



My Two HPs of Freedom

An outboard engine that packs less weight helps a crewmember pack on more experiences. **BY FAY MARK**

From across the floor of the 2007 Miami Boat Show, Russ Irwin, my husband, waved to me. We were picking up accessories for *New Morning*, our Chuck Paine-designed 54-foot sloop then under construction at Lyman-Morse. “Honey!” he called out. “Come over here and see if you can pick this up.” With curiosity, I obliged him, and I then quickly and effortlessly hoisted the two-horsepower Yamaha outboard. “Sold!” he said, with a big smile.

I now had what every woman longs for: her own outboard engine.

In the 11,000 miles we’ve traveled since leaving Maine, we estimate that

80 percent of the time we’ve chosen to use the two-horsepower engine on our 10-foot Zodiac inflatable rather than our more powerful Yamaha 15. Don’t get me wrong: We wouldn’t give up the 15; we love having the power. But more times than not, our Yamaha 2CMH (a model no longer available in the U.S.) sufficiently transports Russ, myself, trash, provisions, fuel, and, at times, two additional adults with ease and flexibility. We’re not going very fast, but in most anchorages, the need for speed in a dinghy is unnecessary, and our neighbors appreciate the reduced wake and noise.

Once we make landfall, I can easily deploy the two-horsepower Yamaha without any help from the captain.

My experiences with our two engines are quite different. What I love about the two-horse is its weight. When we travel from island to island, we typically remove the engine and place the dinghy on the foredeck.

When we arrive, we either place the dinghy in the water or strap it to the toerail alongside the hull. It’s not always our first priority to mount the engine on the dinghy. However, if I’m antsy and ready to head to shore but Russ isn’t, the Yamaha 2 is light enough for me to manage on my own. And if I need to pull the dinghy up on a shore, I can do it because the

RUSS IRWIN

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Elaine Lembo

overall weight is manageable.

I can't stress strongly enough how liberating it feels for me to know that I can come and go from the boat without assistance. I've met too many cruising women who must rely on their husbands to drive or launch the dinghy because the engine is too heavy or too powerful for them to do it alone.

I feel that way about our 15. On occasion, I do drive it alone, but it's not comfortable for me. Unless the wind and water state are relatively calm, it can be downright dangerous for me to take the dinghy out when the 15 is attached.

Just as important as its weight is the smaller engine's ease of operation. The fuel tank and engine are combined (eliminating the auxiliary fuel tank in the dinghy), the throttle is small and easy to control, the starter cord is easy to pull, the engine starts up effortlessly, and for the last three years, it's been consistently reliable, despite being forced to endure some challenging conditions.

The little engine had a harrowing experience in the Caribbean when *New Morning* was offshore between Barbuda and St. Barts. Sitting in the cockpit, Russ called down to the galley, where I was preparing breakfast, to ask if I knew where the dinghy was. That's a rather silly question, I thought. After all, how many places can you leave a dinghy when you're cruising? Twice we toured the perimeter of *New Morning*, but no dinghy. We were shocked to realize that it was gone.

Russ made a pan-pan call. We were still fairly new to cruising and didn't then know the value of listening to the morning nets. Within minutes of Russ' call, a response let us know that an announcement had been made that morning on the Coconut Breakfast Net that a dinghy had been retrieved six miles offshore of Barbuda. For the next 60 miles, Chris

and Kelly on *Verna Breeze*, a Gulfstar 50, would be pulling our dinghy and our trusty two-horse outboard to St. Barts. Russ and I sailed *New Morning* the next day into St. Barts, where we retrieved our runaway dinghy and profusely thanked Chris and Kelly.

Despite being thoroughly caked with salt, the dinghy and the outboard were both in fine condition. One pull of the

cord and it started right up.

I was relieved to know that my little engine was home, safe and sound. Now I'd be able once again to come and go with independence. What Russ may not have realized at the time of the boat show—or perhaps he did—was that my two HPs of freedom created freedom for him, too.

New Morning is now exploring French Polynesia.