

Chris Simmons

Well, my story... Hmm... Feel free to pick bits out as needed. I know not all of this content will be suitable, but maybe some of it could be used elsewhere, too.

I first came to Gazela during the Feb '02 during an introductory event at the sheetmetal workers union hall. I came to know of this event because my mother had been watching the news, and saw the story on Gazela's need for support. Prior to this, like most of the city, I didn't know she existed. Since I had already involved myself in wooden boats a few years prior, my mom knew it would be something I would go crazy for, and of course she was right!

After meeting with you, Eddie, Patrick, and I believe Gay was there as well, and seeing the deck-less tub, I was hooked. It took me a couple months to really become involved, but once I did, I couldn't be kept away. After helping to reassemble the ship, and even living onboard for a couple months, we finally set sail in '03. That trip was one of the most anticipated event of my life, and turned out to be quite hellish! Though it was wonderful to see new places, the green crew (myself one of them), out of tune officers, and the ship still in shambles made for one VERY unforgettable trip. It was then that I didn't come back for about 3 months!

After my hiatus, the pain wore off, and I was back again for haunted ship. Despite the unpleasantness I feel I endured during that first trip, I worked on the ship more over the winter, and was back again for the following (MUCH more enjoyable) sailing season.

I owe a lot of my life as it has become to Gazela and PSPG. With regard to wooden boats/sailing, etc., I had an itch that needed to be scratched. What PSPG gave me was an opportunity to expand my knowledge and capabilities to ever higher standards. I know my life would have gone in a similar direction, but the enrichment I have gotten from PSPG wholly outweighs what I have put in, which has been hundreds of hours some years.

There is a pride that goes along with the sort of work we do on the ships that most people in this world today will never know. But it even transcends pride. There is a need inside all of us to care for and fix things (though ships are not the drug of choice for many). It's an intrinsic need that has been strategically taken away from us in this consumerist world we live in. Gazela gives back to the soul in a way that few things of materialism can. Nobody owns her, yet everyone does. Nobody has to be there, but many develop in seemingly unexplainable obligation to her well being. There is much more to Gazela and PSPG than meets the eye.

Gazela has given me skills I didn't know about, taught me a trade I hope to some day go back to. Gazela has also given me bragging rights, imagination, and dreams. Gazela was the catalyst for Marston and I becoming a couple after knowing each other for 10 years.

There is no doubt that Gazela has significantly caused the direction and quality of my life. I have met many of the people I regard as friends because of PSPG. I have met people worthy of respect around PSPG. Everyone there could be called crazy. Some literally are/were... But in today's world, I think the table has turned. I think it's the ones who live their mundane lives, never experiencing life as it is supposed to be that are crazy. To sum it all up, in a world of endless distraction, poor human relations, and forgotten purpose, PSPG gives me and everyone involved something real to cling to. PSPG is not just the Philadelphia **\*Ship\*** Preservation Guild, but is at it's core the Philadelphia **\*Soul or Self\*** Preservation Guild.