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## LESSONS: GOOD-BYE, BOB, AND HELLO TO A WORLD OF SAILING

SOMEONE YELLED “MAN OVERBOARD!” and I realized that Bob had fallen into the churning gray waters of San Francisco Bay—again. For a second, I considered leaving him behind, as he’d been nothing but trouble since we met.

In my defense, it’d been a long week. Today was the last day of sailing class, and my shins were bruised, my hands calloused, and my hair a tangled mess.

But back to Bob. He’d become harder to see as our boat glided swiftly away. Leaving a member of your crew is a definite no-no, so I ordered everyone to hang on while I turned the boat upwind. After gaining control of the luffing sails, I maneuvered the boat alongside Bob, who wasn’t looking any worse for the wear. This wasn’t surprising, as Bob is a one-gallon orange-juice jug. I grabbed the rope tied to the handle and pulled Bob on board. “Thirty seconds,” proclaimed my instructor. “Not bad.”

When I moved from Manhattan to San Francisco in the early 1990s, I stepped onto a sailboat for the first time and fell in love.

But I was never more than an observer, and I thought that the next logical thing to do would be to find a handsome sailor to take me on his yacht for champagne cruises beneath the Golden Gate Bridge. Several years and countless bad dates later, I found the perfect partner. The catch?



Ellen Galvin (above) developed sailing and crew-overboard skills (right) with OCSC Sailing of Berkeley, California. She went on to charter in Greece.

He wasn’t exactly the sailing type. To experience the rush of wind and water, I’d have to learn how to handle a sailboat on my own.

That’s how I wound up at the helm of a J/24 on San Francisco Bay as part of a basic keelboat-certification class with OCSC Sailing ([www.ocsc.com](http://www.ocsc.com)). Admittedly, the course brought back many fears and self-doubts. In the beginning, especially, I suffered from “tiller confusion” in which my mind and my hands were at odds with one another. I had dif-

ficulty keeping track of the steps required to get the boat in and out of the marina, not to mention actually sailing it across the bay.

I felt physically and mentally exhausted. Was I too old to learn a new sport? Then a funny thing happened. I fell into bed thinking about sailing, and then I woke up—refreshed—thinking about sailing. I practiced tying knots at breakfast and studied right-of-way rules late into the night. With much to learn, I didn’t have

time to obsess about work or other daily obligations. It was pure heaven.

On the last afternoon of class, the winds kicked up to 20 knots. Holding the tiller, I trimmed the sails, then

steered toward the wind until we were sailing closehauled. The boat heeled. Instead of panic, I felt exhilaration. Everything clicked as I tapped into an intuitive part of myself that had been elusive at the start of the class.

Go ahead, I dare you to fall overboard again, Bob!

**Ellen Galvin**



## AZORES LANDFALL: NO YANKS, LOTS OF EUROPEANS



It’d been three years since I last made landfall at the port of Horta, on the island of Faial in the Azores. The islands, which have a temperate climate, lie 2,000 miles east of New York City and 1,000 miles west of Gibraltar. On the day we cleared in, only the bottom half of Pico, the 7,500-foot-high volcanic peak (see photo) on the island of the same name that’s five miles southeast of Horta, showed beneath the clouds. The customs officer and Mid Atlantic Yacht Services’ Duncan Sweet both told us that *White Knight*, the Swan 651 my crew and I were delivering, was the only U.S.-flagged boat in the crowded harbor. Others were European, with the exception of one South African-flagged boat. The speculation is that the pricey euro was keeping Americans away.

**Andrew Burton**