



The Swan 47

L.O.A.	47.9'	Draft	7.8"
L.W.L.	36.2'	Ballast	15,500 lb.
Beam	13.8'	Disp.	32,400 lb.

cushion as an approved alternative, and forcing millions of boatmen who had been relying on seat cushions to buy the more expensive device. PFD manufacturers won't mind a bit.

34
July
1981

The three BSAC committees met after completing their assignments, and it appeared little had been deleted from any regulation. Even industry members were happy to retain technical requirements, fearing competition from lower grade products if mandatory standards were revoked.

Admiral Parker thanked all of the participants, saying the Coast Guard "sure got its money's worth," and adding that his staff had a lot of reviewing to do when it got back to Washington.

At dinner that night someone commented that many controversial regulations had been left in place.

"Well, you had your chance to make them recommended instead of mandatory, and you blew it," remarked a writer who had served a term on BSAC.

Across the table an industrialist grinned. "Anarchist!" he said. — *Carl Sheppard.*

THE IMPERFECT BIRD — Before anyone alive can remember, the swan was the classic bird of stately beauty and grace, often noted in prose and verse. But not all of them were as perfect as delineated as we can attest from memories of one old and choleric cob who very successfully made a small lake his private domain by low level attacks on any human who ventured on his

waters. The drumming of his wings on a cringing back were near equivalents to blows from a baseball bat. We remember them all too clearly.

Nonetheless, it is an apt designation for a boat, and one peculiarly fitting for the Swan 47 that I have been sailing and crewing aboard off and on for some time. She carries the name *Toscana*, the Italian for "Tuscany," the ancient province of Italy that also has been noted in fable and verse. She is owned by Eric P. Swenson, who, as vice chairman and executive editor of W.W. Norton & Company, the book publishing firm, has a well developed and appreciative ear for the beauty of names.

The Swan 47 has a lot going for her. She has a good heritage; Sparkman & Stephens design, and built by Nautor in Finland. The hull is magnificently constructed. Not only does it not leak, but if any water does slop below decks, all lockers and separate bays have scuppers so the water drains promptly into her bilge sump, a hollow section of her keel, and does not splash about the living spaces as is so common.

As Rod Stephens has noted, you should be able to throw a bucket of water into the forepeak, one into the lazarette, and then sponge two buckets of water out of the deepest part of the bilge. It works on the Swan 47.

I did find cracks in the fore and after end of the keel which indicated not so much that the keel was falling off, as the boat had been bent upward from the keel. This is almost inevitable when you can pump four tons of tension into the backstay. With hydraulics, bendy

boats are just a fact of life.

Toscana handles extremely well under sail and is an able sea boat, as she demonstrated in sailing through the Fastnet gale with no real problems. Her 60-year-old owner routinely stood four-hour helm watches without strain, while elsewhere in the fleet younger helmsmen were changed every thirty minutes. Her rig during the worst of the gale was a triple reefed main and hanked on staysail, a good seamanlike rig.

Going to windward during our Caribbean cruise, we were able to balance her so precisely a number of times that we could lock the helm, sit there and watch the boat sail herself. As with all the modern short keel boats, though, *Toscana* on a broad reach with the spinnaker up is something of a handful. Broaching, when it breezed up, was all too common.

I guess all I have learned in sailing is wrong. I have spent the better part of half a century learning how to avoid broaching and trying to keep the mast straight. However, today I am told if the boat is not broaching regularly, she is not being pushed hard enough. And if the mast is straight, the sailmakers eye you as though you were wearing four heads, and tell you something is drastically wrong with the rig.

Off the wind, I certainly would prefer my own antique *lolaire* because she is much easier to steer and not that much slower. But I have to admit that handling *Toscana* in tight starting situations is little short of fantastic. She goes from hard on the wind to dead down wind by just heaving the helm down without touching the sheets. That is something that cannot be done on dear old *lolaire*, whose mizzen must be let run and main eased to execute the same maneuver.

The sail handling gear was excellent with good powerful winches and a cross link system which, unfortunately, was erratic. However, it must be remembered *Toscana* is four years old and has had a hard life. Perhaps the largest part of the trouble was that no one aboard quite understood how the cross link system worked, making it difficult to figure out how to fix it when it went adrift.

Although I am not a lover of hydraulics, I must say *Toscana's* hydraulic boom vang made sail handling extremely easy. Once the main was set and the hydraulic boom vang adjusted, sheets could be eased or trimmed and there was no need to touch the vang. This certainly made handling of the mainsail a dream. However, the crew had to be very careful to rig the main boom preventer when running down wind, because her boom is very low and in an accidental jibe could sweep half the crew overboard. Even sitting in the winch pit, you have to duck as the boom comes over. For a 47-footer, that is nothing other than ridiculous but it has been brought about largely by the IOR Rule, and no doubt accounts for the increasing number of head injuries of late.

The mainsail reefing system, on the other hand, was outstanding. Lines were permanently rigged, leading up through the boom, through stoppers down to self-tailing winches. Jiffy reefing was truly jiffy-reefing...two

good men could tuck in a reef in a couple of minutes and with three people on deck, it could be done in the bat of an eye.

Grooved headstays may be wonderful and efficient on a fully crewed top racing boat, enabling instant headsail changes, but on a cruising boat they are senseless. To hoist a headsail a minimum of four people are required: one on the sheet; one on the halyard; one feeding sail into the foil, and one on the helm...definitely not gear suitable for a short crewed cruising boat. Dousing a headsail in heavy weather is even worse. The problem is that when the sail feeds off the foil, it is attached only at the head, tack and clew, and invariably exhibits a compulsion to go overside and set itself as a highly effective sea anchor.

Below decks, the *Swan* is, in general, excellent with meticulously beautiful joinery work by Nautor. She has a standard S & S layout for both racing and cruising, with thoroughly comfortable pipe berths forward in the sail locker, which are great in port but, of course, out of use at sea. The forward head is big; hanging lockers are adequate; four berths in the main cabin...two pilot berths, two settees...a good galley, an exceptionally good chart table with the most comfortable navigator's chair I have used ever. It is slightly concave so that the navigator sits comfortably up to twenty degrees of heel. At greater angles, he can lean against the bulkhead on port tack, and on starboard tack there is a small removable leeboard to hold him in place. The navigator's nook is very well thought out except for the lighting that was so poor aboard *Toscana* that we installed a florescent light I borrowed from *lolaire*. The after cabin was excellent.

There are, however, two things I definitely did not like about the layout. First, the passageway to the after cabin ran through the galley with the door opening into the galley. That puts the cook in the middle of traffic which bodes ill for the coq au vin or even the baked beans. Such artists should be left undisturbed. A simple switching of the head and hanging lockers in the aft cabin not only would cure the situation, but also would put both heads on the port side, leaving the starboard free for swimming in port. As it is, one of them has to be secured.

The other point I can't understand is the *Swan's* solidly fixed main cabin table. For years, Rod Stephens has been one of the prime proponents for a good gimballed main cabin table. In fact, years ago they used to be called "mustang tables" after the one the Stephens' designed for Rod's famous NYYC 32 *Mustang*, which was a first class model.

Of course there are a couple of factors involved, and I guess the chief one is that when racing, the *Swan* carried so many sails that there is no place to stow them other than on the cabin soles. Aboard *Toscana*, the cabin table was taken out and left ashore just to give more sail stowage space and it ended up that bagged sails were stacked on the cabin soles from stem to stern and in layers to a couple or three feet deep.

When we later went cruising in the islands, we

35
July
1981

moved much of her sail wardrobe ashore since it wasn't really needed. Down there the wind is a fairly consistent twelve to fifteen miles per hour minimum and usually higher, so we carried the No. 2, 3 and 4 Genoas, a hanked-on staysail, mainsail, storm trysail and a couple of spinnakers. Had the genny been hanked on and had we had a No. 2 high cut jib to use with the staysail, no easier boat to sail with a very short crew could be found. Even so, it was fine. We had a wonderfully spacious main cabin...but no table.

Still another blemish on *Toscana* was her ventilation. Simply stated, it was horrible, and we suffered for it in the islands. Like many of the new designs, the Swan is neither flush deck nor does she have a trunk cabin, but is somewhere in between...a bubble deck, I suppose would be the most apt description. It is the new fad. Some like it. Some don't. In any case, the trend is to keep the deck clear, which is good, but at the expense of plentiful ventilators, dorades and ample hatches and skylights?

Several sailors have asked me what I expected from a boat built north of the Arctic Circle. True enough, I suppose, but few of them end up sailing there, and my suggestion is that the designers and builders spend a few weeks aboard the Swan in the tropics or even on the summertime Chesapeake, and see what happens. I'll bet a bent cotter pin there would be changes.

Toscana had one very bad deck leak, but it was one that could not be attributed to the designers or builders, but rather to the installers of her cross-linked winch system. On the port tack, it was only mildly annoying, but on starboard, it spewed water constantly and, of course, all over the single-sideband radio...somehow it seems inevitable that if there is a leak, it is one that affects the radio, the gear least able to take it.

The problem was that the cross linking had been brought straight across the bridge deck and then dipped down beneath the coaming via a universal joint. Those holes penetrated *Toscana's* interior but in her early years, were very well sealed. However, use had enlarged the holes and there were no stuffing glands to take up the slack, so *Toscana* had the equivalent of a couple of small fire hoses working whenever there was water flying around.

The refrigeration system was another horror, and one that could be laid to her basic design and construction. It was simply a case that no space had been worked in for the refrigeration in the original design so that not only was the equipment stuck here and there, but the basic insulation of the box was so poor that I suspected it had been done with old Finnish pine cones and needles rather than the four-inch foam the experts request, but seldom get.

Arctic Circle or not, there really is no excuse for that sort of lashup, and especially in a boat costing a quarter of a million dollars and actively marketed not only in northern Europe but all over the hot and cold world.

Anyway, in *Toscana*, the compressor unit was stuck down beneath the engine where it was practically

impossible to reach, and the condenser unit as well as the control box were stuffed under the sink in the galley, also practically inaccessible. It was such a rinky-dink solution that I chivvied Ken Grunert, whose system it is, about it. He told me he didn't have many alternatives, but that originally the access to the condenser and control box, at least, had been excellent...through the main cabin settee. However, after he installed the refrigeration system, some one else came along and installed a large Constavolt beneath the settee, completely blocking the refrigeration system. Obviously, that was another situation that should have been worked out on the drawing board when such gear can be shifted around and allowed for with a pencil and eraser.

The sum total, though, was that aboard *Toscana* we had to run the engine three times a day...at nine in the morning, five in the afternoon, and at midnight...to keep the box at its designed 42° and the deep freeze at 10°. Anything short of that, and the system, even with minimum opening of the box, would bounce up to the mid 40s in the deep freeze and 50s in the box, which is hardly refrigeration.

The Swan has other flaws, too, which we will go into in the next issue. At this point, let it be said the Swan 47 reminds us of a swan, but like some of them, she is an imperfect bird. — Donald M. Street, Jr.

RECALLS — Of the twenty-two firms listed in the latest recall list, issued in May by the Coast Guard and received here last month, eight were cited for problems with fuel, electrical and structural defects, with the remainder starting recall campaigns for various errors in certification and capacity labels and for level floatation problems.

Four of the eight began campaigns to correct fuel system standards violations including the Coloso Boat Corporation's 1981-built Sea Eagle 24, which was noted as having a hose clamp missing; J.R. Custom Marine's Sonic 33RS, also built this year, for lack of antisiphon protection; Offshore Marine, Inc., whose Performer 40, Signature 31 and Mirage 36 models built in 1979 and 1980, were listed with various fuel faults, and the Somerset Boat Company's houseboat, built this year, which was reported having a faulty fuel tank support.

Two of the same firms also had difficulties with electrical standards with the same models of Offshore Marine's boats being listed for unspecified problems with their navigational lights, and Coloso Boat's smaller Sea Eagle 22 being listed for using a sub-standard conductor size in that model. Also included in violation of electrical standards for lack of battery terminal protection were the 1981 Hydra-Sports 2400 models.

Two major firms started recall campaigns because of structural and equipment defects. These were Bangor Punta Marine, whose O'Day 19s, built in 1979 and 1980, had problems with hull and deck joint separation, and Mercury Marine's 25-hp outboard motors, carrying serial numbers from 5705532 to 5854016, were listed for defective steering handles.

be used. No time schedule has been announced for new surveys or new charts on the balance of the Atlantic or Gulf Coasts for the southeast U.S. chain 7980 and the plan does not devote one word to this problem.

What is particularly disturbing about the Federal Radionavigation Plan with respect to existing Loran chains is that no effort nor any funds are earmarked for immediate surveying and new charts for the at least two-thirds of our coastal waters that need it. Issuance of correction tables for the Great Lakes and Northeast are only band-aids. And the issuance of new charts for most of the Pacific Coast "sometime next year, maybe the year after" could be accelerated if the plan put a top priority rating on the problem. The same thing applies to surveying and issuance of correct charts for the Southeast and Gulf Coast and the immediate re-configuration of the Alaska chain.

A special committee of the Southern California Marine Radio Council recently was assigned to analyze the mariner's side of the plan, and to report its findings to Rear Admiral R.A. Bauman, chief of the Office of Navigation, at Washington headquarters of the Coast Guard. On the committee were Commander James Alexander, Eleventh Coast Guard District, Hal Davis of Trimble Navigation, and your reporter. Besides the total lack of funding for proper Loran surveys and charting, there were many other deficiencies we found in the plan.

Among them were: (1) total failure to recognize that radar has been for years and will continue to be the primary radionavigation aid of skippers when approaching harbors, within harbors and on the rivers during times of poor visibility, and that there are opportunities to improve its effectiveness; (2) that Omega now provides virtual world-wide coverage and by applying a modest amount of research and development, the few problems there are with the system could be eliminated or greatly reduced; (3) that the development of transponders to place on harbor approach and channel buoys and on coastal or river shorelines which are without prominent radar-reflecting characteristics could greatly enhance the value of radar as a navigational aid.

Page after page of the plan was devoted to justifying funds for new mini-Loran systems to cover harbors and rivers. There was not one word of evidence, however, from harbor and river pilots or the skippers of vessels to support the need for a Loran system in these confined waters. In fact, Rear Admiral J.P. Rizza, president of the California Maritime Academy, in a letter of comment on the plan dated May 26, 1981, hit the nail on the head by saying "I note with concern that the interest of the (marine) industry may not be adequately considered."

Getting farther into the plan revealed areas where millions would be spent for research and development to apply Loran to a wide range of land-based applications. It is stated that "there has been an increasing need for DOT to provide leadership in the implementation of technical and operational

evaluations of Loran-C and Navstar GPS in land navigation." Who determined that need is never documented. Instead the plan proposes research and development for land uses and breaks the effort into eight phases. The last three phases of the R&D is "What practical uses can state and local governments make of Loran-C," "Are state and local governments interested in using Loran," and "Can they afford Loran-C?" It seems to me that these should be the first considerations before a penny is spent on evaluating any other aspect. All of this applies to such land-uses as automatic-locating of taxis, buses, garbage trucks, ambulances, police cars, scenes of highway accidents and location of rural homes during census-taking.

The essence of the summation statements made by the SCMRC to the Coast Guard were these: (1) establish immediately, with top priority, the funding of surveys of present Loran coverage and the issuance of charts that mariners can use with confidence in the Coastal Confluence Zone; (2) initiate R&D programs to make Omega even more useful when beyond Loran coverage; (3) develop transponders for channel buoys and shorelines to enhance the value of radar; (4) stop all R&D work for land uses of Loran until at least the first three items have been accomplished; (5) get direct input from all classes of vessel operators as to their radionavigation needs in each of the principal marine centers around the U.S. rather than basing a federal plan on the opinions of a small group of Washington bureaucrats and consultants whose practical experience and knowledge about real navigation appears open to considerable question.

One saving factor, though, with the plan was the report that not only will the bureaucrats attempt to update it annually, but that also it was subject to revision if the voices of enough mariners were heard, so I strongly suggest that concerned navigators write to Admiral Bauman (Rear Admiral R.A. Bauman, Chief, Office of Navigation, USCG (N), Washington DC 10593) and let us try to get first things first. — Jack West.

WITH ALL HER FAULTS — Very often, I am accused of nit-picking when I discuss boats I have sailed aboard or surveyed or have tried to evaluate for other boatmen. It has been said that I want to make a custom boat out of every stock boat, that the faults I find are ones sailors expect to find and correct themselves, and that most of the errors and aberrations I discover are inconsequential and to correct them would add nothing except to the cost.

If those charges be true, than all I can say is that the art of boatbuilding and designing is at a sorry pass. I don't think it really is because the best builders and designers still seek perfection just at the best builders and designers of old did, and the much larger hordes of builders who don't care still turn out poor excuses for boats just as has been done all through history.

Perhaps the major difference is that boatbuilding has become a manufacturing process rather than the craft and art it was and has attracted many whose principal

interest lies in the cheerful jangling of the cash register and whose principal skills are in how to advertise and sell their wares. This was rarely so for earlier craftsmen, but, then, there were few builders then who ever became really rich in money, albeit I expect that the best of them were rich in satisfaction.

That said, let me continue with the Swan 47 I wrote about in last month's issue, which certainly ranks in the top levels of today's quality craft although she is, as was said, an imperfect bird. Those imperfections are pointed out, not as a matter of carping, but in the hope that the imperfect can be made perfect, which is as much a worthy aim today as it has ever been.

The electrical system aboard *Toscana* made me wonder if it really had been planned and if so, if the designer knew anything at all about his job. First of all, there are two alternators: one big, almost massive, to charge the ship's system, and a small one to service the starting battery. The small starting battery was so small that it was impossible to bleed the system and start the engine on the starting battery. We had to rig jumpers to the main battery as there was no change-over switch. This, of course, required removing the ladder and three cabin sole hatches, making the navigation and galley areas uninhabitable. Then we took off the covers of both batteries, rigged jumpers, started the engine and finally put everything back together again. The whole process took about thirty minutes.

On the other hand, the lighting battery was a tremendous affair that was so big and heavy it took four men to lift it out of the box and get it ashore when we could not re-charge it on the ship's system. This is something that is not supposed to happen, but inevitably it does. It happened to us three times in English Harbour where there is no shore power to run the Constavolt when the engine breaks down.

That battery also was installed in a battery box with a tight fitting lid and absolutely no ventilation. Why Swan 47's are not blown up from hydrogen gas given off by the batteries when charging is beyond my understanding. The bracket mounting on the big battery's alternator swung in so small an arc it was impossible to get the belts tight. This was not peculiar to *Toscana*, either, since every Swan 47 skipper or owner I talked to had the same problem.

All the lights aboard were incandescent so when crew members sat around at night with the lights on, the battery drain was absolutely massive. A few florescent lights would give even better light with less drain. Many of the fixtures were poorly placed, and especially the overhead light by the chart table which lit up the whole main cabin but did not throw enough light on the chart table for the navigator to read the chart. It was so bad I borrowed a small 12-volt florescent light from *Iolaire* and installed it in the corner, underneath the shelf. This lit up the chart table nicely, but did not light the main cabin, nor did it shine up on deck, and it used minimum electricity.

Toscana's electrical panel was magnificent, at first

sight, but as with about every boat I have been aboard in recent years, it was apparent that while its size may have been sufficient for her original design, not enough extra circuits has been provided and there was considerable doubling up as electrical gadgets had been added. In this era of burgeoning electronics, it is a common fault, but it is clear the electrical designers aren't doing too much thinking ahead, and it is time they started. The panel itself was metal, which meant that if an errant wave came down the hatch, the whole system had an excellent chance of shorting out. Plastic panels make better sense. And finally, while it certainly was not the fault of the builders or designers, *Toscana's* wiring diagram had never been changed as circuits were added which makes for some active nightmares when there are electrical problems and the systems have to be traced.

In the engine department, *Toscana* had a few mysteries as well as some things that were sure disasters, as far as I am concerned. Something had gone wrong with the siphon break in her exhaust system and a mechanical valve had been installed which had to be opened each time the engine was shut down to avoid siphoning water back into the engine. A precarious system, at best. There must be better answers.

The box for *Toscana's* Volvo Penta engine was a simple disaster. To get at anything in the engine, the whole box had to be removed, which either destroyed the main cabin, galley and navigation area, or the after cabin. Even checking the oil dipstick required taking out the entire forward engine box and main cabin ladder. A few access ports cut in the box would have made things simpler and no doubt would improve engine maintenance.

The salt water pump was in a similar class as it was gear-driven off the cam shaft and sealed from the oil pan by a very poor seal. As a result, salt water filled the engine oil three different times. The first time the problem was not spotted until too late, and it required a complete engine rebuilding which cost about \$5,000 and laid up the boat for two months. That also wasn't a problem peculiar to *Toscana* alone since it has happened to many other Swans, including *Selina* whose engine has been rebuilt twice. It became such a common problem that the salt water pump has been modified by Volvo, but neither they nor Nautor, nor Sparkman & Stephens bothered to warn owners of the danger or tell them about the modification.

But the design and installation of the oil cooler was perhaps the greatest disaster and the most inexplicable. The oil cooler had an aluminum casing and bronze guts, and was bolted to an iron block, making an excellent battery. To compound the error, a single wire oil pressure and temperature gauge was screwed into the side of the aluminum oil cooler casing. Being a single wire, the cooler was grounded to the engine. Thus, whenever the engine was running, twelve volts were continually being fed through this electric system. The inevitable happened: the side of the oil

casing fell out. Two days were lost taking a taxi to Caracas, finding someone who could weld up the casing and a machine shop that could re-machine it. Again, exactly the same thing happened to *Selina* a year earlier, and it happened to *White Quail* a few weeks after it happened to us.

Yet at the Southampton Boat Show in England this year, I examined the Volvo Penta and discovered that they still had the same oil cooler set up. When I pointed out the problem and the results, the man on the stand, who said he was the maintenance engineer for the United Kingdom, looked me straight in the eye and stated that they had never had an oil cooler failure, nor had they ever supplied new casings. That from an Englishman.

The Swan's engine also had a couple of other annoying features that come from poor thinking, or no thinking, on the engine designer's part. As instances, the engine had no built-in pump for changing the oil, and the port where a pump can be plugged in is almost inaccessible. So the oil was seldom changed, or even checked. Also the header tank for the heat exchangers were mounted above the forward end of the engine which, of course, was mounted low in the bilge. Changing belts was a job for a contortionist, and one skilled with using mirrors to boot. On the other hand, the Swan's engine sump was beautifully done, and collected all the oil drips without fail. There is no excuse for a foul bilge.

Except for a couple of things, the Swan's plumbing was well done. Her sinks, though, drained into sump tanks which had to be pumped out frequently. The system S & S used thirty years ago of draining the sinks directly into the head was a great deal better and served to keep the heads from smelling. The Swan has proper seacocks, but it seems to me there are many more than needed. A bit of careful doubling up would reduce the number of hull holes substantially which is always a plus for safety.

Still, all in all, the Swan 47 is a magnificent boat despite the faults, and the thing that really bothers me is that a great many of those faults could have, and should have been corrected as the boats were built and they were discovered. Yet, insofar as I can see, Hull One and Hull Twenty-one are precisely the same...a sad note, but perhaps a mark of the times.—Donald M. Street, Jr.

LABEL IT CURED — Now, as we small boat seafarers are well aware, there are real problems associated with preserving as much as possible of what is left of the world's natural surroundings. What is more, in spite of the relatively recent hue and cry to *do something about it*, there are no easy solutions. Particularly since most of the problems arise from there being too many people on too small an Earth to allow Nature to take her course, unaided, and still survive.

But the political animal has excellent survival instincts. Some of them discovered that they could give the appearance of *doing something* in a manner that

would offend as few voters as possible. One technique is to aim expensive, relatively unenforceable regulations at a small, docile portion of the populace...especially one whose contribution to the source of the problem is much more form than substance. Thus, we boat owners are saddled with all the well-known current nonsense concerning our homely heads.

But an easier method of appearing to do something while offending hardly anyone is to periodically promulgate a new rule requiring someone to post a sign telling himself that something that was hitherto illegal is still illegal. This notion spread throughout the land. The sign became its own sign of action. Many problems were labeled as cured!

My introduction to this very easy way of problem elimination came several years ago. I was notified that a new rule required me to purchase and post a sign telling me it is illegal for me to pump oil overboard. (Only the sign-rule was new, the oil-law was old.) Being essentially law-abiding, I bought one of the little signs and dutifully posted it next to the bilge pump.

The insidious part of labeling the problem cured is that the disease is catching. A couple of seasons ago, one neighborhood FCC monitoring station decided to enforce the letter of the law requiring every VHF radio transmission to start and end with call letters. In order to make enforcement simple, the FCC borrowed a leaf from the book of the town speed cop and hung out where the pickings were easy. They did their monitoring on the only local public communication channel. When the monitors overheard a victim, they would call the marine operator...by land line...and get the guilty boat owner's name and address.

My first inkling that I had committed a crime was on arriving home one day to discover an FCC OFFICIAL NOTICE OF VIOLATION in the mail. It charged me with having violated "Section 83.364(a)(1): Failure to identify by means of official call sign at the beginning and end of communications..." while placing a call with the marine operator four days earlier.

The notice required that I reply within ten days. The reply had to describe "the action taken to correct and to prevent continuation of recurrence of each violation" and must include the signed statement of the ship's radio operator, pleading guilty as charged. The notice ended with the dire warning that "Willful...failure to reply may result in a monetary forfeiture or license revocation."

There didn't seem to be any penalty associated with the violation providing I made satisfactory reply. However, I had a little trouble trying to figure out what I could do to meet the "action taken" requirement.

Then I remembered the government's favorite remedy in such situations. I notified the FCC that I had posted a sign near the transmitter reading: "USE CALL SIGN." Case closed!

All of which goes to show that there are occasions when it is best merely to label the problem cured. — Murray L. Lesser.