

# Sausalito Houseboat Wars: What Really Happened?



**June 6 • Sausalito Library • 6:30 pm**

420 Litho St., Sausalito

**June 9 • Tam Valley Cabin • 4 pm**

60 Tennessee Valley Road, Mill Valley

**In 1942**, as the United States joined World War II, Bechtel Corporation opened the Marinship factory in Sausalito, where workers built 93 cargo ships and oil tankers in three years. After the war, Bechtel abandoned the shipyard and boatbuilder Donlon Arques bought the large waterfront parcel, which was considered worthless, and dragged old boats, like decommissioned ferries, onto the mudflats and rented them to G.I.s returning from the war.

Over the next several decades, artists, carpenters, beatniks, bohemians, and hippies built floating homes on barges and rafts. Arques' property became the epicenter of Sausalito's development battles of the seventies—what became known as the "houseboat wars." Public officials tried to clean up and clear out the houseboats, citing the lack of sewage hookups, not to mention the loud parties. The houseboaters resisted with civil disobedience, street theater, legal action and more.

**John Byrne Barry** is a writer, designer, actor, director, and crossing guard. He is author of four novels and three plays, including "Sausalyppo Houseboat Wars Murder Mystery," which he wrote and directed in 2023, and has since adapted into a novel called *Pirates of Sausalito: Houseboat Wars Murder Mystery*. The story is made up, but inspired by true events, which he will talk about, as well as sharing photos and TV news clips. At right, there he is at his corner last Halloween, wearing a prop from the play.

