

Shipshape – A Plan

Those that came before us left us with the wisdom found in lessons learned the hard way for our betterment. I now understand why my mother insisted that we clean the “boys’ bathroom” after each use; if not, hell was sure to break out in the small space shared by three young brothers. Gil, a neighbor from my beach life childhood taught us that if we were going down the hill from the street level parking down to the beach cabins, make sure we didn't waste a trip with empty hands. The same held returning up the stairs and in doing so, nothing accumulated “at the beach” that wasn't worth hauling down in the first place and the garbage never ripened before it made it back up the hill to the trash can. My mother and Gil both helped reinforce the meaning and benefits of the term, “Shipshape.”

Both my wife, Sue, and I grew up on the beach. Our responsibility was to do our part to make beach life work for everyone. Like a beach cabin, a boat is either shipshape or it's a hovel. A yacht is understandably shipshape, and a floating hovel is not a yacht. They are mutually exclusive, and it is always a deliberate choice and mindset to be either yachty or not. Sue and I now own and sail a 1998 Bavaria 38 Ocean, named Zephyrus. We purchased it from a mutual childhood friend nearly 8 years ago. Mike, the seller, is a lifelong sailor who had his name at the top of two trophies in the Lahaina Yacht Club before the fire, noting his accomplishments in the Vic-Maui sailboat race. Mike knows a thing or two about sailboats. He said to me, “This is the ultimate cruising boat. Trust me, you two will love it and I will make you a sweet deal.” He bought the next beer and with that we flipped over a napkin and completed the buy/sell agreement. I cross my heart; those were his words, and this really happened!

During the purchase inspection the surveyor said, “What kind of slob owned this boat? He didn't even try to make it presentable for a survey.” I apologized and lamely told the surveyor Mike was my friend, then we completed the sale, and we didn't look back. Mike is still our friend, and the boat is everything he said it would be for the two of us in both comfort and in sail-ability following a very deep, post-purchase cleansing and several dumpster runs.

The boat has proven to be both tough and comfortable at sea. We have explored the far reaches of the Puget Sound and cruised annually through Washington's San Juan Islands and the Gulf Islands of British Columbia. Still, there is so much more to explore and enjoy with Zephyrus here in the Pacific Northwest and Salish Sea! The boat stands up in a blow and is outfitted to be cozy enough to use year-round in the Puget Sound. We have our sights on a circumnavigation of Vancouver Island or possibly a trip up the Inside Passage to Alaska aboard Zephyrus. Prior to Mike, the boat made two extended cruises between Seattle and Baja, Mexico, which also sounds very do-able and fun with Zephyrus. We also called the boat our only home for five full years as live-aboards to help us make ends meet following our purchase and re-launch of Torrid Marine around the same time we bought the boat.

The only way we could have possibly spent so much time aboard our 38-foot sailboat was by being vigilantly shipshape. Quite literally our boat is just big enough for two mature adults to call home, though our five adult kids are always welcome to join us for a weekend cruise because for the most part, the guest cabin (a.k.a. the vee berth) is generally tidy and ready for a last-minute guest. I can imagine, but we don't really want a bigger boat, yet anything smaller seems impossible. The cost of bigger wasn't an option and on anything smaller we would have had to either move off or simply stayed slipbound as a dock queen, none of which were attractive alternatives to our plan to use our boat so shipshape it was. Maybe we should have named the boat *Goldilocks*?

It turns out there is a logical method for being shipshape. When it comes to tidy storage, nothing is left to random happenstance. Shipshape for us involves thoughtful planning that insures anything that is brought aboard is meant to be aboard and that if it comes aboard, it will have a proper place to be

stowed. Most boaters have their own similar meaning for the term, but for us it means clear walkways, both above and below deck, and uncluttered living space with settees cleared except for a relaxing pillow and beds made ready to use. The same holds for above deck and in the cockpit. This way, when the winds howl, we never have to worry about what might crash below while we are above enjoying the wind and water. If something isn't necessary for our foreseeable comfort, use, enjoyment and repair of the boat, it isn't welcome aboard. Clutter is our enemy. If something is temporarily required to affect a repair or improvement, such as a mechanical upgrade to the removal of the decks, all of it still needs a stowage space or it will call home in the dock box or in the back of my car. Over the years, being shipshape has allowed us to consistently cast off on Friday afternoons generally less than 30 minutes from our arrival to the boat. After all, fun, safe cruising is Zephyrus' purpose.

We have developed a six-dimensional storage plan for Zephyrus that helps make and keep our storage optimized and in place. After seven years, the boat remains tidy and as uncrowded as is imaginable on a 38-footer, though it is well stocked with provisions and spare parts for a cruise lasting several weeks. Our storage methodology logically uses a unique, easy to visualize, four letter identification code for all storage compartments and spaces onboard Zephyrus. Ours is unique to our boat. Yours will be too.

The first dimension is the deck level which for us is either above deck or below deck. The relation to the companionway determines whether something is inside or outside and thus above or below deck. Next comes the “primary zone” which could generically refer to “cabin area” below deck and “deck station” above deck. Fortunately, with 38 feet, we can combine cabin and deck station zones without confusion in the unique first letter in our naming methodology. This letter is followed by a relative athwart port-center-starboard indicator followed by a relative fore-center-aft indicator which make up letters two and three of the scheme. So far, the method is designed to more accurately identify the zone and then the relative location within the zone. For example, the inside wall area of the head behind the shower stall is indicated with a P for Port side, and an A for Aft, but in absolute terms, this wall or bulkhead is starboard of the engine room and starboard of the galley and forward of the master cabin. The P and the A are only relative to the specific zone which, in this example happens to be the Head. From here the relative height and type of storage compartment or space is called out as the fourth letter ranging from the bilge up to the upper rail on the solar arch. With this method, there is a possibility that there is still room for duplication, and thus ambiguity which we address by adding a numerical indicator, if needed, which we use for stacked drawers and the like. Exhibit A follows:

PRIMARY ZONE (Bow to Stern)	LEFT-RIGHT ORIENTATION	FORE-AFT ORIENTATION	STORAGE COMPARTMENT (Lowest to Highest)
W-Windlass & Anchoring	P-Port side	F-Forward	B-Bilge
V-Vee Berth	C-Centerline	C-Center	F-Floorboards or on Deck
S-Settee	S-Starboard	A-Aft	U-Under Seat or Bench
N-Navigation Station			S-Seatback (behind)
G-Galley			L-Lower Locker or Cabinet
E-Engine Room			M-Under Mattress
H-Head			D-In Drawer or Desk
M- Master Cabin/Owner’s Suite			C-On Countertop, Shelf or Tabletop
D-Deck			T-Top or Upper Locker/Cabinet
I-In-Deck Fwd. Storage			H-In Hanging Locker
C-Cockpit			W-On Wall or Bulkhead
L-Lazarette			R-Rail or Rail mounted
P-Propane Locker			O-Other
T-Transom			
A-Arch/Davit			

Our boat has an inside and outside, fifteen zones, each with three fore and aft and three athwart indicators (including C for both center and centerline, respectively), where there are twelve uniquely identified storage compartments and locations followed by the catch-all “O” for “Other”. This creates a mathematical potential of nearly two thousand unique, four-letter storage spots within Zephyrus! Fortunately, there are only 126 unique locations on our boat which we identify with the resulting and unique four-letter code. By way of example, VPAU indicates the unique storage location found in the Vee berth cabin, Port side, Aft, Under the seat. Here we keep a plastic tote of hose clamps under which we store the jumper cables. We also have a nearby VSAU which identifies storage under the seat in the vee berth opposite to VPAU wherein is a tote of hatch and portlight parts. On Zephyrus LSAL means Lazarette, Starboard Aft Locker which is where most spare lines, aft dock lines and the emergency tiller are stored. Deep at the bottom of LSAL one will find the seldom used fish filleting table. See Exhibit 4.

Once the totality of possible storage locations was known, we recorded the contents of each on a simple spreadsheet. This log is reviewed annually to determine if things have changed and if so, what needs to be updated. We currently have five named but unused storage locations aboard. These are less convenient than the ones in use but may be used later if we need additional space for stores needed on a longer cruise. In fact, there is one empty full boat width one in the vee berth cabin that is huge that has always been intended for a future bow thruster or full-sized water maker. Currently it is empty but could have a couple scuba tanks in it, if that makes more sense down the road.

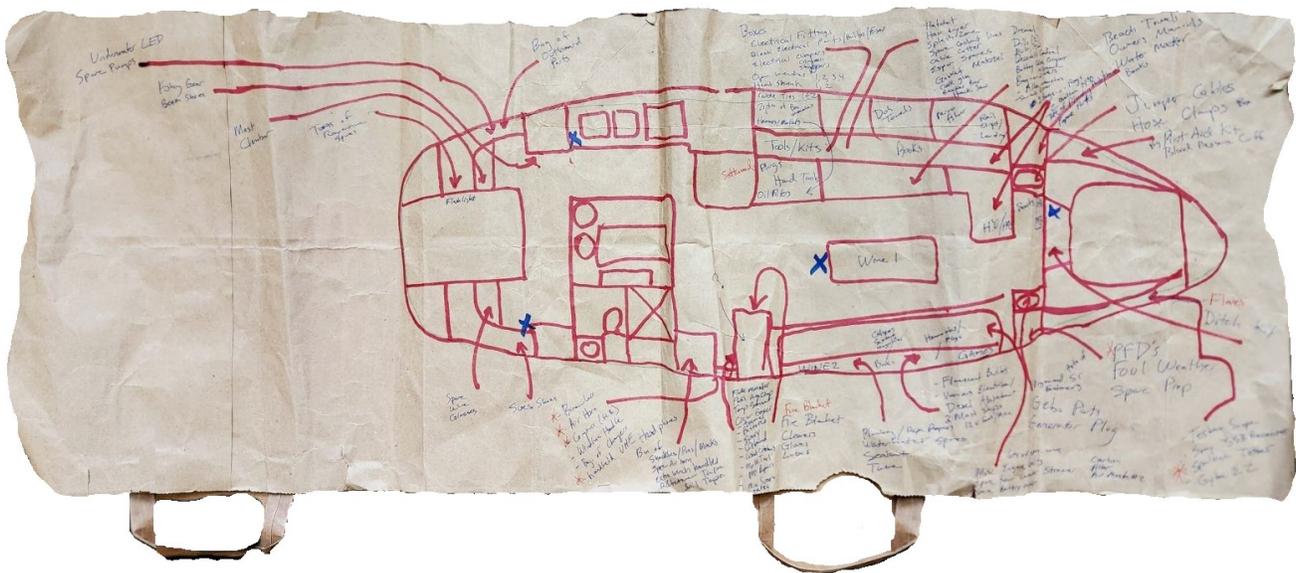


Exhibit B

It helps that everything on the boat belongs on the boat, has a place on the boat and stays on the boat, even when not in immediate use. When we moved ashore to a tiny rental beach house a couple of years ago, we decided that we really liked the boat being fully stocked and outfitted as is and ready to use. Zephyrus remains our primary residence; it’s also our vacation house. Instead of moving all of the galley wares, tools, clothes, toiletries, food, etc. back and forth to the tiny cabin, we simply said, “we can do without this, or we will replace that with a second set that will stay in the cabin. Moving “ashore” was easy after five years of simplistic boat living and the boat remains shipshape, ready to go. When we use the boat we travel lightly, bringing a current book to read, maybe a laptop, a few fresh clothes, or not, and a bag of fresh groceries to consume. Selfishly, our boat is only for us to use but it remains ready for us to use. When we are done cruising, we secure the boat, give it a cleaning and then

generally with one trip up the dock we take off the garbage and a dirty clothes and other personal effects that we will need before our next return. Because it is easy, the fridge on the boat stays freshly stocked and ready, just like in the cabin. If something breaks while we are out, not only do we generally have the spare parts to fix it, but we also have the correct tools to address most issues without panic or having to be reminded the hard way that the cordless drill is not available. Zephyrus is an older boat after all in the lifecycle stage where stuff routinely breaks or requires repair. We know this and we plan for it to avoid weekend ruining surprises.

How-To Steps:

One rainy day while messing about the boat while waiting for the Seattle rain to clear, I decided to do it; the first step was to tear open a grocery bag and draw a rough, inside floor plan of Zephyrus. Then I placed it on the unfolded table in the settee, proceeded to open each of the storage compartments and write down the contents (Exhibit 2). Then I rolled it up and thought about it. Eventually it occurred that it would be easy to download the floor plan of our boat from the internet, which I did. Then I opened it up in a drawing program on my PC and started thinking about how I could identify each space and its contents in a visually logical way. After a few iterations, the method I described above became clear. I sketched the four-letter location codes with their related components, fine-tuning as it progressed. It was mentally challenging yet fun, immediately rewarding and then the unnecessary gear started coming off the boat.

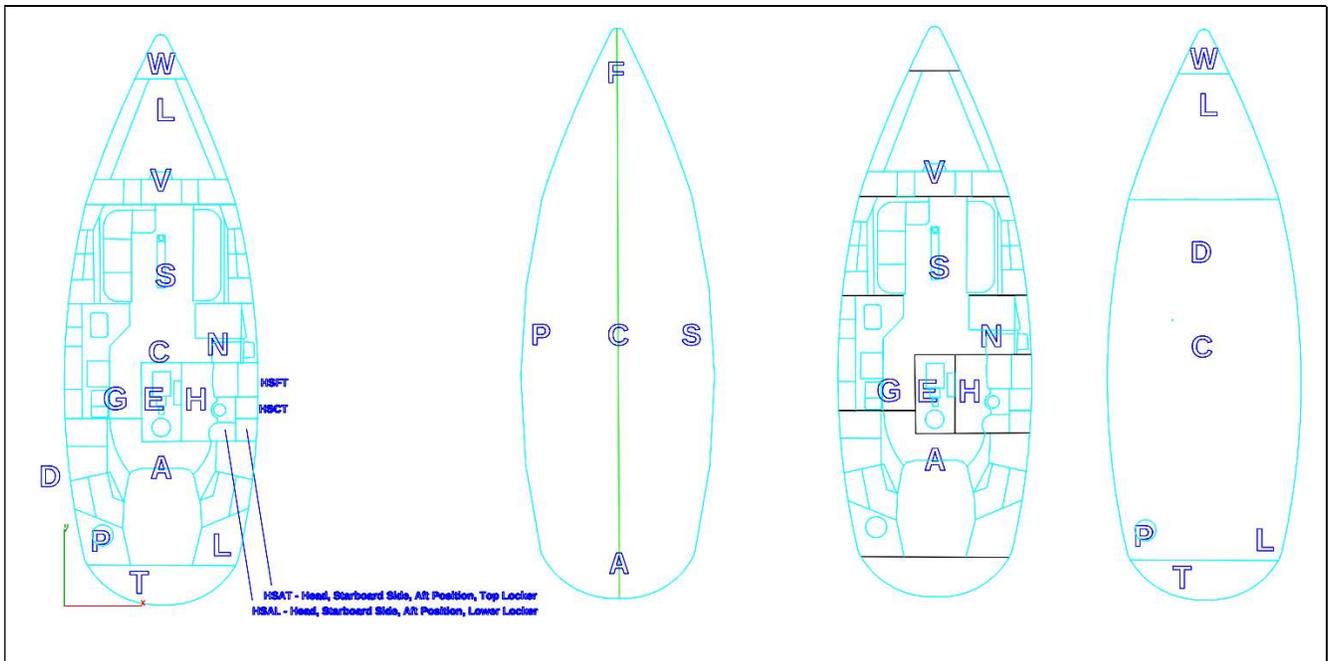


Exhibit C

Once drawn, I shared the concept with some friends. One said, “Why bother? Chaos is inevitable on a boat” to which I replied, “...if you keep your boat like a hovel.” Another said, “Jeff, I’ve been boating exactly like this for 30 years and I already know this. You don’t need to tell me!”, while others saw that a bit of up-front work and organization would have immediate benefits in a tidier, more usable, and ultimately safer boat. Others recognized that the methodology would work well for boats 20 feet in length to 200 feet though the boats they had in mind would have a unique set of storage codes in many ways quite different, but along the same concept. One said, “I see where you are going with this,” suggesting it would be a requirement for offshore or long-distance cruising where space is a premium and self-reliance is required. An online user suggested that I use a label maker to make labels not only

to permanently identify each storage compartment, but to make several more to place on the contents, such as tools, to indicate where they belong. That seemed beyond my scope, however, Ben, who runs Bainbridge Sailing charters said, “I’m going to do that and make a couple extras to include all my safety gear and locations such as through hulls, first aid kits, radios, placards, barf bags and fire extinguishers. Maybe I’ll even include the expiration dates on the stuff that needs to be renewed.” Why not?

VEE BERTH (sample)

VPFC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Primary red First Aid kit</i> • <i>Blood pressure cuff kit</i> • <i>Backup LED mini-lantern</i> 	VPCM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various lengths of Red and Blue PEX • Spare forestay
VPCF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sue’s sea/deck boots • Jeff’s sea/deck boots 	VCFM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMPTY-Reserved for future watermaker
VPAU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jumper cables • Tote of misc sizes of hose clamps 	VCCB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to depth transducer • Access to speed through the water transducer • Sponge and ladle
VPAT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Survivor 6 hand operated watermaker</i> • Beach towels • Raymarine owners manuals • Bavaria owner’s manual • Volvo MD22 owner’s manual • Other owner’s manuals • Other books 	VCCF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>USCG Documentation Number</i> • <i>Fire Extinguisher (1 of 4)</i> • <i>Yellow ACR Ditch Bag</i> VSCU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Gallons of store-bought water (2023)

Italics/underline indicates safety or emergency items

Exhibit D

After nearly sixty years, Gil is still our wise, next-door neighbor on the beach and our cabin, his cabin and our boat remain shipshape. By following this methodology, the resulting set of documentation will be unique for every boat and owner. We find that it is good to annually sit down together and make sure we are both aware of what is aboard and what we don’t have or just don’t need. For now, we continue to use Zephyrus in our familiar home waters. Changes to both our documentation and the related accumulation are now minor and we see no reason to upgrade to a bigger boat. Candidly, my car and our dock box are disaster zones (part of the plan!) full of un-homed and unwelcome boat supplies, but our boat is not. One unforeseen benefit is that our hull’s painted water line is about 2 inches above the actual outside water, probably because we have only what we need to peacefully enjoy our shipshape sailing yacht, Zephyrus.

About the author. Jeff, and his wife Sue Adams, are homeported on Bainbridge Island, Washington, where they operate Torrid Marine, makers of yacht quality marine water heaters and other systems designed to make yachting more comfortable.