

# SKETCHBOOK

BY SAM DEVLIN

## Cruising In Company With A Tug And Shanty Boats



Two great cruising adventures are possible in North America: the Inside Passage of the Pacific Northwest and the Great Loop, which wraps the eastern third of the United States and the southeastern part of Canada. The Inside Passage runs from Washington to Alaska, passing through Canada's lovely British Columbia, nearly 1,000 miles of almost completely sheltered waters and most of them in wilderness. The Great Loop is a 6,000-mile journey (following the seasons) from Lake Michigan to Louisiana, across the Gulf of Mexico to Florida, up the Eastern Seaboard to the Hudson River and St. Lawrence River, then back to the Great Lakes.

Both of these cruises come up in conversation around the boat shop and my design office at least weekly, and come boat show time, they're mentioned virtually every hour. They are fertile dream fodder for baby boomers who are finally starting to realize some of those long-suppressed dreams that kept them alive as they slaved away at their careers, earning enough money to buy a dream boat.

A recent two-boat-show sprint got me thinking about alternatives to the normal approach of buying or building a boat for

those cruises, or even for less-ambitious adventures. A constant theme in my own life is the extra impetus of my friends and cruising buddies: Some really great cruises that we have had were ones that friends proposed and coaxed me into. I welcome those ideas. They get my heinie off to some great adventures on the water.

Still, my wife and I realized years ago that the choice between cruising with company (meaning other people on the same boat) and cruising in company (boating in tandem) is simple: The latter works best virtually every time. I have certainly had good adventures with friends aboard the same boat, but the times with friends alongside in their own boat have nearly always been more enjoyable.

This month's design starts with the cruising-in-company concept. I propose the idea of having several couples or individuals with basic platforms for their own space, and sharing a driving mechanism for unpowered or low-powered vessels.

I have built a few of these little houseboats. They are mostly shanty boats: flat bottomed, with good volume for tiny spaces, and quite comfortable. They might have a low-horsepower, high-thrust outboard, but for the

most part they are relatively poor examples of a good powerboat. Steering from a tiller outboard on the stern might work for a few hours of moving from one marina to another, but with a long cruise in the plans, excuses would be coming hot and furious to stay on the hook for another day or two or three. That reluctance to fire up and go doesn't mix well with the idea of a cruising adventure.

So why not have a proper tug as a member of the flotilla? She would have a strong engine in her bilge, a large propeller and a good-sized rudder to tow or push several shanty boats. A couple of people could be on the tug, navigating and watching for obstructions, and at the end of the day, a good raft-

### Godzilla 25

LOD: 24 feet, 8 inches

BEAM: 9 feet

DRAFT: 33 inches

DISPLACEMENT: 5,800 pounds (light)

### Millie Hill 20

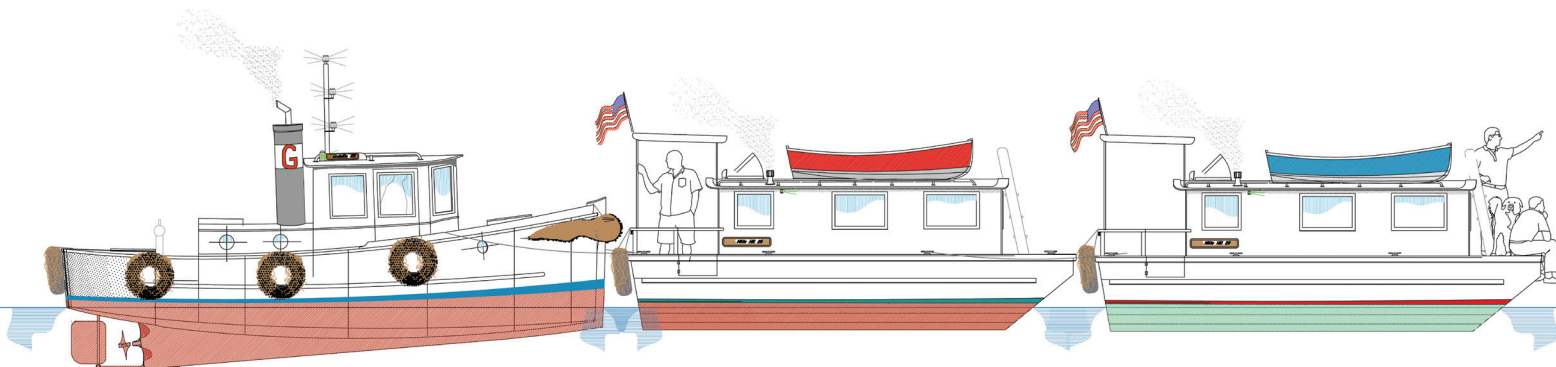
LOD: 20 feet, 4 inches

BEAM: 8 feet, 2 inches

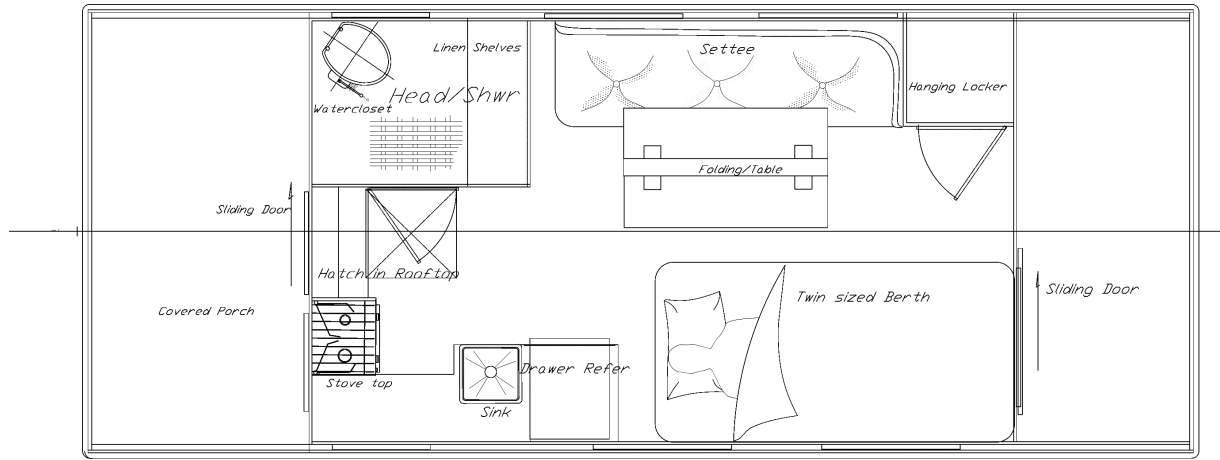
DRAFT: 12 inches (outboard up)

DISPLACEMENT: 2,800 pounds (light)

NEIL RABINOWITZ (TOP)



The Godzilla 25 tug can push or tow Millie Hill 20 shanty boats for a different twist on tandem cruising.



up could be done, with the tug setting her big hook and the shanties tied up alongside. Or if privacy is desired, the shanties could cast off to their own spots in the anchorage.

A shanty association could own the tug and would have shared running responsibilities. Or one member could own the tug, and the others would have the shanties, sharing fuel costs for the tug as goodwill on the expedition.

My Godzilla 25 tug is just under the 26-foot limit where she would need a licensed

skipper, and her accommodations plan is for two, with a slightly enclosed head (aft in the engine room) and a simple galley. Walk-up side decks and sliding doors to port and starboard give good access to the wheel and plenty of air if the weather is hot.

For the shanty boats, my Millie Hill 20 has the roof acreage to stow one of my Guppy dinghy designs or a couple of small kayaks. With a 13-by-8 foot cabin, there is room for a small enclosed head, a galley, a dinette/

**The Millie Hill 20 shanty boat has a basic but comfortable layout for a couple.**

couch and a double berth, plus a small deck forward and a larger deck aft. An elevated sun shade over the cockpit makes things enjoyable in the evening.

I can imagine a barbecue chucked up on the aft rail, steaks cooking away, a drink in my hand and the enjoyment of friends on the water. What more could I ask for? ■