

AN OLD BOATER'S DREAM

By
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Recently, a friend suggested that I write a story about the one that got away (fish, that is). I gave that some thought, but could not come up with anything that seemed sufficiently interesting. However, I did think of the one that got away, or maybe I should say the ones that got a way. Let me explain.

In my lifetime, I've had a number of boats, and like past girlfriends, there's always one that stands out amongst the rest. A couple of weeks ago I had a dream about the love of my life (one of my past vessels, of course). The dream was just like things had been when she had been mine. What a beautiful dream it was and how good it felt, but it was only a dream. I couldn't figure out why I had had that dream. For the sake of this article, I'll refer to this past vessel as Ladylove.

Coincidentally, this past month I received an email from a friend who told me she had some information about Ladylove and that she was doing well and was about 1500 miles from here. Wow, was I surprised! I had given up on this old love of mine and never thought I'd hear of her again. Well, since I thought so much of this vessel in the past, I was really excited to hear about her again and wanted to know everything I could find out. I kept sending emails back to my friend, asking about various details to get an update. I was so excited, my heart pounded every time I opened another email with some bit of information about her. I know, you're thinking I'm being a bit frivolous; well, maybe I am.

Yes, I think there is a similarity between old flames and love affairs with boats. After all, don't we call a boat "she", and hasn't a captain (on occasion) referred to his ship as his "mistress"? Well, come along with me on this thought.

I recall going through some troubled times many years ago and remember doing some meditation to relieve my anxiety. During one meditation period, I had this premonition about finding Ladylove and didn't even know she existed; I didn't understand where the premonition came from. But it was very clear in my mind. Lo and behold, the next year I found her and Ladylove became mine.

The boat had been owned by a 75 year old man who hadn't given it much care. I liked it right from the start; I actually had seen other models like it before and decided this was the kind of craft for me. It was gas powered then, so I decided to change the engines and put diesels in it. I also added fresh electronics and much more. What a craft it was, just like a little ship. It was so solid that I thought it was bulletproof; I became almost over-confident in its capability. It was a 1988, 32-foot Hatteras sport fisherman. In retrospect, probably the best craft I ever owned. She gave me great pleasure, whether it was fishing off Hillsboro Inlet, going to Bimini or cruising down to the Florida Keys.

Whether it was my old flame or the boat, I remember that I loved them with all my heart. I still think of all the wonderful moments I spent with Ladylove. And yes, there have been many times when I lamented about letting her go. But after having her for a few years, when I finally realized that I could not give her the care she deserved, I gave her up to a new master. Yes, I gave her up! Are you startled by that admission? I think no man can love his mistress (his vessel) any greater than to let her go when he knows that may be the best thing for her. And, from what I learned from the emails I received this month about her, that was probably the right decision; at least for Ladylove.

I can't help wondering how it would feel if I were to see her again. I mean, emails are one thing, but they're almost like dreaming again because I can't see her with my own eyes and in the flesh (I mean fiberglass). If I saw her one-on-one, I would tell her how much I had loved her and how I regret letting her go. I'd like to have her back again, but I know her master would not allow that. He makes me feel a bit embarrassed. He's had her all these years since I gave her up, and for me, I've had one vessel after another. It's been as if there is no other that could take her place.

I have thought seriously about finding another model just like Ladylove. The problem with that is that she was so special to me I just can't get myself to try to replace her with a similar model. You know how it is; when you've spent so much time with someone you love and get to know her so well, she becomes unique. I guess I've always felt that she's one of a kind.

Someone recently asked me what was so special about Ladylove. I really can't say. Whether it was my old boat or my old flame, there was this magnetic chemistry; I just can't come up with specifics. I must admit that Ladylove had a great profile, but I think when a person is really in love, they don't trump up reasons for it, it just happens and it's unexplainable and undeniable.

I've tried to understand what this past month was all about in dreaming about Ladylove and then hearing about her through emails. Am I destined to have her again? That doesn't seem possible. I've regretted so much about letting her go and dreaming about getting her back, that the events of the past month only make me feel more forlorn over her. I guess I'm realizing that this is a case of unrequited love. I'm sure you've heard the old saying, "It is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." Now, can that apply to boats too?

I just had an idea. As for my old flame and I, "Blueberry Hill" was our love song. Now wouldn't it be something if I renamed my boat Blueberry Hill? This might be the perfect answer to combining the memory of my boat and my old flame. What a magnificent thought! Now I'm really having an old boater's dream!!!

Oh well, they say things happen for a reason, so maybe there will be more to this than I can now appreciate. I have to admit that I really believe there is a difference between a favorite past boat and a past girlfriend. A boat is only fiberglass and metal and can't love you back, a past girlfriend is real flesh and blood and can love you back, if not at least for the time we did have together. However, I also cannot allow myself to get stuck in the past, so whether it is replacing my old boat or my old flame, I owe it to both of them and myself to move on, ...or maybe not.