

Annie Means
Application for the Yachting Journalists' Association
Young Journalist of the Year Award 2025

[MuckRack Portfolio](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Maritime Mosaics](#)

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PUBLISHED MARINE EDITORIAL WORK | AUG 2024 - AUG 2025

- [**“Fit for the Future: Annie Means Interviews the Founders of BlueTree on Innovative Approaches to Boatbuilding Design and Construction”**](#)
 - *Practical Boat Owner* | August 14, 2025
 - Complete proof provided at the end of this document
- [**“Classic Boats, Italian Style”**](#)
 - *Soundings* | August 1, 2025
- [**“Wet, Winchless, and Climate-Conscious: A Glimpse Aboard a Trans-Atlantic Sail Cargo Vessel Crossing”**](#)
 - *Latitudes & Attitudes* | July 10, 2025
- [**“Restoring Tethra: From Looe Fishing Boat to Floating Dining Destination”**](#)
 - *Practical Boat Owner* | June 5, 2025
- [**“Spieden Island: The San Juans’ Lost Safari Island”**](#)
 - *Pacific Yachting* | May 29, 2025
- [**“Small is Beautiful”**](#)
 - *Motorboat & Yachting* | May 1, 2025
 - Complete proof provided at the end of this document
- [**“A Perfect Pocket Cruiser From North Pacific Boats”**](#)
 - *Soundings* | March 17, 2025
- [**“Heritage Meets Hashtags”**](#)
 - *Watercraft* | March 10, 2025
 - Complete proof provided at the end of this document
- [**“Coral Catch | Rose Huizenga”**](#)
 - *With It Girl* | March 3, 2025
- [**“Harvesting Seaweed with Kumejima's First Female Harvester”**](#)
 - *Session* | February 28, 2025
 - Complete proof provided at the end of this document
- [**“Chaplaincy on the High Seas”**](#)
 - *Oceanographic* | February 5, 2025
- [**“The King of Cortez Island”**](#)
 - *Pacific Yachting* | January 7, 2025

- *“The Oldest Surviving Essex Thames Sailing Barge Gets a New Life”*
 - *SAIL* | November 12, 2024
- *“Tiny Boat Triumphs”*
 - *Passagemaker* | October 3, 2024
- *“Taking the Lead: Women Driving Indonesia’s Coral Catch Initiative”*
 - *DIVE* | August 19, 2024

***MARITIME MOSAICS* EDITORIAL WORK | AUG 2024 - AUG 2025**

I am the founder, editor, and lead writer of [*Maritime Mosaics*](#), an independent newsletter and online platform that explores the intersections of gender, marine leisure, the maritime industry, and coastal societies. The publication has attracted readers across 24 U.S. states and 23 countries, with consistently high engagement across its comment and interaction sections. I write and publish original long-form reporting, photo essays, and multimedia features, shaping both the editorial voice and visual identity of the platform. The following are selected articles I published through this platform over the past year.

- **[“Pathway to Pilothouse”](#)**
 - *Maritime Mosaics* | April 17, 2025 - Current
 - Although I am not the author of this column, I serve as its producer, editor, and editorial director in my capacity as founder of *Maritime Mosaics*, an independent online platform dedicated to marine culture. As part of this ongoing monthly initiative, I collaborate with contributing writer and licensed captain Erica Lichty to document her real-time journey to becoming a captain in the United States' largest ferry system. This work contributes to the publication's broader mission to elevate visibility and representation in a maritime industry still shaped by persistent gender imbalance.
- **[“From England to Italy: Documenting Female Shipwrights and Their Impact”](#)**
 - *Maritime Mosaics* | February 28, 2025
- **[“OceanFolx and the Women Reshaping Lombok’s Surf Scene”](#)**
 - *Maritime Mosaics* | January 24, 2025

MARINE VIDEO WORK | AUG 2024 - AUG 2025

The Italian Boatbuilders Tour: In collaboration with [Women in Boatbuilding CIC](#), I filmed, edited, and produced a documentary short spotlighting Italian female shipwrights—an often-overlooked group in maritime trades. The video emphasizes the importance of representation in traditionally male-dominated industries and has resonated widely, garnering over 3,000 views online. It was also screened internationally at the [Yacht & Garden Festival](#) in Genoa, Italy, and the [Sea Film Festival](#) in La Spezia, Italy, where it was awarded first place in the category of Maritime Professions. [Click here for video link.](#) Stills of the project are below.











JOURNALISM & MEDIA AWARDS | AUG 2024 - AUG 2025

- [Yachting Journalists' Association Young Journalist of the Year Award 2024, Joint Runner-Up](#)
 - [Yachting Journalists' Association](#) | September 16, 2024 | United Kingdom
 - DESCRIPTION:
 - Presented by the Yachting Journalists' Association, this prestigious recognition celebrates the marine journalism of emerging maritime writers and photographers under the age of 30
- [Awarded 1st Place in the Maritime Professions Film Category](#)
 - [Sea Film Festival](#) | May 23rd - 24th, 2024 | La Spezia, Italy
 - DESCRIPTION:
 - My short documentary *The Italian Boatbuilders Tour*, which celebrates femme Italian shipbuilders, won 1st place in the Maritime Professions film category at the Sea Film Festival in La Spezia. The Sea Film Festival—the first in La Spezia dedicated entirely to the sea—invites filmmakers from around the world to share their vision of the sea in short films (under 10 minutes). The festival explores the sea as environment, livelihood, resource, and muse, conveyed through cinematic emotion, imagery, sound, and storytelling. This film submission—and the recognition it received—underscore the importance of documenting women's often-overlooked contributions in the international maritime world.

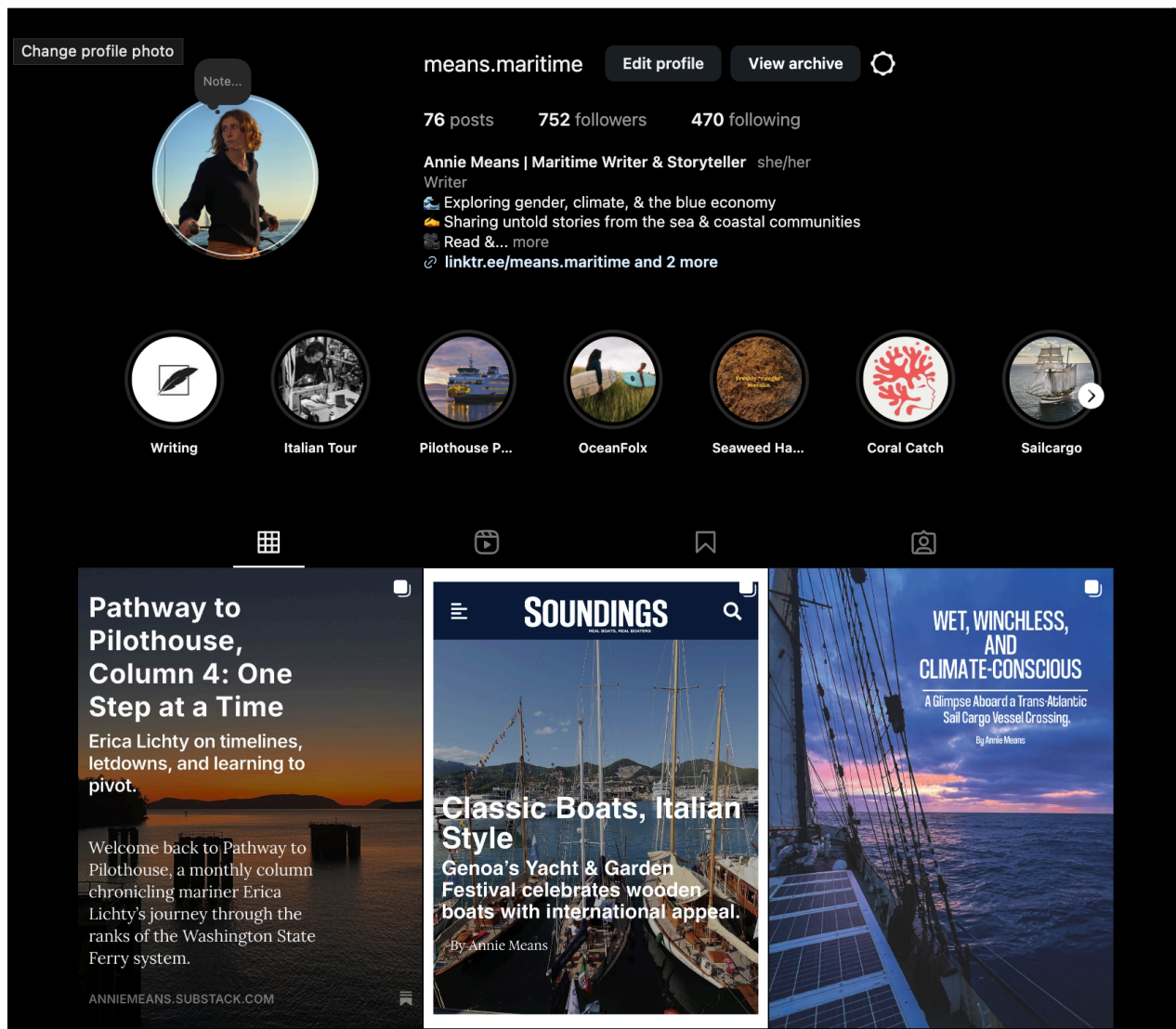
INVITED TALKS & JOURNALISTIC PRESENTATIONS | AUG 2024 - AUG 2025

- **“What Makes An Effective Story.”**
 - [*Diverseas*](#), *Remote/Bali, Indonesia*
 - July 19th, 2025
 - DESCRIPTION:
 - “In this remote lecture, journalist Annie Means shares her work in marine journalism with the Blue Roots Scholarship Cohort, offering professional insight and coaching as participants develop their own marine-focused media projects and feature pieces.”
- **“Women & The Sea: Stories of Passion, Expertise, and Social Sensitivity.”**
 - [*Yacht & Garden Festival*](#), *Genoa, Italy*
 - May 17th, 2025
 - DESCRIPTION:
 - “This talk invites audiences on a journey into the challenges of sailing and naval craftsmanship—fields that, once reserved almost exclusively for men, are now being redefined by the presence and leadership of women. Their deep connection to the sea anchors this compelling, all-female exploration. Distinguished speakers share stories rich with passion, expertise, and social awareness—from carpenters and shipwrights who carry on the ancient traditions of building and restoring wooden boats, to solo and team racers, to specialists in cutting-edge technologies shaping the future of sailing. The discussion will be moderated by writer and journalist Giovanni Panella, alongside Giulia Zappia, researcher and lecturer in Design at UNIGE and member of the Technical Commission of the Italian Federation of Historic Boats (FIBaS).”
- **“Maritime Matriarchs: The Women Shaping the International Marine Sector.”**
 - [*Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival*](#), *Washington State, U.S.A*
 - September 6–8, 2024, 47th edition of the festival
 - DESCRIPTION:
 - “Whether it be boatbuilding, fishing, sailing, or navigating, women have always played vital roles in the maritime industry. Yet, the representation

of women remains low across nearly every marine sector. Why is that? What do we sacrifice when we don't prioritize the inclusion and leadership of women in the marine trades? These questions led Annie Means to travel the world as part of her yearlong [Thomas J. Watson Fellowship](#). In her presentation, she will explore the numerous incredible women at work in the blue economy. From female-led fishing cooperatives in Costa Rica to shipyards in the United Kingdom, cargo ship docks in New Zealand, and coral restoration efforts in Indonesia, Annie's presentation highlights the vital importance of visibility and documentation in this sector."

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CREATION | AUG 2024 - AUG 2025

As media continues to evolve in the 21st century, it has become essential to move beyond traditional print journalism. Over the past year, I have worked to bring long-form journalism (through articles, videos, and other formats) into the digital space by leveraging short-form content on social media. My platform, [@means.maritime](https://means.maritime), serves as both a gateway and an information hub for my larger body of work, regularly reaching more than 12,000 people through cross-posting, reels, and collaborative projects.



MAGAZINE PROOFS (CONT. FROM PUBLISHED MARINE EDITORIAL WORK)

Attached at the end of this document are the magazine proofs for the following articles, as referenced in the section titled “**PUBLISHED MARINE EDITORIAL WORK | AUG 2024 – AUG 2025.**” They are listed in the order shown below.

1. [Fit for the Future: Annie Means Interviews the Founders of BlueTree on Innovative Approaches to Boatbuilding Design and Construction](#)
2. [*“Small is Beautiful”*](#)
3. [*“Heritage Meets Hashtags”*](#)
4. [*“Harvesting Seaweed with Kumejima's First Female Harvester”*](#)

Fit for the future

Annie Means talks to the founders of BlueTree about their innovative approach to boatbuilding design and construction



When finished, *Stria 5* was the largest boat ever built using Vendia marine ply, which is usually found in canoes and paddleboards

The term maritime innovation usually brings to mind bustling ports, sprawling factories, and urban coastal cities, rarely a quaint seaside town. Yet, nestled among the rolling cliffs of Lyme Regis, a small startup is quietly challenging 'business as usual' in the leisure marine industry, putting sustainability at the company's heart.

"What we're trying to do is not only push sustainability, but also push what's possible," says Otto Marples of BlueTree Boatbuilders.

Marples and his co-founder, Obioma Oji, met at the Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy during their boatbuilding course. They came from different backgrounds — Otto, rooted in marketing and operations, Obi, in design and academia. On paper, the two might have seemed an unlikely team. But they quickly became friends and launched their eco-conscious marine startup.

Now, three years in, Marples and Oji have unveiled *Stria 5*: their company's first boat, built with a deliberately progressive approach to construction and stewardship.

The *Stria* is a 5m vessel made from Vendia marine plywood, oak, and Douglas fir. It's powered by two high-performance

3,500Wh lithium batteries and a Torqeedo Cruise 3.0 pod drive — underscoring BlueTree's steadfast avoidance of non-biodegradable glass-reinforced plastic (GRP) and fuel-guzzling outboards.

Oji and Marples describe their business as a progressive boatbuilding company, rather than pioneering; for example, resin is still used, but it's Entropy, a bio-based epoxy resin that utilises plant-based ingredients not petroleum-derived ones.

All business decisions aim to bring balance between the natural world and the leisure marine industry, from sourcing materials and cultivating workplace culture to reducing delivery emissions and considering the impact their boats have

on the community. Following the build of the *Stria* offers a clearer picture of how principles, research, and follow-through come together to create a model and culture aimed at a more ethical future.

Research lab

Each build passes through four key phases: the research lab, construction, fit-out, and finishing.

The research lab is where ideas are generated and tested, from selecting designs in collaboration with naval architects to sourcing materials and planning each stage of the build. At each stage, Marples and Oji ask: What do we actually need, and what's the most sustainable version that we can get now?

MarineShift360's Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) tool is also used to evaluate the environmental impact of their material choices. The software tracks a boat's footprint from raw material to disposal, offering a clearer view of its working (and eventually retired) life.

Stria was the first boat BlueTree put through the system, which now guides their approach. The LCA and this research strategy align with the principles of a circular economy — an economic model that seeks to minimise waste and make

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Annie Means is a marine journalist covering global stories. Her *Maritime Mosaics* highlights many of these stories, while other notable work includes co-creating, producing, and editing the *British Boat Builders Tour*, a web series developed in collaboration with the *Women in Boatbuilding* network to highlight women in marine trades.

All material is researched and tested to ensure it meets BlueTree's high sustainability goals



6mm oak was vacuumed onto the boat's transom



ABOVE The second layer of the cold moulded hull

RIGHT Stria's keel was made of oak before flax was used for reinforcing



the most of resources by designing products for durability, reuse, and recyclability, all while fostering environmental regeneration.

Due to the difficulty in recycling end-of-life GRP, and the environmental damage caused by abandoned GRP vessels, BlueTree builds only from wood.

"For me, it's more natural," said Oji. "Wood is fixable and maintainable – you can bring it back to life. On the plastic side, it's good for a time, but then it just fails."

Design

Stria was designed in collaboration with naval architect Ben Rogerson.

"It was inspired by classically planked fore-and-aft river launches, but with a key departure; this one is clearly cold-moulded," explained Oji.

Cold-moulding is the process of laminating multiple thin layers of wood veneers (usually with epoxy resin) to form the hull. Each layer is applied at a different angle to increase strength and durability, resulting in a lightweight yet remarkably strong structure.

Construction

Like many boats, *Stria* began her life upside down. The team first created a jig (a full-scale prototype used as a shaping tool for the hull) to build a strip-planked plug from tulipwood.

Alongside the plug-making, BlueTree crafted the centreline components (hog, transom, stern knee, and stem), which were faired on the plug before removing it and prepping the plug for hull construction. The centreline was made from oak, except for the transom, which was made of 24mm Vendia. Later in the process, 6mm oak was vacuumed onto the transom to protect the end grain of the cold-moulded layers.

That structure served as the foundation for laying three layers of wood crafted from one of the most sustainable materials on the market: Vendia marine ply.

Cold moulding the hull

Initially, the choice for *Stria*'s hull came down to two materials: UK-grown sweet chestnut and Vendia marine ply, a laminated wood product made from slow-grown, plentiful Nordic pine, prized for its strength, light weight, and traceable supply chain; it can be traced back to a specific tree.

When laying the Vendia veneers, BlueTree opted for a diagonal pattern, a design choice that reflects their willingness to experiment.

"From a cost point of view, we went with Vendia. It's obviously a marine-grade plywood. But we didn't know how it would perform. It hadn't been done at that scale before," said Oji.

Here's where the 'progressive' part of BlueTree comes into play – not just in making sustainable choices, but in pushing the envelope of what's considered standard in boatbuilding.

At the time *Stria* was built, it was the largest vessel ever constructed using Vendia marine ply. Until then it had mostly been used for paddleboards, canoes, and smaller watercraft.

BlueTree is also exploring alternatives to traditional glassfibre construction. Instead, natural fibre composites, primarily flax which is biodegradable and renewable, are used in their cold-moulded hulls. Around *Stria*'s oak keel, flax reinforcement adds strength.

Epoxy resins, which contain Bisphenol A (BPA) – a substance classified by the European Environment Agency as harmful to humans and an endocrine disruptor – are also avoided. Instead, BlueTree uses



Entropy's clear laminating epoxy, a resin that incorporates up to 29% of bio-based content.

Framing

Once *Stria* was turned over, frames were installed. Made from Vendia, the frames were 12mm in thickness and precision-cut using a CNC machine. After some shaping, the frames were glued into place, and flax was used to strengthen the boat's bulkheads.

Fit-out

Next was the fit-out of the vessel, starting with *Stria*'s propulsion system. Staying true to BlueTree's commitment to moving beyond diesel and fossil fuels, Marples and Oji chose a Torqeedo Cruise 3.0 pod drive. The fit-out included templating, shaping the coaming, installing custom lockers and a battery box lid, and crafting the benches.

"The benches are really cool. That was obviously Obi's favourite – she's big into chairs," said Marples, highlighting Oji's previous life as an IKEA designer. "If these were horizontal, you'd need a lot of structure beneath them. But these are vertical," added Oji.

Finishing

To align with BlueTree's environmental goals, Marples and Oji chose Awlwood, a streamlined, single-system primer and varnish.

Traditionally, wooden boats have a reputation for being maintenance-heavy,

ABOVE & LEFT The vertical design of the bench strips means less structure underneath, allowing more stowage space

especially when it comes to finishing. That upkeep – laborious and time-consuming – often nudges boat owners toward GRP alternatives. Aware of this bias, the BlueTree team opted for a finish that would demand less over time without compromising performance or appearance. Everything was tested in the research lab before committing – no surprises, no mismatched tones.

"In the marine world, people are often resistant to light-coloured boats," Oji said. "You understand where it comes from. Darker timbers seem more durable, even though plenty of light ones are just as durable."

They varnished both the interior and exterior of the boat. In contrast to many wooden boats, the interior was

whitewashed rather than painted to highlight the grain.

Beyond the boat

Marples and Oji care

not just about the life cycle analysis of their vessels but also about the sustainability of every fitting and accessory that comes with them. There's an old saying about boats – 'Bring Out Another Thousand' – which reminds us all that a vessel is more than just its hull. It's the sum of all its parts, literally and financially.

"We were trying to find boat covers that were sustainable. But there aren't many options out there that last long or stand up to UV damage," said Oji.

Dissatisfied with what the market offered, BlueTree teamed up with Arts University Bournemouth to explore new ways to create UV-resistant covers using more eco-conscious materials.

In many ways, BlueTree's insistence on collaborative innovation pushes not only their own company but also a wider network of makers and thinkers to put the

A Torqeedo Cruise 3.0 pod drive powers Stria



Awlwood was used on the woodwork, while the interior woods were whitewashed to preserve the wood grain



environment front and centre. "We back everything with research," Oji explained.

Documenting *Stria*'s build and performance, partnering with universities, and showcasing their work at design conferences and in journals means Marples and Oji are educating consumers in multiple ways and helping shift the entire industry toward sustainability.

The journey to building their first *Stria* took time.

Marples and Oji wanted more than just a boat. They wanted a day launch that could serve as a proving ground for their progressive ideals – a space to test new materials for durability and performance, experiment with innovative production methods, refine their manufacturing process, and trial design features and system integration, all while laying the groundwork for their business.

Now with the boat in the water and connections among partners growing, BlueTree's progressive approach to building appears to be a success, one that Marples and Oji hope will inspire other companies to follow suit and question just how expansive the future of green maritime innovation can be, even if it starts in a small country barn.

MAIN: *Slow Dance* is the Kandell family's North Pacific 28



INSET: Jon and Sophia with children Lowe and Noomi



SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

When Jon Kandell decided to downsize from a Grand Banks 36 to a North Pacific 28 it wasn't just about saving money, it was about improving the cruising experience for his growing family

WORDS: Annie Means PHOTOS: Jon Kandell

OWNER'S TALE



MAIN: Sweden's west coast is an idyllic destination

INSET: Jon's Grand Banks 36

The Göta Kanal stretches from Sweden's Baltic Sea to the inlets and islands of its glorious west coast. Winding through the country's idyllic, pastoral interior, a series of 58 locks dot the 120-mile canal, at times lifting or lowering boats up to ten metres at a time in a single metallic passage.

Though it is an engineering point of pride for Sweden, it has also earned the less appealing nickname of the 'divorce ditch' (skilsmässodiket), in large part due to the troubles many couples experience while navigating its constricted channels and locks. The average boater can expect to traverse this winding blue serpent in six to eight days during high season.

Jon Kandell, whose upcoming summer voyage will start in Stockholm, route through the Göta Kanal, and end in the North Sea, expects his cruise to take twice as long. And with a family of four aboard his tiny 28-foot trawler yacht – a boat with an 8ft 6in beam, one cabin and a single head – one might assume the very communication issues that earned the canal its nickname could easily surface in such tight quarters.

But not so for this family.

"For our little boat, it's actually perfect. The canal is quite narrow, and the water's flat. No rollers there," says Jon, chuckling.

In a world where 'bigger is better' and buying a new boat almost always means sizing up, the Kandell family takes a different approach. They view their pocket trawler's small stature not as a drawback, but rather as a major advantage.

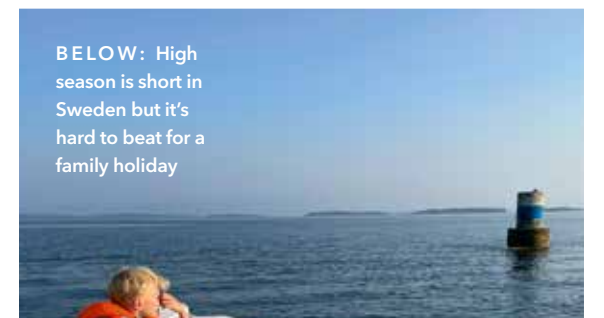
This mindset, and their North Pacific 28, represent years of thoughtful decision-making to deliberately downsize their



ABOVE: A hybrid diesel electric Greenline 33 followed



ABOVE: The North Pacific 28 has been the Kandell's best boat yet



BELOW: High season is short in Sweden but it's hard to beat for a family holiday



A fully equipped long-distance cruiser built for comfort and extended family voyages

RIGHT: *Slow Dance* has been a much easier boat to handle and maintain

cruising lifestyle. And, already, they've proven that small spaces and small boats can lead to big rewards, both in terms of money and family bonding.

Jon and Sophia Kandell, along with their two kids, Noomi and Lowe, aged seven and ten, are no strangers to life on the water. Based in Stockholm, Jon has spent decades at the helm as a recreational sailor and motor boat owner.

In recent years, the Kandells have passed their love of boating on to their children, making the most of Sweden's fleeting summers with week to month-long cruising trips through the archipelagos of the Baltic Sea.

LESS IS MORE

The Kandells' desire for a boat that can handle a variety of seascapes played a part in their decision to reassess what's truly essential in a vessel and what's just extra weight.

The Kandells' journey as boat owners has been a carefully curated evolution—from a Grand Banks 36 (1991) to a Greenline 33 (2011), and now to their latest vessel: a North Pacific 28 (2010), aptly named *Slow Dance*.

Now, Jon is renovating *Slow Dance* into a fully equipped, long-distance cruiser built for comfort and extended family voyages. He's chronicling his DIY transformation on his newly launched Instagram and YouTube channels (slowdancecruising), with one key message: less square footage does not equate to less adventure.



As with any boat purchase, there are, of course, trade-offs. The most obvious? Size – specifically, layout and amenities.

The Kandells' old Grand Banks 36 offered no shortage of space: a roomy saloon and galley in the pilothouse, and separate sleeping quarters down below – one forward with a vee berth and another aft with a twin bed and single berth. Not to be overlooked, it also featured two heads, one of which included the added comfort of a proper separate shower cubicle.

Then came the Greenline 33, a small step down in size but considerably more modern and extremely comfortable. It featured two sleeping options – an owner's cabin forward and a convertible dinette in the saloon. The single head was tucked into the bow with a designated shower area, though not quite a separate shower compartment.

The North Pacific 28 is designed with efficiency in mind, featuring a dedicated pilothouse and two small cabins. The forward cabin serves as a designated sleeping area with a vee berth setup, while the aft cabin is a multifunctional space, doubling as a convertible sleeping area and a combined saloon/galley/hallway. The single head, though compact, is thoughtfully designed with a shower, making it a true wet room setup.

While many boaters might balk at a design so tight, this family has found that the lack of space in the North Pacific has actually brought them closer.

TIME FREED UP

"When you have very limited things, you spend less time fixing, arranging, and dealing with it all. Instead, you can spend that time hanging out with your kids, talking with your wife, going places, reading a book – you know, actually enjoying each other's company," says Jon. For these four, cruising isn't about retreating to separate cabins but about experiencing the voyage together – something made especially easy when your vessel's sleeping quarters double as the living room.

This philosophy of togetherness has held strong for the Kandells, even after weeks afloat. Both Jon and Sophia work in brand consultancy, a field that has given them the flexibility to take off for four to five weeks at a time. And for the past decade, they've spent those stretches out on the water.

All their time at sea has allowed them to become intimately familiar with the workings of each vessel. In many ways, their journey mirrors the tale of Goldilocks and the three bears; finding the ideal engine and boat for their needs required careful consideration, time, and a bit of trial and error.

Their previous Greenline 33 was equipped with a hybrid system, pairing an electric motor with a single diesel engine on the same propeller shaft. The five-cylinder 165hp VW Marine ►



LEFT: The Twin Cummins diesels in the Grand Banks provided plenty of power

ABOVE: But that came with double the fuel consumption of the North Pacific 28



ABOVE AND RIGHT: The Greenline 33 was modern and fuel efficient but Jon found its hybrid drive system rather frustrating



diesel used a hydraulic clutch to smoothly switch between electric and diesel propulsion, while an 11kWh lithium battery powered the electric drive, offering a quieter, more efficient ride when conditions allowed.

ENGINE EXPERIENCES

While Jon appreciated the layout of the Greenline, the engine left him wanting. "I didn't like how the boat handled. It felt like the engine could drive the boat much faster, but the propeller just whipped up a lot of water without getting proper grip."

Their Grand Banks 36, meanwhile, boasted two Cummins 6BTA 5.9-litre 6-cylinder diesels, each delivering 210hp, with Twin Disc gearboxes connected to the shafts. Even Jon admits to missing that power from time to time: "The engines were amazing. I love Cummins diesels because they feel extremely reliable and powerful. The propeller slip is non-existent, and you get an immediate response when going into gear."

But Jon is also quick to acknowledge the drawbacks of the Grand Banks's twin-engine setup: "With all those beautiful details, dual engines, dual heads and dual helm stations, there was so much that needed constant upkeep."

And finally, they found their Goldilocks boat. For the Kandells, the North Pacific 28 struck the ideal balance of power and manageable size, with its single efficient 4-cylinder

Cummins Mercruiser 2.0 QSD engine, a straight shaft and a Technodrive gearbox. "It feels like a Grand Banks to operate but is small enough to get in anywhere," raves Jon.

That small size has also led to significant financial savings. Though the purchase prices of the three vessels weren't drastically different – the Grand Banks was in the low \$100,000s, the Greenline around \$140,000, and the North Pacific much the same – the real fiscal benefits have emerged in the lower day-to-day costs of owning and maintaining a smaller boat.

When most boaters consider purchasing a new vessel, fuel efficiency is one of the first concerns that comes to mind. While the hybrid setup of the Greenline was the most fuel efficient, burning about 0.5 litres per nautical mile at 6 knots, the North Pacific's smaller stature has led to major savings over the bigger, heavier, twin-engined Grand Banks.

ROOM FOR A SMALL ONE

"We're at about half the fuel consumption now compared to where we used to be," says Jon.

"The Grand Banks was already pretty efficient compared to, say, a sportfisher but this is in a different league."

Their Grand Banks 36 consumed about 1.5 litres per mile at 6 knots in total, compared to the North Pacific's 0.7 litres per mile at the same speed.

"Last season, we were out a lot and I didn't fill up my tank once," Jon beams.

But, of course, the fuel tank is just one part of boat ownership. Berthing fees, insurance and maintenance all add up. Logically, smaller, slimmer boats cost less to run on all fronts. Berthing for the Kandells' North Pacific 28 costs about a third less than for their Grand Banks and insurance is nearly half the price. ▶



ABOVE: Noomi flies the flag

LEFT: *Slow Dance* is compact but super-functional



Our main reason for downsizing is driven by simplicity, creativity, and better use of space

A summer season of berthing for their old Grand Banks 36 cost around £1,200 in total, whereas for the North Pacific, they are making a considerable saving, paying closer to £800.

And while the Kandells certainly appreciate the financial benefits from their pocket trawler, their real motivation for small-boat cruising goes far beyond money. "Our main reason for downsizing is driven by simplicity, creativity, and better use of space," Jon emphasises.

Cruising on a smaller vessel has brought the Kandells a wealth of unexpected benefits, the most notable of which is how it has transformed what a typical day during the summer season on the water looks like for their family.

As Jon explained, many marinas in Sweden don't take reservations. This means that when the all-too-brief summer season gets busy, marinas and docks operate on a first-come,

first-served basis, and finding a berth can quickly become a dog-eat-dog world.

"With the boats we had before, if we pulled in at 4 or 5pm, just forget it. There was no space."

But with a smaller vessel comes more opportunities. In the past, the Kandells had to be particular about their arrival and departure times to ensure they had a spot to sleep for the evening. Now, cruising days unfold at a gentler, more meandering pace.

A typical day for the Kandell family involves about four to six hours of leisurely cruising time, followed by pulling into a marina or anchorage to swim, explore and eat.

Whereas before, dropping anchor for lunch in an idyllic cove could risk losing a spot on the dock, Jon now finds



that "there's always room to squeeze in. It opens a whole new world of cruising schedules. I like to cruise all day and come in at 7pm and go to a restaurant. With our old boats, we could never do that."

DRIVING A TANK

The burden of operating and maintaining a larger vessel is also gone. Though their Grand Banks 36 offered ample space, its sluggish response time and unwieldy handling when docking, ultimately overshadowed its advantages.

"It was a tank – at least, that's how it felt at the helm," Jon recalls of his time with the Grand Banks 36.

Its weight, nearly 13 metric tonnes, had its advantages at sea but it became a liability when threading through tight marina slips. Docking, even in the best of conditions, can be a nerve-racking exercise. We've all seen it: frantic yelling, desperate blasts of bow thrusters, slow-motion collisions that play out like a maritime ballet gone wrong.

Jon and his family wanted no part of that. ►

RIGHT: Welcome downtime for Sophia

BELOW: Jon is spending more time with the family



ABOVE: The helm station takes up minimal space

RIGHT: *Slow Dance* in full summer mode with bimini up





LEFT: Measuring up for modifications to *Slow Dance*'s saloon furniture and co-pilot's chair

"I didn't like how stress impacted me as a captain. I want boating to be fun for the entire family," he says. "With the North Pacific 28, that's exactly what it's become. I let my daughter handle the lines and my son can take the helm – it's a whole different experience."

SPACE SAVER

The difference goes beyond just time at the wheel; maintaining and servicing their new boat has also proved to be much simpler. Jon has always preferred to take care of the upkeep and repairs himself.

Winter maintenance on his Grand Banks 36 took weeks. "Antifouling the hull took two days. The brightwork alone took days. Engine servicing was simple and fast but it cost twice as much since there were two of them."

Now, with the North Pacific 28, things are different. With both the skill and, more importantly, the time to maintain *Slow Dance* himself, Jon estimates he has spent only about \$200 on servicing since purchasing the vessel.



For Jon, the true joy of boat ownership has always been hands-on, tinkering, refining, making it his own. With the North Pacific, that satisfaction has deepened, pushing him to rethink the concept of space entirely.

"I think that's the whole mindset shift about this downsizing thing. If you get creative with the space you have, you can actually achieve the same level of comfort without needing a bigger boat."

For the Kandells, with their quintessentially Swedish, Ikea-inspired sensibility, this refreshing way of re-thinking about space has sparked a complete interior overhaul.

One of Jon's favourite projects? The addition of a Castello convertible couch bunk bed for his kids – a compact and functional touch.

The North Pacific 28 originally featured just one dedicated sleeping cabin. The aft cabin served as a hallway, kitchen, living room, and, when needed, a converted bedroom. The design, though cosy, was starting to feel cramped, especially as his children grew and his cruises lengthened. Ensuring everyone could sleep comfortably became a top priority.

The idea struck Jon when he came across a convertible couch/bunk on another boat he looked at. "I almost bought that boat just because of the couch," he laughs.

One of the key advantages of the North Pacific is its flat interior floor, which makes removing sections for access and renovating projects a breeze. After pulling out the dinette, Jon plans to install the new bunk bed and couch before relaunching *Slow Dance* this spring. He has also removed the co-pilot chair in favour of a collapsible bench and a reading nook for his family.

EUROPEAN ADVENTURE

The Kandells' current boat isn't just a great deal in terms of its much lower running costs, it's a perfect fit. Through a combination of thoughtful upgrades and a fresh mindset, they've shaped it into exactly what they need, proving that the best boat is the one you make your own.

As for what's next, this summer's canal journey is just the beginning. It's laying the foundation for an even bigger adventure in the coming years – navigating the extensive canal system of mainland Europe.

"I really want to do some shakedown cruises first with all the new designs I'm putting into the North Pacific, so it will be perfect once we set off for that long trip," Jon says, estimating that the journey will take around ten weeks.

By then, navigating the Göta Kanal will simply be another chapter in Kandell's ever-evolving adventure and ongoing journey of cruising small. We can't wait to see where they'll go next.

INSET: Jon and Sophia relaxing in the saloon

LEFT: Solar panels charge the batteries





Heritage meets Hashtags

Annie Means meets Gaia Brojanigo, the Italian boatbuilder using social media to revitalize wooden boatbuilding in Italy

With photographs courtesy Gaia Brojanigo

When Gaia Brojanigo set out to introduce wooden boatbuilding to an Italian audience, she knew she'd be navigating uncharted waters; at just 27, Gaia is one of Italy's few contemporary wooden boatbuilders. In an industry where heritage boatbuilding is dwindling, she stands among a minority working to keep the craft alive.

Driven by a passion for her craft and a desire to share it with others, Gaia turned to an unexpected platform to recruit new boatbuilders: Instagram. Her account, @brojawoodworking, now boasts over 59,000 followers. Populated with tongue-in-cheek videos about wooden boat construction, Gaia, whose Instagram bio reads "Boatbuilder, or rather Mistress of the Axe" – a play on the Italian maestro d'ascia, the term for a traditional boatbuilder or shipwright – has captured the hearts and minds of her Italian audience with her humour, wit, and expertise.

With her unique presence, she is reintroducing the art of wooden boatbuilding to the wider Italian public. "The fact is, there are no other accounts like this about boats," she says. "I'm not copying anyone's business plan." Through social media, she has breathed new life into a fading craft, giving Italy's boatbuilding heritage a fresh start in the digital age.

Crucially, she's transformed this account into more than just a source of income. Her Instagram page has become a digital educational hub that's single-handedly raising the profile of heritage boatbuilding in Italy—a role, Gaia as explained in our interview, that's desperately needed. "People here just aren't that interested in boats, so there's only a small percentage interested in the historical ones."

Despite Italy being a nation surrounded by over 4660 miles

(7500 km) of coastline and five cerulean seas, the number of Italians who engage in small craft recreation remains relatively small compared to their European and American counterparts.

Italy remains one of the world's leading manufacturers of superyachts, reaching a record \$4 billion in exports in 2024, according to the Italian marine industry association Confindustria Nautica. However, their data also reveals a troubling trend: the market for small craft, including daysailers,



kayaks and other vessels, is shrinking.

A decreasing number of Italians are purchasing or using these smaller boats, signalling a shift away from traditional recreational boating. With fewer Italians out on the water, it's no surprise that interest in boatbuilding itself remains quite limited. And that intrigue is even sparser with regard to heritage boatbuilding.

Gaia, however, is working to change that. Having lived in England for several years, where she graduated from Falmouth Marine School with a degree in Marine Engineering & Boatbuilding, Gaia became accustomed to being surrounded by heritage vessels. The rivers and mudflats surrounding Falmouth are rich in historic boats; the area is dotted with wooden craft which span decades to centuries.

Upon returning to Italy, Gaia was shocked to discover how difficult it was to enter the boatbuilding industry. "We don't currently have any heritage boat schools that offer a degree. The only way in is to be employed by a boatbuilder and spend three years without any qualifications before you can take the exam," she explains. "It's almost impossible to find a job as a boatbuilder because there aren't many workshops available. I mean, you can't even do it for fun."

Despite her rich background in boatbuilding and the vibrant heritage vessel culture she experienced in England, Gaia was taken aback by the challenges of entering the industry in Italy, prompting her to explore innovative ways to share her passion. It's common for boatbuilders and craftsmen to use Instagram as their online portfolio; the platform offers an easy and free way to showcase their work to potential buyers or future employers.

However, Gaia had larger ambitions. "My point wasn't to



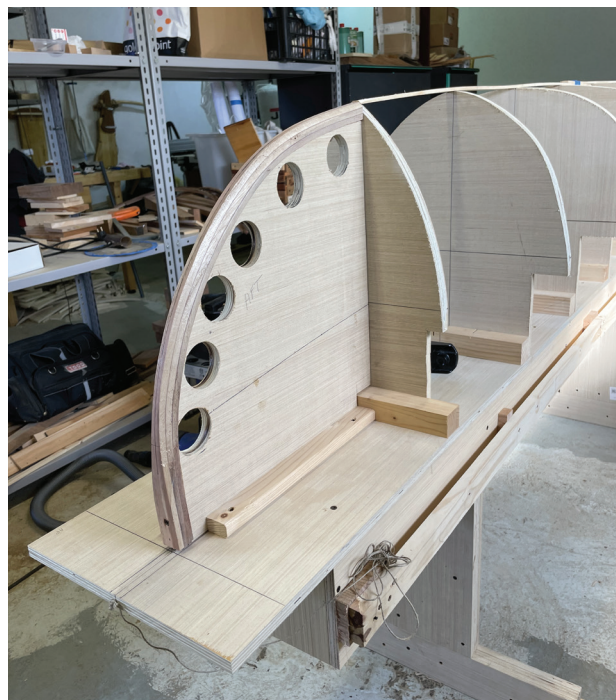
Facing page and above: Gaia's glued clinker build of an Iain Oughtred 7'10" (2.36m) Auk design, using Vendia marine plank. Left: Working to conserve traditional Italian boats in collaboration with the Vela Tradizionale association.

create a profile solely for showcasing my work," she says. "If I were just building boats to sell, I wouldn't feel the need to make my Instagram comedic."

After extensively researching the Meta algorithm, Gaia discovered how to leverage a loophole in the software, enabling her to grow her account and introduce wooden boatbuilding to a wider audience. "What Instagram does is place your video in its niche."

While Gaia is undeniably a skilled boatbuilder, her videos occupy a unique space within the realms of comedy and meme culture rather than traditional boatbuilding. "My videos reach more people because they're comedic. If you stop to watch one or start following me, Instagram assumes, 'Oh, you follow her, so you must be interested in boats,'" Gaia explains. "Instagram doesn't realize that people follow me because it's funny."

In this way, Gaia has managed to manipulate the algorithm to expose viewers to wooden boatbuilding content they might never have engaged with otherwise. "What happens is



Above and left: Gaia's humorous videos featuring projects like this Ted Moore's strip-planked canoe gather thousands of views and likes from her followers on social media.

Below: Italy's historic craft, such as these Sicilian fishing boats, face an uncertain future. Photograph: Cat Holman

that Instagram then starts pushing other videos about boats, perhaps more serious ones. And that was the whole point."

So far, her strategy appears to be working. Gaia's reels – videos – have garnered hundreds of thousands of views on Instagram, attracting enthusiastic fans who offer encouraging feedback. Already, four or five of these user accounts have credited Gaia as their inspiration to pursue their own wooden boat projects. "They say, 'Oh, I've had this idea to restore this boat for five years, but I never had the courage to do it. Then, looking at your Instagram page, I thought, Yeah, I can do it!'"

Despite her impressive success on social media, with 59,000 followers—a considerable feat—Gaia is unattached to the concept of being an influencer. "I don't feel I'm in a position to teach anyone. So, while I may explain how I do something, it's not in a 'this is how you do it' way," she emphasises.

The reality of the matter is that Gaia's work is utterly necessary. "No one is really aware of what is happening with traditional boats—that we are literally losing them because our historical vessels are all fishing boats."

In an effort to protect the Mediterranean's dwindling



fish stocks, Italy's Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with other European Union agencies, has introduced decrees offering financial incentives to decommission and dismantle fishing fleets. Italians are now compensated for scrapping aging vessels and relinquishing fishing licenses, resulting in a decisive shift away from small-scale, artisanal fishing and traditional boats.

While these measures ostensibly target larger trawling operations, their language has proven too vague to effectively regulate these larger fleets. For instance, the Decree on the Permanent Cessation of Fishing Vessels Registered in Sicily offers compensation for vessels "equal to or less than 12 metres (39') overall." This ambiguity has led to an unintended consequence: not only are smaller industrial trawlers being reduced, but traditional wooden fishing boats are also being surrendered in exchange for government compensation.

While fish stocks are being protected, heritage boats certainly are not. "What happens is that, for just a couple of hundred euros, people who may have inherited a small, traditional wooden fishing boat, called a gozzo, from their grandparents and have seen it rotting away often end up destroying it just to get 200," says Gaia.

While Sicily was the primary target of these decrees in 2006 and 2012, these measures are now poised to expand nationwide. Thankfully, some organizations are actively working to combat the effects of this law. One such organization is Vela Tradizionale, Scuola di Marineria, which is dedicated to saving and restoring historical and traditional small crafts in the Ligurian region of Italy. Their efforts not only preserve maritime heritage but also foster a deeper appreciation for traditional boating practices among the local community. Gaia herself has collaborated several times with Vela Tradizionale, most notably in an Instagram reel which showcases the traditional Italian technique of using fire to bend wooden planks into shape.

To enhance the educational aspect of her content, Gaia likewise makes time to engage with Italian youth, hoping to reignite the passion for wooden boatbuilding both online and offline. Last June, she guided the students at the Galvani Nautical Institute in Trieste in drafting and constructing a simple plywood stitch and glue dinghy—the Paolo Lodigiani and Matteo Costa designed 9'8" (2.95m) Spritz boat.

Gaia documented her time at the institute through a series of short reels. In the final video from her five-day course, her students can be seen celebrating as they launch Spritz boat La Fonda into the sea. Donning captain's hats and christening the bow with a bottle of Peroni, true joy spreads across the faces of the young boatbuilders. Under Gaia's guidance, they lofted and built a seaworthy wooden vessel in just a week. For people to care about this craft, they first need to be exposed to it.

Gaia's content provides a carefully curated entry point, attracting youth and individuals who might otherwise never learn about heritage vessels. Her foresight helps ensure the



Top: The completed paulownia strip-planking on Gaia's latest build, before being sheathed in linen cloth and epoxy.

Below: Gaia teaching students at the Istituto Nautico di Trieste. Photograph: Giovanni Aiello.



future of this nautical legacy.

Looking to the future, by adjusting the format of her videos and incorporating English subtitles, Gaia aims to share traditional Italian boatbuilding not only with Italians but also with a more diverse international audience. "Will it become something bigger?" she asks with a smile. "That I don't know because there is nothing else I can compare it to."

As she continues to navigate the waters of content creation, Gaia embodies the spirit of innovation, proving that with passion and creativity, even the most niche traditions can find a new life and a wider audience.

Gaia's Instagram: @brojwoodworking



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HARVESTING SEAWEED WITH KUMEJIMA'S
FIRST FEMALE HARVESTER

by Annie Means





MORNINGS IN KUMEJIMA, JAPAN BEGIN SLOWLY... THEN ALL AT ONCE. AS A CONDUCTOR HOLDS SILENCE BEFORE IGNITING A SYMPHONY INTO MOTION, SO TOO, DOES THE ISLAND PAUSE BEFORE THE DAY BEGINS.

In the lower latitudes of the South Pacific, the dawn air feels dense and slumbering. As the sun rises, light rain settles on the crested hills of this verdant island. Already men, and one particular woman, arrive sleepily at the marina.

First, the percussion ensemble: A cacophony of closing car doors signals the arrival of the day's crew. Cans of Japanese green tea and black coffee are passed hand over hand and thumped down, one by one, into salt-stained buckets.

Next, the strings: the cascading sound of sliding zippers and muffled grunts fills the air as dry bodies wrestle into damp wetsuits. Newly waterproofed, and with buckets in tow, the crew hurries toward their waiting boats.

Finally, the horns: marine engines turn over. The metallic drone of compressed diesel muffles all other sounds as boats launch into Kumejima's cerulean reefs. Eating greedily



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at the harbor's lopping waves, the skiffs speed toward the seaweed fields.

The mozuku harvest begins.

I am riding along with Arisa Izeki, the only female seaweed harvester on this crew and the first female scuba instructor in Kumejima. Originally from Tokyo, Arisa has lived on this small island for decades. However, as I would come to learn, it took her several years to gain entry into the seaweed harvesting cooperative, due in no small part to the gender biases she encountered.

It's April, the tail end of the harvest season. Each day, I accompany Arisa to the final stages of collection. Working as part of a larger team, our task is to collect and re-string the netting on which mozuku seedlings are grown.

Conversation with Arisa is sparse, as we share no common language, but it is undeniably warm. Relying on the metallic,

monotone clang of the Google Translate app, we sit on the fiberglass floor of her skiff, passing my phone back and forth. Through this universal piece of technology, our separate worlds begin to make sense to one another. We exchange jokes, questions, and stories. Arisa is quick to laugh and eager to talk about her work. With the phone in hand, she instructs me on how to set nets underwater.

All of which boils down to: "Do what I do."

With the boat anchored and wetsuits zipped up, we clench our scuba regulators tightly in our teeth and vault our bodies backward, tumbling into the saltwater below.

I note that industrial seaweed fields resemble traditional farmland.

Designed in rows, cross-stitch nets are seeded with mozuku spawn and "planted" into the barren sand flats near coral reefs. From the rippling water above, the fields of brown seaweed look



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similar to the sectioned-off structure of an unwrapped Hershey’s bar, with rectangular plots separated by thin strips of sand.

Beneath the surface, I swim behind Arisa, who, though twice my age, doubles my speed. Fast, elegant, and patient, she waits ahead of me. Through the mutated Morse code of underwater hand signals, she points to her eyes, then to herself, before taking off to unstring and gather seaweed nets.

“Watch me.”

A shared language hardly matters underwater, anyway.

Soon, I am beside her, gathering my own nets. Working hard not to tangle myself or my air tube, I kick forcefully to lose depth and keep the rapidly bundling latticework from snagging on the seafloor. Hours pass this way, zigzagging back and forth above the sand, untangling and organizing 50-foot webbing. As the season wanes, these nets will be hauled in and carefully inspected for the next harvest. Above us, the sunlight penetrates down. I turn and gaze at the gently lapping surface overhead, feeling the warmth of midday rays. In a moment of physical and spiritual suspension, I am held by the sea. I feel bliss.

Arisa taps my shoulder — it’s time to break for lunch. We swim upward. As our heads break through the tension of the waves, my ears fill with the sounds of hacking air compressors, clattering diesel engines, and fast-flowing water. We surface beside the main harvest vessel, where the rest of the crew is busy collecting seaweed. Thick black suction tubes snake from all sides of the boat, forming the stretched limbs of a bionic, octopus-like machine. This intricate apparatus powers the harvest. Beneath the surface, divers grip these winding hoses, guiding the open mouths of the pipes over the full-grown mozuku.

In an instant, the soft, string-like tendrils of the brown seaweed are ripped from their nets and whisked to the boat above. As with all perishable crops, seaweed especially, time is of the essence. These cuttings will be transferred into waiting plastic boxes and driven back to the island’s processing plant within the hour.

Though seldom seen on Western menus, mozuku seaweed thrives in the warm, nutrient-rich waters of Okinawa, where it has long been a staple at dinner tables. Celebrated as a superfood brimming with vitamins and minerals, its cultivation on an



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industrial scale is a relatively recent endeavor, spanning just 35 years. The boat I am on today will harvest several tons of mozuku, many times over. This seaweed will make its way back to the Okinawan mainland, where it will supply restaurants, bars, and supermarkets across the island.

Back in the water, Arisa and I pull ourselves into the harvest boat, muscles tired but steady. The captain, Isamu Nakayoshi—a kind, cheerful man bronzed from years on the sea—hands out bento boxes. Crouched in our open wetsuits, puddles pooling at our feet, we shake the water from our ears and lazily eat our lunches.

Isamu and Arisa’s paths crossed years ago, and their friendship was immediate, built on shared passions and mutual respect. Their connection to the island and its surrounding waters is unmistakable in the way their eyes linger on the horizon as we skim across the bay, and in the seamless rhythm they share beneath the surface, whether spearfishing or harvesting seaweed.

When Arisa first arrived on Kumejima, the seaweed and fisheries cooperative was an exclusively male domain. A diver and fisher herself, she was determined to join and harvest



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Photo: PHOTO GRAPHER

seaweed. However, her application was rejected several times, largely because of her outsider status as a woman. Isamu, already a respected captain and key member of the cooperative, eventually sponsored her application, making her the first woman to join — a milestone in the island’s history.

Since then, their collaboration has deepened. Together, they’ve worked on countless marine research projects, providing invaluable samples for visiting universities and researchers. They regularly venture offshore to hunt tuna, landing massive catches to sell in mainland markets. Their partnership reflects the profound ties between the people of Kumejima and the sea; a connection that transcends profession to define a way of life. This bond is embodied in the very dialect of the island prefecture.

The Okinawan word uminchu has no direct English equivalent. Most often, uminchu is poorly translated as “fisherman.” This interpretation paints with a broad brush, negating the deep cultural nuances of the term and its indistinguishable ties to Okinawan identity. A more accurate interpretation of the word is something akin to “born of the sea” or “person of the sea.” In a

Above- Ita quia volupta tiscidus, voluptaerore nobisquia con exerum, cum essitatie inimus simolorem es nonserundia del magnim laborectur ra venis ut quae cum explant acerspicious aliquia nus.
Photo: PHOTO GRAPHER

pinch, the multi-hyphenate “fisher-sailor-diver-swimmer-spear fisher-shell harvester-seafood lover-ocean lover-seaweed harvester-and more” might also suffice. For Okinawans, and particularly for the people of Kumejima, an island formed from ancient coral reefs, the sea is a fundamental part of their cultural identity and self-understanding.

The Ryukyu Island chain in the Okinawan Prefecture, where Kumejima resides, is dotted with coral-based isles and atolls. Over the course of millennia, these islands have uplifted and taken shape, softening the once rigid boundaries between land and sea. This unique geography is a hallmark of the Okinawan region, marking it as distinct in both environmental and cultural heritage. These islands rose from the labor of living marine organisms, their foundations carefully crafted by coral.

Quite literally, sea life begot terrestrial life — uminchu exemplified in geology.

The word “fisherman” can never fully capture the nuance and intensity of these islanders’ reliance on and connection to the ocean. Arisa and Isamu stand as shining examples of uminchu.



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Photo: **PHOTO GRAPHER**

They don’t just harvest seaweed. They hunt tuna, spear fish, scuba dive, conduct ocean-based research, and handle boats with the ease of those born to the water.

Unlike the English translation “fisherman,” the Okinawan word uminchu does not denote gender. Anyone can “be of the sea.” As a “birthplace,” the ocean makes no distinction between those who engage with it or belong to it. Even in the literal structure of the word, no value is placed on sex, only on the connection forged with the water. Despite this, during my time on Kumejima, Arisa was the only woman I saw in the seaweed harvesting grounds.

Yet I’m told that Arisa’s integration into the cooperative has sparked something of a quiet revolution, inspiring several other

women to join. Though their numbers remain few, their presence is undeniable. They are uminchu.

After lunch, we plunge headlong back into the sea to continue our work. As the hours pass, the sun begins to dip, signaling our eventual rise to the surface and the end of the workday. We clamber back into the skiffs, the mozuku now harvested, the nets set and hauled in. Wet, tired, and content, we haul anchor and turn the boats toward shore, watching the shimmer of the submerged coral reefs drift away.

The rhythm of the harvest will unfold like this for days and weeks — a steady, unbroken cycle.

Through my time spent with Arisa, I have come to see how fully she represents the spirit of uminchu — a deep bond with

UNLIKE THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION “FISHERMAN,” THE OKINAWAN WORD UMINCHU DOES NOT DENOTE GENDER. ANYONE CAN “BE OF THE SEA.” AS A “BIRTHPLACE,” THE OCEAN MAKES NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN THOSE WHO ENGAGE WITH IT OR BELONG TO IT.

