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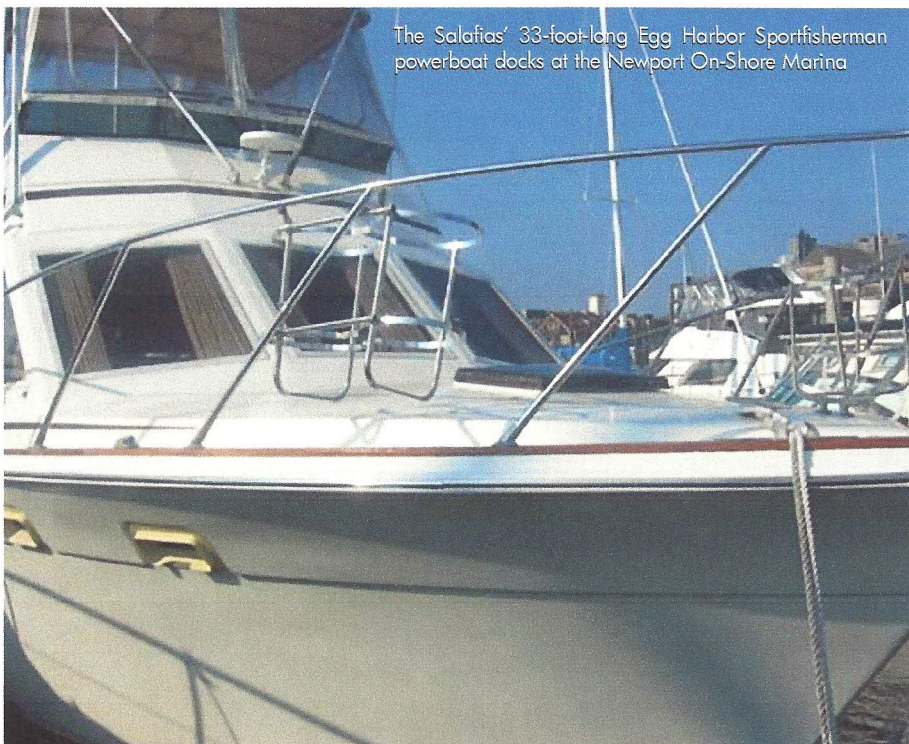
One Newport Couple
Calls Their Boat Home

by Helen McKenna

Joe and Marlane Salafia aboard the *m & em*, where they live for up to half the year



The Salafias' 33-foot-long Egg Harbor Sportfisherman powerboat docks at the Newport On-Shore Marina



Joe and Marlane Salafia think closet space is overrated — for the most part. Of course, when you live in an area just 33 feet long, every amenity needs to be considered. If you ask them, however, there's nowhere else in the world they'd rather be.

Living aboard the *m & em*, their beloved Egg Harbor Sportfisherman powerboat, for nearly half the year since they bought the meticulously maintained beauty in 1989, the Salafias have adjusted to both the spoils and challenges of living on the water. "Being on the boat is a unique experience," says Joe. "The rocking motion, it's nice and calm ... Once you get used to it, it's the best sleeping that you'll ever have." Marlane concurs. It's like "sleeping in a cradle," she says. The couple calls the earliest hours of the day "silver morning," when gulls sweep across the saltwater and the gentle lapping of soft swells ring out a cacophony of mast rigs nearby.

The *m & em* ties up at the Newport On-Shore Marina, a private, 65-slip dockominium located on the harbor in the heart of the City by the Sea. The Salafias have been there since the marina's inception, with Joe serving on the board. While the facilities have always been adequate, renovations completed this year include state of the art durable docks and, much to Joe's delight, cable television. "We actually have 200 channels," he says giddily. "Last year, we only had a channel and a half that we could barely even get." The flat-screen television



The Newport On-Shore official flag.

aboard the *m & em* is just part of the media center inside the boat's main salon, which also contains the galley and air-conditioned dining area/living space. The two use the dockminium's clubhouse for outdoor grilling (it's unsafe to grill while still on the dock) and Marlane says there's plenty of room in the galley to slice and dice veggies and prepare pastas and more. Most evenings they dine in the fresh air of the stern of the boat, and on occasion, sip cocktails on the fly-bridge, where they enjoy stunning, uninterrupted views. Ample wood cabinetry stores their dry goods and sundries while the soft carpeting underfoot and custom window dressings lend a welcoming, homey ambiance.

Down below, the portside bunk offers accommodations for two, albeit semi-tight quarters. It was once the place where their daughter Emily and son, also Joe, would lay their heads. But today, Joe and Marlane are relishing the sentimental twist of six-year-old Dean, Emily's son, making it his own. "He sleeps on the top bunk. He started on the lower bunk, but when he found out his mom slept on the top bunk, he said, 'Pop, I'm sleeping on the top bunk this year!'" beams Joe. The unexpectedly spacious v-berth fills in to form the equivalent of a queen-size bed with numerous drawers for storage tucked underneath. "Fortunately we're both short," jokes Marlane, "so it works out quite well." Decorated with delicate hand-towels and with a full-size shower, the head — boat lingo for bathroom — is not much different than what you would find on land, save for the portholes.

How does the *m & em* compare to your standard landlubbing abode? It's all about location, location, location. "It's Newport; it's party central, and you can have that if you want to, or you can come down here and not even hear it," says Marlane. "You don't even know it's there."

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Joe adds, “Sometimes, we’ll be here on a Sunday, and people will come for a visit and say, ‘Wow, can you believe how crowded and noisy it is up there?’ And it’s like, ‘Well, jeez, where?’” Marlaine says that an added bonus is that the temperature down on the docks is generally much cooler than it is just a stone’s throw away on bustling Thames Street.

Most dockominium tenants spend a few days a week down at the boat, though a few other neighbors are also live aboards as much of the year as possible. “For the most part, people come down on the weekends, but once they’re here, it’s a party on the dock,” laughs Joe. In fact, it’s the people surrounding them that has made the past two decades so extraordinary, the Salafias say. “The thing I like the most about it is that we have such a nice little community here,” says Marlaine. “Every house we ever lived in, you know you don’t really get to know your neighbors that much, but here, we are on and off each other’s boats all the time.”

Joe says everyone knows each other and that the tight-knit seafaring neighbors go to dinner together and socialize both in the height of the season and when their vessels are dry-docked.

“Now we even get together in the winter,” says Joe. “We ride down to New Jersey, drive up to New Hampshire... We’ve become such close friends. These are my best friends. I think you’ll find that almost anybody who lives aboard has that same view, the camaraderie of people together. It’s a lifestyle, it really is, and I think everybody feels that way that lives on a boat.”

The Salafias’ boat is more than just a second home. It’s a ship of treasured sentiment. “We brought our children up on this boat,” Joe says with a gleam in his eye. “It’s like history repeats itself. His mother crabbed with a net — you know, when they use a net and get crabs off the bulkhead wall? So I think he caught the same crab — I think he caught the same crab his mother caught!”

The couple plans to live on the boat full-time after they retire. Until then, the Salafias enjoy their May through October address on the edge of the ocean. With the soft salt breeze in the air and the laughter of friends nearby, it’s not hard to see why Joe and Marlaine love the *m & em* so much. Looking out at Newport Harbor, Marlaine simply says, “It’s everything you could want.”