

The Trawler & Ocean Motorboat Magazine

PassageMaker

Since 1995

June 2004

Special Insert:

7 Must Dos For Spring

Great Circle

The Cruise of a Lifetime

Insider's Guide

to Ft. Lauderdale

The ABCs

of ABYC

Next
Generation
Nordhavn
47





Survey

A surveyor gets down and dirty about her job

BY SALLY BEE BROWN WITH PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY LYNNE REISTER

"I expected a stern, nautical, male type who'd be angry with me for borrowing his hammer," says *Ursa Major* owner Joyce Gauthier. Joyce had bummed the tool from a Seattle WoodenBoat Show booth and had gotten strict instructions that she'd better bring it back because it belonged to Lynne Reister. Joyce never had met Lynne, but she'd heard that name and knew it meant business.

When Joyce returned, "It was so great to meet this smiling surveyor who knew of my boat and

about whom I had heard such wonderful things." Nobody had previously mentioned that "he" was a "she." Joyce knew a professional when she saw one, and she chose Lynne to do the survey on *Ursa's* next haulout.

I introduced myself to Lynne at a meeting in her Seattle home port, but who would have thought my next brush with her name would be at my mother-in-law's foster home in Bend, Oregon? The home's owner, Jim Worcester, recently purchased a sailboat,

so anything nautical always is our topic of conversation. He mentioned a surveyor whose Seattle Boat Show lecture had impressed him. He'd tried to hire her prior to his purchase but was unsuccessful. Yes, there was that name again—Lynne Reister.

Jim handed me an old survey she had done on his boat for the former owner, pointing out page after page of detail. We could visualize which tight spot she must have maneuvered into to obtain each bit of information.

The surveyor Jim hired didn't spot everything Lynne had, but with her old report in hand, Jim gave him an education. "That guy knew of Lynne before, and he knew a whole lot more of her before we were finished!" he says.

INQUISITIVE, BRIGHT, APPROACHABLE

Friendly and detailed don't seem strong enough to describe Lynne. Inquisitive and bright bring her more into focus, as do approachable and



isn't a foreign project to her. "*Grandy-Lusion's* the scourge of our neighborhood now—but a chrysalis awaiting rebirth," she says.

PUSHED BY WIND

As with many with the passion, Lynne Reister (rhymes with "Easter") always loved water and as a child would nail together whatever floated. Later, she advanced from canoeing to sailing near Newport Beach, California, then taught

sailing, eventually taking over the Newport Beach Sailing Center. When she was responsible for care and maintenance of those boats she learned how they are put together and how they should be maintained.

There, Lynne had a chance to teach water skills to older Girl Scouts. That began a long volunteer career with both the Girl Scouts and the American Red Cross. She became a national safety specialist with Red Cross, teaching trainers throughout the Western states about water safety, swimming, lifesaving, guarding,

Says...

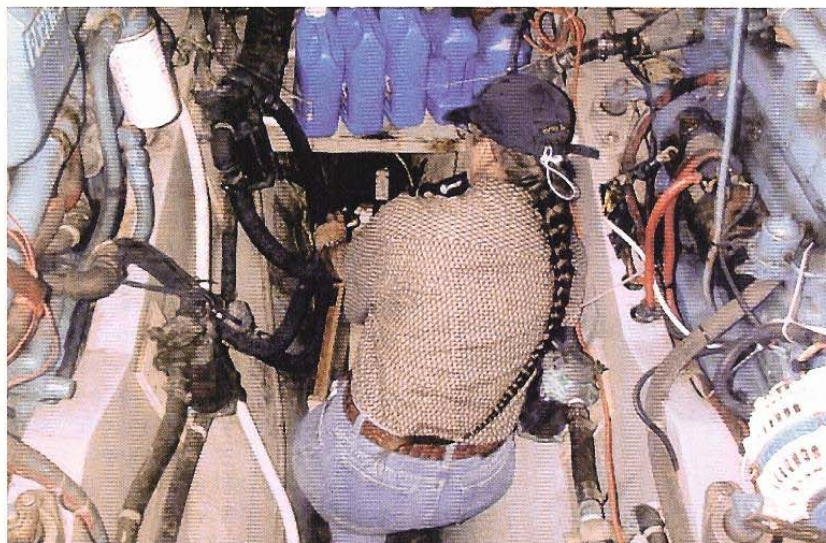
professional. Her office shows her varied passions with its maze of antiques, piles of files, odd doodads and boat parts, plus a scattering of cat toys for Princess, Lynne's Siamese.

Lynne, 61, leads the life she works, living with Princess aboard a classic bridgedeck called *Grandy-Lusion*, a 39-foot cruiser designed by the late Ed Monk. Lynne's docked at the Commercial Marina, site of the former Grandy boatyard on Westlake Avenue North, where *Grandy-Lusion* was built in 1939. She and friendly helpers are rebuilding the boat, having completed all important hull work. Lynne specializes in surveying wood boats, so this

canoeing, kayaking and sailing. From the '60s on, she sailed and did general boating, and she funneled it all into the beginnings of an occupation.

"There's no question that what I learned from volunteering I turned into paid work," says Lynne.

In 1978, she began regular Northwest visits with the Girl Scout program. She'd come with groups of girls or adults, or sometimes alone, for sail training aboard a rebuilt 1913 100-foot schooner. They not only sailed, they did maintenance, too. Plus, she'd come up annually for the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival.



Engine rooms are like a second home for Lynne.

involved—warranted in most cases anyway, she believes. She figures she's as good as the next guy on fiberglass, maybe better. But wood boats are her specialty. Other surveyors have learned that wood boats present their own risks and difficulties, and many avoid them. Some charge more. Lynne doesn't, although other boat characteristics may raise fees.

Insurance companies commonly look to her when a boat has had serious, costly

“There’s no question that what I learned from

A JOB IS BORN

It was there she met Lee Ehrheart, a surveyor, shipwright and consultant. Lynne believes he is one of three or four premier wood-boat experts. They dated for a while and both decided Lynne should move north. With knowledge from her business administration degree, she helped broaden Lee's surveyor school into a five-week course held twice a year. While promoting and assisting him, she soaked in survey knowledge, and in the early 1990s, she began doing the work herself.

“Lee’s an old-time traditional surveyor, maybe the only one who will recognize some old system,” says Lynne. But she knew if she were to earn a living, she’d have to survey boats that people commonly used.

In 1996, she joined the Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors (SAMS), then applied for and received a scholarship for a six-week, 180-hour Chapman’s Yacht and Small Craft Surveying Course. It was of much benefit.

“Not many surveyors did sailboats, so that was an area for me,” she says. Now she does sailboats, rigging, powerboats, fiberglass and wood. Nearly a third of those jobs are on trawlers.

She stays away from full engine surveys—doing more of a cursory examination, looking at installation and operation. If she spots a red flag, she recommends that an engine surveyor become

alterations. “They know I’m a bulldog for detail, will document the whole progression of what occurred and create a reasonable value for work done,” she says.

Lynne finds it interesting that people who buy new boats don’t always think they need a survey. She’s found serious problems on many production boats. “I saw a \$7 million offshore motoryacht in Florida... they installed a macerator between the hull and hull liner with no access panel for repairs.”

WHAT IT TAKES

No license is required to become a surveyor. One competency measurement is whether anyone will pay for services, particularly an insurance company or financial institution. Other than attendance at surveyors’ schools, interested prospects can apply for membership in SAMS or the National Association of Marine Surveyors (NAMS).

To apply to SAMS, one must have experience and be recommended by peers. Within a certain period after applying, an applicant must pass a test. NAMS has similar requirements.

As an accredited member of SAMS, Lynne has been involved in preparing information for its *Recommended Survey Report Content Manual*. She’s also a northwest subregional director, has served on its nominating committee and has helped with an annual national meeting.

Lynne takes the helm of Golden Marlin II, a Fleming 55.

Lynne determines her values through comparisons. *BUC Used Boat Price Guide* is an important source. She studies magazine ads and researches Internet sites, always considering that amenities are different and that vessel location is a factor (having found that Northwest boats historically are 10 to 15 percent more valuable than those in other areas). Sometimes it helps to call the broker or stop at his office to talk about the boat.



volunteering I turned into paid work," says Lynne.

Lynne says it isn't common for surveyors to consult with others in the trade, but she's open that way. She's worked side by side with colleagues on difficult jobs.

Not all surveyors go to such lengths. Lynne tells of a survey she once did on a Thunderbird, a small plywood sailboat. After sending the report, her client called and asked how she had arrived at her value. Lynne read him backup detail from her file, including about 15 comparable vessels. He said, "Really? I wondered, because I've owned seven boats and every time the surveyor asked me what I'm paying for it, and that's always what comes up for value." He was amazed Lynne would do all that research. Presuming that's why she was being paid, Lynne was just as amazed at his reaction.

Ideally, a surveyor never should know a boat's sale price. "On the other hand, if a boat's been for sale for awhile, there's a fair market price if we have a willing buyer and a willing seller," Lynne says.

She envies certain others who survey production boat after production boat—ones that turn over regularly and are easy to compare. "I get ones where there were seven of them made, or hull No.1, or something that's been taken apart and put back together," she says.

COMBAT PAY

One of Lynne's great memories is of surveying a two-story houseboat. When the yard lifted it in slings,

there were balance problems and they decided not to hoist it over ground. Lynne sprawled on her back on a floating platform. The hull hadn't been cleaned, so she soon had spatter everywhere. There she was, balancing camera and tools, with her arms in water trying to keep the platform from floating away.

"She gets the job done, no matter what it takes, and sometimes what it takes is fascinating to behold," says Linda Lewis, one of many who watched that day.

One time, Lynne was alone on a boat and crawling through a narrow passageway. There was a valve that turned easily—too easily—as she passed by. When writing her report while still aboard, she heard water running. The valve was for a toilet intake and water was coming up over the toilet and into the bilge. Had she left the vessel earlier, it could have sunk. "So I'm very careful. Leave it as you found it," she says.

Another lesson she's learned is that when she sees a dangerous situation, telling the buyer isn't enough. "I need to inform the broker and be assured the owner is notified," she says. She gets it in writing, with photographs, immediately.

Once she was showing a buyer two bulkhead holes behind a toilet. She knew there used to be a vented loop in there to prevent the boat from sucking water back. Now there was a short hose going directly overboard. Not a safe situation.

"My recommendation was that the valve be shut until the system could be redesigned to use a (nonexistent) holding tank," Lynne says.

The insurance company gave the owners six weeks to comply with everything. Five weeks into it, Lynne got a 10 p.m. call. The boat was on the bottom. That valve had never been closed.

She emphasizes how important it is to stay on top of through-hull fitting problems. "They are a primary source of dockside sinkings."

SEARCHING

Lynne says the best way to find a good surveyor is to listen to other boat owners. Most of her work originates from referrals. That's how Bill Chase found her. He has a 51-foot CHB, the second boat Lynne has surveyed on his behalf. He learned of her from a Malahide owner whom she had impressed. "Meeting Lynne for the first time is like running into an old friend," Bill says. "It's natural and comfortable and just seems to make sense."

Because he found the CHB in Washington and lives in Alameda, California, Bill had Lynne supervise needed repair work over a three-month period. "She cared for it as if it were her own," says Bill. "And she knows *everybody* in Seattle in any way connected with boats, and [she] knows how to bargain for a better deal."

Perhaps worth most to Bill was that Lynne kept her word all along. If asked to survey his CHB now, even for a new buyer, he knows she'd be neutral and present facts rather than a predetermined opinion.

Although Lynne will go anywhere for a survey—and has done them from Hawaii to Georgia—not everyone will. (She also retains a home/office in Salt Lake City, traveling there about once a month.)



Lynne's office in Seattle, where most of her clients are based.

Finding the right surveyor can be more difficult if a targeted boat is in a different area from the interested party. Look at credentials, because then one knows that someone else is measuring the surveyor's competency. Therefore, a call to NAMS or SAMS or a visit to their respective Internet sites is a place to begin, but more legwork is needed to ensure that you're hiring the best professional for your job. Call a surveyor of interest and ask about qualifications, experience, how many boats of this type he's done, who accepts his surveys and to what organizations he belongs. "You'll learn a lot by the way he talks and how he refers to boats and how he honors your questions," says Lynne.

She can't recommend asking a broker for a referral, because he might suggest someone who doesn't see problems with that brokerage's boats. "There have been many lawsuits over that very situation," she says.

(Technical editor's note: A trusted and reputable boatyard can be a valuable source of referrals. Because many boatyards work with surveyors on insurance claims, yard employees frequently see surveyors at work and thus can reasonably assess their skills. As an added precaution, supplement a boatyard's reference by asking prospective surveyor candidates for copies of surveys they've completed [with vessel and owner names blacked out, of course], and look for a surveyor who thoroughly examines the boats and provides detailed reports rather than simply filling in the blanks. For even more peace of mind, ask prospective surveyors for a few references from as long ago as three years past, and ask the owners whether any missed items have come to light in the intervening time.)

"If a surveyor says no to that type of boat, it's appropriate to see whom he would recommend. He likely will be a good judge of business associates." Lynne was recommended by another surveyor, who was unable to do the work for Seattle resident Chris Parker, who had Lynne survey his 1979 Gulfstar motor cruiser. "She presented herself as a professional, with extensive knowledge of boats and systems and of correct methods to deal with repairs."

Steel boats could be what Lynne believes to be out of her reach, ones she might pass to someone else. Insurance companies seem to disagree, though, and send her anyway.

Lynne says a buyer can help a surveyor by being knowledgeable about boats in general, and the

subject brand, in particular. Good informational sources are Internet owner groups, bulletin boards and brand sites. "Then a buyer can tell me, 'look for this,' and we're both learning," she says.

It's common knowledge that certain brands or builders may have particular problems with design or workmanship. Lynne takes her prior knowledge into consideration but says she doesn't let it prejudice her, because each boat is individual.

So, how do buyers know if they're getting a good survey? A surveyor should take ample time and be thorough. He should offer new, unasked-for information, witness everything operating and write a clean, solid, detailed report that he's willing to back up with facts. He should be open to questions and know most of the answers, but if he claims to know everything, be careful.

FEES AND LIABILITIES

Lynne often receives calls asking how much she charges. It's not a simple question. She needs to know what kind of boat is being looked at, her age and engine hours, where the boat is, and a timetable. "Maybe they don't even need me first—maybe they need an engine surveyor," she says.

After discussing all this, and before they hang up, she sometimes asks, "Don't you want to know how much I'm going to charge?" And often they tell her no—they're just going to hire her, because now they know what they're buying.

Lynne charges by the foot for a certain number of hours and then by the hour from there. That isn't typical. Often it's done just by the foot, but Lynne believes she devotes extra hours that others may not. Her charge is for what she calls a consulting survey—a service she hopes will set an industry example.

As with many businesses these days, surveyor insurance rates are off the charts. Lynne has liability coverage, so if she damages anything, she's covered. But she doesn't carry errors and omissions insurance. She tells her clients this up front, and it's in her attorney-reviewed forms that say total remedy in case of dissatisfaction is the return of her fee.

Her solution—her self-insurance—is doing the best job she knows how, taking the clients with her,



Lynne gives a loving pat to her Grandy-Lusion.

being open to all questions, and keeping them glued to her hip and down in the bilges with her.

One man who teaches owners how to operate their boats approached Lynne to relay an experience. Beginning a lesson with new buyers, he had told them the first thing they'd do is learn where all through-hulls were. They immediately showed him each one and told him its purpose, saying Lynne Reister had explained them already. Lynne knows it takes extra time, but she says hearing those types of remarks is as satisfying as being anchored in a cove on a starry night.

Some surveyors are through in 45 minutes. Lynne says she spends at least five to six hours on a boat, knowing there still are things to discover. She considers that a limited inspection.

And even then, it might not be the time to write the report. Lynne doesn't want to hear from an owner saying he can't get insurance because of her survey. "I did an older boat recently and told the owner 'if I write it up today and if an insurance company sees it, there's going to be problems.'" She suggested he correct the defects and then she'd come back and finish her work.

"It's important they know there's someone who really cares about the boat," she says.

KEEPING IT IN PERSPECTIVE

Although Lynne doesn't believe she's experienced gender discrimination on the job, she does have a



Lynne and Ian Larsen, her grandson, take a welcome break on the water.

feeling that some brokers don't like her, or perhaps they don't like surveyors in general. If she spots a problem and recommends an expert be called in, she knows she won't be popular with that broker. It may interfere with his deadline, but it doesn't stop her. "I've been asked not to come on docks and by those same ones who learned about their boat from me," she says.

She may take 80 or more photographs during a survey and when shooting around a tight corner, may find problems only after the film is developed. She says she's always wished she had a mouse on a stick with a tiny camera so she could put him in teeny spots and say, "Can you see it now?" Since she doesn't have such an "apprentice" at her disposal, it's doubtful her scraped knuckles, apparent during this interview, came during a quiet dinner in a warm restaurant.

Linda Lewis, who recruited Lynne to do a "Women Aboard" talk at the Seattle Boat Show, found Lynne's style helped the audience to believe in their own abilities. "She has a consultant-colleague way about her... 'you know a lot, let me help you know more.'"

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Lynne loves to teach and regularly works with Ehrheart at Havorn Marine Survey and Shipwright School in Seattle. She teaches courses, including "Federal Regulations, Standards, and Recommended Practices" and "Survey Report Development

Intensive." She also oversees apprenticeships, a custom program lasting one to three years.


"Some days I'm teacher and some days I'm student," she says in her usual humble way. "Each student brings a varied and rich background and contributes as much as is delivered."

Teaching extends to her surveying when clients want to know more about their boat. It's fun for her when they can figure it out together. "I want them to feel empowered and to believe they now know far more than they knew before—that they've received a lot of bang for their buck!" She wants them to *want* to pay her fee. And that's happened.

Once she spent a second day on a job and was there for many more hours. She told her client she felt

obliged to charge him a little more. When he asked how much, she wrote down a figure. He said "no way," scratched it out, and doubled it.

At the bottom of Lynne's emails are words of wisdom that say, among other things: "Live with intention, listen hard, continue to learn and do what you LOVE." She does.

But I'll tell you Lynne's little secret. The way to her heart is with a latté, especially if you want her there early in the morning! 

Email the author at sallybee@empnet.com.

For More Information

Lynne Reister, LynneReister@aol.com
Lodestar Marine-Survey & Consulting
2720 Westlake Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109
phone: 206.282.6003; e-fax: 206.333.1788
Salt Lake City office: 801.562.9099

National Association of Marine Surveyors, Inc.
800.822.6267 or 757.488.9538
namsurveyors.org

Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors, Inc.
800.344.9077 or 904.384.1494
marinesurvey.org