

Profiles

By Marilyn Michael



Living the Dream

Jim Barrett is spending his retirement living his dream. He captains megayachts each summer and restores boat interiors each winter. Boats have been his life-long passion, especially one particular boat named *Part Two*, in honor of the second phase of his life after divorce. He lived aboard as a single dad with pre-teen sons. He remarried and his wife, Linda, appreciates the gift he gave her of a love of boats. Today, they enjoy a unique lifestyle. They are part-time liveaboards while remodeling a home on Shelter Bay in La Conner, and Linda is finishing up the last few years until retirement at the University of Washington.

"We often joke," said Jim, "I had the *Part Two* before you and I'll have the *Part Two* forever. If anything ever goes wrong between us, you can bet..."

"He'll be on the boat," Linda laughingly finished his sentence. "This boat's a work of love for Jim. He has more passion for boats than anything else in life and that was a gift he gave me. It's something I never would have dreamt of having. There are boaters, and Jim is a person who will have a boat his whole life. He has a personal relationship with this boat. Not just any boat will do."

The boat to which Linda refers is a 1968 35-foot fiberglass Chris-Craft Commander that Jim has owned, restored, lived aboard, and cruised starting in 1992



Linda and Jim Barrett.



Part Two, a 35-foot fiberglass Chris-Craft Commander.

after his divorce when his two boys were 10 and 13.

LIFE ONBOARD IN THE EARLY YEARS

Jim was department head of the Health Sciences Center for Educational Resources at the University of Washington. Moving aboard near Gas Works Park made it almost a short walk to work. He

loved it.

"I had the boys two-thirds of the time," said Jim. "They had boated all their lives. We'd had a 19-foot and a 24-foot Reinell. I remember when they were little as they slept in the cuddy cabin of the boat, they would bounce, I could actually see air under them and they never woke up. The most difficult thing living with the boys onboard were their paper routes. I had to drive them to Shoreline in the morning. There was no major problems with two pre-teens, they were very good helpers and they loved it. Oh, there was some sneaking out at night through the bow hatch, as boys will do, no serious things. We lived near Gas Works Park; they'd go on walks and things."

In a couple years Jim met Linda, who is now director of Budget Operations at the University of Washington. She was widowed with two young daughters. When they married a year later, in 1986, the six shared Linda's small home in

Shoreline until they bought a larger home in Bothell. They used the boat on weekends and vacations.

"We took a unique vacation for the first two years," said Linda. "Jim would take the boys north for a week on the boat, giving him alone time with them. Then his friend would fly the girls and I up, and we'd be up there for a week and the boys came home."

Puget Sound Yacht Club

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Since 1989, the Barretts have been members of the Puget Sound Yacht Club.

"We've gotten so much out of the yacht club and given a lot," said Jim. "Linda is currently a board member, one of the trustees of the club. I've been commodore and secretary, and I'm currently the club's web master."

Their boat has been decorated in the opening day parade many times as the Puget Sound Yacht Club entry. One year it was featured on CNN. It had been completely covered with the theme of "The Little Ship of Horrors."

"Many times we and members of the yacht club would take a week or two off and spend it working together on floats to participate in Opening Day," said Jim. "It was a big deal for a lot of years. Now we participate some way, often on the officer's boat. We've done the Special People's Cruise every year since 1989. We decorate our boat and take people out."

When asked what advice he would give to Puget Sound boaters, Jim didn't hesitate. "Join a small family boating club and participate with other boaters. You learn so much and the friendships and quality of life you have joining with others is wonderful. One of the best things we ever did was join Puget Sound Yacht Club. It gave us friends who have become extended family. They are there as a safety net. They provide camaraderie on the water."

Linda offered, "If you are new at boating you learn things faster if you join a yacht club because there is a wealth of information that people share." ■



Above:
Linda and
Jim's boys
working on
the boat,
Part Two.
Left:
Helping on
a charter.

"It was a wonderful deal spending time with the children, teaching them to take responsibility for things on the water, the boat, the dinghy, motors, and preparing their own food. We would crab and clam. We all worked on the boat. They knew that if we were going to enjoy the boat together we were going to work on it together."

"We cruised every summer. It was a wonderful way to teach young people to grow up responsibly," added Jim. "They've become wonderful adults."

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

"People should decide what their is passion and what they really love," said Jim. "It keeps you active, young, and healthy. Nobody wants to just quit after retirement."

And Jim is a testament to his advice. Retiring in 2001, he turned to his hobby of woodworking into Barrett Marine. During winters he works as a design finish carpenter and cabinet-maker doing boat interiors and remodeling. He took a summer off to self-school himself for the captain's license examinations. Since then he's worked, during summers, as a contract charter captain on luxury yachts for the company, CEO Expeditions.

"I have a 200-ton near coastal license. I'm licensed 100 miles off US territories," said Jim. "We take 100-foot and 125-foot luxury yachts to Alaska for three months and they go on week-long tours between Juno and Sitka."

"We are eight and a half years apart in age," said Linda. "Jim didn't want to just sit around waiting for me to retire. He is so happy now, having the time of his life. One of the things that's so perfect about him being a captain of luxury charters is he knows so much about the Pacific Northwest, he's like a naturalist teaching people."

"Being an educator at heart, my passion has always been to teach and then to give people the joy of discovering the Northwest and all the beauty that we have here," said Jim. "It's a wonderful combination. It's a real joy having people from all over

and taking them out. I've found I enjoy the people part of the business."

He travels up the Inside Passage all the time. In September he is taking a boat down the coast to San Francisco for the first time. He plans to work harder developing a skippering/delivery service.

"I also want to help train new boaters who want to learn to be successful safe operators of their boats," said Jim. "I'm really interested in helping people new to boating get out on the water. There are a lot of people who happen to have the money to start out in boating in a relatively high-end large vessel and need help learning to operate it safely."

LIVING ABOARD AGAIN

Linda has now been living aboard at the Puget Sound Yacht Club docks on north Lake Union for a year and a half as she finishes her last years until retiring from the University of Washington. She loves it. In 2002 they sold their house in Bothell and bought a home with a private

dock in Shelter Bay at La Conner that they rented out until recently. Jim is remodeling it and comes down weekly for one day or more a week. Linda goes up three days each weekend, leaving Friday afternoon and coming back Monday morning. They tend to be together for four or five days a week and anticipate living like this several more years until Linda retires.

"It's like having a studio that has everything I need and it's cozy," said Linda. "It's uplifting living on the boat, experiencing the weather all the time. I enjoy rain on the roof. I admit one time, though, after it had been raining and raining, I said to Jim, 'You know, this rain has lost its charm!'"

"We are saving a lot of money. The boat is paid for and the moorage is inexpensive. Jim has remodeled everything in the boat. I did the re-upholstery and we did the wall covering together."

"As soon as you drop down into the Skagit Valley the whole world changes," said Jim.

"I just feel so peaceful heading to my other home on the water. We kind of feel we're an island community up there," said Linda. "Our friends in La Conner say anytime we come back to Seattle we are 'going back to America!'"

When Linda retires they plan to live full-time in Shelter Bay but stay busy. She may join Jim in the boat refinishing business. They will keep the beloved Chris-Craft, *Part Two*, at their dock in La Conner and continue enjoying the boating lifestyle.

"The *Part Two* has become more than a place to live and more than a transportation device," said Jim. "I've had it 27 years now. There is an emotional attachment to it. It's become a family member. The children joke, 'Who will inherit boat?'"

With all that it has brought to the Barrett family, surely the boat is due for a name upgrade to *Part Four*. ■



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