colored ash make the interior bright and open even without light from the additional ports.

3. **Painted topsides.** Concrete Customs docks and tractor-tire festooned trawler wharves scratch paint and gouge topsides. Docking *Silk* always caused tension aboard as Beth raced around with fenders and Evans tried to ease her in between stanchion eating pilings. With an aluminum hull, we had the choice of whether or not to paint the topsides, and we decided to leave her unpainted for as long as we voyage seriously. In retrospect, we view this as one of the best decisions we made. We regularly cruise up to docks, get lines ashore, then figure out where the fenders might want to go.

4. **Mainsail furling.** Good sail control means no more than a few minutes from full sail to reefed or furled. For headsails, roller furling offers a solution tested over hundreds of thousands of offshore miles aboard both racing and cruising boats. We considered the many mainsail furling systems, but these can not yet boast the offshore track record of their headsail furling cousins. We eventually followed the lead of the Around Alone racers and installed full battens and lazy jacks, a system which had worked well for controlling *Silk*'s much smaller mainsail. Knowing we'll be able to get the sail down when we need to makes up for the inevitable hassles lazy jacks create when raising the mainsail or putting on the sail cover. Handling *Hawk*'s 750-square foot mainsail has proven to be the most formidable task aboard the boat, so we'll watch with great interest the developments in mainsail furling over the next few years.

5. **Electric winches.** We considered installing one electric or hydraulic winch to help with mainsail handling tasks, but so far have not done so. If we powered the winch located under the hard dodger to starboard of the companionway, we could use that to raise and reef the main. Apart from the increased complexity of a powered winch, we're concerned that we

won't be in good enough shape to handle the sail without it when it breaks. As long as we're willing and able to raise the main, we'll avoid going to a powered winch.

6. **Staysail furling.** We considered roller furling a necessity for *Hawk*'s primary headsail, a 110-percent jib. We debated roller furling for our staysail but didn't want to give up the flexibility of multiple hank on sails for the inner forestay. So far, we've been pleased with that decision. With one reef in her main and a 55-percent genoa staysail, *Hawk* sailed very efficiently and comfortably in the frequent twenty to thirty knot winds we encountered off Newfoundland. When the weather demands, we can switch to a small storm jib and unlike a partially furled staysail it will be perfectly shaped.

7. **Lifesling/crew overboard equipment.** Recovering an overboard crew member from a fully crewed boat in relatively flat conditions simply cannot be compared to recovering someone from a double-handed boat in typical offshore wind and waves. If the on-watch crewmember goes overboard at night with the off-watch asleep in their bunk, several hours could pass before the crew overboard situation is even discovered. When sailing offshore double-handed therefore, each crew member needs to stay focused on not falling off in the first place. In addition to always having "one hand for the boat and one hand for ourselves," we attach ourselves to the boat mechanically with jacklines, padeyes, harnesses and tethers when in heavy weather or alone on deck.

8. **Second head.** Despite her size, *Hawk* has been designed and fit out as a two-person boat. Though the Van de Stadt plan called for a second head just behind the chain locker and forward of the owner's cabin, we believed the head located at the base of the companionway would be adequate for the two of us and our occasional guests. By not installing a head forward, we managed to keep all the plumbing within ten feet of the companionway and the four seacocks in the galley, engine room and head, thereby minimizing hose runs and greatly simplifying the plumbing system. We also left out two sinks in the design, one in each aft cabin, eliminating two unnecessary seacocks in the process. We substituted a sail locker with a large hatch opening on deck for the forward head, which eliminates carrying the bulky sailbags for our three light air sails through the boat and forward along the side decks.

9. **Third cabin.** The Van de Stadt Samoa 47 plan included a master stateroom forward and two guest cabins aft, one on either side of the engine compartment. In the port cabin, we installed bunks equipped with boards and lee clothes for use as dedicated sea berths. When we have

another couple aboard, they stay in the master cabin and we use the aft cabin. We never have more than two guests at a time so we did not need another guest cabin, but our design requirements included an engine room. The starboard aft cabin has been outfitted with a worktable and vise over a tool chest, two racks of tool boxes, and complete access to the engine through two removable panels. The engine room/workshop has proven one of the most successful modifications we made, allowing us much greater self-sufficiency than was possible aboard *Silk* simply because of the range of tools and spares we can carry.

10. **SSB/Ham Radio.** That we left off a long-distance radio probably surprises people more than any other item. For most cruisers, the SSB or Ham radio keeps them in touch with the mobile cruising community and provides social life on passage. Halfway through the last trip, we installed an SSB aboard *Silk* and found it didn't fit in well with our style of cruising—we didn't like being tied to "scheds" and having people panic if we couldn't come up at the appointed time. Currently, we have a Sony all-band receiver for voice and fax weather reports, for listening to the Ham and SSB bands and for the BBC. Many cruisers also view their SSB or Ham radio as safety equipment, though we feel in many situations it offers a false sense of security. If we ever had to abandon the boat, we would use our EPRIB. But a long-distance radio may find its way aboard, especially if we decide it's the best solution for e-mail from the boat.

11. **Satellite communications.** We didn't leave off e-mail communication and Internet access by choice. As soon as we find the right technology, we will install it. We did buy the AT&T digital wireless service and hoped to use that in conjunction with our laptop along the east coast, but coverage has been quite infrequent in the areas we've cruised so far (Atlantic Canada and Maine). We keep reviewing the range of other options and being disappointed with the bandwidth and data rates available for the money spent. Like most technologies, we can always wait another six months and things will be faster, better, cheaper. So far, we've been doing quite well taking the laptop ashore and begging the use of a phone jack for a few minutes. In developed cruising areas like Maine, more and more marinas and town docks have a designated area for receiving e-mails. In less developed areas like Newfoundland, we used phones in convenience stores, harbormaster's offices and private residences.

12. **Generator.** We hate running the engine and have no desire to replace running an engine with running a generator to re-charge our batteries. Evans spends enough time on engine maintenance without adding generator maintenance to the work list. After our experiences

aboard *Silk*, we went with a somewhat unusual solution to the electrical system equation. We installed an over-sized, 800 amp-hour battery bank while keeping our electrical usage to a minimum. The bank can be charged rapidly by dual alternators off the engine or slowly by a 75-watt solar panel. We have enough storage capacity to go a week without any sort of charging at anchor. When day sailing, motoring in and out of harbors keeps the batteries fully charged even when we're using the below-decks autopilot the rest of the day. On passage, the solar panel can keep up with our daily usage so long as we're steering with the windvane. Our electrical solution cannot be separated from many of the equipment items on our "left off" list—together they form an integrated solution that reflects our cruising priorities.

13. **Wind/tow generator.** Unless we decide to add some additional electrical equipment, we don't need the efficiency of a wind or tow generator to keep our batteries topped up. As long as we have the choice, we prefer the simplicity of solar panels. We don't like the noise of most wind generators and have been unimpressed by their reliability.

14. **110-volt System.** *Silk* had a 110-volt system in parallel with her 12-volt system, but once we left the States we never found a place where we could use it again. We didn't want to install an extraneous electrical system which we would never use, especially on an aluminum boat where electrolysis is our worst enemy. But we did want to be able to use some 110-volt power tools and electrical equipment. To that end, we installed a large, 1500-watt inverter in the engine room for power tools, and two small, 300-watt inverters, one in the navigation station and one at my writing desk, for our laptop computers.

15. **Watermaker.** *Silk* carried 100 gallons of water, and we were never down by more than 50 gallons. We often caught rainwater between dockside refills. On *Hawk*, we preferred the simplicity of extra tankage to the cost, complexity and energy requirements of a watermaker. *Hawk* carries 200 gallons and we're finding we can go two months between refills without making any real effort to conserve water. On strict passage rations, we will be able to go at least three months without refilling the tanks, and over that kind of time frame we will certainly be able to catch rain.

16. **Pressure water.** We had pressure water on *Silk*, but we rarely used it once we had installed foot pumps in the galley and head. We still had to maintain it, however, and we spent more time rebuilding the pumps and looking for leaks than we did using the system. Aboard

Hawk, we have again installed foot pumps in the head and galley, and the only thing we miss is the pressure shower. We use a solar shower when the sun's out; a teakettle when it isn't—and we enjoy showers ashore when we get the chance.

17. **Hot water.** We had hot water aboard *Silk* whenever we ran the engine. But we often needed it when we hadn't been running the engine, especially on passage, and a solar shower or heated teakettle offered a quick and easy solution. Aboard *Hawk*, we use the solar shower in warm weather. In cold weather when we're running our diesel heater, we keep a kettle on the heater's hot plate for hot water on demand.

18. **Mechanical refrigeration/freezer.** We installed a high-tech R75 vacuum-panel icebox in lieu of refrigeration. We had refrigeration aboard *Silk*, but found we didn't use it that much. In the tropics, we would have had to run the engine a couple of hours a day to keep it at real refrigerator temperatures, so we tended to use it as an icebox where ice was available and not at all when it wasn't. Given our experience, we decided to install a much better insulated box on *Hawk* and avoid the complexity of refrigeration. Over the summer in Newfoundland, we ended up using the bilge until water temperatures got up to the sixties rather than hauling ice to the boat. We'll have to see how the box works in the tropics—we're not yet sure we've found a long-term icebox/refrigeration solution for *Hawk* yet.

19. **Forced air heating.** For the areas we plan to cruise, a reliable diesel heater means the difference between cold weather camping and civilized comfort. We were very disappointed with the reliability of the forced air system on *Silk*. We talked to everyone we could who had sailed higher latitudes, then installed a Refleks drip diesel heater running off a gravity feed tank that has no moving parts, consumes no electricity and has a hot plate on top for heating up a tea kettle. We then gave it the ultimate test as far as our future plans are concerned: we moved aboard the boat in December in the Chesapeake and went through several periods of temperatures in the teens. After it handled that, we knew we'd be fine in forty degrees in Newfoundland in June or Scotland in January.

20. **Shoreside creature comforts.** We have no microwave, VCR, TV, washer, dryer, dishwasher, air conditioner… and we don't miss them. We do, however, have a toaster and a coffee grinder, and enjoy those luxuries almost daily. We also have two laptop computers, three cameras, lots of fans, a dozen shelves of books, a CD player and a shelf of CDs.

The main thing we tried to leave off the boat was complexity. We can always make our simple boat more complex, but it can be almost impossible to simplify a complex boat. So far, we're very happy with our decisions. By leaving off the things on the list above, we saved at least $15,000—one year's cruising budget. Even more importantly, after four months and 3,000 nautical miles, we don't have anything we need to fix. We're more relaxed, seeing more of the places we visit, and enjoying ourselves more. Compared to our last voyage, not only did we leave off the complexity, we also left off a lot of the stress. And that makes sense.