

( I hope you enjoy this year's offering . It's takes about 5 minutes to read.... r.a.)

## **Always Listen When a Boat Speaks**

### **Part One *My Friend, My Boat and... The Other***

I win all of the sailing races! Inland, Estuarial, Coastal, Off-shore, It doesn't matter, I win them all. OK, maybe not head to head with Foil Keel boats. Besides, I don't think of them as REAL Sailboats anyway, but I win ALL of the displacement hull and even most of the Multihull boat races.

I had to build an extra room in my house just to hold the trophies and plaques.

My PHRF handicap number so high, that no one can believe it. The race committees keep bumping it up and up...

But I keep winning.

I've been accused of cheating, but I don't. I've had observers on board to make sure that I'm sailing an honest race. They all testify that I win without any illegal equipment, exotic gear, or questionable tactics.

The judges leave wondering just how in hell I can win all of the time.

I'll never tell THEM how I do it.

I WILL tell YOU... Eventually.

What really gets everyone's goat, is, they can't believe I win with the boat I have. It's one of those old fiberglass production sloops of the early 1970's. The company long ago went bankrupt

Looking around, I found that there were still a few hulls sailing. Most of them "Fixer uppers". Knowledgeable sailors wouldn't have touched them. Their reputation was so bad.

Ugly as sin, uncomfortable below and SLOW, really slow. Not what any experienced sailor wants in a boat. I AM an experienced sailor with over 40 years of sailing. I don't know why I bought this one. It just happened.

Like any Love at First Sight.. Something just pulled me to it. It kind of spoke to me, urging me to take a closer look. I did. I bought it.

The moment I stepped on board, I had the feeling that we'd get along just fine. Like some middle-aged couples, it was a mature "First Love" at its best!

It took a lot of elbow grease, to get the boat into livable and sailing condition. I had an urgency to get it into shape as soon as possible. I was obsessed. Something was driving me, telling me to hurry and get it done.

I ignored friends and family spending all my time repairing the boat. My lady friend broke off our relationship. shouting, "You love that damned boat more than me!". She was right. The boat and I became closer each day. It took 3 months to complete the job. When at last, I put down the brushes and cleaning gear, I sat in the cockpit as happy as I'd ever been.

It wasn't long before I fell asleep. Well, not a sleep, more like a stupor. And did I dream! Crazy dreams, scary dreams. One of them was so bizarre, it shocked me awake. In the dream, an old man told me that

I'd sail better and faster than anyone else. .... A winner of sailboat races? With this old clunker? THAT was crazy!  
As it turned out, not crazy at all.

When I bought the boat, it had no name. From out of nowhere, "Sasayaki" popped into my head. I don't know where the name came from, I just liked the sound of it. "Sasayaki", ...A name easy to say and remembered. "Sah-Sah Yah-Kee ", musical, different and recognizable.  
Soon that name would be the subject of much talk and hated by every sailor that raced against her.

When the graphics guy painted the name on the transom, SHE came alive! There was an energy trying to burst out. It was like standing next to a thoroughbred horse at a starting gate. She just needed to ... GO !  
And Go she did. The day after the work had been done, I went sailing. The instant we pulled away from the slip, I felt the boat surge. With only the main and a small jib, we damn near hit hull speed while STILL in the marina's entrance! Something told me to steer into a gust of wind I hadn't seen. The boat leaped forward with a bone in her teeth!  
Very quickly I found handling was easy and the boat stepped into its groove nicely. I felt really comfortable and just went along for the ride. We were PASSING other boats like they were in lulls. It was fun! We continued this wild ride for some time.

Then .. IT.. happened!

That strange dream I'd had a few days ago, came back!

I'm wide awake and yet, in my mind I could hear the whispering voice of the old man in my dream saying "You'll win every race. Those dream words so bothered me, I dropped the main, furled the jib, started the motor, and headed back to the marina.

As I cleated off the mooring lines, my legs began to turn to jelly. Setting in the cockpit, I took deep breaths and tried to gather my senses. I don't know why the event bothered me so much, I was wide awake and it was daytime. In truth, I heard the voice as plainly as if the old guy was setting next to me....

I needed a drink.

It took a big Gin and Tonic to calm me enough to gather up my stuff and think about heading home. I was exhausted and still shaky.

I guess I had over-done a bit. Today's sail had been draining and emotional.

My sailboat, Sasayaki and I had had a very exciting "First date"!

I needed to cool down. I needed to think about what was going on with me (and the boat)! I sat in the cockpit for a few minutes trying to rest and gather my senses.

Suddenly, I heard talking again! Actually, a whispering voice. I looked everywhere, the ramp, the walkway, the other slips, I saw no one. The talking got loud enough that I could make out a word or two. The male "voice" was chatting and laughing. Frantically, I walked around peering into the window ports and hatchways of the boats near me. They were empty! The marina was empty !

The mostly undecipherable words continued for a few minutes, then stopped.

I thought I must be going crazy. , I climbed back aboard my boat, went below, and stretched out on the settee. I guess I must have been more tired than I thought. I was hearing bodiless voices.

It was then, I heard “His” words,

“ You and I will sail and win! “.

***End Chapter One,***

***r.ahseln      October 2020***