

*We are a nonprofit dedicated to preserving maritime heritage and to sharing that rich legacy with the public, especially children and youth.*



## Sitka Maritime Heritage Society



### *Sailing Sitka*

Have you ever looked out on the waters of Sitka Sound during a sunny summer day and seen a beautiful sailboat gliding through the sparkling waters, sails full of wind and wondered about who was at the helm? *What's their story? What have they seen? Where have they been?* For this newsletter issue, SMHS reached out to two sailing Sitkans to answer those questions and more. Roger Schmidt and Blain Andersen are two local sailors whose sailing adventures span the globe, and we are pleased to share their stories with you in the following pages.

*Left: The S/V BOB is a 50' Catalina Morgan sloop built in 1992 and owned by Monique and Blain Andersen. The BOB was brought to Alaska by the previous owner specifically to offer chartered sailing trips in the Inside Passage and Glacier Bay. (Photo courtesy of Blain Andersen)*

### *What's in the works?*

**Restoring the Boathouse:** SMHS is planning socially distanced work parties at the Boathouse, with a few, expert volunteers, and a Historic Preservation Fund grant. A great way to support the Boathouse rehabilitation project - and be part of a permanent legacy - is by contributing to the Capital Campaign Boathouse 2020, extended due to Covid-19 as Boathouse 2021! You can donate through the enclosed form, or online at [sitkamaritime.org](http://sitkamaritime.org).

**Website, Walking Tour, and Your Ideas:** Stay tuned for history articles and videos coming to the website, a Maritime History Walking Tour, and sailing classes (see page 3). We are also excited to hear from YOU –and will be doing outreach in the coming weeks and months to hear about the programs, activities, projects, and development ideas that you want to see from SMHS.

**Be a Part of Sitka's Maritime Heritage:** Your membership and support make SMHS's work possible. Like nearly every nonprofit, we are feeling the financial impacts of Covid-19 and could really use your support to sustain our organization through this time. If you are able, a great way to help is by setting up a small monthly donation. You can set up automatic donations by following the instructions on our website or give us a call to set up a monthly mailed donation or other type of recurring contribution. Thank you for your support in keeping and sharing and caring about Sitka's irreplaceable maritime heritage!

### *Come Aboard! We're Seeking New Board members*

Do you have an interest in Sitka's maritime heritage and in creating world-class maritime heritage programs in an authentic WWII boat shop? SMHS is seeking new Board Members with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and skillsets to add to our welcoming, hands-on Board of Directors. Please give us a call or email to find out more.

## Roger Schmidt

For Roger Schmidt, it was a turn of fortune in Provideniya, Russia that led him on his first sailing adventure. Originally setting out on a kayaking expedition, authorities had prohibited him from paddling the coast. But his journey changed when he was invited aboard a 1931 Danish gaff-rigged fishing cutter, the *Dagmar Aaen*, skippered by the German adventurer, Arved Fuchs. "The boat was returning back to Alaska after trying to sail through the Northeast Passage. I ended up sailing aboard for almost a year from Provideniya, Russia to Montevideo, Uruguay via Cape Horn. I left the boat in Uruguay, skipping crossing the Atlantic, because I was love-sick for my future wife, Jeanine." Despite the lovesickness, Schmidt has very fond memories of his time aboard the *Dagmar Aaen*. He says "I still remember like yesterday sailing out of Provideniya and climbing the ratlines to the crow's nest to look out across the Bering Sea. Throughout my year aboard I continued loving spending time in the crow's nest and on the net, the 'widow strainer' under the bowsprit when the boat was underway." Unsurprisingly, Schmidt has had a life-long love of the water, and his interest in sailing and adventure began long before that fortuitous opportunity presented itself in Provideniya. "As a kid and still today I read lots of books about adventurers, present and past including both fictional and non-fictional stories of sailing." Joseph Conrad, Herman Melville, Joshua Slocum, and Patrick O'Brian are among his favorite adventure authors. Roger gained practical experience out on the water, too. "I spent a lot of time with Jack and Margaret Calvin and Chuck and Alice Johnstone on their boats as well as kayaking with my family."

Although Roger says that it can be difficult to find the time to sail, he seems to have found a perfect match in the *Patchy Fog*, a vessel owned by Marya Pilifant. Roger explained that she had kindly offered to let him sail the 18'

Marshall Sanderling Catboat when she's out of town. "I fell in love with the boat, did a bunch of work on her and now sail her whenever I can. I like that the boat is small, can catch wind easily yet still feels very

*"When I sail, I feel connected with the continuum of the seafaring history."*

## Sailing Sitka



The S/V Patchy Fog is an 18' Marshall Sanderling Catboat. (Photo by Bob Juranich)

seaworthy. She seems ideal for sailing in Sitka. I can sail her single-handed, get out on the water quickly, yet the boat is still big enough that I can take the family and have a comfortable overnight with her. Compared to our experiences kayak camping, the *Patchy Fog* is downright luxurious."

When asked about what he most enjoys about sailing, Schmidt replied "As a musician I am very sensitive to sound. I love the sound of sailing. I love that it is active, yet relaxing. You always need to stay focused on the wind and what it is doing but still the wind is doing the work. Sailing brings nature and the ingenuity of humanity together in an incredibly harmonious way. When I sail, I feel connected with the continuum of the seafaring history."

Roger's sailing highlights include some of the farthest reaches of the globe, like sailing around Cape Horn - where the Atlantic meets the Pacific - and to Pitcairn Island, known as one of the most remote places in the world. Yet, amongst those favorite sailing memories is a local one - sailing the *Patchy Fog* at 6 knots in Sitka Sound. Of sailing in Southeast Alaska, Schmidt says "I really like having a little sailboat that I can sail about here in our local waters." For sailors in Southeast Alaska, adventure is always just around the corner. He notes that "With a shallow draft, we can go about anywhere."

## Blain Andersen, S/V BOB

Now an experienced captain and sailing instructor, one might initially assume that the sport has always been “smooth sailing” for Blain Andersen. However, his early sailing experiences were anything but that, “I first sailed in Puget Sound on a college orientation at a summer camp. They thought I knew what I was doing when they let me take a Sunfish out for the day. Me and my little sailboat got immediately blown under the dock. No harm done and I was pushed off, but I realized I was going to have to figure it out pretty quickly.” Blain and his wife, Monique, took a formal sailing course in Scotland in 2001. He remembers “We could both tell we were in for a challenge learning to sail in a country where we could barely understand the captain's thick brogue. But we decided that it was something we wanted to do, and we were determined to learn.” And learn they did. Blain and Monique have owned Sound Sailing since 2012 and taught introductory sailing courses in Sitka for the last five years. Blain enjoys sailing for many reasons, “Being able to go places with only the wind and currents pushing the boat along is something everyone should experience, and I love every minute of it. It is an experience as ancient as human civilization and one you can share with the largest windjammer, the most audacious Turkish gulet, Tlingit dugout canoe, or little Hobie Cat.”

While clearly passionate about sailing and teaching others, Blain also recognizes that there are possible barriers to entry that exist in sailing. “To be honest, it is not a sport that is very inclusive. It tends to attract wealthy folks and mainly white guys like me. We need to change this. Sailing must be available to all because it is just so darn enjoyable, and I think everyone should be able to feel that rush of being propelled by nothing but the wind.” Andersen also pointed out other factors specific to SE Alaska that create challenges for aspiring and experienced sailors alike, such as the scarcity of sailing schools in the region and lack of local resources for

*“Being able to go places with only the wind and currents pushing the boat along is something everyone should experience”*



*The S/V BOB is a 50' Catalina Morgan sloop built in 1992. (Photo courtesy of Blain Andersen)*

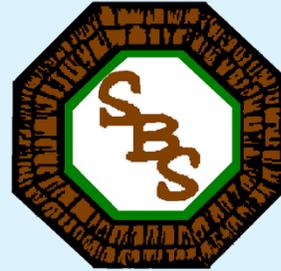
repairs and maintenance. Despite this, Andersen envisions a bright future for sailing in Sitka and feels lucky to sail here. Compared to other, more crowded, sailing destinations, Blain says “The combination of the incredible rugged beauty of SE Alaska, and the diverse and abundant wildlife, is second to none. Baranof Island alone has 600 miles of coastline to explore. It is a cruising sailor's dream.” One very memorable encounter with local wildlife happened as he, Monique, and his mother were motoring through Chatham Straits. He recalls “...when with absolutely no warning - a massive humpback whale breached within a boat length or two of us. It landed with such a huge splash we all nearly jumped out of our skins. Later that day we put the sails up for a beam reach across the strait, and as I cut the engine and the boat began to heel over as a sailboat does, I looked over at my mom (who had never sailed before) and saw her crying tears of joy and laughing. That is one of my most cherished memories. To be able to share such a perfect experience with her was really special.”

Blain is connecting a community of local sailors through a Facebook group called *The Sitka Sailing Page*, he says “it's been fun finding helping hands for a daunting boat project, and seeing others find weekend sailing opportunities here in Sitka.” He also hopes to see the creation of a local sailing club and for sailboats made available to learners and welcomes all to contact him for notifications about upcoming sailing events, resources, and training. Blain believes that “We could make Sitka a great little sailing town.”

SMHS is excited to be partnering with Blain to offer an upcoming sailing course to the community and will announce when we have finalized dates and signups. Stay tuned!

## **2020 Annual Business Sponsors – THANK YOU for your support!**

Our Annual Business Sponsors help us to cover the core costs of operating SMHS and allows us to continue our important work, preserving and sharing Sitka's maritime heritage.



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Sitka Maritime Heritage Society  
P.O. Box 2153  
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We are a nonprofit dedicated to preserving maritime heritage and to sharing that rich legacy with the public, especially children and youth. Members are added to our newsletter mailing list and receive a 20% discount on SMHS merchandise. Thank you!

**You can also become a member online at [www.sitkamaritime.org](http://www.sitkamaritime.org)**

- \$15 – **Students and Elders**
- \$30 – **Crew Member**
- \$40 – **Entire Crew (family)**
- \$50 – **Mate**

- \$100 – **Navigator**
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+

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