

## **I AM A SAILOR THAT FLOATED UPSIDE DOWN IN MY LIFEJACKET**

I am a sailor. I have always been a sailor. When I was only a small child my parents would take me down to the shore. There I would smell the marine air and feel the breeze on my face. My heart would race and my sprits would soar.

At first my parents would not take me sailing with my brother and sister. My head was so big and my body so small that I would float upside down in a lifejacket. Each time our family would go sailing they would put the life jacket on me and throw me in the water to see which way I would float. Finally the day came when I floated upright in my lifejacket. I was to go sailing with my Father.

My family lived in Pittsburg at that time and we were sailing in the Allegheny Reservoir. The reservoir was newly filled and they hadn't removed all the stumps yet.

My family's sailboat was a Flying Fifteen. It was a planing keel boat. That means it rides on top of the water like a surf board, to go fast, and has a deep keel , to keep it upright. My Father and me were sailing at a pretty good speed when we hit a stump. The boat stopped dead in the water. I did not. I went flying. I clearly remember brilliant sunbeams piercing the reservoir's blue green water's. Needless to say, I floated upside down in my lifejacket. My Father grabbed me by a foot and pulled me back into the boat. I stood there and looked down. I realized I had lost a shoe. I looked at my father and started to cry "my shoe drowned". My Father grabbed me harder than he ever had before, or ever would again. He looked me in my eyes and said "it doesn't matter".

Family legend has it we missed church for a month because we could not afford new shoes.

## LEARNING TO SAIL

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My father played a trick on me when he taught me to sail. He taught me to sail in a Flying Fifteen. The trick will not be clear to most of you, unless you are familiar with Flying Fifteens and boat handling in general. The story I tell to explain to the rest of us what it was like is this.

Imagine your father was teaching you to drive. He goes down into a basement garage and pulls out an old primer painted Maserati. He teaches you how it handles, how it brakes, how it accelerates, how it turns and parallel parks.

All during your youth you drive and enjoy this car.

Then for the rest of your life you are condemned to drive a long string of cars: Pintos, Vegas, Fiestas, and Geos. So many poor performing cars, it just left you longing for the car of your youth.

The Flying Fifteen of my youth had exceptionally graceful lines. She was sleek, with a long wave piercing bow. She had an overhanging stern. Her keel was deep and had an aerodynamic swept back shape.

My father would tell us, when we were out sailing, that we were the fastest mono hull boat in the bay. The catamarans were faster with their two hulls, but would flip over often. Then there was, the Flying Dutchman, a boat designed by Uffa Fox just like the Flying Fifteen. It was said he designed the Flying Fifteen because he grew tired of going swimming in the English Channel. The high performance Flying Dutchman he was racing in was very easy to tip over and capsize. The Flying Dutchmen could pass us, but not many other mono hull boats.

The Flying Fifteen had a sleek 325 lb. 2-1/2' deep keel on its' bottom and would not capsize.

The flying fifteen handles superbly. All the sail is set back from the front of the hull so the boat will point into the wind when the sails are let loose.

The ruder is big and turns the boat quickly. It is set behind the keel and a little closer to the center of the boat than is usual and the boat turns tightly

The rudder has a long tail that can be used to push the boat along by just sweeping the tiller back and forth.

All together the Flying Fifteen is a sports car of boats. I will always long to sail one again.

## **THE STORY OF THE ROBERTA- FF 92, THE NINETY SECOND FLYING FIFTEEN MADE.**

To hear the story about the Roberta you will first have to read a couple short stories about Uffa Fox. He was the builder of the Roberta and the designer of the Flying Fifteens. He was a friend and competitor of My Grandfather William Gillies. He sailed with and against my Grandfather in many sailboat races.

Uffa Fox was the designer of champion sailboats, and he raced them.

He designed the Flying Dutchman it was a fast planing sailboat with a center board. The Flying Dutchman is a light high performance boat. It can easily tip over and capsize.

The story goes that Uffa Fox was getting to old to go swimming in the English channel. So he designed the Flying Fifteen. The Flying Fifteen is a planing boat like the Flying Dutchman. Both boats have a flat smooth rounded hull on their bottom. They are designed to ride on top of the water like a surf board to go fast. The Flying Dutchman has a light center board. The Flying fifteen has a 2-1/2 foot deep and 325 lb. streamlined keel with most of its' weight in a torpedo at the bottom. The flying Fifteen can be counted on to be stable in a good wind.

The other story my grandfather told was that Uffa Fox would hold a party every time he would deliver a boat. He would spend all the money he got.

My grandfather knew Uffa Fox well. He was happy to help him promote his new class of Boats.

The Roberta was ff 92 the 92<sup>nd</sup> Flying Fifteen numbered. How my grandfather came by her and how he gave her to us is a long story by itself.

She was built for King Farouk of Egypt. She was one of ten meant to form a racing fleet. King Farouk was deposed before he could take delivery.

My grandfather was one of the principals in an advertising agency. He was to handle and advertise the sale in exchange for one of the boats that had been damaged in shipment and repaired.

At one time the boat had a 6" round hole in its' bottom. It was to the port side and mostly in front of the keel. I always imagined an artillery shell passing through and not exploding. More likely it was a headache ball on one of the cranes loading the ship that got dropped through the boat hull.

I heard the sale went well. The Flying Fifteen was shipped to my Mother and Father.

Years later when I called it "a late wedding present ", my mother broke down in tears and said it was a consolation gift because they had lost a child.

Together my Mother and Father decided to name the boat the Roberta. After Robert, the baby they had lost after just two days. The name bore weight in our family and we frequently just called her the Flying Fifteen.

## **HOW THE LITTLE BOY GOT HIS BOAT**

When I was a little bit older than 8, I decided I wanted a Sabot. When a little girl might have wanted a pony, I wanted a sail boat. Not just any sail boat, but a Sabot. Now I can see the boat with my Father's eyes. It was a particularly small and awkward boat with a flat cut off bow. It had a lee board off to one side. It was likely to capsize. It was just a dog of a boat.

I wanted one. It was for little boys to sail. That meant it was for me. Boys in the yacht club sailed and raced them. It meant my parents would let me sail on my own.

I dreamed of the struggle of sailing off a lee shore where the wind would push you shoreward. I knew I lived on a lee shore. I would have to tack back and forth turning to the side of the wind and pointing as much into the wind as I was able. I would need to work to get windward. A Sabot didn't point to windward very well.

My dreams were of Sabots. I was drawing Sabots. All my savings went to buy one. My newspaper route that wasn't very profitable. Another job I had was delivering bulletins for a large apartment complex for \$3.00 a week. It was savings but I realized that at my earnings it would take a long time to save the three or four hundred dollars that it would take to buy a used sabot. It became a nearly impossible dream. I was obsessed with my dream boat.

After a few months I had saved \$20 or \$30. Things suddenly started to happen. My Father an engineer got a surprise check for a little more than \$100.00 for a patent on something he invented. It was top secret so he couldn't tell us what it was. His former employer felt he deserved it so he got the check. The first thing he thought of was to help me get my boat.

Then my oldest sister Laura, sensing I was getting close, offered a \$100.00 She earned helping a caterer in Bird Rock. It was hard earned money, probably a month's wages. She was saving for a college education and she needed it.

I don't know where the other \$100.00 came from. It most likely came from our tight household budget. We were on the hunt for a used Sabot. We printed up 3x5 cards saying we were looking for a used Sabot. We put some up in laundry mats. But our real hope was the bulletin boards in the yacht club where they had a racing fleet for children.

When we went to the gate to ask the guard permission to post our ad, the guard said ok. But we would need someone to go with us. He called the caretaker and said we should talk to him about his Sabots as well.

The caretaker had two Sabot hulls. They needed paint and fitting out. He included a used sail, mast, boom, a rudder, a lee board and a small amount of the fittings I would need. It cost us \$300.00 and he included a small amount of fiberglass paint. I would need to paint the inside of the hull.

There was a lot of work to fit out the boat. My father worked with me to build a hand pulled trailer that I could use to get to the beach.

The soft sand of the beach was still an obstacle I could not cross. I had to bring my boat to the beach then ask a passerby to help me pull it across the soft sand.

My sister Laura remembered being sent down to the cliff at the bay's edge. She was sent to blow, a blow conch horn, to call me home. I would hear the horn as I sailed on the bay. I would return home down wind. My parents knew where I was. It just took a little time to bring me home.

I was sailing all by myself.

## **THE HELICOPTER, MR. MURRY, NIXON, AND THE HELICOPTER CRASH**

The story is a lot to get in but let me start with the helicopter. The helicopter set down in the back parking lot of a boat launch ramp. They put up temporary fences to keep people away from the helicopter landing zone. Then they advertised rides for five cents a pound. The pilots would not take children without an adult accompanying them.

I maybe had enough from my paper route to pay for a ride. However my Mother and Father were big people. I didn't know how much but I sensed it would be more than I could afford to pay. Mr. Murry, my friend and neighbor, on the other hand was much smaller. He had been a feather weight boxer. I decided to ask him if he would go with me if I paid.

What I didn't know was that Mr. Murry had never been in an airplane or helicopter and was terrified of them. On the other hand here was this cute persistent boy that wanted this favor. How could he say no. He was terrified and almost backed out on several occasions. But how could he disappoint such an excited child.

I got my ride in a helicopter. It was exciting and over so quickly.

I didn't learn of Mr. Murry's bravery till I was much older. I always appreciated him taking me on that ride.

The story would end there if it wasn't for Nixon and the helicopter crash.

I loved my boat. I would take it out in high winds and calm days. In high winds my father would say we took it out capsizing. In calm days we would have to work to get the boat to windward off the lee shore near my house.

This was a calm day with just enough wind to move us. We, Darrel Walraven and me, had a goal. We wanted to sail all the way windward in the bay. Then sail all the way windward in a cove off the bay. Pull our boat up on a beach. We would then go to an Italian restaurant and buy hot garlic bread. We would get our garlic bread. But what happens first is the story.

We were tacking. Going from side to side of where we wanted to go so we could reach our goal upwind in a zig zag fashion up wind.

We had heard Nixon was staying at the Bahia Hotel and had rented an entire floor. He wasn't president yet. He was running in the California republican primary. Robert Kennedy was alive then and everybody thought he would win the Presidential race.

We still wanted to see what was up. We decided to sail near on our way up wind.

We were close. The only boat nearby, when it happened. The helicopter came down quite quickly. We were surprised. It stopped right above the water. It settled gently into the bay. The helicopter sank right away. The blades still turning, They struck the water splashing up spray as they sank. We were the closest boat but we had so little wind that we moved slowly. Within a minute the first passenger popped up it was a little boy in a lifejacket. He was followed by a young man also in a lifejacket. The speed boats on the bay were right on it. The two passengers were being picked up when the two were followed by a man in a flight suit and lifejacket carrying a big book

We sailed to the shore near the Bahia Hotel and watched as a diver hooked up the helicopter. Then a tow truck winched it to shore. It was not the best day for the pilot but he lived to tell the tale.

Then we got our hot garlic bread. It was delicious.

## **MY FIRST TIME OUT IN THE FLYING FIFTEEN AND THE VOICE OF COMMAND**

Sometimes things happen that are your fault. You don't know why but you know it was your fault. A life time later you look back on it and you know exactly what it was. That is how it was with me and my first time out in the Flying Fifteen.

The first time I went out in the Flying Fifteen as the person controlling the boat was when I was about 10 years old. My younger sister Claire was with me to help out. She was in the front of the boat where the jib sheets were. I would need her there to hold the right jib sheet to keep the front sail, the jib, under control. Years later I would put a cleat in to hold the jib sheet. I could then sail single handed. At that time I needed her there.

We were going out with Bob DeHue's two children. They were being raised in France so they would not experience the prejudice of being raised an African American in the United States. They were visiting their father. They spoke no English only French.

Their Father was a close friend of our family. He was a Unitarian, intellectual, artist. There was a impressive mobile hanging in the church lounge that was his work. He was an exceptional man. He grew up on an island and didn't have issues growing up. He was comfortable with intellectuals and found a home in the Unitarian church.

Our family was throwing a picnic in honor of his children's visit. My father launched the Flying Fifteen then gave almost everyone a ride. It was decided I would take Bob DeHue's son and daughter out. It was my first time out. We loaded into the boat from a dock. My sister and the girl were in front and the boy in the back.

I pointed the boat into the wind. Gave it a hard shove and jumped on at the stern. I made my way across the deck to the back cockpit where the helm and tiller are to control the boat.

We were rapidly gaining speed. We needed to turn the boat into the wind to slow the boat and to miss a few boats at mooring in front of us. I had to push the tiller away from me and toward where our friend from France was sitting. He instantly took offence and pushed the tiller as hard as he could the other direction. We turned and broadsided a cabin cruiser right in the middle. We left a big triangular hole in the plywood just a little bit above the waterline. The hole was about one foot on three sides.

My trip was ruined. I made my way to the shore nearest to the cabin cruiser and started my effort to find the owner. The first people I came to were hanging out on their porch. When I asked one of them said he was the owner. He said he had seen the whole thing and he thought it was funny. I told him I thought the boat was insured and we could take care of it. He said not to worry, it was alright. I left my phone number and that was the last we heard about it.

My story so far leaves out the voice of command. I did not have it then. The voice of command is to be obeyed, without doubt, without question or second thought. It is the voice of command you use when there is a strong wind blowing and you turn your boat into the wind to stop it 1' from a dock. When the boat stops I use the voice of command to tell my crew to step across that 1' with a line to tie off the boat. It has to be done then before the boat turns and blows down wind.

## **PETER MERRILL, KIT, AND THE WILD RIDE**

There is something that happens to you when you have a Flying Fifteen. It is sleek, sweptback, aerodynamic, and has a wave piercing bow. It looks like it is meant to sail fast. When some people see a Flying Fifteen they develop a strong desire to sail it fast. That is the way I think it was with Kit.

The Flying Fifteen was not looking its best. The molded mahogany plywood hull was beginning to delaminate and was splintering at the edges. She needed work.

Kit was a surfer that moved into the back of a duplex next door. He quickly struck up a friendship with my Father. He kindly showed me a mold he was going to use to make a cowling for a motorcycle he owned. It was probably from him that my Father suddenly got the knowledge he needed to fiber glass the outside of the boat's hull.

The sailboat had its' keel unbolted. The hull was turned upside down. It was refinished. A couple layers of fiberglass were laid down. A strip of fiber glass tape was put on the corner edges. The boat was gel coated. The deck and hull were painted. The keel was bolted on. Finally big foam blocks were cut and fitted for under the deck to provide floatation in case the boat was swamped or filled with water. The Flying Fifteen was ready.

There is one type of wind storm in Southern California that is known by local sailors to generate high hot winds blowing from the east to the west. The winds come from the land and do not travel enough over the ocean to push up a big swell. Ocean swells come from swells that travel over the ocean for thousands of miles. It takes a long hard wind blowing for weeks to push up a swell big enough to cross the sea. This Santa Anna wind mostly just turned up chop and blew out white caps.

Santa Anna winds were easy to predict. The weather man just needed to know that there was high pressure over the mountains of the southwest and a low pressure trough off the coast. As the winds blow out of the mountains of the southwest they get hotter as they drop in elevation. The winds blow through the mountain passes, across our coastal cities, and out to sea. These wind storms can be counted on happening several times a fall.

Now to be fair to my Father and Kit no one ever said they were planning their trip to Catalina Island during a Santa Anna. They had been planning their trip to Catalina for months. The boat had been made ready. She had been fitted out and refinished. Careful plans had been made. I wanted to go with my Father badly. I felt I deserved it. I had sailed with my Father for years. Kit was new.

In the end, I resigned, this was a trip for adults. I could not go.

The whole family loaded up in our 1958 Chevy station wagon pulling the boat on a trailer behind us. We launched the Flying Fifteen in San Pedro harbor. We launched there because it was the closest to Avalon.

The day started clear and hot with just a breath of breeze. It was a precursor for the winds to come later in the morning. The start was like many Santa Anna days.

We saw my Father and Kit off not knowing it could have been the last time we saw them. My family left, pulling the empty trailer behind us, and headed home to San Diego.

I was told it started out quite calm. They set their sails wing and wing. One sail was on one side the other sail was on the other side. The wind was behind them and they were pointed at Avalon Harbor.

There was a moment at the mouth of San Pedro Harbor when they could check their watches.

Then it all started to happen at once. The Santa Anna winds hit them. They started to go!

One of the most exciting things you can do is to sail a Flying Fifteen in high winds on a smooth sea. Sailing downwind on a broad reach the Flying Fifteen earns its name. It flies, from wave top to wave top. It planes, riding on top of the water. Its bow cuts the waves throwing up spray.

The thrill and excitement is hard to compare to any other boat.

On this trip to Catalina my Father would find more excitement than he bargained for.

At first it seemed like they had everything under control. The wind picked up harder and harder. As the wind blew harder their bow began to dip. They worried their bow would sail down into a wave. The wave would push down their bow. The boat would pearl and sail down into the heart of the wave. The sail would continue to sail downwind over the top of them.

They would tumble end over end like a bicycle with its front wheel stopped.

As the wind increased they moved to the back of the boat to keep the bow up. They were flying like never before or since. Then the realization hit them, if one of them went forward to shorten sail the bow would dip and they would be swamped. Both of them were needed in the stern to keep the bow up and to keep them from taking on water.

The spray, the chop, the occasional wave that made it across the deck was beginning to fill the bilge with water. The watermelon and cantaloupe that they had brought were floating in the bilge washing back and forth with their other spoiled food.

My sister Claire says it was Kit that saved my Father's life. He was a Surfer. He surfed down the wave faces. He didn't pearl in the face of the next wave. He sailed up the next swell. Not broaching at the top. Then he surfed down again.

Almost as quickly as it started happening, it was over. They reached the windward wind shadow of Catalina Island. The wind slowed just enough that they were able to sail into Avalon Harbor and pick up a mooring. When they checked their watches it was unbelievable it looked as if the crossing had taken only a few minutes more than twenty. It figured out to an unbelievable speed. One I would not want to repeat. Everything was wet, wallet, money, bedding, clothes, food, and all.

I answered my Father's collect call that evening telling us he was safe. We were told he would stay there one day and leave at dawn the next for a direct sail to San Diego.

San Diego is down current and mostly downwind from Catalina. He made good time on his trip back home.

## Dismasted or Why You Should Not Sail With Lose Nuts

It was a beautiful summer day. There were good, gentile winds. It was a holiday weekend. Probably it was the Fourth of July. We had started out very early to avoid the crowds. We quickly beat out the channel to the Ocean. We set a straight course. The swell was long and deep. We would rock front to back as we crested each wave. The wind was good and we were moving quite well. The day was beautiful. The wind was fresh. We enjoyed ourselves. By midday we grew bored. It was time to return to port. We lined the red channel light on the right returning to port.

When we looked in the channel we saw a solid wall of boats all headed out to sea for the holiday. I would need to be careful.

One of the most dangerous points in an ocean excursion is when you are just beginning to enter the harbor at the channel's mouth. The ocean swells rise as they cross the sandbar that forms there. You can end up surfing forward down the face of a swell then go bow under the next one. The other thing that might happen is a broach. The wave pushes past you. The current moves backwards across your hull. The boat spins around till it is sideways to the wave. The wind pushes you over the rest of the way. You capsize. The boat fills with water and breaks up as the waves push it against the rocks.

It happened at the most dangerous spot. The day was fair. The swells were long and substantial. The waves were not breaking nor were they likely to turn you around. They would push you against the rocks and break up your boat. Mostly they were making my boat rock back and forth.

Then it happened all at once. I heard the noise of the wire shroud holding the mast up and the chain plate separating. I looked to see the stainless steel bolt sitting on the deck that was supposed to hold up the mast. I looked up to see the mast start to fall. Slow at first. It picked up speed with the force of the wind and the momentum of the fall. Everything in the rigging the sail, mast, and boom, and all hit the water with a forceful splash.

On Flying Fifteens the mast goes through the deck. When the mast fell sideways one side of the deck was pushed down the other side of the deck was lifted and pushed up. This wasn't our only problem. The mast below the deck had two broom handle dowels used as cleats for the halyards sticking out the sides. These two dowels were now sticking up through the deck. They locked our mast out to the side. Our situation was dire. With our mast stuck out to one side, we could not be towed. The boat would be spun around because of the drag on one side. Very soon the swell would catch us and push us against the rocks.

We had one hope.

There is one Hero that I owe an incredible debt of thanks. He took an order. He did it without hesitation or question. He saved the day.

What I needed so badly was for someone to lift the tip of the mast. When the first motorboat came within shouting distance, I made my request. The mast tip was lifted. The pegs pulled out of the deck. I was able to pull the mast parallel to the boat. We were towed into port.

Never use nuts and bolts to hold up your mast. Use pins and retainer rings. I have never seen them fail.

## Don't Explode Your Boat or Why Every Sailor Needs a Checklist

I learned from an open F.A.A. meeting for pilots the need for and use of checklists. They hammered home the use of checklists in every situation. It suddenly made sense to me. I should have had a checklist and checked the mast's wires, shrouds and stays, the day one nut and bolt separated and my mast fell down. I should have checked the rudder hinges on that rental boat that had its' rudder fall apart. I needed a checklist. Its' not just pilots that need a checklist sailors need them too.

I have put much thought into what should be on the checklist and in what order. Importance seemed to help decide on a first. Don't explode the boat. Ventilate it. Open up the companionway hatches. Go forward and open the bow hatch. Try not to breathe too much on the way. Breathe in the open hatch. Remember carbon monoxide gas is odorless and sinks down in a hull. Don't turn anything on or off sparks both on and off can ignite an explosion. I will get back to exploding the boat near the end to keep you reading. Right now the boat needs to ventilate.

Right after not exploding comes sinking. It is a good idea to check the bilge. See how much water is there and what it looks like. There is usually water of some kind in the bilge. A wooden boat weeps and there is salt water. A perfectly sealed fiber glass hull might have fresh water in it from condensation. If the bilge has gas or oil in it, it needs to be removed. Not pumped out. The sponges and rags used in the clean up are spontaneous ignition threats and need to be treated as such. At first just check how much water is there and if you smell gas.

Soon after you come aboard you will have to pay attention to the third item on the list where you are. Check how you are tied up. Make sure you will not breakaway and drift off. Look around you take into account, the tide, the wind, the current, and the movement of other vessels. Make sure you are in a safe place. Check where you are later to see if you are moving.

After checking on exploding, sinking, and drifting off it is a good time to check your mast. The mast is held in place by wires. These are shrouds and stays. The fore stay is in front. The port and starboard shrouds are on the sides. The back stay is in the stern. At the hull there are chain plates to connect the mast to the hull. At the ends of the shrouds and stays are fittings with pins and retainer rings. Look at each one. If there is a turnbuckle, turn it a little bit to keep it moving. Look up the mast to the fittings at the top. See what you can see and give the shroud a little tug. Do this for every shroud and stay. Look at the chain plates' connection to the hull. I then check the mast's connection to the boat. Look at the base of the mast for corrosion at the fitting. Check for cracks in the fiber glass. I just look for anything substantial enough to let the mast slip out at the bottom. Next I check the halyards, the lines running up and down the mast to pull up the sails. Check if they are in their pulley tracks by moving them back and forth just enough to tell. After that it is the jib sheets the two lines that hold the sail in the front, the jib. I check if they are free of the dock line and that the sail can move back and forth to each side. Then I check the main sheet the line connected to the boom that controls the mainsail in back. I loosen the line and make sure there is slack so when we raise the main sail it won't pull the sail down, when we are raising it up. See the dock lines and make they are not tangled up in the rigging.

Lifejackets, make sure you have enough and wear them. Helmets, booms can be deadly. Know about the dangers on your boat. Anchor, see if you have one to stop. Communication make sure what you bring will work. Look at the rudder, the pins, hinges and the tiller. Look for cracks on the tiller. If you have a

wheel move it all the way it should go in each direction. Feel how smooth the movement is. Open up the hatches. Inspect the cables, pulleys and rudder post.

Now we can get back to exploding the boat. A boat can have a very explosive mix of fuel vapors and air. The explosions frequently blow off all hatches and blow people out companionways. Engine compartment hatches are notorious for blowing off with the people on them 50' away. People generally survive the explosions. They would not want to repeat it.

After we leave enough time to ventilate the boat, we want to start the fan. Not Yet! Many times the trick to not exploding a boat is not to have a spark ignite it. In most of the switches on a boat there is a spark that jumps from contact to contact when a switch is turned on or off. This can explode a boat. There is an exception the explosion proof battery switch. It is possible to set the explosion proof battery switch sending power to a fan to the off position. Turn the fan switch to on while no power is going to it. Then turn the explosion proof switch to on position. No spark was made to turn on a fan on to ventilate your hull better.

Look around you. Examine the weather. Will you need jackets? It is almost always colder on the water. Will the swell be substantial? Could passengers get sea sick? Find out about the tide. Will level or current be a problem? Wind, Could there be too much wind? Over so much wind, many boats are almost unsteerable.

If you have an outboard motor, check it out. See how much fuel you have. Look to see if the kill switch tag is there. Pull out the choke. Set the transmission to neutral. Turn on the fuel. Set the throttle to start. Press the primmer bulb 5 times or as much as the instructions say. Pull the start cord a few times. If it doesn't start right away reduce the choke to half way. Turn down the throttle a little. Pull the cord several more times and if it doesn't start it is probably flooded and the fuel is shorting out the spark plug. Once you get the motor started let it run till it is warm then reduce the choke and the throttle. Let it run till you know it is pulling fuel from the tank set the transmission into forward and reverse and see if the propeller is turning. Look at the back of the motor and check if you can see the cooling water circulating. Run the motor a little while, it is part of the check. A warm motor starts easier. When you are done set the valve, choke, and throttle, to the start positions, for quicker starts in a pinch.

With an inboard you have to develop your own checklist. There is usually a long list of things you need to do like turning through hull valves. If you don't do it right your engine burns up. Stick with what someone who knows your boat taught you.

There are many things that need to be on a checklist that I did not address here.

Everybody needs to develop their own.

The final thing on my checklist is I. Am I ready? Am I prepared? Can I do what I set out to do? Am I safe, sane, and healthy?

## The Last Time I Saw 🚢 92, the Roberta

I enjoyed the Roberta most of my high school years. I taught sailing classes for my high school and we went out almost every day. There was the frequent beat to windward to get out the channel to the ocean. We would tack back and forth out the channel. Our zig zag path to windward would disrupt the in on one side and out on the other side traffic pattern in the channel. Our work would get us up wind to the mouth of the channel. Once out the channel and in the ocean our course was more easily set. We could sail on for awhile. The course was usually north, up current and up wind.

On the way home everything would go our way. The current was with us. The wind was behind us. We would sail down wind into the channel and set our sails wing and wing with one sail on each side.

The slip my Father rented was a bow slip. It had a V shaped spring that held the bow and two lines that held the boat perpendicular to the dock. The boat was pointed into the dock rather than side tied. The slip was against the shore. When I sailed out I had to get around the whole dock and sail up wind in a narrow channel between our dock and a sport fishing dock. Every day was a lesson in how to sail up wind in a tight channel. The high school class was a great chance to gain experience. One day there was a gentle steady wind and a fog we could see about a half block in. We went out. We used a compass. We used dead reckoning. We could see the shore quite often. The wind was our guide. The waves set our course. We practiced finding our way and came home as the fog lifted at sunset.

After my high school years The Flying Fifteen became my recreation. I used her frequently.

Then the terrible day came. The sails were in a big green army duffel bag on the front porch. Marco moved to Arizona. He left behind a big green duffel bag with his soccer equipment in it. I think he took the sails by mistake. We never got them back. I was shopping for used sails when my Father lost his slip to redevelopment and not being able to pay more for a side tie.

The Boat was on a trailer in a storage yard when I got married. I never took my Wife sailing in her.

I had the boat and no sails. I was poor. My Wife and I were not earning very much. The cost of storage was substantial to us.

I visited the boat in storage to check on it and to pay rent. I went to the storage lot and I found the lot had been moved 2 blocks away. When I saw the boat my heart sank. The Roberta was laying on its side on the splintered remains of her trailer. The trailer was broken. It looked like it had been moved by a forklift. The mast and boom were nowhere to be seen.

I was moved by a great sadness. I knew it was the end. Without The sail, mast, and boom she would never sail again.

She still had the grace of her lines. Her beauty had not left her. IT stayed with her thrown on the ground never to find its natural element the sea again.