



In celebration of our 50th anniversary, **Classic Times** features our founding yachts that are still in the So Cal Fleet

◆ Vera Lee II ◆

Of the original 13 charter yachts, VERA LEE II is the only continuous member of the So Cal Fleet. Carol Anne Williams, its third and current owner, moors this very special lady at the Long Beach Yacht Club, Alamitos Bay, Long Beach, California, directly across from the Williams' home.

Dedicated Ladies Have Taken Care Of This Lady

Lady Vera Lee

On May 30, 1940, Larry McDowell Sr. purchased this Elco beauty off the floor at the Los Angeles Boat Show and named her for another beauty, his wife Vera Lee. Sunbathing on the deck off Catalina, with Humphrey Bogart or Errol Flynn moored next to them, Vera Lee looked like Marilyn Monroe herself.

Lady Helen

Larry and Vera Lee raised their baby daughter Helen on the boat, bathing her in the sink. Helen, who lived well into her 90s, knew the boat with great intimacy. Marina Shipyard also knows this vessel with great intimacy as it has cared for it since Day One. Rick Olson tells the story of the day he noticed a wooden vessel at the Marina Shipyard and wandered over to check it out. He waited patiently amidst a cloud of paint dust being sanded from the hull. When the sander stopped, the dust settled, and the hazmat suit was pulled away, inside was a little old lady – there was Helen. ◆ Helen experienced a heart attack while on Catalina and had to be airlifted back to the mainland. At that point her family told her, “you can’t be driving to Catalina every weekend.” Helen shot back, “I told them ‘so what if I have a heart attack at sea? I’ll die doing something I love!’”

Lady Carol Anne

“When I first met Helen she was already in her 80’s and always talked about ‘Daddy’ and about the history on this boat. You felt you were meeting someone who was a legendary feminine figure - like an Amelia Earhart. She inspired me as a person to want to be like her.”



A 1940 photo at her favorite mooring at Cherry Cove

Since 2014, VERA LEE II has been owned by Carol Anne Williams who continues a dedicated stewardship. She had witnessed that “the repair of that boat was just like breathing” to Helen who continued to come to the shipyard and loved seeing that new technology was being used. She was very excited by it and thrilled to watch the renovation. Tony Wasson of Marina Shipyard chimed in his agreement. Tony, knowing VERA LEE and the way Helen took care of her, points out that with “modern technology, techniques, paints, and style, Carol has taken the care of the boat to a whole different level.”

Carol wants to be sure to mention the captains during the time VERA LEE has been in her care – her brothers Bill and Woody. Woody, a marine science teacher, brings a special devotion to his work on the mahogany. He has been working hand-in-hand with a gentleman named Joaquin who the Marina Shipyard refers to as “a magician.”

Carol has inherited histories of the boat, the family, and the island of Catalina and is looking forward to returning to VERA LEE’s old mooring at Cherry Cove.



As a bonus e-supplement, Members receiving **Classic Times** by e-mail also received a fascinating step-by-step summary of VERA LEE II’s restoration which was prepared by Carol Anne Williams. It is also included on the CYA website in the Yacht Register section.