

Boating with Missy

By Melissa Gervais

Women Helping Women



Over the past twenty-odd years of boating, I have had my fair share of breakdowns and malfunctions, both mechanical and emotional. Believe me, a blown fan belt doesn't care whether my name is Missy or Mark. I have developed a good tool chest of repair know-how. My boat has tested me but has never left me stranded. Even if I can't fix it, I can figure out a workaround until I can find someone to fix it properly. However, my skills pale in comparison to women who have sailed offshore for years. Many times they have, pretty much, rebuilt their entire boat from mast to keel.

For this reason, when I speak to other boaters, I always assume they are coming from a place of similar or greater knowledge and experience. If I don't understand, I ask. That is how I learn. It is not like our life on land, where we all have different hobbies, skills, and interests. We are boaters and, power or sail, we share a common UV-resistant thread. I have found that the greatest source of information can be found by talking to other women who boat. I run in a circle of incredibly talented women who go out of their way to help each other. They are eager to offer assistance and provide a safe environment to ask even the most ridiculous questions.

However, last year I had an unfortunate experience on a local women's sailing (and power) Facebook page. I was talking about using my hair dryer and the microwave on my boat, in the same sentence. I am very familiar with the total usable battery capacity on my boat, the total amp-hours I use in a day, and what each appliance draws. I have a 6.5 kilowatt generator, a 3,000-watt inverter, an 1,850-watt hairdryer, and a 1,200-watt microwave. It was supposed to be an exercise in calculating the total draw on my batteries, but instead I was taken down like a lame gazelle. The challenge was not that I have good personal hygiene and eat warm food, but that I was "putting women back in the galley" and leaving them "barefoot and pregnant on the back deck."

I was really taken aback by the hostility and their words hurt my feelings. Why had my comments incited so much animosity on this "community" page? I am going to go out on a boom and say it was probably just a misunderstanding. In these situations, it is better not to retaliate and to simply un-friend rather than put on a hat and slip into a rant.

There are a lot of great boating resources for women, so don't let my Facebook debacle discourage you. Start with your local sailing center, yacht club, or attend a rendezvous. If you are new to boating, ask your broker or manufacturer for recommendations. Boat show season is just around the corner and both the Seattle Boat Show and Vancouver International

Boat Show are hosting women's events. I will be at both!

The Seattle Boat Show is offering two options for Women's Day on Monday, January 27, 2020. Boat Show University offers an all-day, hands-on workshop for a fee, taught by women for women who will share techniques from their experiences on how to cruise alone, with a crew, or as a cruising couple. It requires pre-registration. Alternatively, there is a series of free seminars all afternoon and women get into the show for free by going to seattleboatshow.com and downloading a coupon. Both are opportunities to meet, learn, and get inspired by experienced and talented women boaters.

Women's Day at the Vancouver Boat Show is scheduled for Saturday, February 8, 2020. It is a full day of boating seminars and guest speakers designed to educate and inspire. All events during the day are intended to build confidence by presenting information in a fun and supportive environment. Your \$99 CAD ticket includes a choice of guest speakers, lunch, amazing raffle prizes, and a wine reception. Tickets are limited to 100, so register early at vancouverboatshow.ca or follow at facebook.com/womensdayvibs.

If you are a sailor, there are two new events that I encourage you to put in your calendar for next year. The first is the Crystal Cup, hosted by Eagle Harbour Yacht Club in Vancouver, British Columbia. This all-female event is scheduled for August 21 to 23, 2020, and includes a short course and a distance race. Details are available at facebook.com/crystalcupregatta.

The second is the inaugural SHE sailboat regatta for women, scheduled for September 19 and 20, 2020, in Seattle. The *Northwest Yachting*-sponsored event is produced, organized, and crewed by women. Registration opens in January, for information email she@nwyachting.com to contact the race organizer, Schelleen Rathkopf.

If you are looking for an inspiring story, pick up Pamela Bendall's book, *What Was I Thinking? Adventures of a Woman Sailing Solo*. Maybe slip a boat show ticket inside and wrap it up for the perfect hostess holiday gift. I love this quote from Japanese poet Ryunosuke Satoro who said, "Individually we are one drop, together we are an ocean." This month's article is about women helping women, but it extends beyond that to boaters of all types. Grab someone's line at the dock who needs help, give way to someone who is just learning, encourage someone who is docking for the first time, or simply take a land-based friend for a boat ride.

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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.