

Winter Reading – A few Good Books

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I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book. (Groucho Marx)

It's cold out there! If you're staying off the water, think about abandoning the tube (or flat screen) and reading a book on boating. A few good books are listed below. Some are pure enjoyment; the others will improve your boating skills.

Navigation Through The Ages, by Donald Launer (©2009, Paperback). This book is an excellent non-technical history of man's development of concepts, tools and techniques for navigation, from the Polynesians to today. It starts with very early navigation techniques (sailing a latitude, use of stars and wave patterns), covers the navigational progress of the Chinese, Arabs, and Europeans through the Age of Discovery, puts everything you learned in the USPS Piloting, Navigation, and Marine Electronics courses into historical context, and covers today's electronic navigation and emergency signaling systems. A good, non-taxing winter read!

The Nautical Sextant, by W. J. Morris (©2010, Hardcover). You have an old sextant, right? It might be your own, or maybe it's borrowed from the squadron. It's not working very well - maybe some backlash, lots of index error, the whole mechanism seems sticky, could even be it's been dropped and the index arm is bent! This is the book you need to set things right! Morris is a retired physician who collects and restores sextants and other fine measuring instruments. He's written not about how to use a sextant, but about how they are designed, how those designs have evolved over time, how they work, and how to bring any sextant to peak working order. He covers the full range of sextant design and repair with lots of color photos. He tells you when to adjust your sextant and what adjustments to make in what order. He explains how to repair your sextant if it's damaged, and provides the step-by-step process for disassembly, cleaning, restoration, lubrication, and reassembly. This book will give you all the information and confidence you need to get your sextant working superbly.

Modern Marine Weather, by David Burch (©2008, Paperback). I was frustrated with the USPS Weather course when I took it, because although it gives you a good introduction to how US weather systems work, it said very little about how to acquire and use that information while on your boat. This is the book I was looking for. It covers all the standard weather topics, but with a difference. Each chapter discusses, in addition to the normal weather material, how that material is relevant to you along the coast or offshore in your boat. It also gives lots of sources for forecast information, with good discussions of how to evaluate forecast relevance and forecast accuracy. There are sections on GRIB forecasts and QuikSCAT wind data, and where to get them, as well as 500mb forecasts and how to use them. The book is technical, but if you're

out on the water it will really improve your efficiency and safety. David Burch is a prolific author and the founder of the Starpath School of Navigation in Seattle. He has logged 70,000 miles at sea as a racing and cruising navigator, and has taught marine weather courses for more than 20 years.

The Barometer Handbook, by David Burch and Tobias Burch (©2009, Paperback). If you have a cruising boat, you may have a brass-cased barometer hanging on your forward bulkhead. And you may use it for some simple weather forecasting. But how accurate is it? How accurate does it need to be? Can you improve its accuracy? And are you taking full advantage of the information it provides? The Burches provide those answers. The book tells you all you'd ever need to know about the history of the barometer, what types of barometers are available, and how to select a new or used one. But the real meat of the material is the presentation of a calibration and error-correction process that can be used with almost any barometer (the exceptions being those with large random errors), and a description of the many ways your now-accurate barometer can be used to assess the accuracy of weather forecasts and support navigation decisions. Another excellent Burch book.

Yacht Design According To Perry, by Robert H. Perry (©2008, Hardcover). Bob Perry writes *Perry On Design*, in which he does a design analyses on several boats in each issue of *Sailing* magazine. He's a prolific designer, who's famous for his performance cruising sailboats. He designed the Valiant 40, Tayana 37, Baba 30, Passport 40, Saga 43, Nordic 44, Cheoy Lee 44, Tatoosh 51, and many other production and custom boats. He's a charter member of Cruising World's Cruising Hall of Fame. In this book, he talks about a cross section of his designs while telling the story of his career, describing how modern sailboats are designed and built, and discussing the evolution of the boating industry. Interesting stuff. But there's a bonus! Alternating with the biographical information are chapters on key areas of sailboat design: hull shape, rudders, keels, rig design, draft, stability, etc. There's some technical information, but most of the discussion is very accessible. If you want to understand how your sailboat works, and why it's designed the way it is, this is a great book.

Sloop, By Daniel Robb (©2009, Hardcover and Paperback). Dan Robb's family has a lot of history with *Daphie*, a Herreshoff 12½. The fifty-year-old wooden daysailer was deteriorating, unused, on a trailer in his cousin's driveway on Cape Cod when Robb took over. This book is the story of how Robb, a carpenter and author, ended up restoring the boat and, in the process, learning a lot about himself, about wooden boat restoration, and about the wooden boat culture that still exists in that part of Massachusetts. This is an entertaining read. You'll learn about classic wooden boat construction, and get a real feel for the people involved in keeping the industry going today.

You won't find these books (with the possible exception of *Sloop*) available at any of the local bookstores. But Amazon has them all, and I assume other online outlets do as well. Good reading!