

Tips For Prospective Blue Water Cruisers

Words by Wendy Hinman and Garth Wilcox



PART 4

WENDY HINMAN AND GARTH WILCOX SAILED 34,000 MILES OVER 7 YEARS ABOARD THEIR 31-FOOT WYLIE-DESIGNED BOAT, VELELLA, CIRCUMNAVIGATING THE PACIFIC OCEAN, WITH A FORAY INTO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

WENDY IS CURRENTLY WRITING A BOOK ABOUT THEIR ADVENTURES.

MINIMIZING YOUR POWER REQUIREMENTS

There are various ways to reduce your power needs. Keeping up with refrigeration is the biggest challenge. Using LED lights can reduce your demands. When we sit in the cockpit

and talk in the early evening, our power usage is significantly lower. And also lower when we read in bed since we share the same light. Computers can draw a lot of power and different laptops



draw different amounts. Running the computer off its own battery and then recharging it is a way to save power.

KEEPING UP WITH REFRIGERATION

It is difficult to keep up with refrigerator power requirements. Since it is so much hotter in the tropics, it takes much more

power to keep a refrigerator going than in more temperate climates. You might want to double or treble your power requirement estimates if you plan to rely on a fridge/freezer. Consider adding insulation or at least placing an insulating mat on top of the fridge area or just inside the lid to help keep the cool air inside. Avoid side opening units if you are installing a new one. You might also want to make sure any air cooled unit has adequate ventilation, which ours did not. We decided to turn our fridge off because we were unwilling to run the engine to keep up with its demands. The engine heats up the boat in an already hot climate and we find the noise unpleasant and the time inconvenient. Plus we cannot carry the fuel to power it. The adjustment was hard for us at first, but we live pretty well without it now. We are among the

few who live without refrigeration but our power needs are a small fraction as a result. There's more in our section on 'Living Without Refrigeration' to learn how we've adjusted.

LED LIGHTS

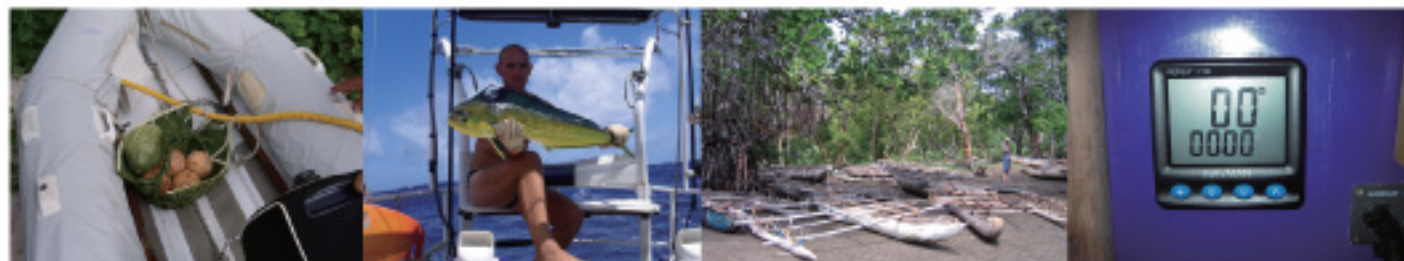
We run LED lights for our anchor light and tricolor which draw less than an amp a day. We bought them off the

radio programs that we could listen to on our shortwave radio, which help us keep track of what is going on in the world, when we can transmit on SSB, we can keep in touch with other cruisers and give us another way to call for help if needed. We bought our ICOM 735 used via the Ham Radio Outlet on the Internet for about \$600US including a tuner. We installed it with a backstay

had good luck with Yahoo and this service includes a photo album which we have found handy for sharing images of our travels easily with a large number of people while we are away.

ONBOARD EMAIL VIA SAILMAIL

With a Pactor II/III modem, an SSB and a subscription to Sailmail (\$200 per year) or using Winlink for those with a



Kyle Ayson

Internet from a company called Deep Creek Design, but they may also be available from West Marine. Deep Creek Design stands behind their products and has been good to deal with. The bulbs fit into a standard tricolor fixture and the anchor light even has a solar cell so it comes on automatically at dusk. While they weren't cheap, we have been glad to have them so we can be seen even if we are worried about our

insulator and a copper strap (painted beforehand to prevent corrosion) stretched along the bilge between the antenna tuner and the keel bolts.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Internet Cafes are usually readily available (throughout the Pacific in the larger towns) and affordably priced,

Ham license (free), one can stay in touch via email on board. As we traveled to more remote areas, we became more interested in getting a Pactor II/III modem. We added a Pactor II/III modem recently and have found it to be very useful. We bought the Pactor II/III modem from the Offshore Store in Seattle, it easily plugged into our ICOM 735 and we didn't need any extra assistance to get it running.



Rob Winter

Brian Edwards

power consumption. We also use LED flashlights and a cockpit light, which you can find at garden stores and often feature a solar sensor.

COMMUNICATIONS

We initially bought a Sangean short wave receiver for \$200US from a catalog, and through it we listened to short wave and local radio programs and could hear the SSB nets, and receive weather faxes. After traveling for a while, we decided that we wanted an SSB so we could join radio nets and talk to our friends and add onboard email via Sailmail. In addition to the

although in a couple of places they were very expensive, like in Bora Bora, Vavau (in the northern islands in Tonga), and the resort areas of Fiji. Again, asking other cruisers and planning ahead can reduce the hardship of expensive email facilities. Other cruisers who have onboard email are often happy to let you send a brief email on occasion to let family know you are safe. Many people complain that Hotmail clogs their inboxes with lots of junk mail and closes the accounts after a month of inactivity. We have often been unable to check email for more than a month when we are in remote areas. We have

SHORTWAVE AND LOCAL RADIO PROGRAMS

We can get news and entertainment on the short wave radio and have found we can get local radio stations that otherwise we couldn't receive on our auto scan stereo which is programmed for U.S. frequencies. We'd suggest researching the schedules for Voice of America, BBC, Canadian Broadcasting System, Radio New Zealand and Radio Australia, or doing a general search for Short Wave radio programs. They can be quite interesting and informative.

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COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER CRUISERS AND SSB NETS

Asking other cruisers is the best way to find out about current SSB radio nets in the area. The nets form a bond within our community. It's a close-knit community that shares information freely and helps cruisers in need. (Caution: There can be a tendency for people to get overexcited about things that ultimately turn out to be non-issues, such as Customs procedures for a specific country or for misinformation to

WEATHER FAXES

To receive weather faxes aboard, we also purchased Weather Fax for Windows from a New Zealand company called Xaxero, which we found on the Internet. The program included a demodulator to connect the computer to the short wave radio. Another weatherfax program is JVComm which doesn't require a demodulator. We generally plug the demodulator into the headphone jack of the radio but since we need to be able to listen to the signal

information and can be accessed easily via short wave radio. Grib files of weather data can be requested via sailmail or Winlink (listed in their online catalogs).

MODIFICATIONS TO VELELLA

Velella was basically a well-found boat when we bought her in 1998, but not quite ready for blue water voyaging. Most of the initial modifications that we made were as follows:



Mark Newman

be spread like wildfire on these nets.) Exchanging boat cards with email addresses is a great way to stay in touch over longer distances and over the long term. Lots of cruisers email one another via Sailmail to plan a rendezvous, share information and stay in touch.

WEATHER INFORMATION

Weather dictates our lives so it pays to understand weather patterns. We can find out from other cruisers, via nets and often weather maps are posted and many useful

to fine tune to the station for the clearest signal, we need an adapter with 2 outlets making it possible to plug in earphones as well as the demodulator. After we are done tuning, we unplug the headphones and turn up the volume for best results. We found out what stations to listen for weather from an incredibly valuable booklet called the Metservice Yacht Pack put out by New Zealand's Metservice weather forecasting service. It includes useful information about weather patterns and specific sources

- Replaced 21 year old stainless steel standing rigging
- Rerigged the main sheet for more purchase
- Replaced undersized bow pulpit
- Replaced hatches
- Removed roller furling
- Added inner forestay
- Added running backstay
- Painted deck and added non-skid



Mark Newman

Wendy Hinman

sites can be found on the Internet. Weather routers like Commanders Weather out of Vermont is another resource. Being able to retrieve your own weather faxes makes you better prepared. Learn as much as you can about interpreting weather maps. One of the most useful sources of information we have come across is the Metservice Yacht Pack put out by New Zealand's Metservice weather forecasting service. Steve Dashew's "Mariner's Weather" and "Surviving the Storm" are helpful resources as well.

for weather information around the Pacific (\$29.95NZ or about \$15US). Bob McDavitt, who caters to yacht needs, can be contacted through email: mcdavitt@met.co.nz. Russell Radio is a ship-to-shore net run out of New Zealand, that provides personalized weather forecasting for one's current location while underway, and the time and frequency details for this and many other nets around the Pacific are included in the Metservice booklet. Many nets offer weather

- Added bow netting and replaced lifelines
- Added Spade anchor and rode
- Replaced main, jib
- Raked spreaders
- Added topping lift
- Replaced running lights, tri color and Anchor lights with LED bulbs
- Added jib tracks
- Replaced dodger, made sailing and full awning

- Rigged main preventer
- Rigged jack lines for safety
- Cut cockpit window for ventilation
- Replaced wind vane
- Replaced prop with folding model
- Added trolling generator
- Added Rutland wind generator
- Added flexible solar panels

- Added EPIRB
- Built 2-part nesting, sailing dinghy
- Added 2-horse outboard dinghy motor

EQUIPMENT EVALUATION

Cruising Equipment Notes about the equipment we carried and what we thought about it.

VELELLA

Sailed by Garth Wilcox and Wendy Hinman around the Pacific, approximately 34,000 miles.

100' 5/8" nylon. Very good holding, never drags, sets easily, holds in all bottoms, coral, rock and weed, sand, mud. Have seen 50+ knot winds with strong currents. We use very short scope - usually 2 times depth + 30'. Maximum depth of water we have seen is 100'. We try to anchor in less than 50' to allow free diving the anchor if stuck. We would have liked to have a pony bottle for emergency diving to retrieve anchor. Every time



Vince Christian

Amie Highfield

- Installed SSB, Pactor IIEx modem for sailmail, short wave radio
- Installed weatherfax software
- Made knife rack
- Made crash bar for galley
- Made Sunbrella pouches for clothing storage
- Added seatback tie downs
- Built chain locker for enclosing chain under V-berth storage

Velella is a Tom Wylie designed 31 foot cutter rigged light displacement cruiser. Built in 1979 with a shallow canoe body and no IOR distortion she has a transom hung rudder on a skeg and a fin keel, tracks beautifully and surfs easily. Velella is cold molded, strong, light, and very seaworthy. Weighing 8000 pounds, she carries 45 gallons of water and 10 gallons of fuel. Space and weight carrying ability are very limited. Keep this in mind

we used a trip line it fouled around a coral head which prevented lifting the anchor or the line got dangerously close to the prop. We always used a chain hook with a 15' nylon line for a snubber to absorb shock loads. Keep the hook off the bottom. Our aluminum anchor had coral scars, paint blisters, cracking (replaced by manufacturer). We only had a single bow anchor roller, but would have liked another for emergencies.



Ian Wilkinson

Ruedi Klotli

- Added ventilated crates for vegetable storage
- Added Snapware canisters for air tight dry food storage
- Replaced speakers with non-magnetic ones
- Added fiddles for shelves
- Built book shelf
- Added Jordan Series drogue and sea anchor
- Added liferaft

when reading these notes. Most of our equipment choices were limited by what came with the boat, space and our budget. Here is an overview of the equipment we carried and how it worked for us.

MOORING GEAR

Ground tackle

The best insurance you can get. Primary anchor: Spade A80 (16lb aluminum), 240' 5/16" BBB chain,

Secondary anchors: Spade A80, 45lb plow, 22lb danforth, 2-300' 5/8" nylon rode with 30' chain, and 150' 3/8" nylon rode with 30' chain. These were rarely used but would have liked at least one rigged and deployable in less than 30 seconds. If we had a bigger boat we would like to have had a roller for an easy to deploy stern anchor though we rarely would have used it.

To be continued.