

# Shipwreck doesn't lower Jane Briggs Hart's sails

Jane Briggs Hart hit rock bottom a couple of weeks ago, but she wants everyone to know that there's still plenty of wind in her sails.

Hart, the outspoken widow of Sen. Philip A. Hart, has spent over a decade successfully sailing tropical waters on her 28-foot sailboat, Loon Feather.

But, in mid-February, the inevitable happened: The boat she and her friend, Ann Bronfman, former wife of the Scagran's liquor heir, were sailing to the Virgin Islands hit the rocks in a narrow key in the Bahamas.

"Of course the wind was blowing in the wrong direction, and as soon as we touched the flat stone, it sent us up against the shore, and there was nothing anyone could do about it," she recalled. "We spent two days and two nights lying on that reef at a 45-degree angle until we could get a tug from Nassau to pull us out."

The boat, which belonged to Bronfman, was barely damaged.

"I thought the boat was going to be ground to powder," Hart recalled, "but, fortunately, 11 of my sins remained unturned."

HART, 68, turned to her lifelong love of sailing soon after her husband died in 1976. She now spends most of her time living on her boat, sailing from New England to Grenada and all points in between.

Hart was always politically active sometimes at her late husband's side and, at other times, speaking her own mind. She's piloted airplanes, driven motorcycles, mounted horses and operated ham radios. She was a veteran of the civil rights movement, and, in 1970, she went to jail as a peace activist.

"Fortunately, Phil thought it (my activism) was wonderful, so that worked out all right," she conceded.

But when she became a widow with her eight children grown, Hart sought a different life.

"I started sailing in the Great Lakes when I was 6 years old," she recalled, "and I'd been sailing intermittently as the children grew. When Phil died, I didn't want to just hang around Washington and get old, so I got a boat of my own, something I never had before."

"YOU KNOW, if you don't follow your dreams, all you have is a dream. It never really happens. One

## Hart speaks before Dems

Jane Briggs Hart will make a rare public appearance when she speaks at the 30th annual Phil Hart Dinner, sponsored by the Oakland County Democratic Party, on Sunday, March 11.

The dinner, open to the public, will be held at Roney's of Bloomfield on Telegraph, just north of Square Lake Road. Those interested in attending may call 334-0971 or 435-4044.

of these days, you just have to say, 'Let's do it!'"

She ordered the boat, named for her favorite book about early Mackinac Island, made in Bristol, Rhode Island. Then she and a friend sailed it way out into the ocean — about 800 miles offshore — and down to the Virgin Islands.

"Not many grandmothers do that, but weird woman that I am..." she observed.

Sometimes she sails with Bronfman and other times she makes a two-week voyage with her dog, Tosca, who is half poodle and half Maltese. Tosca, she explained, has been a sailor since the day he was weaned.

A registered Virgin Islands voter, Hart owns a place on St. Thomas but rents it out and uses only one room when she visits.

"It's a place to be when I'm not sailing," she explained. "But mostly I live on the boat except when I come up to the 'continent,' as they say down here, to visit my children."

Visiting her children takes quite some time, Hart added, because there are eight of them, as well as six grandchildren — with another on the way. And, they're spread across the country — four in California, one in Michigan and three on the East Coast.

ALTHOUGH SOME might call Hart a free spirit, she admits she's not as liberated as she thought she was.

She explained that she and Bronfman had planned a 3½ year, around-the-world trip on Bronfman's 38-foot boat in 1976. Then one of Bronfman's children developed a major health

problem. The child's health improved, but the incident scared the two erstwhile sailors.

"It scared the living daylights out of us," Hart recalled. "We were all set to go. It's a great boat, and it would have been wonderful, but when that happened we said 'Wait a minute! Do we really want to be that far away?'"

"We could have been 20 days at sea when something like that happened, and we couldn't have done anything about it. We just decided that our caring interfered with our sailing around the world. We decided right then that we would be able to go to our children and grandchildren whenever they needed us."

In fact, her visit to Michigan in March is, in part, a family mission. While here, she will be campaigning for her great nephew, Walter O. Briggs IV, a Democrat who is running for U.S. representative from the 18th District. He is the likely candidate against William S. Broomfield, who is seeking his 18th term in the office.

"The world is a different place now, and it's time somebody young took his (Broomfield's) place," she said. "I really feel Walter is very talented and would do a great job. This is my last pitch. Then I'm through."

BUT THOSE who know Hart and have long admired her gumption claim that Jane Hart will never be through. In fact, as soon as she leaves the Michigan campaign trail, she'll again be off to the high seas.

"As soon as I get back, I'm going sailing again," she said. "I think I'll go down to Grenada, and see how things are going there. You know, we really blew it down there. I think the unemployment rate down there was 17 something when we invaded, now it's about 35 percent."

Reagan had a big conference of business people who were going to go down there and do this that and the other. But not a single one has followed through. The tourist business is down. The major airlines don't go down there. Nobody has rebuilt the hotels and resorts we destroyed when we invaded.

"I'd be interested in going down there and seeing how it's going." That's why those who know Jane Hart agree: It would take more than reef or rock to knock the wind out of those sails.



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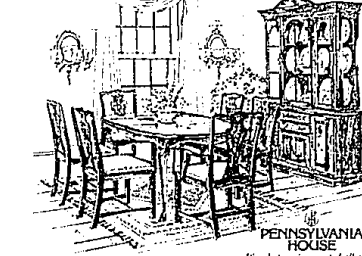
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## Court seeks volunteers

The volunteer programs of the Oakland County Probate Court will hold a two-part training and orientation sessions for people interested in working with troubled teenagers.

The sessions will be from 7-9 p.m. on Tuesdays, March 13 and 20, on the

second floor of the east wing of the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

Additional information is available at 858-0041 during normal business hours.

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