

DONOVAN'S Shady Harbor Marina

10 Years Later

by **A.J. Hammer**

2011 was an exciting year in our life of boating on the Hudson. It was our first season in a brand new boat, something every boater remembers. But it ended with some unanticipated excitement in the form of Hurricane Irene. Soggy Dog was tied up on the Catskill Creek when we learned that the effects of the storm would be bearing down on the area on August 28th. Knowing the havoc storms can wreak on the creek, we needed a better plan.

It was suggested that we find a place to tie up on the river, but there were few options nearby. That's when we thought about Shady Harbor in New Baltimore, New York. Earlier in the season, we had read a terrific article in Boating On The Hudson about the new owners of this magnificently sited marina. They had bought the rundown property out of foreclosure and planned to make it a destination. Maybe they could accommodate us in our panicked search for safe harbor. I'll never forget the friendly, booming voice of Brian Donovan. He answered the phone and without hesitation said, "come on up — we'll figure it out." I can't imagine the anxiety they must have felt as the waters surrounding their just-acquired facility rose to a 100-year level and destroyed seventy-five percent of their docking system. But you'd never know it. They put their customers first, making sure everyone and every boat remained as safe as possible.

To us, that moment personifies the approach that Brian and Kathy take in running the marina. It is the spirit of what Donovan's

Shady Harbor Marina is. As seasoned cruisers, they bring a heightened level of insight into what cruising boaters expect and want. It's evident at every turn when you visit their wonderful property.

Their goal has always been to create a place that they would want to visit (on their 75' motor yacht "Corporate Approved"). A place with the services and amenities they look for and a relaxed (chill comes to mind), yet professional vibe. It has been ten years since their acquisition (and Hurricane Irene) and as they celebrate this milestone, they have much to be proud of and look forward to. Through their vision, a gem of a Hudson



The Docks – then and now.



Photos of the in-ground swimming pool, Ship Store and annual Flag Raising Ceremony and Blessing of the Fleet.



River destination rose from the wreckage. And, it fostered a community of boaters who have shared great experiences at Donovan's Shady Harbor.

The docks have been reconfigured and rebuilt along with new power pedestals and hardware. It would impress even the most discerning captains. Among other benefits, the new layout allowed for a larger easily approached fuel dock featuring ValvTect gas and diesel as well as a pump-out station. They can safely accommodate vessels up to 200 feet making it a favorite stopover for delivery captains transiting the Hudson.

They boast a 35-ton travel lift and full mechanical services, and they specialize in helping boaters who come in with a problem. They strive to solve boater's issues and get them moving again as quickly as possible (but why would you want to leave?).

There is plenty to do on shore and the grounds are meticulously maintained. They've added a bocce ball court, horseshoes, and a bonfire pit. There are several comfortable areas to sit back, relax and take in the spectacular view of the river. The pool is always inviting and refreshing on a hot summer day — we can't wait to see the newly converted shipping container bar and kitchen by the pool this season! There's also a large and comfortable, air-conditioned bathroom and laundry facility just steps from the docks.

Their enormous ship's store is also wonderful because they know what boaters on the move really need and want. Their well-stocked provisions include local meats and cheeses along with a great selection of beer and beverages. Of course, there's an extensive inventory of boat parts and accessories. Looking for a great t-shirt as a memento of your journey? They got 'em (and some wacky, funny ones, too!) There's also plenty of boat-ware, gifts, and myriad sundries... It's the kind of ship's store you



might not expect to find 129 miles north of the Battery.

The onsite Boathouse Grille restaurant was completely redesigned and modernized under the Donovans. It has a warm and festive energy and plenty of space to sprawl out. The menu offers both high-end cuisines for a special dining experience and casual fare perfect for any occasion. With a lively indoor/outdoor bar and enormous deck with one of the best views on the river, it's no wonder boaters and non-boaters alike pack the house. And for the ten-year anniversary, we hear it's growing with even more improvements including expanded outdoor seating with fire pits and new heaters. Plus a new private deck to accommodate their growth in private events. It's such a cool spot to throw a party.

If you read reviews of Shady Harbor since Kathy and Brian took over, you will invariably see high marks for the staff—both on the docks and in the restaurant. Their level of training reflects the determination to provide excellent service. We have



found it to be a cornerstone of the Donovan's concept of a world-class marina.

These are just a few reasons why in the past ten years Shady Harbor has also become a must-stop marina for boaters doing extended cruising. Those traveling America's Great Loop know this place well (and it's where the drink "Little Beers" was made a Looper staple—ask Brian and Kathy how!). As AGLCA sponsors, the Donovans extend a warm welcome to dozens of Loopers every year and celebrate their journey with Shady's annual Boater Appreciation Week and Pig Roast which is open to all. Given the marina's proximity to Albany International Airport, many Loopers choose to leave their boats at the marina for an extended period knowing it will be well looked after.

In the ten years of the Donovan's proprietorship, Shady Harbor has become a perfect port-of-call for the many boat clubs and groups the marina hosts each season for rendezvous and getaways. The staff goes out of their way to accommodate flotillas of all sizes and has terrific event spaces and amenities to make every gathering special. We got a big group together there one year and it was perfect.

If you join them this season you may just feel like you're in the Florida Keys where the Donovans were recently boating, inspiring this tropical addition... Fifteen exotic roosters and hens will be roaming the property when they're not hanging out

in their coop converted from an abandoned sailboat. Oh, and be on the lookout for the new (rooster-safe) resident ten-foot alligator!

This season will also see the addition of a two-bedroom onsite Airbnb for guests traveling by land or by sea. For those who prefer to be right on the water, there will be a floating "Boatbnb" as well. Very cool!

Beyond providing services and a fun destination for the community, they've been busy giving back. Their annual Jamaican Jerk Off contest is one of the best summer parties on the river and a wonderful fundraiser. They have raised thousands of dollars for the Alzheimers Association and the Hope Club of the American Cancer Society, two causes near and dear to their own families.

Since that iconic moment in our boating life ten years ago, we moved up to a bigger boat and have cruised the east coast and beyond extensively. In that time we've become very attuned to what's important to us in a great marina and Donovan's Shady Harbor ticks off all the boxes with the best em'. Thanks to Kathy and Brian, it has become the fun and beautiful destination marina that the Hudson River always deserved. Happy ten-year anniversary Donovan's Shady Harbor Marina. Little Beers cheers to ten more!

A.J. and his husband document their cruising adventures on the Hudson River and beyond on their blog at www.myoloh.com and on their popular Adventures Of OLOH YouTube channel.

