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**THE HORNPIPE**

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**Commodore's Comments**

The Ides of March and the vernal equinox (March 20, 2009, at precisely 7:44 a.m. EDT), were celebrated at our first pot-luck CCSC dinner at the McDonald's home on March 21. Needless to say, we had a copious amount of various dishes brought from many kitchens that were as pleasant as the company and conversation.

After every one was full and not able to move too quickly, I called a brief club meeting in order to discuss some club events for this year.

Specifically, I proposed that we share our sailing experiences between ourselves, and any other interested sailors, by holding a series of seminars at Hammock Island. Some suggestions were having a Man-Over-Board (M-O-B) drill and recovery using a volunteer (me); some basic seamanship skills that we may have not used or that need more practice; basic piloting and charting skills, such as running a dead reckoning plot rather than depending only upon our electronic systems; identification of birds on the bay; and getting certified in first aid and CPR from the Red Cross or other such organization by hosting a training course at Hammock Island. In addition to CCSCers, these programs would be open to other sailors, either at Hammock Island or elsewhere. Let me know about any other suggestions that you have. We already have some volunteer instructors, and the first one (M-O-B drill) is scheduled on our draft cruise schedule.

Well, spring has sprung, on some days, and I guess that our official CCSC sailing season starts with our annual spring picnic where, in addition to food and good cheer, our vice commodore releases the 2009 cruising schedule and gets volunteers for the cruises. As you can see from the draft schedule attached along with this issue of the Hornpipe, there will be a variety of long and short cruises, as well as a mixture wherein one can join parts of the long cruise with a shorter weekend trip. Make sure that you attend the picnic and become a cruise captain, or at least plan to join in on them.

**Andy Monjan**

**Attention – Attention – Attention  
Upcoming Events Reminder**

**What: Spring Picnic & Cruising Schedule Review and Open Boat Tour**

**When: April 25, 12:00 p.m.**

**Where: Hammock Island Marina**

**Bring: Appetizer, side dish, or dessert to share**

**Who: ALL HAMMOCK ISLANDERS — Spread the news. We need new members**

**Light Emitting Diodes Aboard Breezing  
Up**

Light emitting diodes (LEDs) are the latest big thing (after wireless instruments) in marine electronics. They offer large power savings on board, and they are purported to be extremely

reliable, with claims of useful lifetimes ranging from 10,000 to 50,000 hours (although some reports suggest otherwise). The common 20-watt halogen interior lights, for example, can be replaced with LED lights which consume as little as one-twentieth the power of the halogens. In the case of *Breezing Up*, which is fairly typical, the cabin lights generally draw about 1.67 amps of current. An LED equivalent would draw between 0.1 and 0.4 amps.

At night, at anchor, the major power draws on my boat are refrigeration (a huge draw at an average two amp-hours per hour), the stereo (a few amp-hours), the cabin lighting, and the anchor light. Three cabin lights are on for approximately three hours, and consume about 15 amp hours. The anchor light draws about 0.8 amps, for about ten hours, or eight amp hours. Replacing the cabin lights with three-watt LED bulbs would save about twelve amp hours! There are LED anchor lights that draw about 0.2 amps, so an LED anchor light would save an additional six amp hours.

Overall, simply switching to LED cabin lights and an LED anchor light offers the potential to reduce my total daily power drain by eighteen amp hours, or about one-fourth of my total. That's a huge gain, so what's the catch?

Actually, there are several catches — initial cost is one. I'm trying a set of replacement (LED) bulbs in my cabin light fixtures. They cost about \$30 each, compared with about \$5 each for the existing halogen bulbs.

The quality of the light is another potential drawback — LEDs tend to have narrower beams and somewhat different color characteristics. LEDs have improved greatly in this regard, though. I'm trying the warm white color option in mine (in the old days you could have any LED color you like, so long as it was blue or red).

Brightness is an issue — I'm trying three of the 2.5 watt (nine-LED) bulbs from Cruising Solutions. They draw 0.15 amps and are said to be equivalent to my existing twenty-watt halogen bulbs. If I am pleased with them, I'll plan on replacing the remaining four cabin lights with the same LEDs. For good measure, I'm also going to try replacing my two white/red dome lights (in the galley and the head) with inexpensive LED dome

lights from West Marine (they are purported to draw 0.048 amps).

Another potential problem is the rather wide voltage range on board a sailboat. The nominal 12-volt batteries can range from a low of less than 12 volts to a high, under charge, of more than 14 volts. Bare LED bulbs are quite sensitive to voltage levels and could potentially be overdriven (leading to a short life) if operated at the high end of that range. However, the cabin light bulbs I plan to try out are designed to operate in a range of 10-30 volts using resistor-based current control circuitry.

Some boaters who convert to LED lights (anchor lights in particular) report some interference with VHF reception.

LED anchor lights have an additional catch. It is possible to find relatively inexpensive LED bulbs that will fit most anchor light fixtures, but the U.S. Coast Guard has not approved this option. So while you might be getting just as effective an anchor light, you might be exposing yourself to liabilities if you are run over in the dark of night by a careless captain with an aggressive lawyer. There are USCG approved LED anchor light fixtures, however. Again, cost is the major issue — the least expensive USCG approved LED anchor fixture I've found, from Orca Green Marine, is about \$170.

I am going to be trying out my new LEDs soon, and I'll issue a full report. Then I might try replacing the anchor light.

***George Alberts***