Irish Blessing Lazy Jacks

The description that follows refers to the figure shown below.

The system used on Irish Blessing is retractable. It is made up of 8 lines. There are 4 lines on each side including a halyard, a "yoke" line, and two "catcher" lines. The lines are 1/4 inch dacron. The longest line is the halyard, which reeves through a swivel block located approximately 2/3 of the way between the spreaders and the masthead. The halyard has a permanently attached plastic thimble through which is reeved the "yoke" section of the lazy jacks. From the thimble end, each (port and starboard) halyard passes up through it's block and then back down the side of the mast to a pair of small cleats on the mast near the deck, one on each side of the sail track slot (port and starboard). The halyard blocks and the cleats located at the base of the mast are the only permanent attachments to the boat. The yoke section is approximately 15 feet long and has plastic thimbles attached to each end. To attach thimbles on all of these lines, I used a “hangman knot” which is compact, attractive, and works quite well with thimbles. The “catcher” lines pass thru the thimbles on the yoke section and are tied to the boom at experimentally determined points as shown in the figure below. Use of thimbles makes the system self adjusting, and also allows variation of the geometry required to neatly furl the system along the boom and mast, turning at the reefing cringle hooks. To erect the Jacks before lowering or reefing the mainsail, the Lazy Jack Halyard is released to permit freeing the stowed Jacks from the reefing cringle hooks (port and starboard) at the base of the boom, and then the Halyard is tightened as much as possible and cleated to erect the Jacks.

As you can see from the sketch, I have placed the blocks high on the mast, since I felt it was important to get the lift angle to approach 90 degrees. This angle makes it easier to transfer tautness in the halyard to the “catcher” lines. As it turns out I never have put any fastenings on the boom. The “catcher” lines are simply tied to the boom with a bowline at the points I have experimentally determined. The tautness has made it easy when reefing or furling the main; we go to windward and I just release the sail and then “help” it to drop into the Jacks. I have had no significant problems raising or lowering the sail, which I attribute to the design (The yoke section is long enough to permit the “catchers to be only as long as necessary to contain the sail). There is no conflict due to use of the reefing cringles for stowing the Jacks, since we always have the Jacks deployed when the main is reefed to catch the reefed sail at the boom.

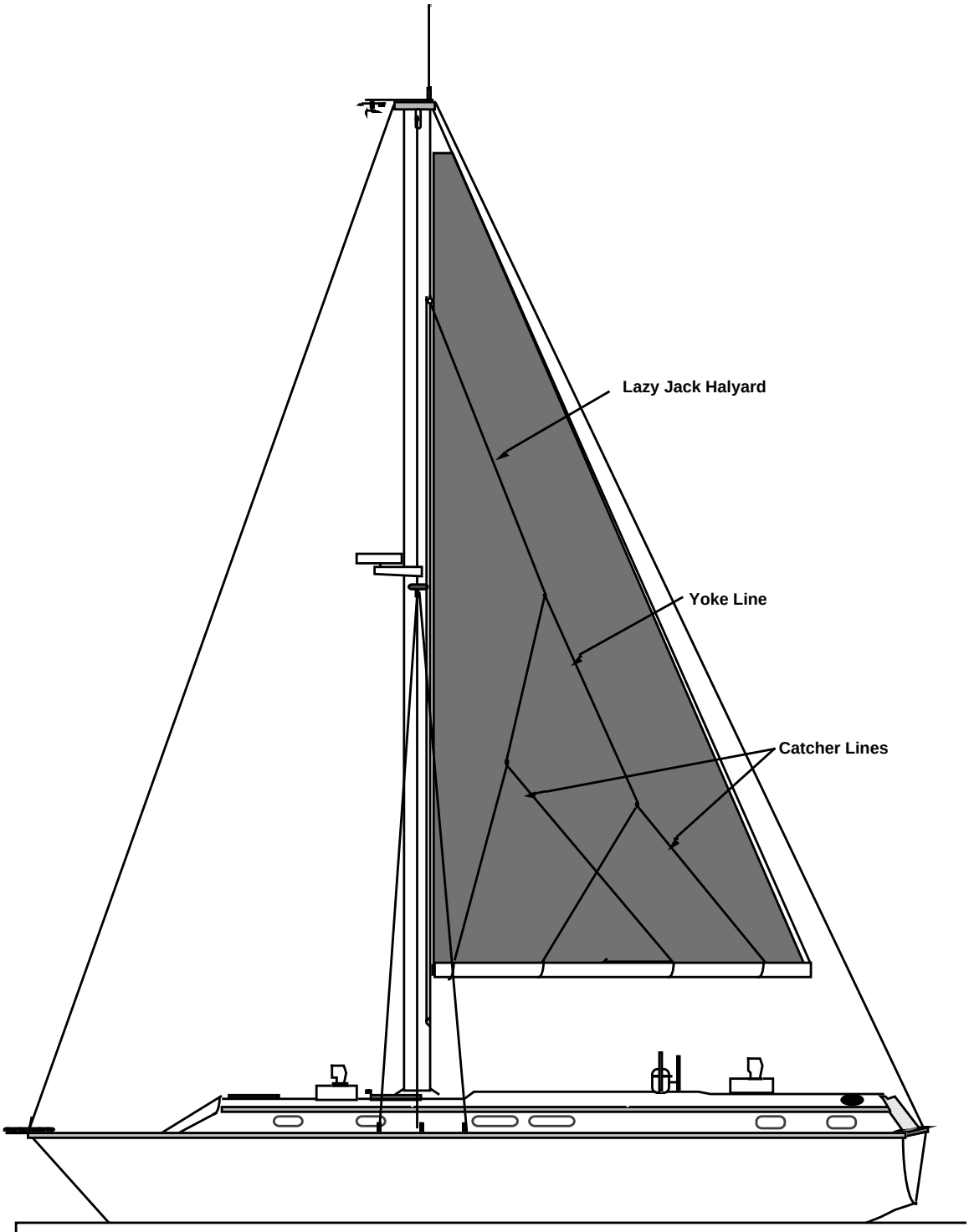
We always stow the Jacks after the sail is raised and, when furling, after the sail ties have been applied prior to installing the sail cover. To stow the Jacks, I lower them and route them along the boom and under the cringle hooks on the boom at the gooseneck, then I retighten the halyards and cleat them off until I get ready to furl or reef the main the next time. Stowed in this manner, they are then completely out the way until needed again. It is very quick and easy to reset up the Lazy Jacks before furling or reefing or prior to raising the sail after removing the cover before removing the sail ties. Easy set up and stowage also makes the decision to sail with the Jacks furled a no-brainer and minimizes chafe on the main that would accumulate if we routinely sailed with them deployed.

When installing the system in the spring, I bend the main, and then tie the catcher lines around the boom with a bowline knot. The sail slugs along the boom prevent the lines from slipping. I did this the first time so that I could readjust the location of the lines experimentally before installing padeyes on the boom. It worked so well that I decided to forget installing padeyes. I have marked the underside of the boom with a permanent marker to help relocate these positions each spring.

During the sailing year, I never remove the main halyard from the sail, but instead bring it down under the halyard winch and retighten it before securing to a cleat. This secures the main under all conditions. Since I seldom install the sail cover when traveling, this "downhaul" has the benefit of holding the main down and resting securely in the jacks when at anchor or in a storm. I have been in fairly high winds (~ 45 kts. in sudden thunderstorms) without a problem even without sail tie downs. I recall one real bad thunderstorm that came up quickly so that I only had time to furl the sail (no time to secure it). When I do secure the sail, I install the sail ties and then lower and secure the jacks before installing the sail cover. I have not had to modify the sail cover to accommodate the jacks because of they are always furled when the sail cover is in use.

Furling or reefing the main sail is greatly eased when using the Lazy Jacks.

I hope this helps
Regards,
Dick Cusick s/v Irish Blessing P-385



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