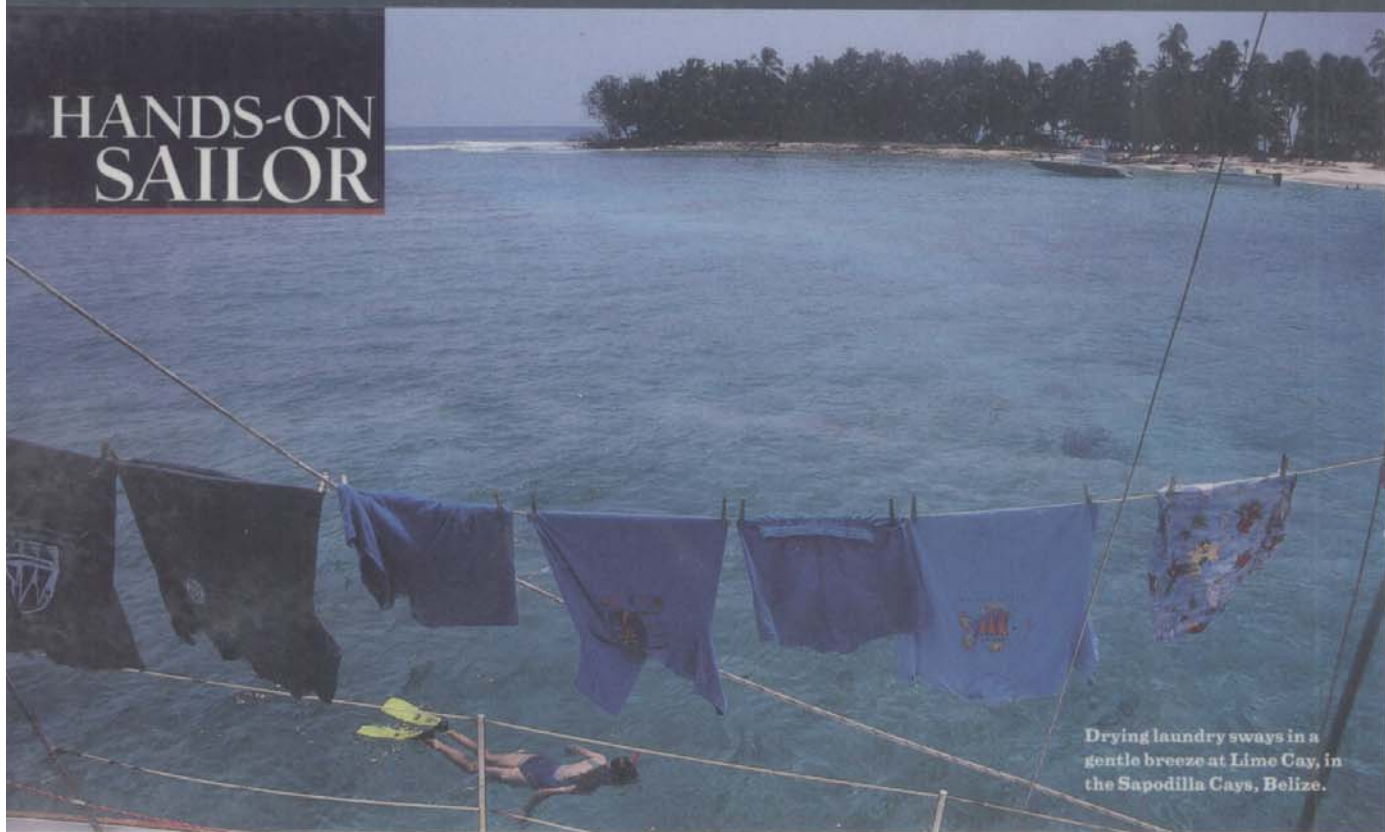


HANDS-ON SAILOR



Drying laundry sways in a gentle breeze at Lime Cay, in the Sapodilla Cays, Belize.

LIVING ABOARD BY BARBARA THEISEN

Curing the Washday Blues

Don't let soiled clothes cramp your cruising lifestyle—wash, rinse, spin, and dry them using these handy tips

I MISS MY WASHING MACHINE. After 10 years of living aboard our boat, *Out of Bounds*, our 1974 Gulfstar 41 sloop, with my husband, Tom, and my two daughters, Kate and Kenna, I can honestly say there's little about shoreside life that I long for besides the ease of throwing dirty laundry into my own purring washing machine. But after all these years, I've found some ways to ease the washday blues.

Sail Naked

If, like me, modesty keeps you from sailing naked (those bare French sailors must have small hampers), you can do other things to keep the dirty-laundry pile manageable.

- Choose fabrics that wash and dry easily. We include plenty of quick-dry shorts in our wardrobes. These are 100-percent nylon shorts that are great for the beach, the dinghy, sailing, or lounging around.

- For wet dinghy rides, protect your clothes by donning foul-weather gear, a swimsuit, or quick-dry shorts until you're ashore. Part of a cruiser's life is arriving everywhere with "dinghy butt," and once your clothes taste salt water, nothing but a good wash will make them wearable again.

- Designate a T-shirt and a pair of shorts to be your "salt-water" clothes for a few days. Wear these over your swimsuit when you go to the beach or anyplace they're bound to become encrusted with salt. Hang them on the line to "freshen" a bit overnight.

- Divide your towels into two categories—those for the beach and those for the bath—and use them accordingly so you never have to dry yourself off with a salty towel when you're clean.

The Wash Cycle

Of the techniques I've used to hand wash laundry, the nonelectric pressure-washing machine is my favorite. It's simple, quick, and uses the least amount of water and laundry soap. The pressure washer can handle about eight T-shirts or two pairs of jeans using roughly 2 quarts of warm or hot water (I often heat my water in a solar shower) and 2 tablespoons of detergent. After adding the water, soap, and clothes, tight-



Kate Theisen spins the sealed tub of a hand-powered pressure-washing machine.

en the gasketed lid and crank the handle for about two minutes. The heat from the water causes the air inside to expand, which builds pressure and, combined with agitation, forces the dirt out. Dump the dirty water, add clean water, crank the handle for about one minute, then wring and hang. I can do several small loads of laundry quicker this way than I can bag it up, dinghy to shore, and find a laundromat. But more important, I can keep up with the laundry when we're far from civilization. The pressure washer is made of molded plastic, there are no internal moving parts, and no maintenance is needed. Pressure washers are available from Lehman's (\$50; 888-438-5346, www.lehmans.com), a store in Kidron, Ohio, that caters to the self-sufficient, or from The Laundry Alternative Inc. (\$40; 888-813-9559, www.laundry-alternative.com), in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Another effective method is using a bucket and plunger.

HANDS-ON SAILOR

Place dirty clothes, water, and detergent in a bucket and use a plunger to agitate. If you choose this method, you'll want to spend \$13 on a special plunger made just for hand washing. Available from Lehman's, this plunger has internal baffles to help get water and soap into the clothes. Laundry can also be washed in a black garbage bag. Place dirty laundry, soap,

and fresh water in the bag and put it on deck in a sunny location. The sun heats the water, and the motion of the boat while under way agitates the clothes. Finally, there's the time-tested washboard. Using a washboard to clean laundry is hard on your clothes and your hands, but it's effective for removing dirt. That said, I much prefer one of the other methods.

Rinse, Spin, and Dry

If you're low on fresh water (see "Don't Let the Well Run Dry," February 2000), you may want to reuse your wash water for multiple loads of wash—but not for the rinse. In a bind, you can eliminate the rinse cycle by washing your clothes with ammonia instead of laundry detergent. Add about 1/2 cup of ammonia to your wash water. When you've finished washing your load, simply wring and hang. The ammonia will get the clothes clean without leaving an odor behind. Never use ammonia with bleach products.

The easiest, quickest, and cheapest way to wring clothes on a boat is to wrap them around a clean shroud and twist. Hand wringers are made for this, and they do a great job, but they're pricey, at around \$125 (they're also available at Lehman's), and you'll need to find a surface to which to attach the wringer. Another way to wring laundry is to roll it in a clean towel and give it a little twist.

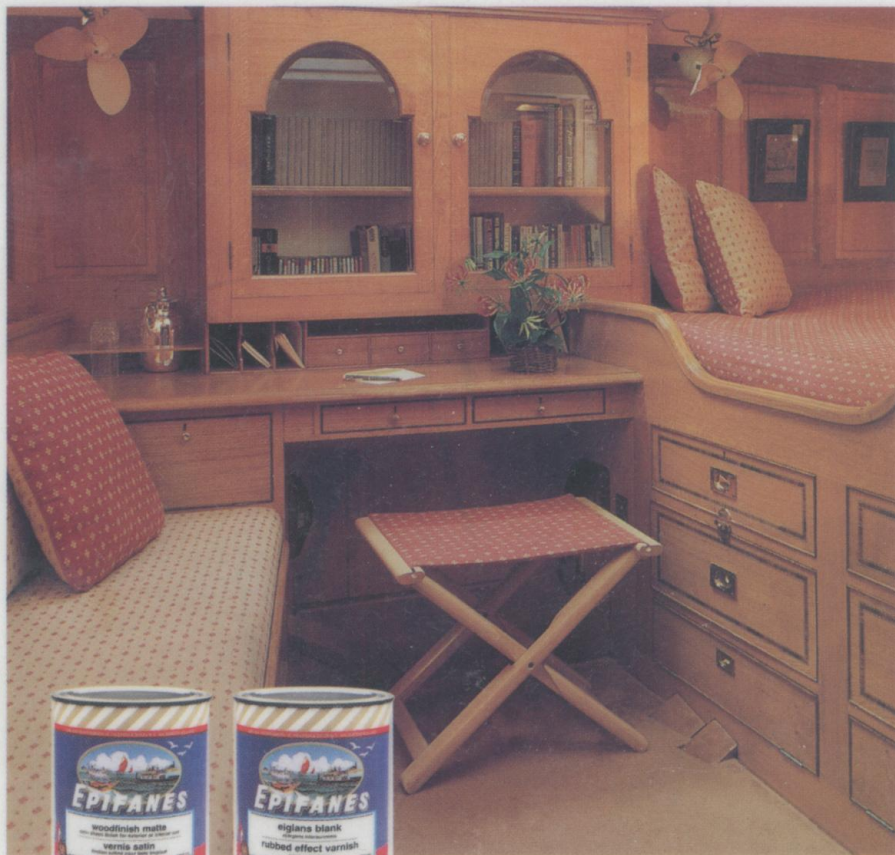
When your clothes are ready to be dried, hang a clothesline in the rigging to avoid dirt stains from the lifelines. Be sure to have a large supply of clothespins. I use wooden ones, as the plastic ones seem to get brittle and break, and when the odd clothespin does go overboard, the wooden ones will more easily decompose.

Hangin' at the Laundromat

Here are a few tips for when civilization beckons and you choose to use a laundromat. Allow plenty of time for your visit; bring a book, knitting, letter-writing material, or whatever keeps you busy as you pass the time. In many small communities, the water pressure is very low, and simply filling your machine may take 30 minutes or more. Plan on spending about half a day doing laundry. Follow the directions on the machines, and don't forget to clean the lint filters on the dryers. Finally (and perhaps most important), double bag your clean, dry laundry in sturdy garbage bags for the ride back in the dinghy. A friend once told me that if there was anything he wished he'd known before going cruising, that was it. He learned this lesson when a wave swamped his dinghy after he'd spent most of the day washing and drying his clothes.

Detergent Tips

Over the years, I've become partial to two laundry detergents, both of which



Sand-free: the inside story.



Another sand-free product from Epifanes

Epifanes gives you a choice below decks. For quick and easy interior maintenance, our "sand-free" Wood Finish Matte goes on over old or new finishes with no sanding between coats (just like our Wood Finish Gloss). Or for the look of a classic tung oil finish, use Epifanes Rubbed

Effect varnish as a final coat. Whichever you choose, Epifanes's signature high solids content is your guarantee of a remarkable, durable interior finish. Look for Epifanes at your local chandlery or call 1-800-269-0961 for the name of the Epifanes dealer nearest you.

EPIFANES®

EPIFANES (EPEE-FAWN-US) NORTH AMERICA, INC., 70 WATER STREET, THOMASTON, MAINE 04861
1-800-269-0961 FAX: 207-354-0387 WWW.EPIFANES.COM



And don't forget our flagship High Gloss Varnish. Exterior or interior, High Gloss's generous mixture of tung oil, resins, and high-alkyd solids delivers an uncompromisingly beautiful finish with less effort.

Interior photo: Charley Freiberg

are economical and easy to store. A large bucket of powdered detergent from Sears costs around \$20 and lasts nearly a year for our family of four. The bucket seals well and keeps the detergent from clumping together in the damp marine environment. I store the big bucket and keep a small supply of the detergent in a clean plastic peanut-butter jar with a screw-on lid: It's easy to get at, and it's the perfect size for trips to a laundromat.

The second detergent, Simple Green, is an environmentally friendly, concentrated liquid cleaner I've used with my pressure washer for several years. With the pressure washer, I add only about 2 tablespoons of Simple Green. For ease of use, I fill an old dish-soap squeeze bottle with Simple Green and just add a squirt (my equivalent of 2 tablespoons). You can also make your own detergent by mixing 1/8 cup of baking soda with 1/8 cup of borax.

Laundry Services

In many ports around the world, someone will do your laundry for you. In Mexico, for example, it's easy to find a commercial drop-off service that will wash, dry, and fold your laundry inexpensively. They charge by the pound, and they weigh it when you drop it off, so heavy, wet towels or clothes really add to the expense. When we were there in 2000, the cost on the Yucatán coast of Mexico ranged from US\$2.50 to US\$3.50 per 9 pounds. In the Bahamas, you can usually find a woman who does laundry out of her home. We never could get a fixed price ahead of time, and in the end, it was a bit on the expensive side—around US\$8 per load. On the Río Dulce, in Guatemala, drop-off laundry services at the marinas run an economical US\$2.50 to US\$3.00 per load.

Onboard Washing Machines

More and more, cruisers these days are considering having a washing machine aboard. To do so, you'll need to meet the requirements of space (approximately 2 feet wide by 3 feet high by 2 feet deep) where you can permanently install the machine, power (115 volts and 15 amps, generally), and water (they average 13 to 20 gallons per a 10-pound maximum load; compare that with less than 1 gallon used in the hand-pressure washer, which has a load maximum of 5 pounds). Most of the portable machines currently in use

are a combination washer/dryer and cost anywhere from US\$800 to US\$1,200. For more details on these systems and their technical specifications, contact Explorer (858-587-9766, www.explorerfridges.com), Malber (800-600-8913, www.malberusa.com), Quietline (FJS Distributors, 800-884-8635, www.quietline.com), Splendide (Westland Sales, 800-356-0766,

www.splendide.com), or Thor (877-877-0540, www.thorappliances.com).

Aboard *Out of Bounds*, a Gulfstar 41 sloop, the Theisens have cruised the Great Lakes, the U.S. East Coast, the Bahamas, and the northwest Caribbean. At press time, they were back in the States earning cash for future adventures.

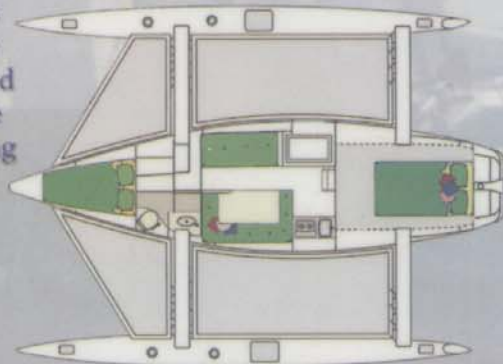
the NEW CORSAIR 36



Sail Plan
Main
Jib
Asymmetrical Spinnaker
Screacher

L.O.A.: 36 ft
B.O.A.: 25' 7"
Folded beam 9' 10"
Mast height 47' 6"

The boat you've been waiting for is soon to hit the waters near you! The Corsair 36 is the perfect answer for those experienced sailors who want the comforts of a cruising monohull, the flat sailing of a big catamaran and the speed, safety and unsinkability of a Corsair Trimaran.



Be the first to
tri the best
619.585.3005
www.corsairmarine.com

CORSAIR
TRIMARANS