

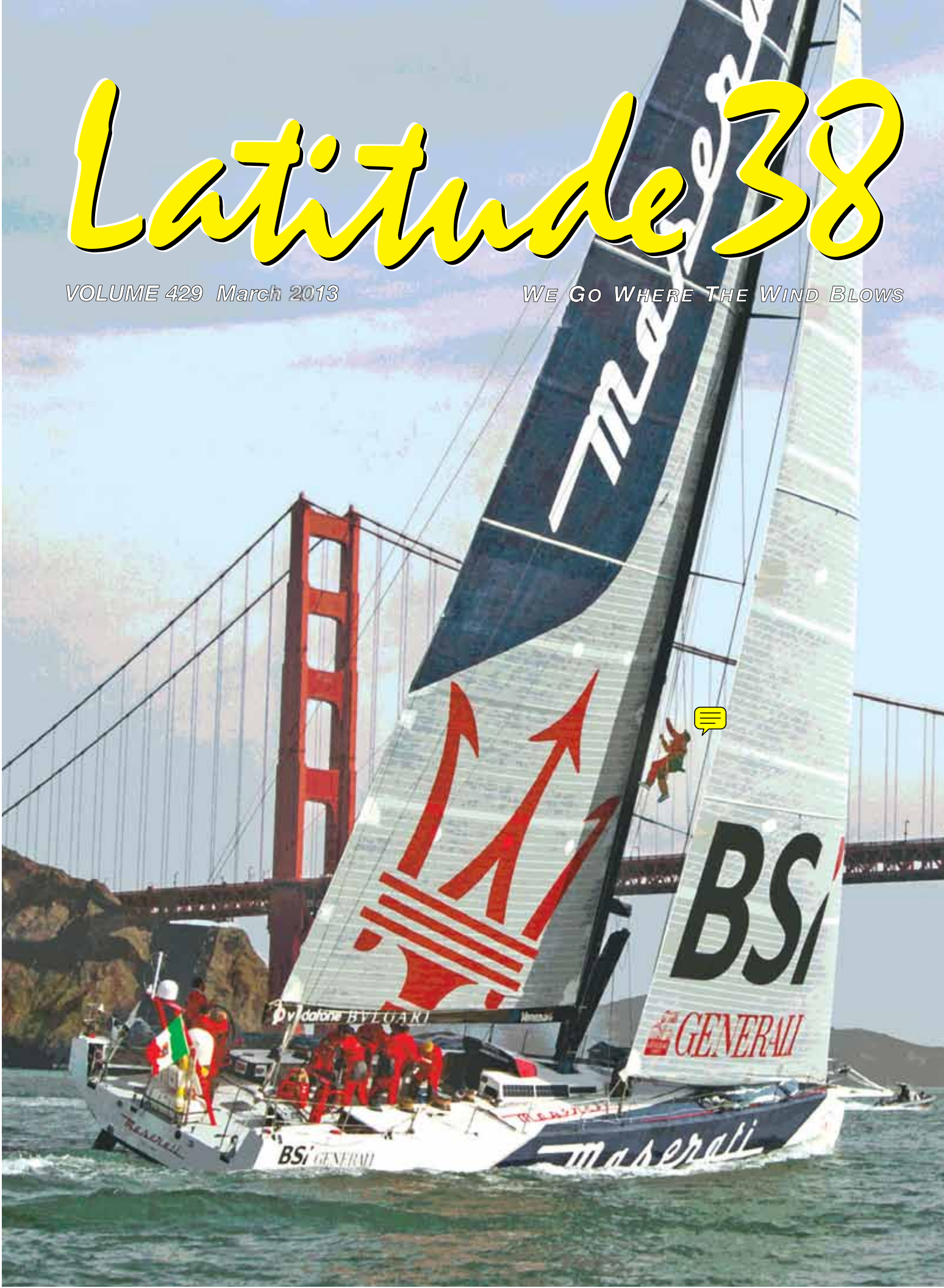
Latitude 38

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VOLUME 429 March 2013

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MARCH 2013



VOLUME 429



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What a Fiasco!

It was a fiasco. But it's supposed to be. San Francisco Bay's Singlehanded Sailing Society held its annual Three Bridge Fiasco on January 26. And as fiascos go, it did not disappoint. There was light air, heavy air, and plenty of current to challenge the more than 350 single- and doublehanded, mono- and multihull competitors.

The rules are simple enough; the tactics, not so much. Round a fixed mark by the Golden Gate Bridge, Red Rock by the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge, and Treasure Island by the Bay Bridge; in any order and in any direction. Oh, and starts are staggered based on each boat's handicap.

Buzz Blackett's Pineapple Powered Class 40, *California Condor*, sailed by Buzz and the boat's designer, Jim Antrim, was the first monohull to cross the finish line, finishing ahead of 266 other doublehanded monohulls.

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Cover: At the end of her 14,000-mile sprint from New York, the sleek VOR 70 *Maserati* glides toward the Golden Gate. Crew photographer Michele Sighele climbs the rig to record the arrival from atop the sloop's 105-ft mast.

Photo by Bjoern Kils

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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.

SELECT BROKERAGE



Beneteau 46, 2008 \$289,000



Jeanneau 45, 2007 \$290,000



Beneteau 36.7, 2010 \$144,000



Island Packet 380, 1999 Galatea \$219,000

SAIL

55' Roberts center cockpit	1987	\$230,000
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46' Beneteau Oceanis 46	2008	289,000
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45' Jeanneau Sun Odyssey	2007	290,000
42' Beneteau 423	2004	175,000
41' Dehler DS	1998	145,000
41' Tartan 4100	2004	324,500
40' Beneteau 40.7	2001	155,000
40' Beneteau 40	2009	199,000
38' Beneteau 381	1999	89,000
38' Beneteau Moorings	1991	35,000
38' Ericson 38-200	1988	63,000
38' Island Packet 380	1999	219,000
37' Pacific Seacraft yawl	1984	119,000
36' Beneteau 36.7	2010	144,000
36' Beneteau 361	2000	89,900
36' Pearson 36-II	1985	57,900
36' Catalina	1989	47,500
36' Hunter sloop	2004	94,500
35' Island Packet	1991	139,000
33' Beneteau 331	2004	84,900
33' Beneteau 331	2003	79,900
32' J/32	1997	79,000
30' Beneteau First 30	2011	149,000

POWER

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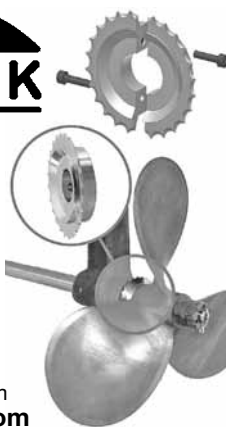
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CALENDAR

Non-Race

Mar. 1-6 — *Lady Washington* and *Hawaiian Chieftain* continue their Northern California tour in Oakland with tours, educational programs and Adventure Sails. **3/7-19**: Redwood City; **3/20-4/1**: Sausalito; **4/2-8**: Bodega Bay; **4/11-17**: Eureka; **4/19-29**: Crescent City. See www.historicalseaport.org for a full schedule and pricing.

Mar. 2 — Sail a Small Boat Day. Free rides on a variety of different small sailboats at Richmond YC, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Wear something warm and waterproof, and bring a PFD and change of clothes. Info, www.richmondyc.org.

Mar. 2 — 'Your Boat as a Business' seminar at Tradewinds Sailing School & Club, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Stick around for 'Flotilla Trips & More' by David Kory, discussing upcoming trips, 6-8 p.m. Free. Info, (510) 232-7999.

Mar. 3 — 27th Annual Mariners' Sunday at St. Luke Presbyterian Church in San Rafael, 10 a.m. An ecumenical service dedicated to mariners, with StFYC's Sons of the Sea Chorus. Followed by brunch at Loch Lomond YC. Info, www.stlukepres.org. Brunch reservations, (415) 707-0924.

Mar. 3 — Fundraiser for International Rescue Group at Alameda YC, 2-7 p.m. Info, www.internationalrescuegroup.org.

Mar. 3-31 — Free sailing at Pier 40 every Sunday courtesy of BAADS. Info, (415) 281-0212 or www.baads.org.

Mar. 6 — In-the-water liferaft training class by Sal's Inflatables, 3:30-5 p.m. at Golden Gate YC, just before the Crew List Party. \$39. Reservations & info, (510) 522-1824.

Mar. 6 — *Latitude 38's* Spring Crew List Party at Golden Gate YC, 6-9 p.m. It's early in the season so you can set up your crew sooner. \$5 for anyone 25 & under (with ID)! Only \$7 for the rest of us. See www.latitude38.com for details.

Mar. 6-27 — Wednesday Yachting Luncheon Series at St. Francis YC, 12-2 p.m. Enjoy lunch and a dynamic speaker each Wednesday for about \$25. All YCs' members welcome. More info under the 'Events' tab at www.stfyc.com.

Mar. 7 — Wildlife on the Bay & California Coast talk by marine ecologist Carol Keiper at Corinthian YC, 6:30 p.m. Free. Co-hosted by Modern Sailing School and Club. RSVP at www.cyc.org or (415) 435-4771.

Mar. 7-10 — San Francisco Ocean Film Festival celebrates the sea with films that increase awareness. \$14 per program or \$100 for a Film Pass. Info, www.oceanfilmfest.org.

Mar. 7-10 — Sacramento Boat Show at Cal Expo. Info, www.sacramentoboatshow.com.

Mar. 9 — North U. Trim Seminar at Nanaimo YC (BC), 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. \$85-115. **4/27**: Coos Bay YC (OR). Info, www.northu.com.

Mar. 10 — Daylight Saving Time begins. Woot!

Mar. 14 — Club Nautique's Winter Seminar Series continues with 'NOAA Sea Birds in Our Sanctuaries' by Karen Carlson in Sausalito, 6-8 p.m. \$10 members/\$15 non-members. **3/28**: 'America's Cup', speaker TBA in Alameda, same time. Info, (510) 865-4700 or www.clubnautique.net.

Mar. 14 — Are you a single boatowner needing crew? The Single Sailors Association has crew to help sail your boat. Monthly meeting at Ballena Bay YC in Alameda, 6:30 p.m. Info, www.singlesailors.org or (510) 239-7245.

Mar. 16 — Marine Flea Market at Emeryville Marina, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Info, (510) 654-3716.

Mar. 16 — Mariners Swap Meet at Channel Islands Landing in Oxnard, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Info, (805) 985-6269.

Mar. 16, 30 — Celebrate Women's History Month at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park with 'Heroines at Sea: Adventures of Sailing Wives' aboard *Balclutha*, 3-3:45 p.m. \$5, under 16 free. Info, (415) 447-5000.

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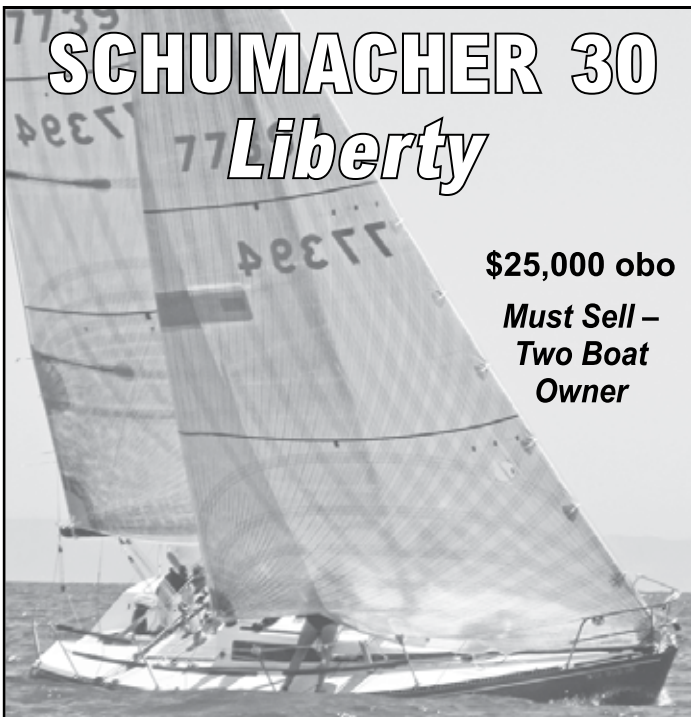
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CALENDAR

Mar. 16-17 — ISAF Sea Survival course at San Francisco YC, 8:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Fulfills training requirement for offshore racers. \$240. Repeats **3/23-24**. Info, www.sfyyc.org (click 'Training Sessions').

Mar. 17 — Cal Sailing Club's free introductory sail at Berkeley Marina, 1-4 p.m. Info, www.cal-sailing.org.

Mar. 20 — Vernal equinox, aka the first day of spring!

Mar. 23 — 'Suddenly in Command' safety course by USCGA at San Jose West Marine, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. \$15. RSVP required, (408) 246-1147.

Mar. 23 — Open Boat Party & Open House at Seal Beach YC in Long Beach. Info, (562) 787-3636.

Mar. 23 — 'Sail Repair Clinic' at Tradewinds Sailing School & Club, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Stick around for a 'Sail Trim' seminar from 1-5 p.m. \$20 per seminar. Info, (510) 232-7999.

Mar. 27 — Sail under the full moon on a humpnight.

Mar. 30 — Beginning Chantey Singing Workshop aboard *Balclutha* at SF Maritime's Hyde Street Pier, 2-4 p.m. Fee-free day. RSVP required, (415) 561-7171.

Apr. 11 — 'Highlights of a Sailing Life' presentation by cruising guru Jimmy Cornell at Corinthian YC, 6:30 p.m. \$10. RSVP, www.cyc.org or (415) 435-4771.

Apr. 11-14 — Strictly Sail Pacific at Jack London Square. Info, www.strictlysailpacific.com.

Apr. 13 — Santa Rosa Sailing Club's Upper Petaluma River Cruise. Info, www.santarosasailingclub.org.

Apr. 21 — Berkeley YC Swap Meet & Open House, 6 a.m. Info, swapmeet@berkeleyyc.org or www.berkeleyyc.org.

Racing

Mar. 2 — Long Distance #1. SSC, www.stocktonsc.org.

Mar. 2 — John Pitcher Memorial. CPYC, www.cpyc.com.

Mar. 9 — Mercury Series #1. EYC, www.encinal.org.

Mar. 9 — Spring Series #1. SSC, www.stocktonsc.org.

Mar. 9-10 — Spring Dinghy. StFYC, www.stfyyc.com.

Mar. 9-10 — Big Daddy Regatta, a don't-miss Bay Area classic. RYC, (510) 237-2821 or www.richmondyc.org.

Mar. 9-10 — BAYS Winter Optis #4. Info, www.bayarea-youthsailing.com.

Mar. 15-17 — San Diego Sperry Top-Sider NOOD Regatta. SDYC, www.sdycc.org.

Mar. 16 — SSS Corinthian Race. SSS, www.sfbaysss.org.

Mar. 16 — Doublehanded Long Distance #1. SSC, www.stocktonsc.org.

Mar. 16 — Lee Storrs Regatta for keelboats, Marina del Rey. South Coast Corinthian YC, www.sccyc.org.

Mar. 16-17 — Spring Keel Regatta on the Cityfront. StFYC, www.stfyyc.com, (415) 563-6363 or raceoffice@stfyyc.com.

Mar. 17 — Spring 1 & 2 PHRF. MPYC, www.mpyc.org.

Mar. 23 — Island YC's Doublehanded Lightship. Proceeds benefit United Cerebral Palsy. Info, www.iyc.org.

Mar. 22-28 — Newport Beach to Cabo San Lucas Race. This 800-mile downwind dash serves as a great tune-up for the TransPac. Newport Harbor YC, www.nhyc.org.

Mar. 23 — Rites of Spring, includes all-female crew division. OYC, www.oaklandyachtclub.net.

Mar. 23 — Small Boat Winter #3. EYC, www.encinal.org.

Mar. 30 — If the Lightship is peanuts to you, don't miss BAMA's Doublehanded Farallones. Info, www.sfbama.org.

Mar. 30 — Rosenblum Regatta. SFYC, www.sfyyc.org.

Apr. 6 — 25th America's Schooner Cup in San Diego, a spectacular regatta featuring (you guessed it) schooners from up and down the coast. Proceeds from race and Sunday's concert benefit the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. Contact Silver Gate YC at manager@sgyc.org or (619) 222-1214 to enter your schooner or find out more.



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CALENDAR

Apr. 6 — Bullship Regatta, the annual running of El Toros from Sausalito to the Cityfront. Info, www.eltoroyra.org.

Apr. 6 — Women Skippers Regatta. SYC, www.sausalitoyachtclub.org.

Apr. 6 — Spring Tune-Up Race, the mother of all beer can races. RYC, www.richmondyc.org.

Apr. 6, 20 — April Regatta #1 & 2 at Spring Lake. Santa Rosa SC, www.santarosasailingclub.org.

Apr. 6 — Summer #1. SeqYC, www.sequoiayc.org.

Apr. 6 — Andy Byrd Memorial Race. CPYC, www.cpyc.org.

Apr. 7 — Spring Series #3. SSC, www.stocktonsc.org.

Apr. 13 — YRA-WBRA #1. GGYC, www.yra.org.

Apr. 13 — Doublehanded Long Distance #2. SSC, www.stocktonsc.org.

Apr. 13-14 — BYC's 41st annual Rollo Wheeler Regatta. One design & PHRF buoy races on Saturday, pursuit race on Sunday. Bobbi, (925) 939-9885 or bobbi@ijfcbat.com.

Apr. 13-14 — Big Dinghy. RYC, www.richmondyc.org.

Apr. 13-14 — Ski/Sail National Championships on Lake Tahoe. Every sailor must ski, every skier must sail, and all must party! TahoeYC, www.skisail.com.

Apr. 20 — YRA-OYRA Crewed Lightship. StFYC, www.yra.org.

May 4-5 — The 113th annual Great Vallejo Race, one of the biggest races on the Bay, which also serves as the YRA season opener. Info, (415) 771-9500 or www.yra.org.

May 18 — Singlehanded Farallones Race, a rite of passage for local solo sailors. SSS, www.sfbaysss.org.

June 15 — YRA-OYRA Full Crew Farallones Race. SFYC, www.yra.org.

July 8, 11, 13 — 47th L.A. to Honolulu Race, better known as the TransPac, starts. Info, www.transpacrace.com.

Remaining Midwinter Regattas

BERKELEY YC — Chowder Races: Sundays through March.

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

ELKHORN YC — Frostbite Series: 3/2, 3/16, 3/30. John Herne, (831) 840-0200 or johnherne@gmail.com.

ENCINAL YC — Jack Frost Series: 3/16. Info, rearcommodore@encinal.org.

GOLDEN GATE YC — Manuel Fagundes Seaweed Soup Series: 3/2. Info, (916) 215-4566 or raceoffice@ggyc.com.

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

LAKE MERRITT SC — Robinson Memorial Midwinters: 3/10. Info, (510) 582-1048.

OAKLAND YC — Sunday Brunch Series: 3/3. Jim, oyracecom@gmail.com or (510) 277-4676.

RICHMOND YC — Small Boat Midwinters: 3/3. Opti Midwinters: 3/2. Bob, bbranstad@gmail.com.

SANTA CRUZ YC — Midwinters: 3/16. Info, (831) 425-0690. Laser Midwinters: 3/10. Rob, robschuyler@cruzio.com.

SANTA ROSA SC — Winter Series: 3/24. Info, www.santarosasailingclub.org.

SAUSALITO YC — Sunday Midwinters: 3/3. Dave Borton, (415) 302-7084 or race@sausalitoyachtclub.org.

SEQUOIA YC — Winter Series: 3/16. Redwood Cup: 3/3. Info, www.sequoiayc.org.

SOUTH BEACH YC — Island Fever Midwinters: 3/16. Info, www.southbeachyc.org.

TIBURON YC — Midwinters: 3/9. Ian, race@tyc.org.

VALLEJO YC — Tiny Robbins Midwinters: 3/2. Info, www.vyc.org or (707) 643-1254.

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70' Catamaran, '04, <i>My Way Forever</i>	\$2,453,700	40' J/120, '02, <i>Alchera</i>	SOLD	34' J/34, '85, <i>The Zoo*</i>	\$29,900
55' Tayana CC, '88, <i>Samadhi V</i>	\$249,000	40' J/120, '01, <i>Vahevala</i>	New Listing \$169,950	34' MJM 34z, '05*	\$259,000
52' Santa Cruz 52, '99, <i>Renegade</i>	\$495,000	40' J/120, '94*	\$149,000	33' Synergy 1000, '99, <i>After Burner</i>	\$49,000
52' TransPac w/IRC mods, '03, <i>Braveheart*</i>	\$395,000	40' Pacific Seacraft, '99, <i>DreamKeeper</i>	\$314,900	32' Luhrs Open 32, '03, <i>Mad Dash</i>	\$114,900
50' Bakewell-White, '02, <i>Brisa</i>	\$615,000	39' Silverton 351 Sedan Cruiser, '99	SOLD	32' Catalina 320, '95*	\$52,000
48' J/145, Hull #9, '03*	\$675,000	39' Carroll Marine CM 1200, '95*	\$49,000	30' Columbia 30, '06, <i>Escudero</i>	SOLD
48' C&C Landfall 48, '81, <i>Footloose</i>	\$159,995	38' True North 38, 2002, <i>Ricochet</i>	Pending \$184,900	30' J/30, '79*	\$26,000
48' 1D48, '96, <i>Chaya</i>	SOLD	38' Aerodyne 38, '03, <i>Kira</i>	\$189,000	30' Knarr, '61, <i>Sophia</i>	New Listing \$60,000
47' Beneteau 473, '06, <i>Done Dealing</i>	\$269,900	38' Alerion, '07*	\$229,000	30' Peterson Half Ton*	\$14,900
45' Jeanneau Sun Odyssey, '08*	\$319,000	36' J/111, '11, <i>Invisible Hand</i>	SOLD	30' Scout 30, '80, <i>Zelda</i>	\$49,500
44' Wylie/Fox 44, '06, <i>Ocelot</i>	New Listing \$253,000	36' J/109, '03*	\$185,000	29' MJM 29z, '07*	\$269,000
43' J/130, '96, <i>RAM</i>	New Listing \$210,000	36' Sydney 3600, '02 <i>Fins</i>	SOLD	28' J/28, '87*	\$32,000
43' J/130, '96*	\$184,000	35' J/105, '92, <i>Vim</i>	\$75,000	28' Alerion Express, '02*	SOLD
42' Beneteau 423, '07*	\$204,500	35' J/105, '00, Hull #355, <i>Whisper</i>	\$84,900	26' J/80, '06, <i>J Hawk</i>	SOLD
41' J/124, '06	\$239,000	35' J/105, '99, <i>Life Is Good*</i>	\$68,900	26' J/80, '00*	\$29,900
40' J/122, '09*	\$399,000	35' J/35C, '91*	\$89,000		

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CALENDAR

Mexico and Caribbean

Mar. 16-Apr. 20 — The 4th Annual Cruisers Rally to El Salvador starts in Mexico and meanders 'rally style' to Bahia del Sol in El Salvador. Info, www.elsalvadorrally.com.

Mar. 19-23 — The 21st Annual Banderas Bay Regatta, five days of 'friendly racing for cruising boats'. The sailing conditions and the Paradise Marina venue couldn't be better. Everybody plays it safe because they're sailing their homes, and the entry is cheap. It's the perfect time and place to have family and friends fly down to join you in the tropics. In fact, you'd have to be nuts to miss this one. The regatta is part of the monthlong Festival Nautico Vallarta. Info, www.banderasbayregatta.com.

Mar. 20-23 — The Loro Piana Caribbean Superyacht Regatta and Rendezvous at the Costa Smeralda YC in Gorda Sound, British Virgin Islands. Having seen the success of the St. Barth Bucket, the Italian clothing company and the new yacht club wanted in on the superyacht action, so they started this event. It attracted 14 top-quality superyachts in its first year, and they expect even more this time around. The yacht club is located a winch handle's throw from the Bitter End YC and all the charterboat moorings in Virgin Gorda's North Sound. Info, www.superyachtregattaandrendezvous.com.

Mar. 25-31 — BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival, British Virgin Islands. One of the Caribbean's best regattas, which includes a huge bareboat fleet. A great way to spend a week-long charter. Info, www.bvispringregatta.org.

Mar. 28-31 — St. Barths Bucket. *Yachting World* has called this "the greatest sailing spectacle in the world" and there is no way we could disagree with the evaluation. Imagine 40 invited yachts from 100 to 289 feet going at it in three races in the spectacular open waters of the Caribbean. At night, almost all the boats line up on one quay in a harbor the size of Belvedere Cove to party, party, party, French Caribbean-style. The fleet is big enough that if you know your stuff, you probably already know somebody on a boat, and therefore have a decent shot at getting a ride. Info, www.bucketregattas.com/stbarths.

Apr. 8-13 — Les Voiles de St. Barth. This is sort of a St. Barths Bucket for people with boats shorter than 120 feet. The relatively new event attracted about 60 boats last year and, with 36 entries already, expects a bigger fleet this year. It offers the same great sailing as in the Bucket, but with even more casual French Caribbean-style partying. If you can sail, there's a decent chance you can get on a boat. Info, www.lesvoilesdesaintbarth.com.

April 11-14 — La Paz Bay Fest. This will be the fifth year for this descendant of the (in)famous La Paz Race Week. An event for cruisers that includes races, potlucks, cruising seminars and other fun activities for the family. More info on Bay Fest 2013 can be found at www.clubcruceros.net.

Apr. 18-23 — Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta. If you love classic yachts, there is nothing that compares to the Antigua Classic Regatta: great boats, great racing, and great fun at a terrific historical site. There are often good opportunities to crew in the Classic. Even Dennis Conner walked the docks and got a ride last year. Info, www.antiguaclassics.com.

Apr. 28-May 3 — Antigua Sailing Week, now in its 46th year, is the granddaddy of all great sailing weeks in the tropics. After years of 200+ entries from around the world, Sailing Week took a big hit with the Great Recession a few years back, but is now back to the five races plus the *Yachting World* Around the Island Race, so maybe the old girl is back up to speed. But, like us, she's gotten more mellow with age. Info, www.sailingweek.com.

May 2-4 — Loreto Fest and Cruisers' Music Festival. This

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CALENDAR

classic Baja event, started to clean up Puerto Escondido, draws a very large crowd of cruisers and Baja land-travellers for a chili cook-off, dinghy races and other water activities, the Candeleros Classic race, and lots of participant-created music. The goals are to have fun and raise lots of money for Mexican charities in Puerto Escondido and Loreto. Info, www.hiddenpartyachtclub.com.

June 28-30 — 8th Annual Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous, hosted by *Latitude 38* and Tahiti Tourisme. This free event is focused on cross-cultural appreciation and includes a cocktail party, a sailing rally to Moorea, Polynesian music and dance performances, and cruiser participation in traditional Tahitian sports — the highlight of which is the six-person outrigger canoe races. Info, www.pacificpuddlejumps.com.

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.

March Weekend Tides

date/day	time/ht. HIGH	time/ht. LOW	time/ht. HIGH	time/ht. LOW
3/02Sat	0214/6.0	0834/0.4	1515/4.3	2020/2.0
3/03Sun	0301/6.0	0938/0.3	1636/4.1	2119/2.4
3/09Sat	0313/1.7	0925/6.1	1543/-0.3	2235/5.6
3/10Sun	0502/1.3	1118/6.1	1724/-0.1	
3/16Sat	0252/5.5	0927/0.6	1620/4.2	2119/2.4
3/17Sun	0332/5.3	1020/0.7	1730/3.9	2214/2.7
3/23Sat	0331/2.1	0924/5.1	1551/0.5	2243/4.9
3/24Sun	0411/1.7	1015/5.3	1627/0.5	2311/5.2
3/30Sat	0156/6.1	0821/-0.5	1517/4.7	2015/2.0
3/31Sun	0241/6.1	0915/-0.5	1623/4.4	2110/2.3

March Weekend Currents

date/day	slack	max	slack	max
3/02Sat	1056 2242	0100/2.9F 1350/2.9F	0357 1712	0711/4.2E 1939/2.6E
3/03Sun	1204 2346	0152/2.5F 1458/2.8F	0446 1825	0806/4.1E 2039/2.1E
3/09Sat	1110	0202/3.2E 1416/4.8E	0523 1800	0818/3.5F 2102/4.2F
3/10Sun	0004 1303	0346/3.7E 1601/4.7E	0711 1942	1007/3.8F 2240/4.1F
3/16Sat	1151 2344	0147/2.4F 1441/2.6F	0444 1804	0749/3.7E 2017/2.0E
3/17Sun	1251	0233/1.9F 1543/2.2F	0528 1907	0838/3.4E 2110/1.6E
3/23Sat	1122	0209/2.4E 1420/3.8E	0543 1813	0832/2.5F 2112/3.3F
3/24Sun	0015 1209	0249/3.0E 1502/4.0E	0624 1849	0913/3.0F 2143/3.5F
3/30Sat	1037 2231	0046/3.1F 1337/3.7F	0337 1704	0655/4.9E 1927/2.8E
3/31Sun	1136 2327	0133/2.8F 1436/3.4F	0421 1807	0746/4.7E 2022/2.4E



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- 2006 41' J/124 \$199K
- 2001 40' C&C 121 \$210K
- 2000 40' Sabre 402 Pending
- 2000 38' Catalina 380 \$119K
- 1993 38' Morgan 38 \$97K
- 2006 36' J/109 \$199K
- 2004 36' J/109 \$177K
- 2003 35' J/105 \$110K
- 2002 35' J/105 \$90K
- 2007 33' Maxi Dolphin 33 \$179K
- 2005 30' Columbia 30 \$60K



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LETTERS

PHOTOS OF DAUGHTERS DRIVING BOATS

I love the photo of the young girl on the cover of the February issue of *Latitude*. Very cool! It reminded me of a photo of my daughter at 10 years of age, steering my Angleman Sea Witch all the way from Richmond to Tiburon for the Wooden Boat Show.

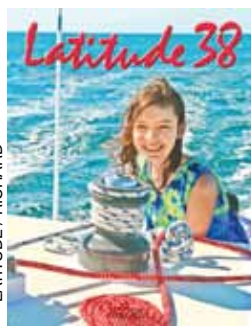
Stephen Carlson
Sea Quest, Sea Witch
San Francisco

YOU MIGHT TRY TO FIND AN INVISO PFD ON EBAY

Where's the PFD for the girl on the cover of the February issue of *Latitude*? She looks to be under 16, and therefore is required by law to wear one.

Joanne Jackson
Zeus, Beneteau Sense 43
Pt. Richmond

Joanne — The model in the photo is wearing a Class AAA Inviso Safety Master PFD made by Super Safety, Inc. during the late '90s. You can't see the PFD because it's invisible. Indeed,



LATITUDE / RICHARD

this feature was a big hit with the kids who are required to wear a PFD because, as one said, "The Inviso is like not wearing a PFD at all!"

Alas, Super Safety went out of business in short order for two reasons. First, the fact that their products were invisible made it difficult for retailers to take inventory and for end-users to find them on their boats. Indeed, the last straw was when Super Safety lost a \$10 million lawsuit to a woman who suffered brain damage as a result of tripping over one of the invisible PFDs while going down the companionway. That she was drunk and "being chased by the ghost of Joshua Slocum" were not considered to be mitigating factors when calculating damages.

That said, we sometimes have trouble with 'one size fits all' nanny-state laws crafted by well-intended bureaucrats. For example, on New Year's Day we took a friend and her large extended family sailing on Banderas Bay. A bunch of them were teens and kids, and as most of them live in Sayulita, they were all expert surfers. One, for instance, is the fourth rated 12-year-old surfer in the world, and is therefore regularly flown to the best surf spots on the planet by his sponsors. When he dove off Profligate's daggerboard in the middle of Banderas Bay, what were we supposed to do, make him wear a PFD? After all, it was about the least dangerous thing he did all day.

There are many differences between the United States and Mexico. In the United States, the majority of legislators feel it's the government's responsibility to make sure that even the most stupid, stoned and drunk individuals can't do any harm to themselves. In Mexico, people are expected to make a reasonable effort to watch out for their own well-being. If, for example, somebody hits himself in the face with a hammer, it's considered to be the fault of the person who swung the hammer, not the manufacturer of the hammer. While neither system is perfect, we prefer the Mexican view of personal responsibility.

While neither system is perfect, we prefer the Mexican view of personal responsibility.

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY

I recently received a letter from San Francisco's 700-slip South Beach Harbor about their intent to charge an annual

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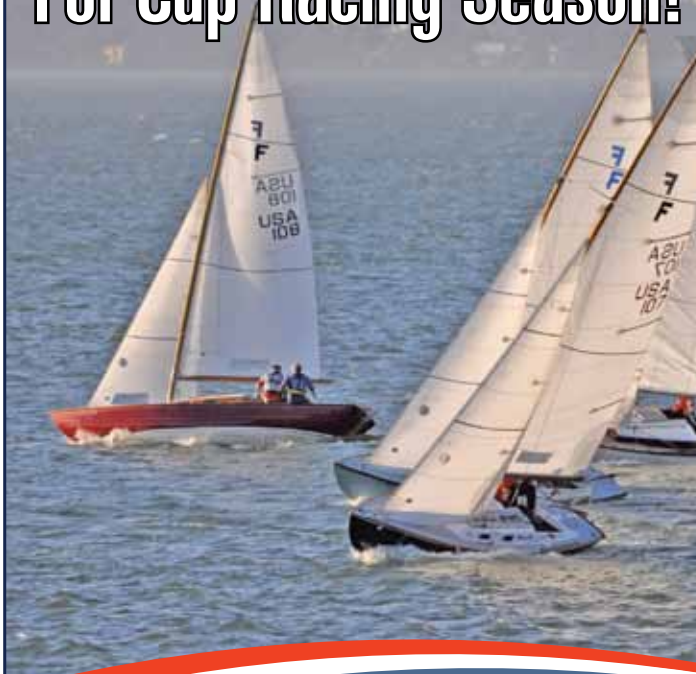
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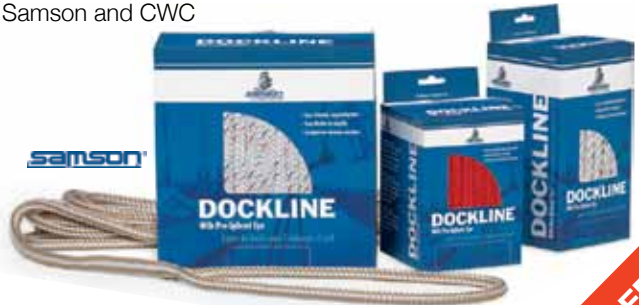
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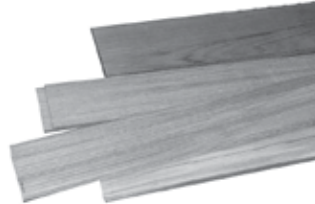
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LETTERS

fee of \$75 to keep my name on their waiting list for a slip. The reason given was that they needed to recoup costs of the administrative burden of maintaining the list. They even went so far as to say they hired someone just for that job!

I'm one of those poor souls in South Beach wait-list purgatory. After coughing up \$80 in 2005 to get on the list, I'm still nearly 200th in line for my boat length category. I believe that somehow I dropped even farther down the list since last year, but that's another story. As far as I'm concerned, the imposition of annual fees for the privilege of waiting in line is nothing more than adding insult to injury.

The marina's announcement letter is full of half-truths at best. Other people reading about the marina's claims of high costs to maintain a list quickly come to the same conclusion I did. B.S.! A few thoughts come quickly to mind:

— The administrative burden of maintaining a waiting list? Try a spreadsheet.

— Don't like answering people's questions about their position on the list? Post the list on the harbor's website so people can see their position without having to bother anyone.

— Don't like adding people's names to the list? Make a form on the website so people can put themselves on the list.

The letter goes on to state that it is "... normal practice of Northern California marinas to charge an annual fee." I phoned five local marinas at random — Berkeley, Brisbane (no wait list fee, but a \$25 application fee), Coyote Point, Grand Marina and San Francisco Marina — and only the San Francisco Marina, another quasi-governmental entity, charges a fee for being on the wait list. So not only is it unusual to charge any wait-list fee at all, it's even more unusual to charge an annual fee.

It's also noteworthy that none of the other marinas I spoke to seemed to have a problem with the administration of their wait lists. It was simply a non-issue. When a slip becomes available, the marina calls up the next person on the list, and so on, until someone answers the phone and puts down the deposit. Given that slips don't turn over very rapidly at South Beach, there isn't a lot of work involved.

South Beach also stated that they think the fee will 'speed up' the wait. Since the wait is determined by people vacating slips, I don't see how a fee is going to accelerate the process.

It would be fantastic if the San Francisco Port Authority paid attention to the obvious demand for slips, and looked at



WEBB LOGG

South Beach is such a popular marina that hundreds pay \$75 a year just to keep their name on the waiting list — even if they are 200 from the top of the list.

opening parts of their shore-line real estate for another marina. As a sailor, I know I'm biased, but as long as sailors keep the halyards from banging the mast, a marina is a quiet, not-too-hard-on-the-environment, and easy-on-the-eyes way to utilize what up to now has been a lot of wasted resources.

I'd prefer to remain anonymous as I still would like a slip at South Beach Harbor, and don't want my name to 'accidentally' fall off the list.

Name Withheld by Request
On the List

NWBR — *It seems to us there are about 50,000 tech guys*



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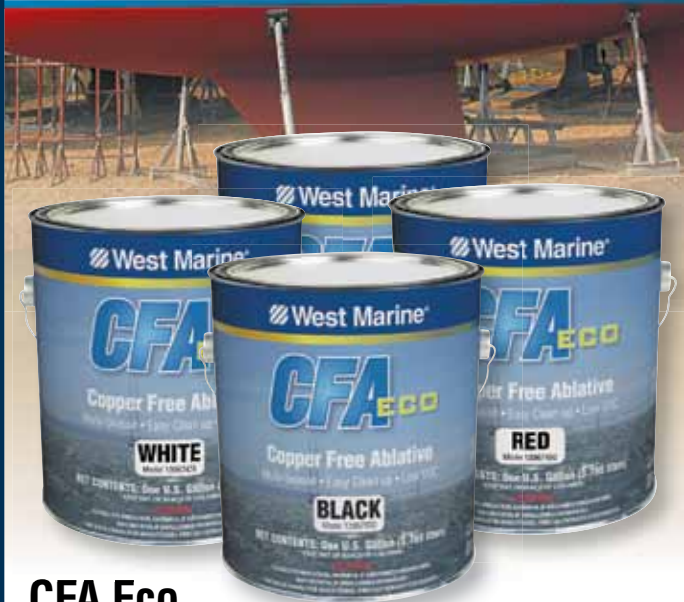
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LETTERS

and gals in *The City* who could, in their sleep, create an automatic and transparent website for South Beach Harbor.

↑↓ ONE OF THE GOOD THINGS OAKLAND HAS TO OFFER

There's a treasure on the shore of Oakland's Lake Merritt, as that city runs a boating program that offers the use of 14-ft Capri sailboats. The cost is a mere \$24/hour for the use of a tidy little sloop that accommodates up to four adults.

The day I was there with my dad, a nice young guy rigged the boat, patiently helped everyone aboard, and cast off the boat. The fixed keel makes it virtually impossible to tip the boat, and the canoe paddle is strong enough for kedging off

if you wander into shoal water. The winds on Lake Merritt are pretty reliable, and while they do shift enough to make things interesting, they don't drive you crazy.

The views of downtown Oakland are spectacular, and when you sail close to shore you get to interact with the many joggers. There's actually a bit of wildlife, too, as you're certain to see plenty of ducks, cormorants, Canada Geese and other more exotic species.



DAN MARSHALL

Joe Marshall enjoys day-sailing on Lake Merritt.

For many years my dad, Joe Marshall, loved sailing and racing his 26-ft Pearson Ariel on the Bay. But as it came time to move out of his house into a retirement home, he was full of dread, as is everyone who reaches that stage in life. Learning that he could continue to sail, but now on Lake Merritt, made the move much more palatable.

Dan Marshall
USCG Master
Cupertino

Readers — What a cool thing for your dad, as having something to look forward to, especially one that involves using the body and the mind, is essential to the quality of life.

Lake Merritt is the largest saltwater tidal lake in the United States, more or less described a 'V', with the 'wings' being about three-quarters of a mile long. You can rent El Toros, Sunfish, 14-ft Capris, and even catamarans from the Lake Merritt Boating Center for what seems to us to be very reasonable prices. For instance, you and five of your friends can rent a 14-ft Capri for just \$24 an/hour — \$20 if you are an Oakland resident. Or you can launch your own small sailboat for just \$2. See the Lake Merritt Boating Center website for details.

We realize that some readers experience trepidation at the thought of venturing into the flatlands of our hometown, but last year the New York Times ranked Oakland as the "fifth most desirable destination to visit in the world" — just after London and just ahead of Tokyo. Indeed, it was the highest ranked city in North America. A cynic might nearly die of laughter and say such a ranking is a lot more revealing of the New York Times than it is about 'Oaksterdam', but we're trying to be less cynical.

↑↓ LOCALLY SOURCED, ORGANICALLY GROWN ANCHORS

There is so much talk and varied opinion about anchors, but what about the steel being used in them and where it's sourced? I'm going through the exhaustive research on anchors, and have a fairly good idea of what general type I'd like, so the hard work is over. Or is it? I recently was introduced to a newer brand anchor, the Mantus. Have you any knowledge of or experience with them yet? More importantly, can you

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LETTERS

educate me on the steel and other structural features that make their anchors the best? Can you tell me where I might find further research?

Chris Glubka
SeaGlub, Hylas 46
San Francisco

Chris — We're not the kind of folks who care about the terroir of the wine we drink or food we eat, so you can imagine the depth of our concern over the source of steel in our anchors. We figure as long as we buy anchors that are two sizes above what's recommended, and use plenty of scope, we'll be in good shape. Now that we think of it, we use an aluminum anchor.

If you charter a Leopard 45 cat in the British Virgins, the boat generally will come equipped with a 45-lb CQR and 150 feet of chain. That was simply not adequate for Tim Schaff, formerly of San Francisco, formerly of Marina Cabo San Lucas, formerly of saving boats during Hurricane Marty in Puerto Escondido, and for the last nine years, owner/captain of the Leopard 45 Jet Stream in the British Virgins. Tim outfitted his cat with an 88-lb Rocna anchor and 300 feet of 3/8-inch high-test chain. "I like to sleep at night," Schaff told us, "and I like to feel my boat will be fine if she's anchored in 50 feet and she gets hit by a 50-knot squall while I'm gone. So I like the extra-large anchor and, when possible, 10:1 scope."

We feel Tim might be a little on the excessive side, but not much. The only downside of the Rocna and similar 'modern' anchors is that they are very expensive. For example, West Marine lists a Rocna 88 at \$1,200, while an equivalent Lewmar claw, state-of-the-art for many bottoms not long ago, is only \$215.

↑↓ WELCOME TO PALMYRA

I understand there is a letter in the February *Latitude* about Palmyra Atoll — where I now am living and working for the Nature Conservancy. I can't wait to see the letter.

Having cruised a bit in the South Pacific, Caribbean, Mexico and Canada, and traveled to many parts of the world, my three-month work stint has been a very interesting experience.

Latitude has always been a welcomed read. I must have picked up my first copy back in 1985 when we purchased Horizons Charter and Yachting Association.

Mike Casey
Palmyra Atoll

Mike — Thanks for the kind words. Given your experience as a cruiser, we're interested in your take on the Nature Conservancy's somewhat-less-than-welcoming welcome to small boat cruisers plying the vast stretches of the Pacific.

↑↓ IS THE PATH LESS TRAVELED THE BETTER ONE?

Have you observed the increasing number of damaged, capsized and sunken recreational sailing vessels that have been reported around the world in the past few years? Most production boats now have thin fin keels, some with a bulb at the bottom, and unprotected spade rudders. I imagine this is because speed is a very important selling point. Certainly more important than safety. I also assume that fin keels and spade rudders keep construction costs down, too.

When sailing boats are designed for racing, I don't have any objection. But I think cruising a racing boat offshore borders on insanity. As you know, it's not uncommon for cruisers on the West Coast of the Americas to cross paths with submerged logs, drifting buoys, shipping containers, fishing nets and whales. Trust me, I have seen those kinds of dangers many

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
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LETTERS

times on my trips between Baja and Acapulco.

Do you remember the good old days when the ballast was molded inside the hull, and the hull was designed to absorb and/or smooth out encounters with hard things in the water? Can you imagine the force applied to the joint between the bottom of the hull and the keel when a modern vessel hits an obstacle, be it a log, rock or even a whale? If skippers and crews of those boats are relying on EPIRBs and satphones to save them after striking such an object and sinking, I think we're on the wrong path.

Massimo Bachi
Nauti Elizabeth, Nauticat 33
Marina Ixtapa, Mexico

Massimo — Generally speaking, we'd agree that boats with fin keels and spade rudders are more vulnerable when colliding with something hard. The problem is accentuated by the fact that if modern boats do hit something, they are likely to have been moving at a higher speed than a boat with an encapsulated full keel and supported rudder.

We're not sure what percentage of boats has been lost because of weakness in their hulls/keels and spade rudders. But the percentage doesn't seem great enough to deter boatbuyers, perhaps because the alternatives are slower.

EPIRBs and satphones? One of the reasons boatbuyers might be less deterred by boats with fin keels and spade rudders is that the EPIRB and AMVER rescue system seems to work so very well.

↑↓ ARE OLSON 30S GOOD FOR SAN DIEGO BAY?

A friend is looking to get a small ULDB for PHRF racing in San Diego. What's your opinion of an Olson 30? He previously owned a Wilderness 40 and a Hobie 33.

Frank 'Noodles' Ansak
San Francisco

Frank — As we wrote last month, all the little Santa Cruz ULDBs — the Moore 24, the Santa Cruz 27, the Express 27, the Olson 30, the Wilderness 30 — as well as the Hobie 33, are great boats. The Olson and the Hobie both rate 96 under PHRF, at least on San Francisco Bay, so they are the fastest of the bunch.

Olsons are known to excel in light air, which is the predominant condition in San Diego, and we think the Olson's cockpit is more user-friendly. But there is lots to like about the Hobies, too. We'd probably base our buying decision on a combination of price and the number of sisterships that come out to play in San Diego.

↑↓ SATISFYING THE SUSHI YEN

Like the Wanderer, we love finding bargains in Mexico, especially when it comes to dining out. While we embrace fresh Mexican cuisine, including seafood, tacos, *sareanado*-style fish and *camarones* galore, Nancy's appetite for Japanese food led us to a unique, all-you-can-eat sushi restaurant in Old Mazatlan. We learned about it from some expats who live in Mazatlan. But the place doesn't have a name and their description wasn't precise: "It's right down the street, catty-corner from the Panama, and they have an all-you-can-eat-sushi dinner special for 110 pesos". Not knowing what a Panama was, we figured this would be a good adventure.

A couple of hours later, we came across a wooden door in a darkened hallway with the word 'sushi' scrawled on it. The interior featured a dozen wooden tables and night club decor. But this was not a 'boat' or 'sushi buffet' place, as the chef

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LETTERS

brought out one platter at a time for the patrons. We enjoyed platter after platter of sushi. The first course was a platter of thinly sliced sashimi with a delicious avocado sauce. The next platter was 12 pieces of futomaki roll, followed by a plate of nigiri style sushi.



COURTESY SHINDIG

Nancy and Rob Novak followed sketchy directions to satisfy their yen for good sushi.

Fortunately, we're active folks, because we feasted on over 55 pieces of sushi, washed down by a total of five Corona beers. The total bill: less than \$22 USD. Then we discovered that Panama was a bakery, so we had dessert, too.

Nancy & Rob Novak
Shindig, Oyster 48
Sausalito

↑↓ **BEST BARGAINS IN MEXICO**

In the February 1 *Lectronic* you cited the spectacular bargain of a meal you had at El Coleguito in La Cruz, as well as complete annual physicals with blood tests and EKGs for \$50, and asked readers for examples of other bargains in Mexico.

Our favorite was trading *panga* fishermen a 12-pack of Coke Zero — ick, purchased by mistake! — three bananas, and one kiwi fruit for lobster. There were two of us, so we expected to get two lobsters. The *panga*-to-boat transfer was a little iffy, so the fisherman gestured to our five-gallon cockpit bucket, a classic empty drywall multi-use bucket, to help complete the transfer. We handed it over, and they handed it back filled with lobster! Eight of 'em!

We became the Forrest Gumps of lobster. We steamed it, sauteed it, BBQ'd it, broiled it, and had lobster tacos, lobster burritos, lobster omelettes, lobster sandwiches and lobster stew. But mostly lobster tacos.



NWBE

Possessing shellfish is illegal for foreigners, but they still taste good.

If we'd had cookies, we could have struck an even better bargain, for every fisherman we ran into asked for cookies.

Later on during that same trip, we admired the full-to-the-gunwales-with-Humboldt-squid *panga* fleet as they cleaned their catch just inside Punta Entrada in Mag Bay. In fact, we dinghied over to take pictures. The guys were rightly proud, and they posed with their catch. Then they insisted on gifting one to us! Soon we became the Forrest Gumps of calamari!

We love Mexico, and we love Mexicans.

Names Withheld by Editor
United States

Readers — It's illegal for foreigners to have any shellfish, including lobster, in their possession except on a plate in a restaurant. As such, we thought it was best to withhold the author's name. And yes, we know that sometimes friendly fishermen all but force shellfish on you.

↑↓ **MY BEST BARGAIN IN MEXICO WAS MEDICAL CARE**

Ignoring the red danger flags flying on the beach at Ixtapa last month, I went looking for — and found — more wave than

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LETTERS

I could handle. A crackling face-plant into the sand earned me a trip by *Cruz Roja* — Spanish for Red Cross — to a clinic in Zihuatanejo about 20 minutes away. Besides the ambulance ride, I was x-rayed, examined by a GP and a specialist, and given a neck brace and pain killers. The diagnosis was a probable cracked vertebrae. From being back-boarded on the beach to being released from the clinic, the total cost was just under \$500. There was an extra charge for thoroughly irrigating the sand packed into my eye.

In addition to what I consider to have been skilled and medical care at about 2% of what it would have cost in the U.S., there was a bonus. When the physician wrote up his orders, it gave my kids their first chance to ever see a manual typewriter. I'm home now, doing fine, and thinking I'll watch for those flags next time we enjoy the beaches of Mexico.

Clifford Smith
Carola, Young Sun 35
Davis

↑↓A SLIGHT CORRECTION

Jim Kilroy's *Kialoa II*, which was written about recently in *Latitude*, was built and launched as a sloop in 1964. She was never a ketch, but she was converted to a yawl. I'm not sure if 'converted' is the correct term, as her main boom was shortened a bit and a mizzen mast simply added on. She also lost her 'elephant ear' rudder and grew a spade rudder. We have a great model of *Kialoa II* in this configuration in a case at the St. Francis YC.

We — meaning Barient winches — built all the winches for *Kialoa II*, including a double cross-connected pedestal winch (grinder). At the time, this was the biggest winch order our fledgling company had ever had. It might have been the biggest winch order any company had ever had. Jim Kilroy makes mention of this in his fine new book *Kialoa US-1 Dare to Win*. I recommend it as a great read about when yachts were real yachts.

R. C. Keefe
President of Barient Winch Company, 1965

↑↓"I USED TO LIVE ON A HOBIE 18"

I just wanted to give you some info and ask a few questions. I bought/saved the 55-ft Marples catamaran *Crystal Blue Persuasion* in Santa Cruz. The boat had suffered under



CAPNTED

'Crystal Blue Persuasion' washed up in Santa Cruz last spring, damaging her rudders.

her previous owner, almost to the point of destruction. For example, she'd gone ashore and both her rudders were bent, her keels were broken off and not retrieved, one shaft and strut were bent, one nice Yanmar diesel had been torn open then left to die in a watery bilge, her new sails were never covered, and more. It wasn't pretty.

That sort of explains how a 24-year-old for whom sailing is life — as evidenced by the fact I used to live on a Hobie 18 — came to buy a 55-ft cat for under \$5,000 just prior to the arrival of a storm, a storm that surely would have been the end of her. I have owned many boats, have many skills, have already had a colorful life, and love catamarans very much.

Since the keels are gone, I want to upgrade by putting in

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LETTERS

some daggerboards, but don't have the time to build them. Do you know any nice boards someone may no longer need, or maybe if an America's Cup team has an extra pair that I could use?

As for rudders, I'm very familiar with vac-bag composite construction, and want to use high density foam instead of wood. I'm trying to find a mapped image of a good rudder design that can be brought to the mill, then foam milled.

Being an underdog in Santa Cruz, I don't have many contacts in the sailing world.

Deyess K. Payne
Crystal Blue Persuasion, Marples 55 cat
Santa Cruz

Deyess — Our having seen Crystal Blue Persuasion as a participant in the 2008 Ha-Ha, it's disheartening to learn she's suffered so much. She was a cool-looking boat, so we hope you can bring her back.

Far be it from us to question the path of a guy who once lived on a Hobie 18 — we admire that kind of gumption and thrift — but we wonder about what seem to be your priorities. With a boat that obviously needs so much help, we'd suggest that you stick to the basics, as big boats cost big bucks, and doing stuff one-off can send the cost into orbit.

Our first call would be to John Marples, the boat's designer, to ask him if it's possible, let alone economically feasible, to convert the cat to daggerboards. As the owner of a large cat with daggerboards, we can say there are pros and cons to having daggerboards, the latter mostly having to do with their breaking and it being more complicated — and therefore more expensive — to build them and their cases. We don't know of any daggerboards lying around idle, and America's Cup daggerboards are far too complicated for your purposes. Marples would also be our go-to guy for rudder design. We think he could give you excellent guidance on getting big bang for your rudder buck.

You didn't ask, but in our opinion, the best use of money would be stopping water from getting into the hulls, getting at least one rudder to work, and getting at least one engine to run. The essentials. That buys you time to decide on what to fix next. We wish you the best of luck!

⇕ SCOPE WORKS EVEN BETTER THAN AMBIEN

Almost all of the anchoring problems you discussed with Brian Bouch in the February *Letters* could be solved if he used a catenary weight, as it would soften or even eliminate the jerking that loosens anchors.

I have always found a 22-lb weight to be ample. Naturally, more weight would be even better, as the purpose of the weight is to keep the anchor chain or rope from straightening out.

I carried a catenary weight with a chain hook for the anchor chain, and one with a cast bronze slider for the rope.

Ernie Copp
Orient Star, Cheoy Lee Offshore 50
Long Beach

Ernie — We always respect your advice and experience, but there is a very interesting — and graph-filled — article on catenaries at www.petersmith.net.nz/boat-anchors/catenary.php. We don't know who Peter Smith is, but according to the article, catenaries are most effective on smaller boats, and are all but worthless in strong winds. And contrary to popular belief, they don't do much to absorb shock loads. The article's leading solutions are more scope and a larger and more effective anchor. But for all we know, some 'experts' have graphs

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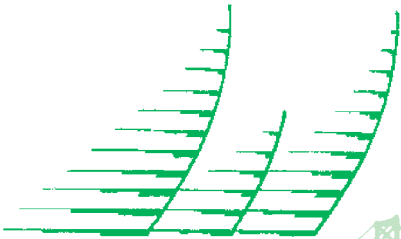
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*- Chris Vandervert
Catalina 30*

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LETTERS

that 'prove' just the opposite.

The one thing we know is that we sleep best with an anchor at least two sizes greater than recommended that is hanging at the end of lots of scope. We generally put out 10:1 — as long as there is plenty of room in the anchorage. After all, what good does anchor chain do sitting in your chain locker?

↑↓ "THANK YOU FOR THE DOUBLE HONOR"

I always read *Latitude 38*, and I was aware of the Queen of the Women's Circuit honor you give out. But I somehow missed it when reading through the November issue, so friends had to tell me that I'd been so honored. But that's not all, as I also missed the fact that I had been named Sailor of the Month for November — at least until I saw *Latitude's* new Master Racing Calendar, which featured photos of all 12 of last year's Sailors of the Month.

I want to thank everyone at *Latitude* for the honors. I'm especially tickled to see the amazing company I had in the Sailor of the Month category. I can't believe that I'm featured in the same article — let alone the same page — as some of those truly accomplished sailors. By the way, I know several of them personally, and they are truly nice guys and gals.

I also particularly want to thank *Latitude* for endorsing, through the awards you have bestowed on me and other women, female participation in the sport of sailing. The

number of women in sailing and racing continues to grow, and it is through this type of encouragement and appreciation that more women become confident that their participation and improved skills are appreciated.

Speaking as a staff commodore of the Island YC, I also want to thank *Latitude* for your recognition of our races and programs that encourage female skippers to sail in the Women's Circuit and in all other racing in the Bay Area. Although our club has a relatively small number of members, we converted at least three more women into sailboat ownership in just the last half of 2012, so I guarantee

there will be plenty of competition for these same awards next year. In particular, watch out for increasing estrogen levels in the Santana 22 fleet!

Kristen Soetebier
Latitude Sailor of the Month, November, 2012
Pueo, Santana 22
Oakland

Kristen — De nada. Women make great skippers and crew. We know, because we sail with hundreds of them each year on Profligate, during both daysails and overnights. And the women drive, grind, tail, pack chutes and do everything else the guys do. And often better. We won't even discuss the difference in smells.

If you're a woman reading this, and you really want to learn how to build your confidence, our advice is to buy or become a partner in a Santana 22. A place like the Oakland Estuary would be ideal, as the winds are mild and the waters flat, and it would be difficult to get into too much trouble. Have someone go out with you two or three times while you learn the basics, then start singlehanded. In the beginning, just practice tacking

LATITUDE / CHRIS



Kristen Soetebier was the 2012 Queen of the Women's Circuit and November's Sailor of the Month.



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LETTERS

and gybing close to home. You'll be surprised at how quickly you get the hang of it and improve. As your confidence builds, wander a little bit farther away, and tack and gybe closer to obstacles just for the fun of it. Having to make all the decisions will accelerate your trial-and-error learning process like nothing else. After the fourth or fifth afternoon, you'll be saying, "I can do this!" And really mean it.

The next step is evening beer can races on the Estuary. Have an experienced woman racer come along for the first couple of races and help you with the most basic racing rules. But sailing



LATITUDE / RICHARD

It can be so delightful in the Estuary that your crew may go overboard on purpose.

side by side with other boats will advance your sailing skills dramatically. And it's a beer can, so nobody is going to take things too seriously. Worried you might hit another boat? Don't, as you won't be going fast enough to do any damage. Worried that you might be the last boat to finish? Nobody cares. Worried that you won't be welcomed by other sailors. Trust us, you will be.

If you get stuck along the way, contact Kristen or one of the other women sailors, as they'll be glad to help. When you want to progress to sailing on the Bay or in the ocean, start by sailing on other peoples' larger boats. You'll have plenty of opportunities.

↑↓ FINDING CREW FOR THE HA-HA

I'm hoping to help out folks who are planning to do next year's Ha-Ha. Locating productive yet fun crew for the Ha-Ha's has required a lot of time and planning on our part, but it has been worth the effort. Since our boat is a Lagoon 47 cat, our crew requirements are a bit different than for monohulls, most of which don't have quite as much room. In addition, Bill, my partner, has set up *Moontide* so he can easily singlehand her, so sailing experience isn't even a necessity for *Moontide* crew.

Prior to my entering the picture, Bill's ideal crew profile included 'good-looking women who love to party, but who do not require babysitting'.



LATITUDE / ANDY

Bill Lilly is very particular about his crew: they must be women and they must be fun.

Indeed, I helped him select crew for his Hugh Hefner and the Playmates-themed Ha-Ha. It wasn't easy being Bill on that Ha-Ha, as he had to sleep in the salon while underway so he could always be ready to handle any questions or issues that arose.

He also had to unplug heads that had been subjected to face wipes, tampons, and so forth — despite his repeated pleas for the women to desist. Bill has found some excellent crewmembers via an internet dating site. Indeed, it was through that site that I met him. I'd always wanted to do the Ha-Ha, and it was his recruiting for the Ha-Ha on that site that caught my attention. But we didn't find any good prospects on the same dating site for last year's Ha-Ha, so we turned to the *Latitude 38* Crew List. And we struck gold!

One nice thing about the *Latitude* list was that we didn't have to convince the women that they could have fun sailing

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LETTERS

without five-star luxury accommodations. (Did I mention that Bill prefers women crew?) Or that they would enjoy new adventures with a bunch of unknown sailors. We found women with all levels of experience, so we then focused in on compatibility. We asked for, and followed up on, references from others who had sailed or traveled with the women. We did not want princess types or ones who did not play well with others. Since *Moontide* is known to throw some unofficial parties during the Ha-Ha, we wanted to make sure the women could handle such rigors as party-hosting.

In the end, we found ourselves with the best *Moontide* crew yet — and that's saying something. All were ready to jump at the chance to work, learn, and contribute. Our sincere thanks to *Latitude* for providing the sailing community with the Crew Lists, which we'll make good use of again.

Judy Lang
Moontide, Lagoon 470
Newport Beach

Readers — Moontide, the last entry in last year's Ha-Ha, is entry #1 in the 2013 Ha-Ha. It will be Bill Lilly's sixth Ha-Ha.

↑↓ **BOTTOM PAINT FAILURE**

I put environmentally friendly ePaint on my trimaran, but it failed, just as you reported that it failed on the La Gamelle Syndicate's Olson 30 *La Gamelle* in St. Kitts. I applied the paint as per the instructions on the can. When I called ePaint to complain about the failure of the product, they said that I hadn't let it dry for 24 hours at 60 degrees or above. Here in the Pacific Northwest, that means the paint could be applied only in July or August.

Getting the stuff off was a total bitch, because the strippers you can use on an epoxy faired bottom aren't that effective, and it smears, so it clogs your sandpaper.

David K. Miller
Farrier F-33
Poulsbo, WA

Readers — Our intent in that 'Lectronic report was not to slam ePaint, but merely report on our experience with it. The



e-Yikes! What's happened to 'La Gamelle's bottom paint while hauled out at St. Kitts?

truth of the matter is that we don't know of any bottom paint — even the most toxic stuff — that hasn't gotten terrible reviews from at least some users. Unfortunately, there are so many variables — bottom preparation, application, weather, and even location — that it's hard to tell what

the cause is when there is a problem. Noting that we haven't tried other products recently, we've enjoyed excellent results with Micon 66 on Profligate. Wish we'd put it on La Gamelle.

While ePaint advises us that their products are now stronger and more effective, our gut feeling remains that non-toxic paints still aren't as effective as toxic paints.

↑↓ **WHY NOT JUST GO 'COMMANDO'?**

Having read about the bottom situation on *La Gamelle* as she was on the hard in St. Kitts, I wonder why you don't forgo bottom paint all together and just scrub the bottom once a

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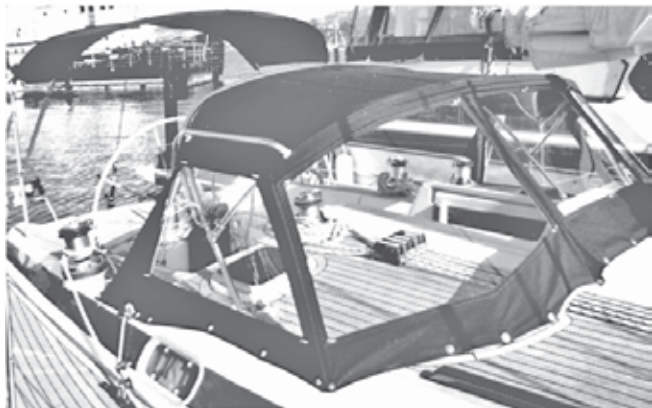
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LETTERS

week before racing. I would think that diving on her in the warm Caribbean waters would be fun.

Tom Anderson
C&C 32, Nonpareil
Marblehead, MA

Tom — Going without bottom paint has certainly crossed our minds, particularly as we'll now only have the boat in the water three months a year. Besides, the Olson 30 doesn't have much wetted surface to scrub, and diving conditions don't get more idyllic than in the Caribbean. Alas, our attempt to 'go green' has left us with paint peeling off the bottom, which isn't fast. Until we see the boat with our own eyes, we're not sure which of three options we'll pursue. Option #1: Just throw the boat into the water and scrub as needed, hoping all the bottom paint peels off in the process. Option #2: Slap a coat of ablative paint over the current paint, hoping that most of it sticks, and scrub as needed. Option #3: Take advantage of ePaint's offer of all the materials necessary to redo the job from scratch. Stay tuned.

↑↓ HOW TO GET OTHERS TO FUND YOUR SAILING TRIP

Has the story of Jim Sullivan of *Elusive Spirit* made it to *Latitude*?

Sullivan, who had sailed the South Pacific years ago until he was rolled three times in a typhoon and had to be rescued by a car carrier, eventually made his way to Southern California, where he bought the Cal 2-30 *Elusive Spirit*. He then announced that he was going to set a record by making an engineless, 8,000-mile non-stop voyage to the Philippines, where he had a girlfriend.

He dubbed his adventure the XPAC 8000, gave it a Pennies for Life theme, and posed before local television cameras with famous dolphin advocate Ric O'Barry of the Dolphin Project. The publicity was to attract charity donations for every mile he sailed toward his destination. He was given a big send-off by the Del Rey YC on March 4, and moments before leaving, got on a cell phone and proposed to his girlfriend in the Philippines.

The story that hasn't been widely told is that Sullivan had boat and other problems, and never made it to the Philippines. In fact, he apparently pulled into several California ports after leaving Marina del Rey.

As far as I'm concerned, the whole thing reeked of the wrong motivations and commercialism. What has long distance sailing come to?

Jim Barden
Ann Marie, Morgan Out-Island 28
Santa Rosalia, Mexico

Jim — We'd never heard of Sullivan or the XPAC 8000, but according to the adventure's website, *Elusive Spirit* arrived in Honolulu on July 13 — more than 3.5 months after most sailors would have been expected to complete that part of the trip.

We have no animosity against Sullivan, but the website also claims that he "achieved his first goal by arriving in Hawaii." This simply isn't true, since his stated goal was to sail non-stop to the Philippines. But Sullivan apparently has a different view of what it means to achieve a goal: "If you don't make it, that's okay, as long as you tried," he writes. He must have 'graduated' from a dumbed-down public school in California.

The website urged people to visit Sullivan at the Hawaii YC, to hear his story of "overcoming personal fears and anxieties." We could find no mention of how much money he raised, how much of it was donated to charity, and how much had been used for expenses and other administrative costs. There was also no mention of what happened to the Filipina woman he



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LETTERS

had proposed to.

Having been around the block a few times, we've become cynical about many charities, and sailing charities in particular. A significant number of charities seem to play on the public's sympathies for the downtrodden and the environment, but too often primarily serve to provide good-paying jobs, travel, and other benefits for the administrators, their families and friends.

Want to sail somewhere and have other people pay for it in four easy steps? 1) Pick a charitable theme that tugs at peoples's hearts; 2) Contact a charitable organization that purports to support such a cause, and negotiate a cut of whatever money you can raise; 3) Have somebody create a slick website; 4) Start hustling for money, partners and donations. Depending on the charity, you can keep anywhere from 30 to 90% of the money you raise. And 100% of what you don't bother to report. The cool thing about sailing in support of some charity is the general public doesn't know much about sailing, so you can make an easy trip sound daring and difficult. For example:

"To raise awareness of the devastating effects of climate change on the Îles Sous Le Vent, Joe Blow, who lost his home to crooked Wall St. bankers, will be risking his life sailing an ancient boat, day and night, with no one to help him steer, across the widest expanse of ocean in the world. He'll struggle with terrible storms and the dangers of being run down by ships, having to navigate reefs that have claimed hundreds of vessels, all to help raise awareness that if we Americans don't cut down on our use of fossil fuels — and handguns! and sex-trafficked girls! — the poor islanders will have their homes swallowed by the sea. Indicative of Blow's total commitment, he won't use his engine at all, but rely entirely on solar power. Blow's selfless dedication to solving the imminent climate change disaster means he won't be able to talk to his wife and children for more than a month, but Blow feels that his commitment to the Family of Man must take precedence over his biological family. His only company will be his cat Helpless, who lost an eye and genitals to a texting driver behind the wheel of an SUV that only got 10 miles to the gallon. A nearly infinitesimal portion of the Sailing to Save the People of Îles Sous Les Vent funds raised will be shared with other catchily named charities. Please support this brave man and his selfless dedication to the future of all our children."

What it really means is that Joe has been dumped by his wife and kids, who now have restraining orders because of his drinking and physical abuse, and that he's lost his home because he used it like an ATM. Blow is trying to convince people to help buy him a used Santa Cruz 50 with a great autopilot so he can enjoy the cruise of a lifetime to French Polynesia without having to spend any of his own money.

Mind you, there are great charities out there and, for all we know, XPAC 8000 is on its way to becoming the greatest of them all. But as we said, experience has taught us to be skeptical.

↑↓ IMMIGRATION INS AND OUTS

Latitude was right about Mexico's 180-day tourist visa. It's still the same as before. However, the FM3 and FM2 visas are gone, having been replaced by *Residente Temporal* or *Residente Permanente*. There is a lot of confusion in both categories. A friend of mine renewed his old FM3 into a *Residente Permanente* because he owned more than \$40,000 worth of real estate. If you have an income of \$3,000 or more per month, you also get permanent status. Then there is the 'points' system, which nobody seems to have a grip on yet.

Residente Permanente is the same as *Immigrato* used to be. It means that you are done with *Migracion*, and can take the citizenship test if you want. There are some other minor

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We'll have snacks and refreshments available, and as a special incentive, we'll raffle off a \$100 gift certificate! But you must be present to win...

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Sail Repair Clinic - March 23rd, 10am - Noon.
Take a peek inside Angie's sail repair kit! Learn to recognize when a sail needs repair or is nearing the end of usability. Get a list of the tools you can and should take on board with you cruising. Learn how basic repairs are made.

\$20/person

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LETTERS

issues, but there are only three categories of visas now.

If folks with FM3s and FM2s would write in and tell what happened when they renewed, we might get a wider picture.

Bob Walker
Cactus, Hunter Cherubini 37
Wofford Heights / La Paz

Bob — Our FM3 was up, so we got a Residente Temporal. While there are now only three categories of visa — Tourist, Temporary Resident and Permanent Resident — there are subdivisions of each. For example, our Temporary Resident visa has a 'lucrativo' endorsement. It's unclear to us exactly what that means.

Just because you have real estate doesn't mean you can get Permanent Resident status. We own real estate in Mexico, but we have to wait two more years — a total of four since getting an FM3 — if we want to apply for Permanent Resident status. By the way, people tell us it's not so easy to pass the test if you want to become a Mexican citizen. You have to pass a detailed test about Mexico and Mexican history, and you have to sing the Mexican national anthem. Kind of funny for a country that has so many of its citizens sneak into the United States.

↑↓KEEPING UP WITH MEXICAN LAWS

I appreciate the information *Latitude* puts out about Mexico and changes in Mexican immigration and other laws. I'll be down there in a couple of years on my boats, so the information is helpful.

The piece in *Lectronic* about the whales getting in the way of sailors racing on Banderas Bay was pretty funny. Those evil bugs!

Mark Hamill
Pika, Brent Swain
Coutenay, BC

Mark — We try our best, so thanks for the kind words. The most important thing to understand is that Mexican culture is very different from United States culture, so there is less precision in laws, procedures and enforcement. You gotta go with the flow. And if you can't get what you want from one office, you should realize that you very well might be able to get what you want from another office. After two months — with lots of holidays — we finally got our Residente Temporal status, which replaced our FM3 visa. Exactly what that status means — we also have a 'lucrativo' endorsement — remains to be seen.

↑↓WHAT LUCRATIVO REALLY MEANS

The Wanderer reported that he finally got a Temporary Resident visa to replace his discontinued FM3, and wondered what the 'lucrativo' endorsement means. It means that he can work legally in Mexico, as opposed to people who have regular tourist visas, who can live in Mexico for up to six months at a time, but cannot work there.

Speaking of nice weather in the tropics, I just got back from a few weeks at my house in the Florida Panhandle. It was heaven, with the temps between 72 and 75 every day. The food was as inexpensive as in Mexico, and you always got lots of it. But meals didn't come with all the tequila one could drink, as is the case at El Colegio.

After a few weeks of warm winter weather, it was hard to come back to Sausalito.

John Skoriak
Sausalito

John — We understand that the holder of a 'lucrativo' visa

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LETTERS

is allowed to make money in Mexico, but it doesn't mean that you can engage in any occupation or business venture that you want. For example, we can't just start a charter business and work as the captain. It's unclear which occupations are permitted and which are not.

↑↓ REMEMBERING KELPIE

As a schoonerman, I want to offer my sincere congratulations to Trevor Murphy for his excellent job of delivering the 82-ft schooner *Kelpie* from Southern California to the United Kingdom. I had a nice talk with Trevor when he and his crew stopped in San Diego on their way to the Canal. *Kelpie* was not



COURTESY DAUNTLESS

'Kelpie' always seemed to lead the way for 'Dauntless' when they raced together.

in very good shape, and I had my doubts that she would survive the trip across the Atlantic during hurricane season. During the 20-some years that Jim Dobott owned *Kelpie*, she and my 71-ft schooner *Dauntless* competed against each other many times. I have to admit that *Kelpie* was the fastest schooner in our class we ever raced against. She could sail five degrees closer to the wind than *Dauntless*, which was a huge advantage. The only times we could beat her were when Jim made some kind of mistake.

Even though *Kelpie* and *Dauntless* were competitors, Jim and I were good friends. After *Kelpie* was rebuilt in San Diego in the early 1980s, my wife Peggy rechristened her. And I crewed for Jim the year *Kelpie* set the Ensenada record for her class.

I'm delighted to see that the new owner has undertaken the project of bringing the old beauty back to life. I wish *Kelpie* and her new owner well.

Paul Plotts
Dauntless, 71-ft Alden schooner
San Diego

↑↓ MORE LIKE THE BAJA GURGLE

I'm happy to report that we were able to make the Baja Bash — actually more like a Baja Gurgle — from Cabo to San Diego in five days during the third week of April of last year. We had calm weather all the way. So calm that we were able to round Cabo Falso and escape the northern end of Cedros in the late afternoon without any problem. We made the trip nonstop except for two hours at Turtle Bay.

Charley Eddy
Snug Harbor, Catalina 470
Alameda

Charley — If you're going to be beset by calm weather, there is no better time than during a Baja Bash. Here's hoping that this year's fleet has equally easy March and April Bashes.

↑↓ A THANK YOU FROM SEASILK'S OWNERS

As the owners of the Hylas 46 *Seasilk* that was driven aground inside Mag Bay during Hurricane *Paul* last October 16, we would like to thank everyone who helped us during that difficult time. That would include Todd and John from San Diego-based Todd & Associates; Chris from Magdalena



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LETTERS

Bay Outfitters; Terry, Ari and Lynn from Cabo Yacht Center; Casey from Markel Insurance; Admiral Salazar and the entire Mexican Navy crew from the Puerto Cortes Navy Base; AT&T



COURTESY SEASILK

After washing ashore during Hurricane 'Paul', 'Seasilk' was successfully pulled from the beach and repaired, and continues cruising today.

(because Verizon just doesn't work in the remote areas of Baja); the US Consulates in Cabo and Tijuana; the volunteers on the marine emergency Ham radio station; the US Coast Guard 11th District that monitors EPIRB signals; the SPOT emergency notification system; our family members and friends at home,

David, Amber, Edye and Dick; and most importantly, the *best* crew: John, Montyne and Brian. It was our crew who made what could have been a total disaster into something more like an unscheduled adventure. Clearly it takes a village to successfully rescue a grounded sailboat and her crew!

Our boat was repaired beautifully by Cabo Yacht Center, and we were able to resume cruising on December 16. After a stop in Mazatlan, we headed down to Banderas Bay, where Craig enjoyed joining a big group for an afternoon daysail aboard *Profligate*. We'll shortly head south to the Gold Coast, Manzanillo, and Zihua before returning to the Sea of Cortez in the spring.

We also want to thank the publisher of *Latitude* for offering to bring down parts for us during the Ha-Ha, and for allowing us to tell our story so that others will benefit from our experience.

Sue Steven & Craig Blasingame
Seasilk, Hylas 46
Coronado

Sue and Craig — Few boats that are blown ashore by a hurricane survive and recover as well as Seasilk did. Well done to everyone!

↑↓ THE DEFINITION OF MAST HEADING

In a recent issue, you said that you'd never heard of the term 'mast heading' and therefore didn't know what it meant. As I understand it, mast heading was a punishment mostly reserved for midshipmen — it would not do to flog the little blighters for a minor infraction. One must maintain their stature in front of the common seamen. So as punishment, they were sent up to the top of the foremast, to the highest partners available at the time, to lash themselves in for the duration of their watch. A punishment, I think, that was most effective in a heavy swell. Perhaps at some time it came to mean a public excoriation or humiliation.

David Niedziejko
Feed the Kitty, Catalina 22
Nevada City / Golden Gate YC

David — We love learning new stuff, and that term was new to us. Thank you.

↑↓ YOUR IDIOT'S GUIDE TO SSB IS NOT FOOLPROOF

Latitude readers might benefit from our experience of precisely following *Latitude's Idiot's Guide to SSB Radio*, as it appeared in the October issue.

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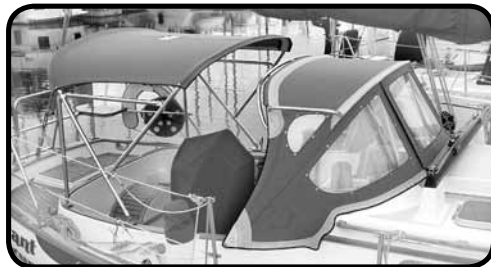
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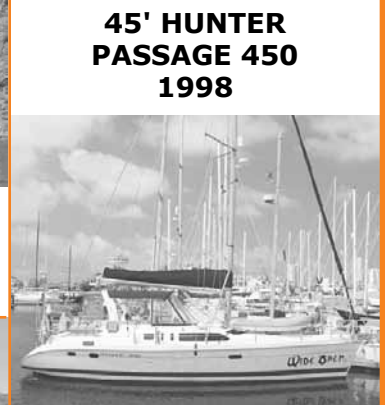
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LETTERS

Last year we bought a beautiful, new-to-us Cabo Rico 40, resplendently equipped with all the radio and safety equipment one might need. We duly concluded the purchase, and are diligently preparing for our upcoming cruise in the Caribbean. Realizing that we needed both a ship station license and the individual user license, we faithfully followed the *Latitude* guide — and got into trouble.

Our application for the ship station license was straightforward. True, there was a checkbox for the MMSI number, but there was no guidance on either the FCC website or the *Idiot's Guide* as to what to do if you are unsure of this number, which would have been obtained from the prior owner. Common sense suggests that it could be added later — it's only a number in a database, for Pete's sake. Even more common sense suggests that as the vessel is uniquely identified by its official Coast Guard documentation number and name — which the FCC definitely has on file with the existing MMSI number and license — just perhaps the FCC might put two and two together and issue the new owner of the equipment an MMSI number. Well, no, that would be way too easy.

The FCC issues a new MMSI number. Typically, of course, a new number can't be entered into the existing equipment. There are exceptions, but I understand that equipment frequently will accept an MMSI number only once and then, if any changes are needed, may have to be shipped back to the manufacturer for any corrections or edits. The remedy to the problem is far from simple.

Effectively, I had to cancel the license — bang goes the \$160 application fee — then the prior owner needed to cancel his ship station license, while I almost simultaneously reapplied for the same license again — referencing the cancelled license and MMSI number. With, you guessed it, another \$160 fee. Only then was I issued a license that has an MMSI number that correlates with equipment onboard.

Bottom line, here's what *Latitude* readers need to know prior to following the not-so-foolproof *Idiot's Guide* when buying a used boat:

1) Identify any and all DSC/MMSI-registered equipment onboard (VHF, SSB, AIS, EPIRBs, PLBs, handheld VHF's, whatever).

2) Obtain from the seller all the relevant registration data. Hopefully, they will be linked with a single MMSI number.

3) Ensure that the seller, as a condition of the sale, agrees to promptly cancel all registrations and licenses pertaining to all this equipment. We had the pleasure of buying our boat from a fine gentleman who has bent over backwards to accommodate our needs. Not every boatbuyer will be so lucky.

4) Obtain confirmation that this has been done.

5) Then, and only then, apply for FCC licenses, NOAA EPIRB registrations, etc. Try to make the applications as simultaneous as possible with the seller's cancellation.

Logical? Sure. But who knew it would be impossible to simply change a number in a database? Our government, being born of bureaucracy and with an infinite capacity to produce red tape of the finest variety, has little appetite for common sense or for user-friendly approaches. Conversely, they have an appetite for duplicate fees for anyone who accidentally gets this sequence wrong. It's a lot easier than you might think to make this mistake, as there is no easy-to-find information on what to do if equipment on board is already MMSI-registered at the time of vessel purchase — a circumstance that will get more and more common as our technology advances.

Terry Rugg
Pajarito, Cabo Rico 40
Redwood City



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LETTERS

Terry — HF expert Gordon West wrote that article, and we believe it to be one of the best articles on the subject we've ever published. That said, we're grateful for your clear and concise five-step guide for those purchasing used equipment.

↑↓ THE LAST VOYAGE OF GRENDEL

Ahhhh, the ever-elusive David Vann surfaces yet again! This time as the author of 'Last Voyage of the Culin', in the October 2008 issue of *Outside* about the death of a 78-year-old on his boat near the Mexican-Guatemalan border. It seems to me that Vann's skills at creative writing may have once more overwhelmed his ability to tell the truth, for I don't remember things quite the way he did in the *Outside* story. At the risk of telling a story that is like a chapter out of a B-movie based on an Elmore Leonard book, let me give you my firsthand version of what happened.

I had swallowed the anchor for a few years, and was living in a palatial estate in Los Gatos — complete with the requisite yoga studio. But it had become a gilded cage. Then an ad appeared in your glorious rag for a sailing trip from San Francisco down to and through the Panama Canal, and up to Belize. Ostensibly, the objective was to deliver David Vann's yacht, the ill-fated *Grendel*, to a group of writers in Belize.

Grendel had already left, so I sent off the required check to be crew, and flew to Cabo San Lucas to meet the boat. Her crew searched the tiny Cabo waterfront for me for three days. It wasn't their fault that they couldn't find me, because Vann had told them to look for a woman named Jane, not a guy named Jay.

After my 30 years of repairing and overhauling boats, you can imagine my dismay upon boarding *Grendel*, an ancient CT-50, to find: No SSB radio; the engine starter switch hanging by one wire; broken switches on the electrical panel, requiring pieces of toothpicks to use them; sails that were shit; standing rigging that was rusty at the chainplates; slack steering; no autopilot; and the dinghy? What dinghy? It wasn't much better in the engine room, as the fuel filter canister was corroded solid, there were cracked hoses everywhere, and hose clamps on the exhaust had almost rusted through.

I thought about a Dos Equis and a night's sleep, but hell,



STEVE LACY

I decided to see what I could do with what tools were available. Capt. Spreader — it wasn't a name I gave her, but rather how she referred to herself — gave me *carte blanche* to do whatever repairs I wanted. But she made it clear that she hadn't received any money from Vann for the repairs. "Yet." She

Cosmetically, 'Grendel' looked great.

said that she was waiting for Vann to send some. While I got to work in fixing some things, Vann suggested that Capt. Spreader ask me if I would front the cash for the repairs, and that he would reimburse me when we got to Acapulco. I've done a lot of questionable things over the years, including a Puddle Jump with a woman I met through the Crew List, demolition derbies, mountain lineman jobs, process serving, and working as a repo man with my own tow truck. I'd done those, but no way was I going to front the money to repair Vann's boat.

Capt. Spreader borrowed money for fuel from her girlfriend, so after a close eye for bad fuel, we each bought our own gro-

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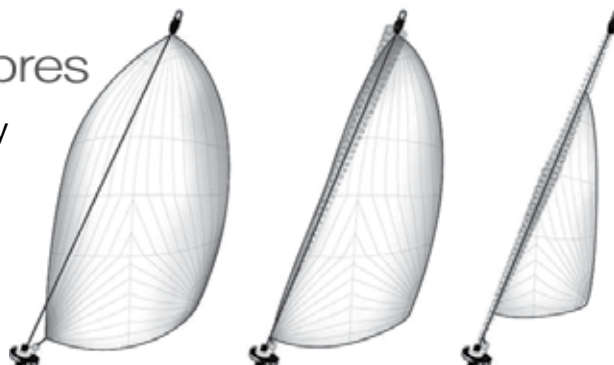
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LETTERS

ceries and set sail. The crew consisted of Capt. Spreader, the aforementioned girlfriend, two surfer dudes — we promptly dubbed them Dumb and Dumber — whom Vann had hired to watch the boat several months prior, a grad student from Brooklyn, a 50-something retired army colonel who, having been "tossed out of the house by my old lady," wanted to get his first sail in, and a couple of secretive geeky guys in their 20s who huddled and whispered a lot. Thinking back on it, I must have been really bored in Los Gatos.

The running lights quit on the first night, so I hard-wired them past the switch. The head plugged with paper, but nobody knew how that happened. The alternator stopped charging — until encouraged by a firm whack with a hammer handle. We had to stay with the original alternator belt even after it started to fray because the replacement was a foot too long. And after 100 miles, the engine fluttered when the vessel heeled beyond a certain point. It seems the fuel tank vent was poorly situated, and thus took on saltwater from time to time.

After dark, we missed a head-on with a ship by about, oh, 30 feet. A short time later an albatross landed long enough to express its feelings — and mine — about *Grendel* by shitting on the companionway stairs. The lucky bird was able to fly away with a squawk. Having no wings, I was unable to leave.

It's during the night watches that you get to know the other members of your crew. My first watch was with Dumber. He surprised me by lighting a four-paper joint, then showing me the .38 Police Special he carried "for protection against *federales*." Unfortunately, there was a slight jerk of the boat, and the pistol slipped from my hand and into the deep waters of the Pacific. I apologized profusely, and promised that Vann would replace it for him.

All the next day Dumber bitched about not being able to find his stash. I told him that he mentioned hiding it in a 'secret place' while he was stoned. Always wanting to help, I suggested that he ask the Geeks or the Colonel if they'd seen his stuff.

After limping into the Acapulco YC, I made a list of deficiencies that had *Grendel* exceeding the definition of 'manifestly unsafe vessel'. Then I described what might be involved in crossing the Gulf of Tehuantepec, and how crossing it with a boat in *Grendel's* condition could be defined as attempting suicide. So five of us crew jumped ship.

Months later I received a few postcards from Capt. Spreader. She described wallowing in the Gulf of Tehuantepec for five days before being towed to "the last village in Mexico" by a fisherman. She wrote that they were still waiting for money, and that the engine had saltwater in the fuel system. After a month of that — hello! — the engine's death certificate had effectively been signed.

The last thing I heard about David Vann was a letter from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court listing me as a creditor. That was the only recognition I ever received for my work.

Why did I go on the *Grendel* trip? The idea of that crew being left alone with the boat just tore at me. I felt as though my leaving would be akin to abandoning children. I was also fueled by boredom, and made my decision to go while wearing my vision-impairing testosterone blinders. You know, the pair we men wear when falling in love with the woman dancing topless on the table at Squid Roe. You get the testosterone blinders in your teen years. They come in a black leatherette box along with the earplugs needed to keep you from listening to common sense.

Does anyone know what happened to *Grendel* or her crew? It would be fun to find out.

PHOTO: DAVE TOWLE



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LETTERS

Latitude's December issue advice to novice sailor Sam Furgason — "You can't let yourself or any member of your crew go overboard. In most cases it's a death sentence." — was good stuff. I'm a great fan of *Latitude*, as our water-soaked opinions are often similar — your choice of having saildrives in *Profligate* notwithstanding. For example, yeah, I have a piece of government-issued paper that says I can operate a vessel with up to six paying passengers, and supposedly am an expert at towing. But the truth of the matter is all of us with government-issued licenses need to honestly evaluate our skills in every situation and, ignoring the gold braid on our hats, make the correct decision as to whether we are qualified to be in charge of a specific vessel in a specific situation. Otherwise, our government license becomes something appropriately presented on a white roll.

Jay Myers
Ne'r Do Well 3
Never Again 2
 Sacramento River

Jay — Actor/sailor/author Sterling Hayden famously went on about how character building — or something — it was when you tried to run a big sailboat without the adequate resources. Having dabbled in that realm ourselves over the years, we think Hayden overstates the pleasures. It sure makes for vivid memories, although the farther past, the more enjoyable they are.

We want to remind all readers that each person's recollection of an event or series of events tends to differ, so readers would be wise to not consider one person's version as gospel truth. That said, we'd like to hear Capt. Spreader's version, she with the saucy handle.

⇕ GETTING ON BOATS IN THE TROPICS

I was intrigued by the mention in a recent edition of *Lectronic Latitude* of boats needing crew for the BVI Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival, and for the St. Barths Bucket. Just having taken up sailing here in the Bay Area in recent years, I have learned how to find slots here, and am wondering how I identify crewing opportunities for these races. Suggestions?

Name Withheld by Request
 San Francisco

N.W.B.R. — 1) Show up on site. 2) Dress and act like a sailor. 3) Be outgoing.

Mind you, being on site in St. Barth would usually involve being on a charter boat from St. Martin, as every room on St. Barth usually sells out for the event, and there is no such thing as an inexpensive room on the island.

⇕ BUCKET (CREW) LIST QUESTION

My question is more of a 'bucket list' question than a 2013 St. Barths Bucket question. Say I were to consider trying to catch a ride on one of the big boats in the Bucket. Do I want to bring along a dressy, all-white — or all-blue — outfit to help seal the deal?

Paul Brogger
 Mid-Life Cruises, San Juan 28
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Paul — Once you get on a boat you'll often be given a crew shirt, but while you're walking the docks hoping to get a ride, dress like a sailor — a light-colored polo shirt, khaki shorts and



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LETTERS

deck shoes. Let people see your sailor's tan and your muscles. If your shirt is from another prestigious Caribbean regatta, all the better. But you have to actively seek out crew positions, so don't pull a wallflower. And don't give up if you don't get a ride the first day — after a day of repacking chutes on 150-ft boats, some crew remember they have obligations for the last two days of racing.

Younger women looking to get rides on the Bucket have a second option, as they can also dress hot in the Baz Bar a few nights before the racing starts. That always results in a couple of invites.

By the way, all the boats in the Bucket are big boats, and the loads are tremendous. If you're not careful or don't know how to stay out of the way, you can get hurt.

↑↓ TRIPLE VIRGIN DOES GREAT IN FIASCO

While driving south from Port Townsend, Washington in late January, I wondered if there was going to be any multihull sailing on San Francisco Bay that weekend. Going online, I discovered that the Bay's biggest race of the year — the Singlehanded Sailing Society's Three Bridge Fiasco — was to be held the following day. There were over 350 entries, including 35 multihulls. After a couple of phone calls and emails, I replaced a crew who had fallen sick on Drew Scott's F-27 *Papillon*. The race would involve three firsts for me: I had never met Drew, I had never raced an F27, and I had never raced on San Francisco Bay.

The Three Bridge Fiasco is aptly named, for the 21-mile course takes the fleet under/near/around the three main bridges that cross San Francisco Bay. It starts and finishes on the San Francisco waterfront, home to this year's America's Cup. The 'Fiasco' part of the race refers to the format. It's a pursuit race, so the slower boats start first, and if the handicapper has it all right, and if the sailors are equally good and equally lucky, everybody will finish at the same instant. Pursuit races are fairly common because they are so much fun, but what makes the Fiasco unique is that you can round the three bridges in any order you want. So imagine 350 shorthanded boats, starting in any number of directions, and nobody knowing for sure which way their competitors will go until they either harden the sheets or hoist a spinnaker.

Winter winds on San Francisco Bay are often light, so usually only a few boats finish the Fiasco. But there were 10 knots for our 10:15 a.m. start, and it was blowing 30 knots in The Slot by the time we were headed for the finish line three hours later. So this year a lack of wind wasn't a problem.

Even to a Bay racing novice such as myself, it seemed obvious that the clockwise circuit would be most favorable, as it would avoid a long beat, and the tide would be with us on the last leg to the finish. The drawback was the big calm patch between Tiburon and Angel Island, but we could see that even the earlier-starting boats were getting through. One advantage late starters have in pursuit races is that they get to 'go to school' on the boats that start before them.

So Drew and I sailed the course clockwise, which meant a short beat to the Blackaller turning mark, which we rounded in company with several other Farrier trimarans and a couple of 32-ft Flying Tigers. Despite being longer and able to point higher, the Tigers — perhaps because they had no rail meat — were no faster to the weather mark.

After rounding, we tried to carry the screecher on a close reach toward the Richmond Bridge, but soon gave up. With no screecher to worry about, we were able to concentrate on staying high on the mark, and were the most windward boat as we neared Tiburon. The Greene 35 *Humdinger* passed us

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LETTERS

to leeward, but Drew and I were pretty happy with our position. The few boats that had opted to head to the Richmond Bridge via the lee side of Angel Island ended up parked in the lee of the big island.

The wind was much stronger past the Tiburon headland, and we had a close reach in 20 knots up to the Richmond Bridge (actually Red Rock) turning mark. Monohulls aren't much for reaching in any kind of a breeze, so we picked them off one by

ERIK SIMONSON/PRESSURE-DROP.US



Catamaran designer Richard Woods hopped a ride on 'Papillon' for the Fiasco.

one. Better still, we closed the gap on the first two F-27s and *Humdinger*. Rounding the island was interesting, as for the first time in my racing career we met race boats going the other way around the mark. I'm still not sure who has 'water' in that situation. Nonetheless, five multihulls rounded the island overlapped,

with most of the monohull fleet behind us.

Our next mark was the Bay Bridge, so we headed downwind. Or did we? It was hard to tell in the turbulent lee of the island, which meant we were slow hoisting the spinnaker. Once we got it up, we blew it — tactically — as first we headed too high, then too low, on our way down to the Bay Bridge. Regardless, by Treasure Island we had picked off all the monohulls but *Humdinger* and a J/70.

Quite bizarrely, on our way to Yerba Buena we also passed a good number of boats beating up to Red Rock. Certainly they had picked the wrong way to sail the course, as we only had a short beat to the finish, while they still had a long beat and a 10-mile run. That meant we were in the hunt for a spot on the podium.

With the wind now up to Force 6, we decided to put a reef in for the last beat, mindful that on the last leg we'd be sailing close to where both Russell Coutts and Jimmy Spithall had capsized their AC72 catamaran in similar conditions. We passed beneath the Bay Bridge four abreast with other trimarans. It was exciting, but not as exciting as for the crew of another tri that had left their spinnaker up too long. We clearly saw most of their daggerboard as they struggled to get the chute down. It took us time to reef in the lee of Yerba Buena, so two F-27s and *Humdinger* pulled ahead of us.

Now the race to the finish was really on. In puffs, our reefed trimaran closed on the leaders, as they had to dump sail. But we dropped back in the lulls. As we headed toward Alcatraz, the wind increased and held steady, allowing us to overtake the F-31 and an F-27. The J/70 might be a fast boat offwind, but she couldn't cope with us to windward, and fell behind. I've noticed these sportboats have near multihull speeds offwind, but fall over on beats, making them slow upwind. Despite the reef, I still played the mainsheet while sitting on the windward trampoline. I'd ease it when I saw two feet of daggerboard showing.

With one more tack for the layline, we quickly began closing on the two leaders. But it was not to be, as the F-27 *Sea Bird* finished first, followed by *Humdinger*, and then us just a minute out of first place. Had the course been a mile longer, I like to think we could have got them both. Still, there's always next year, and now I know better what the wind does in the Bay.

So the multihulls cleaned up this year. Some monohull sailors might say, "Well, you had a long run this year." But it

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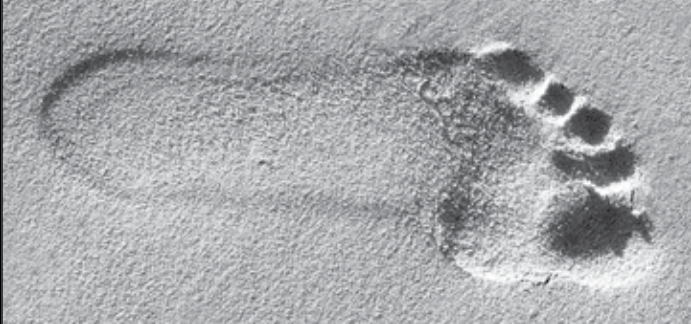
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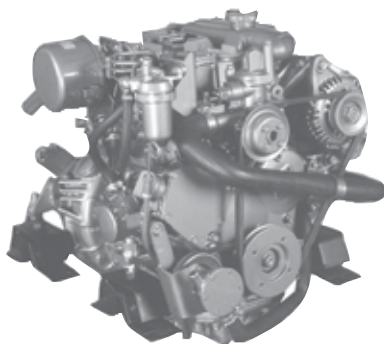
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LETTERS

was a circular course, and the truth is that we overtook most of the boats on the close fetch/beat north to Red Rock.

Anyway, my grateful thanks to skipper Drew, all the great competitors, and the race committee. I will be back.

Richard Woods
Woods Sailing Catamaran Designs
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Richard — It comes as no surprise to us that the Fiasco is attracting over 300 boats, as it's a great race that requires a multitude of talents — traditional racing skills, shorthanded sailing skills, tactical decision making, and luck. Plus it's not just a windward-leeward with the same old scenery. We have fond memories of the event. One year we were singlehanded an Olson 30 through a gap in the Berkeley Pier on our way from the Bay Bridge to Red Rock, and had the late great Mark Rudiger next to us on some other 30-footer. After rounding Red Rock, the far more skilled Rudiger left us far in his wake.

We think folks who love the Fiasco — particularly multihull sailors — would also really like Island YC's Silver Eagle Long Distance Race, to be held this year on June 29. And we mourn the loss of the San Francisco YC's Midnight Moonlight Marathon, another fine race that had similarities to the Fiasco.

For Dave Wilhite's full report on the Fiasco, turn to page 86.

↑↓ IN DEFENSE OF NEW YORK CITY

As a native of what *Latitude* called "the media and narcissism center of the universe" — New York City — I feel it's necessary to offer a small correction to your assessment of Hurricane *Sandy* relief. During the period of 1990-2009, New York contributed \$956 billion more than it received from the federal government — see the attached article from *The Economist*. The New York City metropolitan area also subsidizes upstate New York. Even after the paltry sum offered by Washington, we still have nearly a trillion left in our credit column. The notion that New York City is a drain on the federal coffers is a common misconception. There is certainly a lot to dislike about New York City, but the belief that we don't pay our way — and many others', too — is quite wrong.

So as you are enjoying the sun and sand of Banderas Bay, I am up here on the roofs of New York City, freezing my butt off while our boat sits in the marina at La Cruz. As soon as this last project is completed — and the federal tax paid, of course — we plan to get to Mexico.

Thanks for *Latitude*. It's about the only thing that keeps hope alive in this Arctic wasteland.

Matthew Myshkin & Katrin Haiba
Lila, Southern Cross 31
New York City / La Cruz, Mexico

Matthew and Katrin — You're correct that New York City gives more than it takes, in part because it's so much more efficient if you have 8 million people crammed into 468 urban miles rather than spread out over suburban and rural sprawl. Sort of like buying 48 rolls of toilet paper in bulk at Costco rather than buying them one at a time at 7-Eleven.

What we were complaining about is that much of the taxpayer money that legislators have hailed as going to 'hurricane relief' is doing no such thing. For example, over half the money won't be spent until after 2015 — some relief! And lots of the money will go to the Departments of Agriculture, Defense and Justice, as well as the Social Security Administration, and the Smithsonian Institution. In other words, it's another case of legislators not missing an opportunity to waste a crisis when it presents them with an opportunity to increase the size of

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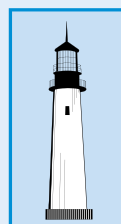
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LETTERS

government and put the taxpayer deeper in debt. We support government relief in such situations, as long as it's efficient — unlike the past FEMA disaster reliefs, which were economic disasters on their own — and free of incompetence and corruption. In other words, pretty much when pigs fly.

↑↓ **OUTBOARD UP OR OUTBOARDS DOWN?**

I use the dinghy dock at Marina La Cruz each day, and have always wondered why most folks kept their outboard props in the down position. In fact, I wondered about this aloud on more than one occasion, and today I got the answer from a fellow cruiser. He politely but emphatically informed me that a similar dinghy with its motor up was "like a knife fight waiting to happen" if the wind came up and the inflatables began to tango. When I asked him what he meant, he claimed the props would slice through inflatable fabric.

I told him that I always kept my motor up because I have seen lower units corroded, and I wanted to keep mine in good shape. He said he understood, but that it was "common etiquette" to keep the props submerged.

I find it hard to believe a relatively dull dinghy prop could do that sort of damage, but I'll take the cruiser's word for it, as it appears in fact most people agree with that view. Our conversation was quite polite, and he promised to make a broadcast on tomorrow's net to make others aware.

Newly Enlightened Again
La Paz

N.E.A. — We're in the 'props down' camp. If you have lots of dinghies at a crowded dinghy dock, a raised prop functions as a stiff jabber of inflatables and human flesh, and it also snags painters when dinghies are tied two and three deep.

↑↓ **CRUISER ISSUES WITH ICOM MIC CORDS**

The insulation jackets on the coiled cables for my Icom radios are crumbling and falling off in pieces. I'm not talking about normal wear and tear. And I'm not the only one with this problem.

I have two Icom VHF M602s onboard, both equipped with HM136B mics. One radio is mounted in a covered recess pocket in the cockpit, where it is protected from direct sunlight, rain and sea spray. The second is mounted in the nav station belowdecks, completely protected from the elements. We also have one Icom HF Marine M802, with an HM135 mic, installed belowdecks at the nav station.

Our belowdecks VHF is lightly used, so when I first noticed debris below the mic, I assumed it was cockroach or other bug droppings. Much to my amazement, I discovered the cable between the mic and the radio was falling apart. I am now dealing with the same issue on the third of the three Icom radios on board.

It's not as if I'm a first-time buyer of Icom products with a grudge. When I bought our 44-ft CSY *Walkover* in 1992, my initial refit included the installation of a VHF and a SSB radio, both by Icom. We sailed for 14 years and had no problems with either Icom radio. Between 2006 and 2009, I did a complete refit, including the upgrade and replacement of all the electronics. Based on my previous happy experience with Icom radios, and favorable reviews of Icom radios by other cruisers, I installed two Icom VHF 602s and one Icom HF 802. I also installed one Icom Command Microphone HM127B. And I carry two Icom handheld VHF's.

I had to replace the microphone on the first VHF — the one at the inside nav station — in February of 2010. Since I hadn't even left the dock after the refit, the radio had never



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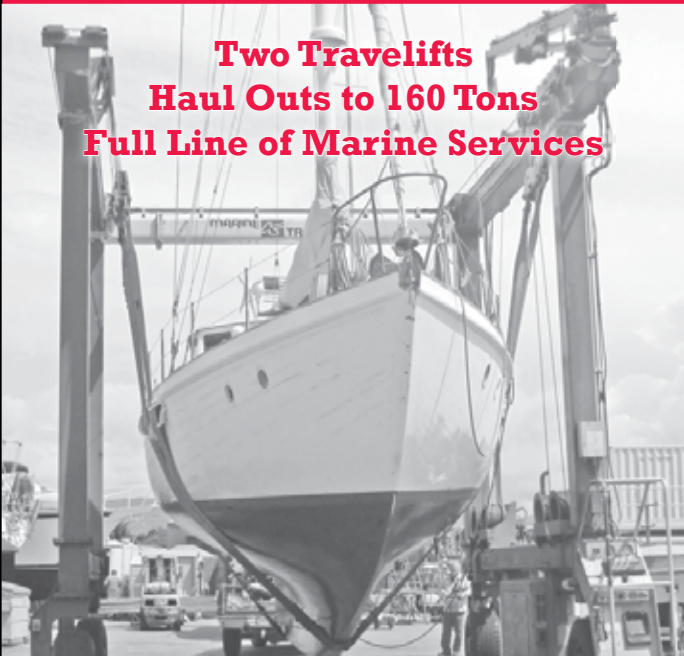
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LETTERS

been used. After numerous phone calls, I was finally able to secure a warranty replacement.

In July of 2010, we left Lauderdale and headed north up the ICW. It was then that the microphone cable on the second Icom VHF M602 began to fall apart. After taping the cable back together, our first order of business upon reaching Washington, D.C. was to call Icom and discuss the problems.



GORDON LONG

Lori Phillips, the service administrator, agreed to replace the mic. I suggested that since it looked like a manufacturing defect, the mics on my other radios should be replaced, too. Phillips said that Icom didn't think it was necessary. But if I had another mic problem in the future, they would replace it.

Long provided a list of 22 other boats that are experiencing similar problems with mic cords.

We are now in Guatemala's Rio Dulce, and I found crumbings from the HM135 mic on my Icom HF radio. I'm trying to hold it together with silicon epoxy until the replacement arrives. I've also asked Icom to replace the mic on my third radio. In their letter back to me, they said they hardly ever hear of such a problem. "From your description," they wrote, "it almost sounds like there is either a cleaning agent or something in the immediate area that is reacting with the compound used in the cables. Other than this, I do not have an answer for the deteriorating that you described, because we do not typically hear of this sort of thing."

I was particularly annoyed by that response, and the ridiculous idea of an environmental issue "in the immediate area" of my radios. So on January 17, I made an announcement on the Rio Dulce VHF Cruiser's Net regarding my problem with the third Icom radio. I thought I might get a response from one or two boats, but within two hours, I received responses from 12 different boats involving 20 Icom radios! Including mine, that makes 13 boats involving 23 radios just in this one anchorage area! I have enclosed a list of the boats that responded, and their email addresses.

In my opinion, a company of Icom's stature ought to issue a product recall of the mics with free replacement.

Capt. Gordon Long
N'Aimless, CSY 42
Rio Dulce, Guatemala

Readers — The fact that Long's complaint is seconded by a detailed list, with email addresses, of others who claim to have had the same problem is, quite powerful. For what it's worth, we have an iconic Icom 802 SSB aboard Profligate — as do most cruisers in Mexico and the South Pacific — and haven't had any problems with the mic.

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. By far the best way to send letters is to email them to richard@latitude38.com. You can also mail them to 15 Locust, Mill Valley, CA, 94941, or fax them to (415) 383-5816.

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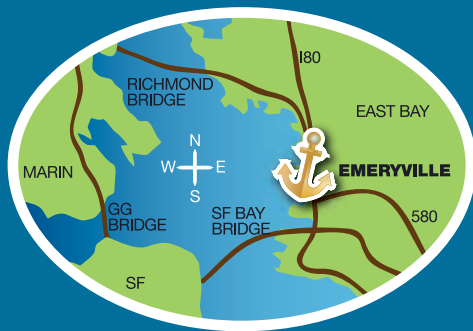
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SIGHTINGS

red bull youth ac selection series

From February 9-24, 12 teams from all over the world descended on San Francisco to try their hand at the tiller of an AC45. They were vying for one of only four remaining spots in the Red Bull Youth America's Cup. Six slots are already filled by four overseas teams that have been selected and groomed by various America's Cup World Series Teams, as well as two US teams that already qualified.



Young sailors had the chance to prove their mettle and get selected for the Red Bull Youth AC.

The youth teams are being judged not only for their sailing skills, but their team effort as a whole package, including their organization, marketing, sponsors, communication skills, and fitness. It was all being scrutinized by a panel that includes double-Olympic gold medalists in the Tornado class, Roman Hagara and Hans-Peter Steinacher.

Oracle Team USA's Darren Bundock, who has an extensive multihull background going back to when he was a youth sailor, was on the water evaluating the youth teams from his perch on the rear crossbar of the AC45 during both sessions. As far as on-the-water challenges are concerned, Bundock noted that "the most difficult part for the different teams is the speed. Most of them have come from monohulls, and the approach into the marks is at least twice as fast as they're used to." Thanks to the skills of the youth sailors, and the watchful eye of Bundock and the other coaches, there were no major incidents on the water during the Selection Series.

As of this writing there haven't been any official selection results posted, so keep an eye on www.americascup.com for the announcement. The Red Bull Youth America's Cup will be held from September 1-4 aboard AC45s, and will use the same race course area as the America's Cup. With strict nationality rules, top-tier youth sailors, and an incredible 45-ft carbon fiber, winged catamaran in the mix, this show is going to be one to watch!

—jeremy leonard

vendée globe comes to a close

The winner of the 2012-13 Vendée Globe may have finished nearly a month earlier, but the seventh edition of this epic race came to a close late last month as the fleet's backmarker, Alessandro di Benedetto, reached the finish on February 22 after 104 days at sea. The Franco-Italian skipper sailed his 15-year-old fixed-keel Finot-designed Open 60 *Team Plastique* back into the famed channel at Les Sables d'Olonne becoming the 11th and final finisher of this Vendée Globe. The 21-ft Mini Transat *Findomestic Banca*, which he sailed around the world in 268 days in 2009-10 to become the smallest boat ever to circumnavigate nonstop and solo, was there to greet him.

Following up on the drama of last month's update, veteran skipper and two-time Barcelona World Race champ Jean-Pierre Dick (*Virbac-Paprec 3*) arrived safely to an incredible fourth-place finish. After losing his keel with some 2,600 miles left to sail, Dick nursed his wounded Open 60 to the small Spanish port of San Ciprián to wait out a massive low that brought 50 knots of wind and huge seas to the Bay of Biscay. Once the weather had passed, Dick enjoyed a pleasant 20-knot broad reach to the finish.

Even more shocking than *Virbac-Paprec's* keel failure and subsequent journey home was the sudden keel failure and capsize of Javier Sansó's *Acciona 100% EcoPowered*. Rescued within 12 hours by the

continued on outside column of next sightings page

boat vs.

Last month's collision between a ferry and a 22-ft powerboat in Raccoon Strait is a grim reminder for all mariners to keep a sharp lookout for commercial traffic. The incident occurred around 4 p.m. on February 16 when the powerboat, traveling at high speed and carrying four people, slammed into the Golden Gate Transit ferry *San Francisco* near Tiburon. Two of the powerboat's passengers were evacuated by helicopter to Marin General Hospital, where one — 68-year-old Harry Holzhauser from Tigard, Oregon — was pronounced dead about an hour later. At the time of



Yeah, we'd feel the same way, kid.



ferry

this writing, the other unidentified victim was still hospitalized with serious injuries. None of the 500 ferry passengers were injured, and the results of the Coast Guard investigation had yet to be released.

Don't think that unusual collisions are the sole domain of powerboaters. Just three weeks earlier a sailboat apparently sailed between a tug and its tow just outside the Golden Gate Bridge, sinking the boat. Miraculously, her two crewmembers were unharmed in the incident.

Photographer Frank Gundry witnessed

continued in middle column of next sightings page

vendée — cont'd

Portuguese military in a helicopter evacuation, Sansó joined his team in the Azores to plan *Acciona's* rescue. The entire racing world breathed a collective sigh of relief at Sansó's — and later the boat's — rescue.

Inheriting Dick's position on the leaderboard after his breakage was Alex Thomson (*Hugo Boss*). Thomson weathered the major Biscay blow that forced Dick to port, and became the first Briton to finish on the podium since Mike Golding in '04-'05. In finishing, the charismatic Englishman also became the fastest English singlehander to circumnavigate in a monohull, besting Golding's previous record by eight days. Thomson finished just two days after the race leaders, François Gabart and Armel Le Cléac'h.

Jean Le Cam (*Synerciel*) and Mike Golding (*Gamesa*) again wrote a fascinating chapter in Vendée Globe history. In the 2004-05 edition,

continued on outside column of next sightings page



Onshore training for the RBAC wannabes was grueling.

Last month, 12 teams from around the world vied to snag one of just four open spots on the roster for September's Red Bull Youth America's Cup.

SIGHTINGS

vendée — cont'd

the pair battled nearly all the way around the world to finish second (Le Cam) and third (Golding, with no keel). In the 2008-09 Vendée, Golding dismasted while leading and Le Cam lost his keel and capsized west of Cape Horn. In this race, the two engaged each other off the coast of Portugal and carried out a battle that would last all the way around the world. A classic drag race up the Atlantic concluded the drama.

Le Cam tacked west, sailing just miles from the coast of Brazil, while Golding remained far offshore to the east. The pair met when the breeze went east and they battled all the way up the tradewinds and doldrums. Exiting the northeast trades, Golding tried one last time to pass Le Cam. When negotiating the Azores High, Le Cam took the longer, faster route above the high while Golding took the slower, shorter route under the high. When the dust settled, it was advantage Le Cam. Undoubtedly the most entertaining skipper in the fleet, an exuberant Le Cam finished fifth, while Golding sailed into Les Sables in sixth, becoming the first sailor ever to finish three Vendée Globes.

continued on outside column of next sightings page

ferry

that collision on January 26. Gundry had driven up to the Marin Headlands that gorgeous Saturday afternoon — the same day as the Three Bridge Fiasco, though the sailboat in question was not part of the race — and was trying to find a place to park when the collision happened. He says he spent a few minutes finding a spot to pull off the road, then snapped these photos, which clearly show what appears to be a Ranger 26 being dragged by the bow of the barge. "The boat was sailing south, parallel to the Bridge, when it looked like it stalled and just drifted into the barge," he recalls. "The barge just ate it up."

It is, unfortunately, all too common for boaters not to notice the sunken tow cable



It's a miracle the two crewmembers aboard the ill-fated sailboat survived unscathed after apparently sailing between a tug and its tow.

— cont'd

between a tug and a barge. Once they see the tug has passed safely, they continue on their merry way, not realizing they're sailing directly into the path of what is essentially a runaway train. Even if the tug sees what's happening, there is no way for her operators to stop the barge in time to prevent a collision.

We'd like to encourage our readers — stinkpotters and ragbaggers alike — to always be vigilant on the water. Keep a sharp lookout for other vessels and the odd piece of flotsam, never operate a boat when you've been drinking, and always, always, always check behind a tug to be sure it's not actively towing a loose caboose.

— *ladonna*

The distance between a tug and its tow is great enough that a sailor who doesn't doublecheck behind his sails might not realize he's about to get creamed.

vendée — cont'd

Despite being disqualified for receiving assistance, Swiss sailor Bernard Stamm (*Cheminées Poujoulat*) completed the course to a raucous welcome, while fellow Swiss sailor Dominique Wavre (*Mirabaud*) sailed into a seventh-place finish, matching Mike Golding's three Vendée finishes. Hometown boy Arnaud Boissieres (*Akena Vèrandas*) finished just hours after *Mirabaud* to make Boissieres two-for-two in the Vendée, with 7th- and 8th-place finishes to show for his efforts. Bertrand de Broc (*Votre Nom Autour du Monde*), most famous for sewing his own tongue back together during the '96 Vendée, finally managed to finish a Vendée Globe (in ninth place), while Tanguy de Lamotte (*Initiatives-coeur*) rounded out the top 10.



JEAN MARIE LIOT / DPP

Alessandro di Benedetto was the final finisher of the 2012-13 Vendée Globe.

A rookie, de Lamotte nursed his wounded boat nearly all the way up the Atlantic. Finishing with a broken rudder, two damaged daggerboards and a damaged daggerboard trunk that was epoxied together to stop the leaking, he seemingly spent as much time underneath and hanging off his boat as he did sailing it.

It was another spectacular edition of one of the most grueling competitions on the planet. If you missed any of the action, head on over to www.vendeeglobe.com/en for the blow-by-blow.

— *ronnie simpson*

the mini 650 pacific challenge

A new race is coming to town . . . or rather, the West Coast. The inaugural Mini 650 Pacific Challenge, slated to start on July 6, is open to singlehanded boats that conform to the strict 'Classe Mini' box rule. It will follow a traditional TransPac route from L.A. to Honolulu.

Modeled after the wildly popular biennial Mini Transat race that takes a fleet of Minis from France to either the Caribbean or Brazil, the Mini 650 Pacific Challenge will feature the same ultra-modern 21-ft racers — both the Series and Proto classes — that are purpose-built to be raced solo across an ocean. The boats, essentially scaled-down versions of the Open 60s sailed in the Vendée Globe, are fully tricked out with twin rudders, bulb keels and big asymmetrical spinnakers.

The event is organized by Open Sailing, the official builder of the popular Pogo 2 Mini. Jerome Sammarcelli, owner of Open Sailing, became the first person to sail a Mini solo to Hawaii when he raced in the 2012 Singlehanded TransPac. Racing the Pogo 2 *USA 806/Team Open Sailing* to a hard-fought fourth-in-class finish, Jerome missed out on a podium finish by just four minutes.

Anyone who has ever raced a Mini on handicap, including this writer, will tell you that it's difficult. With modern hull forms predisposed to sail only on a reach or off the wind, and with modern technology that is often not PHRF-friendly, the boats were designed to be sailed against other Minis. The class's growth on the West Coast — and in the US in general — has been hindered by the fact that no race existed just for them.

But Sammarcelli and Open Sailing aim to fix that with the Mini 650 Pacific Challenge. "I'm extremely proud and happy to bring a dedicated Mini race to the West Coast, and to grow the Mini Class here in the USA," says Sammarcelli, who will again race his Pogo 2.

There's no official word on how many entries the race will see, but with a handful of Minis already gathering in Southern California, and a couple of Bay Area Mini sailors prepping their boats, it should be a good one! More can be found at www.mini650pacificchallenge.com.

— *ronnie simpson*

saying thanks with a daysail

With her gleaming brightwork, polished bronze and lovingly cared-for teak decks, the vintage 103-ft (LOD) schooner *Eros* is the definition of a classic yacht. Marveling at her today, though, you'd probably never guess that she was once loaded to the gunwales with war-weary Allied soldiers during WWII's epic evacuation of Dunkirk, France. She'd been pressed into military service shortly after her launch in 1939, but was eventually returned to her aristocratic owners after the war.

You might say *Eros* has come full circle these days, as she recently hosted soldiers again, although under much different circumstances. When current owners Bill and Grace Bodle were asked if they'd be willing to brighten the lives of a group of severely wounded Afghanistan War vets

by treating them to a daysail, the Bodles were honored to accept. But they didn't initially realize how moved they would be by meeting these injured heroes: Navy sailor Ryan Sykes suffered a traumatic brain injury, Marine Brian Vargas is recovering from a gunshot to the face, U.S. Army Ranger Dominic Annechuci survived a gunshot to the head, and U.S. Army soldier Doug Connor and U.S. Army Ranger Jason Deitch have less visible injuries.

The sail was arranged through the San Ramon-based Sentinels of Freedom organization (www.sentinelsoffreedom.org), which was formed by Grace's brother, Mike Conklin, after his son, an Army Ranger, was wounded in Iraq in 2003. Its principal aim is to help wounded vets segue back into mainstream society by creating "life-changing opportunities" for them, i.e. education, housing and jobs. Activities like daysails aboard *Eros* are simply an added extra, but one that both the vets and their hosts seem to benefit from. The Bodles — who acquired *Eros* (ex-*Fair Sarae*) in 1991 and spent 18 years refitting her into the first-class yacht that she is today — have vowed to share the joys of sailing the Bay with other vets soon. In fact, Bill is intent on giving some of them a close-up view of this summer's America's Cup competition. He hasn't been able to secure special access permission yet, but he's working on it. "If anyone deserves a front-row seat for the Cup," says Bill, "it's these guys. They really are heroes and they deserve to be appreciated."

— andy

the 'church' of capricorn cat

During a late January 'everybody come along' beer can race on *Prof-ligate* out of the Marina Riviera Nayarit in La Cruz, one of our 22 crew was Wayne Hendryx of Brisbane. Wayne has been a sailing/cruising fool his whole life, as evidenced by the fact that his first sail to Hawaii and back was aboard a humble 26-ft Pearson Ariel. For the last six years, he and his wife Carol have owned the Hughes 46 catamaran Capricorn Cat, built and cruised extensively in Mexico and the South Pacific by Blair Grinols. We asked Wayne to review what he's done with the cat since buying her and, in particular, what he's been up to with her most recently.

WH: As you might remember, we did the 2007 Ha-Ha, then kept the boat in Mexico for 18 months. After bringing her back to Brisbane for some work, we did the 2009 Ha-Ha, then came down after the Ha-Ha in

continued on outside column of next sightings page

tholke vs.

Remember back at the end of September when the French Energy Team's AC45 cat broke loose from its mooring off the San Francisco waterfront and drifted onto the rocky western shore of Treasure Island? As you'll recall, local boater Todd Tholke retrieved it and towed it to safety. Initially, he was kind of a hero for doing so. But that only lasted until he claimed big bucks for his efforts. You guessed it; the flap ended up in a lawsuit.

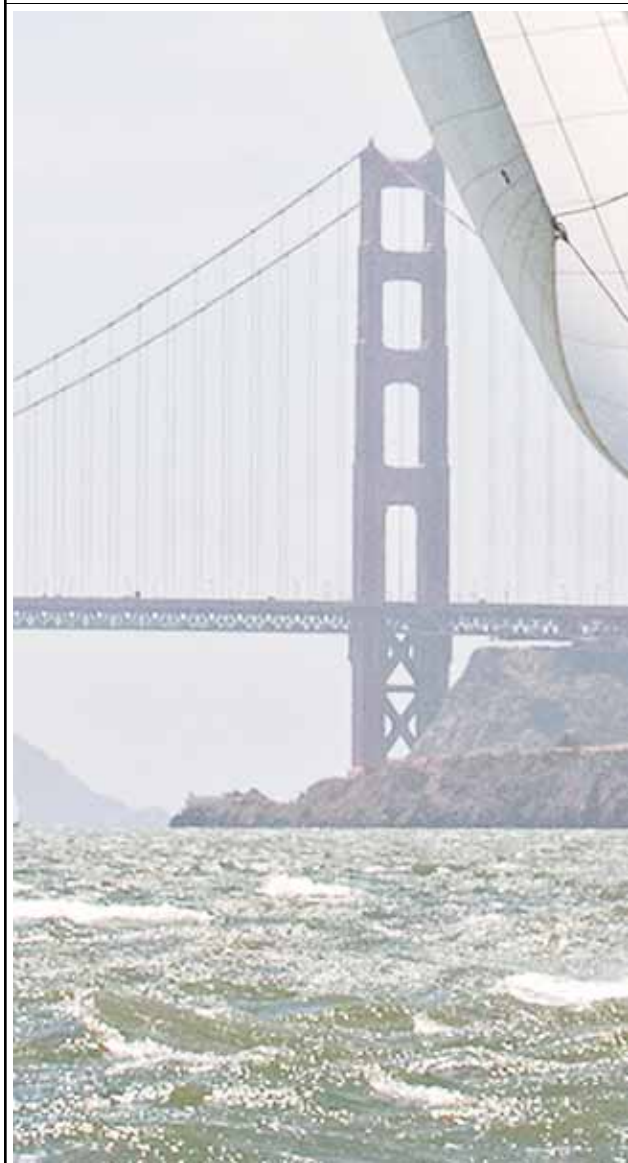
We're happy to report that a settlement agreement has been reached, but don't expect to see the details, as the terms are meant to remain confidential.

The law firm Edgcomb Law Group, LLC released the following statement this week: "The owners of the America's Cup World Series team, Energy Team SARL, and San

PLEASANTON WEEKLY



Vets Doug Conner (left) and Brian Vargas pose at the wheel of 'Eros', with daysail hosts Grace and Bill Bodle.



energy team

Francisco sailor Todd Tholke, jointly announce they have confidentially resolved all claims and counter-claims in the matter of *Todd Tholke v. The Sailing Vessel Energy Team AC45*, Civ. No. 12-05162, Northern District of California. Energy Team thanks Todd Tholke for salvaging its vessel."

Antoine Mermod, Energy Team's technical director, was quoted as saying, "This is a very happy day for the team and for its supporters. We wish to thank the U.S. Coast Guard for its assistance in the salvage as well as the team's countless supporters during the process." Further good news is that this experience has not soured the team on returning to San Francisco Bay to compete in future World Series events.

— andy

cap cat — cont'd

2010. In the spring of 2011, I took the boat from Cabo to Hawaii with crew, and then sailed her back to Brisbane. There were some family health issues, so we've kept the boat in Brisbane ever since.

38: Have you done much sailing with her on the Bay?

WH: [Boisterous laughter.] We use the boat a lot! For example, between the spring and fall of last year, we went sailing on 26 consecutive Sundays. I can't believe how much I learned about my cat during those sails. Anyway, we'd take anywhere from six to 26 friends, and had so much fun! People brought so much great food and beverages it was like being at a gourmet deli, and we had one gal who loved playing stewardess. The crew were terrific. Before we even got to the boat, they'd have the covers off and all the gear set up. And on the way in after a sail, everybody got the covers on, cleaned the windows with the special cleaner, got the docklines and fenders in place. It was so much fun.

38: How many people did you take in all?

WH: Four hundred, five hundred, maybe even more. What makes it so much fun is that you're sharing the boat and the freedom to play with others. Our cat is the best toy that anyone could ever have.

continued on outside column of next sightings page



'Eros' has come full circle, from carrying soldiers in WWII to offering wounded vets the chance to enjoy a daysail on the Bay.

SIGHTINGS

cap cat — cont'd

38: What's the most wind you've seen?

WH: Oh God, we've seen 40 knots a number of times, particularly in the spring, but even in the middle of summer. It was a funny summer because, while it never really got very hot, it blew like hell. We had lots of 30 knots. I reefed the main every time we went sailing. And it was always a double or triple reef, usually the latter. I don't even have a first reef rigged. We'd then roll out as much genoa as we needed for the conditions.

38: What kind of speeds have you hit?

WH: We hit 18.3 about eight times, but typically 17 knots under white sails.

38: What's your typical Bay trip?

WH: Brisbane to the Bay Bridge is eight miles, so we sail into the

continued on outside column of next sightings page

ppjers, hoist your sails

Despite travel trends elsewhere, there is no shortage of cruisers heading to French Polynesia this spring from the West Coast of the Americas — a 3,000-mile passage we call the Pacific Puddle Jump. There are currently 129 boats registered at www.pacificpuddlejumps.com, and more are signing up every week. As always, the fleet is remarkably international, with at least 15 different countries represented.

As in past years, the majority of boats will be jumping off from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; Balboa, Panama; and the Galapa-



SPREAD: LATITUDE / RICHARD; INSET: JAY AILWORTH

— tahiti is calling

gos. But as you can see if you access the fleet list on the website, others will leave from Costa Rica, Ecuador, other Mexican ports and several places on the California coast.

We call the PPJ a rally, but only in the loosest sense of the word, because there is no specific starting point or starting date, no committee boat, no mandatory radio check-ins, and there are no mandated rules. However, all boats converge at the same destination eventually. And as we often point out to the French Poly-

continued in middle column of next sightings page

cap cat — cont'd

middle of the Bay, then reach up to the Bay Bridge and decide what to do. My buddies and I were always looking to the Gate and wanting to head out into the ocean, but my wife Carol would look at me and say, "No, we women want it warm." So we head for the lee of an island or headland. Treasure Island, Angel Island, the Tiburon Peninsula, Sausalito. We had a couple of magical days sailing up to Sausalito. We pulled into Schoonmaker Marina one afternoon just after our friends on the 46-ft trimaran *Defiance* arrived back from Hawaii. We tied up behind them and yelled "Hey, what's going on?" The next thing we knew, 20 of our 26 crew were swimming in the Bay.

38: You know that means they're all daft, don't you?

WH: [Laughter.] Every time we go for a sail, some of our crew goes swimming. I go swimming more than half the time. We go to shallow water where it's warm.

38: Warm water in the Bay? You know you're daft, too, don't you? How many times have the heads broken down?

WH: I don't want to tempt fate by answering that, but not once. We've

got the \$99 heads, and nobody puts paper in them, so they've been working fine. You have to remember that we live in Brisbane, which is a very green community. People are organic and vegetarian, so we don't have a lot of 'processed beef going through the toilets. And like *Latitude* advises, from time to time we pour a little salad dressing in the toilets to lube the flappers.

38: Most of the people you take sailing are locals?

WH: Virtually all of them are from Brisbane, although a bunch are friends of friends. It's so much fun sharing sailing on *Capricorn Cat*.

38: Are you going to do the 20th Anniversary Ha-Ha this year?

WH: Absolutely! John Riise, your editor at *Latitude* for decades, and his wife Katie are coming. They want to bring both their daughters and their daughters' boyfriends. Nic, their eldest daughter, did the Ha-Ha with us in 2007. She was between high school and college and didn't really want to come. She subsequently told us that the trip opened her eyes to a larger world and totally changed her life. She said she'd come on any future voyage with us.

38: What are you doing in Mexico now?

WH: This is our third trip to Mexico in eight months, because we've needed three three-week Mexico fixes. By the way, we've been coming to Mexico for 40 years, and we've never been asked for *mordida*, never had a cop bother us, never been robbed, and never seen any *narco* violence. But I was born and raised in San Francisco, so I know that if you want to find bad stuff, you can. But we've never had a problem in Mexico.

Our first trip was to Leon, 150 miles north of Mexico City. We then went to San Miguel Allende, a World Heritage site, then took a bus to Guanajuato, another World Heritage site. We'd never traveled inland in Mexico because we've been so attached to our boat, but we had a fabulous time and realize there is so much to see. Our second trip was helping Bill and Susan Houlihan, who used to own the catamaran *Sun Baby*, bring their new 42-ft motorboat from San Diego to La Paz. At least a half-dozen times during the trip I heard them say, "We really don't know why we sold our sailing catamaran."

38: Why the third time?

WH: We just needed another Mexico fix, so we chose three weeks in the La Cruz/Vallarta area. We don't know why, but ever since we got here we've been put up by friends in the sailing community. Most recently we've been staying with Mai and Dave at Mai's beautiful place

continued on outside column of next sightings page



Carol and Wayne Hendryx have introduced hundreds of people to sailing on San Francisco Bay aboard 'Capricorn Cat'

SIGHTINGS

cap cat — cont'd

on the water at Marina Iguana. We're going to do a short cruise with them up to Chacala on Mai's Marquesas 56 catamaran *Dolce Vita* as a shakedown. Then we'll help them deliver the cat to Belvedere so she'll be on hand for the America's Cup fun.

38: And we presume you'll then start taking big groups of people out on *Capricorn Cat* just for the fun of it?

WH: You bet!

— richard

eight bells for #12

A former Bay Area treasure was lost to the depths of the South Pacific in late January. The vintage Farallone Clipper *Echo* — aka #12 — had to be abandoned in open water between Fiji and New Caledonia after she apparently hit an unknown object on January 26. Owner Rob Lehmann, who was singlehanding south to Australia

at the time, initially thought he might be able to sail 300 miles to reach shelter at New Caledonia before his 38-ft sloop foundered, but he had no such luck. He was eventually rescued from his liferaft by local New Caledonian SAR (Search and Rescue) assets.

As he explained in detail in a blog post, "There was now ankle-deep saltwater inside the cabin as I rushed around to diagnose the problem. Soon I found that an interior support stay had

broken. *Echo*, as with most old wooden boats, tended to leak at her seams when she was beating upwind. To help remedy this problem she had strengthening stays that ran from the base of the mast up to the chainplates. Her port side stay was broken, and I needed to fix it before I sank in the middle of the night. Over the next four hours (from 3-7 a.m.) I switched back and forth between pumping and mending the stay before I had it cinched up tight. *Echo* was barely leaking anymore, and I went to sleep with the cabin sole dry and the bilge pump barely running."

But it was only a temporary fix. Eventually the traditional cotton and oakum caulking began to loosen, and *Echo* took on more and more water. Her bilge pump needed constant tending due to becoming clogged by bits of cotton and debris. The solo sailor's satphone was useless, having fallen onto the flooded cabin floor, and the tillerpilot failed also, causing the Lehmann to rig an old-school sheet-to-tiller steering system. Finally, after two nights of struggling with almost no sleep, he accepted that he was fighting a lost cause. Lehmann, who bought the boat only a year ago in Alameda from longtime owner Jack Coulter, activated his EPIRB on January 29.

Some local woodie experts speculate that rather than her having suffered a collision, one of *Echo's* butt blocks may have let go, causing planks to flex outward and the support mentioned above (commonly called a "jock strap") to snap. Or, that her port side might have been weakened while she was partly careened in Fiji during Cyclone *Evan*. But such arguments are simply academic now, of course, and won't bring her back.

Echo was one of only 19 Farallon Clippers built by Stephens Brothers Boat Builders in Stockton between the 1930s and early '60s. Like Bears, Birds, and other Bay-centric woodies that came before

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ppj

nesian government, members of this annual migration are an important part of their overall tourism picture — the only segment, in fact, that spends money in the smaller islands of the Marquesas and Tuamotus. As a result, various government organizations and businesses take steps to make cruisers feel welcome in their islands.

Ever since *Latitude* editors coined the phrase 'Pacific Puddle Jump' nearly 20 years ago, we've been profiling the sailors who are bold enough to make the jump (see our April and May editions), and reporting on their crossing adventures in

A distant '*Echo*' — New owner Rob Lehmann was forced to abandon the beautiful '*Echo*', seen here racing on the Bay, in the South Pacific. That leaves just 16 Farallone Clippers in existence.

COURTESY ECHO



'Echo' earned second in class and fourth overall in the 1959 edition of the *TransPac*.



— cont'd

our annual PPJ recap articles.

This month we and our partners will host send-off parties March 1 at the Vallarta YC, Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico; 3-6 p.m. (at the Paradise Village Resort & Marina), and March 9 at the Balboa YC in, Balboa, Panama; 12-4 p.m. Both clubs also offer free cruising seminars.

Working with Tahitian partners, we'll also co-host the annual Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous June 28-30 — dedicated to celebrating the fleet's arrival, while introducing its members to various elements of Polynesian culture.

— andy

echo — cont'd

them, FCs were designed to be raced in stiff Bay conditions, but also on the ocean, while being big enough for short-term cruising. FCs began racing as a class in 1939. They were constructed of Philippine mahogany, bronze-fastened to steam-bent oak frames.

Launched in 1955, *Echo* was one of only two FCs that were finished bright, and she remained so until her final days. Among other distinctions, she placed second in class in the 1959 TransPac (behind another FC, *Debit*), and took fourth overall. With the loss of *Echo*, 16 FCs remain. Four are now in Southern California, and eight are in the Bay Area, where several still race actively.

With her varnished hull glistening, *Echo* was one of the prettiest traditional boats in the Bay Area. Her loss has undoubtedly caused many heavy hearts among those who sailed aboard her and against her during her half century on the Bay.

— andy



LATITUDE 38 ARCHIVES

SIGHTINGS

sailing keeps him young at heart

When we 'grow up' we want to be just like Buz Glass. Decades ago he discovered the simple pleasures of sailing and puttering around on small boats. And even today, at age 87, his passion for modest solo adventures under sail keeps him as young-at-heart as a grade-schooler.

Thin, fit and energetic, his face lights up with an impish grin when he describes his singlehanded adventures in the Delta and all the boats he's owned. "I'm excited about every trip I take, even though I go over the same route every time. It's just fun to get out there, and the preparations and anticipation are part of the fun, too." Having worked as a Lockheed engineer for most of his career, Buz takes a

continued on outside column of next sightings page

family abandons

As this issue went to press, the Coast Guard was searching for a family of four — a married couple, their four-year-old son, and his under-eight-year-old cousin — who reported their 29-ft sailboat, possibly named *Charm Blow*, was sinking on the afternoon of February 24. An hour after the initial report, they informed the Coasties they were abandoning ship to a makeshift liferaft cobbled together from a cooler and a lifering. They did not have

Buz Glass, who's owned somewhere in the vicinity of 30 sailboats over the last 50 years, on his latest mistress, a pretty little Cal 25.



SPREAD: LATITUDE / ANDY; INSETS: BUZ GLASS

ship off monterey

an EPIRB or liferaft.

Using the radio transmission, the USCG used a line of bearing from a radio tower to determine that the vessel's position was about 65 miles off Monterey. SAR assets immediately began searching, but no signs of the crew, the boat or any wreckage had been spotted. Officials could not identify the crew, and did not know where they were from or where they were heading.

— *ladonna*

buz — cont'd

systematic approach to pre-trip planning, yet he likes to keep things as simple as can be: an ice chest and a Porta-Potti serve his needs just fine. "The key to a happy retirement is keeping yourself excited and entertained," says Buz, who lives near Discovery Bay. He ought to know. He's been happily unemployed for more than 25 years.

Beginning when he was a preteen, Buz has owned close to 30 different sailing craft, many of which he picked up for a pittance — sometimes even for free. When he was little, his dad built him a "canvas and wood kayak with pontoons and a square sail" that could only sail downwind. But his first real sailboat was an 11-ft plywood (blunt-bow) Moth that his older brother bought for him in 1941. He was 15. "That was probably the happiest moment of my whole sailing career," he recalls with a smile. He lived in Lakeland, Florida at the time, where the kids used to tie up their dinghies bows to the shoreline. "I always had to rush around the dinghy's mast and jump ashore quickly to avoid tipping it over. I still remember saying to myself, if I ever get a boat big enough that I don't have to run around the mast to keep from capsizing, I'll think I've died and gone to heaven." The irony of that memory still brings a smile to his face.

Why so many boats? "I can't tell you why I've changed so often [every two or three years]. I guess I'm fickle about sailboats, and I hate to be that way. I just like the new ideas and the new challenge. I always wonder how they're going to sail." All have been sloops to which he's made modifications for singlehanding, such as leading lines aft. On his larger boats (up to 27 feet), he's also rigged self-tending jibs.

The best-performing boat of his entire armada was a 17-ft English-built Leisure cabin sloop. The worst was also English, an 18-footer called a Mirror Offshore Diesel Yacht. "It made as much leeway as headway." Buz says his Ericson 27 had the prettiest lines, his Hunter 27 performed best among his larger boats (despite its wimpy Renault diesel), and he really loved his S2 26: "I must have followed that boat for 10 years, since first seeing it in dry storage." He eventually picked it up for \$100 after it had become a near-derelict.

Buz currently has a nice little Cal 25 — berthed at Discovery Bay — that has a cabin kept cozy by a Tiny Tot wood stove. (Although his current dream boat is a Nonsuch 22.) "I still thoroughly enjoy being able to control the wind so that it takes me where I want to go without power. That's always been a marvel to me."

— *andy*

great gray globs of greasy whale guts

Say you're sailing along in the ocean one day and you pass what looks like a dirty rock floating just under the surface. Do you: a) figure it's some kind of dead critter and sail on by; b) decide it's a chunk of pumice and note it in your log; c) keep a better lookout for the next 20 minutes to avoid hitting more of it; d) fling yourself overboard, swim over and embrace it and hope your crew can get the boat back to you before you drown.

Before last month, we might have picked 'a' or 'c'. As for 'b', pumice tends to float pretty high and looks volcanic, so it's probably not that.

But now? We'd probably pick 'd'. Because if we were as lucky as an unemployed Englishman out walking his dog on the beach back in January, that "greasy old rock" might be worth more than the boat.

What Ken Wilman found was a chunk of ambergris. And it's worth just as much of a fortune today as it was when whaling ships prowled the oceans hunting Moby Dick and his ilk.

Ambergris comes from sperm whales. They were hunted mainly for their oil, which was used in lubricants, oil lamps and candles. But when whalers got done extracting the oil-bearing tissues from a whale's head, they turned their attention to its intestinal tract. If they were lucky, they would find a mass of ambergris, a hard, waxy

continued on outside column of next sightings page



ambergris — cont'd

substance that was — and still is — prized for use in perfumes and lotions. A returning whaling captain could literally make enough to retire off a lump of the stuff.

Once believed to come only from a “sick” whale, the formation of ambergris is now thought to be part of a sperm whale’s digestive process — likely a coating that forms over an irritant such as a squid beak to help it pass more easily. It’s unknown whether the whales ‘puke’ it up, hairball-style, or it comes out the other end. It may be either-or, depending on size.

That size varies from golf-ball size bits to big chunks weighing over 100 lbs. The one found on the beach in England in January weighed 6.6 lbs and could be worth upward of \$180,000. Last year, on another English beach, a young boy walking with his

father found a chunk worth \$63,000. In 2006, an Australian couple found a 32-lb lump worth almost \$300,000.

Since sperm whales swim all the oceans of the world, and ambergris has washed onto beaches all over the world, and most experts will tell you that there are tons more that are still floating around out there — you might think ambergris is downright common. It is not. Realistically, it is so rare that you might have better luck playing the lottery than finding any, ashore or afloat. Scientists estimate that only 1% of sperm whales produce ambergris during their lifetimes. And during the heyday of whaling in the mid-19th Century, when almost 8,000 sperm whales a year were killed (by the American whaling fleet alone!), many whaling ships and crews went their entire careers without ever finding an ounce of ambergris.

Despite the odds, it does happen. In addition to the ‘just folks’ who make the evening news by finding blobs every few years, there is reportedly a whole underground network of full-time ambergris “prospectors” and brokers that you don’t read about.

As far as discoveries of ambergris at sea, we could find no references to any being found by yachts or any other modern craft. But there are plenty of stories from the days of yore. In a 1905 *Oregonian* article, a fellow named J. Taylor claimed to have found 1,000 pounds of the stuff floating in Alaskan waters. Around the same time, closer to home, the crew of a lumber schooner plucked a 75-lb chunk out of the ocean near Mendocino.

There is no “ambergris index”, but depending on quality (the older the better — some floats around for decades before washing ashore), prices vary between \$10-\$20 a gram, or around \$460/ounce.

That upper range is 15 times the current price of silver.

So we don’t know about you, but next time we’re out there and we come across a low-floating “rock”, and it’s calm or safe enough to do so, our inclination would be to haul the mass on board and check it out. (See center column.)

Despite aged ambergris’s being described as “an olfactory gemstone,” it does not supply the dominant scent in perfume. Rather, it fixes and amplifies what is already there, kind of like what Lance Armstrong finally admitted to doing. Oh, and it’s widely thought that the smell can be particularly seductive to feminine noses. So if you want a second opinion, have your wife or girlfriend take a whiff. If she starts tearing her (and your) clothes off, that’s another potential confirmation: along with everything else, ambergris is thought to have powerful pheromonal properties.

If we could have one more second of your attention before you start

continued on outside column of next sightings page

ambergris

If you’re cruising in sperm whale-rich waters, here are a few tips for finding and identifying ‘floating gold’:

- Ambergris looks like a floating rock hovering just below the surface, like a tiny iceberg, and the water around it might be calm or ‘slick’ from its oily secretions.

- Birds sometimes eat the stuff, so if you see a flock busy pecking at something in the water, it might bear checking out.

- Next time you’re cleaning fish, take an extra minute to look for hard objects in the guts. In 1908, a fishing boat returned to its Connecticut port with a hunk of ambergris worth \$20,000. It had been found in the stomach of a swordfish.

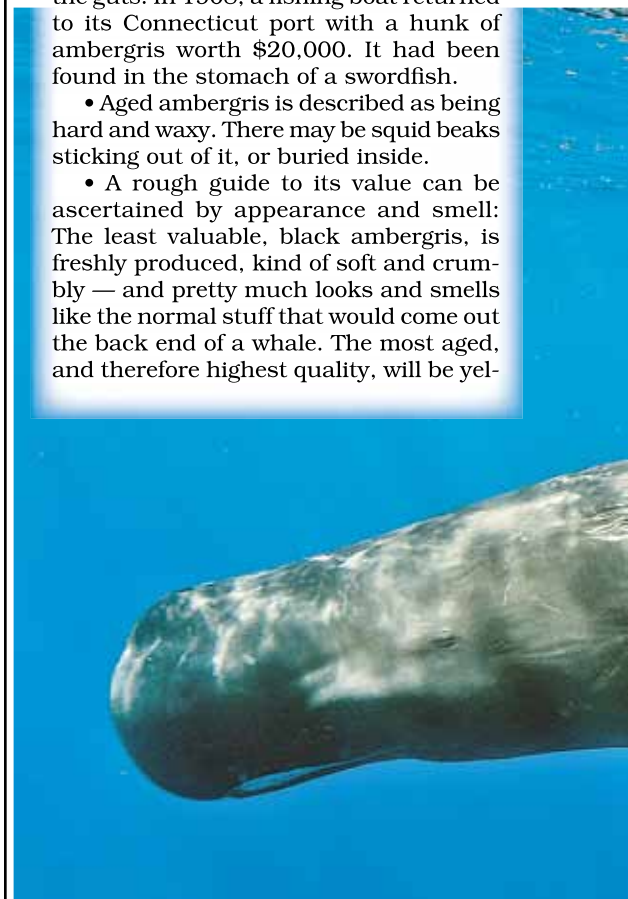
- Aged ambergris is described as being hard and waxy. There may be squid beaks sticking out of it, or buried inside.

- A rough guide to its value can be ascertained by appearance and smell: The least valuable, black ambergris, is freshly produced, kind of soft and crumbly — and pretty much looks and smells like the normal stuff that would come out the back end of a whale. The most aged, and therefore highest quality, will be yel-



NIGEL SLATER

Ken Wilman's pooch Madge sniffed out this hunk of 'floating gold' on an English beach.



how-tos

lowish, goldish and/or white, and have "a rich, complex odor described variously as sweet, woody, earthy, and/or marine." It can also be light brown, dark brown or gray. Those middle grades will also fall somewhere between black/bad and white/not-bad on the smell-o-meter.

- Common 'fool's ambergris' objects include whale blubber, clumps of seaweed, dog poop, dead animals, cooking grease and part of an eroded old tire. Presumably, none of these would smell very good.

- If you find some, don't store it in plastic or any other kind of sealed container. It is best preserved "suspended in a cotton cloth." And keep it away from animals.

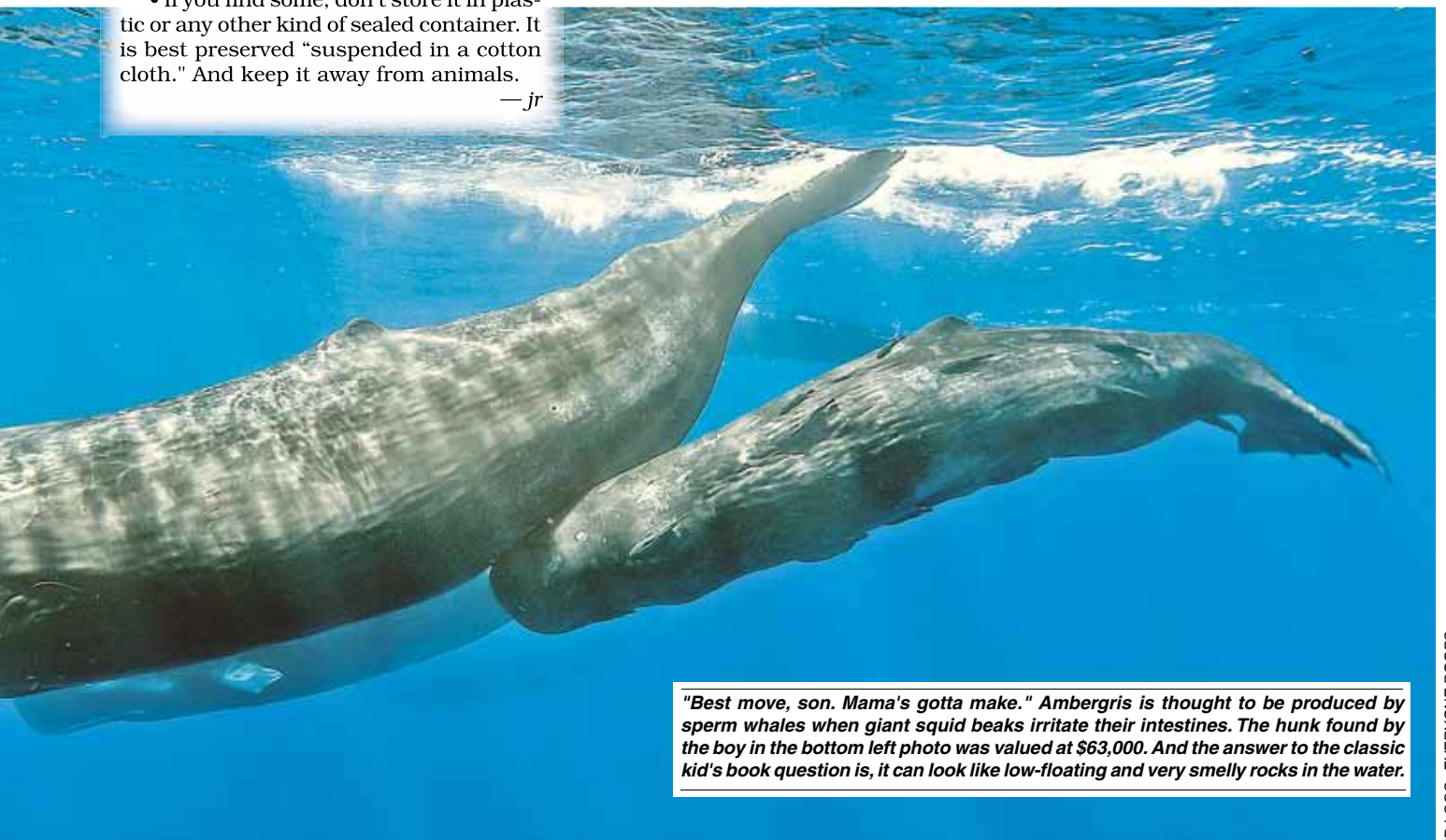
— jr

ambergris — cont'd

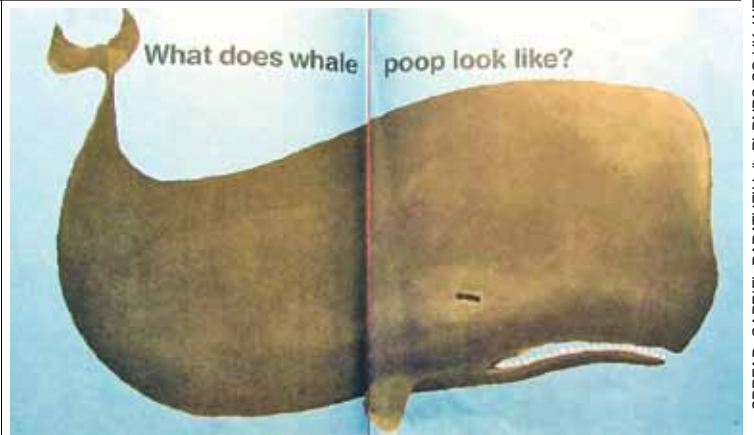
rigging a purse seine of the back of the boat — for the record, sperm whales are an endangered and protected species, and ambergris is banned for use in the U.S. (These days, there are synthetic substitutes that mimic its properties). However, 'found' ambergris is still used and highly valued in many other countries.

In addition to its use in fragrances, it is burned as incense in the Middle East, is stirred into tea in Morocco, provides a scent in Egyptian cigarettes, and is eaten in China. And you want crazy? In 2005, a 200-year-old perfume originally made for Marie Antoinette — featuring ambergris as a main ingredient — was reproduced in limited quantities for \$11,000 a bottle.

— jr



"Best move, son. Mama's gotta make." Ambergris is thought to be produced by sperm whales when giant squid beaks irritate their intestines. The hunk found by the boy in the bottom left photo was valued at \$63,000. And the answer to the classic kid's book question is, it can look like low-floating and very smelly rocks in the water.



SPREAD: GABRIEL BARATHELI; (L-R) BNPS.CO.UK; WEBB LOGG; EVERYONE POOPS