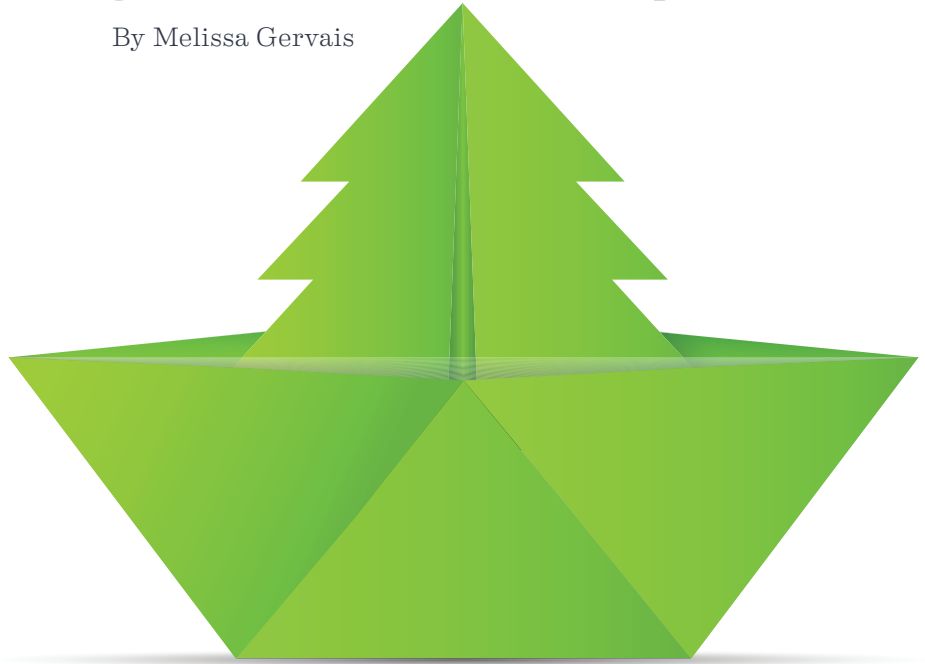


Boating with Missy

By Melissa Gervais



‘Tis The Season

My favorite holiday tradition is to get dressed up with my shiny shoes and dangly earrings, then head to an elegant hotel downtown. It’s always decorated beautifully, with a musician seated at the piano, and they have the most glamorous wingback chairs. To toast the season, I always order an ice-cold Cosmopolitan with three floating cranberries.

I also have a favorite boating holiday tradition that happens on the first Thursday of December each year. Our boating group gets together for cocktails, dinner, and a hilarious gift exchange that has been lovingly referred to as the “Gong Show” at the yacht club. There is a \$30 limit, and everyone who brings a gift, gets to participate. Our gift exchange started innocently enough, but I remember the TSN Turning Point. There I was, taking a bite of my Tiramisu, when, out of nowhere, a remote control race car swerved around my wine glass and made a beeline for the end of the table only to end up high-centered in the butter dish! The next year, a small drone hovered over my pecan pie, before it darted through an open window, only to crash to the ground adjacent to the Commodore’s parking stall.

However, the most coveted gift each year is still the bucket of cured meats and the Montblanc pen case containing two very special cigarettes. Our evening always closes down on the shoreside patio, with a raised snifter to toast the fabulously decorated boats cruising by. December has always been a fabulous time to meet up with our friends, share stories from our summer cruising season, and quite often a blur of taffeta and cab receipts.

With COVID-19, this year will be quite sobering. Gone is the annual boating party at the yacht club, there will be no bling at the hotel, the company I work for isn’t having a party, and the boat parades have been

cancelled. Public health officials have restricted the number of people who can gather, so there will be no over-the-top house parties or special dinners out. Right now, it’s not looking very festive. When I find myself in situations that are entirely out of my control, I refer to my childhood mentors, Dr. Suess and Winnie-the-Pooh. They have the uncanny ability to find happiness, no matter how dire the circumstances.

It was the Grinch who shed light on the over-consumerism of the holiday season, and a reminder that the true spirit of the holidays, “doesn’t come from a store.” And it was the silly old bear that taught me the importance of long-lasting friendships. This year, I’m choosing people over things. I’m going to extend compassion where I might not otherwise, share joy, and be a kid at heart again. I plan to spend a few more winter nights on the boat, maybe curled up with a good book, or watching great movies like *It’s a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. I’m also planning to head out for an afternoon cruise with a hot chocolate and my camera in hand. Maybe I’ll even buy a fruit cake! At any rate, this holiday season will be really different from last year, and there is nothing I can do to change it. Let’s plan to embrace it, and take solace in the fact that we are all in the same boat. Wherever you may be, and however you may celebrate, I raise my Cosmo and extend best wishes for a happy holiday from my deck to yours.

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.