

Let the ladies drive.

Most of my days are spent on or near the water. Except of course for those days when I'm trapped in front of this infernal keyboard. As I work, I watch the world float by. Kayaks, Sea Rays and super yachts. One boat at a time, sometimes more, some well piloted and other less so but all of them coming and going like the tide. The reasons we are boaters are all the same regardless of the craft; Mainly we love being on the water and being out of doors on nice days. Even the guys on working boats. There are easier ways to make a living and these guys wouldn't haul traps if there weren't a certain amount of seawater coursing through their veins. They enjoy being on the water, period. We all do.

But do you know why else we all go through whatever it is we go through to be able to go boating? Because driving a boat is fun. That's it. Fun. Big boats and small, power or sail, I don't care. I would rather be operating a boat, any boat than doing just about anything else. It doesn't even have to be a nice day. Sometimes bad weather is just as fun. I can't think of anything more powerful than wind and water. Just last Saturday I was at Jupiter inlet on the outgoing tide and the waves were stacked up steep and deep. We were in a little open boat and had zero intention of braving the eight to ten foot blown out surf but all four guys in the boat were drawn to the dangerous pass and all four wanted to get as close as we could just to watch the wind work on the water. To our astonishment a 50-foot battlewagon came into view barreling down on the pass. We cleared the narrow inlet to give him room as the big Viking pinned the throttles down and crashed straight ahead for the center. The spray was exploding off the flared bow and the wind was blowing it into rainbows as the beast came straight in, totally committed and damn the torpedoes. He made it. When the yacht's big hull settled back in the water there was a collective breath aboard our little boat. It seems we all were holding our breath just watching.

We all four looked at each other and we all had the same thought: "Man, that sure looked like fun!"

So I wonder, do the girls know how much fun it is to drive? As I work and watch the world go by I see mostly men doing all the driving. There are women on many of the boats to be sure. Generally reading a book, talking on the phone or chatting with another girl. Generally when I see a girl driving there are only girls aboard. I think it is culture and possessiveness.

The two problems with the girls not driving are straightforward. The first is that isn't fair for the boys to have all the fun. And second it's just plain dangerous. Accidents happen, as do medical emergencies. Your wife absolutely must be able to handle your boat.

I speak from experience here. I am pretty sure that my mother and wife both could start the boat and get home from the beach but that's about it. They don't have the wheel time to handle the boat in less than ideal conditions. They don't have the wheel time to understand how to read the water and feel the subtleties of wind and current. I'm not sure either one can operate the GPS plotter, or knows VHF radio etiquette or understands the just what the DSC button does and when to push it. And they certainly don't have the experience to dock in strong current.

I plan to remedy this situation. When we next find ourselves afloat as a family you can bet I won't be driving. I'm sure to get some resistance but I plan to hold strong. Remember fellows, the more wheel time she gets the more comfortable she will be and the more fun she will start having. Think about it, she can drive while you rig the rods and baits. She can hold the boat in position while you throw the cast net for baits or drop the marker buoy in just the right spot. As she gains confidence you gain trust. Soon you will trust her completely with your precious boat and you just may find yourself with more time to enjoy both of your best girls.

“Could save your life mister”