

Boating with Missy

By Melissa Gervais

To the Helm: A First Boat Purchase

Like many of us, I was introduced to boating by my parents when I was very young. I grew up near Cowichan Bay on Vancouver Island and one of my favorite ways to spend a day was on the boat. Our family had an 18-foot speedboat that we would drag up onto the beach and then spend the day swimming, gunkholing, cooking marshmallows on an open fire, and drifting home under the stars.

Occasionally, my dad would invite me along to go fishing. He would prop me up on some lifejackets at the helm, pick out an object on the horizon, and it was my job to keep us on track and watch for logs. I never learned how to dock the boat and the throttle was a no-go zone, but I took my assignment very seriously.

After university and a real job, I decided that I would like to get back on the water. A friend had recommended a boat broker on Granville Island named Bill Steele.

At the time I worked in the finance industry, so I showed up to meet Bill on my lunch hour wearing a suit and heels. He led me down the dock and stopped in front of a very sharp-looking, 34-foot Bayliner Avanti Sunbridge.

My first reaction when I saw the boat was, "This is way too big." I had decided that I wanted to start with a smaller 20-something-foot boat so that I could learn the ropes. Everyone told me not to waste my time and that I should get a boat that was a bit bigger than I felt comfortable with and I would "grow into it." In hindsight, it was excellent advice.

Bill gave me the tour. The galley was large with a cooktop, microwave, large fridge, and a nicely sized ban-

quette. There was a large front stateroom and a smaller aft stateroom. The head had a full shower with lots of hot water. It was actually nicer than my first apartment.

Bill fired up the twin engines and maneuvered us out of the seriously crowded marina to the wide-open seas of English Bay. The boat got up on plane, no problem. It was a beautiful day and I was having a great time. As he slowed the boat to enter the harbor, he slid off the seat and said, "You take over." *What?!* I had never really docked a boat, let alone a boat with two engines. This was taking a turn. Without hesitating, he said, "No problem, I will show you how."

And he did. A shot of port forward, a shot of starboard reverse, and wouldn't you know it, the boat turned. I didn't touch the steering wheel once and guided that huge boat, in reverse, into her slip. I bought the boat. Subsequent dockings did not go that well, and I had a lot to learn.

For the first adventure, I took some good boating friends with me to Desolation Sound and we practiced everything including my first PAN-PAN over the VHF. It seems the gas gauge was a bit off and both engines died just outside of Pender Harbour. A lovely couple with a very young baby towed us in. If my friends had not come with me to talk me off the ledge, I am sure I would not have kept the boat. I had taken the Power Squadron course and was a good student, but the wind was howling, the seas were angry, and it was all too much.

On a subsequent trip, I anchored for the first time in Princess Louisa inlet. It was packed and the only spot that was available, with a stern tie ring, was in 100 feet of water. From my training, I knew that the anchor rode to depth ratio should be 7:1, so did that mean 700 feet of rode? So much to learn, grasshopper. Another great lesson, because the following week I anchored in Conover Cove on Wallace Island in 10 feet of water. I could actually see the anchor.

It has been 20 years and I still have the same boat. She has taught me so much, not only about navigation but also about mechanical, electrical, maintenance, and modern-day electronics. She has also introduced me to some fantastic people and some beautiful places. To others out there interested in getting into boating, I say go for it! I'll be writing in this column about the boating lifestyle and how you can go for it.

NWY

It's been a long road to the helm for Captain Missy, but her beloved Bayliner has served her well since she bought it in the nineties. A great first yacht broker experience set her up for success.



Missy grew up boating with her family in the Gulf Islands. She works for a yacht services company based in Vancouver, B.C. and boats most weekends from April to October. A self-proclaimed weekend warrior, she enjoys blogging about everything cool for women who boat at missygoesboating.com.