

Latitude 38

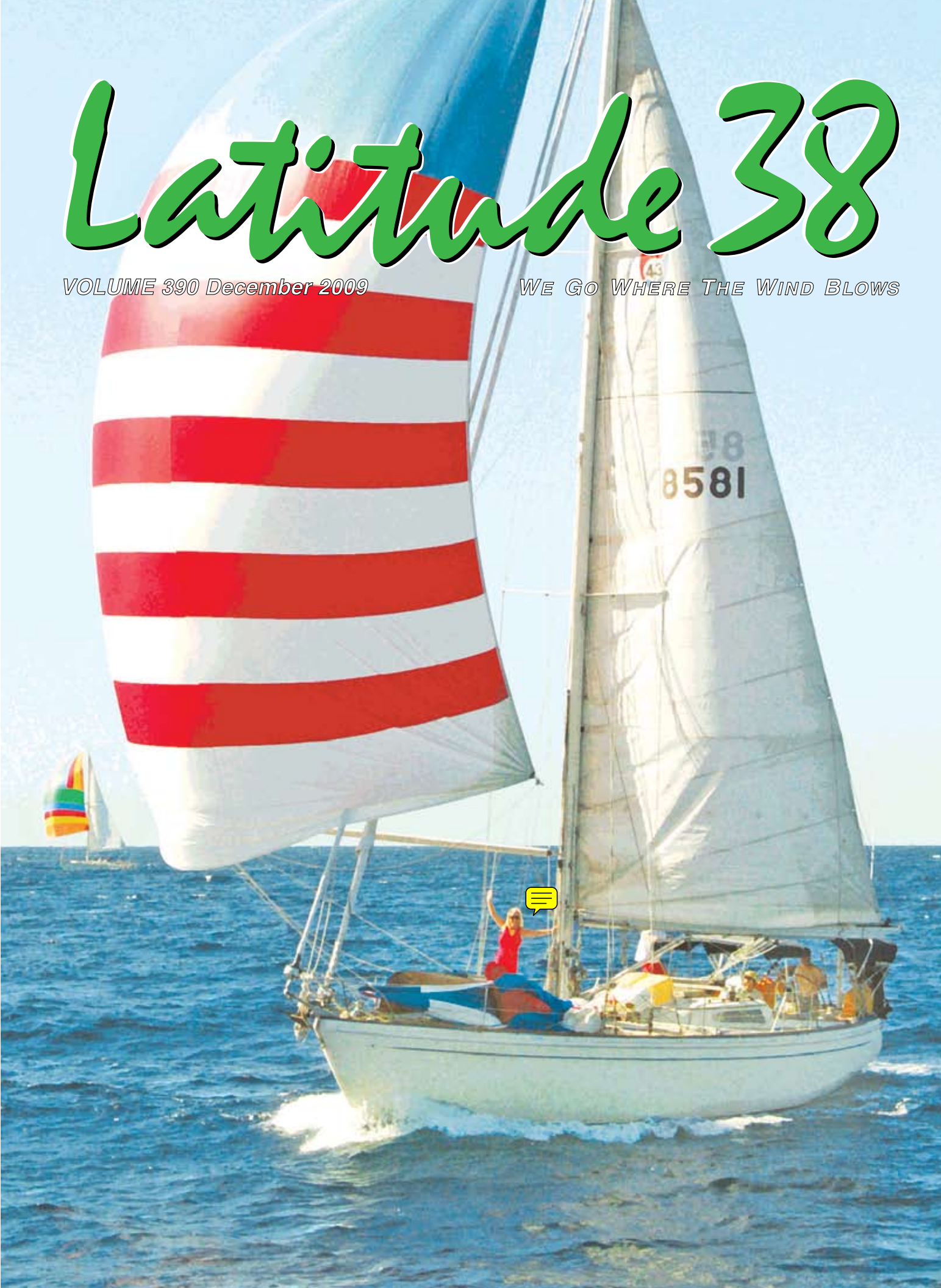
Latitude 38

VOLUME 390 December 2009

WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

DECEMBER 2009

VOLUME 390

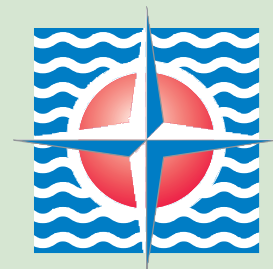




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Every boat has a story. But some boats' stories are longer than others. *VIP* is one such boat. Designed and built by the Stephens Brothers of Stockton, *VIP* is number 7 of 19 Farallon Clippers, built between 1940 and 1962. The yard built her shortly after WWII as a gift to one of the Stephens Brothers, Theo, the Very Important Person.

Some 55 years later Don Taylor, visiting friends for dinner, is sharing their coffee table book of all the beautiful wooden boats built by the Stephens boats when he found himself constantly flipping back to a photo of the 38' Farallon Clipper.

He found *VIP* sitting quietly (languishing is his word) in the Brisbane Marina in the fall of 2002. That was only 7 short years ago! A major refit at the KKMI boatyard ensued to restore her structural integrity. And then there was the new teak decks, cabin sole, cabinets, wiring.

Don called Pineapple Sails to discuss a new main, genoa and jib. After careful measurements and recommendations of changes that would make the boat faster, we built the sails just in time for this year's Jessica Cup. "Right out of the bag," Don wins the weekend, three out of three races.

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VIP*

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Cover: Steaming south under a vintage candy cane-striped spinnaker, the Columbia 43 *Adios* enjoys the idyllic weather of the Ha-Ha's Leg Two.

Photo by *Latitude 38/Andy*

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Latitude 38 welcomes editorial contributions in the form of stories, anecdotes, photographs—anything but poems, please; we gotta draw the line somewhere. Articles with the best chance at publication must 1) pertain to a West Coast or universal sailing audience, 2) be accompanied by a variety of pertinent, in-focus digital images (preferable) or color or black and white prints with identification of all boats, situations and people therein; and 3) be legible. These days, we prefer to receive both text and photos electronically, but if you send by mail, anything you want back must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. **Submissions not accompanied by an SASE will not be returned.** We also advise that you not send original photographs or negatives unless we specifically request them; copies will work just fine. Notification time varies with our workload, but generally runs four to six weeks. Please don't contact us before then by phone or mail. Send all submissions to editorial@latitude38.com, or mail to Latitude 38 editorial department, 15 Locust Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941. For more specific information, request writers' guidelines from the above address or see www.latitude38.com/writers.html.

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POWER	Californian 42, '87	119,500
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CALENDAR

Non-Race

Dec. 1 & 31 — Two chances to howl at the full moon this month — the first on a Tuesday, the last on a Thursday.

Dec. 2 — Club Nautique's Winter Wednesdays Seminar Series continues with 'Decorative Knots' with West Marine Rigging's Ryan Nelson at Club Nautique in Alameda, 6-8 p.m. Seminars run every other Wednesday at the same time and location, and are free unless noted. **12/16:** 'Safety Equipment & How to Use It' with instructor Arnstein Mustad; **12/30:** No event; **1/6:** 'Yacht Design—Under the Water, Part 1' with instructors Ted Strand & Jim Hancock. Info, (510) 865-4700 or www.clubnautique.net/winter-wednesdays.

Dec. 2-30 — Wednesday Yachting Luncheon Series at St. Francis YC, 12-2 p.m., \$13.50. Enjoy lunch and a dynamic speaker every Wednesday. All YCs' members welcome. More info under the 'Events' tab at www.stfyc.com.

Dec. 5 — 33rd Annual Lighted Yacht Parade on the Oakland/Alameda Estuary. Starts at 5:30 p.m. Presented by Encinal YC, Oakland YC and Marina Village Yacht Harbor, this year's theme is 'Christmas Carols'. Find out more and enter your boat at www.lightedyachtparade.com.

Dec. 5 — South Beach YC Lighted Boat Parade from McCovey Cove to the Ferry Building, 5-7 p.m. Chili and hot buttered rum at the YC after. Info, www.southbeachyc.org.

Dec. 5 — Petaluma YC Lighted Boat Parade, 5:30 p.m. Info, (707) 753-1590 or www.petalumayachtclub.com.

Dec. 5 — Vallejo YC Harbor Lighted Boat Parade. Info, www.vyc.org or (707) 643-1254.

Dec. 5 — Stockton SC Lighted Boat Parade. Info, www.stocktonsc.org.

Dec. 5 — Santa Cruz YC Lighted Boat Parade in the south harbor, 5:30 p.m. Info, www.scyc.org/lbp.

Dec. 5 — 30th Annual Delta Reflections Lighted Boat Parade, starting in Stockton at 5 p.m. Info, www.mwyc.org.

Dec. 6 — Subasta Auction at Marina de La Paz, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. This fundraiser for needy kids in La Paz is hosted by Fundación de los Niños de La Paz and sponsored by Club Cruceros. Info, www.clubcruceros.org.

Dec. 6-27 — Free sailing at Pier 40 every Sunday courtesy of BAADS. Info, (415) 281-0212 or www.baads.org.

Dec. 10 — San Rafael Lighted Boat Parade, 6 p.m. Info, www.sanrafaelyachtclub.org or (415) 300-4510.

Dec. 11 — Hanukah begins at sundown.

Dec. 12 — Marina Bay Lighted Boat Parade, 6-8 p.m. Details, info@mbyachtharbor.com or (510) 236-1013.

Dec. 12 — Sausalito Lighted Yacht Parade along the waterfront, 6 p.m. Info, www.syconline.org.

Dec. 12 — Holiday celebration at Hyde St. Pier with live music, activities and a visit from the Big Guy himself, 3-4:45 p.m. Tour historic vessels from 6-9 p.m. RSVP for tour. Kids 15 & under free, adults \$5. Info, (415) 447-5000.

Dec. 15 — 'Everything 12-Volt' free seminar by Jerry Yow at San Jose West Marine, 5-6 p.m. RSVP, (408) 246-1147.

Dec. 18 — St. Francis YC Lighted Boat Parade, from Pier 39 to Ft. Mason, 6 p.m. Info, www.stfyc.com.

Dec. 19 — 22nd Annual Holiday Boat Lighting Contest at Pillar Point, starting at 6 p.m., with a party following at Half Moon Bay YC. Info, www.hmbyc.org or (650) 725-2120.

Dec. 21 — Summer Sailstice for those in the southern hemisphere. It's still six months away for the rest of us.

Dec. 25 — Shop our online chandlery for the perfect gift for your favorite sailor. Go to www.latitude38.com and be sure to order by 12/14 for delivery in time for Christmas.

Dec. 31 — Only once in a blue moon does the blue moon

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CALENDAR

land on New Year's Eve, but it does today.

Jan. 1 — Cure that hangover with a head-clearing sail!

Jan. 4-Mar. 26 — Full-Time Sailmaking & Rigging Course at Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building in Port Hadlock, WA. Info, www.nwboatschool.org or (360) 385-4948.

Jan. 6 — Registration at Santa Cruz Harbor for three USCGA classes, 7-8:30 p.m.: Coastal Navigation (starts 1/11), Boating Skills & Seamanship (starts 1/13), and Sailing Skills & Seamanship (starts 1/14). Info, wscgaur@gmail.com.

Jan. 12-Feb. 2 — America's Boating Class by Marin Power & Sail Squadron in Novato on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7-9 p.m. Textbook, \$40. Info, (415) 924-2712.

Jan. 13-17 — 50th Annual Portland Boat Show at the Expo Center. Info, www.otshows.com.

Racing

Dec. 5 — Fall Series #4. SSC, www.stocktonsc.org.

Dec. 12-13 — BAYS Winter Opti Series #3. Info, www.bayarea-youthsailing.com.

Jan. 1 — Master Mariners New Year's Day Race and Chili Potluck at Pt. San Pablo YC in Pt. Richmond. Info, (415) 364-1656 or www.mastermariners.org.

Jan. 2 — Burrr Rabbit. CPYC, regatta@cpyc.com.

Jan. 16 — Richmond YC Little Daddy Regatta. Big Daddy will follow March 13-14. Info, www.richmondyc.org.

Jan. 18-22 — Key West Race Week by Nautica, the best regatta in the country. Info, www.premiere-racing.com.

Jan. 27-30 — The Superyacht Cup Antigua. Watch beautiful people sail beautiful boats in a beautiful venue. Info, www.thesuperyachtcup.com.

Jan. 30 — Three Bridge Fiasco, one of the oddest and most entertaining races ever invented. and the first SSS event of the season. Info, www.sfbaysss.org.

Midwinter Regattas

BERKELEY YC — Midwinters: 12/12-13, 1/9-10, 2/13-14. Chowder Races: Sundays through March except when it conflicts with above. Bobbi, (925) 939-9885.

CAL SAILING CLUB — Year-round Sunday morning dinghy races, intracub only, typically in Laser Bahias and JY15s. Email Gary and Alistair at racing_chair@cal-sailing.org.

CORINTHIAN YC — Midwinters: 1/16-17 & 2/20-21. Donal Botkin, racing@cyc.org.

ENCINAL YC — Jack Frost Series: 1/23, 2/27, 3/27. Small Boat Winter Series: 1/30, 2/27, 3/27. Matthew Dean, rearcommodore@encinal.org.

GOLDEN GATE YC — Seaweed Soup Series: 12/5, 1/9, 2/6, 3/6. Mont, gyyacedeck@aol.com or (209) 481-5158.

HALF MOON BAY YC — Midwinters: 1/17, 2/21, 3/21. Info, sailing@hmbyc.org or www.hmbyc.org.

ISLAND YC — Estuary Midwinters: 12/13, 1/10, 2/14, 3/14. John, (510) 521-2980 or iycracing@yahoo.com.

LAKE MERRITT SC — Midwinters: 12/12, 1/10, 2/13, 3/14. Beth, (510) 444-5292 or ebuddington@earthlink.net.

OAKLAND YC — Sunday Brunch Series: 1/3, 1/24, 2/7, 2/21, 3/7. John, (510) 522-6868 or j_tuma@comcast.net.

REGATTAPRO — Winter One Design: 12/12, 1/9, 2/13. Jeff (415) 595-8364 or jzarwell@regattapro.com.

RICHMOND YC — Small Boat Midwinters: 12/6, 1/3, 2/7, 3/7. Tony, amcastruccio@sbcglobal.net or (925) 426-0686.

SANTA CRUZ YC — Midwinters: 12/19, 1/16, 2/20, 3/20. Info, (831) 425-0690.

SAUSALITO YC — Sunday Midwinters: 12/6, 1/3, 2/7,

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37' X-Yachts 372 Sport, '87	SOLD	
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35' J/105, Hull #347, '00, Bald Eagle	Reduced!	\$109,000
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35' J/35C, '91, Belle**		\$120,000

35' 1D35, '00, Great Sensation	\$84,900
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34' Olson-Ericson, '89**	\$47,500
33' J/100, Hull #5, '05, Reddie Freddie	Reduced! \$118,000
32' J/32, Independence, '00	Reduced! \$125,000
29' Back Cove, '05, Diamond Lil	Reduced! \$159,000
29' MJM 29z, '07**	\$269,000
29' J/29, '85, Masthead**	SOLD
28' Alerion Express, '06**	Reduced! \$105,000
27' Choate, '79, Allegro Con Brio	SOLD
27' Antrim 27, '98, Luna	Reduced! \$29,900
26' J/80, '01, Lay Down Sally	SOLD
22' Aquapro Raider 665, '04	Reduced! \$34,900

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CALENDAR

3/7. John Mount, race@syconline.org.

SEQUOIA YC — Winter Series: 12/5, 1/16, 2/6, 3/13.
Redwood Cup: 12/20, 1/24, 2/28, 3/28. Mike Garl, mikegarl@sbcglobal.net.

SOUTH BAY YRA — Midwinters: 12/5, 1/16, 2/20, 3/20.
Jocelyn Swanson, regatta@cpyc.com

SOUTH BEACH YC — Island Fever Midwinters: 12/19,
1/16, 2/20, 3/20. Info, www.southbeachyc.org.

TIBURON YC — Midwinters: 1/23, 2/13, 3/13. Ian Mat-
thew, ian.matthew@comcast.net or (415) 883-6339.

VALLEJO YC — Tiny Robbins Midwinters: 12/5, 1/9,
2/13, 3/7. Info, (707) 643-1254.

Please send your calendar items by the 10th of the month to calendar@latitude38.com. If you're totally old-school, mail them to *Latitude 38* (Attn: Calendar), 15 Locust Avenue, Mill Valley, CA, 94941 or fax them to us at (415) 383-5816. But please, no phone-ins! Calendar listings are for marine-related events that either are free or don't cost much to attend. The Calendar is not meant to support commercial enterprises.

December Weekend Tides

date/day	time/ht.	time/ht.	time/ht.	time/ht.
	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW
12/05Sat	0230/5.0	0654/3.0	1255/6.4	1950/-1.1
12/06Sun	0319/5.1	0802/2.9	1354/5.9	2041/-0.7
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
12/12Sat	0117/2.2	0754/6.4	1451/-0.3	2148/4.4
12/13Sun	0210/2.6	0835/6.5	1535/-0.7	2245/4.6
	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW
12/19Sat	0212/4.7	0640/3.2	1223/5.7	1916/-0.4
12/20Sun	0246/4.7	0728/3.2	1303/5.3	1952/0.0
12/24Thu	0500/5.3	1134/2.1	1703/3.6	2235/1.8
12/25Fri	0537/5.5	1233/1.5	1840/3.5	2326/2.2
12/26Sat	0617/5.8	1325/0.8	2013/3.6	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
12/27Sun	0023/2.7	0700/6.1	1413/0.1	2125/3.9
12/31Thu	0401/3.0	1012/7.1	1712/-1.6	

December Weekend Currents

date/day	slack	max	slack	max
	12/05Sat	0914 2217	0032/4.1F 1208/2.5F	0407 1448
12/06Sun	1022 2310	0124/4.0F 1308/2.4F	0456 1550	0708/2.3E 1916/4.7E
12/12Sat	0930 2306	0029/2.1E 1252/4.5E	0341 1652	0640/2.8F 2001/3.5F
12/13Sun	1014	0130/1.9E 1339/4.7E	0433 1740	0728/2.7F 2052/3.7F
12/19Sat	0857 2149	0016/3.4F 1141/2.0F	0342 1421	0545/1.8E 1747/4.3E
12/20Sun	0945 2226	0052/3.2F 1226/1.9F	0421 1505	0627/1.8E 1830/3.9E
12/24Thu	0021 1343	0333/2.5F 1613/1.7F	0650 1911	0938/2.9E 2148/2.3E
12/25Fri	0105 1439	0418/2.4F 1718/2.0F	0728 2025	1029/3.3E 2245/2.0E
12/26Sat	0154 1531	0507/2.4F 1821/2.4F	0808 2135	1121/3.7E 2344/1.8E
12/27Sun	0247 1621	0556/2.4F 1919/2.9F	0851 2238	1212/4.2E
12/31Thu	0119 1200	0322/2.2E 1534/5.8E	0615 1930	0916/2.9F 2234/4.4F

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LETTERS

↑↓WHICH BOAT HAS CIRCUMNAVIGATED THE MOST?

I read somewhere that more people have circumnavigated on a Westsail than on any other boat. But another sailor told me that he read more people have gone around in Tahiti ketches. Could you clarify the answer or direct me to somebody who might know the answer?

John Jones
Planet Earth

John — What a fun question! Unfortunately, we're never going to know the answer to your question because there is no body or institution that keeps track of circumnavigations.

We at Latitude keep what might be the closest thing — our not-definitive 'West Coast Circumnavigators List', which at last count had about 286 boats. The majority of circumnavigations were completed on various types of boats. But boat types with multiple circumnavigations to their credit include the Nor'Sea 27, Islander 36, CT-41, Freya 39, Cal 46, Valiant 40, Peterson 44, Cal 35, Rhodes/Cheoy Lee 40, Westsail 32, Pearson 365, Tayana 52, Stevens 47 and Celestial 48. It came as a major surprise to us, but the boat leading our circumnavigator's list was the Cal 46, with five trips around to her credit. Who would have thought?

Just for fun, consider some of the improbable boats on our list that have made it around: 12-ft Testa custom, Lapworth 24, Lyle Hess 24, 25-ft wood Folkboat, Vertue 25, Contessa 26, Heavenly Twins 26 cat, Albin Vega 27, Cal 2-27, Southern Cross 28, H-28, Westsail 28, Piver 28 tri, Ericson 29, Cascade

29, Odyssey 30, Golden Gate 30, Rawson 30, Channel Cutter 30, Piver 32, Tahiti 32 sloop, Cal 34, and Columbia 34. If this gives you the impression that any decently built production boat has, in good hands, a fine chance of being able to sail around the globe, who are we to argue? And we know for a fact that some of these boats on our list were purchased and equipped for less than

More Swan 65s have gone around the world — that's our guess.

\$10,000. As has often been said, money has never been the main obstacle to anyone doing a circumnavigation.

If we had to guess which boat in the world has been circumnavigated the most, it would certainly not be the Tahiti ketch. We suppose there is a very slight chance that it would be the Westsail 32, but we think it's more likely to be something like a Valiant 40 or a Peterson 44. If we had to put money on it, our guess would be the Swan 65.

If anybody has a different opinion, we'd love to hear it.

↑↓"THAT'D BE UP THE BUTT, BOB"

The accompanying photo is of an enema device made from liferaft parts. I saw it in a recent magazine article. The device was made by the Robertson family of the 43-ft wooden schooner *Lucette* in '72 after their boat was sunk by a whale in the South Pacific. In order to survive in a lifeboat without fresh water for 38 days, they had to hydrate their bodies with saltwater using the jury-rigged enema device.

How can ingesting saltwater via the anus be less destructive

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LETTERS

to a human body than drinking it? Does the saltwater bypass the liver or something? How long could you survive being hydrated like this, and why don't all liferafts come equipped with enema devices? It could save lives.

Mark Sedorchuk
Planet Earth



MARK SEDORCHUK

Thanks to modern electronics, enema bags are no longer needed in liferafts.

TransPac, did some pretty ballsy firsthand research. The former Navy carrier pilot and a friend packed six lbs of food — but no water — into a Zodiac inflatable, then set out to test survival systems by drifting from San Francisco to Hawaii. Things didn't start particularly well, as the inflatable was flipped off Monterey after just a couple of days, and they lost much of their gear. But they kept on. In fact, Sigler was furious when they



LATITUDE / ANDY

Perhaps fearing they'd be stranded in their liferaft for a lengthy period, the 'Eupsychia' crew gave an enema demonstration during the Ha-Ha Kick-Off party.

You'll have to read his book to find out how the two survived without fresh water for so long.

Nearly 40 years on, it's a very different cruising world. As we all know, whales are still sinking boats. But when crews lose their boats, they now have incredible electronic devices to help get themselves rescued. We're talking about VHF radio, SSB/ham radio, EPIRBs, satphones, Spot GPS systems and more. As such, the entire discussion has evolved from how to survive in a liferaft by giving each other enemas and drink-

Mark — Back when we started sailing in the early '70s, cruisers used to ask the same questions you're asking. And because of the crew's magnificent survival, Dougal Robertson's *Survive the Savage Sea* was a popular book.

In addition, guys like George Sigler, whose Oakland-based Survival & Safety was an early advertiser in Latitude, and who started the Singlehanded

were rescued just short of Hawaii 56 days later. But by that time they'd each already lost about one-third of their body weight, and Navy officials were worried they were going to die. Oh yeah, once they were rescued, the Navy copped to the fact that the trip was actually an official Navy project. For reasons known only to him, Sigler took 26 years to write *Experiment* in Survival about the trip. It's available from Amazon.

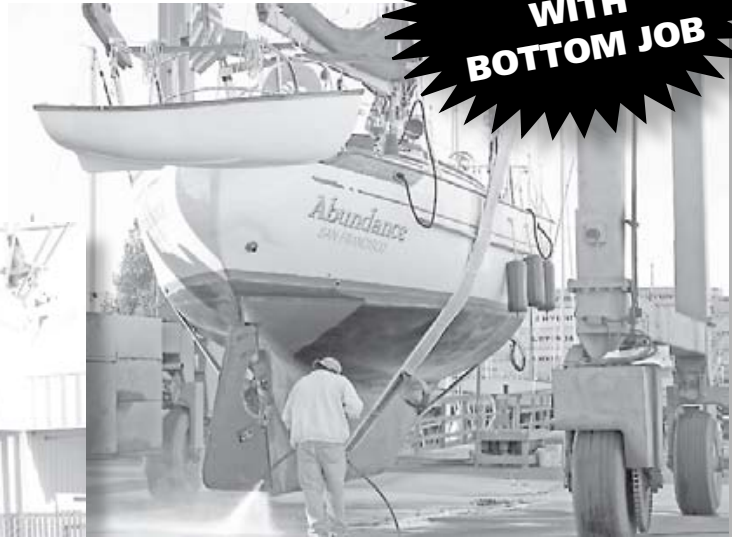
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LETTERS

ing one's urine, to how to get one's butt rescued in a matter of hours. Because of this, redundant ways to call for help have become very popular.

↑↓ BAJA CALIFORNIA IS HEAVEN, NOT HELL

I was glad to see that you used the November 16 *Letronic* to set people straight on what life is like down here in Mexico. Although I sold my beloved Vanguard 33 *Uhuru* a few years ago and no longer cruise, I still live in Baja.

Here's how a local sees all the so-called problems in Mexico. Swine flu? You have a better chance of catching it in a grocery store in the U.S. We've hardly had any swine flu cases in Baja California Sur.

Beheadings, killings and drug problems? These are



MIKE MILLER

Having sold his Vanguard 33, Mike Miller now is a trailer-boater out of Los Cabos.

primarily border problems and turf wars between rival gangs. It's not a threat to cruisers or tourists. Once again, you have a greater chance of some thug attacking you outside your neighborhood 7-Eleven than you do being attacked in Mexico.

The hurricanes that hit Baja this season did bring some wind, a lot of rain and some damage. But unlike after *Katrina* in the States, the clean-up in Baja literally started while the storms were still passing through. I drove through Ciudad Constitución one week after it had been hit really hard by *Jimena*, and saw that several crews from CFE, our electric company, had been flown in from the mainland and were hard at work. They had already put in miles of new power lines and replaced the wooden power poles with hurricane-proof ones made of concrete. The power was on, people were in the stores, and life was already returning to normal. The folks



MIKE MILLER

Coastal Mexico is safe for cruisers, but not dorado.

who spearheaded the clean-up debacle of *Katrina* could have learned a lot from the Mexican government and people of Mexico.

Yes, the dismal world economy has adversely affected tourism in southern Baja. But I rarely see anybody begging or living in the streets of Los Cabos. The cost of living down here is beyond reasonable, and it's a rare person who can't afford a tasty taco and 10-peso beer. Tourism is starting to come back, although thanks to the knuckleheads in the mainstream U.S. media, it's going to take longer

than it should. CNN, in particular, couldn't have been more out of touch with many of its reports about Mexico, and it most definitely hurt us.

Since I no longer have a sailboat to tow my dinghy, I've included a photo of what I use now. By the way, as I write



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LETTERS

this, the water temperature in the southern Sea of Cortez is 85 degrees, we've been getting some surf, and the fish are biting. The dorado is one that I caught last Sunday, and later shared with my wonderful Mexican friends and neighbors.

I'm a California boy who has found my heaven in safe, warm and incredibly inexpensive southern Baja. No matter what kind of nonsense CNN and other U.S. news sources give out, take it from me, life down here is great!

Mike Miller
ex-Uhuru, Vanguard 33
ex-Ventura / now Los Cabos, B.C.S.

Mike — Surprisingly to us, one of the worst offenders has been the Los Angeles Times. On many occasions they've had a big ad on their webpage for a feature titled something like: "Drug War Hellhole That is Mexico." That's not even close to the wording of the ad, but it conveys the hysterical and inaccurate tone they've used. The Times should be ashamed not only for running such a misleading headline, but for running it repeatedly, almost like propaganda against Mexico.

And for all of you skeptics, don't take Mike Miller's or our word on the quality of life south of the border — ask anybody who is cruising in Mexico or is one of the more than a million Americans who have retired in Mexico. They think your beliefs are as whacked out as those of the Flat Earth Society.

↑↓ PROTECTING THE UNION WITH CHEESE

Your recent article on the earthquake and resulting tsunami in Samoa that drove so many boats ashore caused me to recall the tale of the *Wateree*. She was a Union steamship in the Civil War that, in 1868, happened to be at anchor in Santiago, Chile. An offshore earthquake drained the harbor of water. The water was gone long enough for the local citizens to flock into what had been the harbor to pick up floundering fish. It was even reported that the mud started to stink, making the U.S.



More than 130 years later, all that's left of the cheese-shooting 'Wateree' is the boiler.

sailors sick, so the water must have been out of the bay for some time.

When the sea came back in, it did so with a vengeance, sweeping all before it. This included the *Wateree*, which ended up intact and relatively undamaged some 500

yards inland! Looters spied this rich prey in short order, so the captain ordered that they be fired upon to keep them from boarding. The grape and balls had been lost, so all they could find were balls of . . . hard cheese! These were loaded into the cannons and fired harmlessly at the looters. Nonetheless, it successfully repelled the boarders.

But the *Wateree* had to be abandoned. It eventually became, in turn, an emergency hospital, an inn, a hospital again, and finally a warehouse. She was eventually completely destroyed by another tsunami on May 9, 1877.

The only action this ship ever saw was when she was high and dry, defending the flag by shooting cheese at the locals.

Jamis MacNiven
Woodside

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LETTERS

Jamis — We love it! What the heck were they doing in Santiago anyway?

↑↓NOTHING BEATS FULL-MOON CHUTE-FLYING

I sailed my boat in the recent Ha-Ha, and would like to compliment the entire Ha-Ha organization for hosting an unbelievable event. My crew and I had a wonderful time, met some great people, and enjoyed some spectacular full-moon sailing. I find it amazing that you guys can shepherd more than 150 boats for over 700 miles and keep the whole endeavor under control. This only works if the participants are equally passionate about making the event one to remember — and they were. Great people, great venues, spectacular scenery, and great fishing — except for us.

We were the first boat to sail the entire second leg. Indeed, we sailed the entire course once we learned the Ha-Ha rules for Soul Sailor status, which is that you can't motor when the Poobah thinks it's possible to sail. We also sailed the third leg, but Rich and Sheri Crowe of the Newport Beach-based Farr 44 *Tabu* nipped us by about a mile when the wind got light near Cabo.

After the first Ha-Ha leg, those of us with bigger and faster boats got organized within the Ha-Ha to race the last two legs. There were no handicaps; the first one across the finish would win. Scott Piper of the Miami Beach-based J/160 *Pipe Dream*, who has done four circumnavigations, blew out his big kite in 28 knots of wind on the first leg, so he couldn't make his usual speed in the lighter stuff. But Scott and his crew are damn good sailors, and were in the hunt all the way. In addition to *Tabu* (whose crew each have 350,000 ocean miles), *Pipe Dream*, the multi-Singlehanded TransPac-vet Lou Freeman on the Swan 51 *Seabird*, and Lee Pryor's Oceanside-based J/130 *Sirocco* with the deep keel, all had the sail of a lifetime down the coast of Baja. It doesn't get much better than that.



LATITUDE / ANDY

"The Ha-Ha will live in our memory book forever," says Bob Musor.

I know that we'll never forget gybing our big red kite in 22 knots under the full moon. That will live in the memory book forever. Everyone wins in the Ha-Ha, but I think this one might have been special.

A word on our crew. As you realize, you never really know the crew until you untie your boat from the dock. My crew had never met each other before the Ha-Ha. I had one guy who had flown in from Hawaii, two from San Francisco who didn't know each other, and a 21-year-old left over from the delivery from San Francisco to San Diego. Two of the guys were friends of a friend who had done a lot of prep work on the boat but couldn't make the trip.

The first time the five of us met was the morning before the start of the Ha-Ha. All knew how to sail, but none except me had ever flown big asymmetricals in any sort of breeze, particularly offshore. Before long, I had five good drivers, which was a key to making the trip a lot of fun. When the breeze got up it was hard to get wheel time, because it was so much

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LETTERS

fun. You all but had to pry their fingers off the wheel. I had to start rationing time behind the wheel! There is nothing like a full moon Hoo-Hah sailing down coast of Baja. We had one stretch in Leg Two where we made 92 miles in eight hours. Not bad for a sprit boat. Fast cruisin' is great fun!

I think anyone contemplating doing a Ha-Ha needs to cast off the docklines and just do it. It will result in memories that last a lifetime. Thanks again for a wonderful event.

Bob Musor
Sceptre, J/130
Alameda

Bob — Thanks for the kind words, and even more for accurately pointing out that the success of the Ha-Ha is actually based on the participants being such great folks. Which they were. It amazes us that some people who have never done a Ha-Ha continue to tell others that the Ha-Ha is just a drunken party down the coast. That's so off the mark we're thinking of giving the Ha-Ha a motto: 'The most fun you can have sailing without drinking or having sex.'

Collectively, this year's Ha-Ha fleet sailed the equivalent of five times around the world. Other than the J/World collision with a whale resulting in the boat sinking, there were relatively few problems, even during the moderately strong winds and big seas of the second and third day. For the record, in the 16-year history of the Ha-Ha, one boat has sunk, one lost her rudder, and one was dismayed.

↑↓ HERE'S ONE FOR THE BLOOPER REEL

Thanks for a perfect Baja Ha-Ha! It was my third, and the sweetest, because I finally got to sail it with my own boat.

You asked about the blooper that we flew. Four weeks



Probably 80% of the Ha-Ha fleet thought a blooper was some kind of mistake, not an '80s-era headsail to be flown from the leeward bow.

before the Ha-Ha, I helped sail a friend's Cheoy Lee Offshore 50 from Portland to San Diego. While in San Diego, my lady Tiffany and I met Patsy Verhoeven of *Talion* and her niece Morgan at the Brigantine restaurant on Shelter Island. At the bottom of the steps to the restaurant, there is a beautiful picture on the wall of an old IOR boat with a blooper flying opposite the spinnaker. "Yes," I said to myself, "that's what I need for the Ha-Ha!"

Minney's Marine Surplus in Newport Beach had a few bloopers to

choose from, and I was lucky enough to find a perfect one to match my red, white and blue spinnaker. Hopefully, you got some good pictures of it as *Profligate* reached across our bow!

Craig Shaw
Adios, Columbia 43
Portland

Craig — Thanks for the kind words. And yes, we did get a great shot.

Congratulations for being one of the few Soul Sailors in this year's Ha-Ha. You Portland sailors know how to persevere.


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LETTERS

↑↓ **GREAT HA-HA, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PUDDLE JUMP?**

First, a note of thanks for your work to make the '09 Baja Ha-Ha such a resounding success! I crewed on the Seawind 33 *Stray Cat*, and just returned to California from Cabo. Guy and Carol Dean, the skipper and admiral respectively, continued on to La Paz and will head to points south.

Everyone on *Stray Cat* — which also included Dave Roskelly — agreed that the Ha-Ha staff did a splendid job of directing/assisting/herding/guiding/mentoring/babysitting 160+ vessels with probably about 600 people from San Diego to Cabo. Somehow you guys managed to run an orderly and professional event, but with few rules. Yet there was rampant *joie de vie*, including the 'From Here to Eternity Beach Kissing Contest' and a 'Boat Bites Competition'. Bravo! And let's not forget the miraculous third place ties in all the classes, which meant not one boat got anything as bad as a fourth place finish.

Those of us on *Stray Cat* loved the wild winds and high seas, and though we were awed by *J/World's* encounter with a whale, we rejoiced at the seemingly routine rescue of all aboard! Bravo once again!

But enough about the fab Ha-Ha, I'm interested in the Pacific Puddle Jump. After meeting up with fellow Ha-Ha sailor Joel Ungar of the Santa Barbara-based Island Packet 350 *Alobar*, I learned that he's considering doing it, and I expressed an interest in perhaps being part of the crew. That leaves me with three questions:

1) Based on the Pacific Puddle Jump site, it seems that boats might be departing from all points on the West Coast, though most from Mexico. Is there an approximate date when most of them leave?

2) Recognizing that there are many variables, how long is a typical passage to the Marquesas from Banderas Bay for a 40-ft sloop?

3) While I will add my name to the crew list associated with the Pacific Puddle Jump site, do you know of any specific skippers looking for crew to make the crossing?

Thanks again for the unique Ha-Ha experience, one I will not forget!

Mark Downing
Santa Rosa

Mark — Thanks for the very kind words, we're glad you all had such a good time. We put your questions to Andy 'Assistant Poobah' Turpin, who becomes 'Mr. Puddle Jump' every spring. He responds as follows:

If you want to crew on the Puddle Jump, I suggest that you apply to join the Yahoo 'pacificpuddlejumps' group. Go to the Yahoo home page and search for 'groups', then punch in 'pacificpuddlejumps'. Once you're in, you'll see a database of many boats that are heading west this year. You can also subscribe to receive daily emails from the group on a wide variety of Puddle Jump topics. You could post your own email message to the fleet stating your desire to crew and listing your qualifications.

Most boats leave from Mexico between the beginning of February and the end of April. The trip typically takes three to four weeks on a 40-footer. If you want more detailed passage data, check out the info table in our annual recap articles. You can download them for free at www.pacificpuddlejumps.com, and get a wealth of data on crossing times and weather.

↑↓ **HATS OFF TO THE COASTIES**

I run a 21-ft Boston Whaler out of Bodega Bay, and I have Commercial Assistance Towing as well as Auxiliary Sail Vessel endorsements on my USCG/Merchant Marine Master's

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LETTERS

ticket. Over the past couple of decades, I've towed at least six or seven disabled boats back to the harbor up there, and stood by to assist several others. (We don't have a SeaTow equivalent running out of our little harbor 60 miles north of San Francisco, so we help each other the best we can.)

I'd never been on the other end of a tow line until November 14. In almost dead calm conditions that morning, I was motorsailing my newly-acquired Niagara 31 sloop against a strong ebb halfway between Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge. Suddenly my boat's 13-hp Volvo diesel blew a head gasket, so there went our power. We were right in the center of the ship channel at the time, and I could see a container vessel approaching the Gate. I won't share the language I used before I calmed down somewhat and realized that, for the first time in my life on the water, I needed help.

The Coasties instantly responded to my call on 16, switched me to 22A, and told me that help was on the way. Within about five nervous minutes, one of their 45-footers was on the scene. Her three-person crew competently walked me and my three-person crew through proper procedures to receive their tow. We swiftly lowered sails, and I managed not to miss the rescue boat's accurately-thrown heaving line. It was not difficult to make their tow line fast to my boat's bow cleats, although I'm embarrassed to admit that I had to be reminded by the Coastie skipper not to make both ends of their tow bridle fast to the same starboard cleat.

I moved aft after being politely admonished by the Coast Guard skipper to clear my boat's foredeck while under tow. Our run at hull speed out of the main shipping channel and back up to Gas House Cove was uneventful. But I was relieved to see the large container vessel that had come in the Gate pass a couple of hundred yards to the beam of us.

In my excitement, I failed to get the names of the Coasties who helped us out. I wish I could thank them personally and by name for their skill, seamanship, and especially for their courtesy and understanding. I'd take my hat off to all of them, but the sun's reflection off my aging, balding dome would necessitate their swiftly grabbing for sunglasses, and they've already done enough on our behalf, that's for sure.

Tony Wilde
Syrinx, Niagara 31
Gas House Cove, San Francisco

Tony — Yours isn't the first boat/sailboard/dinghy/kite-sailor to have been dead in the water in the shipping channel, so you can be sure that the pilots and crew on ships keep a sharp eye out for situations such as that. Nonetheless, there have been accidents. More than 30 years ago, our friend Lou Albano and a crewmember on his 30-ft Hurricane were run down and killed by an outbound ship after the engine on their boat failed and there was no wind for them to sail out of the way.

↑↓ "THE COAST GUARD SAVED MY LIFE"

I just saw the report of the rescue of the *J/World* crew during the Ha-Ha. Whenever I see a Coast Guard helicopter or hear of a Coast Guard rescue, I relive the time they pulled me off the cliff at Devil's Slide near Pacifica in '95. They saved my life. They are my heroes.

After the rescue, I hosted a dinner party for the crew and the whole station at a local hotel. The diver who pulled me off the cliff told me that he had helped save 57 people, and nobody had ever done that before. The guy had had to leave his wife, who was in labor at the time, to fly the mission to save me.



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LETTERS

Every time I see those helicopters, I say, "God bless the United States Coast Guard.

John Murphy
Pacifica

John — The Coast Guard is terrific, isn't it? Our only regret is that SAR operations had to become part of Homeland Security, which we think is an entirely different mission.

Funny you mention a recognition dinner or event for the Coast Guard rescue crew. Shortly after the J/World rescue,



A Coast Guard helicopter is seen during one of their many training missions.

Chris and Carolyn Hunt of Sacramento, who from their backyard watch Coast Guard C-130s take off on rescue and support missions, proposed hosting a BBQ at their house for the crews. We're going to wait until warmer summer weather for that. In addition, we're going to try to arrange an

appreciation event for the Coast Guard SAR folks in San Diego prior to next year's Ha-Ha. These men and women are the best in the world at their jobs!

↑↓ "MAY A THOUSAND SEAGULLS CRAP ON YOUR DECK"

Thank you for degrading my honest suggestion that Liz Clark of the Santa Barbara-based Cal 40 *Swell* consider chartering by reducing it to a lame booty call. You smugly state you know I mean well, yet you nonetheless proceed to imply less than seemly motives on my part. Generally, your editorial comments are insightful and informative. What's the matter? Readership down? Feeling particularly snarky this month?

I'll begrudgingly thank you for the suggestions to get more involved in cruising. I will look into them. Of course, in your mind, I'll probably just be looking for female captains, right?

I might be "flunking Men and Women 101" if I were cruising for a date. I am merely suggesting some alternate means Liz might use to keep on rolling. She's is a smart gal, and rightly may have considered these options, but may not have thought there would be demand. Maybe it's just the impetus needed for her to do some limited chartering, or use her other talents — like surfing — to gather some extra cash, without impacting her personal journey too severely, or depending on the kindness — or lack thereof — of *Latitude* readers.

Of course women — and men — will make their own choices. I'm just suggesting that if she were to draw from a base of West Coast sailors — men or women — she might have them meet friends or family in California to screen the pool more easily, given her remote location and limited connectivity. Again, just trying to help, as I hope she keeps going, and keeps us, the readers of *Latitude*, in the loop on the way.

Given that none of us are with her, can any of us really reach the state of "understanding what she dedicated this phase of her life to?" It is clear she has a minimalist and low-impact philosophy, and she seeks that rare vision that comes from being close to and in tune with one's surroundings. Perhaps those ends could flourish by her sharing her rare niche with others, beyond the articles she kindly provides

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LETTERS

for us. If it keeps her going, and brings others into the fold of her thinking, then so much the better.

In my opinion, we need more folks to think and live as she does. But I do not presume to really 'get' all that makes up Liz or her journey, and neither should you.

In the meantime, I'll be feeding Olestra-laden potato chips to seagulls and dropping them off by your slips. Enjoy. And make sure to buy a few extra deck brushes.

Gary Hatch

Former owner of *Thalia*, 26-ft Privateer ketch
Cayucos, CA

Gary — *With all due respect, though you may not have intended it that way, we think your letter did come across as a lame booty call. We speak not just for ourselves, but for the three other members of our staff who proof the letters and responses before they go to print. But we apologize if we misunderstood you and your comments.*

With regard to chartering, it's the first thing anyone with a boat thinks about when considering ways to make money. Except in the most unusual situations, it's a terrible idea on which lots of time is spent, money is wasted and nerves are frayed. And that's before one even considers the risks of not having charter liability insurance. We're sure chartering has crossed Liz's mind, but that she's been smart enough to dismiss mixing business with dreams.

While it may be presumptuous of us, we do think we 'get' what Liz is doing — trying to live this part of her life like a poem.

↑↓ REAL-WORLD OUTBOARD SUGGESTION NEEDED

I just bought my first sailboat, a 1978 Newport 27. She has an Atomic 4 engine that doesn't run, so I have to get an outboard for her. I want to get an outboard that will move her along at five knots. Can someone at *Latitude* tell me how much horsepower I need to get that speed out of my 6,000-lb boat? I've asked at some outboard shops, but they only seem to know about powerboats.

Bill Murphy

Eisy M, Newport 27
Santa Rosa

Bill — *Rather than decide how big an outboard to buy based on theory, how about letting us throw your question out to our readers who have similar-sized and-displacement sailboats? After all, there may be some 'real world' considerations that could have a big effect on what size outboard would work best for you.*

↑↓ PT. CONCEPTION WAS A BREEZE

Your advice about rounding Pt. Conception in the November 4 edition of *Lectronic* was spot on. Last August I waited three days on a trip from Ventura to San Francisco. The fourth morning was foggy and there was a SSW breeze. We sailed downwind all the way to Port San Luis! It was the only time we had the motor off during the whole trip. Go figure.

But beware of the unsung dragon off Pt. Sur. Whoa wheee!

Cary Otis

Swallow, Nor'Sea 27
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↑↓ IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND IT PROTECTS YOU

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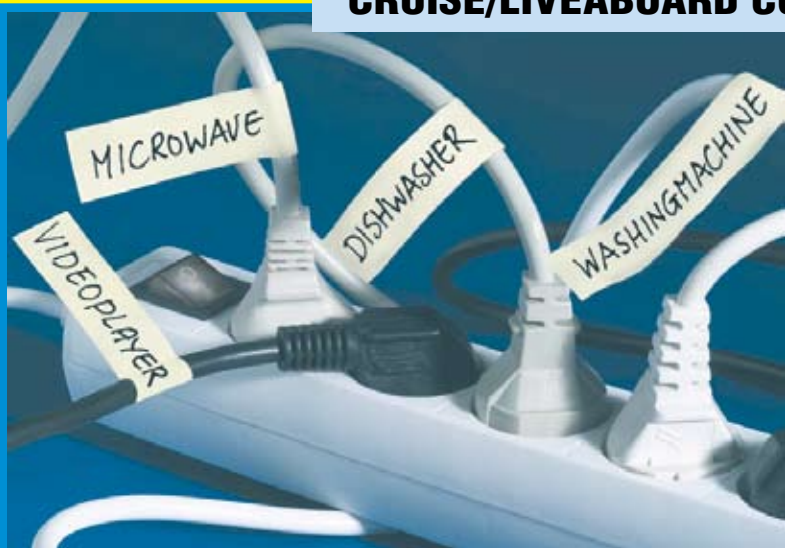
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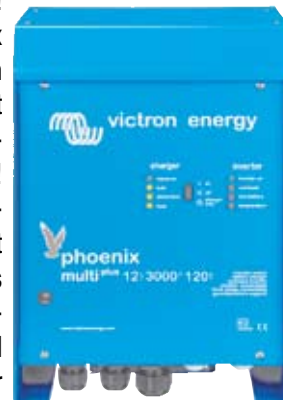


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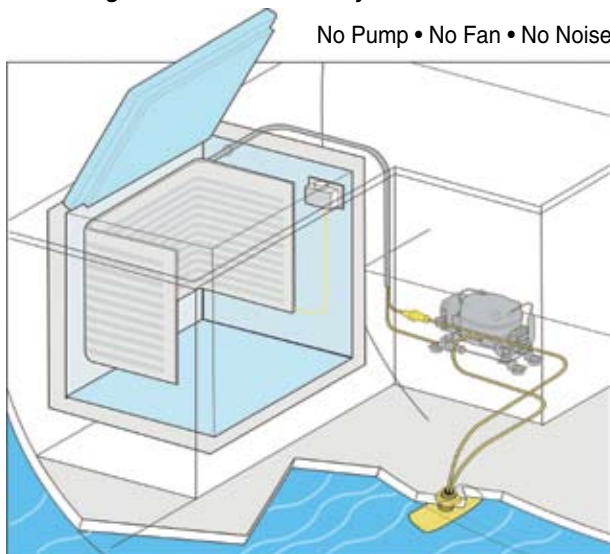
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LETTERS

is no equivalent where I lived.

But I'm wondering how liability works on boats. Is it like my house, where someone can slip, fall, sue and win? Many of us invite friends — and friends of friends — onto our boats. Do I have to avoid inviting people on daysails because they can sue me if something bad happens to them? If we lose someone overboard and I've done all that's reasonable to rescue him, can I be held liable as the skipper?

I hope I'm not being paranoid here. I have lots of parties at my house, and I'm not concerned about people slipping on the floor and suing me. But more things can go wrong on a boat.

I'm not asking for legal advice, but am curious what you have to say on the subject as it affects all of us. I don't want to work for an extra 10 years to pay for someone who didn't have the proverbial 'one hand for the boat'.

Iraklis Kourtidis
Winterhawk, 38-ft CSK catamaran
Oyster Point Marina, South San Francisco

Iraklis — You should have liability insurance on your boat — just as you should have it for your car and house — for three good reasons. First, most marinas now require up to \$500,000 liability insurance in order for you to get a slip. Second, while serious accidents are rare on boats, they do happen, and when they do, you want to make sure the injured person is taken care of. In the case where the person was responsible for himself/herself getting hurt, maybe it shouldn't be on your nickel, but that's the way it is.

Third, if somebody gets hurt on your boat — even as a result of their own stupidity — you stand to lose everything if you don't have insurance. For when it comes to lawsuits, the plaintiff has all the advantages. He/she can hire a lawyer on a contingency basis, and therefore has nothing to lose even if he/she doesn't prevail. But as a defendant, you still have to hire a trial lawyer for an ungodly amount of money, and could easily be bled dry in legal fees before you even get to the steps of a courtroom. And even if the case against you gets laughed out of court, nobody — as Bismarck Dinius learned — is going to pick up your legal fees for you. In England, where they have a more refined sense of justice, the loser of a lawsuit pays the winner's legal fees. One consequence of that more equitable system is that people are much less inclined to file — or threaten to file — frivolous lawsuits as has been so common in California.

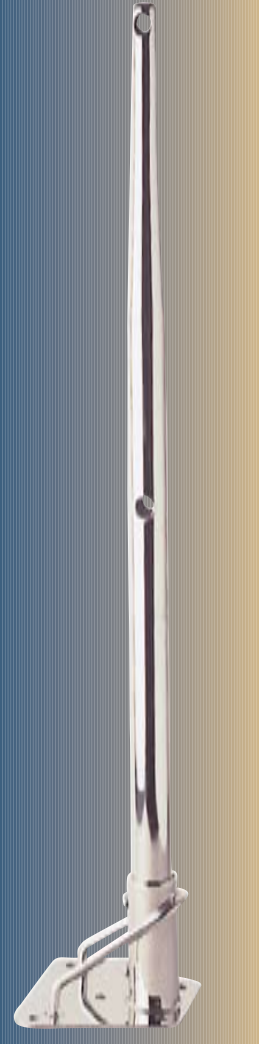
You also have to remember that even if a jury were to find you only minimally responsible for the injury, you could still be liable for 100% of the damages. This is thanks to the tortured legal concept of 'deep pockets', which holds that, if a person or company is responsible for as little as 1% of an accident, the person or company can be held responsible for 100% of the damages. This concept was championed in the '70s and '80s by California Chief Justice Rose Bird, who was, according to Wikipedia, "a controversial ideologue who often substituted her personal biases for law and the state constitution." Despite the fact that she had no judicial experience, she was appointed the first female Chief Justice of California. By an astonishing 2-to-1 margin, she also became the first Chief Justice to ever be recalled by the people of California. Bird finished her career not by being a real judge, but rather by ignominiously playing one on a television comedy. And no, we didn't make that up.

If you detect a slightly disparaging tone, it's because we believe that Bird, and others like her, through 'deep pockets' and other well-intended but foolish ideas, demonized personal responsibility and competence, and fostered the current 'California culture', in which irresponsibility, incompetence and failure

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LETTERS

are so frequently and richly rewarded.

Our remarks are obviously an oversimplification of some complicated concepts, but you'd be smart — not paranoid — to carry liability insurance. The good news is that liability-only insurance is actually quite inexpensive. In fact, if your boat is under 26 feet, you're almost certainly covered for about \$300,000 by your homeowner's or even renter's insurance. And if necessary, you could bump it up to \$500,000 or more for less than \$100 a year.

If you've got a larger boat, companies like Progressive will sell you liability-only insurance on boats up to 50 feet and \$250,000 in value. While Progressive wouldn't give us any examples of cost, people have told us they've gotten \$500,000 liability coverage on their boat for less than \$250 a year. We think that's money well spent. Progressive must make money on the policies, too, because we often see the Chairman of the Board of Progressive on his boat in the Caribbean. She's called Lone Ranger, and she's a refurbished 250-ft ocean-going tug that can cover 34,000 miles without having to refuel.

TIME FOR A SUNDOWNER/MOONRISER

We think we understand what Cal Chamberlain was talking about when he wrote about the sunset and moonrise phenom-



COURTESY BLUE BANANA

If you missed this sunset . . .

ena. Although we didn't get confused about which way was west, we were making the 220-mile passage from Sicily to Tunisia, North Africa, on a splendid evening, when we watched the sun set in front of us. Minutes later, we watched the full moon rise dead behind us, and it looked exactly the same as the sunset. The attached photos show first the sunset, then the moonrise. You are going to have to take our word for it as the photos look almost exactly the same except that the moon appears somewhat larger and there are a few clouds to the west. It was as if someone had put the video camera in reverse.



COURTESY BLUE BANANA

. . . you just had to turn around.

What a glorious world!

Sam & Bill Fleetwood
Blue Banana, Gulfstar 50
Monterey

EXPEDITE THIS!

We're all thankful that Eugenie of *J/World* and her crew were rescued following the unfortunate collision with a whale that caused their boat to sink. I crewed on Joel Ungar's Island Packet 350 *Alobar* in this year's Ha-Ha, and we also had a 'whale event'. Ours was north of Cedros Island when two large whales surfaced about 20 feet away, one on each side of our boat. Having already heard about the loss of *J/World*,



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LETTERS

we were pretty concerned, so we motored very slowly to port, gradually moving out of their path. Our subsequent chats with other boats indicated that many other crews had close encounters with whales, too.

Another interesting encounter was with Immigration in Cabo. When first paying tourist card fees at the bank across the street from Immigration, I asked a teller if any added fees would be charged by the Immigration officials. I was told there should not be any additional fees. But when it was my turn for processing at Immigration at the table they had set up for Baja Ha-Ha boats, an official asked for another \$20. When I politely questioned the official's request, he said, "It's OK, no problem," as he waved off my concern for additional fee. Nonetheless, the same Immigration official was successful in persuading many other Ha-Ha folks to hand over \$20 for some kind of "official sounding" fee.

Others might want to be aware of this and other requests for extra 'fees' in Mexico. One cruiser wisely suggested asking officials for a receipt when such questionable fees were requested, thinking it would be a way to judge the validity of the request. It might be worth a try. Of course, you don't want to jeopardize your standing in Mexico during the Ha-Ha or at other times, so ponying up an additional \$20 instead of being confrontational might not be a bad idea under some circumstances.

Having already done Ha-Ha's in '06 and '07, this was my third — and best — Ha-Ha yet. We had a great time on a good boat. Thanks for all you do to make this a fabulous cruising event.

John Harold
Alobar, Crew, Ha-Ha '09
Impulse, Hunter 340, Owner
South Beach Harbor, San Francisco

John — Thank you for the very kind words.

We saw so many whales during our Baja Bash in June and during the this year's Ha-Ha that we often didn't bother looking at them — unless they were in our path. Alas, a number of them were either in or close to being in our path. Our response was the same as yours — we tried to ease off to one side or the other. But sometimes there were so many in a given vicinity



LATITUDE / ANDY

Sailors must be careful; there are more whales than ever along the California and Mexico coasts.

ity that it was hard to know which way to turn. And we tried not to think about what it would be like if we slammed into a whale at 15 or 20 knots in the black of night. We know research has been done on how to avoid collisions between sailboats and whales, but apparently no successful solution has been found. We hope that changes.

In fact, we saw so many whales, that as part of an editorial response to an October letter, which we wrote prior to J/World's getting hit, we wrote the following:

"Based on our experience and that of others, whales seem to have made a huge comeback from Alaska all the way down to mainland Mexico. This being the case, everyone sailing from

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LETTERS

California to Mexico should have a plan of action ready in the event of a collision with a whale."

As for that clever guy at Immigration, we heard that he told some people he was charging an "expediting fee." But the other cruiser was right — no receipt, no money. And people should stick to their guns, particularly in big cities where there are tourist bureaus and such. There is much less bribery in Mexico than before, and the government is continuing to try to eradicate it completely.

↑↓A COLLISION FROM THE WHALE'S POINT OF VIEW

I sent the 'Lectronic link on the sinking of *J/World* to Diana MacIntyre, curator at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center at Palos Verdes, who is a whale expert. This is what she had to say from the whale's point of view:

"I wish they wouldn't say it was an attack. The whale(s) was coming to the surface to breathe, and something was in the way. They don't seem to hear sailboats. They bump what-



LATITUDE / RICHARD

ever is in the way so they can get to the surface, and will bump it until it goes away. I wouldn't call that an attack. I'm sure the whale was just as surprised as those on the boat."

I thought you might like to hear her perspective.

Ginger Clark
Planet Earth

After meditating on it, Eugenie is convinced no whale would intentionally hit her boat.

*of unprovoked whales attacking boats. In the case of *J/World*, however, captain Eugenie Russell tells us she doesn't think the whale attacked them. Read about the incident starting on page 102.*

Ginger — With all deference to Ms. MacIntyre's expertise, there have been many documented cases

↑↓LOTS OF WHALES ON THE MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL

We are currently in Richards Bay, South Africa. There has been only one sailboat hit by a whale this cruising season.



COURTESY BLUE SKY

They're everywhere! The Mathers of Redondo Beach recently saw hundreds of whales in the Mozambique Channel.

The boat was disabled, but was towed into Richards Bay by the local sea rescue people. The boat is now on the hard getting repairs to both the prop and the rudder.

During our passage south from Ile de Mozambique along the Mozambique Channel, we saw hundreds of whales. Our closest encounter was with a whale just one boat length in front of us. We tried the music thing. I also turned on the motor and motorsailed when we encountered more than a few whales — and even when we saw them breaching and tail slapping. We did all we could not to be quiet. But I don't think it really mattered, as our closest encounter was while nearing Richards Bay, when we were both running the motor and

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LETTERS

playing music.

P.S. We really enjoy *Lectronic*, as it gives us the much needed connection with home. Keep up the good work.

Jim Mather
Blue Sky, Downeast 45 ketch
Redondo Beach

↑↓ "THE HIGHLIGHT OF MY DAY — THEN AND NOW"

Thanks for the great picture of my boat *Freedom* in the November 11 *Lectronic Latitude*. I made *Latitude* once back in the mid-'90s in a piece about how to take good photos. The photo of my boat was with her rails down on starboard, framed by the Golden Gate Bridge in back. I still have the photo on my wall and four copies of that issue. It is the highlight of my day — both then and now!

Thanks for such a great magazine, as it greatly adds to the sailing experience in Northern California.

Jib Martens,
Freedom, Worth 40
Sausalito

Jib — Well, thank you, for without sailors like you making their boats 'looking good', we wouldn't have any great photos to run. Incidentally, check page 98 for the print version of that great shot of you enjoying a mellow daysail.

↑↓ ANOTHER STUGERON BELIEVER

I'm a 69-year-old German who, since '00, has been lucky enough to get away to our Super Maramu for sailing breaks in the Med, Caribbean, mainland U.S., Canada, Hawaii, Alaska, and currently Ensenada. Over the years, I've suffered badly from seasickness, although not quite as much with age.

I initially tried to treat my *mal de mer* with pharmaceutical ginger, but didn't have good results. Then I tried the Scopoderm patch. It was pretty effective, but I didn't like the strong side-effects. I ended up using Stugeron after other sailors recommended it while we were in the Dominican Republic. While there, I was able to buy Stugeron over the counter under the Cinnarizine brand.

I take half a 75-mg pill two hours before leaving the harbor, a quarter of a pill four hours later, and another quarter pill another eight hours later. I have no side-effects with this dosage. It's worked for me, so I recommend it to others.

Claus von der Heydt
Jonathan, Super Maramu
Berlin

↑↓ TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF NONSENSE

Why do people in the United States continue to racially profile? It happened in the November 13 *Lectronic*, when the editor made a reference to an "African-American media personality and mogul."

I thought that when people are American citizens, that's what they are. It seems that people such as you like double-barrel identities. Even Bill Cosby doesn't like the term African-American — and he should know better than you guys. If you continue this practice, there will be no more Americans, and we'll all have double-barrel ethnic descriptions. That's true racial profiling.

Be part of the cure, not the problem.

Dennis McMurtry
Canada

Dennis — With all due respect, you seem to be so bogged down in minutiae that you're not making sense. The following

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LETTERS

is the paragraph we wrote in reply to an email written by a fellow named Scott, a paragraph that contained the phrase that offended you:

"At the risk of sounding like a complete asshole once more, we're totally confused yet again. Several times in your various missives you've used the word 'hummer' rather than the word 'humor' to mean 'that which is meant to induce laughter'. We corrected it, hoping we were doing the right thing. And now you've used 'Opera' to refer, not to a place where operas are per-



African-American or just American?

formed, but rather to the African-American media personality and mogul. Are these typos or, as you suggest, do we just have an underdeveloped sense of 'hummer'?"

"Racial profiling," Mr. McMurtry, is "the inclusion of racial or ethnic characteristics in determining whether a person is considered likely to commit a particular type of crime or an illegal act or to behave in a 'predictable' manner." So, would you now like to try to explain how we racially profiled Ms. Winfrey? What racial or ethnic characteristics did we use to suggest Oprah was likely to commit a crime or act in a predictable manner?

What you meant to accuse us of is racially identifying Oprah, which is an entirely different thing. We indeed did do that, and with good reason. For if a sailing forum administrator consistently misspells 'humor' as 'hummer' and 'Oprah' as 'Opera', we have to go to extra lengths to make sure both of us know exactly who we are talking about.

Furthermore, Bill Cosby is just one guy who doesn't like the term African-American. If you want a five-minute opposing view, visit YouTube and check out Michael Jackson's explanation of why he was proud to be called an African-American. And while you're doing the research, look up Oprah in Wikipedia. In two of the first three lines she's described as an 'African-American' by those apparent online racists.

We agree with you that it would be preferable if everyone was just an American, but that cat has been out of the bag for ages, what with Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Native Americans, French-Americans, German-Americans, Arab-Americans, ad nauseam.

↑↓"WE'LL ACCEPT THE LIEN WHILE WE APPEAL"

A reader recently wrote in to complain about his county tax assessor's trying to charge him personal property tax for his boat during the time he was cruising her in a foreign country. My complaint with the Ventura County Tax Assessor is a little different — that they are trying to charge us personal property tax based on an inflated value for our boat.

We're confident we will win our appeal because, for the '09-'10 time period, Ventura County is appraising our boat at double what they did in '03-'04. Not many boats have doubled in value after they've been on a five-year cruise in Mexico. Plus, it's not as if boat values have been going up in these difficult economic times.

Unfortunately, the tax assessor's office says it will take approximately two years before they'll be able to hear our

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appeal on their valuation! So we will accept their placing a lien on our boat, and will accumulate penalties and interest on the tax. Fortunately, once we win our appeal, we will not owe the accumulated interest and penalties, but will have to pay only tax on the correct assessed value of our boat.

Can an owner of a yacht avoid paying property tax in California by remaining in transit? I ask this because I don't want other counties to value our boat based on the initial inaccurate appraisal by Ventura County, and thus perpetuate the current problem.

I'd also like to know why the law of supply and demand, along with competition, seems to have been suspended at Channel Islands Harbor. I would think that a county suffering from shrinking tax revenues would want to see as many slips as possible occupied in its harbors. So why wouldn't the county pressure the marina operators, who all lease their marina space from the county, to price their slips in a way that reflects the current lesser demand for slips?

I don't mind paying \$16/ft for a slip in a marina that's full, but I'm not going to pay \$16/ft in a marina where only a little more than half the slips are occupied. I'm convinced that if the marina lowered its rates to \$10/ft, the increased occupancy would result in a higher overall yield. This would mean more money for the marina and more tax revenues for the county, and would prevent businesses that live off boatowners from withering and dying.

Based on recent experience, I've come up with what I believe are some marina truths. Specifically, you know you're paying too much for your slip when:

- The CEO of the marina decides that your '90 Ford Econoline van is too ugly for their nearly empty parking lot.
- Your marina has only 60% occupancy, and of the 40 slips in your area, only three are occupied.
- You find out that you are paying twice as much as someone who has their boat on an end-tie in the same marina.

Based on these considerations, once we take our boat out of Channel Islands, we won't be bringing her back.

David Eaton
Oz, Oceanic 46
La Selva Beach

↑↓WHAT ABOUT SAILING A LASER ALONE?

Lately folks on a Laser sailing site have been exploring the subject of sailing solo. Is it safe? Should you wear a helmet? Should you have a chase boat? Things like that. It reminded me of an incident I had years ago, so I added it to their thread, but thought I'd share it with *Latitude* readers, too:

"I have sailed my Laser, mostly solo, since '82. When sailing on the chilly waters of San Francisco and Tomales Bays, my body dress has always included a full wetsuit, boots, gloves, and a good lifejacket.

"But who would have thought my sketchiest incident would occur in a big wind hole on a very warm day just off Sausalito? I'd already been out for two or three hours before I sailed into the calm zone. As I bobbed without any wind or enough tide to move the boat, I became aware that nature was calling. I really needed to pee, and I wasn't going to be able to make it to shore any time soon.

"Surfers just let go in their wetsuits all the time, but trust me, it's not acceptable if you're not submerged and getting rinsed out. So I took off my lifejacket, and unzipped and rolled the wetsuit down to my knees. Kneeling off the transom, I was just about to relieve myself when a sudden puff — a rotor out of Hurricane Gulch — caught me. The boom hit my shoulder and over we went.



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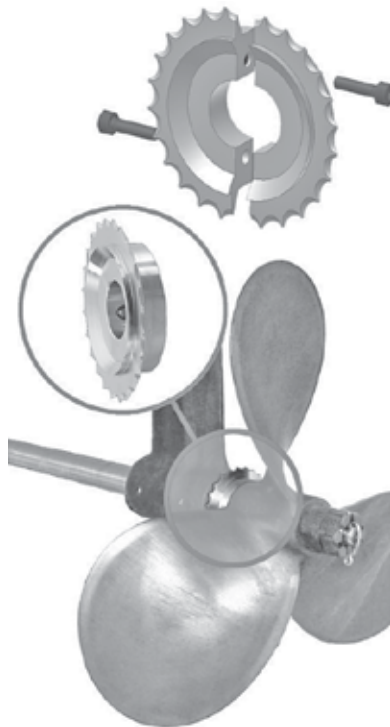
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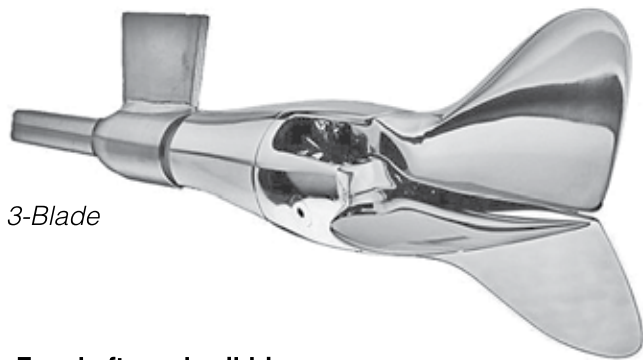
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"So there I was, my Laser on her side, my lifejacket floating near me, and me, mostly naked, trying to tread water with my wetsuit down at my ankles. In the midst of this mess, a boat suddenly appeared. 'Do you need help?' they shouted.

"I couldn't cop to my situation. Help would have been too embarrassing. So I said, 'No, thanks, I've got it under control.' And I waved them away.

"I had sense to quickly get hold of the boat, and I eventually got it sorted out, got back onboard and re-dressed.

"I think sailing dinghies by yourself is a lot like piloting a small plane. A combination of poor planning and little



DENNIS OLSON

**If you're going to sail alone on a Laser,
be prepared for anything.**

mishaps can surprise you — if not ruin your day. When it comes to sailing, proper clothing, gear, planning, and judgment — meaning knowing your weather and water conditions — are paramount. At various times while sailing my Laser, I've thought it prudent to carry flares, a waterproof phone and VHF. But the best safety factor is time in the boat. Keep practicing. Solo if you have to. Based on my experience, the worst mistakes I have made in my Laser were when I was sailing with others. It was the, 'Hey, watch this!' factor. I maintain that the most dangerous part of your solo-sailing day is the drive to and from your launch spot.

Dennis Olson
Tomaes Bay

↑↓SHOW THE RIGHT NIGHT LIGHTS

During the recent Ha-Ha, there were many late night discussions over the VHF about showing the proper running lights. Many of the Ha-Ha boats had their masthead tricolor lights and deck-level running lights showing at the same time — which is illegal. Many more sailed with both their tricolor and steaming light on, presumably because the steaming light was useful for checking the sail trim. And many continued to show their tricolor and steaming light while motorsailing.

Some said that these practices were bad form and portrayed sailors as a bunch of fools. I'm writing to share another reason for properly setting your running lights. If a boatowner were — God forbid — to have a collision with another vessel, there would almost certainly be an investigation to see who was at fault. If one boat was under sail and another under power, then there's a good chance that the boat under power would be at fault because sailboats have the right-of-way. However, if the captain of the boat under power said he couldn't tell what kind of vessel the sailboat was because her light pattern indicated a motor vessel, a fishing boat, a boat headed the other direction, or something else totally weird, the boat under sail would have lost her right-of-way rights.

I'd like to summarize the lights sailboats are supposed to show while underway at night. If under sail, a sailboat is to show *either* her masthead tricolor or deck-level running lights — but not both! And sailboats are not allowed to show



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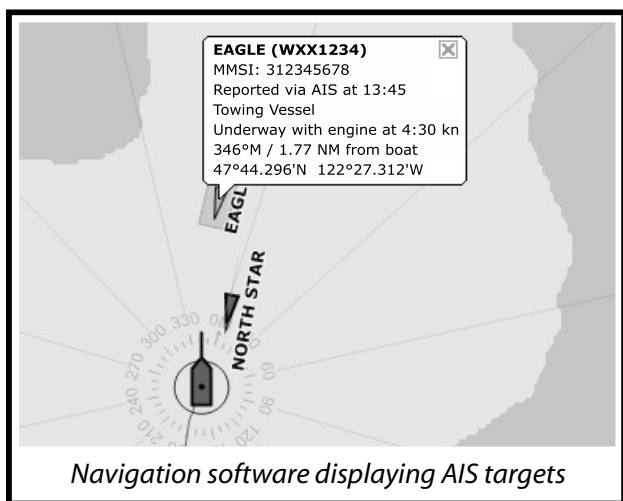
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their steaming lights while sailing. If the sailboat's motor is running and turning the propeller, we're motoring — even if we have sails up. If a sailboat is motoring and the steaming light and deck level lights are on, we're not allowed to use our tricolor.

Dan Marshall, USCG Master
Cupertino

Dan — Thanks for the much-needed review. During our pre-dawn approach to Bahia Santa Maria, we had 26 Ha-Ha boats in sight. Of that total, about eight were illegally showing both their masthead and deck level running lights. As you well know, the combination of their deck level transom light and their masthead stern light made them appear to be northbound rather than southbound, with their red and green lights on the wrong sides. That's a recipe for problems.

How can sailors be so ignorant? Based on our personal experience, it's easy. We somehow managed to publish Latitude for more than 20 years before somebody was kind enough to give us a "Hey dummy!" heads-up one Fourth of July evening when we were showing both our tricolor and deck level running lights. "Are you sure we can't have them both on at the same time?" we asked. He was sure, and he was sure right. Maybe we should have taken a few sailing classes somewhere along the way.

On a somewhat related topic, this was the first Ha-Ha in which a lot of boats had AIS systems. Most just had the receivers, but a few had AIS transmitters, too. Everybody we talked to — including our crew — raved about how much easier the AIS made it to see ships and other vessels equipped with a transponder, and how much more confident it made them feel, particularly in fog. One guy went so far as to say he'd choose AIS if he had to pick between it and radar. We wouldn't go quite that far, but AIS is clearly a very valuable safety tool. Had they been around 30 years ago, we might not have any grey hair.

↑↓ YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD

I just finished my first Baja Ha-Ha, and I want to thank the Grand Poobah, Andy 'Puddle Jump' Turpin, Doña de Mallorca, and everyone else on the Ha-Ha staff for making the cruise south one of my most memorable sailing experiences ever. There must have been a tremendous amount of work in planning and organizing this event, and for that I am grateful. It's too bad Mai, the owner of the Marquesas 56 that I sailed on, and a good friend of the Grand Poobah, couldn't make it for yet another Ha-Ha. She wasn't feeling well, but was with us in spirit and SailMail.

I do want to comment on one experience we had on the last leg of the Ha-Ha when it was dark and the moon still hadn't come up. We were motorsailing with our steaming and navigation lights on, and had been holding a steady course for hours. I was on watch and I noticed a boat that appeared — depth perception was poor in that light — to be about a mile off our port side. I marked the target and watched as she seemed to be sailing on a parallel course with us.

Then I went below to use the head. Upon my return to the cockpit, our boat lurched to port. Looking up, I saw a boat cross our bow under full sail! It was a good thing that Mike's eyes were forward and that he took evasive action or there would have been a collision. I looked at the radar, and the marked target was still on our port side in approximately the same place. This meant the crossing boat had no radar or radar reflector!

I got on the radio and made a statement about how much ocean there was out there, and how everyone should try to be

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safe. The response was, "You always have to follow the Rules of the Road." Although the other boat had indeed been on starboard tack, I felt their crossing so close was a dangerous and foolish maneuver.

A long discussion ensued among our three-member crew, and the summary of that discussion resulted in two points that could have made this experience benign: 1) Knowing he was going to be close, he should have hailed us with his intentions. We would have happily altered course for him. 2) If he'd just fallen off a bit, he would have had plenty of time to cross our stern. Granted, it might have cost him a few seconds, but surely it was a safer choice than to cross our bow so closely and risk a collision. Given that he was 'invisible', he surely had a responsibility to make every effort to be safe and considerate of other boats in the fleet.

Dave Ganapoler, Crew
Dolce Vita, Marquesas 56
Belvedere

Dave — Thanks for the very kind comments about the Ha-Ha. While there was a tremendous amount of work that went into organizing and managing the event, it was primarily a great event because the participants were so terrific.

In your description of the nighttime close call on the last leg of the Ha-Ha, we're surprised that you made no mention of the biggest factor of all — the running lights! If the other boat was able to get so close to you because she wasn't showing running lights, you should have blasted her crew for that ultimate safety violation. On the other hand, if she was showing running lights and your crew didn't notice her until she almost hit you, you guys were negligent in your watch-standing. No boat showing running lights should ever be allowed to 'sneak up' on another boat like that.

In any case, you seem to be a little unclear on the concept of being the burdened boat. If you were motoring and the other boat was under sail, and if the other boat could pass in front of you, she clearly had the right-of-way. And her running lights were the way she signalled her intentions. As such, you were absolutely obligated to make whatever changes — and the rules call for "early and substantial changes" — necessary in your course and speed to prevent a collision. The fact that you'd been motoring at the same speed on the same course for a long time means absolutely nothing.

We don't want to rub it in, but when the other guy said, "You always have to follow the rules of the road", he was right. His only obligation — in addition to showing the proper running lights — was to avoid a collision at the last minute if it appeared that you weren't going to do what was needed to prevent it.

As you point out, if a boat starts making course changes far enough in advance, it only has to be a few degrees to create a comfortable buffer. But make no mistake, it's always the responsibility of the burdened boat to make those changes.

We don't know about everyone else, but we loved the sailing on the night of the third leg. Not only were the conditions dreamlike, but they presented countless opportunities to sail in the company of other boats. Geez, we wish we were back out there again right now!

↑↓THE 100,000% MISUNDERSTANDING

I know I'm late commenting on something from the May issue, but I needed to correct your math. In an editorial response, you cited the case of Ida May Fuller, the first person in the United States to ever receive Social Security, as an example of the United States Social Security system being nothing more than a Ponzi scheme. You used her as an ex-

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ample to argue that it's a Ponzi scheme because it bestowed great benefits on early recipients and will be leaving later contributors to get little in return despite their massive contributions.

After noting that Ida May paid a total of \$24.75 into the system, you noted that she received \$24,000 in benefits before she passed away. As a result, you said she got a 1,000% return on what she put in. You were way off. Here's the math:

Ratio: $24,000/24.75 = 969.697$. In other words, Ida May got back 1,000 times what she paid in, not 1,000%. Big difference.

Percent Gain = $24,000/24.75 \times 100 = 96,969.697$ or 100,000% gain.

P.S. Sorry, I'm a bit behind schedule on my reading.

Dick Glumac
Venturer
Gashouse Cove

Dick — We're so bad at math we could probably head up the Congressional Budget Office, or at least have been a dufus for the Security and Exchange Commission and not found any evidence of Bernie Madoff's doing anything wrong.

Despite the fact that, because of our unfortunately advanced age, we are going to be among those who make out like comparative bandits on Social Security, we're still outraged, because the overwhelming majority of good, hard-working Americans who have paid and are paying so much into the system will get so little — if anything — out of it. Indeed, if the under-40 generations weren't so ignorant of how they are being shafted, we suspect they'd be running around with the heads of members of Congress on pikes — sort of like Paris in October of 1793 all over again.

In much more positive news, Congress has recently been making progress toward insuring an additional 49 million Americans — at no additional cost! The response to this Pixie Dust Economics has been so positive that the Administration is thinking about no longer issuing bonds, but rather funding the federal government using chain letters. Last one in is a rotten egg, first one out is the big winner!

(Yes, yes, we know that single-payer is the most efficient health insurance model possible. Unfortunately, it can't be efficient in this country, because it would be administered by the United States government, one of the most monumentally incompetent, inefficient, corrupt and fraud-ridden institutions in the history of man.)

↑↓ **BEST DINGHY MANHANDLING PRACTICES**

Latitude has published numerous helpful and informative articles, but you've never give extensive coverage to the challenge of launching and retrieving dinghies and outboards from sailboats. Would you consider writing an article on getting your tender into and out of the water with a davit-less boat? A focus on the singlehanded sailor with a boat less than 36 feet would be ideal.

I'm also interested in what it currently costs people to store their boats for months at a time in Mexico.

Rich Katurbus
Thiells, NY

Rich — We're don't think there is a need to write an article on the subject, because if you don't have davits, you pretty much have no choice but to launch and retrieve your dinghy — usually from either just in front of the mast or just aft of the mast — with a halyard. Then, if the motor is much bigger than 6 hp, you pretty much have to repeat the process to launch or

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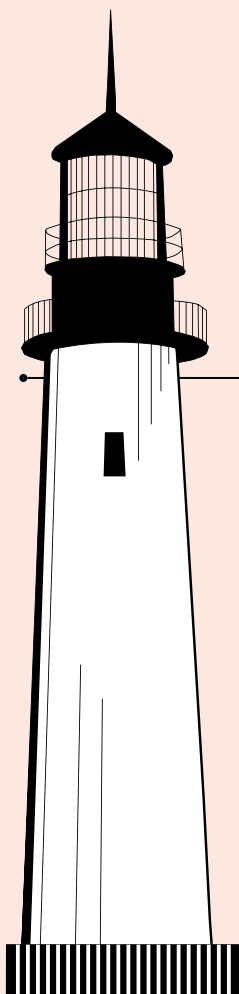
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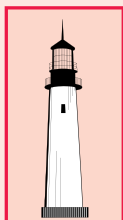
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retrieve the outboard. It's a work-intensive and time-consuming process, which often results in people on such boats not wanting to launch their dinghy very often, towing their dinghy when it would be better to have it on deck, and limiting themselves to smaller-than-ideal outboards. When cruising in places like Mexico and the Caribbean, the ability to easily launch and retrieve a suitable dinghy and outboard is, to our thinking, critical to happiness.

If anybody has any great suggestions for managing dinghies on small boats, or the easiest way for just one person to manage them, we'd love to hear about them.

↑↓ THE ULTIMATE HA-HA RESCUE BOAT GETS A TOW

I regret that proper acknowledgement was not given at the Baja Ha-Ha XVI awards ceremony to the two people who made it possible for two Ha-Ha boats to tow the motorsailer *Iron Maiden* to and from Bahia Santa Maria. Our crew, Tiffany and Greg Norte, were the experienced ex-USCG people who effected the successful tows of *Iron Maiden*. They should have been recognized as the true champions of these tow towing events. They provided the know-how to rig the tow bridles, attach and deploy the tow rope, steer and handle each vessel during the towing process, and anchor the *Iron Maiden* at her destinations.

Iron Maiden's transmission failed outside of Bahia Santa Maria, and they put out a call requesting assistance just before dusk on November 2. *Iron Maiden's* skipper had been up for 24 hours, so he was pretty tired and wanted assistance in getting into Bahia Santa Maria. The nature of the transmission failure caused their main engine to be inoperative, and thus they had no propulsion other than their sails. They were making about 2.5 knots under sail, but were concerned about both the time needed to reach Bahia Santa Maria and turning the corner into Bahia Santa Maria — and into the wind. Also, their anchor windlass is hydraulically powered by the main engine so it was inoperative. They were concerned about anchoring under sail in a crowded anchorage filled with Ha-Ha boats, with the possibility of all 250 feet of their chain running out due to their inoperative windlass, resulting in a large swing radius on the hook.

We responded to *Iron Maiden's* call for assistance. At the time, we misunderstood their position report and thought that they were ahead of us. Since we were making 5-6 knots over ground under sail, we crossed the Baja Ha-Ha Leg 2 finish line, then started our engine to travel to *Iron Maiden's* position. I called to verify their position and discovered that they were actually six miles behind us, so we turned back and motored to their position.

Tiffany and Greg provided the expertise necessary for our 18-ton vessel to tow the 88-ton *Iron Maiden* approximately 25 nautical miles to Bahia Santa Maria. This included a dinghy transit by our first mate Diane to *Iron Maiden* with the tow rope's being fed through the water. This occurred after dark in three- to four-ft swells while *Iron Maiden* was sailing at 2.5 knots. *Sagittaire* was under engine power while I maneuvered her to keep abreast of *Iron Maiden*.

Greg boarded *Iron Maiden* from the dinghy, and then Tiffany handed him the 7/8-inch braided tow rope. Tiffany returned to *Sagittaire* and secured the dinghy to her side. The tow then commenced to Bahia Santa Maria, while both Tiffany and Greg communicated instructions on the towing process back and forth via VHF radio. Allan and Alison Gabel, the captains of Ha-Ha entry *Fly Aweigh*, provided input via VHF on the best anchorage positions to be fully clear of the anchored Ha-Ha fleet in Bahia Santa Maria. They dinghied around the

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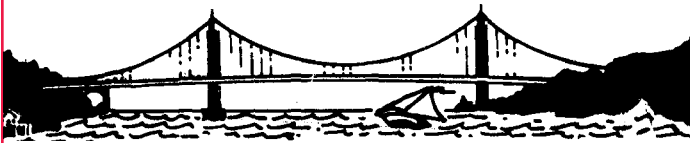
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LETTERS

anchorage with a hand-held depthsounder to accomplish this.

The anchoring process required that the entire 250 feet of *Iron Maiden's* chain be flaked on deck. It was then manually deployed, using hooks and line in a controlled deployment, minimizing risk to both ship and crew.

Once the extent of the damage was assessed in Bahia Santa Maria, it was determined that repairs to *Iron Maiden* were not possible while on the hook due to intermittent rolling and the associated dangers of moving heavy equipment



GREG & TIFFANY NORTE

Just out of the Coast Guard, Greg and Tiffany supervised the towing of 'Iron Maiden'. The pair are crewing around the world and looking for good rides. Find them at www.TiffanyNorte.com.

under those conditions. *Fly Aweigh* agreed to tow *Iron Maiden* to San Carlos in Bahia Magdalena, where a dock was available and parts could be more readily obtained. All persons aboard both *Sagittaire* and *Fly Aweigh* agreed to swap crews so that Tiffany and Greg could be aboard *Fly Aweigh* and *Iron Maiden* to facilitate the towing process.

As in the first towing event, Tiffany and Greg planned and executed the successful tow over

these 45 nautical miles through narrow waterways. This started in the dark of night in order to enter San Carlos in the daylight. As during the first tow, Greg was aboard *Iron Maiden*, while Tiffany assisted Allan and Alison on *Fly Aweigh*.

Please give credit to these two extraordinary crew people in any articles or responses to letters that may appear in your fine magazine and your excellent *Lectronic Latitude*.

Michael Quiriconi
Sagittaire, Brewer 47 PH Cutter
Seattle, WA

Michael — The best possible way and place for Greg and Tiffany — as well as you and Diane — to get proper recognition for your fine efforts is via a well-written letter such as you've just done for this month's *Latitude*. There was so much going on at the award's ceremony — over 150 trophies handed out, the mini interview with J/World's Eugenie Russell, the spoof prizes, and so much more — that it was the wrong place to try to get the story across. But you all deserve such accolades, so thank you for providing the full story.

That having been said, the *Iron Maiden* story is one of the most ironic in the annals of the Ha-Ha. A month or so before the start of the Ha-Ha, Bill Simpson, a man of many accomplishments and much sailing experience, called us to all but insist that we hire him and his 86-ft motorsailer to provide rescue and repair services for the Ha-Ha. He noted that he could power at 10 to 12 knots into all sea conditions to come to the aid of boats in distress. When we explained that we hadn't needed such services in the 15 previous Ha-Ha's, and therefore didn't see why we needed him now, he said that he was like life insurance in that we didn't realize we'd need him until it was too late. When we countered that the Ha-Ha fleet has a history of taking care of its own, and his one boat couldn't possibly cover the area the other 160+ boats could, he switched to a new tack. "You need me for marketing," he said. "Lots more boats will sign up for the Ha-Ha if they know that *Iron Maiden* will be able to come to their assistance." As there were already 195 paid



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entries in the Ha-Ha, this wasn't a persuasive argument.

With Mr. Simpson continuing to insist that we hire him and his boat, the conversation began to go south. Despite our international reputation for patience and calm, we may have stooped to using the adjectives arrogant, pompous — and perhaps even worse. Then we hung up. After half an hour or so, we called Simpson back, explained that we'd been working long hours, had some made foolish remarks, and offered him an apology. He accepted it, and although we agreed to go our separate ways, we suggested that we have a beer sometime. So all was good.

The next thing we knew, Iron Maiden left San Diego a day or so behind the main part of the Ha-Ha fleet. Although not part of the fleet, Simpson made a few roll call relays for Ha-Ha boats toward the back of the fleet. It was a little bit weird having someone outside the event making relays, but Simpson had a great signal, was nice about it, and didn't try to use it as an opportunity to promote his services.

A few days later, Iron Maiden was in Turtle Bay and had helped out a Ha-Ha boat that had stayed behind with some kind of minor mechanical problem. Simpson was given good reviews by the owner of the repaired boat. A minute later, however, someone else piped in with words to the effect of, "Yeah, he did good work, but to the tune of \$100/hour."

The usual cruiser/Ha-Ha ethos is that you help others, particularly those broken down, at no charge. Of course, there is no law against a fellow cruiser's asking to be paid for help, and there is no law against a cruiser's paying another cruiser to have his boat fixed. But other boats received assistance on the Ha-Ha, and we don't know of another one that was charged.

A few days later, we had our anchor down in Bahia Santa Maria when we got the second-hand report that Iron Maiden had lost the use of her engine and was being towed into Turtle Bay by a much smaller Ha-Ha entry. We about fell over. First, there was the irony of the proposed "ultimate Ha-Ha rescue boat's" having to be rescued by a much smaller boat. And we couldn't help wondering if Simpson was paying the Ha-Ha boat \$100/hour for the tow. After all, it would seem only fair.

Second, for the life of us, we couldn't figure out why such an accomplished mariner — Simpson has owned many boats, done a long cruise, and circumnavigated the Hawaiian Islands aboard an engineless Pearson 26 — couldn't easily just sail the last 25 miles to Bahia Santa Maria. After all, it was downwind, there were no weather issues, there was going to be a nearly full moon, the entrance to the Bahia Santa Maria is about seven miles long, and there is about 25 square miles in which he could anchor. In other words, it was about as challenging as falling out of a chair. Anyway, Iron Maiden was towed into Bahia Santa Maria and, as you described, later towed into Mag Bay and on up the channel to little San Carlos.

When we heard that Iron Maiden was being towed to tiny San Carlos, we were baffled once again. After all, this tiny pueblo is in the middle of nowhere and, less than two months before, had been leveled by the Category 1 winds of Hurricane Jimena. Why not sail Iron Maiden 175 miles down to Cabo San Lucas? After all, the wind was going to be mild and from aft, Cabo has all the experts and parts, and what they don't have can be flown in almost immediately. It would be like pulling into San Leandro rather than Sausalito to seek boat repairs. Who knows, maybe something about Iron Maiden's shaft and engine problems would have made her vulnerable in case the weather unexpectedly turned bad. But it struck us as strange.

We're sure there is a moral in here somewhere, but we're not



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LETTERS

bright enough to figure it out. And despite our little contretemps with Simpson, we hope Iron Maiden is quickly and easily repaired, and that he and she enjoy the happiest of voyages.

↑↓ DRUG LEGALIZATION IN MEXICO?

In the last week, I have inquired at two military checkpoints — one *Policia Federal*, the other *Marinas* — about drug legalization in Mexico. They told me that they have not had orders to change their search or arrest protocol for Schedule I drugs.

I live in Mexico full-time, and yes, I have read the foreign news, but the announcement about so-called legalization of small amounts of drugs would be news to the average Mexican. Few know about it.

What happens to those who are arrested for drugs? Arrest, seizure of their vehicle and possessions, prosecution by PGR, and who knows how long a wait until a trial by judge. By the way, if arrested for drugs, you'll always await trial in a state prison, not some jail.

This is reality versus horribly inaccurate media information.

David Eidell
Mexico

David — Thanks for the heads-up, because this certainly is murky stuff, and the reporting hasn't been accurate. What is true is that in late August, Mexico did decriminalize small amounts of marijuana, cocaine, heroin and meth. If you say various law enforcement agencies haven't gotten the word yet, it wouldn't surprise us, because that's how things sometimes go in Mexico.

In any event, nobody should think Mexico has legalized small amounts of these drugs. That's absolutely false, and no, Mexico is not the new Amsterdam.

One of the main purposes of the new law is to stop law enforcement from extorting money from casual users of drugs. Another is to provide treatment to users. Indeed, if someone is caught three times, they are forced to get treatment.

All in all, it's better to get high on life, not drugs, while in Mexico.

↑↓ "WHAT A BIG-TALKING LOONY!"

On November 5, I read the second letter by Andy 'Live and Let Live' Deering, the guy who had previously written in to claim that sailors are too safety conscious. You might remember that in a June letter he spoke dismissively of sailors who carry EPIRBs. "The idea," he wrote, "is not to need to be rescued. Should I ever have a real emergency, I'd either deal with it or die trying."

What a clown! Just days before reading Deering's drivel, I read the *Lectronic* report on how the five good people on *J/World* — Eugenie Russell, Barry Demak, Ray Quinn, Mark McKinnon and Judy Land — had been rescued thanks to their EPIRB and the Coast Guard. Had they not had the EPIRB, there is a reasonably good chance that one or more of them might have died that evening from exposure. I'm confident they don't think much of Deering's advice.

I'm thrilled that the five *J/World* sailors — as well as anyone else who has ever been saved by an EPIRB — survived without injury or lasting harm. Further, I hope that nobody is foolish enough to listen to Deering. While it's true that the chances are small that he'll ever need to use his EPIRB, a certain percentage of mariners will. If too many took Deering's advice, he could be indirectly responsible for the deaths of some of them. If he wants to sail without an EPIRB, he should



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have the courtesy to keep his loony ideas to himself.

I also have a suspicion that Deering is just a big talker, and that if he ever found himself in distress, he'd be crying like a baby for help. The big talkers are often filled with false bravado.

Jonathan Aftwich
London, England

↑↓ **MAYBE JARED SHOULD EAT A FISH TACO INSTEAD**

I was curious about your badmouthing a Subway opening in La Cruz, while evidently being pleased by a "spanking new Wal-Mart in Bucarias." To me, both are just evidence of the general collapse of civilization, and in particular the further loss of Mexican culture and identity. In the same vein, I was glad to hear of the real estate slump along the Vallarta Coast, which, in my humble opinion, may slow a few more "disgusting developments," to use the words you correctly used to describe Subway.

Most of the coastal area between Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita, as well as most of coastal Baja California Sur, and many other once-lovely places in Mexico — and the world — are no more. Unless Miami Beach or Orange County are your style. It sounds like the Cabo Corrientes area is going as well. In Baja California Sur, it seems as if there are more barbed wire fences and no-trespassing signs restricting coastal access than there are pelicans. It wasn't like that not long ago. I'm afraid I like Mexico way too much to be happy with golf courses, luxury condominiums, Westin Resorts, and absentee-owned McMansions.

I'm just back from a too-short cruise out of San Carlos, Sonora. I'm glad to report that Hurricane Rick decided not to join the party, but after *Jimena's* wrath in San Carlos, he got everybody's attention around here. And while we didn't get wind, the seas were kicked up for a while. Since then, it's been perfect sailing weather, with 85 degree temps and 15 knots of wind on the beam — until we got spanked by the Norther that made the Ha-Ha interesting. I've enclosed a couple of photos of some of our anchorages along the Sonora coast, although they don't do justice to the greenery after *Jimena* dropped several feet of rain. It looked like Michigan with cactus!

Tom Kucera
Ryokosha, Mariner 32
San Carlos, Sonora / San Rafael, CA

Tom — We see a huge difference between putting a Subway, which is a gringo fast food chain with a big neon sign, across the street from the zocalo in La Cruz, which is a small, quiet and authentic Mexican town, and opening another Wal-Mart in the heavily commercial area along a busy four-lane highway. One is invasive, the other fits in.

Like it or not, stores like Costco and Wal-Mart make life less expensive and more convenient for Mexicans as well as Americans. We find it hard to object to them, particularly since Mexicans still have countless traditional options, and their culture is still strong and pervasive. You would what, like Mexicans to still travel on foot and by burro, and plow fields with shells attached to the end of sticks?

We find it disturbing that so many of us Americans, who have grossly overdeveloped our own coasts, want Mexico to remain undeveloped, backward and jobless so we can enjoy pristine areas during our visits. Sure, the selfish part of us wishes that Los Cabos and the Vallarta Coast had never been developed. On the other hand, we know those developments generated and continue to generate countless jobs and bring in massive amounts of much-needed foreign investment.

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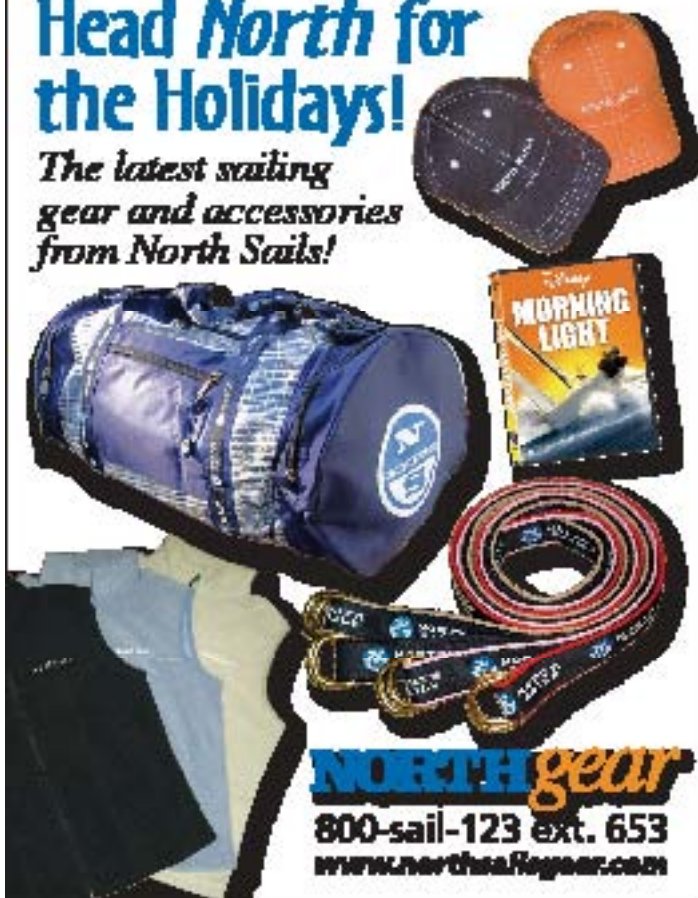
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LETTERS

We also know that Mexico's coasts are far less developed than those of the United States, and that for those with boats, there are still thousands of miles of undeveloped coast. The plan



LATITUDE / RICHARD

The original 'Bridge to Nowhere' at the oft-failed development site Puerto Escondido.

to cover the coasts of Baja with luxury hotels, golf courses, marinas and airports was called The Nautical Stairway. It was a massive failure. You might also note that after

more than a quarter of a century of trying to turn Loreto and Puerto Escondido into a tourist haven, it's still a flop.

Speaking of Hurricane Rick, which initially posed a major threat to Cabo, it not only made a hard turn east, but then headed a bit south, too. The result is that while Puerto Vallarta didn't feel any effect, Punta Mita, 12 miles to the west, was lashed with 50-knot winds for 15 hours.

DISCO BALLS, MAYBE — STROBES, NO

For many years masthead strobes were recommended — by the West Marine catalog, for example — as an important navigation aid for sailboats with standard running lights. They were to be used to prevent collisions. Yet last season I was reprimanded by the Coast Guard for having a strobe on my 40-ft sailboat. Can you tell me if the Coast Guard was right? If so, when did masthead strobes become illegal on boats equipped with standard navigation lights?

Tom Bobas
San Francisco

Tom — If somebody in the Coast Guard told you it was illegal to have a strobe on your mast, we think they goofed. According to the Coast Guard's FAQ on navigation, while in inland waters, strobes are a recognized and legal indication of an emergency. Be aware, however, that Rule 36 of the International Rules says that the use of strobes is to be avoided in international waters. That's because many navigational aids use strobes or flashing lights, and if you turn yours on, you could confuse other mariners. But if your boat is sinking and you turn on your strobe to let people know where you're going down, we don't think anybody is going to bust your chops.

Back in the '80s, we used to have a strobe light on top of the tricolor on our Freya 39. But that was before GPS, reliable and energy-efficient radar, reliable EPIRBs, and all the other electronic miracles. We don't have a strobe on Profligate's mast, nor do we see the need for one.

In a typical month, we receive a tremendous volume of letters. So if yours hasn't appeared, don't give up hope.

We welcome all letters that are of interest to sailors. Please include your name, your boat's name, hailing port, and, if possible, a way to contact you for clarifications.

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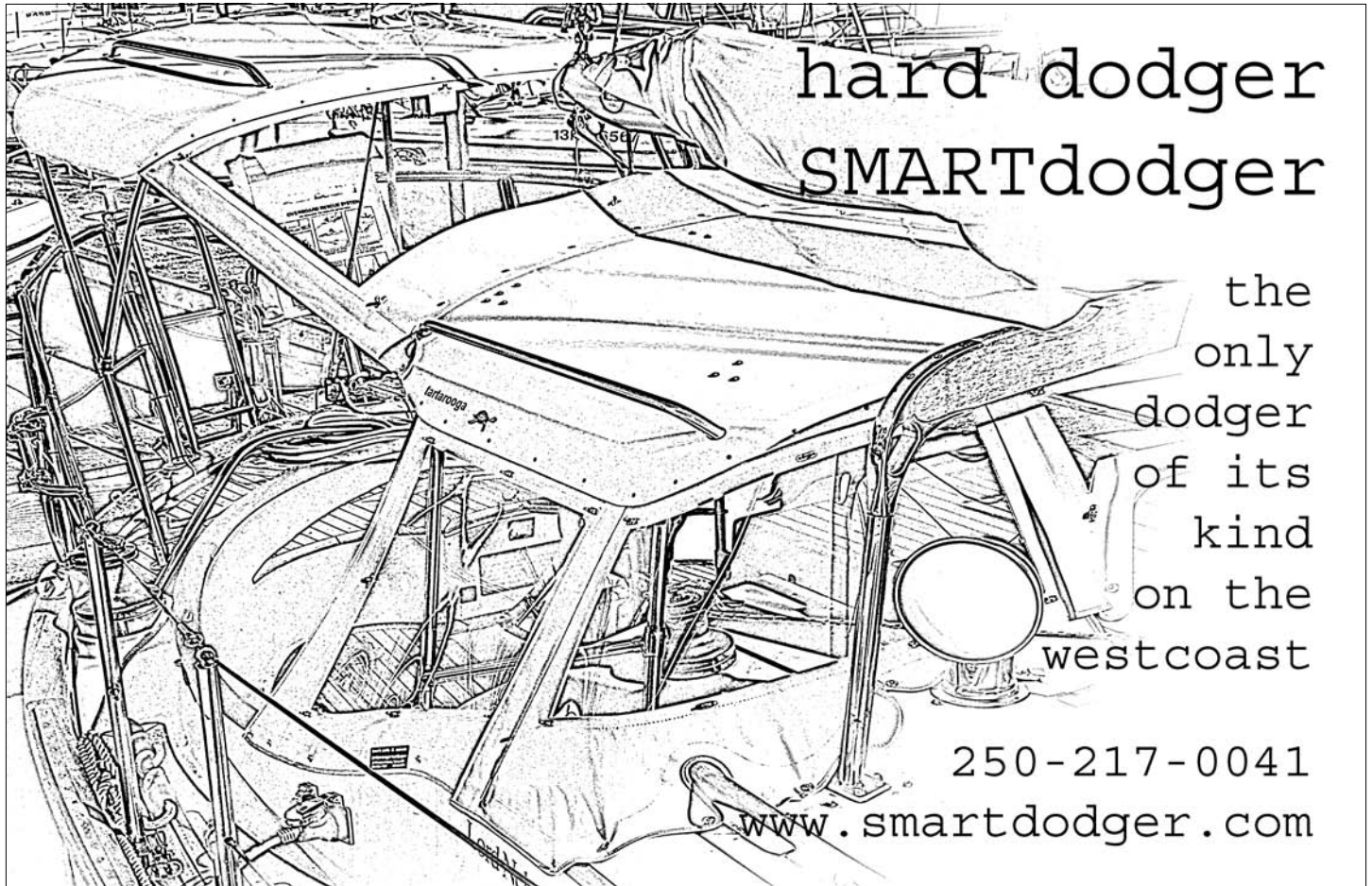
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SIGHTINGS

english for americans on *california*

It's been one trial after another for the crew of *California* in the '09-'10 Clipper 'Round the World Race, but despite it all, her 17-person crew is forging ahead in the ten-boat event.

A series of wind holes on Race 2 from La Rochelle, France, to Rio de Janeiro forced the crew to start the engine — which automatically earned them 10th place — to get through the doldrums and arrive on time for the start of Race 3. While the leaders enjoyed 200-mile days, South African skipper Pete Rollason and his crew endured days when completing a mile an hour was seen as progress — evidenced by the boat's 35-day passage.

California was off to a good start in Race 3 on October 27, solidly in the middle of the pack. But on Day 10, the steering wheel spindle



'Cork' takes out Ireland's frustration at being robbed of a berth in the 2010 World Cup on 'Hull & Humber'.

sheared off, forcing the team to employ their emergency tiller, once again dropping them to 10th for the leg.

Race 4 from Cape Town to Geraldton, Australia, got off to a cracking start November 22 . . . literally. An untimely puff led to a botched duck that left two boats behind in Cape Town with significant damage.

In a stroke of good fortune, neither was our state's namesake.

"Our approach to the start line was looking good," said *Hull & Humber* skipper Piers Dudin. "We were next to *Uniquely Singapore* at the 'pin end', the opposite end of the line from the Committee Boat, and on starboard tack. *California* pulled off a great start. *Cork* was a little behind them, and so had to duck around behind us as we approached the line in diagonally opposite directions. As they ducked us they were hit by a gust which prevented them from turning away, and they ended up colliding with us, spinning us round on the spot and causing a rather large crack just to the side of the helm station."

Fortunately, no one aboard either boat was hurt. The boats are a different story. *Hull & Humber* has a hole that extends from six inches below the waterline all the way through the deck, and *Cork's* bow looks as if it's been sandblasted. Clipper Ventures is currently working on a repair strategy for the two boats. The remaining eight boats fought for an advantage in breezes ranging from zero to 30 knots that lay between them and their destination.

This means that even if *Hull & Humber* receives redress for the incident, *California* — barring any additional disasters — can look forward to a finish other than last for Race 4. We have to believe they've already been dealt all their bad cards, and the crew seem optimistic about the rest of what's a really long race.

For a 'round-the-worlder like Bay Area-based *California* crewmember Quannon Au, we have to figure that all this misfortune is pretty grating. But what's evident is that it hasn't dampened his sense of humor, as he checked in with an informative guide for new crew:

English for Americans on a 'Proper Sailing Yacht — Don't let the giant stars and stripes on the mainsail fool you. With our skipper and most crew hailing from either the U.K. or having a British background, we are definitely more of a steak-and-chips than a burgers-and-fries boat.

Part of my training on this race has been learning to navigate subtle and not-so-subtle cultural differences. The following are my results thus far after many weeks of painstaking cultural anthropology.

continued on outside column of next sightings page

fish and chips

Last year, a group of a dozen or so kids launched the product of Spaulding Wooden Boat Center's first youth boat building program: the 12-ft Norwegian pram named *Guppy*. On November 7, the second such pram was launched at a party celebrating what would have been Myron Spaulding's 104th birthday.

Work on *Lightly Salted* — named after the team's favorite snack: Kettle Chips — began in March, and the kids were not only mentored by adult boatwrights, but also graduates of the first youth boat building program. "They were a lot



Back to the grind — Bay Area sailors Shana Bagley and Quannon Au have found the Clipper Race to be rewarding. Spread, after a good start in Rio, 'California' ended up in 10th place.



PHOTOS COURTESY CLIPPER VENTURES PLC

at spaulding

better than we were," noted Sausalito's Annarose Leff, 13. We're betting that the next crop of young boatbuilders — who will be working on a 16-ft lapstrake boat originally designed by Spaulding, and updated by Tom Wylie — will be saying the same thing about Annarose.

The celebration also featured the launching of Jonah Ward's Spaulding 33, *Aurora*. Ward, an employee of Spaulding's yard, did an amazing job of restoring this vintage design to her former glory.

The party was capped by the announce-
continued in middle column of next sightings page

california — cont'd

Tea: Brits drink tea as much as Americans drink any liquid. Whereas our franchise coffee shops foisted things like the "grande latte mochacino with soy" on the rest of the world, on the boat you're more likely to hear something like "tea, white, strong, one sweetener, extra milk." Also, "tea" can apparently mean dinner. Or lunch. Which seems like it could lead to questions like, "Would you like some tea with your tea?"

Biscuits: What we call a biscuit, they call a bread roll. What we call a cookie, they call a biscuit. Crackers can be biscuits or crackers. But chocolate chip cookies are always cookies. Chocolate chip biscuits? Don't be silly.

Potatoes: Fries are called chips. Chips are called crisps. Jacket potatoes are what we call baked potatoes except, um, wearing cute little potato-sized biker jackets, I guess.

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SIGHTINGS

california — cont'd

Manners: You may hear your crewmates ask for things using lots of extra words. Don't be intimidated. This is called "being polite," but as an American, no one will expect you to learn it. Just remember that "I couldn't perhaps trouble you for a hot drink, could I?" translates roughly in American English to "Yo! Gimme some coffee!"

Aluminum vs. Aluminium: Brits don't know that we spell the word without the extra 'i'. Don't let them know this and instead insist that we pronounce it differently just to make them mad. Then watch as they get mad. Good clean fun every time.

Buoys: Brits pronounce this "boy" and find our pronunciation of "boo-ey" to be hilarious. See aluminium. Rinse and repeat.

Clothing: Pants are trousers. Underwear are pants. So saying "Wow, my pants sure are dirty," may result in awkward silence. Followed by
continued on outside column of next sightings page

spaulding

ment that planking on the 124-year-old *Freda* had begun. The 32-ft gaff-rigged sloop, built in Belvedere, is the oldest active sailboat on the West Coast — though her 'activity' has been limited in recent years while the Spaulding gang performs a "museum-quality" restoration.

Considered by many to be the "Matriarch of the Bay," *Freda's* restoration doesn't come cheap. "We have raised a lot of money, which is what keeps us going," said Program Director Andrea Rey. "We're getting there, but we still need \$100,000 dollars to finish."



Put 'Guppy' and 'Lightly Salted' together and you get 'Fish & Chips'! Clockwise from above, 'Freda' gets planked; her ribs are 'sold' but you can still 'buy' a plank; shining like a ruby, 'Auroral' touches water for the first time in years; Tom List's waterfront jam band provided the entertainment; the proud boat builders (l to r): Peter Graumann, Eric Beltran, Jenny Phister, Colin Daly, Jim Spaulding, Andy Nyugen, Duncan Sutherland, Jack Bushel, Henry Orr, Andrew Saiga, Gary Johnson, Nolan Van Dine, Craig Southard & Anna Rose Leff.



— cont'd

To raise funds, the Center is 'selling' *Freda's* planks — dozens of generous donors have already 'bought' her ribs — and the \$1,200 donation just barely covers the labor costs involved in creating each plank. But you don't have to be Thurston Howell III to help — donations of any size are graciously welcome,

For more on the Spaulding Wooden Boat Center, its wooden boat yard, or the youth program — which is run in cooperation with 4-H and Big Brothers/Big Sisters — go to www.spauldingcenter.org.

— *ladonna*



california — cont'd

humiliating laughter.

For a 'legger' — someone who sails one or more legs, but not the entire race, like Walnut Creek's Shana Bagley — leaving the boat at the end of Race 2 proved difficult.

"We have made mistakes, irritated someone, been irritated by someone, felt afraid, suffered seasickness and extreme sleep deprivation, and even cried, but we have also improved, apologized, discovered how to see things from 17 other perspectives, felt like a champion, persevered, adapted, and laughed until we cried," she wrote.

"We've had extreme highs: going out the spinnaker pole for a spike drop, seeing the world from the top of the mast, completing a headsail change in a squall in the dark with waves crashing over the bow and rain pelting you in the face while laughing like a maniac, warm water whole body shampoo and rinse in the 'snake pit' courtesy of yet another squall, being tried in Neptune's Court at the equator, seeing the deepest of deep blue seas and the brightest of star-filled skies, tearing up the dance floor en masse while in port, and making dear friends for life.

"And we have had extreme lows: having your head in the sick bucket for 12 hours, watching the spinnaker shear from the mast block and tear in half, hot bunking in a berth that smells like feet or is soaking wet from the watermaker overflow pipe, and being asked by the Race Office to turn on the engine. Every single one of these events was not experienced alone. There are many facets to this adventure that those at home simply will not understand. I have to accept that. But no matter where I go, there will always be 17 other people who will understand to the core. That is what makes it so hard to leave the boat."

— *rob*



COURTESY CLIPPER VENTURES PLC

'Hull & Humber's ouchie.'

on a wing and a prayer

Despite a few setbacks, things are going well for BMW Oracle Racing — both down in San Diego and in the New York Supreme Court.

In the second week of October, and just a week after a standing rigging failure toppled their 190-ft tall, soft-sail wingmast, the team stepped a new hard-wing sail — the largest ever built. Spanning some 180 feet, the new rig is comprised of only two elements rather than the three seen on many other hard wings that have come before it. The fact that it can also carry both a jib and screecher negates the need for additional camber for downwind work.

At a full 80% larger than a Boeing 747 wing, and nearly 60% of the *entire* wingspan of the *Spruce Goose*, the wing is currently being sailed with a minimum amount of controls, although the team says it was designed so that more can be added later. The wing wasn't the only aerodynamic improvement to *BMW Oracle 90*, though — a soft fairing has been added to the aft crossbeam, and much of the trampoline between the three hulls has been removed. Hydrodynamically, the boat has fewer appendages now; the main hull's daggerboard and rudder are gone.

The tune-up on the wing was going well in its second day of testing until the second and third trailing-edge flaps started separating from the rest of the wing due to a loosened pin. The crew was able to reattach the pin and lash the flaps to the main element of the wing

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wing — cont'd

before heading back to the barn for a repair that didn't keep them off the water for very long. They damaged the skin on one of the flaps in a subsequent training session, but the team was back sailing again by the time many people found out about it.

In the courtroom, the team won some significant battles that make us somewhat hopeful that we will indeed see an early-February match. The first 'w' came on October 27 when Justice Shirley Kornreich threw out Alinghi's choice of host — the Arab Emirate Ras Al Khaimah. Alinghi and BMW Oracle then came to the table and agreed on Valencia as the venue for an early-February AC 33. Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of the story. The problem, at least for Alinghi, is that their boat and shoreside operations are already in Ras Al Khaimah — which is not happy about the fact that, in anticipation of hosting the match, it spent a reported \$120 million in infrastructure improvements only to have been rendered moot by the court's decision. The collateral: how about a 90-plus-ft catamaran with powered winches? Alinghi, it would seem, have little recourse to recover their boat, as they suddenly changed their tune and appealed Kornreich's decision on the venue. If they lose, they might not get their boat out of Ras Al Khaimah in time for the match, if ever.

The second 'w' came when Kornreich ruled that the boats must be fully ballasted when measured, which means that Alinghi will likely be forced to sail without water ballast, add a second rig, or go on a serious weight-loss program so as not to exceed the 90-ft waterline limit stipulated in the Deed of Gift.

Stay tuned, this one could get even more interesting before it happens . . . or doesn't.

—rob

seven ways to call for help

The sinking of *J/World* following a collision with a whale during the Ha-Ha (see page 102 for the story) has focused our attention on the various ways to call for help. As we see it, there are seven. They overlap in effectiveness, but none is perfect. Here's our thumbnail review.

VHF Radio — The downside of VHF radios is that they have limited range, particularly handheld radios when the antenna is only a few feet above the surface of the water. The maximum range isn't much more than 25 miles, and it could be only a couple of miles. If water coming into the boat is the problem, built-in VHF radios may quickly lose their power supply. Historically, waterproof handhelds haven't been as waterproof as advertised, so a waterproof bag or case is highly recommended. VHF radio is normally the best way to communicate with a ship or helicopter crew once they've reached the scene.

Digital Selective Calling, or DSC, comes standard on most new fixed-mount VHF's. Though there other things you can do with it, DSC is most valuable in an emergency. If your radio has been properly registered and is interfaced with a GPS, the 'Distress' button can tell every DSC radio in range — including the Coast Guard — who and where you are. If conditions allow, you can manually enter the nature of your emergency. It may not be ideal in every situation, but it's clearly worth the small hassle to get it set up properly.

DSC-enabled, fixed-mount VHF's range in price from \$100 to more than \$500. Non-DSC handhelds can be picked up for as little as \$90, but a DSC-enabled, waterproof model will set you back \$250-\$300.

SSB Radio — These radios can transmit great distances — if the conditions are right, if you pick the right frequency for the distance you are trying to call, and if someone aboard knows how to use one. These high-frequency radios are not intuitive. Almost everyone thinks 2182 is the universal frequency for distress. Wrong. The right

continued on outside column of next sightings page

navigating

If anybody in the Ha-Ha thought they could go to sea and escape the near ubiquitous iPhone, they couldn't have been more wrong. During our stop in Bahia Santa Maria, we learned that seven of our crew on *Profligate* had them.

We're behind the tech curve, so we assumed that those with the newer 3G models were using them to simply make phone calls and surf the net at places like San Quintin, Cedros Village, Turtle Bay and Bahia Santa Maria, and using the GPS apps that work on the newest



Right before we went to press, BMW Oracle Racing announced they'd be breaking down camp in San Diego and heading for Valencia, but not before putting in a few weeks of testing on their new hard wing sail. Spread, the massive wing gets put through its paces off San Diego. Inset, the two-element wing is 180 feet tall; see the sailor climbing the rig for a sense of scale.



via iphone

models. But that was just the start of it. Don Hall then showed us his Navionics program, which gives the tiny iPhone most of the features of a giant chartplotter. You know, speed, bearing, tracks, waypoints and all that good stuff.

If you buy the USA West version, you get all this incredible stuff on your little phone, plus most charts from the Bering Sea to deep into Mexico — for a total of \$10! This is a case of something sounding too good to be true actually being true. The

continued in middle column of next sightings page

help — cont'd

frequency depends on how far you are from the station you want to call. See *Latitude's* SSB radio guide in the October issue, and tape the list of frequencies next to your radio.

Like VHF radios, SSBs are vulnerable to their power source's being compromised. This happened to *J/World*. The DSC feature on SSBs is also similar to that of VHF's: You hold the button down for five seconds to send the alert (though the unit must be tuned to 2182.0 kHz). An alarm will sound on any DSC-equipped radios in range, and your unique identifying number and location flash on their displays.

The two most popular SSB radios are the Icom M-710 (about \$1,500) and M-802 (about \$1,800). These prices don't include the

continued on outside column of next sightings page



PHOTOS GILLES MARTIN-RAGET / BMW ORACLE RACING

SIGHTINGS

help — cont'd

a Pactor modem, which can cost as much as the radio.

EPIRB — These are credited with having saved over 25,000 lives in the last 30 years, and it was an EPIRB that brought a Coast Guard helicopter to *J/World's* liferaft. The downside of EPIRBs is that they are 'dumb', in that they can indicate only that you have an emergency, not what kind of emergency. In addition, rather than sending a vessel or chopper immediately, the Coast Guard does some checking to make sure it's a legitimate emergency, and this can add minutes or even hours to your rescue.

A positive state of mind is critical to the survival of people in distress.

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iphone

charts are so detailed that they showed us the location of our numbered dock at the marina in Cabo San Lucas. For another whopping \$10, you can buy Navionics Caribbean, which includes everything from Florida to the north coast of South America, and for reasons we don't understand, most of mainland Mexico and down to Peru. And shifting from chart to chart and/or zooming in and out is ultra fast. The features just go on and on. For every



— cont'd

port, for example, the Navionics has a terrific moving graphic that shows the state of the tide, the strength and direction of the current, and the phase of the sun and the moon. If you click on a marina icon at a given place, the phone number for the marina is right there for you to click on and make a call. The same is true for boatyards and marine services, although the listings for these aren't up to date.

Buying the Navionics program is the ultimate no brainer. We later learned that one of the crew on the Corsair 31 *Sally Lightfoot* in the Ha-Ha used his to do all his navigation while driving. He kept his iPhone in a waterproof pouch hanging around his neck because the Corsair 31 can be a wet boat.

In addition to the Navionics navigation programs, Rich Ray, the guy who created the much-praised and dirt-cheap GP-SNaxX navigation program for Mac computers, now has an iPhone version called iNavX. At \$49, it's more expensive, but still dirt cheap. We've only started to use ours, but Ray points out that his product has features that Navionics doesn't: Access to the largest library of official raster charts and maps, comprehensive route and waypoint management and navigation, GRIB weather overlays showing wind, pressure, waves and temperature, anchor alarm, true and magnetic bearings, great circle computation of all bearings and distances, AIS target display, and a digital compass. Some of these features require signing up for other services.

In Ray's evaluation, both the Navionics and his iPhone navigation apps are great, and they are so inexpensive, you should really have both. We think he's right. And wait until to you hear the 'anchor alarm' go off on your iPhone — it will knock you right out of the deepest sleep.

If you're using an iPhone to navigate, we'd love to hear about your experiences and your opinion.

— richard

help — cont'd

So another major drawback of EPIRBs — as the *J/World* crew will attest — is that there's no way to know if your distress signal has been heard, that help is coming, and when it may arrive. Had the *J/World* crew known a chopper had been dispatched and when it would arrive, the spirits in the liferaft would have been more buoyant.

There are two kinds of EPIRBs, ones that only give the initial lat/long, and others that continue to broadcast the latest lat/long. The price difference is minimal, so the obvious choice is the latter. Always make sure that your EPIRB battery is strong and that you know how to activate it. And if your EPIRB isn't properly registered, it will be as useful as a paperweight in an emergency.

The most basic ACR Category II EPIRB runs about \$700. For \$1,100, you can get a GPS-enabled Category I ACR that will send your exact location in the first data burst.

Satphone — In most emergency situations, we believe than an Iridium satphone is the most helpful rescue device. If it's preprogrammed with the Coast Guard's SAR number, kept in a waterproof case, and has a charged battery, it provides nearly instant two-way communication with the Coasties. In addition to your being able to tell them the nature of your emergency — taking on water, dismasting, heart attack — they can let you know that help is on the way and when you might expect it. The effect this can have on morale cannot be understated.

Not all satphone calls go through, and some are dropped. But the Iridium system has improved over the years. We probably made 25 calls on our Iridium during this year's Ha-Ha. Only two didn't initially go through, and two were dropped. Redialing solved the problems in all cases. Iridium satphones work virtually everywhere in the world, but they are not waterproof. Have a waterproof case of some type.

The Iridium 9555 can be found for under \$1,500, which often includes a supply of free minutes. Minutes can be purchased separately for anywhere from \$1.36 to \$2. Note that Iridium phones can also be rented for events such as the Ha-Ha.

Spot Satellite Messenger — With the push of a button, this inexpensive device — with a relatively small annual fee — will send a message to the GEOS International Emergency Response Center, which, in the United States, means 911, in Europe 122, and the nearest emergency service in the rest of the world. Lamely, the Spot people were unable to tell us what this meant if, for example, you were off the coast of Nicaragua or Peru, or other places where marine emergency response is limited or non-existent. But you can also alert up to 10 contacts 'back home' in emergency and even non-emergency situations. While you can't talk back and forth as with satphone, you can pre-program certain messages that would indicate the type of emergency you're having. Spot also provides tracking and other messaging services. The response of *Latitude* readers who have used Spot — although not in emergency situations — has been great. Many say they use it as a backup to their EPIRB. They are not waterproof so check this, and they must have an unobstructed view of the sky.

One downside of Spot is that, while it covers much of the world, it doesn't cover all of it. Hawaii, for example.

The Spot Personal Tracker costs \$100, while the Spot II Satellite Messenger, which allows you to send text messages, runs \$150. A one-year subscription to the service is \$99.

Cell Phones — These are great in emergencies, of course, but coverage on the water is very limited. And if in Mexican water, you must know a number to call, or the prefixes, to call back to the States.

Aboard *Profligate*, we have built-in and handheld VHF's, plus an SSB, an EPIRB and a satphone. We'll be adding a Spot. We love the redundancy of it all. If someone were on a budget for a cruise to Mexico, the very least we'd recommend are a satphone, an EPIRB or Spot, and a VHF. But know this: the devices necessary to let people

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help — cont'd

know you need help are available, and in most cases, at a relatively low cost.

It goes without saying that you're also going to want to have at least one handheld GPS with batteries in a dry bag. Also note that had the *J/World* crew not been rescued from their liferaft relatively quickly, the cold would have become the biggest threat to their lives. Costco sells summer wetsuits for just \$49. If you're sailing off the coast of California or north of Cabo in Mexico and have to get into a liferaft, it could be the best \$49 you've ever spent.

The tools to greatly limit your risk on the ocean are available, so you'd be foolish not to use at least some of them. If you've had experience with using any of these devices in an emergency situation, send your story to richard@latitude38.com.

a legend in our midst

Bay Area sailors had one of the greats in their midst last month and most didn't even know it. Eric Forsyth may not be a household name, but those in the know considered themselves privileged to meet the man who had just arrived after a successful trip through the Northwest Passage.

On October 17, Forsyth, 77, sailed his Westsail 42 *Fiona* under the Gate for the first time — something he'd always wanted to do. For a man who has as many miles under his keel as the distance from the earth to the moon, milestones are hard to come by.

Forsyth's sailing resume reads like a Jack London bibliography: two circumnavigations, three trips to the Arctic, four times around Cape Horn, several Pacific, Atlantic and Baltic crossings, plus years spent cruising the Caribbean. "I also did the Panama Canal four times, which I could've done without," he remarked.

In 2001, Forsyth was the recipient of the Cruising Club of America's highest honor — the Blue Water Medal — for the previous year's 10-month, 21,784-mile voyage from his home on Long Island to Antarctica and back. This distinction was followed six years later by the Seven Seas Award, presented by the Seven Seas Cruising Association for *Fiona's* trip to the Antarctic Circle the year before, as well as his many previous adventures.

His latest adventure began on June 15, when he sailed north from Long Island. Over the next 124 days, Eric and his crew — there were six who rotated through — logged 8,873 miles, averaging 112 miles per day. And that's including days spent in port . . . or aground.

To be fair, there was really only one grounding. Pack ice swept into Resolute Bay, where *Fiona* was anchored, very quickly one day. The crew weighed anchor in an effort to find a lead through the ice but were pushed ashore. It was a soft landing, and *Fiona* floated off on the next high tide, but the incident made for quite a story.

An electrical engineer by trade, Forsyth retired from an illustrious 35-year career at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island in 1995, and has spent 2/3 of his life since then aboard *Fiona*. His beloved wife and sailing companion, Edith, passed away four years before his retirement, but Forsyth has had no trouble finding crew wherever he goes . . . even the top of the world.

"We were in Resolute when a fellow on shore gave a yell," he recalled. "He said, 'You need extra crew?' I wanted another person through the center of the Northwest Passage — the autopilot compass doesn't work up there, and we just needed someone at the wheel — so we brought him on."

Indeed, he nearly always finds the bodies he needs for ocean passages by posting signs at marinas or putting a call out on his website. But there are rare occasions when he can't find crew — or the crew he has jump ship, as happened in Nome. "We were in the Chukchi Sea on our way to Nome when the autopilot broke," he said. "We had

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it's a woman's

It's not just teenage girls seeking a title who go sailing around the world, though they seem to get the most press. One female sailor already *en route* on her planned non-stop solo circumnavigation is Jeanne Socrates (synereida.livejournal.com). As reported thoroughly in these pages, Socrates lost her previous Najad 361, *Nereida*, on a Mexican beach last summer, just a handful of miles before completing a two-year solo circumnavigation. She then had a new Najad 380, also named *Nereida*, built with the intention of sailing around the world via the Great Capes.



ERIC FORSYTH



RUSS ROBERTS

Top, ice bergs weren't as much trouble for 'Fiona' as pack ice. Center, but the floes brought some interesting wildlife much closer. Below, Eric Forsyth left the Bay on November 24, bound for Panama, the Caribbean, and home by May.



LATITUDE / LADONNA

world

On October 10, Socrates left the Canaries and is currently ticking off the miles to the Southern Ocean. But it hasn't been smooth sailing. So far she's dealt with typical new-boat issues — minor leaks, unexpected chafe, oil dripping where it shouldn't, bolts appearing out of nowhere — as well as more serious issues.

One of her most troublesome problems was with her watermaker. Almost from Day One, Socrates had some issue or another until the day came that it literally blew up, soaking the cabin in brine. She

continued in middle column of next sightings page

legend — cont'd

to hand steer for 700 miles in 30 knots and heavy seas. I don't think they liked that!"

While self-effacing to a fault, Forsyth is a consummate storyteller. From sharing the details of a delightful brunch with the crew of *Ocean Watch* in Gjoa Haven, to recounting the antics of one nameless crewmember who fell into the harbor at Nome — "He went on a real blinder," he said — Forsyth entertained a group of sailors that continued to grow as he spoke.

We wish we had space to share all his stories — like the time he was dismayed in 160 knots of wind while singlehanded across the Atlantic, or how he rebuilt a 1928 4.5-liter Bentley ("The best Bentley ever made!") while building *Fiona* — but instead will suggest you discover this legend for yourself at his website, www.yachtfiona.com.

— *ladonna*



'Fiona' was pushed ashore at Resolute by pack ice. While mildly embarrassing, it wasn't as dangerous as Forsyth's singlehanded trek across the Bering Sea from Nome to Dutch Harbor, thanks to a mutinous crew.

SIGHTINGS

go nick!

When we interviewed intrepid singlehander Nick Jaffe for the July issue of *Latitude 38*, he confessed that he'd been told time and again that his goal to reach his homeland of Australia by November was unattainable. Small boats such as Jaffe's Contessa 26 *Constellation* aren't known for speedy ocean crossings — indeed, it took the little red boat 27 days to cross from Half Moon Bay to Honolulu — but the naysayers weren't taking Jaffe's single-mindedness and determination into account.

On November 18, the 28-year-old Jaffe sailed into Coffs Harbor on the north coast of New South Wales, Australia, finishing a journey that began 743 days earlier in Amsterdam. "When I arrived, two customs agents asked, 'Where's your homecoming party?'" Jaffe recalled. "I told them 'You're it, guys, make some noise!'"

Through his well-written blog, Jaffe brought sailors the world over along on his shoestring journey. No big sponsors, no media hype, no

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woman's world

spent a couple days effecting repairs and it's worked flawlessly since.

Socrates, who's in her 60s and has sailed solo for several years and tens of thousands of miles, has successfully dealt with other potentially disastrous situations in the last two months. It took years of working on her own boats to gain the skills for such jobs. We hope the pubescent girls following in her wake have such knowledge, as it's absolutely necessary when — not if — something goes awry.

As of this writing, Aussie 16-year-old Jessica Watson (www.jessicawatson.com.au) has been at sea for a little more than a month, and seems to be faring

Seasons Greetings
from the crew at
Latitude 38

— cont'd

well aboard her S&S 34 *Ella's Pink Lady*. Watson hopes to become the youngest person to solo circumnavigate.

The other contender for the title of 'Youngest Around' is Marina del Rey resident Abby Sunderland (*soloround.blogspot.com*), 16, who bought the Open 40 *Wild Eyes* on the East Coast at the end of October and had her shipped west. According to her blog, Abby still plans on leaving this year, though no date had been set as we went to press.

We sincerely wish these young adventurers smooth waters . . . but hope they're prepared for the worst.

— *ladonna*



nick — cont'd

record aspirations — just a young man on a sailing adventure. And it was a roller coaster ride. From the triumphant highs of finishing a lonely crossing to the extreme lows of leaving new friends . . . over and over . . . we've followed Nick on his physical and emotional journey.

After leaving Hawaii, Nick made his way to the tiny atoll of Palmyra and then on to Samoa. Nine days after his arrival in Apia on September 20, a 8.0-magnitude earthquake generated a tsunami that devastated

American Samoa and the southern end of Samoa . . . where Nick's parents happened to be vacationing. Apia, on the northeast side of the island, was spared major damage but reports filtered in of profound destruction and death in the resort-laden south. Not only concerned for his parents well-being, Jaffe also wanted to help everyone affected by the disaster, so he volunteered with the Red Cross.

Jaffe found his parents, a bit battered, but otherwise whole. They left the island the next day but Nick stuck around to help. When he was told there were too many volunteers, he set his sights on the tiny Tongan island of Niuatoputapu, which had been nearly flattened by the tsunami. He, along with a number of other cruisers, carried as many provisions and supplies as they could to the people of the island.

By the time he arrived in Vava'u, the tone of Jaffe's popular blog was decidedly glum. "This goal of completion lessens in meaning every day," he wrote. In hindsight, Nick thinks the tsunami affected him more than he realized. "I felt hopeless in the face of disaster," he told us. "There was this gross tragedy, with so many affected peoples, and here I was, holidaying on a boat. It really brought things home to me — the fragility of things, the pain in the world — and made me think about what's important."

Though he admits to having often considered giving up, Nick persevered, finally tearing himself away from Tonga — and yet another group of new friends — bound for Australia. "I perked up once I was back at sea," he recalls. "I had wonderful conditions until I neared New Caledonia: 15 knots on the beam, zero squalls, warm blue skies — totally idyllic."

At this writing, *Constellation* — which held up incredibly well over the last 17,000 nm — was for sale. "I had no real intention of keeping her," says Nick. "She's too small to live aboard, and just to keep her as a fanciful object is unaffordable. Besides, I can't afford the duty, customs, quarantine and GST charges that come with importing a foreign boat."

Now that he's accomplished what he set out to do, Jaffe refuses to wallow in the sometimes-inevitable depression that comes after such a feat. "I want to start a foundation that will award grants to young people embarking on acts of adventure and exploration," he said. That's between working on his company, *Arktisma.com*, and planning his next sailing project. "I've come out of all this having twice as much energy and hope for the future, even if sometimes I came across depressed and anxious," he said. "Maybe I'll even write a book. It's all the rage!"

— *ladonna*



NICK JAFFE

Nick Jaffe emulating his supporters who started a 'Go Nick' campaign on his site, www.bigoceans.com.