



## President's Letter

Dear Members-

I am taking this opportunity to cheer the weekend-day women sailors, those of us who work long hours during the week. Departing from our homes by dawn and returning after dusk leaves little time for family members, grocery shopping, or doing the laundry, but somehow we find time on the weekend to raise the sails so we can feel the wind and listen to the water.

Whether we work in a big city or a small town, our stress levels diminish when we spend time afloat. I live in New York City and truly enjoy sailing a small boat with one or two friends on the Hudson River. We usually point the bow toward the George Washington Bridge, tacking only when another vessel is in line with our course or if we are about to steer right into the New Jersey docks. A good day for us means enough wind to get us to the Bridge in two hours.

As I end my term as president of National Women's Sailing Association/Women's Sailing Foundation, I commend all of you for getting out there on the water. You have helped bring recognition to NWSA by becoming members, participating in our events, and contributing to our youth program, AdventureSail®. NWSA/WSF has attempted to identify sailing programs and events of interest to you. We do this so that you will make time to share and enjoy the sail. I expect to be a weekend-day sailor for a few more years, and I hope to see you on the water, sailing whenever you can and every chance you get.

My heartfelt thanks and best wishes to all of you!

*Valli Cook*

# Take the Helm®

Official Newsletter of the National Women's Sailing Association

FALL 2008

## All Smiles for the 7th Annual Women's Sailing Conference

On June 7, the seventh annual Women's Sailing Conference filled the stately rooms and grounds of Marblehead's Corinthian Yacht Club, enhanced once again by near-perfect weather and a near-capacity crowd. The Conference, whose primary sponsor is BoatU.S., featured a day-long series of classes and workshops, giving the 125 women novice-to-expert women sailors who attended a terrific opportunity to network with other women while learning new skills or brushing up on old ones.

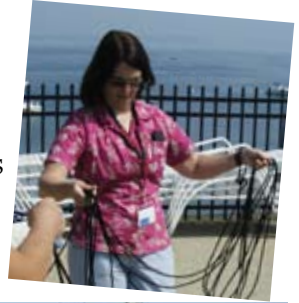
Organized by the National Women's Sailing Association and hosted by the Corinthian Yacht Club, the conference featured seminars on land and afloat, covering a variety of need-to-know boating topics. This year the on-the-water training included sessions in crew overboard, boat systems, safety on board and introduction to racing and spinnakers, while the land-based training included reading charts and plotting courses, knots, diesel-engine troubleshooting, docking techniques, using spring lines, how to throw a line, suddenly single-handed and galley cuisine. Working with the 100% female instructors, many of them U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captains, this year's students showed the same enthusiasm as in years past.

At dinner that night, conference attendees applauded Pat Seidenspinner as she accepted the Leadership in Women's Sailing Award, given annually by NWSA and BoatU.S. (see separate article), debated strategy about how to nab the silent auction item they wanted, and cheered each other when they won one or more of the many items more than 50 area merchants and boating specialists had donated to the raffle to benefit the AdventureSail® program.

One of the most popular silent auction items was a pink Mustang PFD, donated by Teresa Collins of LRSE (Life Raft and Survival Equipment) in Portsmouth, RI. Said the winner of the PFD, Patty Gregory, "NWSA put on a fabulous, informative, and empowering day for women sailors, yesterday in Marblehead, MA at the Corinthian Yacht Club. I had a great time - learned some useful docking techniques, simple tips for keeping the diesel engine running smoothly and took a racing class with the UNH women's racing coach! I am very impressed with the good work NWSA does with young girls at risk and I thank LRSE for its donation to their cause."

Along with primary sponsor BoatU.S. the other much-appreciated conference sponsors were the Arnould Gallery & Framery, Blue Water Sailing Club, Boston Private Bank & Trust Company, Boston Yacht Club, Doyle Sailmakers, Flores Mantilla, Landfall Navigation, Liberty Fleet of Tall Ships, Lynn Marine Supply, Mack Boring &

*Continued on page 7*



Upper: Getting the line ready to 'Heave Ho'!  
Above: Lending a hand rigging an unfamiliar boat



## NWSA

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### Renew Your Membership

Renew your \$45 annual membership today! An application/renewal form is included with the newsletter and is available on line at [www.womensailing.org](http://www.womensailing.org). Send your check to:  
C/o 26 Beach Road,  
Hingham, MA 01943.

## Inaugural Northwest "Take the Helm<sup>®</sup>" Women's Sailing Conference Gets off to a Great Start Under Leadership of Linda Newland

On August 2, 2008 about 75 women from Oregon, Washington, California, Texas, New York, Arkansas and Massachusetts descended on Port Townsend Yacht Club in Washington State for the Inaugural Women's Sailing Conference. The 51 participants, 15 workshop leaders and 10 other volunteers enjoyed a continental breakfast and were welcomed by Event Chair Linda Newland and Commodore Dave Weeding of Port Townsend Yacht Club. The majority of workshop leaders, many of them US Coast Guard Licensed Captains and certified professional sailing educators, came from local areas, but also included women from California and London, England.

NWSA President Valli Cook from New York and Vice President Joan Thayer from Marblehead, Massachusetts, flew in to welcome the guests. Val welcomed the participants and thanked BoatU.S. for providing the primary sponsorship for the inaugural event. She noted that the mission of NWSA is to enhance the lives of women and girls through education and access to the sport of sailing. Workshops received high marks from the women as they enjoyed charting, GPS navigation, learning sail trim at the



*Is this really as complicated as it looks?*

dock and on the water, getting an opportunity to helm a boat, knot tying, learning crew overboard recovery procedures and generally sailing in picturesque Port Townsend Bay in 10 knot winds sur-



*Hands-on charting is basic to understanding navigation!*

rounded by the Olympic Mountains to the West and Cascades to the East.

Nancy Erley, locally and nationally known as a two-time circumnavigator, was the keynote speaker. Nancy showed video clips from the two circumnavigations she skippered that were crewed solely by women. Interspersing the video with compelling stories of the challenges met and conquered by the crew, Nancy mesmerized the crowd. In 2006 Nancy received the Leadership in Women's Sailing award jointly awarded by NWSA and BoatU.S. She was a workshop leader at the SCYA Women's Sailing Convention and at the NWSA's Women's Sailing Conference in Marblehead, MA. She currently lives in London, England.

The day ended with a wine and cheese reception and announcements of raffle prize winners. Raffle proceeds fund the NWSA AdventureSail<sup>®</sup> program for at risk girls ages 9-14. Seafaring music played by "Tuesday Morning" with Betty Sleeth on guitar and Marilyn Bruner on keyboard ended the day on a highnote.

The enthusiastic women noted how much they enjoyed the skill-building classes and of equal importance was the confidence building they acquired working with other women and the ability to network for future sailing opportunities.

For further information, please visit the website at [www.womensailing.org](http://www.womensailing.org) or e-mail them at [wsf@womensailing.org](mailto:wsf@womensailing.org).

## BoatU.S. and NWSA

We have signed on for another year as a Cooperating Group. That means that NWSA members are eligible for BoatU.S. membership at \$12.50, half the regular annual \$25 dues rate. We receive announcements with information that we pass on to you the member through our own website or our e-NWSA. There are discounts at West Marine retail stores with BoatU.S. membership—another good reason to get more for less.

Other benefits include:

- Discounts on fuel, overnight slips and repairs at more than 750 marinas nationwide
- On-the-water towing
- Access to high-value, low-cost group rate boat insurance
- Full year subscription to the award-winning BoatU.S. Magazine
- An effective lobby that fights unfair taxes, fees and government regulations that single out recreational boaters.

You can sign up for a BoatU.S. membership on line at [www.boatus.com/member](http://www.boatus.com/member). Give NWSA's Group ID number **GA8404B** when prompted to receive the special discounted rate.

Or call BoatU.S. membership services toll free number 800-395-2628.



*NWSA President Val Cook, Susan Shingledecker of BoatU.S., Pat Seidenspinner, Award Winner for 2008, and NWSA VP Joan Thayer - at NWSA Women's Sailing Conference in June.*

## Veteran Race Volunteer Pat Seidenspinner Honored with Leadership in Women's Sailing Award

Underscoring that volunteer race managers are the backbone of competitive sailing, Patricia Harvey Seidenspinner of St. Petersburg, FL, was honored with the annual Leadership in Women's Sailing Award at ceremonies capping the day-long Women's Sailing Conference held at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Marblehead, MA. Both the award and the conference are sponsored by BoatU.S. and the National Women's Sailing Association. The award honors a male or female who has a record of achievement in giving something back to the sport of sailing as well as inspiring and educating women.

"Pat Seidenspinner has such an impressive list of 'firsts' in her sailing resume," said Susan Shingledecker of BoatU.S. in presenting the award with NWSA President Valli Cook. "She has given an extraordinary amount of her time and expertise to grow the sport and inspire more women and girls to get involved in racing. Beyond the local level, she's also volunteered for national leadership positions to improve race management across the board," added Shingledecker.

Seidenspinner, a native of New York City, grew up in Rochester, NY, and enjoyed a career as a flight attendant with TWA. She and her husband sailed in their time off, but upon retiring to St. Petersburg, Seidenspinner became very active in race management and eventually managed many national and world sailing championships. She is a member of US SAILING's Race Management Committee and is the editor of its Race Management Handbook. She served as Chairman of the Race Administration Committee, and as a member of both the Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

Some of Pat's credits in sailing include: 1st female Principal Race Officer, Southern Ocean Racing Conference, 1st female appointed as International Race Officer by the International Sailing Federation, 1st female Principal Race Officer at an Olympic games, 1st female Commodore of St. Petersburg Yacht Club. In addition she has run many other local and national championships at St. Petersburg Yacht Club.

**Making Changes  
Come About®**

## Events for Women Sailors

**January 23 - February 1** — Seattle Boat Show Women's Day on the 24-25 with special sessions targeting women. Go to: [www.seattleboatshow.com](http://www.seattleboatshow.com)

**February 7, 2009** — Southern California Yachting Association's 20th Women's Sailing Convention, Newport Beach CA. Contact Gail Hine at [hine@scya.org](mailto:hine@scya.org) for info.

**June 6, 2009** — NWSA's 8th Women's Sailing Conference, Corinthian Yacht Club, Marblehead, MA. [joan\\_thayer@comcast.net](mailto:joan_thayer@comcast.net) for more information.

**April 4-5, 2009** — Diesel Engine Workshop with Max Boring, Union City, NJ • Estimated cost \$600. More details later.

Check the website for updates on all our events! Go to [www.womensailing.org](http://www.womensailing.org)



## Chapwoman's Boating Wit & Wisdom

by Anne Lorimer Sirna

- The anchor that would not set in the evening has locked its jaws for eternity in the morning.
- It's bad manners to peek into your neighbor's port-hole.



*Spinnaker Rigging Workshop*

## West Coast SCYA Women's Sailing Convention

Southern California Yachting Association (SCYA) will hold its **20th** Annual Women's Sailing Convention on Saturday, February 7 at Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club, Corona del Mar, CA. The event usually sells out every year! Attendees report a fantastic day filled with interesting workshops and super networking.

The Convention is the model for NWSA's Women's Sailing Conferences. Organizer, Gail Hine, continues to be at the forefront of west coast women's educational seminars.

E-mail Gail at [hine@syca.org](mailto:hine@syca.org) to get on the mailing list for next year's event, Feb. 7, 2009.



*"Going Up the Mast" Workshop*

## Director Profile: Joan Thayer

Joan Thayer considers herself an active person, whether at work or at home. She enjoys the challenges of her demanding administrative position at Boston Private Bank in Boston as well as those of campaigning her Sonar, doing race committee duty or volunteering on behalf of NWSA.



Joan learned to sail in an after-school program in the 4th grade in Marblehead. She started volunteering in the sport not long after that at the Pleon Yacht Club where she was the secretary. Her older sister was the Treasurer and her mother, the senior treasurer. Summer was all sailing. There weren't the numerous options for youth as there are today.

She worked her way up the ladders of competitive sports and then into the administrative side somewhere in her 30's. Since that time, she has been racing and organizing events and loving every minute of it. Only when a NWSA newsletter arrived in the mail did Joan even think of being involved with sailing as opposed to racing. Her dear friend Sue Corl steered Joan into co-chairing an AdventureSail® program in Boston, then teamed up with co-chairing the Women's Sailing Conference in 2001. And the rest is history.

Joan's mentor for women's sailing was the late Emmy Magoon. Joan raced as Emmy's crew, was encouraged to be on the U.S. SAILING's Women's Championship Committee and ultimately was the chair of the committee. Emmy was one of the most positive and silently powerful women. Emmy's commitment to women on the water just followed Joan. Emmy and Joan owned the Sonar together until Emmy's untimely death in 1998. Emmy instilled the can do attitude that Joan carries with her today.



## Paralympic Gold

Maureen McKinnon-Tucker of Marblehead, MA, is rather busy these days. **She won the GOLD MEDAL in the Paralympics in the SKUD-18 with skipper Nick Scandone (Newport Beach, CA).** Now she has a new job - as the Adaptive Sailing Coordinator for Piers Park Sailing Center in Boston, MA. With support from the Peabody and Shapiro Foundations, she is launching a new program for physically and mentally disabled sailors. Additionally, Piers Park has the only fully wheelchair accessible sailing dock in Boston. Maureen was thrilled when 28 people - some new to the sport and some returning to it - came to the sailing center to try adaptive sailing.

Maureen said that before becoming confined to a wheelchair after a fall, she had not taken sailing terribly seriously. "It wasn't until racing was taken away from me that I realized how much it meant to me," Maureen said. Maureen had an opportunity to share her thoughts about sailing as the keynote speaker for the National Women's Sailing Association's in 2007.

With support and encouragement from her husband, Dan, and two young children, she was so thrilled to have WON at the Paralympics, but also likes sharing her love of sailing with others.

## Learn to Navigate Takes on New Meaning

Thirteen women, two coming from that great state of Alaska, arrived in New London, Connecticut, on Friday afternoon, Sept. 5. All of us somehow managed to get there within 20 minutes of each other. Although Hurricane Hanna was also forecast to be on her way, we knew we were safe in the harbor. We enjoyed supper on the porch of a local establishment overlooking the river, watching as the beautiful schooner *Mystic Whaler* silently slid over the water on her homecoming sail. Starting at 8:30 that night, the *Mystic Whaler* would be ours until Sunday afternoon.

By 9 p.m., we were all in our bunks waiting for the hurricane to arrive, the gentle rocking of the ship lulling us to sleep.



*"I think the rabbit goes around the tree."*

Saturday morning was clear and crisp, and we got up early, ready to enjoy the first of several fabulous meals prepared by our chef and served by the crew. It was just too nice to be down below, so our navigation instructor, Sue LaVoie, began the class on deck. Landfall Navigation provided NWSA with charts for sailing in Long Island Sound. But Hurricane Hannah forced us to alter our course. We matched up landmarks on the chart Sue had given each of us. Once in the Sound the wind was brisker and the air more humid, reminding us of the storm coming soon.

Capt. John Eginton decided that we should put in at Mystic Harbor for the night. We followed the markers and whoever felt like it was encouraged to take the helm. Capt. John anchored effortlessly at the very end of the harbor, where a wedding was to take place under a tent. By this time the storm clouds were looming over us. If the bride could do it, we figured we could, too, and we all disembarked to tour the quaint seafaring town and see what was open. Then the heavens themselves opened, and de-



*Instructor Sue LaVoie explains the charts.*

spite our slickers and foul-weather gear, we all got drenched. After taking hot showers and putting on dry clothes, we all relaxed and enjoyed a sumptuous dinner in the cozy salon below. During the night, the wind sang in the rigging, but we were safe below.

All was quiet again on Sunday morning, and the sun came out as we headed down the Mystic River to the Sound. We paid the toll to the bridge keeper with our pancake toss, laughing as he skillfully waved his oversized net to catch his breakfast.

On the way back to New London, the post-hurricane weather was so nice that we decided to stay on deck. While Sue and the crew engaged some of us in the practical application of various knots, others decided to check their chart against the markers to be sure of our course. The rest of us just hung out in the sun for a while, happily chatting or reading a book.

The *Mystic Whaler* cruises are always fun because they bring together a group of women from diverse backgrounds and fields of work who immediately bond because of their love of sailing. This September, with Hurricane Hanna joining us as well, we learned how resilient we were. We hope you'll join us next fall on the *Mystic Whaler* and enjoy the excellent company of other women, terrific teaching, superb food and unique accommodations. Hurricanes won't be invited, of course, but we will adjust in style if one happens to show up anyway.



*Sue LaVoie demonstrates usage of parallel rules.*

## Fundraising and Having Fun

Monday, August 4th, Corinthian Yacht Club women members who own businesses came together to sell their wares, enjoy the company of other women members and their friends and raising money for the Women's Sailing Foundation. The entry fee entitled the person to a refreshment and purchase other beverages throughout the evening. Each business donated an item for the raffle, which was conducted several times during the night. There was also a silent auction as well.

There were 18 business owners who took over the ballroom and the dining room of the club on a night when nothing else was happening. The dining room was closed and only the bar was open and a light supper was available on the porch. Perfect setting. The businesses ranged from chocolates, to pottery, to clothing and accessories, handmade items, handmade jewelry, flowers, services, sporting goods, cards and art poster with the fotos of AdventureSail® events was displayed in the foyer. The evening provided \$1,995 for the Foundation.

Kathryn McKinnon and Kathy Mealey both attended the Women's Sailing Conference in previous years. They wanted to do something for NWSA, so it worked out to benefit the AdventureSail® programs this year.

## AdventureSail® Around the U.S.

### Gold Country Yacht Club and The Friendship Club

On Aug. 3, the Gold Country Yacht Club, based in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, hosted the local Friendship Club for a day of sailing on Scotts Flat Lake. The day began with a knot-tying session led by GCYC Secretary Tish Buti, who walked the girls through the basic knots used around boats – the bowline, cleat knot, and square knot. Then she told them about boating safety and handling. This was especially important for this group of girls, since most of them were unfamiliar with boating of any kind and needed to know they were not going to sink if the boat tipped!

Once on the water with their skippers, all of the girls had the opportunity for a bit of "tiller time" under the area's consistent winds. The day wound down with a swim in the cove (reachable only by boat) and a hot-dog luncheon at the Clubhouse provided by GCYC. This is the tenth year that the Gold Country Yacht Club members have provided this day of sailing and camaraderie for adolescent girls.



Founded in 1995, The Friendship Club is a prevention program designed to reach at-risk girls before they engage in unhealthy behaviors. Through a year-round program of educational activities, emotional support and community involvement, it teaches the girls life skills, personal responsibility and the value of working hard to achieve their goals.

The Friendship Club receives no public funding and is supported by

the generosity of the community and private grants. For more information, please visit their website at: [www.friendship-club.org](http://www.friendship-club.org).

### Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Long Island and the Breakwater Yacht Club

The Little Flower Children Services supplied the kids, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Long Island sent the adults, and all had a great time with Adventure Sails at the Breakwater Yacht Club on July 8. Thanks also to the other sponsors, the Town of Southampton and ELISA.



## Women's Sailing Foundation

### AdventureSail® Scholarship

The Women's Sailing Foundation (WSF) is pleased to offer up to \$500 in an AdventureSail® Scholarship for a sailing course to young girls between age 9 – 14 who would like to learn how to sail and need financial assistance. Proceeds from NWSA events fund AdventureSail®, a national program for at-risk girls age 9 – 14.

This year NWSA arranged for five events, which were held in Boston, Grass Valley, CA, Southampton, NY and Racine, WI. You can learn more about hosting an Adventure-Sail® event by contacting [Amy.Cermak@womensailing.org](mailto:Amy.Cermak@womensailing.org).



*Lots of smiles at the Boston AdventureSail® event!*



## Vicki Sodaro Wins Adams Cup Again!

On the final day of racing at the U.S. Women's Championship for US SAILING's Adams Cup, hosted by Oklahoma City Boat Club and sponsored by Rolex Watch U.S.A., the Oklahoma winds finally came sweeping down the plains for the final race. Solid winds blowing 15 to 18 mph were a big change from the light and shifty breezes of earlier races.

Wind or no wind, nothing could keep the highly experienced crew of the San Francisco Yacht Club from continuing their domination of the regatta. San Francisco finished the final race with a second-place finish, which gave them a 25-point lead over their nearest competitor.

"We liked today's stronger air," said the team's skipper Vicki Sodaro (Tiburon, Calif.). "It's closer to what we sail in San Francisco, minus the wave" Two of the members of the winning team Vicki Sodaro and Stephanie Wondolleck (San Rafael, Calif.) are now both four-time Champs. Sodaro has three wins as helm and one as crew, while Wondolleck has one as helm and three as crew. This is the second crew win for Emily French (Blingen, WA). Katie Maxim (Napa, Calif.) rounded out the experienced Californian team that showed their skills with top-three finishes in eight out of eleven races.

## Captain Ann Ford and NWSA President Val Cook Cross the Pacific

Just before *She's Yar*, a Hylas 42-foot sloop, left Honolulu for San Diego on July 1, its Captain, Ann Hood, said, "I've always said if the right situation came along, I would sail from Hawaii to California again. [It would just take] The right boat, the right passage, the right time of year and the right people. This delivery is all those things. Yes, it is a windward slog, but everything is looking good."



*She's Yar* is rigged for ocean sailing and she sails beautifully. For Val, it was an honor to have the opportunity to sail with such an experienced captain as Ann Ford. Once underway, the honor was extended to her mates Terri, the sloop's owner and a skilled mechanic as well, and Aliah Irvine, a 21-year old surfer and student from Waiana, who tackled the grunt work and helped anyone else who needed it with the most positive attitude imaginable.

When the ship arrived in San Diego July 25 after 28 days at sea, Capt. Ann's first remarks were, "We made it!" Her passion for sailing and taking charge of her life showed in the rest of her presentation. "Fortunately," she said, despite the anticipated rough seas and foul,

rainy weather, it was a good trip. God answered our prayers. There were no accidents or injuries and we never touched the medical kit. Terri kept all the systems running, including spending 13 hours working non-stop to fix the steering when it broke 22 days out. The steering held up the rest of the trip.

Val Cook, who flew from New York for the trip, was the perfect match for the rest of the crew. Her sailing experience was critical to our safety and she contributed greatly to the harmony of the crew. Aliah Irvine was terrific. She was a quick learner and always had a positive attitude. And we saw both dolphins and whales."

All of the four took joy in their experience and agreed they'd would do an ocean crossing again with each other. That say something special about the karma aboard

*She's Yar!*



*Conference - Continued from page 1*



*Attaching the spinnaker pole to the mast.*

Parts Company, MASS BAY SAILING, National Grand Bank and North Sails.

The raffle alone raised almost \$2,000 for NWSA's AdventureSail® program for at-risk girls and the 2008 Women Sailing Conference furthered NWSA's goal of enriching the lives of women and girls through education and access to the sport of sailing. Mark your new 2009 calendars now for June 6, when the eighth annual Women's Sailing Conference will take place again at the Corinthian Yacht Club.

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