

A column by Melissa Gervais

Boating with Missy



Popsicles and Lifejackets

The outstation that I usually visit in my boat is open, but due to COVID, is operating under winter rules for the unforeseeable future. This means no amenities. There is water on the dock, but you have to supply the hose. Also, the boats must tie-up in a checkerboard fashion, so no one is docked side by side. It's basically anchoring at a dock with access to the beach for walks. I'm just so grateful to be back on the water that I'll take what I can, instead of complaining.

Three weeks ago, I visited the outstation. There are four fingers there, and each one already had two boats docked. I headed for the finger with the most open space and tied up closest to the shore so I could walk the dog. No one came over to grab my lines, but the boats around me were of that ilk. Some always help, and some just never have.

Later that afternoon, I noticed the couple who were at the end of the dock walking towards my boat. Surprisingly, they actually transitioned from the side I was moored on to the far opposite side to "go around" my boat. Odd. They didn't say hello, or even try to make eye contact. A boat was pulling in at the same time, so I didn't think much of it and went over to help. The woman on board waited until she had my attention and said, "Please, don't touch my lines." Fair enough.

When the next boat came in, I went over to offer assistance, but this time I asked, "Would you like help with your lines?" A friendly face replied, "Of course, Missy! Why would you ask?" I could see that our new boating reality was going to take some figuring out. Later that day, there was a social distance docktail hour, and everyone was six feet apart, and there was no sharing of snacks or beverages. It was really lovely to see everyone as I have really missed this interaction. It soon became clear that some in the group had been watching a lot of television lately and had some pretty strong opinions! I quickly learned that some boaters felt that dogs should not be allowed at the outstation and that the presence of

animals made them very uncomfortable. Another couple felt that it should be members only and that children and grandchildren should not be allowed. It was becoming apparent that some people, who I had known for years, were starting to show their true colors. I headed back to my boat as another boat was pulling in, and was asked again not to touch the lines or the boat. As the couple at the end of the dock walked passed this new boat, the gentleman physically moved his wife to the opposite side of the dock. It was all just too much. I fired up the engines and moved my boat two docks over.

There were three boats on the new dock, and they all came to help with my lines. The new members introduced themselves immediately and wished they could shake hands. They even asked to meet my dog, Jonathan, and said how much they loved dogs. Everyone continued to social distance, but my new neighbors were friendly and wanted to know how long I'd been a member of the outstation, and if I knew where the best crabbing and prawning could be found. We knew people in common, and I had a fabulous weekend getting to know some new "old" friends. The positive energy was palpable.

Slowly, more and more boats showed up. Friends I haven't seen since last summer appeared on the dock with familiar smiles and stories to tell. The new normal was starting to feel normal once again. At one point, I was reading on my back deck and stopped to take it all in. I looked up to see my friend's daughter, Erin, walking down the dock with a popsicle and a lifejacket. She was heading off for a dinghy ride with her Dad, and it reminded me; this is what it's all about.

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.