

## **Bonnie O'Boyle, the First Woman Editor-in-Chief of a Boating Magazine**



**Bonnie O'Boyle was a fixture in the boating magazine business for 20 years.**

Bonnie J. O'Boyle passed away recently but is remembered by people in the boating industry for her wit, sunny disposition and professionalism, which raised the standard of boating journalism in the 1980s. She was responsible for coining the word “megayacht” as well as publishing the PMY Top 400, descriptions of the largest 400 yachts in the world, providing the public yardstick for the owners of these boats to annually discover their rank in the pecking order of the truly rich – which of course begat ever larger boats.

### **Co-Founder of Power and Motoryacht**

Bonnie O'Boyle is probably best known for being a co-founder and editor-in-chief of Power and Motoryacht (PMY), along with co-founder Jeff Hammond, who was publisher. She was the first outside investor in the new concept. It was a daring idea ~~at the time~~, because PMY, which had its first issue in January 1985, was the first controlled-circulation consumer magazine (i.e., they were mailed out for free) in the boating industry.

She also has the distinction of being the first woman editor-in-chief of a boating magazine. The magazine was profitable from the very first issue and went on to surpass all of its rivals in advertising income over the next four years, and essentially the boating magazine editorial bar at a new and higher level.

### **The PMY 400**

While there she inaugurated the PMY 400 World's Largest Yachts in the August 1985 issue, along with putting varnish on the cover which had never been done before in the field. The issue was a tremendous success with both consumers and advertisers alike. Bonnie researched the subject all year long to produce an arresting catalog of not only the megayachts, but also of the cast of characters who owned these vessels. While this concept was much copied over the years, no one seemed to capture the foibles of the rich owners with the wit and fun of Bonnie. Within three months of the world's Top 400, she had produced the PMY 100 Top American yachts.

To a large extent, the popularity of these large motoryachts, which simply got larger and larger over the years, all started with Bonnie's portrayal of superyachts being the ultimate reward and status symbol for the truly rich. And because of their outsized egos and checkbooks, many could not stand to rank lower than their friends, so they commissioned bigger boats.

### **Humor as an Editorial Tool**

O'Boyle was also known for her irreverent approach to publishing, and every month in PMY featured a humor column written by designer Tom Fexas who had a unique view of nearly everything boating. His most memorable column was called "Sailing Is Silly" which made newspaper reports all over the country.

Previous to PMY, Bonnie was managing editor of Boating magazine from 1980 to '84. There she cultivated yet another humor column written by Dick Bradley, which was the magazine's most memorable feature. She also worked diligently to upgrade the magazine's boat-testing procedures, bringing them out of the dark ages to use modern testing equipment. When she started at *Boating*, the magazine was a distant and money-losing third to *Yachting* and *Motor Boating & Sailing*, but by the end of her tenure it was #1 in ad revenues largely because of the friends she had made in the industry.

### **Workaholic and Magna Cum Laude**

Veterans of the boating industry will remember Bonnie's sunny disposition, and well-written stories about personalities in the industry. Previous to *Boating*, Bonnie worked at *Rudder* magazine as an associate editor, and at *Motor Boating & Sailing* as managing editor in the 1970s where she learned her craft. In 1978 Bonnie released *Living Off the Sea*, her first and only book to be published.

It was little known by people in the industry, but throughout her tenure at the New York City-based boating magazines from 1972 to 1984, she commuted to work from Bristol, Pennsylvania, each day crossing the state of New Jersey twice on the train, then working in the evening as the hostess at the restaurant in her family's historic King George Inn located in Bristol, across the street from her house. Bonnie's remarkable work ethic easily made her a standout in the boating journalism field.

Bonnie graduated valedictorian from Eden Hall in 1963, attended Newton College, and graduated magna cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

### **Bonnie's Second Career**

O'Boyle retired from Power and Motoryacht in 1990 after its purchase by publisher Reed Elsevier. She found a second life contributing to many community and art organizations in Bucks County. She was an active member of the Bucks County SPCA, Bristol Riverside Theater, Friends of Silver Lake Nature Center, Bristol Rotary Club, James A. Michener Art Museum, Bristol Educational Foundation, and the Grundy Foundation.

Bonnie was a longtime board member for First Federal of Bucks County (Penn Community Bank). In addition to her professional and philanthropic successes, Bonnie was an avid horseback rider, and still owned two horses when she passed away. In her free time she enjoyed traveling the world and studying ancient cultures.

Bonnie is survived by two sisters and two nieces.

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