

# Becoming a Sailor

There are more efficient, faster, and economical ways to travel on the water, but none as rewarding as traveling under sail. After decades of being blown about, soaked, awed, teased, and satisfied, each time I set forth there is magic. For forty years it has stayed fresh and new, never failing to lighten my soul when I realize that through cunning and skill I have tricked the wind into moving my boat. There is nothing like it.

And that is what I hope to share with you in this book. Through these drawings and meager words I hope to entice you into another world. The world of the sailor.

Anyone can learn to sail. That's easy enough. In fact there are books that will show you how to sail in a weekend. And I'm sure you're capable of doing it. But there is more to sailing than . . . well, than just sailing. By its very nature sailing is slightly enigmatic and requires abstract thought. You can't just press a button and go wherever and whenever you like. It takes effort. Which in turn necessitates a certain amount of involvement. And this involvement is what being a sailor is all about.

After a few times out on the water you will see for yourself that there are many who sail but few who are sailors. You will also find that by the mere fact of commanding a boat, no matter how modest it may be, you will be hailed as Captain, or Cap'. It's a nice touch of nautical etiquette and a step up in station for most of us. But I'd rather be called Sailor any day.

A sailor is one who can handle a vessel of almost any type quietly and competently. He, or she, can read the water, the current, the waves, the clouds, and even the smells. The sailor, like any good craftsman, is at home with the tools

of his trade and the elements he works in. Becoming a sailor takes time (more than a weekend, I can promise), and it takes work. But the time will pass all too swiftly, and the work will seem like pleasure.

Is it worth the effort? Years ago I read about an old man who enjoyed working his small sailboat up and down a narrow river. His skill in handling the boat impressed the writer, who one day asked him why he sailed. The old man said that he first became a sailor for the pleasure it seemed to promise, but soon found it to be work mixed with small doses of fear. He almost gave it up right at the start. But before long the problems were overcome or in some manner dealt with. From then on, he said, the true rewards of sailing—patience, philosophy, self-respect, and the mastery of time—became evident. To him, these were the pleasures that becoming a sailor promised and eventually fulfilled.

Now it's your turn, and I envy the start of your adventure.

David

