

A nautical adventure from a woman's perspective--cruising the world in a 52-foot powerboat. During an eleven year voyage of 48,000 nautical miles, life meant crossing oceans, riding out frightening gales, plus glorious sunsets and exotic ports along the way.

**VOYAGING TO THE MEDITERRANEAN UNDER POWER:
Imprints of Ports, People, Sunsets, and Storms**

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VOYAGING
To the
MEDITERRANEAN

UNDER POWER

*Imprints of Ports, People, Sunsets, and
Storms*

By Mary Umstot

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TEKA III from the air on the Black Sea

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A Really Dark and Scary Night!

On the night of October 13, 1997, I felt fear like I had never felt before. My husband, Denis, and I stood alone in *TEKA III*'s pilothouse, watching the wind and waves outside the windows creating quite a disturbance. As we approached Cape Flattery on the northwest coast of Washington, an outgoing tide, running about four knots from Juan de Fuca Strait, charged into twelve-foot swells coming in from the Pacific Ocean.

To enter the Strait we had to make a starboard turn near Tatoosh Island, a formidable rock formation. I stood on the port side of the pilothouse watching the waves build ahead of us, with a curly lip on each top. Scared? You bet! As we neared the point to change course, I physically moved closer to Denis and began taking deep breaths to control my fears. Denis had experienced that treacherous area salmon fishing for years, and from his intense concentration on steering the boat, appeared confident enough to pull it off. I, on the other hand, felt totally helpless. In my mind, if we did not climb that wave just right while turning, we would lose control and roll over, to be swallowed by the wave. I would never see my children and grandchildren again.

With darkness all around us, we turned as the next wave started its climb. The running lights reflected white foam from wave train after wave train on both sides of us. That's when I actually held my breath.

But we made it! In only a matter of minutes we were sliding down that big wave, heading into the Strait and safety. The image I have is of huge hands lifting me up and carefully cushioning my ride. At that point I bonded with my boat!

An hour and a half after that momentous turn, we dropped the anchor in Neah Bay Harbor, relieved that the day and trip were over.

We had decided to abort our trip south to the Baja that fall due to a chain of storms that filed one right after another into the Northwest, holding boats in ports for weather windows. These ports were few and far between along the Pacific Coast and days were getting shorter. Weather windows might not stay open long enough to make a passage. It took us from 6:45 A.M. to 9:40 P.M. to make it north from Grays Harbor, Washington to Neah Bay on that day. Shorter days meant traveling in the dark at both ends. And the ocean had one of its boisterous days during that time.

We experienced other episodes of bad weather during our ten years at sea. After making it through this one, coupled with the realization that the ocean had many moods, benign to boisterous, I approached each scary situation humming a mantra: *“Feel the rhythm; trust my ship.”*



*While this wave is in the Caribbean, imagine the same wave
at night in the story above*

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