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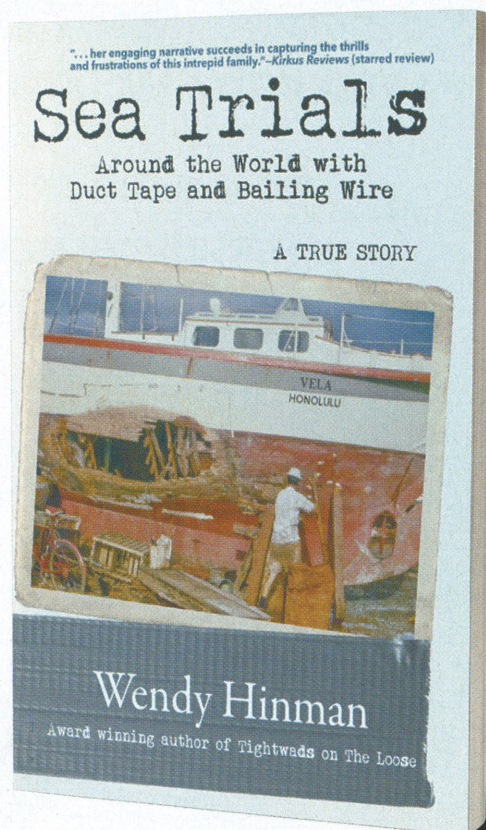
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## A GOOD IDEA GONE WRONG

There I sat, covered in paint—and little else—wondering how I was going to get out of this predicament. It had seemed like a good idea. Now, not so much...

BY WENDY HINMAN

**P**artway through refinishing the inside of our old fibreglass Thunderbird, I was anxious to finish. My husband and I had spent days stripping the ugly tan burlap-textured carpeting that had been glued inside the hull and sanding away the bumpy residue from the adhesive. I'd applied a coat of paint the week before. All it needed was the final coat. Paint supplies were in my car trunk—had been for weeks—and I was tired of carting them around.

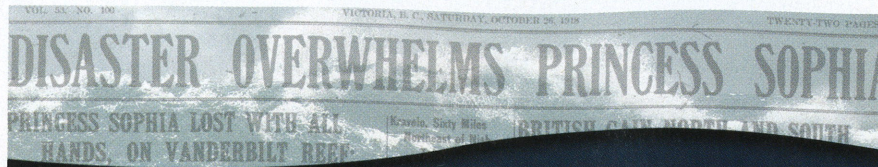
So on a quiet afternoon after I left the office, I decided to finish the job. I drove to the boat and found Leschi Marina deserted. I popped the trunk and threw my bags of painting paraphernalia into a battered blue dock cart and wheeled

it down the wobbly dock to the boat. It was a glorious day, with Mount Rainier proudly displaying her flanks above Lake Washington. A light breeze played on the water.

Pawing through the bags inside the boat, I pulled out a fresh can of *Seattle Gray* paint, brushes and roller tray, but as I neared the bottom of the last bag, I still hadn't come across my painting clothes. Then I remembered throwing them into the laundry basket after I finished painting the first coat, sure I wouldn't return to the boat to do more work until after I'd washed the next load. Rats.

It would take me an hour

to get home and back to get them. Since weather in the Pacific Northwest isn't always so reliable, I might wait weeks for another opportunity to be able to paint inside with the hatch open for good ventilation so I wouldn't suffocate from the fumes. I just wanted to get the job done, so we could put the boat back together and go sailing. I didn't want to drive halfway across the city to retrieve my painting clothes. It'd likely only take me an hour to paint anyway. To avoid messing up my work clothes, I thought, *well, I'll just take them off and*



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paint in my underwear. If I was quick, no one would be likely to see me.

So in bra and panties, I set to work, blasting Bob Marley as I swished the paint brush back and forth up the inside of the hull. I made steady progress and the transformation from the first coat to the second was reward in itself. What had once been dingy fibreglass now glowed. And it was such an improvement over the mildewed carpet that had come with the boat. Nearly finished, I leaned back to appreciate my work. I was glad that I'd undertaken this on a warm, sunny day because, even with ideal ventilation, the smell of paint fumes was overwhelming. Just a small area left and I would be free to head home. I was eager to call it done and breathe fresh air again.

I shifted my weight and bumped the can. Before I could react, it careened into an open compartment. Half a gallon of *Seattle Gray* oozed into every corner. I grabbed for the can but it was too late. Paint had dribbled down the sides of the now nearly-empty can and my fingers were smeared with paint. A giant gray puddle pooled at the bottom of the compartment.

I poked my sticky fingers through the paper bags in search of paper towels, only to find a distressingly thin roll. When I pulled at the paper, it shredded into strips. It was the last sheet.

There I sat in bra and panties, hands smeared with gray paint and no paper towels with which to clean up. At full volume Bob Marley wailed "No Woman, No Cry." For a moment that's exactly what I wanted to do. Then I started to laugh at the absurdity of my situation. Who else would get into such a situation?

I might as well coat the insides of the compartment, since I'd already begun by accident. I dabbed away, spreading paint across each of the neighbouring

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compartments until the three-inch-deep glob of spilled paint was reduced to a thin, even coating. An unexpected dividend of my mistake.

Unfortunately when I finished, my fingers were coated in paint and I was still in bra and panties. I couldn't exactly call for help or drive home this way without getting arrested for indecency. So I wiped my fingers on the top edges of the bag, smearing gray fingerprints everywhere. After I wiped off the drips, I sat with my fingers in the air, hoping they'd air dry a little before I had to face the inevitable—finding a way to get my pants and shirt back on without ruining them. Finally, I balled my hands into fists and slowly, carefully wriggled into my nice clothes and tromped up the dock to the car.

The good news is that the inside of the boat compartments now gleamed as brightly as the rest of the interior, and I had, miraculously, avoided wrecking my clothes. The bad news is that, by the time I got home, my steering wheel and stick shift were covered with fingerprints like a crime scene.

Maybe next time, I'll make sure I have painting clothes and paper towels before I begin. At least I have a fun story to share. 

**WENDY HINMAN** is an adventurer, speaker, and the award-winning author of two books: *Tightwads on the Loose* tells the story of her 34,000-mile voyage aboard a 31-foot sailboat with her husband. *Sea Trials* details the harrowing round-the-world voyage of a family who must overcome a shipwreck, gun boats, mines, thieves, pirates, scurvy and starvation to achieve their dream. For more information visit: [wendyhinman.com](http://wendyhinman.com).



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