



## THE VIEW FROM HERE



# WOMEN'S DAY

I was lucky to grow up sailing with both my mom and my dad. While my dad was always a bit more willing to head out in the dinghy when it was raining and blowing 20 knots, I always knew my mom as a competent and confident boater who could handle herself out on the water. As I grew older and saw other couples interacting on their boats, my mom's abilities and confidence became a source of pride. She also taught me lessons about how to react and behave on a boat that I couldn't have learned anywhere else.

My mom learned how to sail from her father, on an old wooden lifeboat that he kept at Nanaimo Shipyard. It had an old canvas sail and it leaked somewhat, mainly due to the many rivet and caulking repair jobs to its wooden ribs and planks. They had a homemade tin pump that my great grandfather made, and it was my mom's job to pump out the boat at regular intervals while they were out sailing. It is one of her fondest memories of spending time with her father.

Along with my dad, who

has similar memories of sailing with his father on Cowichan Lake, she carried this tradition on with my sister and me, and then went on to encourage my wife and many of her female friends to take up the sport. If I had to pick one recreational activity to label my mom with, it would be sailor.

So, imagine my surprise when she told me last summer that while she feels like a confident boater, she still has fears around helming and handling the boat if anything were to happen to my dad while sailing. If someone who has this much experience and miles under her keel questions her abilities in an emergency situation, surely she's not the only one.

A few weeks later we got a timely visit to the PY office from Pacific Yacht System's Melissa Gervais. She wanted to gauge our interest in an idea she was working on with the Vancouver International Boat Show. Her plan was to put together a Women's Day event specializing in topics that not only teach but empower women in boating. What a great idea I thought, and when I told my mom about it later she was one of the first women to sign up.

Melissa, along with a

team of supporters and sponsors, pulled the day off magnificently. With more than 100 attendees—including a couple babies—and a day full of useful seminars and lectures, it was inspiring to see so many women who were eager to hone their skills, gain confidence, explore their dreams and meet other like-minded women.

The feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive, with many attendees grateful to see an event of this nature started and hoping to build a community of women boaters on the BC coast. You can check out Melissa's write up for more details on page 14. I know I'm looking forward to seeing this great event expand and succeed in the future.

I'm not going to lecture anyone about shaking up traditional gender roles on the water, but it seems that boating would be a lot safer if both captain and crew had equal abilities and confidence in handling and navigating the boat. I'm sure it would be a heck of a lot more interesting too.

—Dale Miller



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## FIRST WOMEN'S DAY AT THE VANCOUVER BOAT SHOW A SUCCESS

The day started with an inspiring presentation from keynote speaker, Pamela Bendall. Her travels in her 14-metre sailboat, *Precious Metal*, took her from Alaska to Mexico, from the Galapagos Islands to Panama. First of all, to leave the trappings of a corporate career to go sailing seems difficult for some of us to fathom. But then to hear her stories of travelling offshore, to unknown parts of the world as a solo female sailor really make you stop and think. In the afternoon, Pamela gave a presentation called "Our

Ocean" that was also a real eye-opener. She has noticed, first-hand, the increase in garbage in our waters and is working diligently to encourage garbage collection and beach clean-ups in the countries she visits. Pamela has documented her travels and experiences in a book called *What Was I Thinking? Adventures of a Woman Sailing Solo*. I started reading it and couldn't put it down. I was particularly taken by this quote, she says, "I essentially live a self-sufficient lifestyle. I make my own water and power, rely on solar panels and leave a very small carbon footprint on the



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planet. Other than the never-ending maintenance and repairs of my boat, life is simple. I have now, finally, discovered the art of living my dream."

After the keynote speaker, participants chose from a number of different speakers and topics. Margaret Pomert, who leads the Seattle Sailing Women's Program and holds a 50-ton US Coast Guard Master Captain's licence, taught "Docking and Anchoring Basics," which was one of the most popular presenta-

tions of the day. Our very own Jeff Cote spoke on electrical and electronics, Agathe Gaulin spoke about weather basics, Liza Copeland helped us organize our boats, Christie Burdon enlightened us on all things insurance and Lorraine Willgress tackled emergency procedures.

The event was held in the Gate H foyer at BC Place and, while there were some challenges with the venue, the feedback forms sent a resounding message that this is something

that was missing in the industry. Participants loved that the event was a full day and that the speakers did not make the topics too basic. That combined with the fashion show and cocktail reception, made the event a complete success.

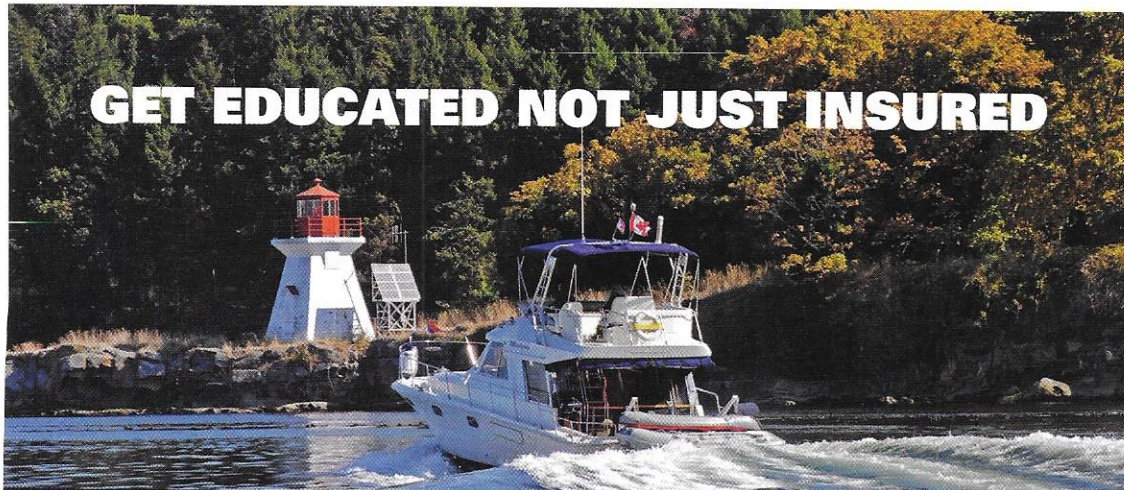
It's one thing for a group of women to get together to organize an event but it becomes even more important when the community that they belong to gets on board. It takes a village and Women's Day was no exception. Hats off

to the organizing committee of the Vancouver Boat Show for giving us the opportunity, especially Linda Waddell, Monica Smith and Eric Nicholl. This event would not have happened without the support of the sponsors, Navis Insurance, Pacific Yachting, Western Marine, Milltown Marine, Steveston Hardware and Mercury Marine. And to the fantastic committee, Christie Burdon (Navis), Desiree Miller (Pacific Yachting), Andrée Stovell (Western Marine) and Sue Mattice (Pacific Yacht Systems). And to our fantastic volunteers who had to get up really early on Sunday, Lauralei, Julia and Jessica. Also, to all of our vendors who donated prizes, a special thank you to Nanaimo Sailing School for our grand prize of a five-day sailing/learning cruise in the Gulf Islands. A sincere thank you!

I am looking forward to next year and I encourage you to contact me at melissa@pysystems.ca with suggestions, ideas or support!

—Melissa Gervais

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