



# Bluewater Sailing

Est. 1978,

A Division of Compass Rose, Inc.

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Sailing, Power & Navigation Instruction  
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Boat Rentals & Yacht Charters  
Group / Private Lessons

## TRADITIONAL VESSEL

### DE - NAMING & (RE)NAMING CEREMONY<sup>1</sup>

Rev. 10/02

#### Required Items

1. Lots of liquid spirits for the guests – soft drinks, beer, wine, rum and other liquor
2. Lots and lots of food available for all to eat
3. A silver dollar – the older the better
4. Bottles of champagne for christening
5. Red wine for blessing
6. Ship's Bell for ringing

#### Planning the Ceremony / Summary

a. You must plan to put on a great show. Show your boat that money is no object, and that you will do anything for it. Show the vessel that your checkbook is wide open. In fact, you want to make this boat really believe that you, as the newly adopted owners, will make life really terrific!

b. Pour a round of drinks for everyone who comes by.

c. Ring the bell to call the ceremony to order. Ring it again to make sure that they heard it.

d. Ask your guests to give verbal comments about how nice your hospitality is. You might think this is really weird, but the boat needs to hear others rave about your generosity.

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Please Note: In the interests of brevity, we have eliminated some of the more obscure but conceivably important requirements which might have involved activities such as dancing about the boat with a chicken on your head, possibly naked and perhaps in violation of numerous laws, morals and regulations.

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Our many thanks to Captain Peter W. Damisch for the research leading to this outline! © P.W. Damisch 2002

**Tradition and History**

Want to change the name of your boat? Heard about the bad luck in renaming a boat? It's a big decision, but if done properly with due reverence there is no reason to hesitate. Some say that when a boat is named it has been enlivened, and from that time on the vessel must be treated with the same respect that we would have for a person.

Renaming a boat is not something to be done lightly. Since the beginning of time, sailors have sworn that there are unlucky ships and the unluckiest ships are those who have defied the nautical Gods and changed their names improperly. Thankfully there is a way to change a boat's name without upsetting the various deities of the sea and air.

According to tradition and legend, each and every vessel is recorded by specific name in the Ledger of the Deep and is known personally to *Poseidon*, or *Neptune*, the God of the sea. Thus if we wish to change the name of our boat, the first logical thing that must be done is to purge its former name from the Ledger of the Deep and from *Poseidon's* memory.

There are five necessary elements in this important ceremony:

- invocation
- expression of gratitude
- supplication
- re-dedication
- libation.

The ceremony should be read with flair on the foredeck before a gathering of distinguished guests.

In summary: ( details later )

**First: You must de-name the vessel.** Bless the former name and allow that name to go to the everlasting sea. A simple thanks for it's former service, a good-bye to the original name and a blessing for it's past service. Be sure to remove all traces of the original name.

**Second: You must establish the new name** Ceremony is required. This is the fun part !! Here are three possible ways to Rename a boat if the vessel has no name (new or un-named ). One or more of these methods work just as well. There are other methods, but these seem to be the most commonly used.

**1st method**

You must pour very good red wine (or champagne) on the bow and offer some to the God Poseidon (Neptune). Pouring wine into the waters of the Home Port, then saying out loud the new name, asking Poseidon to bless the boat and all who ride within. If it is a sailboat, don't forget Aeolus, the God of winds. Both gods' blessings required. Also, the Captain (owner), crew and guests should sip the wine as well (spill and intake quantity are not limited! The gods like generosity!)

**2nd method**

After de-naming: Scuttle the boat out of sight of land for cleansing, then re-float and rename. However, not many of us can do that one! (at least not on purpose)

**3rd method**

Have a Virgin urinate on the bow while renaming the boat and asking Poseidon's blessing. The major problem is .....well, you can work on that one.

Bluewater's procedure ( for some reason ) will focus on Method # 1.

**Tradition and History** ( continued )

Red wine is the wine to spill as it symbolizes the blood of a virgin (which used to be sacrificed ). In some cultures leather was used to cover boats and urine helped tan the leather. Urine was also used to "wash" away old things and to clean wounds. Since boats were thought to have souls, when captured, the soul needed to have the old wounds washed away and re named to reflect the new owners culture.

The libation part must be carried out at the bow, as was the original naming ceremony. You are advised to use nothing but the finest red wine (or champagne) and to pour it all on the boat. One thing the Gods of the sea despise most is meanness; so don't try to do this part on the cheap.

You should have a "de-naming" ceremony. The purpose of this is to prevent her from becoming confused about what her name really is.

First, in purging your boat, you must expunge and remove all physical traces of the boat's old name before the ceremony. This is an involved process beginning with the removal or obliteration of every trace of the boat's current identity. This is essential and must be done thoroughly. It is easiest to simply remove the offending document from the boat and start afresh. Take all papers that bear the name ashore, including logbooks, engine and maintenance records as well as any charts with the name inscribed. Be ruthless. Remove the old name from the lifebuoys, transom, dinghy, and oars. Don't forget the life rings and especially the transom and forward name boards. Sand away, as painting over is not good enough. You are dealing with the Gods here, not mere mortals and they will catch any error. If the old name is carved or etched, try to remove it, or at least fill it with putty and paint over it.

Do not under any circumstances place the new name anywhere on the boat or carry aboard any item bearing your boat's new name until the purging and renaming ceremonies have been completed, as this would be tempting fate! Once you are certain every reference to her old name has been removed from her, all that is left to do is to prepare a metal tag with the old name written on it in water-soluble ink.

You will also need a bottle of reasonably good Champagne. Plain old sparkling wine won't cut it. The last part of the ceremony, the libation, must be performed at the bow, just as in a naming ceremony. Two things to watch out for here: don't use cheap-cheap champagne, and don't try to keep any back for yourself. Buy a second bottle if you want some. Use a reasonably expensive brew, based on your ability to pay, and pour the lot on the boat. One of the things the gods of the sea despise most is meanness; so don't try to do this bit on the cheap.

Since this is an auspicious occasion, it is a good time to invite your friends to witness and turn the ceremony into a party. You can read the ceremony with flair in front of a gathering of distinguished guests

Naming Guidelines / Boat Name Tradition

- a. Generally Named after Vessel's Occupation or Something Personal For the Owner
  - often feminine or terms of endearment
- b. Keep it Simple, Use your Imagination & Have Fun!
- b. Do Not:
  - Name after a Ship of Misfortune ( Titanic, Lusitania, Andrea Doria, etc. )
  - Have a name, which is pompous, arrogant or threatening
  - Give an Impressive Name ( name should be humble )
    - => humble is more likely to pass unnoticed by the elements
    - => haughty named vessel is bound for trouble
  - Name after Larger Denizens of the Deep; Oceans, Winds, Storms or Other Cataclysmic Events that might offend the gods of the seas

Will your boat name weather this storm?

- 1) **The Explanation Test.** How often do you want to explain what the name means?  
Bizarre Greek gods, in-jokes, and foreign words usually fail this test.  
Names that are difficult to spell fall in this category.
- 2) **The Non-cute Test.** How sappy is the name? Puns, childhood nicknames, and in-jokes usually fail this test.
- 3) **The Brevity Test.** "Brevity is the soul of wit" as well as the soul of boat names.  
Imagine repeating your boat name 3 times, followed by a "Mayday".  
Still sound like a good name?
- 4) **The Hubris Test.** If you're racing, try not to pick names like "Magic Bullet", "Blew By You" (see test 2), or "Clear Ahead", unless you feel you can live up to them.
- 5) **The "Been There, Done That" Test.** Don't name your boat after a type of wind (Zypher, Sirroco, Breeze), any historical boat (Dawn Treader, Ra, Spray) or an alcoholic beverage. Unless, of course, that's what the boat tells you her name is.
- 6) **The Embarrassment Factor.** Imagine explaining your boat's name to someone you don't like, and who doesn't like you. If grudging respect is not a possible outcome, you may wish to reconsider.
- 7) **The Corruption Test.** What will your 'friends' call your boat? e.g. White Hawk = White Cloud or Serenity=Senility.
- 8) **The Omen test.** Once followed a boat cutely named 'Das Broke' out one day. He promptly drove over a submerged section of break wall at high speed and sank.
- 9) **The radio Test.** "Over and Out" would be a bad name. ... "This is Summertime calling Over and Out. Do you copy?" Huh??

**Order of Events**

Opening Invocation  
Blessing  
Expression of Gratitude  
Supplication & De-naming  
Rededication & Renaming  
Libation & Ceremonial Rituals  
Honoring Gods of the Winds and the Seas  
Christening  
Party

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**Other Reference Material**

Captain Peter W. Damisch, Managing Director, Bluewater Sailing School

Multiple Suggestions by Many Friendly Boat Owners

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CEREMONY DETAILS

**Opening Invocation & Blessing:** Ring the ship's bell and call the ceremony to order.

“In the name of all who have sailed aboard this vessel in the past and in the name of all who may sail aboard her in the future.”

“We invoke the ancient Gods of wind, Aeolus, and the sea, Neptune, also hailed as Poseidon, to favor us with their blessing today.”

**Expression of Gratitude:**

“Mighty Neptune, King of all that moves in or on the waves, and mighty Aeolus, guardian of the winds and all that blows before them! We offer thanks for the protection you have afforded this vessel in the past. We voice our gratitude that she has always found \_\_\_\_\_ shelter from tempest and storm and enjoyed safe passage to port.”

Ring bell and toast the boat's old name & owners:

“A toast to \_\_\_\_\_ *(old name)* and  
\_\_\_\_\_ *(prior owners' names)*”.

**Supplication & De-Naming:** Invoke the name of the ruler of the deep as follows:

“Oh mighty and great ruler of the seas and oceans, to whom all ships and we who venture upon your vast domain are required to pay homage, implore you in your graciousness to expunge for all time from your records and recollection the name (here insert the old name of your vessel) which has ceased to be an entity in your kingdom. As proof thereof, we submit this ingot bearing her name to be corrupted through your powers and forever be purged from the sea”

(At this point, the prepared metal tag is dropped from the bow of the boat into the sea.)

“Now therefore, we submit this supplication, that the name of this vessel has hitherto been know as \_\_\_\_\_ (*old name*), be struck and removed from your records and archives.”

“Further, we ask that when she is again presented for blessing with her new name, she shall be recognized and shall be accorded once again the self-same privileges she previously enjoyed.”

“In grateful acknowledgment of your munificence and dispensation, we offer these libations to your majesty and your court.”

(Pour at least half of the bottle of Red Wine or Champagne into the sea from East to West. The remainder may be passed among your guests.)

**Rededication & Re-Naming:**

Again call on *Poseidon* as follows:

"In return for this, we rededicate this vessel to thy domain in full knowledge that she shall be subject as always to the immutable laws of the Gods of wind and sea."

"Oh mighty and great ruler of the seas and oceans, to whom all ships and we who venture upon your vast domain are required to pay homage, implore you in your graciousness to take unto your records and recollection this worthy vessel hereafter and for all time known as \_\_\_\_\_ ( new name ), guarding her with your mighty arm and trident and ensuring her of safe and rapid passage throughout her journeys within your realm".

**Libation and Ceremonial Rituals:**

"In consequence whereof, and in good faith, we seal this pact with a libation offered according to the hallowed ritual of the sea."

"In appreciation of your munificence, dispensation and in honor of your greatness, we offer these libations to your majesty and your court."



**Honoring Gods of the Wind and Sea**

The next step in the renaming ceremony is to appease the gods of the winds. This will assure you of fair winds and smooth seas. Because the four winds are brothers, it is permissible to invoke them all at the same time, however, during the ceremony; you must address each by name.

Pour very good red wine on the bow and offer some to the God Neptune, pouring the wine into the waters of the Hailing Port, then use the following words to say the new name out loud and request the blessing of Neptune and Aeolus. Captain, crew, and guests should sip the wine as well. ( At this point, one bottle of red wine then one bottle of Champagne, less one glass for the master and one glass for the first mate are poured into the sea from West to East or sprayed over the bow.)

“Oh mighty rulers of the winds, through whose power our frail vessels traverse the wild and faceless deep, we implore you to grant this worthy vessel (Insert your boat’s new name) the benefits and pleasures of your bounty, ensuring us of your gentle ministrations according to our needs.”

(Facing north, pour a generous libation of Champagne into a Champagne flute and fling to the North)

“Great Boreas, exalted ruler of the North Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavors, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your frigid breath.”

(Facing west, pour the same amount of Champagne and fling to the West while intoning:)

“Great Zephyrus, exalted ruler of the West Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavors, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your wild breath.”

Honoring Gods of the Wind and Sea ( continued )

(Facing east, repeat and fling to the East.)

“Great Eurus, exalted ruler of the East Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavors, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your mighty breath.”

(Facing south, repeat, flinging to the South.)

“Great Notus, exalted ruler of the South Wind, grant us permission to use your mighty powers in the pursuit of our lawful endeavors, ever sparing us the overwhelming scourge of your scalding breath.”

“Hail! Aeolus and Neptune!! We seek your benevolence upon this vessel, now to be known as “ \_\_\_\_\_ *( n e w n a m e )* “

”Aeolus, whose mighty hand doth charge the wind, to this vessel gentle zephyrs send, and we who sail within will bend our heads in awe and tribute, without end”.

“With breath from high that maketh heaven’s breeze, to cause we sailors joy, or fear, upon the seas. We call upon you Aeolus, please – grant this ship and all its mortals, ease.”

“To Aeolus!” ( Everyone drink a toast to Aeolus, pour wine into the air, ring the bell )

“O! Neptune, you spirit God of waters great and small, on this vessel, by your grace, allow these sons and daughters all, to pass from port of hailing to their port of call, and on these sailing subjects make your gentle blessings fall.”

Honoring Gods of the Wind and Sea ( continued )

“You who cause the seas to rage or lie in sweet repose, please list’ to we mariners here, your servants of the flows. This ship, the captain, crew and all of those who love the wind and seas – will follow where thee goes.”

“To Neptune!” (Everyone drink a toast to Neptune, pour wine into the water, ring the bell)

Christening

After a boat is de-named, you simply rename her using the traditional christening ceremony, preferably with royalty (or a pretty lady or handsome man) breaking the bottle of champagne on the bow and incanting the sacred words.

The word "christening" should be a consideration when renaming. You really are not christening a new boat when renaming. It would not be appropriate to say " I Christen thee" if you are renaming. A simple "I name thee" will do.

“We will now perform the Christening Reverend Jimmy ( or other name ) will provide a serenade during this part of the ceremony.”

Play pre-selected song(s) from Jimmy Buffet or some other favorite, nautical selection.

“Let it be recorded, that on this day \_\_\_\_\_ ( *d a t e* ), and forever more, this fine vessel is named “ \_\_\_\_\_ ( *n e w n a m e* ).”

“I name (or christen) this ship “ \_\_\_\_\_ ( *n e w n a m e* )“.  
May god bless her and all who sail in her.”

Take a bottle of champagne and crack it on the hull.

Take some more champagne and pour drinks for everyone who does not already have a drink.

Make a toast to you, the owner, to your spouse or significant other, and last to your new boat, and pour that into the water. With every toast, ring the ship's bell.

*First mate* "First, a toast to the Captain."

*Captain* "Next a toast to my lovely (or handsome) First Mate."

"Finally, a toast to \_\_\_\_\_ (*n e w n a m e*)".

**Christening** ( continued )

"Next, we will place a silver dollar under the mast (or other; see note) as a good luck charm, and as a symbol of generosity to this vessel, to show her that we will care for her and attend to her every need and desire."

Note - if you can't put the silver dollar under the mast, find some other safe place to put this good luck charm where the boat and the sea will know it's there (and others will not accidentally rip it off, spend or sell it...)

Last, thank everyone for attending and continue the festivities in celebration of this joyous occasion.

"Finally, a toast to all of you, with many thanks for coming today to help carry out this essential naming ceremony and to celebrate this festive occasion.

Cheers!!" (Ring the bell).

Once the ceremony has been completed, you may bring aboard any and all items bearing the new name of your vessel. If you must schedule the painting of the new name on the transom before the ceremony, be sure the name is not revealed before the ceremony is finished. It may be covered with bunting or some other suitable material.

**Party:** Insert your own fun here and enjoy your boat!!!

**First Sail After Christening:**

First time out with the new name on the boat, luff up into the wind and drift to a complete stop, then allow the boat to sail backwards. This represents "backing over" the old name. Sailing backwards is hard - requires a good breeze, some waves usually help, and a fair amount of skill. But the goddesses and gods that are concerned with these matters are not easy to impress! Under no circumstance should you do this under power!

If the boat is a powerboat, you may have bad luck with the new name until you have run aground three times