

# LIVING ABOARD

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BOAT DWELLERS ENJOY THE SMELL OF SALT AIR AND THE SOUNDS OF SEAGULLS ON THEIR OWN KIND OF WATERFRONT PROPERTY

Waterfront property is prime in the Lowcountry, that's no secret. People seek the smell of the salt air breezing through their windows, the sounds of seagulls calling to each other, and of course those glorious sunsets.

But for a lot of ocean lovers, there is something better than just being by water; they live on it, their boat serving as their home.

They are living aboard.

Bob and Karen Hagan, along with their miniature pinscher Fang the Pirate Dog, live aboard the *Plein Air*, a 53-foot Californian

motor yacht. Bob has his captain's license and Karen is first mate.

The Hagans have always been enamored with boats and had dreamed for years about living aboard. They'd seen many of their friends try to maintain a land home and a sea home, and that was something that didn't interest them.

"We were sure we wanted to leave shore, and we wanted to make a clean break," Karen says. "So we sold our home and most of the stuff in it. We kept wedding china, photos – grandmother things. The boat came furnished – over-furnished actually."



THE HAGANS HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED OF LIVING ABOARD. NOW THEY DO AND THEIR LIFESTYLE IS JUST HOW THEY LIKE IT – SIMPLE.



THE SUNSET VIEW FROM ABOARD PLEIN AIR, DOCKED AT CITY MARINA.

## distinctively charleston

The Hagans currently lease a slip at the City Marina, and the walk to their car is about three-fourths of a mile. "That means if you forget something in your car, you get it later," Karen says.

But that daily walk to and from her car might have otters swimming beside her, a heron picking through marsh grasses or the fins of a dolphin off the bow of a boat. Sometimes she bikes, and she knows that \$27 worth of groceries fit in the basket on the bike.

"Any more than that, and you have a problem."

Karen works out of their floating home, an artist with a studio near the stern that looks out directly on the Coast Guard station. She has painted the scene she sees many times and still has not tired of it; in fact, it's one of her favorites to paint in the first few minutes after dawn.

Captain Bob goes to work every day at a sales job in Charleston. "He has the starched shirts, so he gets the closet space," she says, smiling. Then at the end of his day, it's back out to the boat to enjoy a glass of wine at sunset and then maybe a potluck dinner with neighbors.

"It's like a neighborhood where most boaters look after one another," says Bryan Richardson, dockmaster of Bohicket Marina and Yacht Club, another Lowcountry marina that allows people to live aboard. "For marinas, that is the most positive aspect of live aboards. We have a comfort level when we're not there 24/7."

And that's what it is to Karen and Bob too – a community, if you change slips, marinas or even countries. The Hagans spent time in Abaco, Bahamas, and Bob had a radio show there where he talked about Fang the Pirate Dog. Every so often, the couple will get a request to see Fang from a boater who recognizes the name of the boat.

"You know other boaters, know your neighbors," Karen says.

Janette Chapman, who lives aboard at the Ashley Marina, wants her neighbors to know when she's aboard. One of the first things she does after she gets home is put out her American flag to signal that she's around.




BOB AND KAREN HAGAN, ALONG WITH THEIR MINIATURE PINSCHER FANG THE PIRATE DOG, LIVE ABOARD THE PLEIN AIR, A 53-FOOT CALIFORNIAN MOTOR YACHT.

"I signal other boaters I'm there, then I open the boat up. I love opening all the windows, letting the sea breezes flow through the boat," she says.

Chapman says that it's a great lifestyle for a woman living alone. She works with her sister marketing waterfront real estate, but when she comes home, she says there is always someone to say "hey" to.

"I like the people on the docks, the boating lifestyle. I like the simplicity of not being able to buy anything because I don't have anywhere to put it. I just got my captain's license, and I plan to live aboard as long as I can."

Karen says she and Bob feel the same way. "This is the best thing I've ever done in my life. We plan to live aboard forever." 

### WANT A TASTE OF THE MARINA LIFESTYLE?

**A good way to experience it is to visit a marina during a fishing tournament (check out *Watermarks*, page 14). Watch the boats come back with their catches to be weighed, enjoy some good music, walk the docks and see the boats (and probably some great parties!)**