

Boating with Missy

By Melissa Gervais

The Power of Words



One of my favorite destinations in the Gulf Islands is Conover Cove on Wallace Island. It is located in the Trincomali Channel between Galiano Island and the northern tip of Saltspring Island. My sister gave me a copy of the book *Once Upon an Island* by David Conover, and after reading it, I knew I had to go there. The story is set just after the World War II, when David Conover and his wife Jeanne purchased the island, and together they built a bed and breakfast resort called the Royal Cedar Cottages. Our modern-day trials and tribulations pale in comparison to what they overcame such as their commute to the island in a very small boat or building dock pilings without quick-dry cement.

In the mid- to late 1960s, the Conovers sold the majority of the island to a group of teachers from Seattle. Disagreements among the owners led to court proceedings, and the property was again put up for sale. Wallace Island was purchased via a court-ordered sale and became a provincial marine park in 1990 through the cooperative efforts of the Provincial Government and BC Marine Parks Forever. One of the original cottages is still standing and it is well worth the visit, just be prepared for some very shallow anchoring and a tricky entrance.

Jedediah Days: One Woman's Island Paradise by Mary Palmer is also the story of an industrious couple who purchased Jedediah Island, a 640-acre island located between Lasqueti and Texada islands in the Strait of Georgia. The book documents their life on the island between 1949 and 1994. Once again, after reading the book, I knew I had to visit.

We met our good friends and anchored in Deep Bay close to the beach so we could row ashore and hike to the bluff on the far side overlooking Sabine Channel (which is also the only point on the island with cell reception).



Missy and her Dad on the docks at Genoa Bay Marina.

It's an absolute paradise. We returned to the boat for dinner, and our friend, Sue, made her now-infamous "Jedediah Jumbalaya."

Another great read about a pioneering woman cruising the coastal water of British Columbia is *The Curve of Time* by M. Wylie Blanchet. This amazing adventure of a thirty-five-year-old widower and her five children takes place in 1927. For fifteen summers, they cruised the coast in a 25-foot boat! I can't imagine the courage it takes to load your entire family on a small boat with no real navigation equipment and set out in relatively uncharted waters. That is really inspiring and makes me laugh when I second guess myself pulling into the gas dock.

However, my favorite back deck read is *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach. My dad was a pilot and our family grew up with a small Cessna 172, our station wagon in the sky. He was also a teacher and reading was a big part of my childhood and he gave me the book when I was very young.

Many years ago, while my parents were vacationing in Hawaii, my dad called me. He was sitting poolside reading an aviation magazine. There was an advertisement that Richard Bach would be speaking for the now-closed Out of The Blue Flying School, previously located at the Arlington Municipal Airport between Mt. Vernon and Everett, Washington. The event was sold out, but I managed to wrangle a seat.

When I arrived, there were cars parked all along the runway. Somewhere in an old photo album, I have a terrific picture of my beloved old Camaro parked in front of Richard's beloved SeaRey amphibian plane, "Puff". I took my copy of the book along with my Dad's copy to be signed. There were more than one hundred of us packed into an actual airplane hangar when Richard started to talk about the "seagull" book. It was one of those surreal moments that I will remember for the rest of my life.

To this day, I still search second-hand bookstores and purchase as many copies of the book as I can find. I always have a copy on board in case someone says, "I've never read that book." I also make a point of re-reading the book every summer. To some, it is a simple story of a silly bird experiencing an existential crisis, but therein lies a profound message that we can all be so much more than we believe.

My dad passed away recently, and I have his copy of the book. Inside the front cover, the inscription reads, "Leo, so glad we share a sky." **NWY**



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.