

Charting My Own Course

Women at the Helm
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by Lynn Glassman

You know when you're young and impetuous you sometimes do foolish things! When I first began teaching swimming, I went to the New York boat show and I bought a small 12-foot Hobie Cat sailboat. I didn't know how to sail, I didn't have a place to keep the boat and I certainly didn't live near water. The company that sold me the boat said that they would teach me to sail in a classroom. After two months I learned to sail very nicely on paper. I picked up the boat and brought it up to the Catskills where my folks were staying for the summer. All my cousins helped me set it up on land and we couldn't wait to go out on it. We

brought it to Silver Lake and we all took turns sailing the boat. That was my first boating experience. My dad wanted to try it, so we put it in the Hudson River with a friend in his powerboat nearby. He ended up towing us when the wind died down.

During my teaching career I taught lifeguarding for the Red Cross. At one point it was necessary to teach students how to use a canoe for rescuing. With some fundraising at hand, I was able to purchase a 16-foot Grumman canoe. The students learned how to canoe in a 75' x 40' indoor swimming pool. We used the canoe all the time even giving faculty members lunchtime rides. I often think

about how funny we must have looked as we paddled around the pool in that huge aluminum canoe hoping not to crash into the pool's tiled walls.

Then in the 1990s I wanted to try boating again. This time it was a weeklong trip on a canal boat. My partner and I went with another couple up to Syracuse to start our Erie Canal Adventure. I still didn't know anything about boating but heard it was easy. The company gave us one-hour lesson on how to use the boat and simply said "good-bye see you next week." I was designated the captain and the rest designated as first mate, cook, and radio communications person. We

had canal charts and were told to use the buoys and beacons on along the shore to navigate our route. We thought we were doing really well, until we switched roles for a few hours. I gave instructions on looking out for these particular buoys and not to miss them but instead we wound up in a marsh like the African Queen. After doing some maneuvering we were able to get back on track and into the Erie Canal system.

I retired after 34 years of teaching swimming, lifeguarding and physical education for New York City. Boating seemed to always gnaw at me. So I signed up for Kingsborough Community College's Maritime Technology program. I learned a great deal about all kinds of boating, had wonderful experiences on all kinds of boats, expanded my knowledge and skills and earned a degree from the College. At this time I also joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary. I still didn't have my own boat so I learned to use other people's boats. After getting my USCG Captains License 25 GRT Masters with Towing, I felt it was time now to get a real boat, an "adult" boat. In 2010 I purchased a 28-foot Albin flush deck. I used that boat to help train many people in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, I became a coxswain and was proud to serve in the Auxiliary.

After spending nine years with the Coast Guard Auxiliary, one thing became apparent



to me; women know very little about the boats they were riding on. I decided to branch out on my own and start a business called "Women at the Helm". Quite often women are just passengers on boats that their husbands or friends own. These women rarely get opportunities to learn as much as possible about boating. They may not realize how important it is that they have some basic knowledge and skills. I teach a course called "Suddenly in Command", because if something should happen to their husbands or

friends, they need to know how to be able to take control of their boat.

They need to know how to properly call on the radio, how to steer the boat, and possibly bring it back to port. I also teach boat handling skills, navigation, charting, line handling, and a host of other important skills. I want to provide a nonthreatening, enjoyable learning environment, geared towards empowering women as they enjoy boating.

