

I never thought much about my husband's working library. Dick uses the narrow burning room on the first floor of our house as an office and, since he removed the large drafting table when he retired himself from designing sailboats, it has become a TV den for him and a repository for boating equipment and unassorted stuff.

Hovering above the stacks of boxes and file cabinets is a high bookcase that reaches to the ceiling and spans the width of the room. One day last summer, Dick decided it was time to clean up. I thought the bookcase was an odd place to start because it was the only neat section of the room, which was really a jumble of, dare I say, junk.

He started putting the books in boxes. "We really should get rid of these," he commented. "What's the best way? I would like them to go to someone who cares about sailing," he said.

We weren't successful last year when we tried to give away the file cabinet full of sailboat designs cut from boating magazines from all over the world. No library or yacht club was the least bit interested.

"Let's try selling this collection instead," he suggested.

"What do you have here?" I asked. "We should get a list together." Of course this being Sag Harbor, in five minutes, I had my friend, Annette who lives on Harrison Street on the phone. She has been selling books from a library she inherited.

"There's a site on the internet called ABE Books. Dealers from all over the country respond when queried about a book by title or author. They list the book by publication date and condition and give you their selling price. That part is so easy it's staggering," Annette confided. "However, if it's a valuable book, you have to go through it page by page looking for wear and damage. And, be certain if you call it a first edition. The game is time consuming and requires patience."

Not our strong point but we started this endeavor on a roll. Dick plopped two heavy boxes down by my computer desk and I started cataloging in a random fashion. The

## OUR TOWN

BY JOAN TYOR CARLSON

# A Sea of Books

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first book out of the box was "The Complete Book of Pleasure Boat Engines" a nifty Prentice Hall first edition from 1980.

"This one sells for \$15," I shouted to Dick. I had to go to the sixth book before hitting a more lucrative tome: "The Gougeon Brothers on Boat Construction, Wood and West System," a 1980 entry which priced at \$75.

This news moved Dick to accelerate boxing the books, completely surrounding my desk with them - much like dinghies at our local dock. At this point, I remembered the Disney cartoon, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" (or was it "Fantasia"?), which had cute little Mickey dressed in a long gown and peaked hat, sweeping away water which was engulfing him. Maybe that is not accurate but the vision stays with me.

"Stop, stop," I yelled to Dick. "You're getting way ahead of me. Besides, I am getting tired. That's enough for now."

In the next day or so, I cataloged about fifty books dealing with matters marine from "Your Boat's Electrical System," \$13.50; "Weather for the Mariner," \$7; "Gipsy Moth Circles the World," \$2; "Repairs at Sea," \$18; the rather chilling "Where Seconds Count," \$8; "Ocean Racing Around the World," \$10; "Practical Principles of Naval Architecture," \$35; "Thirty-Odd Boats," \$85. And on and on including some large size books with staggeringly beautiful photographs of yachts under sail.

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Dick's collection comprises somewhere between 200 and 250 books. Although I never went beyond cataloging the original fifty, one thing became clear to us. These books should not be separated. This is Dick's personal and professional library which he collected and used in his fifty years of practice as a naval architect, including apprenticing in New York with Phil Rhodes and M. Rosenblatt.

As the only such naval architect on eastern Long Island for most of these years, Dick lived and practiced first in Shelter Island and then Sag Harbor. Since his work was more popular in England and its colonies, letters addressed to "Richard Carlson, Shelter Island, USA" would arrive regularly. He specialized in designing racing yachts and was a marine surveyor for all sorts of boats.

I have a fantasy. There are many dedicated sailors on Eastern Long Island who not only have beautiful yachts but also large houses with bookshelves to spare. What a wonderful post-Christmas present this collection would make from a loving wife to the captain who has everything but this unique, not to be duplicated, library. Or, a corporate gift to the CEO who sails. Or, one of you guys could just buy it for yourself.

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