

# A Sailor's Life For Me

By Lori Lee

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You've heard the stories of sailors: tattooed arms, women in every port, drunken brawls, and a love for the sea that always pulls them back to the water. The Utah Sailing Association (USA) sailors, here on the beaches of Bear Lake, have it covered, and then some. Lane's sun tattoo yells in green and purple as his big diamond earrings glisten. Paul downs a cold one, two, no three.... he's stopped counting. And Mark is leading the conversation on putting the women in tube tops at the front of the boat. "If you really want to see sailors in action you have to stay past midnight," Paul chimes. (I don't think I want to.) But love of the water brings them all to the beach, waiting for the wind, - "power lounging" they call it, and they take it seriously. These sailors and their families are members of a group of non-exclusive boat people who love wind-powered water sports.

Catamarans (twin-hulled sail boats), decked out with 30-foot sails rich with colors like tangerines, moss, Barney the dinosaur, and bright lemon pie, line the beach and dot the turquoise water Bear Lake is famous for. Under straw hats, we lounge in beach chairs talking baseball, old movies, and by 3:00 p.m. the movie *Master and Commander* has come up twice. The first time I saw the film I clearly missed out on the details; the way the characters linked cannonballs to cut down masts, and the way they swabbed the decks with sand to stop them from getting slick with blood. It's all in the sailor's eye.

Pretty Woman plays on Paul's hand-crank radio, and they tease me that if I want to understand sailing I need to start drinking and talking dirty, but when the wind picks up and Brett and I hop, struggle, and shrug into the blue trapeze harnesses and push the boat out into the water, it gets better than drinking and talking dirty could ever be. The trapeze is not just something you see at the circus. Hooked via the harness to a line on the boat, Brett sets the sails so one side of the catamaran comes out of the water, and we lean with full body weight out the other side to keep it from capsizing, our

legs straight, pushing against the side of the hull as our bodies lean out over the water, sometimes inches, sometimes feet, from the speeding water below us, but oh, this must be how the birds feel. No motor, just wind pushing us faster and faster across the lake, our bodies horizontal to the water, touching the boat only with our feet, the harness loop, and a rope, the wind chasing back my hair and the bright blue curls racing beneath us. "This is my favorite part of sailing," Brett says with exhilaration. "When you tandem trapeze you feel like you're flying, and you get to share it with someone."

The USA was formed in 1959 by a group of local sailors who enjoyed racing, organizing regattas, and having other sailors to power lounge with. Brett, one of the group's dedicated leaders, gives me vocab lessons: lay lines, starboard, port tack, jibe, tack end of the jib, powerful air, sheeting the sails - it's all Greek to me, at least for the first half of the day, but I see how serious he takes sailing, how much he loves the sport and supporting those who are interested in it. The USA teaches beginners. You don't even have to have a boat, you can just come to outings and work as crew to get to know the sport. Brett will even help new sailors find the right boat for their needs. His dedication has helped keep the group active and growing with eight annual sailing events and races across Northern Utah and even into Wyoming. In April, the group holds the Ice-Breaker Regatta; then the Memorial Day weekend sail at Bear Lake; the Utah Summer Games slip into their schedule; the 4th of July Independence Sail; a trip to Pinedale in Wyoming with the Freemont Lake Yacht Club; a Bear Lake race called the LeBeau's Marathon 20 where the racers munch down dinner at LeBeau's, a diner on the shore of Bear Lake; and the Octoberfest at Pineview Reservoir.

The group boasts nearly 60 members and welcomes anyone who wants to give sailing a try. Though it's not required to have tattoos, a sexist vocabulary, or to drink beer in order to join, I would definitely recommend a straw hat and a lounge chair. There is just something cool about the big straw hats, or in Brett's case, a big straw cowboy hat. Somehow, the straw line-up perched along the waterfront near the colorful, dramatic boats makes power lounging a little more serious. Plus, when your hat blows off, you know it's time to get out of the chair.