

# Re-Naming Your New Pre-Owned Boat?

## How To Keep The Sea Gods Happy

By Captain Bernie Weiss

***"I've just bought a boat, but I hate the name! Should I change it?"***

Since the beginning of time - or, at least, since days of iron men and wooden ships - sailors have sworn that there are unlucky vessels, and that the unluckiest vessels of all are those whose new owners have changed their boats' former names.

As old salts know, renaming a pre-owned boat is not an undertaking to be done lightly. It's a "legend thing." The principal Gods of the Sea are Neptune, ancient Roman King of the Sea, and Poseidon, ancient Greek Ruler of the Sea. Neptune and Poseidon are peaceful rulers, but they are disturbed - crazed - whenever the name of a boat is changed.

According to the legend, Neptune and Poseidon live on the ocean floor in a palace made of coral and kelp, where they record data about every sea-going vessel, by name, in a meticulously maintained Ledger of the Deep. This vessel data base is cross-indexed by hull number, sail number, documentation number, and state registration. Thus, Neptune and Poseidon are intimately acquainted with each and every sea-going vessel. To change a vessel's name is to blemish their records.

Because this is disrespectful to the Gods, even an implied threat to change the name of a pre-owned boat tempts fate. The vessel and its new owner risk events that are, at once, mysterious, unpredictable, and unfortunate, such as long bouts of foul weather and mal de mer, fires down below, personal injury "accidents," collisions at sea, and of course, sinking to Davy Jones' locker (or Neptune's and Poseidon's palaces on the ocean floor) with ultimate loss of the vessel.

### Many options to consider

So, suppose you have finally acquired a boat - one you can afford be-

cause it's a pre-owned yacht within your budget. And what if the boat's name absolutely positively offends you, and **must** be changed?

To avoid the wrath of the Gods, I recommend choosing one of the following options. Nautical lore has documented that all these methods are acceptable to Neptune and Poseidon, so select the one that works best for you:

**1. Don't accept responsibility.** Ask the previous owner of the boat to change the name, officially, before you assume ownership. By so doing, any subsequent misfortune to be rendered by Poseidon

and Neptune will accrue to the prior owner, not yourself.

**2. Choose another language.** If you already own the boat, keep the name but translate it to a new language. For example, "Sea Witch" sounds far more romantic when translated to French: "Sorcière D'Mer."

Same Name = New Language; that works for Poseidon and Neptune.

**3. Anagram it.** Use the same letters in the old name to create a new name that's more acceptable. A friend in Port Jeff re-named his "Mission Impossible" to "Ibis Nolo Pessimism." The anagram produced a mysterious legal nonsense phrase, but it worked. In the four years since the name was changed, "Ibis Nolo Pessimism" has yielded nothing but pleasure to its second owner.

**4. Preserve the theme.** Select a new name with the same general theme as the old. I noticed recently at a City Island boatyard that the former "Floating Alone," owned by a bachelor mortgage broker who lived aboard, has been re-named "Tee for Two" by its new owners, a golf pro and his mate. The "Bugs Bunny," owned in Mystic by a microbiologist, was sold to a urologist in Huntington, who re-named the boat "What's Up, Doc?" A new SeaRay was purchased in Norwalk by a radiologist, who named the boat "X-Ray." Later, when the boat was sold to an optometrist, its name was changed to "Ray Ban." When "Clewless" sailed off her mooring in Tropical Storm



Courtesy Irish Berube



Ernesto, the absentee owners decided on a new name, "Crewless." All of these new names preserved the themes of the old names, thus satisfying Neptune and Poseidon.

**5. Keep the old name, but augment it with a prefix or suffix.** My friend Ann Infanti acquired "Amy" and didn't like the name, so she appended "Lee" to the old name and her new-old boat's old-new name is now "Amy Lee." And I heard this story at the Brewer Pilots Point yard: A racing sailor angrily divorced his wife. In the agreement, she took the condo and he took the yacht, originally named "Jane" after her. He immediately renamed the yacht "FUJIMO," which represents "@!\* You Jane, I'm Moving Out."

**6. Use only a part of the old name, and re-spell it if necessary.** Last summer, in a Narragansett Bay marina, I observed that a vintage wood schooner named "Seriously, Dear" was undergoing a major re-fit and would soon emerge as "Sirius." A few years ago, after the lobster die-off in the Western Sound, a lobsterman's old "Mary M" was sold. The new owner kept only the hull and engine, re-building the interior as a mini-trawler for recreational use. To avoid the wrath of Neptune and Poseidon, the new-old boat was renamed "Merriment."

**7. Retain the sensibility of the old name.** For example, a boat named after the previous owner's spouse can be safely re-named after **your** spouse if she has a similar disposition and if the name is similarly styled. Thus, the new owner of "Saucy Sue" morphed her name to "Daring Daphne." "Rhonda-Vous" was re-named "Paula-Vous." When my friend Gary divorced Ruth and, to celebrate, bought himself a boat, the boat was named "Jennie" for

the previous owner's wife. Gary re-named it "Ruthless." Incidentally, I have never encountered a recreational vessel named after a male, although macho behavioral characteristics - "Bold," "Adventurous," "Intrepid," etc. - are commonly used. In contrast, military and commercial vessels frequently honor men with their names.

**8. Transfer the same name from YOUR previous boat to THIS new-for-you boat.** My friend Stewart Napoleon has owned several boats, none new, and all of them have been re-named "Desiree" after Napoleon Bonaparte's mistress. Alicia Holmes, a party-loving airline hostess, has always re-named her several new-old boats the same: "Unlimited Carry On." Dr. Jack Allen, a hematologist in New Haven, has named each of his five sloops "Blood Vessel."

The take-away message? Changing the name of a pre-owned boat might be chancy, but any of these options is acceptable to Neptune and Poseidon, and will therefore appease their wrath. Good luck!

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