

# WEEKEND BREAK

CONTACT US  
Alyssa Evans  
aevans@dailystorian.com



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Photos by Ron Baldwin

Floating homes.



A green boathouse.

## MOTHER NATURE AT YOUR DOOR



Houseboats in John Day.

### Living on the water

By RON BALDWIN

It has long been the dream of many Northwesterners to live a simple life on the water. A houseboat on the Columbia River, or perhaps a liveboard sailboat on one of its tributaries. Cruising about in the summer months, then overwintering in a snug harbor.

Or maybe, living year-round in a house built on a log raft, rising and falling twice a day in rhythm with the cosmos and Mother Nature at your door. And, like all dreams, these scenarios may or may not be what each seems.

The urge to live on the water is as old as the first boat. A floating home can be as small as a pickup truck or as big as the *Thalamegos*, a houseboat built by Egyptian pharaoh Ptolemy IV Philopator. His three-story palace on a catamaran measured 377 inches long by 66 feet wide.

The ship was decorated with 60 inch marble colonnades embellished with plenty of gold, jewels and ivory. The ship, which sported 1,200 oarsmen, was symbolic of power from the god Dionysus to the human (Greek) royal line.

Although houseboats sold in Washington state last year for upwards of \$6 million, and billionaire yachts are valued in the tens of millions, most houseboats are substantially less grand than these modern day pharaohs. Besides, where are you going to find 1,200 oarsmen?

#### The Northwest joins fleet

Water habitation came to the Northwest with humankind. When Europeans came, native peoples were already living on the water. Liveboard was the standard until defensible settlements were established.

Soon, the Columbia and other river system shorelines were dotted with river homes along every sheltered slough and channel. Often the people who lived on the river made their living near the river. Gillnetters, log rafters and boommen, tug and barge operators, fur tradesmen, horse seiners and marine construction workers made up a large segment of the water-bound population.

Houseboats, float houses, boat-houses and boats large enough to live on have been a feature of life on the Columbia since those early days, but changes in the patterns have been

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A blue houseboat.

#### KNOWING YOUR FLOATING HOMES

**Boathouse** — A structure intended to house a boat. Normally never moved or moved with great difficulty.

**Houseboat** — A vessel with a house-like structure designed to be moved occasionally or often. Built on a barge or scow hull, many are self-powered.

**Floathouse** — A house built on a log raft. Not intended to be moved but anchored in place. Moveable with great effort and expense.

**Floating home** — A house built on floats, anchored in place and never moved.

**Liveboard** — A boat big enough to be used as a home. Usually moored in a marina or other anchorage. Used for pleasure cruising.