

MARINA GUIDE

Home is where the boat is

When the neighborhood is the marina

BY MIKE NORTON
Record-Eagle staff writer

GREILICKVILLE — Dennis and Maureen Mitchell love the view from the picture window of their family room: a scene of sailboats rocking and seagulls swooping over the waters of West Grand Traverse Bay.

What's even better, from their point of view, is that they're part of the scene themselves.

Their "family room" is the transom of their 30-foot powerboat, G'Day, at Slip 116 in the Elmwood Township marina. Ever since March, when they sold their home in the Franklin Woods subdivision, the boat and the marina have been their home. This is where they eat, sleep, entertain and relax.

"Just look at that," said

Dennis, waving at the panorama of water and watercraft just beyond the dock. "If I had to buy a house and a piece of real estate with that view, it would cost me \$2 million."

Lots of folks do it. During the warmer months of the year, anyway, they make their homes at the local marina. For the cost of a boat, a slip rental and some hookup fees, they live the life most of their fellow boaters can only capture on weekends — without leaving the comfort of their homes.

The Mitchells' plan is to spend the winter months in Florida on shore, living in a senior housing community. Summers will find them here, floating near Traverse City.

"This is a good waterfront," says Dennis. "There's a lot of coming and going, so there's always something entertaining to watch. The only disadvantage is having to listen to all those go-fast boats and all



Record-Eagle/Meegan M. Reid

Dennis Mitchell, who lives with his wife on his powerboat in the Elmwood Township Marina, bails out his dinghy.

the noise they make."

There is one other major disadvantage — if you can call it that. Like other boat-dwellers, the Mitchells have

learned to do without a great many of the possessions they once enjoyed. But both agree that the process of deciding which things to throw out and which to keep was healthy.

"This life is all about taking advantage of living and getting further and further away from things," said Maureen, a former teacher and school secretary. "When you have a house and a piece of land, you accumulate things, without even noticing it. Now our life is all about personal relationships."

That's certainly true of Dennis, who's a naturally sociable fellow. He likes to get to know everyone on all the nearby boats, and enjoys ambling down the dock for his morning cup of coffee with harbormaster Dick Eldred. (Strangely, it's a ritual both men used to perform in their former

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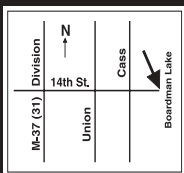
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