



by Captain Joan Gilmore, [Sail Away Sailing School](#)

Quite often, women call me to ask if I offer all-women's sailing courses. The reason, usually, is that they are tired of trying to learn sailing from their husbands, or because they have been in courses where the men tended to take over. In the late 1990s, I interviewed Betsy Alison, five-time Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year, at the Bitter End Yacht Club in Virgin Gorda, BVI. Betsy is one of the best sailors in the world, but she says that even she gets into situations on racing yachts where men ask her to step aside when about to tack so that they can handle the jib sheets!

Generally, the different learning styles of each gender make men more eager to do the hands-on stuff while women tend to hang back and observe. Some sailing schools don't let husbands and wives in the same course because each couple already has their communication dynamic set in place. Often, the husband absorbs the information and then relays it to his wife. While he is translating to his wife what I just said, I am already

explaining the next step, and now they have both missed it, putting them behind the rest of the class. For couples like this, I tell the man that his help is needed at the bow of the boat so that his wife or girlfriend can hear what I'm saying with less distraction.

Once, I was teaching a female student in the Virgin Islands how to drive a dinghy. She was doing well, but returning to our boat, she saw her husband standing on deck watching us. She began to drive erratically, forgot how to use the throttle, and nearly hit our yacht! I asked her what happened. She said, "My husband was watching". Independently, she had mechanical skills, but as part of a couple with him, she did not. Her husband handled the mechanical things in their home life, and this dynamic spilled over into their sailing lessons.

Another thing I have noticed is that when men and women take sailing courses together, men tend to try things before they have been given the full explanation on how to do it. Women, on the other hand, tend to want to find out all the details before they start something. The instructor has to balance the needs of women who want a complete explanation against the enthusiasm of the men who want to "just do it." Sometimes, it seems that the fun is diminished for men if they know too many details about something before they start it. I have often waited for a man to tie a bowline when he really doesn't know how to do it. But he will insist, "I can do it, just wait." Perhaps he is also the kind of fellow who will drive around looking for an address rather than ask for directions.

During one of my women-only courses, we had an engine failure. The raw-water cooling system had shut down, so we anchored under sail and got a tow. Back at the dock, we discovered that our engine overheated because the raw water filter had not been screwed back on tightly enough after our pre-sail engine checks. This broke the seal so the engine couldn't draw in enough cooling water. One of the women spoke up and said, "That was my fault. It was so difficult to get the filter unscrewed to clean it, that I screwed it back on loosely so it wouldn't be so hard to open the next time." I refer to that kind of mistake as a "gender error." To make a gross generalization, I'd say that women tend to be information gatherers while men tend to be experience gatherers.

Title 9, the 1975 law that requires schools to offer equal physical education opportunities in sports for both boys and girls, made a huge impact on how women approach learning to sail. Women who were in high school after Title 9 went into effect show very little difference from men in their eagerness to take the helm and try new skills. But women who finished high school before 1975, generally, have a more reticent attitude about trying new things and tend to defer to men. Perhaps this observation will be useful in your teaching.

As a sailing couple, the best combination is to have two people with two different learning styles and two different operating styles. That way, when there is any kind of challenge, they can be analyzing it from two different perspectives and have two different options on how to

handle it. On a boat two heads are better than one. If those two heads have respect for each other's styles, they are more likely to tackle anything that comes their way.

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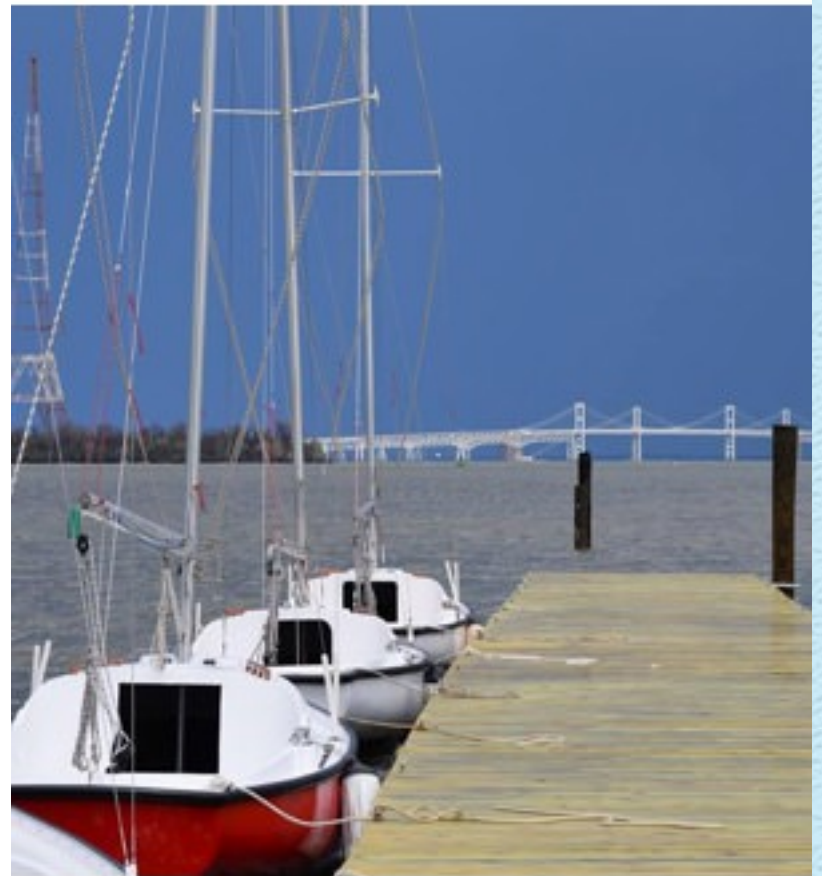
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This Was Helpful

## Affiliate Profile: The Annapolis Sailing School

by Lenox Grasso, ASA Instructor Coordinator

Annapolis. When one thinks of classic yachting epicenters on the Eastern Seaboard of the United States, just a handful of places come to mind. One of them is beautiful Annapolis, Maryland, known as “America’s Sailing Capital”. Also the state capital since 1694 and once the national capital of a young United States for six months at the end of the Revolutionary War, Annapolis is a great town to visit by both land and sea. Local institutions on the Severn River that call Annapolis home, like the United States Naval Academy, the Annapolis Maritime Museum, and Saint John’s College (founded 1696), add to the colonial charm of this historic seaport. Annapolis is a town for sailors.



The 2017 United States Sailboat Show occurs in Annapolis this week, 5-9 Oct. This show, one of the largest and most prestigious boat shows in the world, was established by Franklin “Jerry” Wood back in 1970 in Annapolis Harbor as the first in-water, all-sailboat show. An instant success, it revolutionized the boat show industry. And eleven years before that, Jerry founded the Annapolis Sailing School with just two sailboats after being approached by a stranger who wanted to charter his catamaran. It was the first commercial recreational sailing school in the country and it has maintained its status as one of the nation’s largest since 1959.

Owned now, since 2014, by Rick and Jenny Nelson, with managing director John Cosby, Annapolis is one of the nation’s premier sailing schools and still America’s oldest. Founded a quarter century before ASA, the school teaches sailing the “Annapolis Way” by

maximizing hands-on, physical, on-the-water instruction while emphasizing safety, fun, and learning, in that order. Jenny, who was an instructor at the school as a teenager, states, “We are thrilled to build upon the legacy of the school by adding courses, boats, facilities, and amenities, further dedicating ourselves to providing a great student learning experience and engendering life-long sailors”.

Situated ideally just two miles from downtown Annapolis on Chinks Point (named for local Chinquapin Trees), just across the mouth of Back Creek from the Annapolis Maritime Museum, at the end of Bembe Beach Road, boaters at the school enjoy both protection from the elements and quick access to the Severn River and the open waters of Chesapeake Bay. The school has private sandy beaches, a large pavilion tent, and four classrooms that are organized with tables, chairs, charts, models, videos, and white boards, all geared toward simple, functional, and no-nonsense sailing instruction. They hold their class graduation ceremonies in the Sail Shed, a recently renovated clubhouse with comfortable seating and a glass wall over-looking Back Creek.

ASA is honored to affiliate itself with the prestigious Annapolis Sailing School. They have supported ASA since our founding in 1983. ASA easily could have been headquartered there. Actually, the school does seem like a part of ASA. Our ASA 211 Instructor Evaluator Clinic, led by Duncan Hood and David Lumian, and a full set of ASA 201, 203, 204, and 205 instructor clinics are being hosted at the school this week, as they have for many years, by a staff of people who are helpful, knowledgeable, and very accommodating.

ASA is proud that Annapolis Sailing School elects to teach the ASA curriculum. The school teaches ASA courses in well-defined modules, and each instructor follows ASA standards faithfully. Their beginning course, ASA 101, Basic Keelboat, is taught in a limited-sized class with a low student-to-instructor ratio. Annapolis certifies hundreds of ASA 101 students annually, three times the number of their other ASA courses combined!

The Annapolis Sailing School has a fleet of Rainbow 24 sloops to teach its ASA 101 classes. The Rainbow was designed specifically for the school by Sparkman and Stephens in 1961 and first built by Tidewater Boats in 1962. It is fast and forgiving, nimble, and very stable with an 1100-pound keel accounting for more than half its displacement weight. A spacious cockpit seats five adults comfortably. The standing and running rigging are very well maintained. The high cockpit coaming provides dryness and good back



support for students. The head of each mainsail is bright day-glow orange which makes this charming and sturdy fleet of engine-less boats easily visible on the Severn River.

Sailing education, conducted on the scale it is at Annapolis Sailing School, is hard on boats. In the off-season the school rebuilds and services their fleet of Rainbows at its own on-site facility in the same building as the offices and classrooms. Over the winter workers strip, repair, re-finish, re-fit, and re-rig each boat for the following spring. Young workers are mentored. All work is well-planned, meticulous, and impeccable. The school has created a sailing education machine with an annual cycle of instruction and boat maintenance, but also with an eye on the big picture, past, present, and future. More than 100,000 students have graduated from the school since 1959, and they have all been taught on these famous Rainbow 24 masthead sloops.

When a student demonstrates sailing proficiency on the Rainbows, they may become a member of the school's Keelboat Club as a "Rainbow Sailor" and given access to the Rainbow fleet with a generous allotment of reservation privileges. Students who can devote limited time and energy to sailing may elect to become "Social Sailor" members. And the school's "Ultimate Sailor" members can venture further offshore on one of the school's Beneteau 37s, after completing ASA 103 and 104. Heading south on the bay takes boaters past Poplar Island, toward the mouths of the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers. Heading north under the Chesapeake Bay Bridge leads into Baltimore.

Of course, the future of sailing belongs to today's children. The school's KidShip Sailing program is a weekly sailing camp that offers age-appropriate instruction for children ages 5 to 15. Many of the KidShip graduates attend lessons for several years, progress to sail on school and college teams, and then return to Annapolis as instructors.

Tradition lives in Annapolis, and it is especially alive at the Annapolis Sailing School. Not surprisingly, the school does not tout its own legacy. In all ways, it is the epitome of a classic sailing school whose owners, managers, staff, instructors, and boat wrights devote themselves to the spirit of sailing and imbue their spirit of dedication forward to other sailing schools and to anyone who steps aboard a boat in Annapolis.

[Submit a Profile for your School](#)

## Instructor Clinic Graduates

from a 201/203/205 instructor clinic in Gainesville, GA



## Congratulations!

*(From left to right: David Lewis, Matt Roberta, Barry Sroka (IE), Shaun Northcutt)*

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