

Water Fronts for Nov. 4

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is world famous for writing best-selling books and as a radio personality – but in the local sailing community she's best known as a helluva good skipper.

The petite Dr. Laura – she stands 5-foot-3 and weighs 115 – helms a boat with the best of them and better than most.

She lives in Santa Barbara and is a member of Santa Barbara Yacht Club. She also is a member of Pierpont Bay Yacht Club and competes in a number of races off the Ventura County coast. She also is a strong supporter of the Caregivers Sailathon and sailed the most laps and raised the most money the last two years.

Since getting into sailing just six years ago, Dr. Laura has owned several boats – a virtual armada -- and is currently having a 47-footer built so she can assemble a crew and race in next year's TransPac Race from Los Angeles to Honolulu.

The 47-footer will have a microwave "which is the most important factor for me, after eating during the Cabo Race," she said. The boat is being named Katana, which is Japanese for the sword of the samurai.

She has previously owned a J-80, J-92, J-120, J-125, J-105 a Flying Tiger, a J-145 ("way too big and too many people to manage") "and a yacht I donated to charity." Her current boat is a J-100 named Perfect. "I will never sell her. She won the Ullman Championship. She is a beauty and takes good care of me and mine.

"That's it. No more boats in my future."

Unlike many wealthy skippers with high tech boats who have "rock stars" drive their boats, Dr. Laura drives her own. "I drive the boat. I got guys with big muscles to trim and haul sails about."

Among her regular crew are locals Eric Bohman, Kevin Miller, Todd Downey and Cody and Taylor Schlub. "I get out on the water as often as possible and learn from the experience and input of my crew – best teachers around."

She placed second in the 67-mile course around Santa Cruz Island in the Hardway Race in her J-120, Warrior, then later sold the boat. She then campaigned Perfect, winning her class in the Milt Ingram Race, placing second in class in the Tri Point Race, fourth in class in the Santa Barbara Channel Challenge and sailing the most laps and raising the most money in the Sailathon.

Does her husband crew for her?

"My husband wouldn't get on a sailboat for love or money.....he pays the bills." Is she treated differently in the sailing community because of her celebrity? "Because of 'celebrity' status, some folks have preconceived notions about me which lead them to be less than friendly sometimes. Others who listen to my radio program and read my books are quite supportive and kind. Many folks seem to be surprised that I am – in the end – just a person with the same joy about sailing that they embrace." Does she ever mix her avocation with her vocation?

"I use sailing situations on my radio program to make 'points' to help people cope with terrestrial life. I have told the story when my then-coach took me out on the J80 and explained broaching to me and made me put on a life vest for the real life demonstration. I was so scared. I cried. I wanted to go home. Nonetheless, he kept me out there and explained what would happen, why, and what I was supposed to do to get the boat on her feet again. We did it three times. After that I wanted to do more because it was fun! I use this example sometimes to explain to folks about facing fears and learning the skills they need to face what they fear and then being more prepared in life situations rather than avoiding things they fear."

She is noted for her support of the Caregivers Sailathon. Does she support other charity-type events?

"I've sailed in the Leukemia Cup, an SBYC charity regatta for Hospice Care, and after Katrina, KFI AM in Los Angeles was involved in fund raising. We gave away three \$10,000 donations to the Katrina Fund" to people who bid to have lunch with her at SBYC and then go on an afternoon sail on Perfect. "I have raised all sorts of funds for other organizations."

"I also make jewelry to raise money for Operation Family Fund which provides 100 percent – no overhead whatsoever -- of funds to families of fallen or severely injured military heroes. Please see www.moonstones.com for photos of my pieces and www.operationfamilyfund for information. I have raised over \$1.5 million from my jewelry for OFF. Perhaps your readers would purchase or order some lovely things from www.moonstones.com for Christmas presents and contribute to worthy folks who protect America." And I just couldn't resist asking that necessary journalist question. How old is she? "Hey – I am a proud 63 with a new -- one week old -- tattoo on my left shoulder. See drlaura.com for photos. I play tennis hard twice a week, shoot pool, hike twice a week, work out with weights twice a week, hard core yoga practice three times a week and sail/race. I am buff size 2 and own 60 pairs of custom cowboy boots." Granted she has often been controversial. But boring? Never.

SOLID BOX: Upcoming sailboat races:

* Sunday, Nov. 7, Gal & Guy Series 2 & 3. Hosted by Ventura Yacht Club, this popular series gives the ladies a chance to take the helm. A female must drive and a male must do the crew work. The final two races of the series will be sailed on Sunday, Nov. 7. Fee for individual races is \$20. The skippers meeting will be at 10 a.m. Racing will start at noon. For more information, contact VYC race chair Stan Whisenhunt at 659-1464 or e-mail him at Swhisenhun@aol.com.

* Saturday, Nov. 13, Two Harbor Fall Series 3. This race is hosted by Anacapa Yacht Club. The skippers meeting is at 8:30 and racing begins at 11 at the Mandalay Buoy. The final race will be hosted by Pierpont Bay Yacht Club on Dec. 4. The entry fee for individual races is \$30 (\$25 for USSA members). For more information, contact: Richard Countess (PBYC), phone: 818-889-2669, e-mail: rcountess@aol.com, or Gene Beville (AYC), phone; 805-469-9549, email: race@anacapayachtclub.com.

SOLID BOX:

2010 ocean sailboat racing schedule:

Nov. 7, VYC, Gal & Guy Series 2 & 3

Nov. 13, AYC/PBYC, Two Harbor Fall Series 3

Nov. 14, PCYC, TGIS 4

Nov. 27, VSC, Wild Turkey Classic

Dec. 4, PBYC/AYC, Two Harbor Fall Series 4

Dec. 5, PCYC, TGIS 5

(Fax your race announcements, results and other information to Stan Whisenhunt at 659-3058 or call him at 659-1464. His e-mail address is Swhisenhun@aol.com).