

A photograph of a sailboat's deck and rigging, viewed from the side. The boat is white with blue accents. In the background, there is a body of water and a line of green trees under a blue sky with light clouds. A large, stylized compass rose graphic is overlaid in the top left corner.

# SAILING

*our local waters*



# From the dock to the captain's chair in one week

By Susan Erwin, Marcy Shortuse and Dusty Hopkins  
Photos by Christine Cunningham, Matthew Gutman,  
Dusty Hopkins, Julianne Greenberg and submitted

There's something about the wind in your face and the salt on your lips as you glide across the water – soundlessly – as the captain of a vessel powered by the wind. It's that feeling that brought Gasparilla Island Magazine and Boca Beacon Publisher Dusty Hopkins into the sailing fold, where he has been since he was a teenager. He laughs, though, when recounting his first experience.

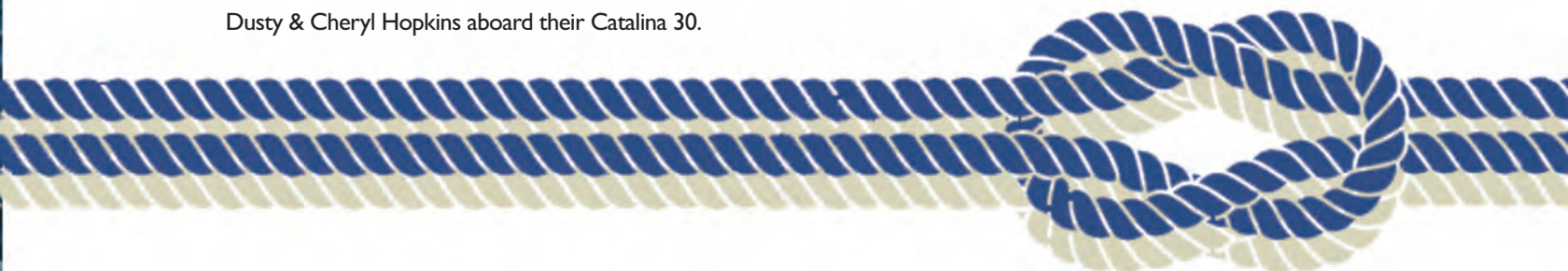
"It was at football camp, and my first taste of sailing was on a little sunfish," he recalled. "I floundered in it at first, quite terribly, and continued to flounder for several years. Then I took a course through Steve Colgate at South Seas Plantation in Captiva, and it really started to come together for me."

It's not as simple as it might look, to captain a vessel with sails using wind power. As the wind changes, so do your responses to each element of the boat. Sometimes it's a pleasant cruise, other times it turns into a lot of work. Dusty knew if he wanted to grab that control, he needed to learn from the best.

"Taking that course at the Colgate school really cemented the knowledge in me that I could do anything in the water," he said. "I felt empowered. You can get involved in sailing in many different layers, from a beginner kicking around the harbor to circumnavigation and celestial navigation around the world."



Dusty & Cheryl Hopkins aboard their Catalina 30.

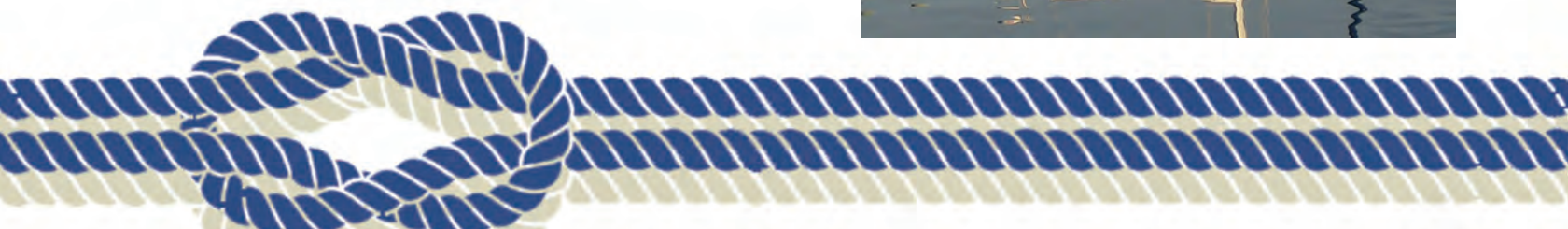


With a few years more of practice, Dusty became a sailing instructor in Mystic, Conn., right after he got out of the Service in 1975. He worked with people just starting out, in smaller boats under 20 feet in length.

Since then, sailing has always been a part of his life. He has had racing catamarans, a Catalina 30', and now owns a 41' Hunter.

He has sailed from Hilton Head down to Fort Myers Beach, as well as all around Chesapeake Bay, the Caribbean, the Virgin Islands and Hawaii.

"I love to talk with people about sailing," he said. "When someone asks me why I love sailing far and above motorized boats, the first thing that would come to mind, in one word, is serenity. I love shutting off that motor and just gliding over the water ... there's nothing like it."





There are numerous top-notch opportunities around our area to take part in, whether you're an experienced sailor or have never stepped foot on a sailboat. Let's explore just a few ...

## THE COLGATE OFFSHORE SAILING SCHOOL

- Captiva Island, FL

Steve and Doris Colgate are the owners of the distinguished Colgate's Offshore Sailing School on Sanibel Island, recognized as the number one sailing school in America.

The Colgate's story is one of true love along with a shared passion for sailing.

Doris was working in the advertising department for Yachting Magazine in New York when she took a "Learn to Sail" course in the summer of 1967. She had never stepped aboard a sailboat before the class, and described her initial experience learning to sail as "amazing." She was in awe of the fact that she was able to make a boat move without a motor.

"I was in control – it was very empowering," she said.

She recalls many of her colleagues would come in on Monday mornings tanned, smiling and exhilarated, all because of sailing.

"I wanted to take a course because my coworkers looked so happy and content," she said. "It wasn't just the fact that they enjoyed their job, it was because they were able to sail every weekend. They had the ability to get away from it all and be out on the water - and I wanted that in my life. So I asked where I could learn and that's how I found out about Steve's school."





Steve and Doris Colgate



Growing up, her family didn't live near the water, so boating was never an option.

After taking the learner's course she immediately knew she wanted to pursue future sailing adventures.

In 1964, Steve turned his love for sailing into bringing more sailors to the lifestyle, and sport, of sailing. He started Offshore Sailing School with one location in New York City, and gradually expanded to eight locations in Florida, the British Virgin Islands, New Jersey and New York. The New York locations were closed in 2016.

Doris (CEO and President of Offshore Sailing School), vowed to never get in the way of Steve's love for racing, he continued on to compete in the Pan American Games, the 1968 Olympics, 20 Newport to Bermuda Races, 2 Sydney-Hobart races, 5 Antigua Race Weeks, and a host of other racing and sailing adventures too long to list here.

"Each time I take the helm, no matter where I am, my body and soul relax into the rhythm of the sea," Steve said.

The Colgates opened the Sanibel location in the winter of 1975.

adjacent to a 330-acre island resort surrounded by sandy beaches and the Gulf of Mexico.

"We're seeing more families," Doris said. "The average age for sailing school used to be around 45, but that's changed. "We have a program where 'teens and tweens' sail for free with two paying adults. And this is a nice family resort."

A pioneering female mariner, Doris wrote the book "Sailing: A Woman's Guide." She wanted other females to feel the same sense of accomplishment she felt at the helm.

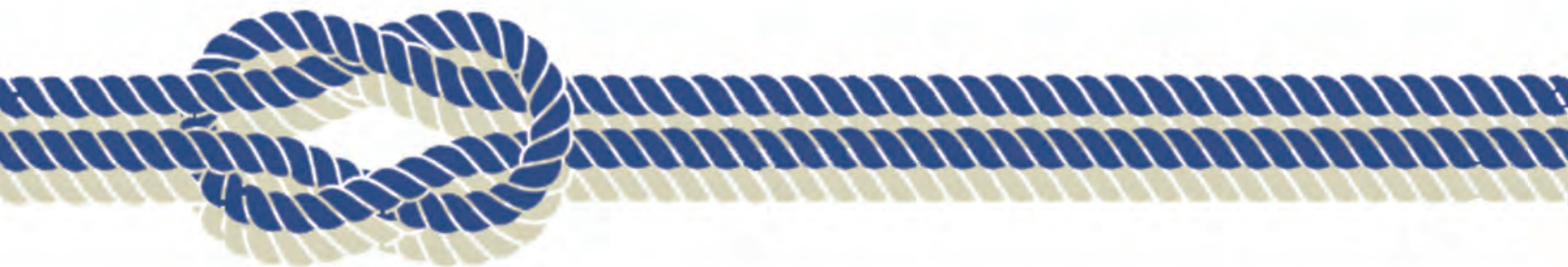
The school also started offering courses for women only, taught by women.

It's been several years since the Colgates have been to Boca Grande. Years ago, they hosted a corporate retreat at The Gasparilla Inn. A group of coworkers spent a week on the island working on team-building skills, and the group went sailing in the afternoons.

The Colgate Sailing School website offers an abundant amount of resources – sailing tips, a blog and a host of videos. For more information, visit [offshoresailing.com](http://offshoresailing.com).



The Colgate's Jeanneau 439







The Colgate 26, designed by Steve Colgate. All of the vessels used are well-maintained and follow rigorous safety inspections.

