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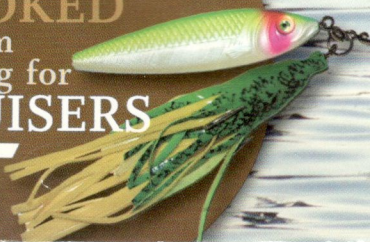
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BY CATHERINE J. JOHNSON

Genoa Bay

Just-Right on Returning

I first discovered Genoa Bay 34 years ago from my family's liveaboard sailboat, and since then it's been my favourite place on the entire coast. There's a feeling of a bygone era there that draws me back. My youngest brother felt the same, so he returned years later and built a house—one of only

six constructed in the area over the last 32 years. Most of the surrounding land is either Indian Reserve or Agricultural Land Reserve, so development is almost nil, and this is one of the many things that makes Genoa Bay so unique.

The bay is tiny—about a 1/4-mile wide and 3/4 of a mile long—and access

is well-defined by day markers on each side of the entrance (see Chart #3478). You'll find excellent sailing right in the bay, as the racers in the annual Cowichan Bay Regatta will attest. Summer west-lies mean you can beam reach your way over to Cowichan Bay to stock up at the bakery, cheese shop, fuel dock, ▶



[Above] The entrance to Genoa Bay is well marked by day markers on each side.

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Above Expect impromptu dock parties and gatherings while staying in Genoa Bay—it may take a while to leave, but the sense of community is outstanding.

native England.

Genoa Bay Marina was the hub of the community when I first visited in 1974, and still is. The Kiedaisch family has had the place for 20 years, passed from father to sons, and for the last four years Ben and Will have operated the Genoa Bay Café as well. Their upscale West Coast cuisine is served in rustic, old-world ambience, a trademark of the property. The atmosphere of the place is that of relaxed welcome, and the brothers feel that boating is a commonality for people, an equalizer, that lets you swap stories with folks from all walks of life.

The wharfinger, Geoff Hill, has so enjoyed the tales and the tying up that he's been at his job since the '70s. Impromptu dock parties are great for meeting other boaters and locals from the small float-house and liveaboard community, and many of the 60 or so land residents have a boat in the bay, or at least go dock-walking. It can take a little longer than planned to get out of the bay, chatting with locals and fellow boaters before you cast off, but it's this sense of belonging that is the true beauty of a small community. I stayed in the bay for a month last year and was

and beer and wine store—and you might see harbour porpoise and seals breaking the surface as you cross. My family has enjoyed years of day sails right off Separation Point—a landmark we fondly call “Cow Horn,” and you'll find good crabbing throughout the area.

Genoa Bay is choice for both overnight and day stays, especially if you like walking (or if you have a dog). There are 3 miles of pastoral beauty from Genoa Bay to Maple Bay, just as picturesque as the Yorkshire Dales. Mount Tzouhalem embraces the valley, and from Genoa Bay Farm there is a view back into the bay over rolling fields and Hereford cattle, across to Hatch Point. The natural history of the area is compelling. Succulent plants grow from rocky outcrops, and Arbutus and Garry oaks extend down the mountain, providing cover for California quail and other bird species. Gorse grows here too, and it's as thorny and flowery as it ever was in its

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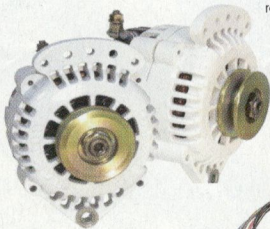
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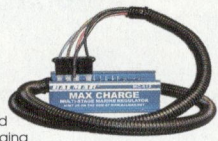
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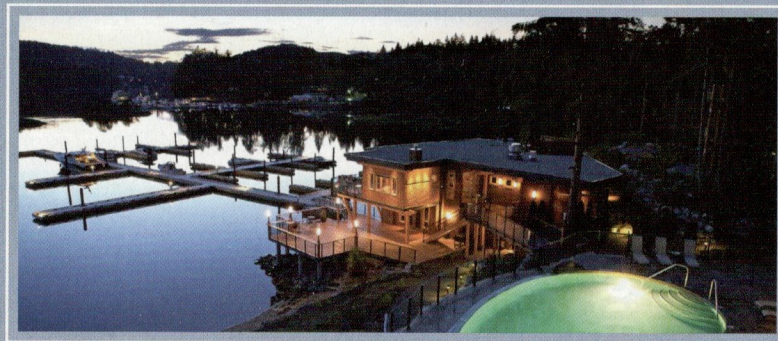


frequently waved at and spoken to—I felt completely welcome and that is often lacking at larger marinas.

There are other fun things to do in Genoa Bay besides walking, eating and socializing. Three musical events are held each summer—quartets from the Victoria Symphony, jazz trios, Cajun bands or bluegrass—and all are free for the public to enjoy. The concerts were started as a thank you to the marina’s customers and have just carried on. Charity benefits and dazzling displays of Christmas lights are yearly fetes, and the floating Genoa Bay Gallery, owned and operated by Colleen Irwin for the past nine years, is brim-full of eclectic artwork by talented local artists. To celebrate Halloween, residents hold a pumpkin-carving potluck with bonfire and fireworks out on the point and everyone is invited. The grand finale is candlelit pumpkins glowing and grinning along both sides of the road on Halloween night (a very spooky walk).

There is a ton of history in Genoa Bay, literally, with part of the retaining wall built of ballast rocks from ships loading lumber in the late 1800s. There is also a slag heap jutting out of the water by the ramp, looking like an avant-garde sculpture, but is actually file tailings from the old sawmill. Rumour has it that before the bay was christened “Genoa” in 1858, it was called “Snug Leave,” and although unsubstantiated, anyone who has been there can vouch for the “snug.” And as for the “leave,” I’ve left Genoa Bay countless times, but I always return. ☺

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