SSCA - Making Cruising Dreams Come True

The Seven Seas Cruising Association Celebrates 60 Years!

By Barbara Theisen

What do Nigel Calder, Jimmy Cornell, and Beth Leonard have in common? They're all members of Seven Seas Cruising Association.

With nearly 10,000 members from across the globe, the Seven Seas Cruising Association is the largest organization of voyaging cruisers in the world. Our members share the dream of sailing the seas as a lifestyle. Founded in 1952, SSCA is also one of the oldest organizations of cruisers in the world and the goals of the original founders are still the goals of SSCA today: sharing cruising information, camaraderie, and leaving a clean wake.



But just because SSCA has celebrated 60 years of launching cruising dreams doesn't mean that things haven't changed over the years. Their passion for cruising has stayed the same, but even long time members are surprised at the extensive benefits that have been added to their membership and the ease of accessing these benefits from anywhere in the world.

SSCA is probably best known for its monthly Commodores' Bulletin. The 48-page monthly publication is packed with information, advice and inspiration from members who are actually out there cruising the world. This means that members get the most up-to-date information on anchorages, customs and immigration, costs and "what to do and where to go." The Bulletin is all about cruisers sharing information with fellow cruisers. Members know that in addition to finding the best anchorage, you need to find a place to do the laundry and you want to know where the best places to snorkel, the best place to provision and the best place to enjoy a good dinner or a beer are. It's all in the Commodores' Bulletin.

The Bulletins are now online at www.ssca.org so that members no longer have to wait for the mail to arrive to read the latest cruising information. They can download the issue for future reference or search ten years of past issues, raising the waterline by not having to store printed publications on board. It's been said that the Commodores' Bulletin has probably launched more voyages and kept more cruising dreams alive than any other publication.

Camaraderie is another cornerstone of SSCA. Wherever members gather, they organize get-togethers and exchange cruising information. SSCA sponsors gams (a gathering of sailors) throughout the world. They attend educational seminars, roundtable discussions, hands-on demos and they share experiences and enjoy each other's company. Trinidad hosts the first SSCA gam of the year—on New Year's Day each year. Gams are also held in Annapolis, MD, Melbourne, FL, Punta Gorda, FL, Isla Mujeres, Mexico and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico each year.

Members are encouraged to hold regional gams, as well. Longtime cruiser Kathy Parsons, *Hale Kai,* has been a member of SSCA for decades. She first joined SSCA years before she set sail in order to learn what cruising was all about. "Now in the 20 years that I've been out cruising, SSCA is my community of cruising friends. I enjoy attending the gams and we fly our burgee as we cruise."

One of the newest ways that SSCA is sharing camaraderie is through our local groups. These volunteers coordinate local social events for members.

SSCA members fly their burgees with pride. By flying the burgee they can find other members throughout the world, enjoying their friendship and company. But they can also see who's in the anchorage before they get there! They can find members they've lost touch with or who can give insight into what they can expect when they arrive at their destination by using the online Member Locator Map. Cruisers Ty and Suzanne Giesemann, *Liberty,* believe that, "There's no greater feeling than sailing into an unknown port and seeing the familiar SSCA burgee flying from a cruising boat's flag halyard. The excellent upgrades to the website help us keep track of our friends even better than before."

Just visit an SSCA Cruising Station (CS). It's a big, big world out there but SSCA is making it a bit smaller. Members can go online to www.ssca.org and download a list of CS. The list and map are updated monthly. CS Hosts offer not just a warm welcome, but often can help with transportation needs and can provide local maps and information and can assist in finding needed services. They may organize potlucks or other get-togethers and provide you with social and cultural information and exchanges with local people. You can contact them in advance for information about a port and its facilities, knowing that any information you receive comes from a knowledgeable local with your best interest at heart. Imagine sailing into an unfamiliar port… in the South Pacific, the U.S., in the Caribbean, South American or the Med. Think of the advantages of having a host there to provide

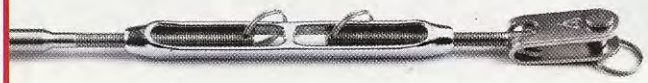
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Dreams Come True



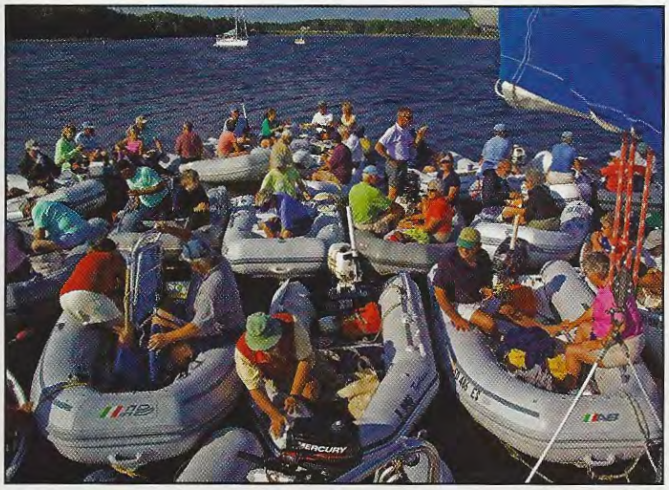
information in advance and welcome you when you arrive. That's an SSCA Cruising Station Host.

Seven Seas U (SSU) is the educational branch of SSCA, offering online educational webinars for cruisers. SSCA members receive tuition discounts and SSU supports SSCA helping to keep our member dues as low as possible! SSU is a convenient, interactive, and cost-efficient way to add to your boating and cruising knowledge. All you need is a computer and an Internet connection. The list of current and upcoming courses can be found at www.SevenSeasU.com.

Can't make a live webinar? Not a problem. Members are spread out all over the globe and therefore the times of some live webinars may not be convenient for everyone. All registered participants for a course receive a link to the recording of the live webinar and instructors make themselves available via email to take questions. So you can register for a course and then view the recording at your convenience. Or you can use the recording to review a webinar that you attended live.

Whether you're on the move or making plans, interactive Port Guides for worldwide ports provide information you need. Sharing information is one of SSCA's key traditions. SSCA's new online interactive





Port Guides allow you to search available Port Guides by region, country, port, author or boat name and start reading the chosen Port Guide immediately. You can even access Port Guides via SailMail or Winlink.

Need to buy new equipment or replace what you have? Let nearly 10,000 SSCA members help you make informed buying decisions! Every year, cruisers spend meaningful sums of money on maintaining, replacing and adding marine equipment to their boats. The newest online Equipment Survey was introduced in 2008. Categories include virtually everything from stem to stern that you might want to research—from the boat itself, to anchors, electronics and communications. This could be the first time an open-ended, inclusive marine equipment survey has ever been attempted, and best of all, the ratings and comments are coming primarily from the most demanding of test beds: cruising sailors who live aboard their boats.

Cruising Advocacy is another way that SSCA supports you and supports cruising. Most cruisers are just too busy to find and attend meetings to fight for the right to cruise and anchor safely and freely. SSCA provides a VOICE for cruisers, whether it is our Concerned Cruisers Committee pushing for cruisers' rights to anchor responsibly or your SSCA Board of Directors writing an appeal advocating that governments take a stand against piracy. Your SSCA is the voice for your cruisers' rights.



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Dreams Come True

The benefits of membership in SSCA continue with a free online subscription to Ocean Navigator magazine, a free membership in Island Cruising Association (cruising resources and information specific to New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific) and special offers on supplies, equipment and services available to members from over 50 vendors! All of this can be found on the SSCA website at www.ssca.org along with much more. Find out how cruisers can volunteer around the world, learn where help is needed and what to bring when cruising to remote areas of the world or find out how you can volunteer to serve your SSCA family. It's fun and it can take as much or as little time as you have to offer.

From the sharing tradition of the founders, SSCA has become the key tool and resource for information in the world





of cruising. "No other organization in the world has anywhere near the collective long-distance cruising experience and wisdom that is embodied in SSCA," says Nigel and Terri Calder, *Nada*.

SSCA is a caring, supportive family of kindred spirits, ready to assist fellow cruisers when needed. It's this now famous "SSCA Clean Wake" policy, which has helped raise the reputation of today's sea-gypsies around the world, ensuring that the welcome mat will be out for all cruisers who following in the wake of a fellow SSCA member.

Beth Leonard and Evans Starzinger, *Hawk*, are true ambassadors of the SSCA Clean Wake policy. They add, "SSCA provided us with invaluable information and an instant support network when we were new to cruising and most in need of both—and SSCA allows us to do the same for others who are following in our wake."

For as long as mankind has memory, we have been entranced by the sea. The need to know what lies beyond the next wave and over the far horizon is pervasive. Ask any group about their fantasies and someone will tell you of a vision of tropical blue skies, balmy breezes, ever-gentle waves and sailing to exotic ports. Those who are living the dream, as well as those who are planning for the day that they can release the ties to the workaday world and sail off to seek paradise, and those who only dream of such adventure, all join together in an organization called the Seven Seas Cruising Association.

Help celebrate 60 years of making cruising dreams come true. Become an SSCA member and participate in the fellowship of worldwide cruisers. You'll be rewarded with lasting friendships of like-minded, caring people who are there for one another when help is needed; who are eager to share their experiences and knowledge with you.

For more information, go to www.ssca.org and take the Virtual Tour.

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