

# BOATING PROFILE:

by Jeff Sublett

*When curiosity got the best of me, a new kind of snowbird was revealed.*

## A Different Kind Of Snowbird

As I was about to leave Liberty Landing Marina by car on January 4th, something a little unusual peaked my interest. It was a beautiful Down East sedan coming past the fairway in a light snow. I stopped to check it out. As the boat got closer it executed a perfect landing. There was the captain, comfy at the wheel in a light sweater vest, and his lovely mate. She stepped onto the deck in winter garb, leaned over with the stern line, and snagged the dock cleat with a single wave of her arm. She then moved to the foredeck and did the same for the forward line... a winter boating ballet.

I made my way back to the marine center to find out who these new winter visitors were. I was fortunate enough to meet a great cruising couple, Bob Meng and Martha Comfort.

After a short exchange I knew there was more to know. They were kind enough to invite me to coffee on board "SIMPLICITY" their beautiful Back Cove 37 the following Saturday morning.

Another example of why we love boating, you get to meet really great folks. If you want to talk about a boating power couple, these guys are it.

When I arrived in my snow boots and winter parker, left at the door, Bob and Martha were cozy and warm on the settee with the temperature perfectly maintained by the reverse cycle HVAC systems on board. We began a wonderful Saturday morning of bagels, coffee and boat talk.

Martha is one of those people you meet and immediately think what a lovely person, grace and poise, and quiet style that instantly puts you at ease. That first impression might come from the kindness that beams from her smile, maybe it's her Quaker background, but you just know it's from the heart. What you can't get immediately is the depth and breath of her boating skill and experience.

Martha started her sailing life at twelve invited by her uncle to sail out of Nantucket Harbor for a week aboard the schooner "FLYING CLOUD". As part of the crew she was in charge of keeping all the oil lamps ship shape,



she was hooked. By 16 she had saved enough to buy a sunfish, the fact that it arrived in a box didn't slow her down a bit; she assembled the boat, and headed out onto Long Island Sound.

After finishing a degree in biochemistry at McGill University, Martha set out for a life at sea, starting as crew on a 44 foot charter yacht in St Thomas and from there to Europe as a deckhand on a 60 foot French charter vessel headed home. After a tour of Europe, the short story is, back home to Connecticut, racing in St Thomas, a husband and sailing the Pacific from California to Singapore where she spent eight years raising two children and building a very successful boating business.

Martha eventually landed in the Pacific Northwest to start a new chapter, which included a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Washington. She now spends her professional life as Northwest Regional Manager and Lead Broker for Chuck Hovey Yachts, member and past Chairperson of the Washington Boating Alliance, and owner /President of the International Marine Management Institute. Our powerhouse sailor is also a Board Member and President Emeritus of the Freedom Project, a group that runs volunteer programs inside WA state prisons.

A published author, "The Guide to Buying a Boat", a trans Atlantic and trans Pacific Sailor and live aboard, she still spends her free time boating because she loves it so.

Bob, on the other hand, also a lifelong boater, starting at age 11 with a 14-foot runabout, has had to balance his interests in flying and boating. Even though in his teens Bob took his parents from Seattle up to Alaska in a 24 footer, flying won out professionally. After a 20-

year career as a commercial airline pilot, Bob decided on a career in the marine industry in 1988. He started his own marine services companies, ON-WATER TRAINING, and later, CONSOLIDATED MARINE SERVICES, AND YACHT SEATTLE, eventually covering all aspects of yacht service, management, and training. A US Coast Guard Merchant Marine Master, an ABYC and NMEA Master Marine Electrician and Electronics Installer, Marine Surveyor, Washington State Boating Standards Committee Member and Aviation and Marine Expert Witness and consultant, he still has an airplane, but we're glad to have you back on the water. After 20 years as a pilot for American and United Airlines and another 30 in the marine business, Bob decided to more or less retire.

About a year ago, relaxing aboard his 63 foot Ocean Alexander Pilot House Motoryacht in Seattle, Bob decided to simplify. His solution was naturally to buy another boat, you know that particular disease, and a lot us have it. While active in his yacht management business he was commissioned to deliver a Back Cove 37 for a client on the West Coast. Bob was so impressed with quality of the build, the light and airy pilothouse, the performance, as well as second stateroom in a 37 footer that the Back Cove rose to the top of the list in his plan to "simplify". A new Back Cove 37 turned out to be the answer, and picking it up on the East Coast would create an opportunity to spend time here and explore new waters.

As fortune would have it, back in 2009 Martha engaged one of Bob's companies to aid in a boat delivery for her brokerage. Probably due to one of Bob's favorite stories about an invitation he received from an insurance group to speak at their conference because they discovered





that clients who used his services had zero claims in the preceding years. Another thing you'll hear from Bob is how lucky he was to get that call to assist in sea trials for a boat Martha was brokering. To quote Bob, "we met under the hull of a 55 foot yacht and as the hired help he was very nervous about approaching such a beautiful woman for a date". He did, and as they say the rest is history. He continues to comment on how fate and Martha were so kind to him that day.

I soon found out how "SIMPLICITY" came to be in the fairway that January morning, a few days before they had cruised down from Essex, Connecticut in gale force winds and three to four footers.

Cruising comfortably in their Stidd helm seats at 18 knots, in part due the extra oomph of the optional 600 horsepower Cummins Diesel below deck. Back Cove already a solid, well built and beautifully finished New England boat with a long list of standard features and with the options and accessories on "SIMPLICITY", Bob suggested they were cruising aboard "probably the best equipped Back Cove 37 out there today". Bob and Martha, both life long boaters, worked very closely with Back Cove on the details to make this the very special yacht I saw that day. As a result of a late addition to the auto pilot system, a Christmas gift, Bob, Martha and "SIMPLICITY" left Essex, Connecticut January 2nd bound for Liberty Landing Marina in Jersey City which will be "SIMPLICITY's" home till spring. They left on the 2nd because winds were down to around 15 knots and the seas were reported to be a 1-2 foot chop, as boaters you well know, things change. When they pulled into Glen Cove they had seen winds of 20-25 knots and nasty 4-5 seas, which they described as a "good test run". After a short stop in Flushing Bay to assure good timing transiting the East River Bob, Martha and "SIMPLICITY" arrived at Liberty Landing late afternoon on January 4th, all ship shape as expected. I

suspect due to excellent and thorough preparations, and following the tenants of what they practice in their professional lives. According to Back Cove documentation, 18knots would be 2200 RPMs and about 13.5 GPH, at 46% engine load. If speed is what you need, she tops out at about 28 knots and 3000 RPM, but the max suggested continuous cruise would be 2700 RPM, about 25 knots and 70% power with a range of about 320 nautical miles at 18 gals/hour

During the back and forth of the purchase process, Back Cove became aware of the depth of Bob's knowledge and experience in the marine industry and they made a deal. Bob would be allowed to commission his own boat in exchange for a complete and detailed report and evaluation of their delivery process, including any changes or improvements that might be made in the boat. The boat, a Back Cove 37 aptly named "SIMPLICITY", was delivered to Pilots Point Marina in Westbrook, Conn. Feb. 2016 for Bob to commission it his way. Bob's way, developed as core principles of his yacht management business, is "risk management and safety", a holdover from his time as a commercial pilot. With the boat on the hard at Pilots Point the commissioning began. "SIMPLICITY" was polished several times to a well-protected high luster; her bottom was soda blasted and several epoxy barrier coats applied. The prop, though new, was removed and sent out for a final tuning and polish, all through hulls, hoses and clamps, and wire and plumbing runs were double checked and a few were modified to make sure his Back Cove complied with all current standards before the boat hit the water in April 2016 for sea trials. Keep in mind Back Cove is a very high quality yacht builder and most owners will never find issues with their boats but Bob is very detailed with an eye to dealing with issues he thinks may have even the possibility of becoming problems.

And as per his deal, he communicated regularly with, Jason Constantine, Guy Seiberts, the Customer Relations point person at Back Cove in Maine as well as the CEO as part of their Product Research and Modification program.

Just another example of how a quality builder like Back Cove operates, they saw this as an opportunity to possibly make a great boat even better.

Being a systems expert, Bob chose equipment and brands based on thousands of miles of yacht deliveries, cruising both oceans in some of the worst conditions. Bob thought the only criteria for choosing equipment should be "reliability, customer support, and ease of use". Based on his theory that the mind works in blocks of three, the equipment was set up to need a maximum of three steps to operate, believing that steps 4 and 5 are soon forgotten. As a result, some of Bob's findings and recommendations will find their way into future builds as a way of increasing customer satisfaction. After a summer of in water sea trials, in between time spent on the West Coast for business, Bob began the installation and testing of the electronics in October 2016. "The electronics and equipment was chosen was based on being able to cruise at any time whether east coast or west coast or to the last frontier of remote Alaska, safe and comfortable in any conditions the boat itself can handle.

Now for an example of "Bob's Way" when it comes to electronics. "I chose to go with Furuno as the main backbone, I knew that every component had to be Nemea 2000. This would allow for simplicity, reliability, and ease of installation".

"I started with the Furuno Nav Net 12" TZT2 as the central system for GPS, Depth and Radar, as it is compatible with all other major component manufacturers. This includes our Fusion AV 750 stereo, audio and visual, Cummins Engine Instruments, Airmar ultrasonic Weather and the list goes on. It also uses the Max C charts, not charts that are only proprietary to one manufacturer".

"The helm station console consists of The Nav Net TZT2 -12 inch and the Stealth 15 inch Multipurpose monitor accompanied by a Furuno FA50 AIS Transponder, Furuno DDS Radar, Airmar WX 220 Ultrasonic weather station, Simrad AP44 autopilot with the new NAC3 Computer".

"As an Airline Pilot and Captain of much larger and commercial vessels, I felt it mandatory to also have a PC driven navigation system on board in addition to the Furuno Nav Net. Not only as a backup but to free up screen space that can get too crowded to share with all the vital information required for safe cruising on one screen".

"The PC is a miniature, high powered solid state hard drive with Windows 7 for reliability, Nobeltec Professional V 3 Navigation software, and MS Office 365 installed and connected to the Stealth Monitor as the primary navigation screen. All vessel manuals are also stored on this computer along with a sophisticated custom maintenance log book system custom designed by Alliant Marine Group of Seattle, WA. Having this vessel information at your fingertips is a great advantage to increased safety. In addition, this computer has Long range Wi-Fi antenna system that allows for easy updates of navigation and vessel system software. The long-range Wi-Fi antenna also enables the vessel to have a router for all guests to access Wi-Fi. A network hub is also installed to allow other manufacturer systems to talk to the Furuno Nav -Net and the PC. Using NMEA 2000 allows all information including data, depth, engine data and performance information, weather, autopilot, radar to be shared AND viewed and overlaid onto the Stealth monitor".

"A carefully designed and well thought out system install, without taking any shortcuts, pays off in zero downtime and reliability of all systems, "Bob's Way".

Many of the modifications to the boat were to accommodate the electronics package and insure a clean wiring run up to the antenna forest on the saloon roof. In some cases where additional holes were needed to get antenna wiring in place, lights were installed, with added advantage of having a brighter cabin. An idea to keep in mind when you are adding equipment, wish I had met Bob a few months earlier. After spending time with Bob and Martha I learned a lot and have certainly adjusted my "To Do List".

I can't thank Bob and Martha enough for sharing their insights, hospitality, and information in writing this profile. As always, have a happy, healthy and safe boating season.

