

Self Reliance Journal

In this latest incarnation of a survivalist magazine, the two strands of the self-reliance movement are mixed up here with the glee of cognitive dissonance. You've got your pure survivalists, who run away from things (the govint, Y2K, society in general), and now you've also got the greens, who run to society (rural values, ecotopia). So in one issue you'll get articles on solar-powered yurts, making your own soap, and the best "combat flashlights" used to temporarily blind an assailant, or software for training your long-range rifle skills. In between is material on outfitting four-wheel drives, diving for legal abalone, AC inverters, building your own home and other matters of living close to the land away from the crowd.

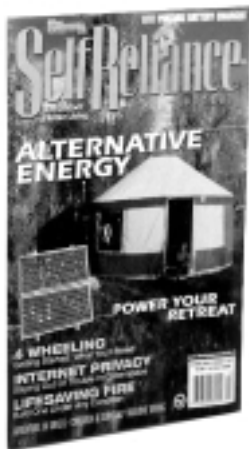
—KK

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Power Generator Lanterns

The new Liberty Power Generator unit is attached to the top of a lantern and heat from the lantern's flame produces enough electricity to run a portable AM/FM/short wave radio for as little as 1 cent per hour, providing a valuable alternative to battery power for radio communication or other electric needs. The generator has no moving parts to wear out, no batteries and needs no external power source, only the heat from the lantern's flame.



Handmade Houseboats

Oh, it's an ancient yearning. I lived on a houseboat once; you definitely need more than a log raft. But you don't need a million dollars more. The techniques here rely on modern materials (barrels and composting toilets), and cover all aspects of building and maintaining a floating cottage, mindful of the constant threat that constant water presents. In my experience, however, the main hurdle is not construction, but finding a place to dock. If you have a location, you can build it.

—KK

Handmade Houseboats Independent Living Afloat

Russell Conder
1992, 230 pages
\$19.95
McGraw-Hill
800-822-8158



Are You Crazy?
This book is about how to build your

own houseboat, and thereby sidestep the twin ogres of twentieth-century survival: mortgages and landlords. If you can hold these pages open, dear reader, then you have the manual dexterity to hold a hammer. If you can do that, then armed with this book and a smidgen of imagination, and at least a little gumption, you can build your own floating home, and be comfortably ensconced inside it, within a few weeks.

Steel barrels are the cheapest option; however, they will eventually rust away. Where wind and water meet, there is enough readily replaced oxygen being thrown promiscuously about to equip the intensive-care unit of any hospital. Oxygen is one of the most corrosive elements known, and it will attack steel houseboat barrels with glee. Not only do the drums deteriorate, but flakes of rust fall into the mud and sand, poisoning the benign environment where minuscule creepy-crawlies used to live, before the kamikaze debris started to rain down. If you have acquired a houseboat with steel drums, they'll undoubtedly need replacing soon. If you are building a new house and choose steel for reasons of economy, you are simply putting off the painful necessity of opening your wallet and buying plastic barrels, which will last as long as the houseboat does.



Figure 2-6. Barrels beneath a raft frame support the 54-foot houseboat shown in Figure 2-7.

Ordinary plastic barrels are readily found, and they are strong and durable. Due to their rounded shape, they will support the weight of a house, on the shore or afloat. The plastic barrel compresses as load is applied; that is, it transfers the load away along its curve, rather than attempting to support the weight in one place and then breaking, like a flat surface will. All a plastic barrel requires in the way of consideration is that it be placed out of, or protected from, the direct rays of the sun: Ultraviolet light will eventually weaken the material and cause it to become brittle. This should not be a problem with houseboats, for the barrels are placed underneath the raft, in the shade.

Houseboats can be designed to float in as little as 6 inches of water, so finding a suitable site should not be a problem.

Enclosed is a photo of my little 18'x7' houseboat. Designed by William Atkin in the 1940s, she was built in 1985 by David Scarborough of Rock Hall Boats: cedar-planked, fiberglassed to the waterline, canvas-covered plywood deck, plywood house, powered by a 9.9 outboard. I had her built as a weekend retreat, but before completion, I had a stroke. When I recovered enough to live alone, I moved to the St. Johns River in Florida and have lived aboard since 1987. (Beats living in a nursing home.)

