CATALINA 350 INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



C350 Association
Technical Editor
Bill Templeton

It is with both buyers and sellers remorse I tell you that we (Pat and I) have traded our beloved 350 in on a 2019 C385. I know, I just completed a commentary on why we did not need to move to another boat...but, we volunteer at the Catalina owner's table at the Annapolis Sailboat Show each October and stare at all the new models, poke around on them....chat with Gerry, Sharon, dealers and owners ....finally just could not resist the prospect and challenge of a new Catalina.... Hey, it's not like I went to another brand....I'm not that crazy! Many of the modifications I have made on our 350 since new (2005) and written about in this column over the last several years I will be doing again on the 385. I will miss the 350 group....I even asked Gerry Douglas if I bought a 385 could I stay in the 350 group.....LOL. I still have articles in the queue for the Summer and Fall issues of Mainsheet but if any of you are interested in stepping into the "Tech Job" don't hesitate... it's great fun. So watch out C385ia, I have a bunch of stuff I will send you as I do with our new boat much of what I did with the 350.

This quarter I submit to you Bruce Whyte's article sub-titled SSB on the Cheap. **–Bill Templeton**, pbtemp6816@verizon.net

SSB For $1,500? No Way. Maybe.

I sailed the ARC 1500 in the year of "Irene". ARC required every boat to have a working SSB for daily scheds and contact with the organizers and other boats. We had a new system that was allegedly installed and calibrated. It was not working when the crew arrived. I was told, as navigator, to fix it but despite my incredibly superior ability to read a manual, found it impossible to get running. Our neighbor, who had the same system, could not get it running. "Fix it on the way" was the skipper's retort as we cast off lines and set sail for Tortola. How we could do that without communications was a mystery to me.



We twice had contact with another rally boat, the very same one that had tried to fix our SSB. Our contact with them was via VHF, meaning they were within about 30 nMiles. They relayed our position to the organizers who had been worried about the duration of time without contact. Apparently the SSB was finally fixed about 4 months and several technicians later.

I decided then and there that if I ever left the coastal waters of any country I would have a working SSB that I could actually use competently. But the entire project was daunting. A new language had to be learned. More equipment to be bought. What pieces. Where to put them. How to hook it up. At what cost.

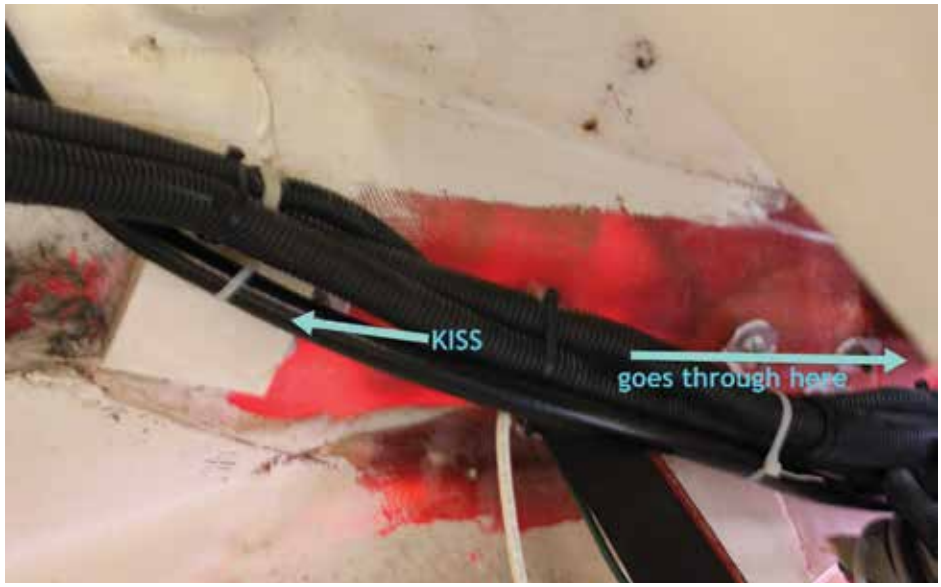
I met a global wanderlust sailor who had SSB consisting of second hand equipment and other odds and ends. This had worked properly across the Pacific and the Atlantic. After several liquid consultations I decided to give it a shot. I wrote down all the individual pieces needed on a napkin (where all new ideas were found). So, I hunted for all the pieces he recommended and found them over 6 months

A second hand iCom706MkII transceiver found on eBay. When I received the transceiver, I wired it up to the lawn mower battery to check it actually worked. All the lights came on but no transmission. I took it and the tuner to a local Ham store. They checked them both out, replaced 2 transistors in the transceiver, but otherwise, after $100 charge, declared them sound and good as new.

An SG-230 automatic tuner found by a friend in a chandlery in Virginia (who also vouched for the chandlery owner). After a trusting phone call, we negotiated a reasonable price and had it shipped home. It was tested with the transceiver as above and declared healthy. It was screwed onto a wooden backing plate that was glued onto the inside of the port aft hull high and out of the way (Figure 1).

A Ground Plane (ground, counterpoise). This was one component I was most concerned about. Did I have to lay copper





tape from one end of the hull to the other? I had heard of some external hull options. Was there another way. I came across the KISS system and checked their specifications and claims (which were excellent). This consists of a 10' long piece of semi-flexible cable that is about 1.5" in diameter and which contained multiple lengths of antennae inside. It could allegedly be placed virtually anywhere on the boat. So we bought that. The plane was run in the space used by all the wiring running from the breaker panel to the aft of the boat high on the port side. It left about 2 feet in the aft port swim locker that had to be gently curved out of the way of everything else there (Figure 2).



The actual antenna was the final piece. Did we want to cut and insulate the backstay. No, it would have cost more ($1,500 minimum quote) than we were prepared to pay for the entire set up. Did we want a 23 foot antenna fixed to a side/rear rail. No, we would look like the Clampetts sailing into town. So after extensive research, we opted for the GAM split backstay antenna. The antenna slid over and up the port side split backstay. It starts about 4 feet below the backstay split and finishes about 6 feet below the mast head. It is fixed by several plastic ties only. It connects to the tuner via a cable through the transom. This required a bucket lift for 15 minutes to affix it (Figure 3).

So, we had the pieces, they were now connected. I had elected to have the main unit of the transceiver hidden behind the breaker panel and connected to the front plate via a cable. The only other hardware needed was a new 20A breaker to fill a spare slot for the SSB.

Now to the final piece: does it work. Once powered on and after some searching of the internet, I was able to listen to Canadians talking about Canadian stuff, truckers across the entire continental US talking to their friends and offices and others I could not understand.

So it works. We have not gone up in smoke. Let's hope we never need to use it! But it looks really good on the instrument panel also.

–Bruce Whyte, Aussie Mate Hull # 357

- iCom 706 MkII transceiver..... $400
- iCom front plate mount..... $30
- iCom cable to front mount $130
- Repair..... $100
- SG-230 automatic tuner $155
- KISS ground poise $149
- GAM antenna..... $450
- Hire of bucket $75
- 20A breaker..... $28

Total Cost..... $1,517