



As you are getting prepared for the 2010 cruising season, take a look at how far we have come with Search and Rescue communications equipment.

Pictured below is the WWII (1941) **BC-778**, nicknamed the “Gibson Girl,” an emergency code-sending transmitter.

It is the first American on-the-water rescue device. The Navy used it in rafts or dropped it from airplanes. The frequency of 500 kHz needed long antennas. They were erected by releasing a box kite or a gas-charged balloon.

The narrow-waisted form provided a good hold when the radio was strapped between the legs of the operator who turned the crank on the top side. It had a range of about 200 miles.

The name “Gibson Girl” comes from the circa 1890 fashion artist Charles Gibson, whose art depicted narrow-waisted women.

Harry Lee (AD7YB) gives us a fast forward to today with how satellite communications links and the Internet have changed it all.

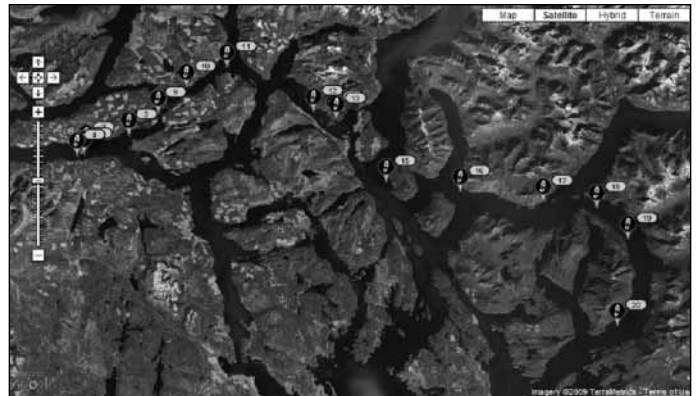
### A Tracking Device for Boater Safety by Harry Lee

This note describes new safety devices called satellite personal trackers, which increasingly are being used by boaters to enable family and friends to track their progress on the water in near-real-time. These low-cost, hand-held devices provide satellite-based GPS location and communication services.

Because they are satellite based, they provide service in areas where you can't get cellular, Internet or VHF access.

User functions include the following:

- **Track Progress:** Automatically sends your GPS location to friends and family, enabling them to track your progress on the water using Google Maps. See photo example.
- **Check-in/OK:** Lets your friends and family know that all is okay with a pre-programmed message along with your GPS location.
- **Help:** Notifies your personal contacts that you need assistance.
- **SOS/911:** Notifies emergency services of your GPS location and that you need assistance in a life-threatening emergency.



Satellite personal trackers are easy to use and do not require any special license or hardware other than the handheld device. Among other SYC members, these devices have been used by the Gradys on their 2009 return cruise from Alaska, by the Lees on many off-shore fishing and cruising trips, and by P. J. Baker and family on their present Pacific cruise.

One drawback of these devices is that batteries periodically must be replenished (presumably a 12v device will be available in the future). Also, for emergency notification, boaters that have satellite personal tracker should use them only as a supplement to EPIRB and DSC, rather than as a low-cost replacement. Despite some limitations, Barbara and I use our device every time we go cruising.

**W7SYC** – For more information about the Seattle Yacht Club Amateur Radio Committee or getting an amateur radio license, contact Dan Withers, [dwithers@rodaxwireless.com](mailto:dwithers@rodaxwireless.com) or call (206) 947-2303.



### Spring W7SYC Amateur Radio Rendezvous April 9-11 Port Madison Outstation

There will be the normal boat open house, installation assistance, technical presentations and a local ham shack visit.

An official Greenbox will be on Saturday evening followed by a potluck dinner.

Sign-up at the Front Desk (206) 325-1000.  
This is a “non-event - event.”

Questions: Contact Dan Withers, WM7W at (206) 947-2303

