Question: I am sailing off the Italian coast next summer. I am told that the buoy system is different than in America. I am familiar with the Cardinal system in Canada, but how is the Italian system different?
Winston, Yonkers, NY

Answer: The system in the U.S. and the system in Europe, aside from Europe also making use of the Cardinal system, are known as the IALA, (International Association of Lighthouse Authorities) Lateral System of Buoyage. This means that there are buoys indicating the outer limits of a channel. The numbers increase as the vessel heads to port when entering from a larger body of water, with the even numbers on the starboard side and the odd numbers on the port side of the ship as it transits the channel from the sea.

The basic systems are the same, except that the colors are reversed. In the U.S. (IALA "B") RRR or Red Right Returning is the rule with the green buoy on your left. In the Italian waters (IALA "A") the green buoy is on your starboard and the red buoy is on your port. The location of the shapes are the same in both "A" and "B" areas. The "can" or flat-topped buoy is on the port and the pointed or "nun" buoy is still on your starboard .

You will find that near coastal buoys are few and far between. Most coastal navigation is done with the aid of lighthouses located on hills along the coast.

Question: What is the difference between FLOTSAM and JETSAM?
Melissa, Bay Shore

Answer: There are actually three types of floating debris related to ships on the seas. The term flotsam refers to that which is left afloat pursuant to a ship's sinking. This is what you see in movies that is scattered about on the surface after the ship heads to the

by Captain Stan Glatzer

Foreign Buoys
Debris Types
Wind Types
Compass "Dip"

bottom. Note: Lost containers and 55-gallon drums washed overboard are included in this category.

Jetsam is the debris that remains after the ship's crew voluntarily disposes of material overboard either to lighten ship to prevent sinking or the illegal dumping of garbage. Submarines used a ruse of discharging material through their torpedo tubes to give the illusion that an enemy's depth charges were successful in sinking the sub. As this was supposed to appear as flotsam to the surface ship, in reality it was jetsam.

A third type of debris found afloat in the ocean is jettisoned by a sinking ship's crew voluntarily and buoyed for retrieval at a later time. This is known as lagan.

Question: I have read that the expression "she has a bone in her teeth," refers to a ship moving through the water with the anchor at the waterline. Is this right?
Luigi, Brooklyn, NY

Answer: The correct definition of the saying refers to a vessel underway at a speed fast enough to produce a foaming or breaking bow wave, The resultant white is seen as though the ship has a "bone in her teeth".

Question: I heard that "…three sheets to the wind," has to do with being drunk. Is this true?
Mark, New Bedford, MA

Answer: Yes. The expression was derived from small sailboats. These have three sheets (lines) for controlling the mainsail (1) and the jib (2). If the sailor was drunk, then he would have difficulty coordinating the sheet handling and the boat would end up with the sheets flogging free in the wind.

Question: When I use my boat and I am going fifteen miles an hour, why can't I tell that the wind is coming from the back of the boat?
Cynthia, Speonk, NY

Answer: Cynthia, when you sit on the boat and are not moving, you can tell which direction the wind is coming from and even be able to guess the speed of the wind. This is called the "true wind".

As the boat begins to move forward, you are creating a breeze of your own and it comes from the

continued on page 53

by Captain Stan Glatzer

Foreign Buoys

Debris Types

Wind Types

Compass "Dip"

continued from page 48

movement of the boat through the air. When the speed you are traveling is equal to the speed of the wind coming from astern you, will feel no breeze. (This is a dangerous situation on a sailboat because the crew loses concentration on wind direction and a turn to either side will cause the boom to swing to one side, creating a deadly weapon.) The faster you go, the stronger the breeze and the wind seems to move toward the bow and come from forward. The breeze you create is called the "apparent wind".

The wind speed when the true wind is opposite the apparent wind is equal to the difference between the winds. The apparent wind speed when the winds are from the same direction will equal the sum of both winds. The true wind can only be felt when the ship is lying ahull (stopped.)

Question: What is meant by compass "dip"?

Answer: A compass needle is magnetized with one end attracted to the North Pole and the other end magnetized to point to the South Pole. The needle is balanced delicately on a needle-sharp tip so that it will spin freely.

When manufactured, a compass should be constructed for the general area it will be used in. In the tropics, the compass is equally distant from both poles, so the pull on both ends of the needle is relatively equal. Thus the needle is balanced. As the vessel travels north or south and approaches one pole making the compass closer to it than to the other, the pull on the needle tip tends to be stronger from that pole and the downward angle to that pole increases. When the vessel is north or south of Lat 65 degrees, the downward angle begins to create friction on the needle bearing and the compass will not function properly. Compasses must be compensated for the "dip" or downward angle being created. Most reputable compass manufacturers will construct a compass for the area of its use.