

Boating with Missy

By Melissa Gervais

The World Needs More Phil Collins

T There is nothing better than relaxing in a lounge chair on the back deck with the sun hitting your eyelids. The only interruption is the odd cry of a gull or the splash of a seal. A boater's happy place. That is until you hear: "Are you sleeping?" Trick question. You've heard this voice before, and the conversation never ends quickly. She is a talker and has just learned that the Royals have moved to the Gulf Islands and wants to know if this is true. Her sister's best friend posted something on Facebook or Instagram, and she can't believe it. "Have you heard? Do you know anyone in North Saanich? How long would it take to get there by boat?"

Are you kidding me? I work hard all week, and my weekends are sacred to me. It is my one chance to chill and not think about anything. So what do I do? Keep my eyes closed and hope she moves along? Not a chance. I invite her onboard, pour two glasses of wine, and listen to the whole secondhand scandal. Sometimes there is no way out. Or is there? Can you tell someone, politely, to get out of your sunbeam?

I find it ironic that boating covers the entire social spectrum from anti-social loner to over-the-top floating party, where you can't get enough people on board. It is both an individual and a team sport. A few summers ago, I spent most weekends at the high-end of the party Richter scale. I decided to take a weekend off and anchor in a secluded bay with a stack of magazines, the new Palm Bay strawberry grapefruit mimosa, and a jumbo bag of Miss Vickie's. I was midway into Anna Wintour's take on the summer frolic gown when I hear— "Missy? Everything OK?"

Again, are you kidding me?

I like to poke fun at some of the characters I have met on my seagoing travels. A few need to wear a shirt more often or get a pedicure. A few more need to listen just once

or google appropriate humor. They are entertaining, to say the least. But on the flip side, I have met some of the most incredible people who have become good friends. We don't have to see each other often, but when we do, we pick up right where we left off.

One of the outstations that I visit regularly has a group of communal picnic tables. If you are feeling social, pull up a seat. I was taking my dog to the beach and saw a couple who I didn't recognize, but they landed firmly on my fun-radar. I stopped and introduced myself; they were relatively new members of the club and hadn't met many people. They offered me a glass of bubbles, and we chatted back and forth like we had known each other for years. The dog missed his walk and I met some lifelong friends. Sometimes it seems so random, but that is the thing about boating—we already have a lot in common.

After many fun summers, they moved away for a job opportunity on a tropical island, but we stayed in touch. One day out of the blue, they called and said, "Why don't you come and visit?" Initially, I didn't hesitate about the visit, but then I paused. I had never met their kids, been to their house, or even seen them in street clothes. The only thing we shared was sunny afternoons on the boat. At the end of the day, that was enough, and I went to the Bahamas.

I am grateful for every day I have on the water and all of the people I meet. However, there are some days that boating, like life, presents people, situations, or conversations that don't inspire. We live in a polite society so we don't display annoyance, besides you have no idea what other people are going through or have endured. Sometimes, it is not about you. And sometimes, you are the first smile of their day. Share your sunbeam.

Back to my sunny but interrupted repose that day on the back deck. Once the Royals' change of address was confirmed and my unannounced guest left, I returned to my lounge and solitude when this familiar song came on the radio:

Tell everybody I'm on my way
New friends and new places to see
With blue skies ahead yes
I'm on my way
And there's nowhere else
that I'd rather be

-Phil Collins "On My Way"



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.



Missy and her boating friends in the Bahamas. Boaters really can boat anywhere!