

CRUISING: THE GOOD LIFE AFLOAT

They can be found in almost any yacht harbor - the boats that always look as if they are ready to leave. Out among the perky day-sailors, the fuel-hungry motor yachts, the tall and graceful "gold-platers" of the racing fleet, they bob impatiently at their moorings. They want to be gone.

However they vary in size and construction, they all have important qualities in common. Their rigs and hull designs have made small con-

pers are cruising men, more concerned with the unchanging requirements of the sea than with the changing compromises of racing-handicap rules. They are satisfied with what are essentially old-fashioned ships, old-fashioned gear. Beached though he may be by responsibilities ashore, the cruising sailor can still feel a certain smugness about his boat. She can take him across an ocean whenever he is ready to go.

Just a few years ago, the men who owned boats like these were usually looked upon as oddballs, dropouts or dreamers ready to up-anchor and take off for the islands—or at least talking about it. They were incurable eccentrics, antiquarians putting in their time refurbishing relics of another age.

Suddenly those old-fashioned boats and their gear seem strangely up-to-date. The cruising sailors seem less eccentric. The boats they have preserved have become objects of envy: now even the weekend yachtsman want something like them and every month the boating magazines fatten with advertisements of new cruising sailboats coming off the drawing boards and production lines. On the water, at least, yesterday's tastes have become today's styles.

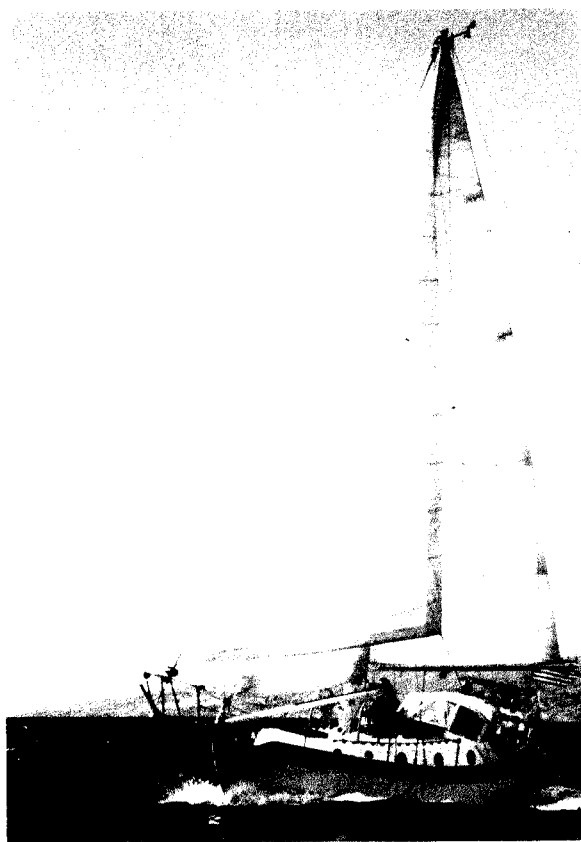
In an era when too many boat builders turn out fresh styles, fresh models with the alacrity of car manufacturers, the new trend is to try to capture a piece of the past. More and more builders have come on the market with big, beamy cruising boats. Their advertising copy suggests that what every cruising man wants—and needs—is all the comforts of a small apartment crammed

into a fiberglass hull. But for all the contemporary gadgetry—the refrigerators, the hot-and-cold running water systems, the all-weather carpeting—the lines of the new boats are really close copies of the sturdy old designs in the color pictures opposite.

The husky cutter *Quimera* shown sailing home from Catalina, is at once the newest and the oldest of this cruising fleet. Her hull is a classic: its lineage traces back to a 19th century naval architect named Colin Archer who was commissioned to design a boat for harbor pilots going out to meet incoming sailing ships. Archer developed a double-ended hull capable of standing offshore for weeks at a time, then making for home shorthanded in steep northern seas.

Over the years, the basic hull has been refined into a modern cruiser by a succession of naval architects. "Colin Archers" as the boats are still called, have, circled the globe. *Suhaili*, *Eric*, *Thistle*—their names are familiar in far ports. The latest incarnation, the Westsail 32 is a roomy, teak and fiber-glass version built in Costa Mesa, California by a young refugee from electrical engineering named Snider Vick. With his small production line and fierce devotion to quality, Vick is determined to give fits to competitor whom he calls "the plastic pop-out-people"—the mass producers of lightly built fiber-glass boats, few of which are suitable for long-term living aboard, to say nothing of ocean cruising. As testament to Vick's success, a small armada of Westsail cruisers is already fitting out for round-the-world voyaging.

Freedom from frills. Like Thomas E. Colvin, the naval architect who designed and built the lovely junk rigged schooner *Gazelle*, the



cessions to the years. They are built for simplicity and safety, for ease of maintenance and sea-kindliness, and the comfort of their crews. Near by their neighbors wait for an afternoon sail to a convenient cove, a chase around the buoys or an ocean thrash that will strain the speed and strength of modern racing machines. But these are purely cruising boats. Their skip-

men who drew the lines of all these boats are men whose restless imaginations were shaped by the same traditions that molded Colin Archer—the traditions and demands of the sea. Simplicity, sturdiness and utter freedom from frills are the hallmark of their work.

Teakbird, Bolero and Walloon are all from the board of veteran designer

whom Garden has given long-keeled boats that are easy on the helm. Not on ocean passages when a snug Garden rig teaches the enjoyment of what the designer calls "chasing off before the wind under boisterous conditions"

"The person we are building for," says Tom Colvin, "is a member of a minority group: he is that one out of a

thousand sailors who cannot find what he wants in the catalogues of the big builders." He is a man who shuns complex modern gear that he cannot service himself.

He can work with rope or wire or canvas and the sailmaker's palm

sits comfortably in his hand. His compass and sextant are instruments to be treated with care and reverence. He can read the tides and the weather, and he knows the movements of the navigator's stars. His library is charts and pilot manuals. His bible is the American Practical Navigator by Nathaniel Bowditch, a one-volume encyclopedia of seagoing wisdom that was first published in 1802 and remains a remarkably complete selection of everything a seaman needs to know.

Minority groups of cruisers may be but their numbers are growing steadily. As summer ends, their boats will be following the season—Running down the trade winds from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean or heading out to the warm atolls of the South Pacific. At home, the new cruisers are getting ready to join them. Lightning designer Len Thornback and his wife have already

moved aboard their Westsail at Newport Beach, Calif. "In a year or so we'll simply leave. First the Mediterranean and the Baltic. After that, we don't care where."

In harbors on both coasts, families are getting ready to leave. Even school-age children are no deterrence. More and more of them are taking the same correspondence courses that cater to children of diplomats and military personnel in remote foreign posts. At quiet Bahamas anchorages of an evening the youngster rowing the dingy across to a neighboring boat is likely to be looking for a friend working on the same study assignment.

Tom Colvin himself is one of that cruising minority. Gazelle was not built for a client, she was built for the Colvin family and she has taken them more than 10,000 miles in every weather. Her Chinese rig is the product of years of research and practical trial. For an experienced sailor like Colvin who first went to sea at 14 on a three masted schooner, the steel hull with its full battened sails represents just about the ultimate in versatility, strength and simplicity.

Like all proper cruising vessels, Gazelle gives her crew the basic necessities of privacy and comfort. To enjoy this kind of life you need remarkably little money beyond the cost of the boat providing that you are more than a competent sailor. Cruisers need to be boat builders, mechanic, electrician, navigator, sail maker, rigger, doctor, lawyer, pilot and philosopher."



William Garden. A boat by Bill Garden, says one of his admirers, "always seems to fit into the tradition of the Grand Banks fishing schooner and the opium clipper." Odd combination? Not for the offshore sailor to

With her teak decks, hefty fiber-glass hull, and her sea-kindly lines, this Westsail cruiser is a happy combination of blue water traditions and modern building techniques. She can take her crew anywhere in the world.