

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

Fashioning a job as water taxi captain

By Victoria Abbott Riccardi
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

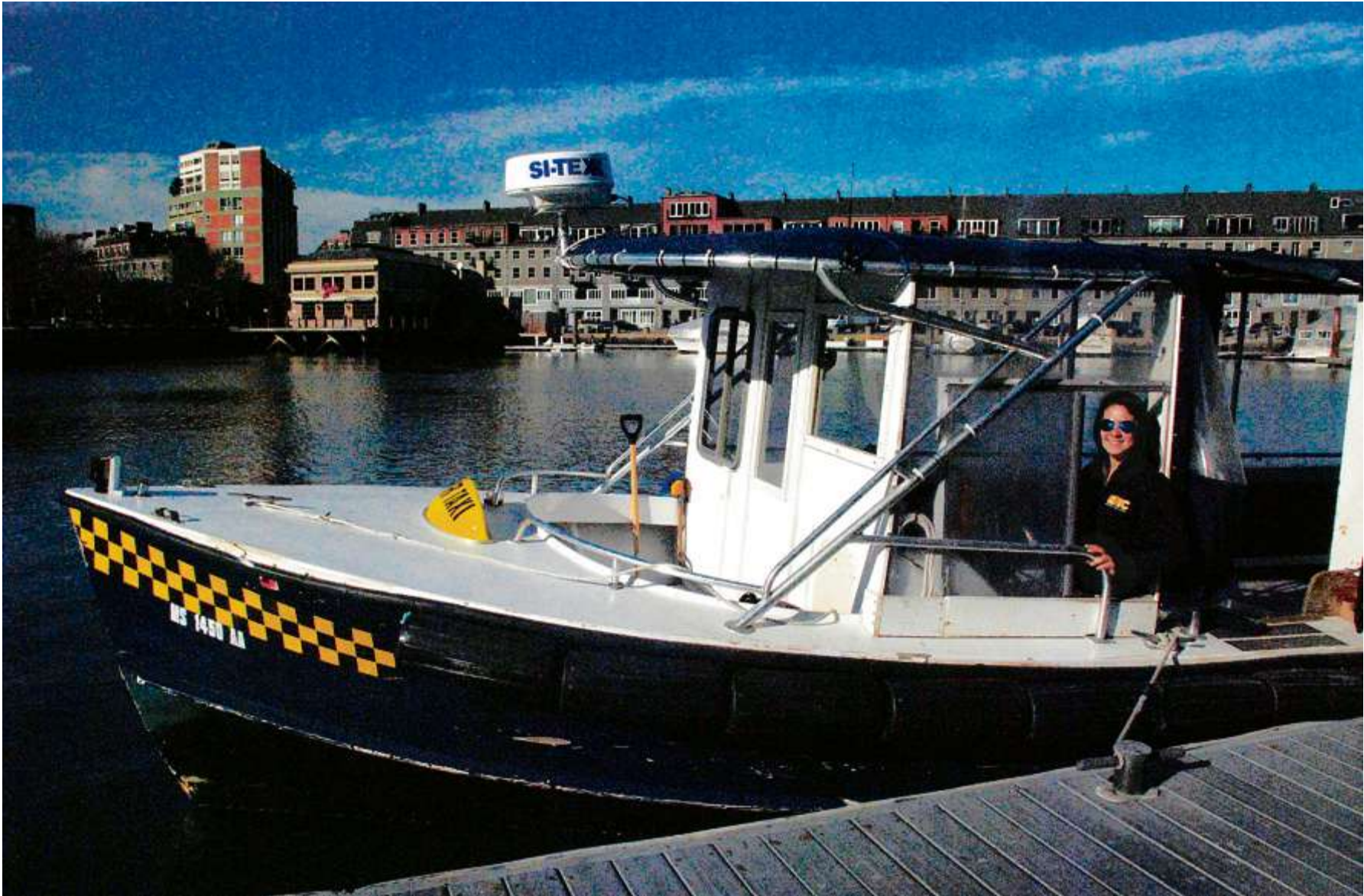
It's 2 p.m. on a recent weekday and Captain Amy Meloski has just finished her 8-hour shift ferrying passengers along Boston's waterfront in a Boston Harbor Cruises Water Taxi. To reach her status, the 24-year-old Quincy native had to log 360 days on a boat to obtain a US Coast Guard Charter Boat Captain's Credential (Master, 100 Ton License, Inland), letting her command any vessel weighing less than 100 tons in Boston's inner harbor and around the islands. She also had to pass exams in Safety Knowledge, Navigation, and Chart Plotting, as well as have a clean driving record and submit to a background check and medical exam, making her one of eight female Boston Harbor Cruises captains out of 40 to 60 men. "I only learned about boats five years ago," she adds laughing. "I didn't even know what was the bow or stern."

Wearing her captain's uniform of khaki pants, a white shirt adorned with gold sleeve bars, and a black, zip-neck, jersey jacket, she talked about what led her to swap a career in fashion for life on the water, the highlights of her job, and why she's afraid of spiders.

Q. What made you want to be a boat captain?
A. It's a funny story. My first college was Lasell [in Newton] and I studied Fashion Merchandising my freshman year. I just woke up one morning and thought, "I don't want to do this anymore. I miss the ocean." So I applied and enrolled at UMass Boston in the Environmental Science program. When I started classes it was all about oceanography and I thought one day maybe I'll work on boats.

Q. What was the pull of the ocean?
A. My grandparents live in Quincy, on Adams Shore, and when I was a kid I used to always explore the rocks. I remember picking up horseshoe crabs by their tails and studying them and walking through the marshes.

Q. What's a typical day?
A. I wake up at 5 a.m. and am usually on the road around 5:30. Then we start up our boats and are usually running by 6:15.



VICTORIA ABBOTT RICCARDI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Q. Breakfast?
A. I pack it the night before — some oatmeal with a little honey and cinnamon in a Mason jar. I eat it cold.
Q. No hot beverage?
A. Oh, I'll get a coffee in the morning — I'll stop at Dunks.

Q. So you're all pepped up, then what?
A. In the winter, it's slow. Today I only carried two people. I'll bring a book.

Q. Do you take breaks, to use the restroom?
A. Yup. I'll just tie up and run up to the Hyatt [Regency Boston Harbor]. I try to catch the commuter boats, I know their schedule and I know when they have 10 or 15 minutes at the dock.

Q. Do people tip you?
A. Yes, most people — 1 or 2 bucks.

Q. Greatest on-job disaster?
A. Oh, last winter it was really, really windy out — there were little rollers coming into the harbor — the boat's going up a foot and a half and down a foot and a half — there was a ton of debris in the water too and all of a sudden one of my friends, who was working on another boat, came over the radio and said, 'Guys, I can't move.' He was right off the fuel dock with a passenger and he had this big piece of wrap — the kind people use to wrap their boats in the winter — around his prop and could only go in reverse. We got his passenger onto another boat and then I towed him back to our facility.

Q. Has anyone ever fallen overboard?
A. Nope, we haven't lost anything, not even a phone or a wallet.

Q. Gotten seasick?
A. Not on this boat. The trips are so short — everything's about 10 minutes from point to point.

Q. Highlights of job?
A. Meeting so many different people, just hearing their stories and where they're from and why they're here.

Q. What do you think about when you're driving?
A. I think about where I want to go with life. I'd love to study the ocean — coastal ecology.

Q. Favorite place you've visited in the world?
A. Any beach, whether it be summer or winter.

Q. Dream destination?
A. Australia. There's so much down

there — the coral reefs, beautiful, beautiful beaches, rain forests you can go explore, all different types of animals than what we have up here.

Q. Sounds like you're an outdoors girl.
A. Yes, I am, as long as there's no spiders. I see a spider and I'm done.

Q. Why?
A. Probably because they have more than four legs.

Q. Anything else?
A. When a lot of the passengers get on, they say, "Oh, where's the captain?" And sometimes people ask if I even have my driver's license!

Interview has been edited and condensed. Victoria Abbott Riccardi can be reached at vabbottriccardi@gmail.com.



HERE

TACKLE AN ENDURANCE BIKE RACE IN N.H.
Tune up your bike and start training for Pats Peak's Mountain Bike Festival in June, which features 6-, 12-, and 24-hour races, plus the X-Country Challenge and Downhill Thrill race. The high-octane races, held June 11 and 12 in Henniker, N.H., draw riders from across New England who compete for more than \$4,000 in cash and prizes. Ride solo or in teams of up to five people as you navigate wooded trails, fields, unpaved roads, and steep inclines and descents. During the downhill challenge, racers take the chairlift up and race down a course one at a time as they vie for the fastest time. Kids races take place both days, too. Entry: \$28-\$78. 888-728-7732, www.patspeak.com/bike.html.

EXPLORE THE BERKSHIRE'S BLOOMING GARDENS
This spring, stroll through the Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge, wander around the wildflowers at Pittsfield's Hebert Arboretum, or visit the Magic Wings Butterfly Conser-

vatory in South Deerfield, home to 4,000 butterflies in a tropical-like habitat. Then relax in Stockbridge's Red Lion Inn, which is running a Blooming Berkshires package that includes two night's accommodations, breakfast for two, two tickets to the botanical gardens, two cocktails, and a gift bag. The caveat: Subject to availability and must be booked by May 26. Room rates start at \$380 for two nights, including tax and gratuity. Entry prices vary. www.redlioninn.com/blooming-berkshires.

THERE

STICK TOGETHER AT THIS QUIRKY OHIO FESTIVAL
See people dressed head to toe in Duck Tape outfits, watch a parade with Duck Tape floats, and catch the Duck Tape fashion show at a three-day festival near Cleveland, Ohio. The Avon Heritage Duck Tape Festival runs Father's Day weekend, June 17-19, and celebrates all things American this year. The free event includes life-size Duck Tape sculptures, an arts and crafts tent where you can make duct tape creations (there

are more than 250 different Duck Tape colors and designs), a lively parade, rides, live entertainment, and good ol' all-American food, such as corn dogs and funnel cakes. Also catch a performance by Lita Ford, former lead guitarist for the '70s band The Run-aways. Be one of the first 500 attendees each day and receive a free roll of Duck Tape; the annual event draws more than 60,000 participants. 866-818-1116, www.ducktapefestival.com.

HONOR SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND DEATH IN ONTARIO
Celebrate the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death by attending performances at the Stratford Festival, a renowned repertory theater festival held each year in Stratford, Ontario, about 90 minutes from Toronto. From now through Oct. 16, the festival will present the North American premiere of "Shakespeare in Love," the hit comedy from London's West End. Also, don't miss "As You Like It," a fun production loaded with audience participation, the great tragedy "Macbeth," and "Breath of Kings," on stage at the Tom Patterson Theatre, which was reconfigured into a theater-in-the-round for this event. In celebration of Shakespeare, select



theaters across the United States will screen "Taming of the Shrew," "Hamlet," and "The Adventures of Pericles." Ticket range: \$19.75 to \$150. 800-567-1600, www.stratfordfestival.ca.

EVERYWHERE

ACCESS OR CHARGE 10 DEVICES AT ONCE
Forget searching for multiple hotel and airport plugs when you travel: Satechi's new Aluminum Hub comes with seven blazing-fast USB 3.0 ports and three 2.1-amp USB charging ports, so you can refuel your phone, tablet, camera, and other travel devices simultaneously. The USB 3.0 ports let you transfer data at speeds of up to 5 gigabytes per second — great for copying large photos or files quickly — yet are backward compatible to handle USB 2.0 and 1.1 devices. The sleek hub weighs just 7 ounces. In fact, it's somewhat beefy DC power cord tips the scales at 9.25 ounces, but you can leave that behind and just carry the included USB cord, which allows you to connect the power hub to your laptop. When you get home, plug all your external devices, including your computer screen, scanner, printer, keyboard, external

hard drives, and more, into the hub. The hub works with Macs and PCs, and measures about 7.25 x 3.75 x 1.25 inches. \$59.99. 858-268-1800, www.satechi.net.

A SMARTWATCH WITH EVEN MORE FEATURES
Garmin's new Vivoactive HR GPS smartwatch has many of the features of a regular activity tracker, keeping tabs on your daily activities and fitness goals as you bike, swim, walk, and run, but adds new sports and cool new features. The easy-to-



read water-resistant watch works when you're golfing (it offers info on thousands of courses, and provides your scorecard as you play) paddleboarding, and skiing or snowboarding, so you can keep track of your stats while on these adventures near and far. It also keeps track of steps climbed and "intensity minutes," recognizing how much time you logged at different intensity levels. Big bonus: The watch has a built-in optical heart-rate sensor so you can get heart-rate data without having to wear a chest strap. Sync your watch to your cellphone and get notifications of incoming e-mails, text messages, and phone calls on your Vivoactive. \$249.99. 800-800-1020. www.garmin.com. KARI BODNARCHUK