

# Sailing With Sharon

by Sharon B. Herring



## So Why Did We Choose The Chelsea Yacht Club?

"As luck would have it" Chelsea was where our first boat was stored when we purchased her so that was where she stayed. Jim and I applied for membership and that was by far one of the most defining moments of our lives.

Many of the readers that I reach out to are far more blessed than I was, as I did not discover boating until I was late into my forties. I have no idea how I did not discover the beauty of the Hudson River sooner. OK! Truth is Jim and I married young and spent a good amount of time learning to make a living that would afford us the ability to have a large family and a large busy family we have. We started our own business which still keeps us very busy. As all you parents know, with kids comes soccer, dancing school, softball and baseball, karate lessons, swim teams, diving teams and I could go on and on. No! I never got to the river and I am so sorry that one of the activities that I missed driving my children to was the Chelsea Youth Sail Program.

Buying our first sailboat was just a way to fill our time. Our children were grown and did not need or want our constant attention. What I never realized was that when we joined Chelsea Yacht Club large changes would be made in our lives.

In what way you ask? Every way.

Jim and I never were part of any organization besides our family. Chelsea is not just a Yacht Club, it is a family. We joined blindly not knowing what we were in for. Chelsea embraced us, our children and then our grandchildren. The members reached out to us and helped us learn to sail, to race and more than that, they were support for us in hard times and there to cheer us on in good times. At one of our family dinners my entire family was playing a game of who knows more about our family. When asked "who is the oldest member of our family" one of the youngest grandchildren said "Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Let me answer that one!" Then he panicked for fear he would get it wrong so he asked, "Do you mean just the family at this table or the whole Yacht Club?" To Jim and I, that spoke volumes about the affection our entire family feels about the members of our beloved Chelsea Yacht Club.

So how does a club get so entwined in your life?

Good question. They do it by accepting us and reaching out to us. They do it by needing us and valuing what we have to offer them.

They do it and do it and do it.

Is Chelsea full of perfect people?

No. They are just like my family, full of characters. The more time you spend with them the more endearing they are. Chelsea is a "working club". When work needs to be done, we do it ourselves. Late last summer, Hurricane Irene hit Chelsea Yacht Club. Our club was flooded and what was left behind made us face a major cleanup. This past winter members came out in droves to help. Members with all sorts of skills, doctors, lawyers, electrician, teachers, carpenters, salespeople, computer tech, you name it, all came together and worked side by side. What was accomplished was more than just cleaning up and repainting: new friendships were formed and old ones renewed. In my mind, the most important thing that was accomplished was that we made memories and bonded with each other. The results are beautiful and more than that, Chelsea is stronger for having taken the opportunity to work together.

Was Chelsea alone in their efforts? Absolutely not!

Clubs up and down the Hudson River offered to help and do whatever they could for Chelsea. So I'm left to think that Chelsea Yacht Club is not the only club that forms together as a family. I do know that while racing in HRYRA I have met many wonderful members of other Hudson River clubs and I have to say I have felt their embrace, their love and I have to tell the truth, they too have some characters. (Jack, you know who I mean).

Yacht Clubs must pass from generation to generation with members who feel like I do. This must be what keeps them thriving and existing. Chelsea has racers in their 90's and racers who had to stop racing in their 80's (and let me tell you, that breaks your heart). We have racers in their teens that have their whole lives ahead of them. Young families and empty nesters join and have no idea how their lives will soon change. The more they get involved the luckier they will be. Pretty soon they too will realize that a Yacht Club is not just a place to store your boat. Chelsea Yacht Club has been a place to grow my family and my life. It is part of my home and part of who I am. So you see when I say it was "as luck would have it" that we stayed at Chelsea, it was really Great Luck.