

Don't Piss off Poseidon Part 1 by Guest Author Howard Paul

September 29, 2008



There are times when cultures clash leading to humbling and sometimes ominous outcomes. In this case, the conflict involved science butting its head with sailing lore.

I am a scientist, a Professor of Psychiatry at a medical school. I am trained to debunk myths and rituals. In fact, many rituals are deemed to be pathological. People believe in magic and concoct many, often life strangling, rituals to keep them seemingly protected and safe. In OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) these rituals can ruin people's lives. I spend many of my professional hours trying to help people free themselves from the tyranny that these rituals can cause.

Naturally, when I purchased my current boat, I thought nothing of erasing its old name and placing "*Knot Again*" in gold foil on her transom. My previous boat, an older Pearson, lovingly restored to better than new condition, was dubbed "*Knots of Luck*" when we renamed her after purchase. I wanted other names such as "*Olimbic Games*" (a pun on the limbic system, the emotional control center of the brain) and other cute appellations, which were summarily dismissed by my Admiral. The family was able to agree on *Knot's of Luck*, so it was done. Nothing bad happened.

When we bought our next boat it was named *Persephone*. Prior to it being called *Persephone* its original owner named it *Ariadne*. For those of you not up on mythology, Ariadne was the daughter of king Minos of Crete and his wife Pasiphae, the daughter of Helios, the sun-titan. Ariadne's claim to fame was her aiding and abetting Theseus in overcoming the Minotaur.



The story goes that Minos' son was killed in a war against Athens. Minos, then attacked Athens and the vanquished Athenians asked for term so he would not further destroy the city and its inhabitants. The settlement required 7 young men and 7 maidens be sacrificed every nine years to the Minotaur. To make matters more interesting, a white bull, was sent to Minos by Poseidon as a sign showing that his beating out his brothers for the crown of Crete was sent by Poseidon in answer to Minos' prayer. Minos was supposed to offer this bull as an offering to Poseidon, but, kept it as he thought it was beautiful (those old timers really had problems listening!). To make matters worse, Minos' wife, Pasiphae, fell in love with the white bull. Legend has it that she had Daedalus build a wooden cow that she climbed inside of in order to make love with the bull. The Minotaur, half bull half man, was the monster created by this tryst. Dedaedalus

was then summoned to build a giant maze, a labyrinth, to keep the Minotaur entrapped.

So Ariadne helped destroy her brother (half-brother)? This would be one of those times when the kid says her brother is a monster that she would be correct! Back to the story. Theseus was one youth selected to be fed to the Minotaur. Ariadne fell in love with Theseus and helped him by providing him a sword and a ball of thread to find his way out of the labyrinth. It worked just like an ancient GPS and Theseus was able to overcome the Minotaur and find his way out of the maze. To recap, after her mother slept with Poseidon's gift to her father, which led to the creation of the Minotaur, Ariadne helped Theseus kill the Minotaur. Freud would have had a field day with that one! Do you think this might have caught Poseidon's attention? Don't piss off Poseidon.

I cannot imagine why someone would want to change such a fine boat name as *Ariadne*, but, the second owner decided to deep six *Ariadne* and replace it with *Persephone*.



Persephone has many stories associated with her, but to cut to the chase, she was kidnapped and taken to Hell, where she became known as the “dreaded goddess” and “Queen of the underworld” and consort of Hades. Now, due to many different shenanigans, lots of people including Demeter (who stopped the earth from making produce, Orpheus, Adonis and the nymph Minthe (who got creamed!), Pirithous and, get this, Theseus (see above) were tied up with chasing Persephone. Bad things happened to many who had dinner with Persephone and Hades. The idea of having my boat named after the Queen of Hell just did not seem right to me.

Just to complete the history lesson, at the gates of Hell here is a three headed dog named Cerberus. Cerberus’ job is to make sure that people only can get into Hell, but they cannot escape. This monster has a snake for a tail and snakes down his mane. He does his job well. Thus endeth the lesson.

Poseidon, I don’t worry about no stinking Poseidon, so I changed the name without due homage. We wanted to stay in the “Knot” family and, since this was the next boat, we decided on *Knot Again*. The next boat may be *Knot Ever Again!* Remember, Don’t Piss off Poseidon.

Don’t Piss off Poseidon Part 2 by Guest Author Howard Paul

Shortly after commissioning *Knot Again* the Admiral and I started cruising. *Knot Again* is a C&C 35 MK III, a great racer cruiser. When we cruise with the many cruisers of our club, we are often the first boat in port and have a head start on sundowners and party planning. Chardonnay time is a real favorite aboard our boat. *Knot Again* is a stable, fast, roomy and well-found vessel. She has gotten us through some very uncomfortable experiences, which in hindsight may have been hurled at us by Poseidon and his pal, Aoleus. (see *Wind; Lats and Att’s* issue 97, June 2008). We also race her and have collected a boatload of silver over the years.

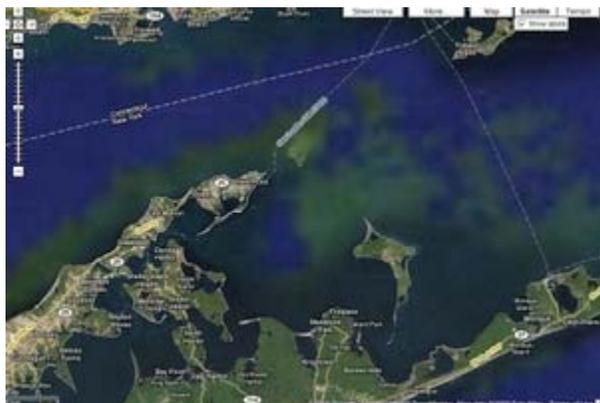


My son, Adam (not the owner of this blog), loves *Knot Again*. Shortly after the name change he and I and four other stalwarts entered the Around Long Island Regatta. As far as ocean races go, this one is a short race of about 200 miles. The course is to keep Long Island to your left from start to finish. The start is off Breezy Point and there is a 100 mile easterly ocean leg taking you to Montauk Light where a sharp left turn takes you northwesterly through Plum Gut into Long Island Sound. You then head west until the finish at Hempstead Harbor. The only really dangerous part of the trip is through Plum Gut where the tides often exceed your boat speed and, when cleared through the gut, there are underwater spires that reach to about 6’ from the surface if you stray too far left after entering the Sound. For most boats, this is no problem however; if your keel is 6.5’, beware!

Here is where this gets weird. *Ariadne* is not what you would call a common name these days. One of my crew had a new daughter and her name was, you guessed it, *Ariadne!* Having excessive scientific hubris, I did not connect the dots and see what was coming. After about 80 miles of beautiful sailing, we set the chute for a reach to Montauk. Most of the crew was new to the boat, as were its owners. My foredeck man, a very nice

bloke nick named Sven was used to manhandling the spinnaker pole on the boat he raced on. *Knot Again* had a roller bearing car on which the pole could be easily raised and lowered on its track. The wind lightened and I called for the pole to be raised to increase the belly in the sail. Sven, thinking that he would have to manhandle the pole upward, released the up-haul line from its cleat and gave a mighty tug. He positioned himself over the pole in order to get good leverage and when he pulled the pole, now released and riding on its ball bearing car, it flew up and caught him on the chin where he almost bit his tongue off. I gave him some ice to suck on and after a while, the bleeding stopped. OUCH, one crew down.

We made the turn at Montauk and had a lovely run through Plum Gut. Then we met it. The boat was an Express 38. It was, believe it or not, named *Cerberus*. I was down below trying to sleep and my son Adam was



on the helm. We had the big chute up and were doing about 8 knots. We were flying. *Cerberus*. Not even in our class came chasing after *Knot Again*, or was he chasing down *Persephone* who has escaped from Hell. *Cerberus* had rights and pushed us left. Adam, now too busy racing and not acutely aware of the hazards lying below was actually going faster than *Cerberus* and almost was abeam to regain rights (back then, mast abeam was still in the racing rules). Just a few seconds from safety, I was awoken from my sleep by a loud and horrific sound. Until I was re-aware of where I was, I thought a train hit us! When I popped my head up through the companionway and saw where we were, I instantly knew what had happened. I grabbed for

my electric drill and started to undo the floor panels to see if we were taking on water – we were. At this point, I told the crew to put up the protest flag against *Cerberus* as he had pushed us into shoal water and after our crash did not stay to assist. I assigned the crew to the manual bilge to assist the electric pumps. I radioed the Brewer yard in Greenport, explained our circumstances and turned the boat around to go back through plum gut. We doused the sails and were able to equalize water coming in with water going out. OUCH, one boat down. We arrived at the travel lift at low tide. Water in equaled water out, that was good, however, draft also equaled depth, that was bad. We were barely able to make it into the slings under full power while making a gouge in the mud. When the boat was hauled, the front of the keel had a decided gap all around the front. The yard manager heard Ka-Ching as he surveyed the damage. *Cerberus* prevailed and had returned *Persephone* to Hell!

Twenty some thousand dollars later, I still did not get the message. A year or two later, while on the hard, a storm came up right after the boat was placed onto its jack stands. The yard had not yet installed the chains to prevent the stands from moving. The wind caught the cover and pulled it off the boat. The ties caught a jack stand and pulled it out from under the boat. *Knot Again* tumbled to the ground. My rod rigging sliced the mast of the Tartan next to me in two. My hull was scraped, but intact, however, my long keel was positioned at a new and unique angle and my rigging was toast. OH NO, *Knot Again*! Ka-Ching! Some thirty some thousand dollars later I got the message and appeased Poseidon. Since then we have enjoyed great cruising, escaped from Aoleus' fury (see the wind article) and have had much success racing, coupled with wonderful cruises.

Don't Piss off Poseidon Part 3 by Guest Author Howard Paul

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I am more humble and have a newfound respect for Poseidon, Aoleus, mythology and nautical tradition. I still try to rid people of their oppressive rituals, however, if you buy a boat and wish to rename her, don't piss off Poseidon. When I step on board, I become a sailor and pay respect to those things that sailors cherish and believe.

A [quick perusal of the Internet](#) will provide you many accounts of the ritual to be performed. Here is a brief synopsis of the key elements found.



Please be advised that what follows are summaries of far more elaborate and exact details of the renaming ritual. If you Google the renaming ritual, the two most extensive recounts are those of Captain Pat and John Vigor. Barbara Dyer also has a posting, which she claims will work and avoid the anger of Poseidon. All of these rituals involve friends, rum or champagne and removing all remnants of the old boat name.

Firstly, you must remove all reference to the old name. It is amazing how insidious the name can be. It can show up on various documents, life rings, dinks, sail bags, glassware, leftover shirts and hats, as well as on documentation boards firmly attached to the hull. Carefully look through your nav station, log books, and engine maintenance records as many small bits may contain the name. It is reported that white out is OK to use. Once purged, a good bottle (or a few depending on how many friends you have) of bubbly is needed, some say rum will also work. Various odes, prayers and invocations are available meant to acknowledge, sooth and appease Poseidon and his friends. Champagne is then poured to the North, West, South and East. Of course, any left is to be imbibed by those in attendance, however, do not skimp on Poseidon's share, as this will PISS OFF POSEIDON. Once this has been completed, it is now all right to bring on items with the new boat name and to re-christen the boat and place her name on the spot of your choice. If you have to schedule the painting of the new boat name before you have the ceremony, make sure the new name is covered until the ceremony is completed.



One variant says you need to have two rounds of libation for everyone in attendance, plus one more. You must take your boat out into the ocean, or at least out of your harbor or anchorage. Everyone holds a glass full of champagne. Make sure the Coasties are not in sight. The boat owner then backs up the boat and thanks the god of wind (Aoleus) and water (Poseidon) for their kindness and caring for the old boat, using its old name. All then drink a toast to the old boat name. The boat is then put into forward and a second round of drinks is poured. Aoleus and Poseidon are then asked to extend their kindness to the new boat name. This glass is tossed downwind. Some say only the owner needs to do this, then that glass is refilled

and the new boat name is toasted. Once ashore, the new boat name can be revealed or affixed. All iterations of the ceremony have a few core elements; an invocation, an expression of gratitude, a supplication, a re-dedication and a libation.

Just remember, don't use cheap champagne and DON'T PISS OFF POSEIDON.