

# Sailing To Allegory

## Part one- All'inizio

Ugly, Butt ugly. That's the only thing I can say about the boat. A nasty looking thing, fat and squat just sitting there. It was the last boat on "C" row, West Basin Marina, Astoria Oregon.

40 feet of dirt, spider webs and seagull droppings. A tall weed, long since dead, had sprouted up from one of the cockpit drains. All of the lines were crusted black with the soot and grime of years of neglect. It even smelled bad.

Did I say it was ugly ? That's an understatement. Why did I like it, you might ask? I needed a "bullet proof" boat for what I'd planned to do, but more of that later. This boat was built like a tank and best of all, it was a bilge keel Cutter . Perfect for running up on shallow beaches!

I'd spent the last few years casually walking the docks of marinas looking for such a boat. From Bellingham Washington to Coos Bay Oregon, I'd walked them all, searching. There had been some good candidates, but nothing ever really grabbed my attention like this one did. I'd passed by this boat several times , but when I'd gone to the marina office to ask about it, The front desk people just shrugged and told me they had no idea who owned it. Whoever it was the staff would say , they were still paying the moorage fee. I questioned, "Well, someone had to have signed the contract, hadn't they?" The response was, "All of the past records were destroyed by mistake years ago. This owner has never been traced. The moorage rent comes in the mail as cash every month along with a hand written note on blue paper, in old fashioned pen and ink, with fancy scroll words, saying.. it's for that month's fee. It's never signed. The boat's no hazard here and as long as the payment comes in, we can't call it a "Derelict " and have it removed. We contacted the State Marine Board trying to find out who the owner was, and they told us it was registered to a person in Idaho. We found out that it was an older lady and when we asked about the boat, she had no idea what we were talking about. The Oregon Marine board said that as long as the registration fee was paid up, there was nothing **they** could do".

The boat sat there for years. Each time I managed to get to Astoria, I'd walk past it hoping I might catch the owner. I never did, and nothing ever changed, except maybe there was a little more dirt and seagull poop. Then, one day, not so long ago, something did change ...

and ...that's the start of my story.

I'd made it back to Astoria to meet some friends for a weekend beer break. One morning, while they were sleeping off one too many IPA's, I sneaked out of the motel room to do a dock walk. Of course, I planned to visit my old ugly friend at the West Basin marina.

From the observation platform high above the docks, one can look over the whole marina. From that distance, even with my bad eyesight I thought I read "For Sale" printed on a bright orange sign hanging from the pulpit of the last boat on "C" row.

At low tide, the ramp to the docks was at a steep angle and I almost ended my story there. Excitedly running and tripping down the ramp I got to the end of "C" row. There a sign on the boat did indeed say "For Sale" and at the bottom In small print, " Inquire at marina office".

I may have broken the Olympic record for the 200 meter sprint getting to the office. The two people inside jumped as I slammed open the door. Before anyone panicked and ran for cover, I shouted, "The boat at the end of 'C', I want that boat ! ". For a long time, no one said a word. Then, Brenda, the manager of the marina, turned to the man next to her and said, "You have competition !".

Brenda cleared her throat and continued, " Dan, This is mister Maro . He's been asking about the boat. . Mister Maro, Dan is an old friend of the marina, he's had his eye on that boat for years." The stranger smiled, held out his hand . "Call me Virg. Can I call you Dan?" His friendly voice made me like him immediately. "Sure, Virg, as long as we're using first names. Where do you hail from?" . He pulled over a chair, sat down. I did the same. I could hear Brenda breath a little sigh of relief. I think she knew Virg and I were going to get along just fine.

"I come from a small town in New York called Andes. It's about 100 miles Southwest of Albany". "What in the world are you doing out here... in Oregon?" I responded. " I have several sailing friends in Portland and they told me about the boat. It sounded like the one I had been looking for for a long time. I flew into Portland, rented a car and drove here in hopes the thing would be for sale."

I heard Brenda gasp. Virg and I both turned to look. Her face was pale . "What's the matter, Brenda?" I asked. She looked at me, then at the new guy, Virg, and in a quivering voice said, "You're not going to believe this, I just opened the morning mail, look here!!"

She handed me a sheet of light blue paper. Written in ink, in sweeping calligraphy, it said...,

" Two sailing brethren shall meet herewith to seek the vessel at this moorage, slip: C3. They shall be allowed to own, in partnership, for the sum of two thousand dollars, said vessel . Accept the payment made and forward monies by account number, to the financial agent indicated."

"Brenda, when did you know the boat was up for sale?" I asked.

" I didn't. This letter is the first I've heard. This is weird" .

"Well !" Virg laughed, "This is getting interesting. I had no idea it was up for sale either, but I just had a feeling something was going to happen. I had to find out. I'll tell you my story".

For the next few minutes Virg talked about his recurrent dream. The same theme happened over and over. He had found a boat in some marina where he would be crew and navigator .He knew he was going to be guiding a journey. The destination wasn't exactly clear. The face of the other person was always blurred , like they do on television to protect the identity of folks. The cruise never seem to start and each time he tried to get the boat moving, he would wake up. The dream had been bothering him for years.

Now it was my time to gasp. "Virg, Brenda, this is unreal. I've had a dream that keeps popping up too, and it's one of the reasons I've wanted that ugly old boat on "C" row. In **my** dream, I'm on THAT boat. I'm ready to cast off the lines, but I have to wait for a crew to show up. He never does and then I wake up"... .OK.. What the hell is going on here?" I said in my best WTF voice !

I looked at Virg and blurted out, "It's got to be YOU in my dream. This is too weird not to be true. You saw yourself as a navigator? I saw two of us on some kind of voyage of discovery. Do you have any idea where we'd be going?". He stared at me for a moment then said. "I don't know, but something about seven islands kept popping up in my dreams". I laughed. "Ok , that's too crazy. I've always thought about cruising islands along the West coast of the Andaman Sea. North of Phuket, the Southern edge of the Myanmar peninsula. "

A moment passed when no one spoke, then Virg said, "If you're ok with this, Dan, I am."

"Brenda, will you take a check?" I said.

WE all started laughing. A few minutes later, Virg and I were partners in a boat we hadn't even fully looked at. That all changed in the hour that followed.

He and I pushed, prodded, scratched and wiggled every bit of that boat. It was then we discovered just what a great partnership we had. Virg was a genius at everything mechanical, I knew electrics and electronics like few did. By late afternoon we had a plan for getting the boat ready for sea. All rigging had to be replaced, new sails, electrics upgraded and modern electronics added. The old Yanmar was going to need a little maintenance, but it was in surprisingly good shape. We looked at

each other and knew that all of this boat stuff was going to put a big dent in both our bank accounts, but then, that's what boats do, don't they? .

We found some old logs dating back 30 years or so, but no owner's name was ever found. After scrubbing the transom, we could barely make out a name for the boat. Faded red old fashioned scroll letters read, "***Sine Spe***".

Neither of us had any idea what it meant, but decided that the name sounded right and should stay.

Virg and I spent the next year getting to know each other, spending long hours repairing, cleaning and replacing boat things, and as well, both of us were getting to like this old Cutter, ***Sine Spe***, ...more and more each day....

A little over a year later, with new sails, replaced rigging and a hell of a lot of scrubbing, fueled and provisioned and a repainted name, we kicked over the engine, dropped the mooring lines and headed ***Sine Spe*** out across the Columbia River bar.

With a few stops along the way planned, we set a Southwesterly course for Myanmar and those 7 islands Virg and I had dreamed of.

End, Part one