

January/February 2021



# SisterShip

women on the water

**Cruising  
the  
Gambiers**

**Remembering  
'Evan'**

**Sitting out a  
cyclone in Fiji**

*Sailing the Space Between*

**Puppy on board!**

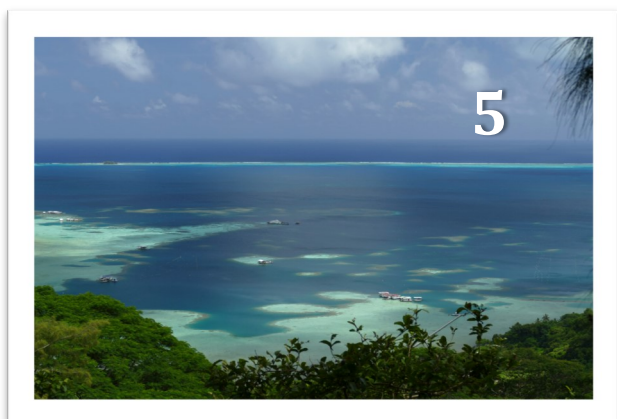
**TRANSITIONING TO LIFE ONSHORE**

**PLUS Barge Boats, Sustainable Sailing, and much more!**

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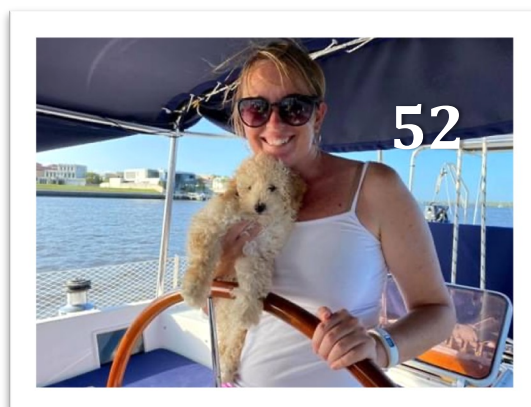
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**COVER:** *Sailing the Space Between* at Treasure Cay, Bahamas.

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# The bowsprit

From the editor

## Evan, John, and Harry...

*SisterShip* Magazine was originally founded in 1988 as a way to expand that special connection women on the water form with each other in ports and anchorages around the globe. Back then there was no internet or social media and cruising could lead to a sense of isolation, something women in particular noticed. Of course being supportive of women does mean men are unwelcome — far from it, and *SisterShip* is delighted to have many male subscribers and even a few contributors!

John Hembrow is well-known to those who cruise the South Pacific and Australia. With many cruisers trapped by COVID-19 border restrictions and having to sit out the cyclone season in less than ideal locations (climate-wise), John thought sharing his experiences of Tropical Cyclone Evan in Fiji in 2012 might provide some useful insights for those facing a similar situation.

Speaking of locations, while most (if not all!) of us are still relatively restricted in our travels, this issue takes us across the globe from the Puget Sound on the Pacific Northwest to the Gambier Islands of French

Polynesia, and from Florida to the canals of Belgium and the islands of the Azores.

We welcome a new face to the pages of *SisterShip*, a very cute ‘commodore’ called Harry! Check Tanya Rabe’s column on page 52 to see what I mean.

There are also two fun competitions to enter — Topsail’s new riddle and a *SisterShip* ‘caption me’. Be sure to get your entries in!

As we begin to cautiously navigate a new year, the team at *SisterShip* wishes you well and thanks you for your continued support.

Stay safe and, as always, look for the dolphin!

*Shelley Wright*





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*SisterShip* Magazine cruises along with an international flavour.

Our contributors hail from all around the globe. We encourage writers to maintain their voice and therefore their local spelling.

Measurements and navigation aids (IALA A and IALA B)\* are different too. We want to keep you on board with our ethos of a less regimented style, and a more international spirit!

\*The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA, previously known as International Association of Lighthouses) is an Inter Governmental Organisation founded in 1957 to collect and provide nautical expertise and advice.



## The Pearls of the Gambiers

View over the Gambier Archipelago from a hill in Taravai.

*When sailing into the Pacific Ocean from the Americas, most cruisers choose the Marquesas in French Polynesia as their first destination. That is far to the north if you enter the Pacific Ocean from Chile. So Minke and Jaap decided that the Gambier Archipelago in Polynesia was a more convenient destination to set sail to. It was a two-month voyage and roughly 4,000 miles of sailing in the South Pacific before they dropped the anchor of their steel ketch Eastern Stream in front of the village of Rikitea. Still relatively far south, it is a destination most sailors do not visit during their passage through French Polynesia. But would it be worth the detour?*

### Cruising the Pacific Ocean

Cruising from Chile to the Gambier Islands is definitely not the milk run of the Pacific crossing. So far south the weather is unpredictable, and low- and high-pressure systems fight for their position. Calm periods, squalls, a lot of wind, and restless seas are all normal. We have never changed the sails so often as we did on this trip. From just a reefed jib to all our sails and everything in between. We even used our spinnaker to keep some speed in the dead-calm periods.

The prevailing conditions raised the question

of whether we would be able to stop at any of the open and unprotected anchorages in between Chile and the Gambier Islands, or if we might have to cross to French Polynesia in one passage. We were lucky the weather was good enough to stop at both Easter Island and Pitcairn. We briefly explored and provisioned with fruit and vegetables, but our first safe harbour was the main anchorage in the Gambier Archipelago.

When we dropped the hook, it was almost unbelievable. Protected by the island of Mangareva and the reefs in front of us, the water was flat again. After two months of movement and swell it was a strange feeling with *Eastern Stream* just floating behind her anchor, not moving at all. To be honest I was kind of proud that we managed to cross the first part of this huge ocean, just the two of us. We sat in the cockpit with our cold and well-deserved ‘arrival’ beers, impressed by the landscapes of a new country.

### The Gambier Archipelago

The view from our cockpit was amazing. From the crystal-clear water we looked to the small village of Rikitea with her big cathedral.



The hills of this volcanic island are green and covered with palms, banana trees, and beautiful flowers, while Mount Duff, the highest mountain of Mangareva, looked down on us. The whole archipelago is only 18 by 15 nautical miles. If I looked in the other direction, I could see some motus on the outer reef in the far distance. Even though we had just arrived I was already looking forward to cruising around here.

But cruising in the Gambier Islands brings a new dimension. The archipelago is famous for black pearls and in a lot of places the lagoon is filled with buoys from the pearl farms. Some visible, some below the surface. Between those buoys, suspended at a depth between one and a half and three meters, are the precious oysters producing their pearls. We didn't want to get caught in these pearl farm lines, or accidentally destroy the farm. So, sailing here we had to search with the binoculars for buoys and navigate a route around them. Remarkably, sailing in the lagoon of the Gambiers is almost like sailing on a lake. The lagoon is not so big that waves

and swell can get too high. Most of the time it's just quite relaxing to cruise around.

### **Eyeballing our way in**

"There's a bommie at one o'clock", I say to Jaap, talking into the handheld radio while I stand on the bowsprit, looking for reefs just below the surface and other places not deep enough to cross. Jaap can hear me on his VHF and I feel the boat move to port. We're on our way to Kouaku, a motu on the south east side of the archipelago. In some places the reefs come to the surface and we have to search for a safe passage through. Kouaku is a place you can only visit when weather is calm and there is no big swell coming into the lagoon, as the outer reef around the motu is open and not high enough to protect boats from big swells. We manoeuvre in circles



**MAIN:** All around the archipelago you see little houses on the water, the pearl farms.

**INSET:** On every island you still can find a church built during the time the missionaries came to Gambiers.

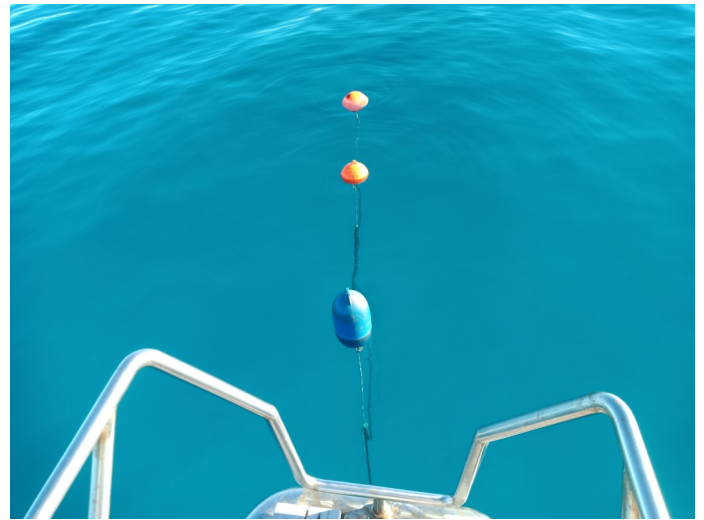




looking for an ideal sandy spot to drop our anchor.

“I think it’s possible to anchor here and use some buoys to lift our chain above the coral over there,” Jaap shares his opinion with me. It is the only place we find where we can drop enough chain in the water and not hit any reef. There are more places of course to drop the anchor. We see other boats anchoring in two meters of depth with about 15 meters of chain. With our boat and type of anchor we like some more scope for a good holding. By lifting some of the chain with buoys the chain will not damage the coral we can see from the surface. It works very well and it’s a great place to be anchored.

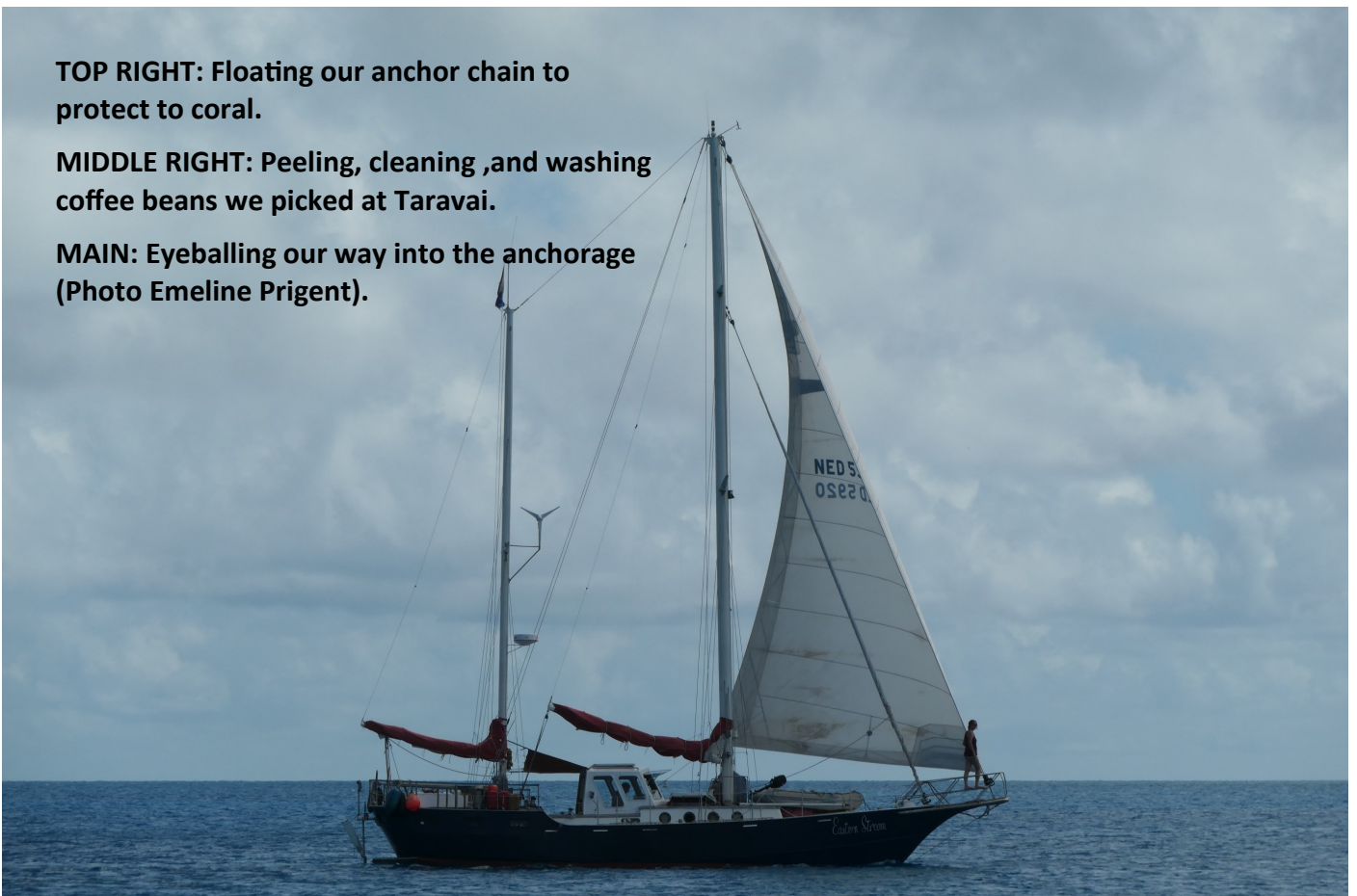
We can easily jump in the water and snorkel to the reefs close by. Unfortunately, the coral does not seem that healthy. Compared to the coral, the reef fishes we see are big, colourful, and definitely worth the time taken to swim. The motu is small, has a pure white beach, coconut palms, and a lot of birds. Everyday people from Mangareva come over to the



**TOP RIGHT: Floating our anchor chain to protect to coral.**

**MIDDLE RIGHT: Peeling, cleaning ,and washing coffee beans we picked at Taravai.**

**MAIN: Eyeballing our way into the anchorage (Photo Emeline Prigent).**







Dada explains how the pearl production works.



The famous black pearls of French Polynesia.



Putting a nucleus in the oyster is precise work.

motu with small boats to search for shells and go fishing. In the evening we have the beach to ourselves again. With friends we enjoy these evenings with BBQs or a little fire, while looking at the stars, listening to the sound of the waves that break on the outer reef and having a good time. It feels like a perfect holiday with lazy days and good company.

## Taravai

We find some sheltered anchorages on the south west side of the island Taravai. Small bays with a good holding in sand with coral encircling for protection. These places are the ones we love to use when there are strong south east winds, which blow here from time to time. We also stayed here for several weeks during the COVID-19 lockdown. Far away from the areas where people live, it gave us some freedom for swimming, snorkelling, and an almost daily walk on the beach in search of coconuts. Coconuts are a welcome addition to our diet here in the Gambiers. You can find them at almost every anchorage, using the green nuts for the water and the older ones for the flesh. We even bought a traditional rasp to make our own coconut milk.

To reach our favourite anchorage, we cross the shallow reefs on the east side of Taravai, to visit the village and anchor in the delightful basin near the town. Although Taravai is little more than a few houses and a church, nowadays only eight people live on the island. Valerie and Hervé are two of them. With their two sons they are a friendly and generous family who always give sailors a warm welcome. They live almost self-sufficiently on the island. They have solar panels for energy and collect rainwater for their water supply. They hunt wild pigs and goats on the island and fish in the vicinity. They grow fruit and vegetables in a big garden; sailors can buy or trade goods for their produce. We exchanged milk, flour, yeast and sometimes a bottle of wine, for green papaya, pampelmousse, and bunches of bananas, but also manioc and sweet potato. Fresh produce is a luxury to eat in this area.

There are also many coffee plants on the island. We asked if locals pick the coffee beans, they laughed. Their grandparents used to do that and sell the coffee in Tahiti.



Nowadays it is a lot of work which earns little reward. “You can buy instant coffee in the shop in Rikitea. So much easier”, replies Valerie to our amazed faces. This was unexpected. Jaap loves coffee and even the instant coffee is expensive here. Jaap asks if he can pick some coffee beans, he gets a positive answer. In a few days our boat turns into a true coffee factory. And yes, it is a lot of work, but now Jaap will drink fabulous home-made coffee for the next few months.

Cruisers are also invited to a weekly potluck BBQ at their place, always is a nice occasion with delicious food, good conversation and games of volleyball and Pétanque. During our stay we visited Taravai many times to join the BBQ, enjoyed pleasant hikes on the island, and visited the family.

### The Real Pearl of Gambiers

It is said that the Gambiers produce the best pearls in French Polynesia, so there is no better place to visit a pearl farm than here. When we are anchored near the airport, I look through the binoculars to search for a

small greenish house on poles. “Look, I think that is Dada’s pearl-farm.” I give Jaap the binoculars to see for himself. An hour later we cross the lagoon with our dinghy, on our way to visit that little house to find out how the oysters are used to produce the famous black pearls.

Dada tells us all about the farming of pearls.



**MAIN: View over the main anchorage of the Gambiers, Rikitea.**

**INSET: You find coconuts on every island and motu in the Gambiers.**







Valerie made me a crown of flowers for international women's day.

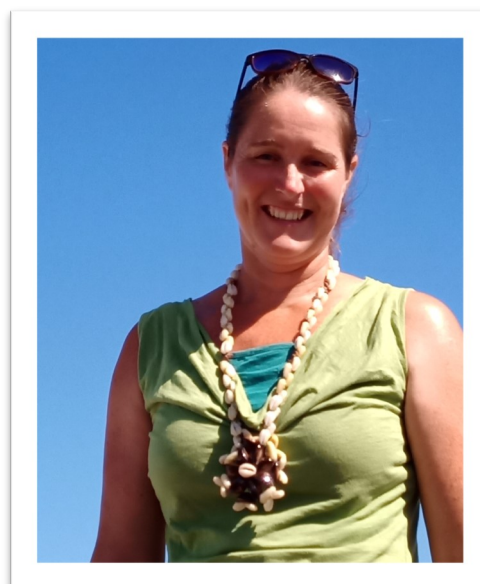
It is a job where you must have a lot of patience. It is rare for oysters to grow a pearl naturally, so the farmers encourage the oysters to produce pearls. First, the young oysters grow for about eighteen months before pearl-farmers can insert a small nucleus inside the shell. The oyster grows a pearl around this nucleus, but again this is an eighteen-month process. During this period, the farmers have to ensure the environment is best for the oysters. While the oysters grow the pearl they need to stay healthy. One oyster can produce three pearls in its lifetime. Farmers can only sell those pearls which have a perfect shape and colour. If there is a little bud of mis-growth on the pearl it is worth nothing, all the patience (and investment) was for naught. On the other hand, when farmers produce a high-quality pearl it can be sold for a high price – far in excess of our travelling budget.

It is interesting to watch the different workers do their different jobs. Cleaning the oysters, opening them a little to put a nucleus inside, and then returning the oyster to the water where it continues to grow. It was fascinating to learn more about how this industry operates and I am glad we had the opportunity to visit a pearl farm before we left the Gambiers.

## Was it worth visiting?

We had more than enough time to explore the archipelago and enjoy the hospitality of the people living here. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown and the travel restrictions we stayed five months in the Gambier. The Gambiers are definitely a pearl within French Polynesia. The archipelago has great variety – the mountains to explore, the motus to relax at and to enjoy the blue water. But it was also a great experience to discover more about living so close to nature.

The Gambier Islands are still a region in French Polynesia where not so many cruisers come. Where you can stay alone at an anchorage for days or even weeks without meeting other people, enjoying nature. For me it was a little paradise that has all the facets of French Polynesia. Notably, the archipelago is outside of the cyclone area. We will definitely return to the Gambier Archipelago during the next South Pacific cyclone season.



**Minke and her boyfriend Jaap left the Netherlands aboard the steel ketch, *Eastern Stream*, in 2016. After reaching Panama they sailed to Easter Island (Rapa Nui) and from there to Chile. They have lived in Chile for more than a year now, exploring Patagonia.**

**Minke's blog can be found at: [www.easternstream.nl](http://www.easternstream.nl)**



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### RIDDLE MY BOAT PART (hyphenated word)

We are a little vane but we look perfect when we're trimmed

We are terrible at keeping secrets and are such snitches

We can recount a special short story which may be of fairies

When in flight we can stall and lift but never leave the boat

What part of the boat are we ?

*Congratulations goes to winners  
Tania Ebeling and Sheerie Mercer  
(again!) for the last Sistership riddle  
competition which was the  
"Windlass"*

*Here's another one and another*

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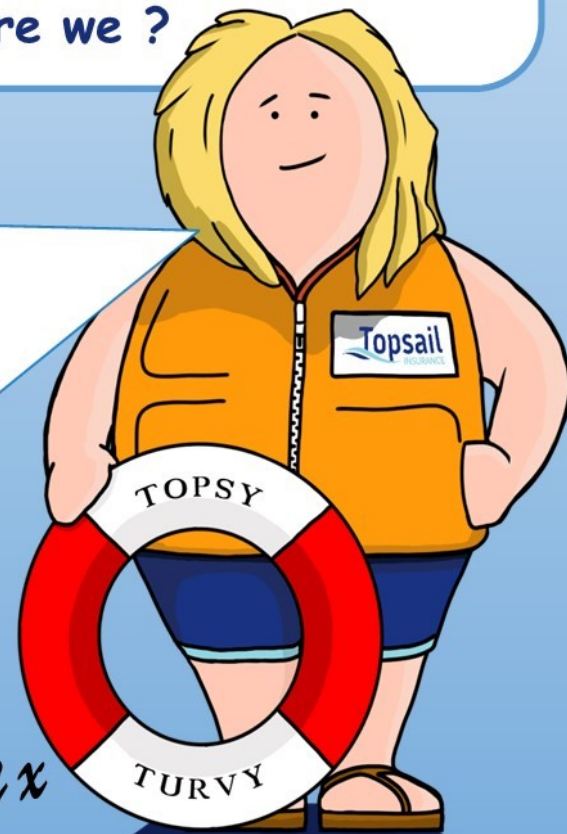
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# *SisterShip* Watches ...



By Amy Alton

## *Sailing the Space Between*

Many of us enjoy ‘test runs’ of the cruising lifestyle by chartering a boat and island hopping for a week or two. Holly and her husband, Scott, have reversed that path. Holly and Scott sold everything, bought their boat *Sailing the Space Between*, a Leopard 46, and opened her up for charters in Florida and the Bahamas, inviting charter guests onboard to be temporary cruisers.

Holly has been working hard to document a variety of their cruising and charter adventures over the past three years. Sometimes they create an entire video for their guests and share it on YouTube, but they also document the projects and pitfalls of the cruising lifestyle.

**Amy: *Sailing the Space Between* was in Key West, Florida, with charter guests when the COVID-19 pandemic began.**

**What had your plans been and how have they changed?**

**Holly:** The plan was to show our guests a great time and we accomplished that. It was sad to see Key West shut down, but it was all still new, and the bars were still trying to figure things out. We were still able to walk the streets, buy some libations and [party back on the boat in quarantine](#). We did postpone the other two charters so we could get back to our family in these uncertain times. We were able to reschedule them in June and have continued to be a safe place where small groups could travel, have fun, and experience new adventures during the pandemic.

**Amy: How do you divide video production between you and Scott?**

**Holly:** Scott pretty much does ALL the postproduction; I do most of the filming. I do a final edit and some voice overs. It takes me way too long to make the videos. Our latest intro (which had to turn into a trailer because it got too long) took me over a week to make, and it was only just over a minute. My perfectionism gets the best of me.



**Amy: How has creating videos enhanced your sailing experience?**

**Holly:** I think it helps to try to look at the learning experience or humorous moments as filming. Whatever is happening may suck right now (if something breaks or goes wrong) but if I grab the camera and can show everyone that shit happens all the time and you just gotta deal with it, I think it helps us process it and hopefully others too.

**Amy: How has it helped your charter business?**

**Holly:** YouTube is our main source of advertising. We want to be real with people and we find that this makes the potential guests at ease, like they know us before even contacting us. A week in close quarters can be intimidating for people to spend with people they don't know. I think the videos help alleviate that.

**Amy: Your videos have documented selling all of your stuff and buying a boat. Tell us about that process.**



**Holly:** Well, it took a year and we're still not done. Scott has always been an adventurous man which translates into lots of toys and hobbies. We sold an RV, a Harley, two RZR side by sides, a trailer, and an antique truck, which helped us in purchasing our boat.



*Sailing the Space Between at anchor.*



**Amy:** What's your biggest struggle with your videos?

**Holly:** Consistency, which boils down to time. Most successful channels produce at least a video a week. We run two businesses, and videos (directly) aren't a source of income. Unless Scott has great content to work with, the motivation to put the time in to make them isn't there.

**Amy:** You've stayed in Florida for hurricane season for several years. What advice do you have to cruisers living on or leaving their boat for hurricane season?

**Holly:** I'm a born Floridian, hurricanes are just a part of life. You plan for the worst and hope for the best. Find a safe/secure harbor and do what you can to secure her and if it looks like it's going to be a direct hit, get off the boat. Your life is more important than the boat.

**Amy:** You get to introduce your guests to the cruising lifestyle. What usually surprises them the most?

**Holly:** How much work it is. Something is always breaking or going wrong, kinda like a house. There're lots of moving parts to a



**ABOVE:** Holly and Scott making a heart.

boat and it takes a lot to make sure they're all working properly. Especially on a four-cabin cat, it's usually at least two, sometimes four-times the headache!

**Amy:** What's one piece of gear you wish you had onboard *Sailing the Space Between*?

**Holly:** I'd say a dedicated cameraman. Is that considered gear? It's just us two and when crazy stuff happens, we both have to help to work through it. There's no time to pick up the camera to document it. I try to recap after the fact, but it would be nice to get some of the action. Guests have been known to do some filming for me.

**Amy:** What's your favorite modification you have made to *Sailing the Space Between*?

**Holly:** It's either the [SeaDek](#) or the extra fridge/freezer.

**Amy:** Your videos include amazing drone footage of remote islands. Tell us about your drone. Who flies it? What advice would you give to someone who wants to fly a drone off the boat?



Drone shot of *Sailing the Space Between*.



**Holly:** Scott has a love/hate relationship with his Mavic 2 Pro. It's always throwing error codes at him and he's crashed it twice while doing an in-sail flight which makes him gun shy. Practice a lot in a stationary place before attempting to launch from a boat, especially a moving one.

**Amy:** Landlubbers often wonder how sailors can live in a small space with their partner. What tips do you have for maintaining sanity with Scott?

**Holly:** We have lots of practice. We have been together for 26 years and have worked together for most of it. We're pretty much together 24/7 anyway. That's not to say we don't fight, but the amount of space around us doesn't change anything.

**Amy:** What's been your hardest or scariest moment on *Sailing the Space Between*?

**Holly:** There have only been two times I've



**BELOW:** Charter guests and crew.



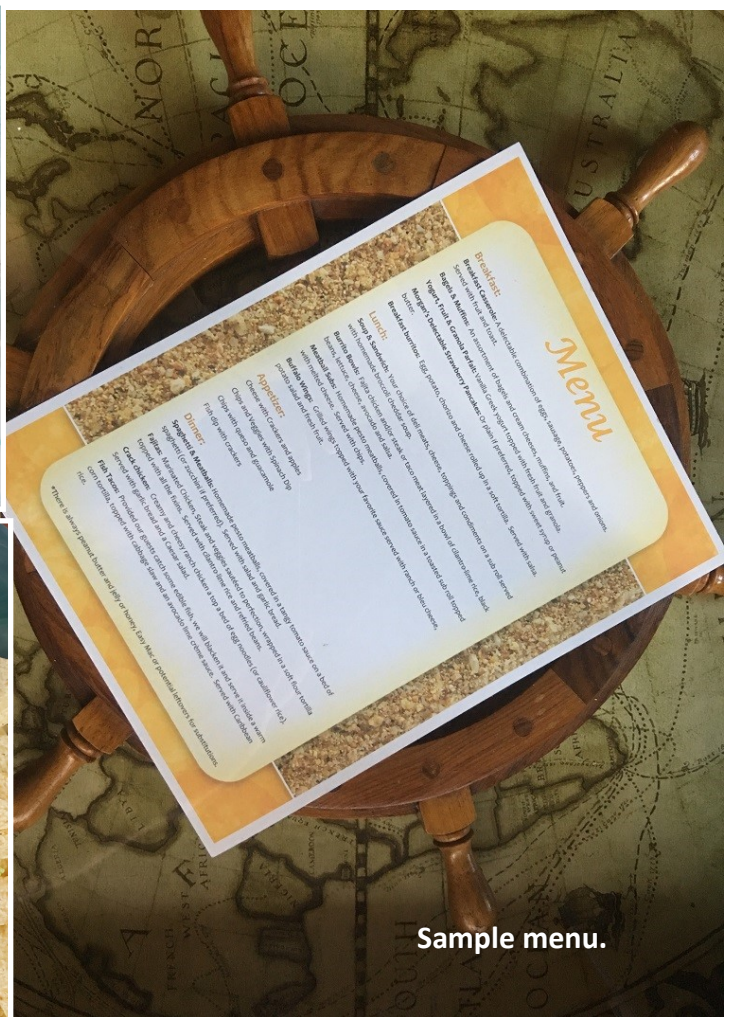




Chicken caesar wrap with avocado pasta salad.



Taco salad.



Sample menu.

Nibbles on board *Sailing the Space Between*.







Sunset from *Sailing the Space Between*.



View from BooBoo Hill in Wardrick Wells, Bahamas.



been scared so far. The first was [when we were chased by a waterspout](#). The other was when we anchored in a spot in the Bahamas and the winds turned and picked up to 35 knots in the middle of the night. The anchor drug and we had to pull it up in three-foot seas and navigate through two reefs in 35 knots and the dark.

**Amy: What's one quality Scott has that makes him a great sailing partner?**

**Holly:** He knows how to do and fix EVERYTHING. It boggles my mind, and I don't know how other sailors out there can live on a boat without being super handy.

**Amy: What strength do you have that you think makes you a good sailing partner?**

**Holly:** The ability to see the good in things. Not everything goes the way you want it to, but that's just life. I try to find the bright side when possible.

**Amy: Is there anything else you want to share with the readers of *SisterShip Magazine*?**

**Holly:** I look forward to getting to know more of your audience and hope they enjoy our goofy adventures in return.

**Links:**

<https://www.facebook.com/SailingTheSpaceBetween>

<https://www.sailtsb.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/sailingthespacebetween/>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/sailingthespacebetween>



**ABOVE: Scott and Holly.**



Amy Alton, in partnership with her husband, shares their journey on their YouTube channel, [Out Chasing Stars](#). You can also enjoy her writing and photography on their blog, [OutChasingStars.com](#).



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# Transitions

As we move from one year into the next, we have hopes that the upcoming year will be better than the previous one. This is especially so as we leave this tumultuous year where our freedoms have been seriously curtailed. How much more difficult it is though, when we have had wonderful times sailing, exploring, and making new friends, to leave it all behind and decide the time has come to 'swallow the anchor'? This is going to happen to many of us at some time or other. Are you mentally, as well as physically, prepared for this?

Making the move off the boat into a very different future can be a stressful time. When we sailed away from New Zealand 15 years ago in 2005, leaving our friends and family, we were buoyed up with such excitement at the prospect of adventures to come we gave no thought to what we would do when our voyaging days came to an end. Cruising the world was the sum of what we wanted to do. It was our everything. We were only in our late 50s and the world beckoned. We had a

small sailing kitty, our health, and a sturdy boat. Adventures and misadventures; change and more change; we relished it all.

We knew this lifestyle would take every cent we owned but the freedoms are addictive. Life was so full we hardly noticed the years passing until we hit 70. Then for some reason we realised that we were getting old! And there was more sailing we wanted to do before we sold the boat, more land adventures too. How to fit them all in, and when?

Then COVID-19 struck and stymied all plans. When you cannot see many years of active life ahead even wasting a day seems criminal! We have learned some interesting things and completed several projects over the past restrictive months but are aching to proceed with our plans. Returning to our hometown in New Zealand is not on our agenda because we simply would not fit in anymore. We have changed and are not the same people we were in our 50s. Our values have changed with the years at sea. We now have a clearer idea of what we are looking for when our sailing days are over. We can actually visualize how our life will be but getting to that point of acceptance has not been easy. Perhaps the transition back to land is easier for those sailors who already have one foot in a land-based life?

Of the 40 women sailors who contributed to my book, *Blue Water Women; Making the Leap from Landlubber to a Life at Sea*, about 50 percent have a base on land. As boat deliverer



Sunset serenade on *Stardancer*.





## Gina de Vere

Judy Hildebrand says, “I currently live on land with a home base. It’s always hard when I return from a long stint at sea but I have many land friends so I ease into it. I also live on a mountain with no neighbours. It would be hell if I returned to city life! It doesn’t take long before I am itching to feel a solid deck under me and the thrill of rolling along in the trades to some exotic port.”

Finding a substitute for the utter peace and privacy cruising can provide is not always easy. Alexandra Mateer and her husband found an isolated spot on a mountainside because as she says, “We are still in nature, so it’s not like moving to a city. There is a lot of similarity between living in wild isolated bush places and being on the ocean.”

However, we are all different. Liz Stewart enjoys a town life where she can be more spontaneous, just lock the door and leave without a second thought. Some of our sailing women enjoy living near a city or town because of the access to facilities this brings. Often times they are closer to their families and can be part of their grandchildren’s lives or can visit art galleries and theatres which they missed while at sea. However, several blue water women have tried land life but have missed the sea, so have bought a smaller boat for pottering about the coast or seasonal sailing. Chantal Liebert Haller in Switzerland and Laila Kall of Sweden have each bought smaller boats which they enjoy sailing around the Mediterranean each summer. Lisa McVey is back in ‘dirt world’ as she calls it but is planning on buying another boat to sail in a

different way this time; just six to seven months each year giving her the chance not to miss out on land-based activities. Jennifer Gordon-Jones has a boat in the Mediterranean for the sailing season and then travels in her motorhome exploring Australia. Others have a canal boat to explore Europe for a few months each year.

One theme that seems to run through most of the options of post-cruising life is that of keeping moving, keeping going with different projects to continue expanding your world, and often keeping a connection with water or wilderness. Starting a new life can have its difficulties. Gwen Hamlin suggests finding a group pursuing a shared activity works well in helping to settle in. She has a good book club group and her husband made new friends via a motorcycle group. She says that fitting in with friends and family again can be difficult, “It has taken me six years to carve out some sort of life ashore. I’d been gone a long time. It was hard. No one really wanted to hear about our experiences. Most people have little incentive to include you in their well-established networks.” This is something we hear a lot; other people are not really interested in your sea stories; they are too far away from their reality and their day to day interests.

Lilly Service makes the point that her friends and family will possibly not be ready for the ‘new’ her. “I am getting so much more educated about the world we live in. I don’t want to be the same as I was. After all, isn’t that the point of cruising? We may live off



the grid somewhere beautiful; we are pretty sure we will not end up where we started, upper middleclass suburbia.”

Physically moving your things off the boat you have called home for some years can be a challenge. Friends Chris and Russ managed to get their 25 years’ worth of gear into four suitcases, but they did already have a house set up with all the requirements to start a new life. I dread the idea of packing up, sorting out, and giving away a large amount of my possessions, but because we want to do more motorbiking we need to travel lighter.

Then there is the physical transition of moving off your boat, your beloved home, and prepping the boat for sale. Selling your boat could take longer than you expect and the price you get most probably will be less than you hoped for in this current market of over-supply. These are stressful moments in your life, and you need to be kind to yourself. I am told if you can focus on the joys you expect in your future life it makes going through these tough times easier.

The writer Maya Angelou believes we must acknowledge there are times when we are ‘in the slop’ – in between saying goodbye to the past before embracing the future which she explains in her book *In the Meantime*. Learning how to transition more easily starts with acknowledging and accepting you are in this place for a while. Make written plans and

**BELOW: Gina on *Stardancer* – celebration time!**



**ABOVE: Crossing from Brisbane to PNG on our former boat.**

write tick lists, giving yourself rewards on completion of each step. These actions can give you a feeling of achievement and progress when all you can see is mess and muddle. Take the time to say ‘goodbye’ to your boat, and when the day comes to put up the SOLD sign, create a ritual of celebration. You can now move ahead with the next part of your life. Make sure you have plenty of dreams, stay ‘involved’ with your community and keep busy with lots of projects.

Whatever age we are or stage we are at we still need to have adventures, to seek out new experiences to feel truly *alive*! If we dare to take the steps to a different way of living, we can lead a more fulfilling life and make the most of our time on this wonderful planet.

A poem written by blue water sailor Jeanne Pickers sums up what we miss when we swallow the anchor:

*“I MISS that wonderful excitement and stomach-*







**TOP:** Local PNG School kids visiting *Caesura*, our former boat.

**ABOVE:** Christian catching dinner, North Queensland.

**TOP:** Sharing another sunset crossing the Arafura Sea.

**ABOVE:** Impromptu invitation to a Moslem wedding.



**Socialising with newly made sailing friends.**



*churning elation of heading out to sea. I miss that yearning for the overwhelming wonder of vastness. A time to take stock, to be humbled, to grow my inner self in quiet solitude without the humdrum of cluttered existence that living in civilization's confinement and worldliness necessitates. Being out at sea is truly living in the now – no yesterdays and what might have been, no tomorrows with what still might be: just the moment and whatever the elements have to offer.”*



**A New Zealander by birth, Gina has been sailing full time on her monohull, a Gib Sea 47.2 with her husband Christian Selaries for the past 15 years. They set sail from NZ in 2005, sailing the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea twice, Australia to Indonesia twice, exploring Borneo, Thailand and Malaysia, and the South China Sea.**

**Sailing was a huge change from the career Gina enjoyed as university lecturer in marketing, innovation, and entrepreneurship, and as CEO of her business consultancy, Masters Consulting. She continues her work as a Life Coach. Her newest adventure is as book author, having previously had articles published in sailing magazines in Germany, USA, Australia, and NZ. Gina's aim in life is to inspire and support women in particular, to make the 'leap' to a more adventurous, fulfilling life.**

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# Should I stay or should I go?

Image by Wikilimages Pixabay.

## John Hembrow

With many cruising yachts stranded in the cyclone zone this summer due to COVID-19 border closures, Down Under Rally's John Hembrow shares his experiences of Tropical Cyclone Evan in Fiji in 2012. John hopes this may be useful for those currently sitting out the cyclone season.

Remember the song by the band The Clash "Should I stay or should I go?"

If you like take a listen <http://youtu.be/GqH21LEmfbQ>. The chorus goes like this:

*Should I stay or should I go now?  
Should I stay or should I go now?  
If I go there will be trouble  
and if I stay it will be double.  
So come on and let me know  
Should I stay or should I go?*

Those of you reading this who have sailed off or are the process of sailing off 'into the sunset' have, or will at some stage, be faced



with the decision "should I stay or should I go".

During 2012 this became my theme song.

We departed Panama on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 and began our westbound journey with no



real destination in mind. We were just headed west and each time we arrived somewhere we liked, that song started in my head.

Seven months and 7000 nautical miles later we arrived in Fiji and it was time once again for the now familiar tune to rattle around inside my head – but with a new urgency. We needed to decide now, stay in Fiji for the cyclone season or go to New Zealand or Australia. Having done the passage from New Caledonia to NZ in 2009 with our previous boat *Migaloo* and having spent six months exploring NZ we decided that as much as we enjoyed our time there in 2009/2010, we didn't want to go back again. We were not ready to head 'home' to Australia just yet either as we really had not even scratched the surface when it comes to the cruising grounds on offer in Fiji. So crunch time – what to do?

We were well aware that cyclones frequent Fiji but having spoken to several other cruisers who had spent several cyclone seasons in Fiji and having also been able to secure a berth for the season at Vuda Point

Marina, a well-respected 'cyclone hole', we decided that if our insurer would allow it, we would stay! We were pleasantly surprised when our insurer approved our request to stay with the only real condition being that in



**We were required to secure aft mooring lines with chains to the cyclone railway pegs to prevent chafe from the marina wall.**



**A briefing was held by marina management.**



the event of a named storm being forecast to effect Fiji, *Red Sky* must be located in Vuda Point Marina and the cyclone procedure of the marina be followed.

Over the next couple of months, we waved goodbye to new friends and old as they all departed Fiji for NZ or Australia and by the beginning of December, we were one of only about 10 or so cruising boats that remained and were still actively cruising the area. Other cruisers (about 50 or so) had opted to return home and leave their boats either in the water or in cyclone pits at Vuda Marina or the cyclone hole at Musket Cove marina. For some this had been a ritual for several years.

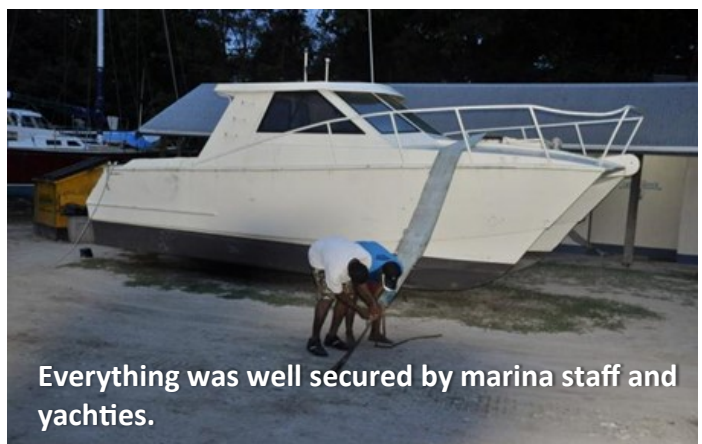
During our journey from Panama to Fiji it was rare to not be sharing anchorages with many other boats and as much as we loved the company and comradeship of our fellow cruisers, we were really looking forward to being the only boat in the anchorage. We were not disappointed; at one stage we were even the only boat at Musket Cove where during the cruising season it is normal for there to be 30 boats and not unusual for over 50! We returned to Vuda Marina a couple of times in late November and early December as there were potential storms headed towards Fiji, but it was not until about the 12<sup>th</sup> of December that the reality of what might be in store for us began to sink in. Tropical Cyclone Evan had hit Samoa twice in 48 hours caused plenty of damage, was now intensifying and headed our way. Time to get back to Vuda and make preparations!

On the 15<sup>th</sup> Vuda Point Marina management put out a notice board that left no doubt about what was now a very real threat.

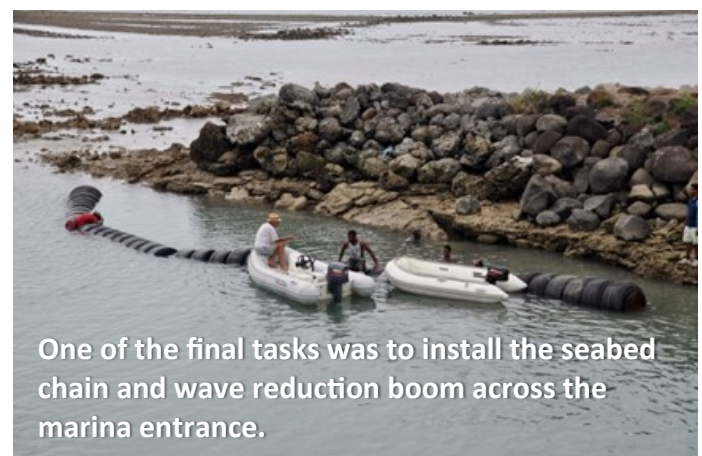
Having been in the marina for two days our preparations were well underway in accordance with the guidelines provided by Vuda Marina including the requirement to secure aft mooring lines with chains to the cyclone railway pegs to prevent chafe from the marina wall.

The last of the major preparation yet to be completed was the process of removing anchors from all the vessels (about 50) and running anchor chains via small dinghy out to the centre of the marina, where divers (cruisers and marina employees) took turns diving to the bottom of the sea floor where they were secured to a cyclone rail. Whilst the depth of the water was only about five metres, visibility was about six inches which made this a difficult, unpleasant, and time-consuming process.

A briefing was held by Marina Management who went to great lengths to explain what we



Everything was well secured by marina staff and yachties.



One of the final tasks was to install the seabed chain and wave reduction boom across the marina entrance.



may experience, the obvious dangers, and the not so obvious ones such as the potential for and effects of storm surge should it occur. They also informed us of a property within walking distance they had secured, where anyone from the marina could retreat at any time before during or after the storm to if they wished or needed to.

Preparations continued and the sense of community that is synonymous to the cruising community was more evident than ever. Everyone lent a hand to anyone who needed one as well as tending to the needs of vessels that had been left by absent owners in a state that was not consistent with being ready for what we were now sure was coming: TC Evan, confirmed Category 4 cyclone with wind speed estimated at 270 kph (145 knots), and expected to directly impact Fiji's western division, that's right where Vuda Point Marina, us, and our boats were located.

Hmmm, maybe being a bit cold might not have been so bad... And once again I find myself singing that bloody song *should I stay or should I go?* Too late now, we are staying!

Urgent, but organised and calm, preparations continued for the next 24 hours (night and day). Anything and everything was well secured by marina staff and yachties.

One of the final tasks was to install the seabed chain and wave reduction boom

across the marina entrance.

Of course, yachties being yachties, not even the threat of a Cat 4 Cyclone forecast to hit in the next 12 hours was going to interrupt 'sundowners'.

It was time to head back to the boat move her away from the seawall (and any chance of an easy disembarking if things got ugly) and wait!

## THE EYE OF THE STORM

By Sunday evening 16th December 2012 all preparations were complete, and we returned to *Red Sky*, moved her away from the sea wall, tensioned the anchor chain and stern lines, checked that our spreaders were not going to get fouled in the rigging/masts of the boats either side of us, and adjusted our fenders. We were anxiously checking forecasts and hoping that TC Evan would make a last-minute course adjustment and move offshore. No luck in that regard, weather stations reported that TC Evan was intensifying and now confirmed as a Category 4 Cyclone (strongest winds are VERY DESTRUCTIVE with gusts of 120-150 knots. These winds correspond to the highest category on the Beaufort scale, Beaufort 12: Hurricane).

**11.00 am Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December.** We were getting a taste of what was to come. Wind speeds were constant at about 50 knots with gusts to about 65 knots and the barometer was falling at an alarming rate.

**12.30 pm:** I attempted to capture the fury on video of what we thought (hoped) was as bad as it would get. Rain was coming down in sheets, the noise generated by the wind as it continued to build (now constant around 65 knots or 145 kph and gusting much higher) had changed from the familiar whistle as it passed through rigging to what I can only describe as a guttural roar, something like the noise one that the Zombies make in those Hollywood horror movies. At this stage we





still had internet. I posted the video on my Facebook Page and I was soon receiving requests from news and other media for permission to air it. 28 Storms posted it to their YouTube Channel and can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/gh6S9D6Hs8A>

**1.00 pm:** Pressure was 970 and still falling. News reports were saying that the eye, which was expected to pass by very close to Vuda Marina, was still five hours away! It was at this point we realised that we were in one hell of a storm and things were going to get ugly.

Items that had not been well enough secured began to blow around the marina and to my surprise I could see marina staff running around chasing them as they crashed into trees and boats that were in the shipyard. I was at the time, and remain still, in awe of the courage and commitment of the Vuda Marina staff. They had been told by management not to venture outside once the cyclone started however, they couldn't seem to help themselves.

The next thing I saw was one of the staff with dive tanks and mask on running past *Red Sky* headed for the marina entrance, then the marina tender headed that way also. Apparently the surge protector had partially let go and these guys were going to attempt to re-attach it! I am told the swells at the marina entrance were in excess of 1 metre and there were standing waves breaking all over the surge protector but that wasn't going to stop the staff from having a go at re-securing it even if the wind out there was over 70 knots!

**3.00 pm:** The first reports of drama begin to filter over the radio. Headsails that had not been removed started to unfurl and shred, halyards that had not been well secured were flying around masts, and a large tree had fallen, its branches rested on the solar panels and rear awning of a boat across from us. Fortunately, it seems that the marina staff and the owners were able to clear the worst of the debris and avoid further damage. So far so good for us, our fenders continued to

jump on to the deck as *Red Sky* and the boats either side of us rolled and came together, it was a continuous battle to keep them in place but so far we had managed to avoid any damage.

**5.00 pm:** The bow lines on a 70 plus foot ketch five boats upwind from us failed and apparently the anchor chain was not properly secured. Its owner was desperately motoring forward on its stern lines attempting to keep the boat from being destroyed against the seawall.

The result of this for us was that the weight of it was transferred to the boat alongside, causing a domino effect meaning that they were now all resting on each other and rolling heavily with the wind pressure on the masts. It became far too dangerous to try to push the fenders back down as they were pushed out of position as the rolling was so extreme that it was actually causing the cap rail to go under water. One instance of bad timing on my behalf would have resulted in a crushed limb or worse. It was time to retreat below and peek out of the port lights.

As we rolled, I could see at least half a metre of the antifoul of the boat to our starboard and one metre of the smaller boat to our portside. By now the fenders, those that hadn't popped, were useless and the topsides of *Red Sky* and the boats around us were getting scratched. The teak cap rails were being destroyed, stanchions were bending and lifelines breaking. It was heartbreaking to have no choice but to bear witness to the sights and sounds of *Red Sky* being punished in such a manner, even as I wrote this five months later I became emotional.

This continued for the next four hours or so and wind speeds at the marina entrance were reported to have exceeded 120 knots or 220 kph. I can say with certainty that this was the worst four hours of boat ownership in my life. Leanne and I just sat in the saloon and grimaced every few minutes at the sound of splintering timbers and the boats next door bashing against our topsides, trying to



imagine just how bad the damage might be.

We couldn't move around with any ease and even just sitting in the lounges was impossible without bracing against the floor, at one stage Leanne was actually thrown from port to starboard as she attempted to change positions. The motion of the boat was violent and was far worse than any ocean passage we have experienced.

**9.00 pm:** Things started to calm a little; it is amazing how calm 40 knots of wind seem after four to five hours of 80-100 knots! But the fun wasn't over yet.

Concerns about a storm surge coinciding with a high tide that was due in a couple of hours lead to speculation about the potential consequences and even more trepidation. Fortunately, there was no significant surge, and we were spared the predicted anarchy that may have resulted.

**1.30 am:** 14 hours after it began it was finally over. Things calmed. *Red Sky* was still afloat. A good look around with the aid of a spotlight showed no significant damage apparent (cosmetic only) and she was now just rolling gently. We realised we were ok. Emotional and exhausted, but grateful to have survived what was later reported here at <http://www.weather.com/news/weather-hurricanes/fiji-samoa-cyclone-evan-20121216> to be "The most intense tropical cyclone to have impacted Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu".

## THE AFTERMATH

After some welcome sleep, the daylight revealed TC Evan's destruction during his brief visit to Fiji.

Many of the trees in the marina grounds, some well over 40 years old, were blown over. The marina staff had been working to beautify the grounds for a couple of months before the storm and it was sad to see their work destroyed. The sunset bar at the marina entrance withstood over 100 knots and suffered relatively minor damage after the



**ABOVE and BELOW:** The daylight revealed the destruction.





flagpole collapsed under the pressure of the wind causing it falling onto the roof of the bar.

Overall, the boats fared much better than the grounds. The majority of those that had been properly prepared and that were in the cyclone holes in the shipyard suffered no damage.

Many of the boats in the cyclone holes did move and had to be repositioned with the travel lift after the storm but to my knowledge none suffered any damage as a result.

Despite the best efforts of marina staff and the yachties to prepare all the boats some of the boats whose owners were absent had not been prepared by their owners with a Category 4 storm in mind and they did suffer some damage such as the loss of solar panels and awnings that either had not been properly secured or that should, with the benefit of hindsight, been removed completely.

**BELOW and RIGHT: More damage.**



Unfortunately, some of these items after they were blown free of their original location did end up causing damage to other boats that had been properly prepared.

A few sails that had not been removed were also the cause for concern before, during, and after the storm. The absent owners of vessels who could be contacted, and who had not removed sails, gave permission for their boats to be attended to and where possible marina staff and other yachties who had already prepared their boats, set about preparing these vessels and saved them from being damaged or causing damage.

Some owners decided that they didn't want to





remove their sails and other items or allow others to do so in their absence, and whilst some suffered no consequences others were not so lucky. There were also more than a couple of dinghies that could have been secured better.

The boats that were in the water in the marina fared a little differently to those in the cyclone holes.

Some had no damage at all, quite a few suffered very minor damage, such as bent stanchions.

Some, mostly the larger boats as they were all moored next to each other, including *Red Sky*, were unlucky enough to be damaged as a result of another vessel's bow lines breaking under the strain.

This shouldn't have been a major issue except that the anchor chain of this vessel (as they discovered when trying to tension it during the storm after the lines broke) had not been properly secured to the centre cyclone mooring. As a result, this vessel was driven back into the marina wall and then it 'leaned' on the one next to it which in turn leaned on the one next to it and so on. These boats were then gunnel to gunnel and the fenders that were already being punished as the boats heeled heavily in gusts of over 100 knots and touched each other, were now being squashed flat. As the gusts came and went the fenders would pop out and be blown on deck and a battle to slip them back into place between the gusts became far too dangerous. The owners (all of whom were on board) resigned themselves to the fact that their boats were going to be damaged. Some fenders simply popped or were cut.

*Red Sky* was the last boat in this domino effect, and she suffered heavy scratching to her topsides as well as broken lifelines, bent stanchions, destroyed cap rails and cleat bases.

To my knowledge there were no injuries



**ABOVE: *Red Sky* was the last boat in this domino effect and she suffered heavy scratching to her topsides as well as broken lifelines, bent stanchions, destroyed cap rails, and cleat bases.**



sustained by any yachties or staff at any time during Evan's visit and given the ferocity of the storm, this is a miracle and testimony to the preparations made by all.

I must emphasise that this was a significant storm event and given the number of boats that were at Vuda Point Marina vs the number that sustained anything more than a bent stanchion or two is a testimony to how well-deserved Vuda's reputation is for being the best cyclone hole in the Pacific.

The next few days saw a huge effort by all present to clean up the damage and try to get things back to normal. Apart from the fact that there was no electricity for 10 days or so afterwards life at Vuda Point returned to normal pretty quickly.

The management and staff of Vuda excelled before, during, and after this event and must be congratulated for their dedication and genuine concern for all property and persons in their care. We will forever be grateful to the entire team. To show our appreciation we 'took the hat around' to all the cruisers and other boat owners in the marina and raised some money to enable us to invite all the staff and management to a dinner in their honor. The yachties served the food and drinks and the staff were able to just relax and share their stories of how their families and friends had been impacted by Evan. Some told stories of family and friends that were missing, of homes that had been completely destroyed, and people who had lost everything they owned. That is when we truly realized how lucky we were. But it was when Moe, the shipyard manager/travel lift operator, spoke to us as a group that emotions overcame many of those present. You see Moe rarely says anything, he is always polite but not what you would call talkative, so when he stood up to thank us for the dinner and he told his story we were all in awe of him. He spoke from his heart and one of the things he said was:

*"When the storm was on, Adam (the marina manager) made me go home, I didn't want to, I wanted to stay and make sure you were all ok and that the boats were ok too. I went home and I feel bad to say this but instead of being worried about my family and my home I was worried about the marina and the boats and the yachties".*



**ABOVE: Steve, one of the grateful yachties, serving drinks.**

**BELOW: Some of the staff enjoying a meal and drink.**



## LESSONS LEARNED

It is easy with the benefit of hindsight or from the comfort of the chair that you might be sitting in as you read this to be critical of some of the things that happened during Evan.

The things I learned from being there when it happened are many and YES there are things that could have been done differently and



YES I have asked myself more than once was it a good idea to stay in Fiji during the cyclone season? In answer to this question I can say that at the time I wished we had not stayed but having had the experience and dealt with the consequences I can honestly say that given the same circumstances that lead to our making the decision to stay I would do it again, and in fact we did.

I have spoken with friends who weathered the storm at Vuda with us and here is what some have said in regard to lessons learned:

- Fenders are not going to protect your boat in an event like this. After Evan I bought some old car tyres and drilled holes through top and attached ropes for tying them to the topsides and also to be passed under the boat and tie to the other side to stop them popping out. I then bought second hand T-Shirts and covered the tyres with these. I stored these at the marina just in case. Perfect solution? Maybe not, but I would rather a few black tyre marks than scratched gelcoat.
- All lines securing the boat should be doubled and attached to at least two alternate points of anchor.

- Anchor chains that have been secured to the central cyclone mooring **MUST** be tensioned **IMMEDIATELY** after they have been attached to ensure they are well connected.
- All accessories such as solar panels and the like **MUST** be removed or if not practical to do so very well lashed down
- Wind instruments and other fittings at mastheads should be removed.
- Sails **MUST BE REMOVED** (I can think of no valid reason for not doing so).
- If you identify items on another boat that have not been properly prepared, and you believe they could cause injury or damage, persevere until you get permission from the marina management to remove them and then do so with the same care you would if it were your own boat.
- If possible take photos of your boat in its prepared state and send them to your insurer and ask them to confirm in writing that they are satisfied with your preparations (we did this).





- Marinas should have comprehensive checklists that have two fields of tasks :
  - 1) Those that **must be done** or you will be asked to leave (such as removing sails and doubling mooring lines).
  - 2) Those that they **strongly recommend** to be done.
  - 3) The ones that fall under the category of **must be done** should be confirmed as having been done by each and every boat by a member of the marina staff.
- People all react differently to events such as these, be patient with others. Don't tell them what to do, ask them if they would like you to help them do what you think they should do.
- Provision prior to the event as you would if you were going on passage as often food and water can be in short supply after a significant storm.
- In all preparations **plan for the worst and hope for the best.**

We also learned that we have a great insurance company, they paid out in full without any penny pinching, were prompt, and the process simple. Others have not been so fortunate. On this subject we have been very communicative with our insurer and left nothing to chance when we sought and gained their approval to remain in Fiji during the cyclone season. All communications were in writing and anything that I felt was subject to interpretation I had clarified.

So that's it done and dusted, all in all an experience I would prefer not to have again, and call me a whimp if you like, but if I am going to be in a big storm (or any storm for that matter) I would rather do so at Vuda Point than in the middle of an ocean!

**John and Leanne have been sailing and cruising for over 20 years.**

**With 50,000 nm under their keels in motor cruisers, monohulls, and multihulls, both power and sail, they have a wealth of experience and knowledge to share.**

**They have cruised the east coast of Australia, crossed the Pacific, purchased vessels overseas, and faced their fair share of storms and challenges at sea. They have also made the return voyage from Australia to Fiji, via New Caledonia and Vanuatu six times in the last seven years.**

**In 2015 they began the Down Under Rally and have since assisted over 200 vessels to make the voyage from Australia to New Caledonia and Vanuatu and back to Australia.**

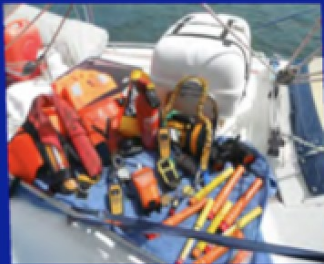






***Are you ready to go offshore?***

***Do you know what you don't know?***



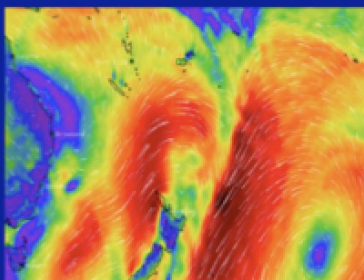
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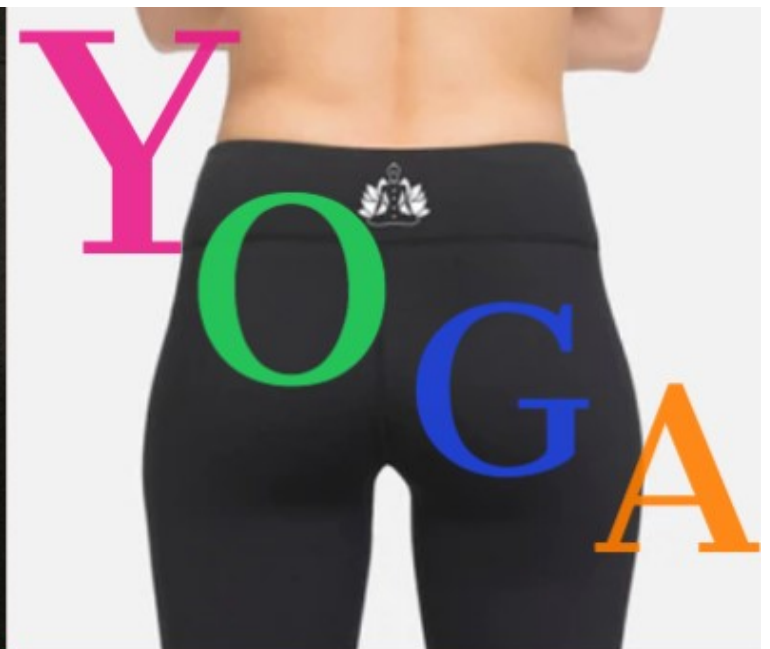
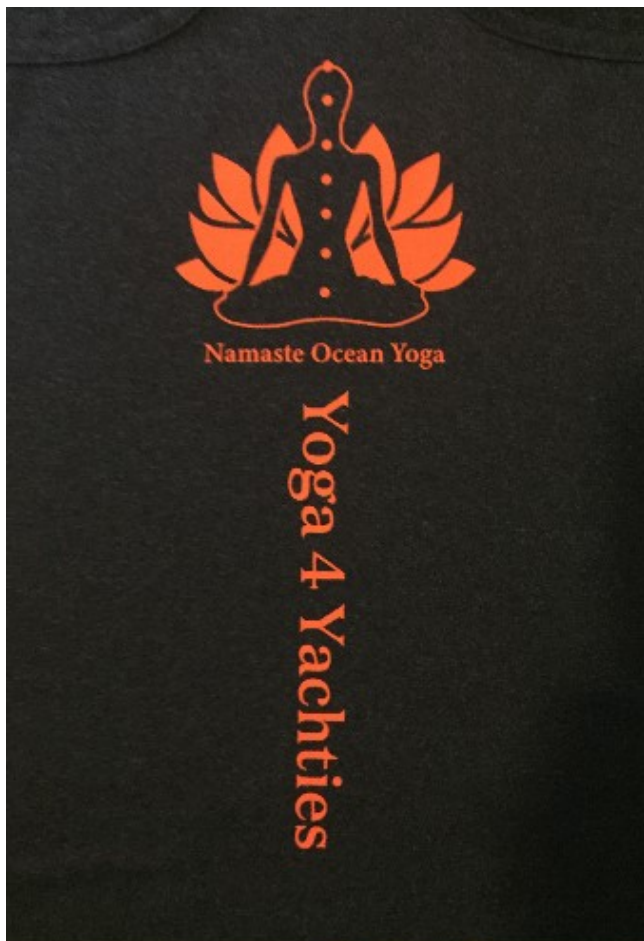
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1st: LISA MIGHETTO: 'An Island Called Hope'

2nd: SUE NORRIS: 'Not the Place but the People'

Highly Commended: Cherylle Stone: 'The Stuff of Dreams'

Editor's pick: Kristen Anderson: 'Oh The Places You'll Go!'



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# An Island Called Hope

## Lisa Mighetto

It was nearly 30 years ago, but I remember my first visit to Hope Island vividly. My husband Frank and I had just purchased our first boat – an 18-foot wherry with a sliding seat, oars, and space for one passenger in the stern. Unsure of where to go on our initial voyage, we studied a chart and discovered a new marine state park called Hope Island in South Puget Sound. We drove in heavy traffic for two hours from our home in Seattle, launched the boat from a ramp, and rowed for another hour, finally arriving on the shores of what was to become my favorite place in the world. Here, in the midst of Pugetopolis, was a place of solitude and stunning scenery, remarkable for its uncrowded beaches, mountain views, and lush forest trails. Once I saw Hope Island there was no going back. Now I was a mariner – and we bought our sailboat *Murrelet* a few years later, hoping to find

more destinations like this. We discovered many, but none has replaced Hope Island in my heart.

Hope Island is small – just 132 acres of state park land and five public buoys – but a lifetime of exploration would not exhaust its possibilities. Reachable only by boat, it was the destination of my first overnight sail on *Murrelet*. I learned the boating basics here, mostly by trial and error. My initial attempt at snagging a buoy required several passes, but now my husband Frank and I can accomplish this task in a single swoop, with one of us in the bow and one at the helm, using polite, efficient hand gestures instead of hollering into the wind. I learned the delicate balance of boarding my dinghy from my sailboat, discovering that Hope Island is best explored by small craft, close to the clear water. Peering straight down to the bottom, I could



watch fish and other sea life in another world under the boat.

Hope Island taught me to listen and observe. I have spent many evenings in my cockpit gazing at the night sky, which sometimes offers a moonrise or meteor shower. Loons are common here – and once I heard one repeatedly answering its own echo against the cliffs of an adjacent island. This was a lonely sound, like the essence of wildness – and even craziness, demonstrating that the bird is aptly named. Seals are a common sight at Hope Island, and their snorting around our boat always seems humorous by day and unnerving at night. Years ago, on a January morning, a seal rapidly approached my transom, hurling himself against the boat. Was he cold? Hungry? Lonely? Frightened and confused by this unusual behavior, I grabbed the boat hook to defend myself – and then I spotted the cause: a pod of orca whales swimming by, their dorsal fins breaking the water majestically (or menacingly, from the seal's perspective).

While most of the year *Murrelet* is the lone boat at Hope Island, summer weekends attract every sort of watercraft and exuberant activity imaginable. And it is the social

interactions and human connections at Hope Island that I cherish most. Frank and I quickly learned the joy of anchoring with friends on multiple boats at Hope Island. One memorable evening we rowed our dinghies through bioluminescence, with sparks flying like magic from our oars. On another visit, while walking on the shore, Frank and I watched in horror as a loose raft of sailboats drifted past in the swift current,





prompting speculation about the proper way to tie up. We heard that the local sailing club held a seminar on rafting and anchoring soon after.

When I was younger and laser-focused on my career, I brought clients and colleagues here on day trips. Sometimes our excursions began awkwardly, with stilted conversations in the cockpit as we sailed or motored toward the island. But Hope Island began to work its magic even before we arrived, as the waterways of the southern Salish Sea converged into the narrow passage leading to our destination. The shoreline along the way is lined with Douglas firs, cedars, maples, alders, and madrone trees, with occasional gardens peeking through. Even the water has an emerald hue. One spring I brought a visitor from England on my boat to Hope Island. “I’ve never seen so many shades of green,” he observed – a striking comment from a resident of a country known for its verdant landscape.

The formula for my ‘work’ visits to Hope Island was always the same: sail to the island; dinghy to shore; picnic in meadow; walk the forest trail; play guitar and sing; and return to dock on the mainland – wine sometimes

included. “I had such a great time today,” wrote one colleague in our visitor’s log. “I had no idea this place existed.” Another suggested that he had no idea that he liked his co-workers before this trip. One late afternoon, *Murrelet* encountered the *Lady Washington* and *Hawaiian Chieftain*, replicas of tall sailing ships, on our way back from Hope Island. In high spirits, the crews of these vessels, dressed in period garb, fired their mock cannons at us. No one on *Murrelet* was sure if the intent was a friendly salute or to start a pretend battle. That night one of our visitors wrote “I’ll never forget this day!” in the logbook.

Much of the charm of Hope Island comes from its connections to the region’s past. Commander Charles Wilkes named the island in 1841 for one of his crew on their U.S. expedition to chart Puget Sound, which ties it to a larger history of exploration and colonization of the Salish Sea. The interior, easily reached from the shore, includes the remnants of an early farmstead, including an old house, several outbuildings, and historic farm equipment. I have spent many visits pointing out the gnarled vines of the grapes that were once cultivated on the island for a





local winery. There is something enchanting about encountering evidence of Hope Island's previous occupants and feeling continuity with previous generations. Or, as one of my guests summed up, "Thanks for showing us the cool old stuff!". One afternoon while we were on a buoy, tribal canoes from the adjacent Squaxin Island Indian Reservation (People of the Water) surrounded *Murrelet*, circling Hope Island and reminding us of the continued presence of native peoples who have inhabited this waterway for many centuries.

While most of my interactions with other boaters at Hope Island have been joyous, there have been difficult moments. One experience in particular taught me a lesson about gratitude when a large, well-appointed powerboat tied up at the buoy next to us. I was in a foul mood, struggling to cook on our single burner in the galley of my cramped, 26-foot boat and I gazed over at the amenities and ample space available to my neighbors, a middle-aged couple, with envy. "I could really be happy in that boat," I

thought to myself, "Those two are really lucky." The first hint of strife occurred in the early evening, when the man began playing the stereo at an early-splitting volume. I remember well the song he blasted: "If You Wanna Be Happy" – a ditty about the value of marrying an 'ugly' woman. The tune has a catchy Caribbean beat, but it is difficult to imagine more sexist or offensive lyrics. My college roommate and I use to howl with laughter whenever we heard this song in the 1970s, as the words to the 'oldy' were outrageous to us even then. Apparently, the woman on the fancy boat agreed, as she loudly demanded to know if the song selection was a "passive aggressive statement" about her.

The situation went downhill from there, as the couple began an argument worthy of Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, the bickering pair in the movie "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?". Although I had not met this couple – or spoken to them – I could tell they had too much to drink, as they slurred their words and threw items around their



*Murrelet.*



cabin and cockpit with loud crashes. Around midnight I heard the woman sobbing. I became terrified when the man begged her “to get out of the water,” thinking she had fallen from the boat in the dark, into the icy currents around Hope Island. Just as my husband got on the radio to ask for help, the Harbor Patrol arrived – and the woman quickly jumped onto their boat. It turns out she was not in the water after all, but had escaped into the dinghy and was sitting there waiting. The next morning, I noticed the man sheepishly casting off from his buoy – alone.

This incident haunted me for years. Frank and I called it “The Night of the Big Drama,” a reference to “The Night of the Iguana” – another boozy Richard Burton film. For me, it was less an opportunity for self-righteousness, smugness, or schadenfreude and more a reminder to be grateful for all that I have. Tensions can become focused and exacerbated on a boat and most mariners know that even large vessels can seem small when people need time away from each other. To this day I

never see that buoy at Hope Island without thinking about the couple and hoping that they are ok – whether together or apart.

Here is a testament to how much I love Hope Island: I joined a yacht club simply because it owns an outstation located on an adjacent island. The outstation offers a clear view of the state park, teaching me all about FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) long before it became a trendy social media term. It has become a



*Murrelet.*








running joke between Frank and me. Now, whenever I am on a buoy at Hope Island, I gaze in the direction of our yacht club with yearning, especially if it looks like our friends are sitting around the fire pit. “I wish we were there,” I whine. And when I am at the outstation island looking toward Hope Island and see empty buoys – or sailboats tied up – I ask, “Oh, wouldn’t it be wonderful to be there?” Of course, I realize my very good fortune in having both options.

Since first laying eyes on Hope Island I have visited several times a year – until now. After spending months abroad last year, I returned to my home in Seattle in the middle of the pandemic and am under a ‘stay at home’ order. I have not sailed to Hope Island for nearly a year, and it is what I miss most. Will Hope Island seem the same when I go back? When Frank and I can finally take our boat out and spend the night, will we fall into familiar routines, a reassurance that life can feel ‘normal’ again? Or will everything have changed? At this point I cannot say but it seems like the name alone offers a promise of light and healing – and I look forward to discovering what the island has in store for us.



**Lisa Mighetto is an environmental historian and sailor who lives in Seattle. Her writing has appeared in *Cruising World*, *Sailing Magazine*, *Pacific Yachting*, and other publications. For more information, see: [www.lisamighetto.net](http://www.lisamighetto.net)**





# Barefoot Boating Blunderment

Jane Chevous

## Brave New Year

Jane tries to follow the BBB principles on the sailing boat *Chantey*, with her husband Ivan. She blogs and shares her writing at [www.barefoot-tales.uk](http://www.barefoot-tales.uk)

### BBB principles:

1. Go with open arms.
2. Walk barefoot and tread lightly on this earth.
3. Blundering or random wandering in the flow.
4. Take only friendship, leave only delight.

### Open Arms

How do we enter 2021 with open arms, after all that we have been through in 2020? Is it even possible? I imagine that like me, many of you are glad to leave much of 2020

behind, a year we hope never to be repeated. But equally I'm afraid of what further hardship and suffering 2021 will bring. Part of me just wants to hide in my bunk until it's all over. Or sail back across the Atlantic and, like Moitessier, keep going. Fear and apprehension make me want to run away. I'm sorry, I'm not feeling brave.

Brene Brown talks about being brave and afraid at the same time. She reminds us that the word courage comes from the Latin *cor* which means heart. Her daily mantra "Today I'll choose courage over comfort" is about the bravery of showing up vulnerable, with heart. Something we do as sailors most days, as we know there is always a risk of failure, and we can't control the weather or the sea. So, what can sailing teach us about choosing courage over comfort as we stand at the threshold of *this* new year?

### The Gate of the Year

One of my favourite new year quotes is from Minnie Louise Haskins and dates from 1908:



*“I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:*

*‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown’.”*

Showing up vulnerable doesn't mean we have to show up helpless. We can look for the guiding lights that protect us or encourage us to just take the next step. Our guiding lights may be practical resources, or the people who support and inspire us. In sailing, even budget barefoot boaters can find affordable ways to add safety and protection. On our maiden ocean crossing last summer, we used the free chart-plotter OpenCPN on a donated old iPad and a cheap Raspberry Pi. We checked in every day on the SSB radio Doodah/SSCA net, whose members provided much needed encouragement as well as a safety contact for us and our family. As poor weather slowed us down, joking with them about how many *more* days before we reached the Azores kept us motivated and content to blunder on, even when running



Sailing free.

Calm ocean.





South from a tropical storm, or when the current started taking us backwards at one point!

As the days passed into weeks, and the weeks into a month, we learnt to relax into the heart of each moment. Today the wind is strong, great, we can reef down but at least we're making progress. While it's flat calm, I can bake bread, and absorb the stunning quality of the light reflecting on the water, and watch the pilot fish swimming alongside for miles. We learnt not to count the days, or fear the dawn, but to savour each moment and open our hearts to the gift it could bring. Altogether we were at sea for 51 days (this year's slow boating record, they informed us in Horta!) Once we stopped worrying and just showed up, those were some of the richest, happiest and most beautiful days of my life. We felt that deep sense of connection with the world. We felt in tune with the heartbeat of life. We were fully present in each moment and appreciated everything from the star-studded vastness of the universe to the colours of daybreak on a storm-clouded sky. We were ever thankful for family and friends who had supported us to embark on this great adventure. Even on the hardest days, we learnt to just be open and always found something that brought us goodness and light.

While life at sea was enriching, it was also challenging, so of course we were thankful when we finally made landfall in Horta. Sailing to the Azores in our own craft had been on my bucket list for over 40 years. Most of you will know that amazing feeling of joy and fulfilment that comes from pushing through the fear to achieve a dream. The freedom to choose to do that, or not, is the opportunity that faces us at the start of each new year. Thankfully, it's not something we have to do all alone.

## A hand in the darkness

Minnie Haskins' poem continues:



*"And he replied:*

*'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.*

*That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way.'*

*So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.*

*And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East."*

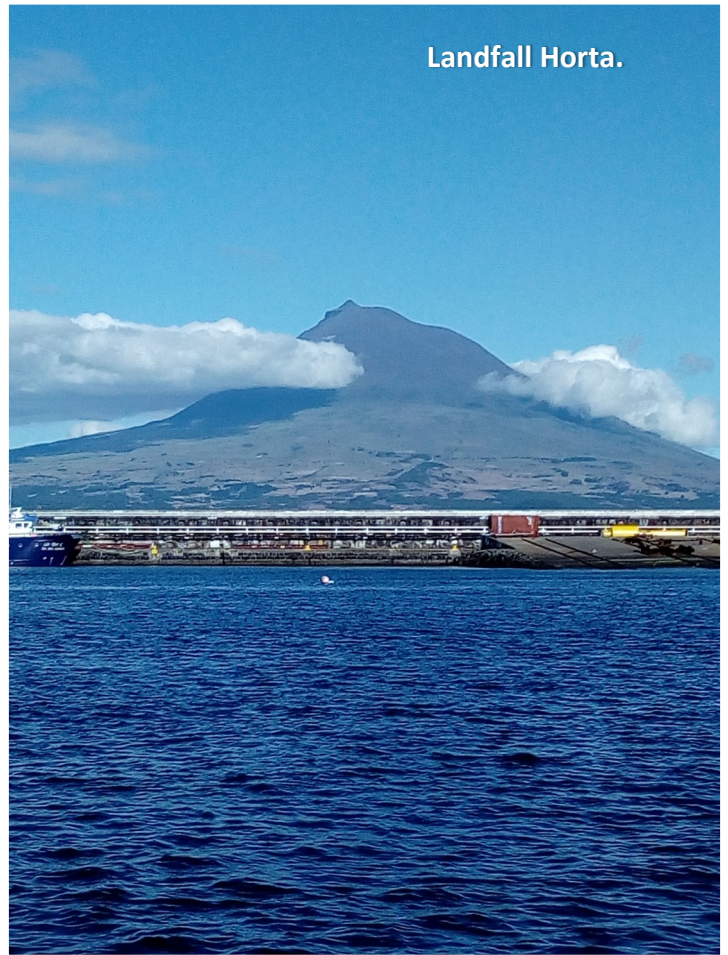
Whether or not you believe in a God, here is a hopeful message that a hand of goodness is ready to lead you into the unknown. Each day at sea reminds us of the good to be found in uncharted territory. Honestly, I am still fearful of what 2021 will bring. I still don't feel brave. Grasping the comforting hands of my friends and family, I am trying to find the courage to show up anyway.

In Huxley's *Brave New World*, the main character John is told that his desire for



freedom from the prescribed social order equates to a demand for ‘the right to be unhappy’. While some of our freedoms are curtailed at the moment, we do have that amazing freedom to choose to open our arms to life, instead of hiding away. That freedom, like the freedom to sail the oceans, can bring us trouble and unhappiness. It also brings us happiness and joy, in each moment that we find the courage to show up.

The *SisterShip* community has been one of the hands that has led me through the past year. I hope you all find many moments of courage, happiness and joy in 2021. Please write in and share what brings you joy and inspires your courage to show up with open arms. We need to draw on each other’s strength more than ever right now, as the year turns. Blessings to you and yours.



Landfall Horta.



*Chantey* at Horta dock, Azores.



Jane Chevous  
Writer, Educator, Activist

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vikāratas = change



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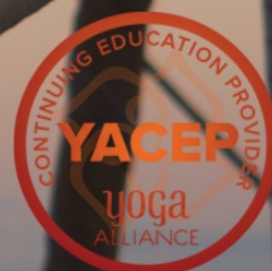
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## Tanya Rabe



### Our new commodore is a bit ruff!

He is a handsome chap, rather hairy with tightly curled, sea-swept blonde hair with a few strawberry highlights. He's a little short but incredibly fit and tenacious.

Thankfully, he is easy on the eye and a real charmer because his manners leave a lot to be desired. I don't believe it is because I am a woman, but he has a tendency to boss me around and he actually bites me if I don't comply. Oh yes, this new Commodore is in need of some disciplining but it's so hard when he is so darn cute!

Meet Harry, the twelve-week-old Moodle who has moved onboard and stolen hearts all



over the world on Dogs Who Sail.

Since losing our Maxy boy in October last year and Mel the year before, our boat has been so quiet. Having a puppy onboard again has been fabulous and at the same time, a little bit hectic.

Every morning Harry wakes me up at the crack of dawn, his furry little face and wet nose nudging me to get up immediately and



seize the day! From this point on, all time belongs to Harry, and I need to plan my own activities to be crammed into the puppy naps which seem to be getting shorter and shorter.

I want Harry to grow up being a well-adjusted dog. He is a Poodle x Maltese, a little dog with a big personality. As fulltime liveaboards, it is important to me that Harry is always safe onboard, so puppy training is in full swing.

Over the next few issues of *SisterShip* Magazine, I will share my experiences with Harry, and tips and tricks we are learning from our puppy trainer.

Before we begin, let's dispel the myth; you can't teach an old dog new tricks. If you have the patience, time, and dedication to consistent with training, you can teach your puppy or older furry four-legged crew member new behaviours.

It is important to remember however, that there is not one specific training method that is going to suit all dogs and there certainly is no quick fix. So, bear in mind, while I don't have a magic wand I do have some worthwhile suggestions, so let's get started.

## POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

In the past four weeks since Harry arrived on the boat, I believe I have said "No", "Nooo", or "No!" about 100 times a day. That is close to 3,000 "No"s and we are not making any progress.

Harry's trainer has turned this old training reprimand on its head in the belief that dogs, like humans, are more likely to respond to positive and happy experiences.

When your dog is performing a behaviour that you don't want, instead of shouting "No!", the plan is to find that golden moment when they pause from the behaviour and reward them in that moment. An example is Harry's persistent barking.



Rather than me yelling no at him as he barks mindlessly back at me, I am to wait until he stops barking and jump in and reward him with treats and praise.

As we know though, when a dog is misbehaving, (or in their mind, playing) they can get carried away and are fully in the moment, so it can be a challenge to find that pause. In this case, you need to draw your puppy out of the behaviour and refocus their attention on something else. This is where tasty treats are your best arsenal.

Have a handful of treats and lure your puppy's attention to your hand. This will happen pretty much straight away as most doggos love treats.

Once you have their attention, you can either go into training for the sit position or the recall. Most dogs who are playing up, are just looking to amuse themselves, they want something to do. This is a great opportunity for training, which they will see as playing a game with you. Puppy will have your company, your attention, and a structured activity to focus on.





Tanya and Harry.

## SIMPLE SIT COMMAND

With the treat in your fingers, hold it close to Puppy's nose and as you ask them to sit, draw your fingers upward. This automatically puts your dog into a sit position as dogs can't look directly up to the sky without folding back. As soon as their bum hits the floor, give them the treat with a lot of praise. Keep repeating the same thing, over and over.

## MAKE THEM WANT TO COME

With a handful of treats, offer one to your dog for sitting and once they sit, throw a treat a couple of metres away from you. As soon as the dog runs and picks the treat up, call Puppy back to you, using his name. Using a happy tone will encourage the dog to come to you too. Once they arrive in front of you, give the doggo a treat straight away and simultaneously offer lots of praise, ask them to sit, and give them another treat as soon as they obey the command. Repetition is key.

There are so many positives with these short 5–10-minute bursts of training:

- They keep your puppy from engaging in unwanted behaviour while showing them the behaviour you prefer.
- The dog is mentally and physically stimulated in a controlled way. When Puppy's activities are uncontrolled, he/she can become hyper stimulated and out of their mind. This is where barking, nipping, and biting can become a problem.
- Training is a bonding opportunity for you and your dog.
- On a boat, you need to take additional measures to keep your dog safe. By teaching them to come to you when called and to sit, enhances their safety.

I'm amazed how quickly they learn. If I ask Harry if he is a good boy, he stops whatever he is doing and plonks his little butt on the



floor waiting for the praise and treat.

I find after meals and naps he is most alert and active. He can also be naughty with this renewed energy and so training happens in these times.

To accompany this article, I will pop some short videos of the SIT and RECALL training I am doing with Harry on Dogs Who Sail TV YouTube channel. This will give you a better idea of what the training looks like in real life on our boat.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtUFPdHz6qQ>

In the next issue, I will touch on keeping your dog mentally active onboard and toileting.

If you are keen to connect with other sailing dogs, our Facebook group, Dogs Who Sail is

where all the action happens. We'd love to see you there.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dogswhosail>



**TANYA RABE** co-founded *Dogs Who Sail* with her two Cocker Spaniels Maxy and Mel. What began as a space to share their own story as liveaboards has now grown into a global community of dogs on boats. Tanya devotes her life to caring for dogs, celebrating their individuality and promoting responsible dog ownership. Ask to join Tanya's closed Facebook group *Dogs Who Sail*.

[www.dogswhosail.com](http://www.dogswhosail.com)

## Dogs Who Sail is dedicated to dogs on boats around the world

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# Flat bottomed girl

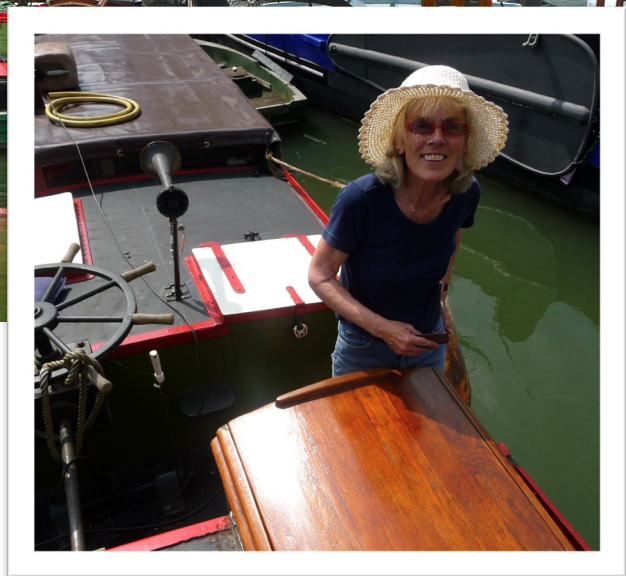
## Views from the canal

**VALERIE POORE** takes the helm of our regular barge boat column.

### Living in a Parallel Dimension

By the time this article graces the pages of *SisterShip* magazine, it will be 2021. Oddly enough, I'm having trouble imagining the coming months at the moment, although like most other people I am more than happy to see the back of 2020. I suppose it's because we've been so caught up in simply enduring the war of attrition the pandemic has waged on us, we haven't really had time to think of 2021 and what it will bring.

I am, however, an eternal optimist, and I'm also of the convenient (for me) opinion that living on a boat puts me at a distinct advantage in terms of living as normal a life as possible, whatever normal might be now. The reason for my confidence is my conviction that while boats are part of the world, they also exist in a parallel dimension. Now, you're probably thinking I'm talking off the top of my head here, but it's something I've observed from both my life in Rotterdam's Oude Haven and also when we've been away on cruises.



Just taking my home harbour as an example, our watery community in Rotterdam is a village within the city. The Oude Haven was established about thirty years ago and in all that time people like me have lived on board their historic Dutch barges in the three harbours designated for museum craft. Given the length of time we've been there and the numerous public events we've held over the years, you'd think that most of Rotterdam's long term residents would be aware of us, wouldn't you? Not so. I've been surprised time and again by the number of people I've spoken to who haven't even registered the existence of the boats, and even if they have, they're completely ignorant of the liveaboard owners.

What's even stranger is that despite the harbour being the social hub of the city and very popular among the student population, these students are also oblivious of the community in the water while they're partying on the quaysides. They think nothing of throwing all manner of things into the harbour, including themselves at times, but ask them about the boats and they'll give you



a blank stare. “What boats?” they ask, puzzlement written all over their faces. So in that sense, although we are part of the city, it seems we’re so completely separate from it we may as well be living on a different planet.

And then comes cruising, and I don’t mean sailing here, I mean canal and river cruising. Every time we set off on one of our trips, I am aware of the parallel dimension effect. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in cities where the waterways cut through the centre of towns, spreading tentacle-like into residential areas and suburbs. Ghent in Belgium is a perfect example of a town divided and criss-crossed by two rivers and numerous canals. Whenever we pass through it, as we often do when heading for southern Belgium and France, I have a strong feeling of disconnect with life on the streets. In fact, it is nearly always here I get my first real feelings of escape.

I remember one occasion especially when we were tied to a bollard set in the quay wall before one of the city locks while waiting for the gates to open. Without warning, a tanker emptied a load of water into the river just in front of us. It fell with such force, there was virtually a tidal wave, and it was just as well we were securely tied up or we’d have been cast violently adrift. Fortunately, the canal basin is wide and we wouldn’t have been at great risk even if our ropes had snapped. But it made me realise the size of the gap between a land-based world and that of the waterways. The operator or driver of the tanker gave no thought to what might have been in the river below him and certainly no heed to the possibility of anyone waiting there for the lock. The incident was both alarming and funny too, but it was a clear case of my parallel dimension scenario.

Such a feeling becomes even more pronounced for boaters exploring rural





waterways. The more remote the river or canal, the more the sense of separation grows. One of my personal favourites is the Sambre river, which flows upstream from Namur in Belgium to a few kilometres beyond Landrecies in the Aisne province of northern France. The section I love the most is from Thuin, on the Belgian side of the border, to Landrecies. We spent a magical summer holiday there in 2018 and the intensity of its other worldliness still overwhelms me when I think about it now.

Rivers like the Sambre, the Scheldt, and the Meuse meander through the landscape creating a network of beautiful routes from which the boater can view life on land with a detached eye. However, she can also choose to step out of her own realm, knowing she can step into it again at any time; the only trouble being that the longer she remains in it, the harder it is to leave. This 'other' world of the water becomes her reality, or maybe

that isn't such a problem after all?

And this brings me back to where I started. We've all had to get used to a different kind of normal this past year – on land. However, boats offer us the perfect retreat and they suffer from fewer of the limitations inherent on *terra firma*. Our boats are our islands, whether they're on the oceans or the rivers. Even in our harbour we occupy our own space and rarely tread over others' gangplanks unless invited on board or obliged to breast up. Meetings take place outside sitting on our own decks while talking to our neighbours who remain on theirs. The noise is inevitable; the vocal volume rises along with the distance between the boats, but we're used to it; it has always been so and it's part of our lifestyle. Indeed, social distancing from all but our family members is entirely natural to us. And we like it that way.

As for the parallel world of life on land and those who throng the quaysides of my



The Sambre, a parallel dimension.





Oude Haven, my own island.



Escape from reality in rural waterways.





The Sambre, total separation.

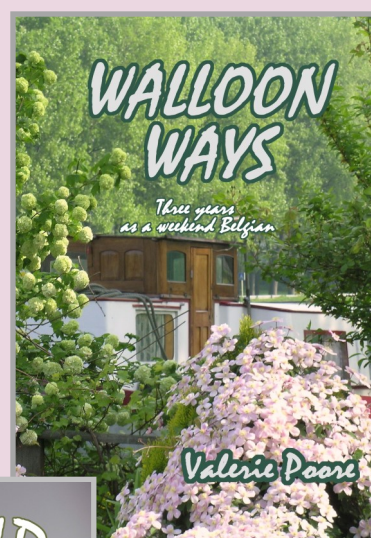
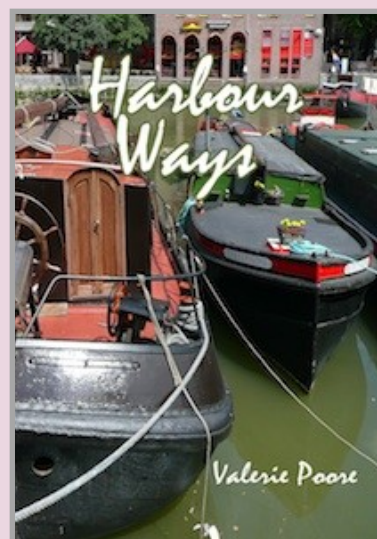
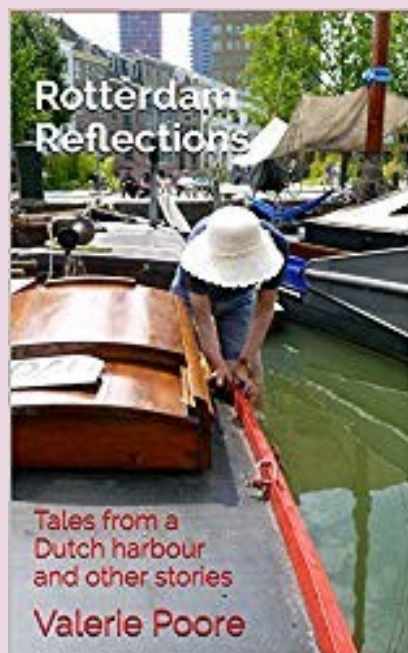
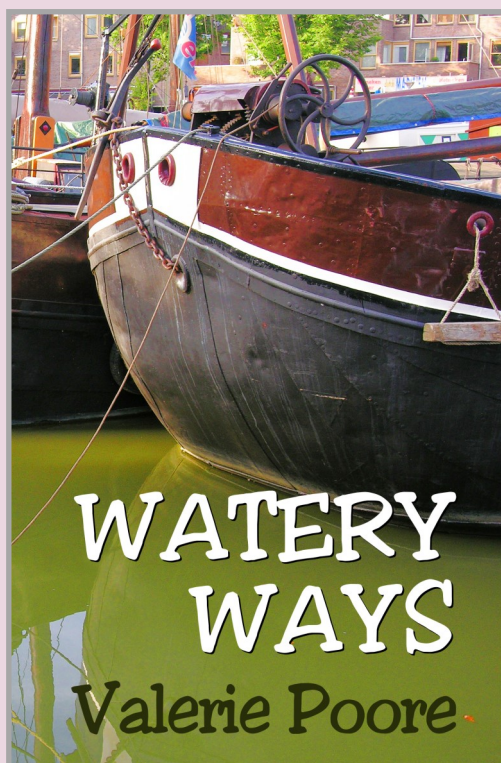
floating Rotterdam village, the longer they remain oblivious to our presence, the better. You could say it is social distancing of the most satisfactory kind.

So whatever 2021 has up its sleeve, remember your boat is your personal, safe haven; an island to which you can withdraw whenever the mainland becomes too isolating.

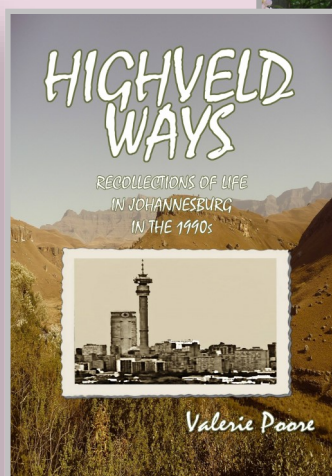
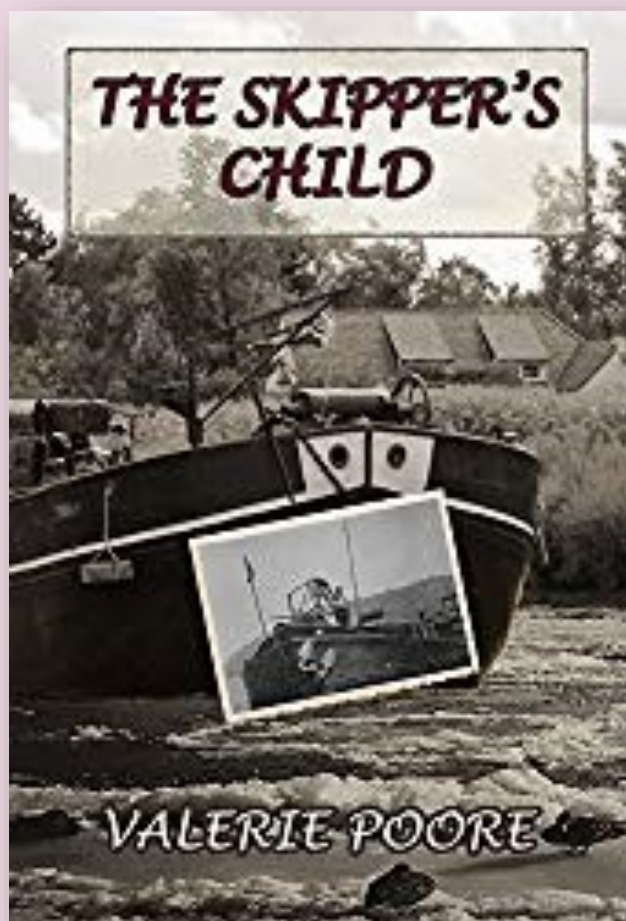


**VALERIE POORE** was born in London, England, and grew up in both north London and the west of Dorset. She moved to South Africa in 1981 but returned to Europe in 2001, which is when she began her love affair with the lovely Dutch flat-bottomed barges (hence the page title). She has lived on a barge in Rotterdam's Oude Haven since then, but summers see her and her partner on the Belgian and French canals. Val teaches writing skills at the local uni for a living, but has written several memoirs about her waterways life. Writing is a lifelong love as well as being her work.





Valerie's books can be found on  
Amazon.com







# SUSTAINABLE SAILING

HEATHER FRANCIS

## Sustainable Goals

For many people January is a time for reflection and consideration. A chance to tally up what was achieved over the past 12-months and to set goals for the coming year. 2020 was a year like no other, but I am bolstered by reviewing such a difficult year and find comfort in the tradition of setting intentions for the days and weeks ahead.

When it comes to my efforts towards sustainable living I faltered more than I would like to admit this year. Like many, I gave myself a pandemic pass, allowing my laziness to be chalked up to difficult circumstances and fear. I accepted more single use plastic bags than normal because the thought of having to wash my reusable bags EVERY time I used them seemed like too much work. I turned to online shopping and felt little resistance when clicking the “Buy Now” button, despite knowing that several of my purchases were neither sustainable or necessary. And, like most of

us, I spent way too many hours online, few of which were used productively.

In spite of these setbacks I can also proudly tally some successes. I continued to work toward reducing our food waste onboard by resisting the urge to panic buy, imaginatively reinventing leftovers and buying fresh goods in quantities I knew could be used before they spoiled. Stranded alone on the hardstand in a boatyard in the Philippines since late February, I decided to make the best out of my forced landlocked time and started a container garden. Not only did this provide a much-needed distraction, and some delicious additions to my meals, by using plastic containers that I found discarded in the garbage or washed up onshore I did it while being conscious of my environmental impact.

But perhaps my proudest achievement was realized right here, on the pages of *SisterShip Magazine* when Sustainable Sailing debuted in 2020. When I pitched this column, my intention was to challenge myself to learn more, to open a discussion around



sustainability and to encourage readers to make changes towards living a more sustainable life. I feel like I have done well on my first two goals, and hope you, the reader, feel like I have succeeded in the third.

Moving into 2021, a year that so far appears to hold many of the same challenges of 2020, I am setting my goals to minimize those obstacles. Being online has become increasingly necessary, but I want to limit my screen time. My goal is to turn my phone off at night and to wait an hour after waking before turning it back on. I am sure I will still fall down a rabbit hole and spend hours watching outdated cooking shows, but I want to be mindful of when that happens.

Hopefully, I can curb my bad digital habits. Heightened hygiene is still an important concern, but I want to also prioritize washable and reusable items whenever possible. No more opting for convenience and wasteful just because the sustainable

**BELOW: An impromptu #FIXITFRIDAY electrical repair. Join me on Instagram @sustainable.sailing.**



**ABOVE: High tide line at the boatyard, all the encouragement I need to double down on my efforts to reduce single use plastics this year.**

alternative requires a little preparation and effort. I want to lead by example by continuing to eliminate disposable and single use whenever possible.

I already know the happiness I attain from material goods seldom lasts longer than the thrill of opening a packet, and that choosing a sustainable lifestyle is also about sustaining myself. This year I intend to be more mindful about the way I find joy and fulfillment. Listening to my instincts will be key, resting when I need to restore my energy, and doing so without feeling guilty. I want to remain healthy and live with ease.

It is easy to put words on paper but there is nothing more discouraging than failing to find a sustainable way to follow through on your goals. No matter how genuine your intentions are it isn't always to easy to take action. Whether you are frozen at the starting line or frequently falter to finish, here are some tips to help you define your





**ABOVE: My container garden tomatoes sheltering on the bunk during a typhoon in October.**

sustainability goals and reach them.

**Be Honest About Your Habits:** The first step to making change is to honestly evaluate what needs to be corrected. This may mean taking a hard look at your habits, a process that isn't always easy or comfortable. There are lots of tools to track things like time spent online but keeping a written track of things such as new items of clothing purchased in a month or take away meals consumed in a week is sometimes easiest. When things are recorded on paper we can see the frequency and volume of our habits in black and white, and often it is surprising.

**Be Realistic and Specific:** To create a habit that is sustainable it is important to define your goal. It is also important to set a goal that is attainable. Can you eliminate ALL plastic from your life? Probably not. Can you decide to say NO to single use plastic bags at the grocery store? Definitely! Being specific about what you want to

achieve, eliminating single use plastic at the grocery store rather than just eliminating plastic, will help you take action toward your goal. Be careful not to confuse attainable with easy.

Like most challenges that we set for ourselves there will be bumps along the way. That's okay.

**Focus:** It is easy to get carried away with New Year's enthusiasm and write a long list of goals you want to accomplish only to find yourself feeling overwhelmed in a few weeks time. Deciding on one or two realistic goals will ensure that you don't feel exhausted by just looking at the giant TO DO list. When one of your sustainable goals becomes a habit then add another to your list. Remember, you don't have to wait until New Year rolls around again to set an intention, but you do have to stay focused.

**Make Do:** When first trying to make sustainable choices many people feel the need to buy new "sustainable" things – a stainless travel mug, a reusable straw, a fancy shopping bag. They believe that having something new and shiny means they'll love it more and use it more. The only problem is those new and shiny things become used things soon enough, and when their sparkle goes so does their allure. Learning to use and be content with what you have is one of the most sustainable actions you can take. A plastic yogurt container can be used to store leftovers, a worn-out t-shirt cut up into cleaning cloths, a plastic Ziplock can be washed and reused several times. Take a few weeks to make do with what you have, and if you still feel the need to buy that special sustainable something, then go for it.

**Friends and Community:** Staying inspired to live sustainably can sometimes be a struggle. One great way to keep motivated is to find people who are trying to achieve similar goals. Whether that is a friend who is also making positive changes in their



life or an online community that you can draw encouragement from, surrounding yourself with like-minded people will make the journey easier.

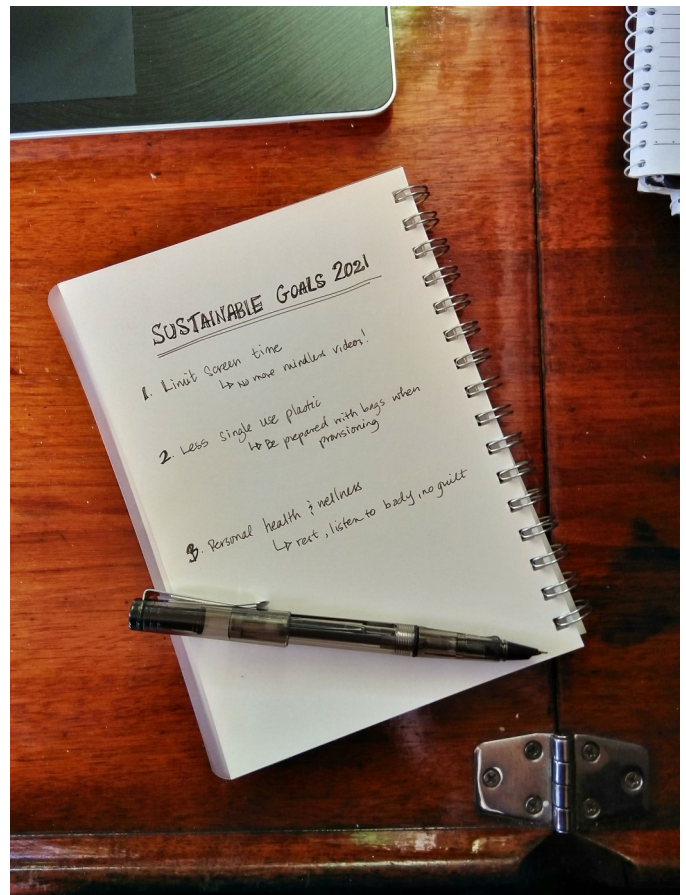
**Better not Perfect:** Being perfect at something is never a realistic expectation but striving to do better is always achievable. Whether you forget your reusable mug and decide to go for a takeout coffee anyway, or someone gives you a plastic knickknack made in China, setbacks will happen. The trick is not to dwell on things that are imperfect but to muster the courage to start again. Making a conscious effort to do better is the first step to doing your best. Like most things in life, building sustainable habits takes dedication and practice, so be patient with yourself.

So much of what has happened in 2020 has reinforced the basic principals that I try to live by. Small actions have far reaching affects and to reach a big goal everyone needs to do their part. These are important lessons to remember when things start to feel overwhelming.

I would love to hear what intentions you are setting this year and the actions you are taking to reach them.

You can find me on Instagram @sustainable.sailing where I post about things I am doing to meet my sustainability goals, including #FIXITFRIDAY, a movement to encourage people to take action once a week by trying to fix something rather than buy new.

You can also send me an email at sustainable.sailing41@gmail.com. This past year we've seen the impact working together can have, are you ready to help build a sustainable future for us all?



**ABOVE: Reflecting on writing intentions for a more sustainable 2021.**



**Heather Francis is from Nova Scotia, Canada and has lived and worked on boats throughout the world. Since 2008 she has been living and sailing onboard *Kate*, a Newport 41 sloop, with her Aussie partner, Steve. She is a writer, photographer and cook who tries to live mindfully. Follow at [www.yachtkate.com](http://www.yachtkate.com) or [@sustainablesailing41](https://www.instagram.com/sustainablesailing41)**



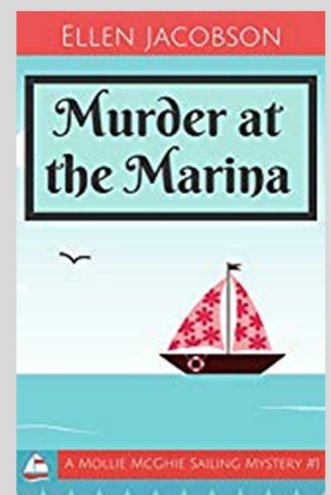
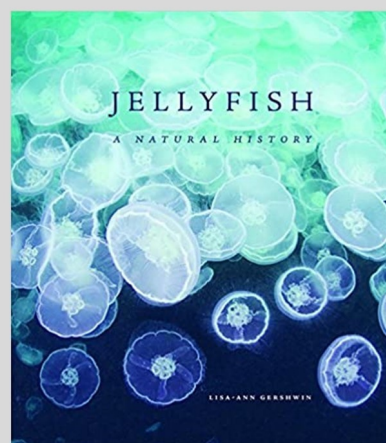
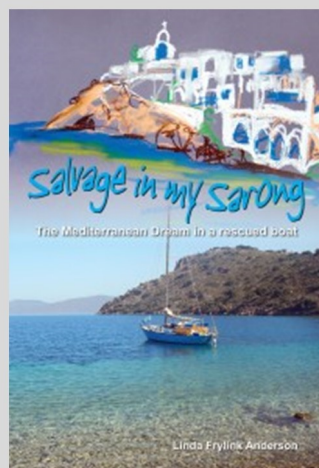
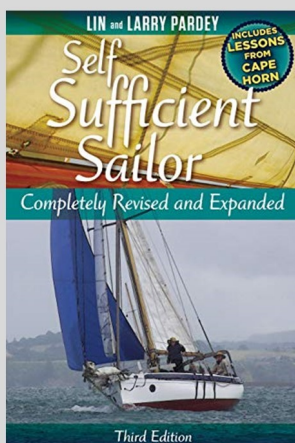
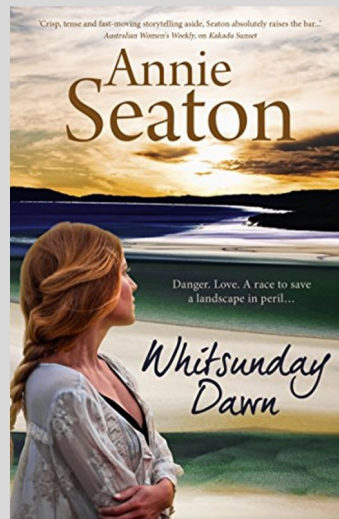
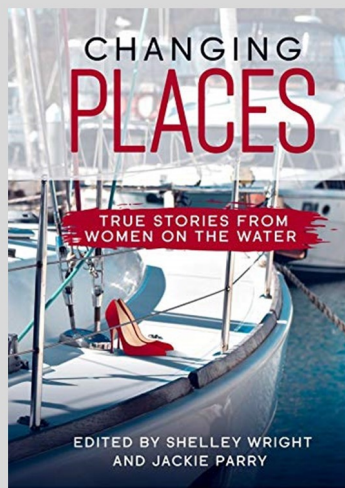
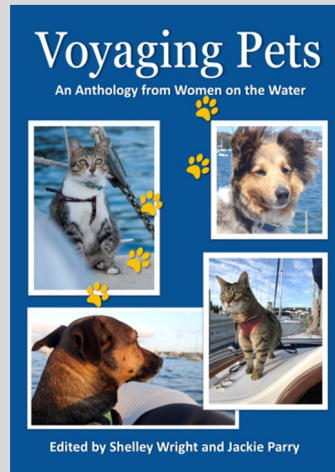
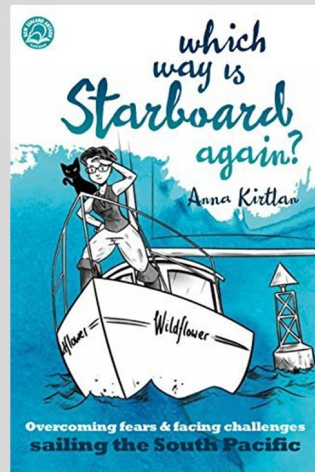
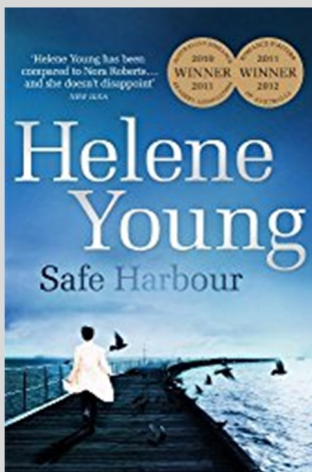
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