



Sailing Down the Moonbeam

Mary Gottschalk

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With a destination loosely defined as the rest of the world, Mary and her husband Tom leave family, friends and successful careers for a multi-year sailing voyage.

As the voyage takes her farther and farther from her traditional support systems, her world becomes more and more defined by forces outside her control. Mary's travels through often uncharted island communities, provides a compelling metaphor for a journey of self-discovery.

Sailing Down the Moonbeam Details

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From Reader Review *Sailing Down the Moonbeam* for online ebook

Larry Dunlap says

This is a very nicely written memoir, and I really enjoyed it. Since I'm writing in this vein and have been reading a lot of memoir, biography, and memoir-disguised-as-fiction, I'm probably a little critical. When I stacked it up against some of the really great memoirs that I had to give a five, I couldn't in conscience go with more than a four star review. On the other hand, if you're looking for an interesting and fun read, you can't go wrong with this book.

Katherine Sartori says

Author Mary Gottschalk travels 13,612 miles in three years by sailboat in her memoir *SAILING DOWN THE MOONBEAM*, but her story relates many interior storms of the heart as well. Masterfully, Gottschalk contrasts and compares her joys, her determined hopes and difficult realizations, plus the intermittent fears and heartaches of her inner and outer journeys.

I've only gone sailing on rare occasions, so most of Gottschalk's descriptions of the rigors of managing a sailboat, though excellent, are not what I remember most about her story. Rather, it was her singular ability to pull me into the book and identify with her that made her story linger in my mind long after I'd read the last page. Her fresh honesty in describing a young wife's enthusiasm for adventure and her optimistic love and trust in her husband resonated with me. Naiveté or simply a lack of self confidence can lead us into perilous situations. Gottschalk's story shows how the underpinnings of a childhood spent with a demanding and continually dissatisfied mother can impede emotional maturity and self esteem, but cannot destroy it. She is fearless in enumerating her mistakes and misconceptions and that makes her story very real. It made me remember how I, too, spent years trying to build inner confidence and even more years focusing on a husband's needs and wants who also eventually let me down. So, if an author's job is to reach into readers' hearts and ask them to identify with the main character, then Gottschalk did a superb job!

My only request is that the author write a sequel, because even as I applauded Gottschalk's courage in going her separate way at the end of the book, I also was very curious about "the new course" she'd set for herself, "booking tickets to Asia and the Middle East for five months" on her own and then securing a job in Melbourne, Australia.

Rachelle Ayala says

Bravo! This was more than a sailing adventure, but a journey of personal discovery. Sometimes we don't want to look too closely at our lives, fearful of what we may discover. For Mary and Tom, their well ordered Wall Street life provided them with the perfect avenue to leading parallel and superficial lives, one populated by schedules, routines, predictable events and social gatherings. When they threw off the shackles of corporate life to take a dream sailing trip, they were forced to really know each other.

The stresses of living aboard a small vehicle 24 by 7 with no other companions compounded with

mechanical failures and natural disasters brought to light how truly incompatible they were as a married couple. Even though there were moments in paradise, especially in the South Pacific, the journey lurched to an ignominious ending when Tom's inability to be honest with himself and Mary kept them from completing the round the world quest.

I could honestly relate to Mary and felt for her as she tried her best. But in the end, she was liberated and went on to many adventures. The sailing trip brought her out of the need to seek affirmation to being herself and knowing that her feelings and interests are valuable.

But for the first time, I understood that my mistake had been unconsciously ceding to him the right to judge what I should do and how I should feel. I needed to take more responsibility for my actions and feelings.

Gottschalk, Mary (2010-09-02). *Sailing Down the Moonbeam* (Kindle Locations 3632-3634). Rising Sun Press. Kindle Edition.

Sonia Marsh says

Mary Gottschalk has a gift of making her reader feel all the emotions she went through during her three-year journey with her husband Tom. The love, fear, anxiety, depression and even boredom, she experienced.

This memoir has so many layers which is what makes it interesting and different. Mary shares everything she'd going through; from the changes in her relationship with her husband, the way she had to keep her mouth shut when her husband insisted he had everything under control, yet Mary knew he didn't. These were the times when I wanted to yell at Tom, and defend Mary. You feel her frustration and anger, and also her joy when she and Tom are having moments of glorious sailing around the islands.

Her descriptions are vivid, and scenes movie-like, and the changes that occur within her relationship with Tom, are in constant flux, until they end up in New Zealand, where their sailing adventure comes to an abrupt ending.

It was a real joy to read Mary's book; an easy-read, and there is something we can all relate to in one form or another, in this memoir.

C.L.R. Dougherty says

Many couples share the dream of running away to sea, spending endless days together sailing peacefully through soothing waters under perfect blue skies that fill with stars after each day ends in a spectacular sunset. *Sailing Down the Moonbeam* should be required reading for all of them. It's a well-written recollection of the experiences that one couple had when they went to sea in pursuit of their dream.

Mary Gottschalk paints vivid images of the glorious days and starry nights, interspersed with the stark reality of what it's like for a couple to go to sea in a small boat for an extended voyage.

She brings the experience to life, and not just the wonderful parts. Keeping a yacht going is hard work; experienced sailors like Mary and Tom knew that before they took off, but they still had their share of

surprises. Dealing with the unexpected is inevitably taxing, not just for the individuals, but for their relationship, as well. Contrary to the commonly held notion, the yachting life isn't idyllic and stress free, but it's filled with opportunities for personal growth.

If you share the dream, you should read the book; it will prepare you well for life afloat. I know; my wife and I have lived our own version of Mary Gottschalk's dream for many years. If you've never imagined such an adventure, you'll still find the story inspiring. Climb aboard today and enjoy the insights shared in this wonderful book.

J.P. Lane says

I've just revised my method of ranking books by stars, so before I say what I think of this book please note that 5-stars from me = literary excellence (Pulitzer Prize material); 4-stars = well written and very enjoyable. *Sailing Down the Moonbeam* is not only well written, it's one of the most enjoyable books I've read this year. Being a traveler myself, I found Mary Gottschalk's account of her and her husband's voyage from New York to New Zealand in their 37-ft. sailboat *Salieri* so descriptive it was as though I was taking this journey of a lifetime with them. But this book is not a travelog by any stretch of the imagination. Riding the waves with Mary and her husband I was witness to a marriage held together by a very thin thread called habit. *Sailing Down the Moonbeam* was not all smooth sailing as you'll find out when you read this honest account of a marriage washed up on the rocks.

Penelope says

This well-written, highly involving book has as its premise how a voyage can be a metaphor for a marriage. Two successful New York executives, Mary and Tom, leave high-powered jobs and security to sail across the Pacific in their boat, *Salieri*. The voyage lasts 4 years, covers a total of 13,612 miles, and ends in Auckland, New Zealand.

The trip is off to a rocky start, with both sailing problems and personal disagreements, but by the time the couple reach Panama, where they stay for six months, they have learned to handle the boat as well as their relationship. Or so it seems. As the voyage continues, on the surface, it's smooth sailing across the Pacific but dark undercurrents lurk in the depths occasionally erupting into sudden squalls. The wife reflects on and broods about her marriage and her husband's sudden, sometimes vicious attacks when she fails to do what he orders. As the author writes, "We sailed in the same space, at the same time, heading in the same direction, but we were rarely taking the same trip."

Some of the sequences where the couple stopped off in places are very entertaining and filled with the flavor of other cultures. This reader would have tarried longer but the author - or the voyage - moves on.

In Auckland, Mary's good friend, Salli, tells her that she and Tom are in a constant struggle for control. This is illustrated when Mary writes how she tries to walk faster to keep up with Tom, "but no matter how hard I tried, though, I couldn't keep his pace." He offers a devastating indictment. "Marrying you felt like failure. Walking ahead of you allowed me to hold on to my fantasy."

What makes "Sailing down the Moonbeam" a good read is the writing, the personal insights, and above all, the feeling that I'm along for the voyage. This author has this ability to draw the reader into her own world. We get to know Mary Gottschalk personally in this book, her conflicts, expectations, and mood swings while she struggles with her marriage.

However, toward the end, the fights, arguments, tears, unfairness, and demands grow a bit tiresome. Add infidelity and it is with relief that we see Mary decide to get on with her life without Tom, and make her way to her next goals on her own. Sailing Down the Moonbeam

Rossana Condoleo says

A Life Journey

This is a life journey and not a log book. And this is the reason why I was able to read it up to the end, although sailing around the world is neither among my present hobbies nor among my future projects. I love Mary Gottschalk's outspokenness and her neat, clean writing style. She is detailed, but not verbose, so that reading her book was pure pleasure.

The Husband-Wife relationship of the two well positioned New Yorkers could work so well if a boat and the unknown hadn't put it to the test! Two people in their forties which Sailing around the world made so different and yet so more faithful to their true nature. This is a story which highlights how important it is to change relationships and life patterns and to explore the new to discover the unexpected. At this point some readers may argue "Why should I?" and opt for a comfortable existence without adventurous travels in the vastness of the oceans and of their Selves.

Susan Weidener says

I'm not a sailor, don't know anything about sailboats, but that didn't stop me from enjoying Mary Gottschalk's memoir about sailing the Pacific with her husband, Tom. Early on in the story, you learn that Mary and Tom are more than ready to leave corporate America behind, take the plunge and do what they have always dreamed of doing - "cruising" the Pacific. Even the name of their yacht - Salieri - harkens to a shared belief that like the composer who always stood in the shadow of Mozart's brilliance, neither would ever be "a mover or shaker" in the world of finance and that each in "our own way, was limited by personality as much as by brains or ability." These limitations of personality come to haunt the couple as they begin their five-year voyage, ultimately setting the mood and tenor of the book which chronicles crises, near-disasters and personal power plays.

As a reader, I was instantly impressed and amazed that anyone could even consider something like this. Five years is a long time and the Pacific Ocean a pretty huge place. Yet, as the story unfolds you are drawn into the world of people like Mary and Tom who set sail, anchor at ports of call and form their own social alliances, based in a shared philosophy of living a life outside the box; on a quest for beauty and magic on near-deserted islands and in moonbeams across the water.

We learn early on that Mary is smart, educated and is prone to depression. She has a no-holds barred honesty in admitting her naivete, as well as her denial, that her marriage is seriously in trouble and that she depends

too much on her outgoing husband. Still, the reader wonders, why would a woman as intelligent as she stay with a man who verabllly abuses her, let alone sail the world with him where he becomes her sole companion and social support for weeks on end? It is to the writer's credit that she offers no pat answers, only a portrait of her own desperate desire to make her marriage work.

The writing is often lyrical . . ."I often find myself in a mystical space, a cosmic place of absolute silence and serenity from which I peer down on the tiny speck that is Salieri making her way across the ocean," Gottschalk writes. Unfortunately, dreams of serenity and finding romance in the wanderlust life, collide with the reality of verbal abuse, betrayal and ultimately infidelity. Finally, the author learns that indeed this voyage has been more than visiting exotic locales, but a journey into her own heart and soul . . . of truly sailing down life's "moonbeam." Bravo to Gottschalk for writing such a brave and beautiful memoir.

Alexandrea Hills says

I won this book through Goodreads giveaways.

I enjoyed Mary's style of writing. She went on an amazing adventure and I'm happy that she wrote about it. It was nice to hear both the good and the bad that she experienced while sailing. I think that it is very brave and uplifting that she was able to write about how she changed and grew as a person.

I've never been sailing so somethings I got bogged down with the sailing jargon. I had to look a few things up to know what Mary was referring to but other then that it was a good read.

Sherrey says

Mary Gottschalk in her memoir, *Sailing Down the Moonbeam*, traverses two journeys -- a five-year sailing adventure and a journey of self-discovery. Leaving behind everything they know, Gottschalk and her husband, Tom, decide to put everything on hold and strike out on an adventure most of us never contemplate.

Aboard their vessel, *Salieri*, Gottschalk not only increases her sailing knowledge but she begins to understand the impact of her childhood on her personality and in her marriage. The difficulties faced on board *Salieri* from time to time because of equipment and weather are surmounted and dealt with easily.

Yet, the differences between she and her husband which once bound Gottschalk to him begin to rise up and become problematic. The metaphor drawn between their sailing journey and the health of their marriage is beautifully written and done so with compassion and dignity.

Gottschalk's writing is strong and enjoyable. Her descriptive abilities shine in the characters they meet along the way, the luscious scenery of the Pacific, and even in dialogue among the characters. The quote above is a favorite of mine and shows well the kind of writing I'm talking about here.

My Recommendation:

For those who are sailors, those who long to be, and those who just dream of traversing the waters of the Pacific Ocean, Gottschalk's book will not bore you. You will cheer, cry, laugh, and mourn each place they

have to leave to complete their travels. This memoir is definitely a winner!

Belinda Nicoll says

Gottschalk's memoir is an easy and interesting read. Not only did I learn a lot about sailing but I could relate to her belated rite-of-passage that resulted in clarity about her failed marriage and finding her true self. Whatever solution might be obvious to outsiders is not always clear to the one experiencing the issue. Self-doubt was a big culprit in the earlier life of the author - I find that very credible. Some time after the couple's sea voyage had come to an end, they still go a few laps back and forth before finally splitting up...often, that's how it is in real life. The fact that the author comes out of a see-saw marriage a more independent and determined person is admirable and a sign of real growth.

Megan Cutler says

Had I read this book at any other time in my life, it may not have touched me as deeply. Some books come to us when it's time. Shortly after I decided to read this book my husband and I made the life-changing decision to move across the ocean from Canada to England, and I read this book shortly thereafter. The initial stages of the journey described by the author in this book hit very close to home in many ways.

This book reads much like a journal (which makes sense, given it's the true story of the author's life). The writing is rough around the edges in many ways. Occasionally the author will cut to an earlier period in her life, a sort of flash-back related to the current scene, but it isn't always clear when this has happened. Sometimes I would have to retrace my steps to figure out if I was in the past or the present and which comments affected which time period. I do wish the author had spent a tad more time describing the workings of a sailboat, since I know next to nothing about sailing. I had a hard time following some of the more technical aspects of the book. But aside from the occasional rough bump, the book is very enjoyable to read.

Kathleen Pooler says

I knew *Sailing Down the Moonbeam* by Mary Gottschalk was going to be a compelling story before I even read the first word. First of all, I know nothing about sailing so I was curious and second, the notion of leaving a corporate job to sail around the world is intriguing, something dreams are made of. To say that it would take courage is an understatement. So while I expected an exciting, romantic adventure, I found myself mesmerized as much by Mary's inner journey as I did by her detailed guide to the art and science of sailing.

Throughout a seemingly mundane list of day-to-day activities necessary for pulling off a sailing trip around the world (this left me reeling at all the things that can go wrong and all the work that has to go into keeping the sailboat functional), the author weaves a multilayered narrative of a scarred childhood, a troubled marriage, a woman trying to find her way. The sailing trip becomes a metaphor for learning how to control what she can and how to give in to what she cannot control. As the storm winds blow and she and her husband, Tom encounter obstacles in maintaining the course, Mary begins to take her life lessons from the sea.

Mary's descriptions and sensory details pull me right into the scenes. The tiny details of the sailboat, the

people, and the places they visit help me to experience her journey first hand. She offers reflections and introspections boldly and honestly without an ounce of self-pity, leaving me feeling the tensions and subtle and not so subtle changes in her relationship with Tom. Her character development is multidimensional and believable. When I see Tom's fun-loving, caring side, I am able to experience the pain when he became aloof and dismissive. I feel Mary's building frustration with his inability to openly communicate and by the time she eventually makes a firm decision about their relationship, I experience relief that Mary has come through this journey a stronger and more confident woman. She is the heroine and I am rooting for her. This story could be a guidebook for anyone sailing to far off places. But it goes way beyond that by being an engaging, believable and courageous story of how one woman has the courage to face the unknown and look deeply within herself to find her own happiness. A beautifully –written, well-paced and captivating memoir that reinforces the gifts available to us when we are willing to step outside our comfort zones.

P.C. Zick says

I thought this book would be a travel memoir, but instead I discovered the book is the memoir of a marriage with the travel providing the setting and the sailing serving as a metaphor for the troubled relationship.

Mary and Tom decide to set sail from New York City for five years. Idealistic, romantic, and downright scared at times, they do what many of us only talk about doing if we won the lottery. When I told my husband the basic premise of the book, he asked, "Are they still married?" I told him he'd have to read the book to find out the answer.

Mary states in the beginning that the stats for couples enduring life on long cruises is "not encouraging."

Thankfully, Mary kept a journal of the journey, which eventually she turned into this memoir. Let her example be a lesson to all authors or those interested in writing a memoir of events in the past: Write in a journal just to keep track of all the details that will fade from our minds but not from the page. Her descriptive details of the sea and its living world are precise and graphic, which creates word photos for the reader. Here's one description of her view as they left Boot Key.

"As we made our last trip out through the lush mangrove-lined channel, Tom had the helm, his even more faded orange-and-yellow hat shielding his balding head from the blazing Florida sun. Manatees cavorted among the roots of the trees. Pelicans sat stolidly on the wooden pilings, waiting for the right moment to pluck lunch from the water. Raucous frigate birds were everywhere, flying madly about, hitting the water like torpedoes when they saw fish. Through it all, white ibis stood by like pieces of sculpture, regally taking it all in."

Without her journal notes, these literary and literal images would be impossible to recall after more than a two-decade gap in the experience and the publishing of her memoir.

Equally descriptive is Mary's examination of her marriage with Tom. The relationship rides the continual waves of emotion as two people learn to live and function in a cabin on a 37-foot sailboat. Mary touches on many truisms of marriages, and I felt myself nodding my head often while reading the book. Miscommunication (or no communication), different agendas, and competitive spirits collide during the sea trip. Sometimes it was painful to look so closely into the intimate portrait – only because it reminded me of my first marriage that ended in divorce after twenty-six years. So many hurts, disappointments, and

infractions build up over the years until they stifle the partners or explode the relationship into tiny pieces of shrapnel.

The emotion I felt during the reading this book is a tribute to Gottschalk's honesty, descriptive portraits of people and place, and an immaculate writing style.

I recommend *Sailing Down the Moonbeam*, even you don't sail. I don't sail, but I sure loved living vicariously for a short while. I asked the author about her record keeping, and she assured me she didn't use everything in this book. Good news – perhaps she'll write more on sailing the seas, both literally and figuratively.
