

OWNERS' CLUB



The Davises list the Exumas (below), Nantucket and Charleston as perhaps their top three destinations so far on their 85ft Horizon Valiant



MY LIFE IN BOATS

DR RICHARD DAVIS

On the cusp of his second retirement, the owner of *Valiant* tells *Kate Lardy* why boats are a big part of his precious time

I grew up on boats. My parents always had a fishing boat out of Atlantic City and I was kind of like their deckhand. My wife, Val, started boating when she met me. After college and medical school, we looked for a practice near the water and moved to the North Shore of Long Island.

My dad bought us our first boat, a 12ft jet boat, but we soon realized that we needed something safer for our small children and moved on to a series of Sea Rays, from 33ft to 48ft. On our next boat, a 56ft Neptunus, which we had for 12 years, I did a lot of the work, including rebuilding both helm stations. That was what got me started doing mechanical work.

We sold that and custom-built a 67ft Marlow. When I retired from my practice as an ophthalmologist, I told Val I wanted to move on board full-time, and she said, "OK, but we need a bigger boat."

In Annapolis on our Marlow, I stalked a guy sitting on the back of his Horizon drinking coffee. Finally, I said, "Excuse me, can I talk to you about your boat?" He's now a good friend of ours. He has a Horizon E88 and loves it. He took me on, we crawled around and we ended up building this E81 with Horizon. I appreciate how they prioritize accessibility for service

and maintenance, and they've been nothing but terrific. If I were to build another boat, I'd have a hard time looking at another company.

Right now, we have a really good situation because Val and I run the boat, which is 85ft overall, with just one crew for cleaning. I'm the captain and I do most of the maintenance. I love projects. The boat provides me with an endless source of stimulation and entertainment. A job might pop up that I have no idea how to do, but then I get to figure it out. If I can't do it, I'll find the right guy who'll teach me. I've learned how to do so many things.

When we took delivery three years ago, we moved on board full-time for a year and a half, then I started a new business; now we are here about 70 percent of the time. After a day or two at the house, we can't

wait to get back on the boat. We've learned to live with a lot less stuff. I did have to give up my pinball machines – they're still in the house, I just don't get to see them as much – but I'm happiest on the water.

Waking up on the boat is great; the view is always spectacular and the dogs like it.

We've been all over the place: Key West, the Exumas, Charleston, Nantucket, Boston... We bought a dock – which incidentally came with a house – on the North Fork of Long Island. After November 1, Sunset Harbor Yacht Club in Miami Beach is our home port. It's really a special place with like-minded people.

Next month I'm selling my business, merging with a company that's planning national franchises. They wanted me to be the national medical director, but I said no; that would take me away from my boat too much. I'm getting back to being retired and my QTR – quality time remaining. ■

"I'm happiest on the water. Waking up on the boat is great; the view is always spectacular and the dogs like it"

The light and airy interior of *Valiant*. Richard and wife Val (below) have learned to live with less stuff

