

# **2012 Vic-Maui Race & Return Journals of the s/v Family Affair**

by Paul Michael, Navigator

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## Race Day 0 - July 6, 2012

Great circle distance from Victoria, BC to Lahaina, Maui = 2,308 nautical miles.

*"I start from the premise that no object created by man is as satisfying to his body and soul as a proper sailing yacht." ~ Arthur Beiser*

Welcome family and friends to the journals of the sailing vessel Family Affair as we partake in the 2012 Victoria to Maui race and return to Seattle. Tomorrow we start and it has been a long journey for us. Family Affair is a Beneteau First 45F5 cutter-rigged sailboat that was bought in Los Angeles back in 2008. Until then, it was a somewhat neglected rental that had years of service in the waters of Mexico. During the delivery run up to Seattle, we lost our mast in a gale off Point Conception, one of the windiest places in the North Pacific during the summertime. Since then, we've literally rebuilt the boat from the keel up. It's now stronger and faster than the day she left the factory in France back in 1990.

The boat is co-owned by my good friends Thomas & Sandy Buus and Tom's parents Henning & Greta Buus. They've spent a great deal of time, effort, and money to bring the boat up to the safety standards required for this race. Every boat in the Vic-Maui race will be more prepared than most ocean crossing sailboats and their crews better trained. We've been through mandatory safety-at-sea and offshore medical courses. We are lucky to have a very skilled albeit mostly inexperienced team to ocean voyaging. Here are our members:

Henning & Greta Buus – They are both 1<sup>st</sup> generation Danish immigrants and celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last year. Henning is a retired Boeing engineer and still does some part-time

contracting work in the aerospace industry. Their daughter Marianne showed horses with my wife Julie when they were children.

Tom & Sandy Buus – Tom is an A&P rated aircraft mechanic working for Boeing at the Delivery Center in Everett. Sandy is a nurse working at Overlake Hospital. Both have been sailing for many years. They have plans to retire and take off sailing across the world. Tom and I want to build a small i550 raceboat and perhaps someday get a corporate sponsorship to do some global double-handed races.

Sharina Brothers – Sharina is a naturopathic doctor who was introduced to sailing in 2010 during a cruise with her husband, my wife Julie, and I up to the San Juan Islands. She and her husband Seth are looking to buy their first sailboat and start their own adventures.

Dave Powell – Dave is a firefighter working for the City of Seattle and has been sailing/boating his whole life. He owns a Catalina 31 sailboat and has been racing competitively for several seasons now.

Dan Ohms – Dan's a retired firefighter for the City of Bellingham. He's our wise sage and has been sailing and racing since 1974. He did the Vic-Maui in '84, '86, '96, and '98. He's raced in the Sea of Japan in '89 in the Olga Race and the outside leg of the Van Isle in '05. In 2006 he was in France for the double-handed Demi Cle long course to England and back in Mini Transats.

Paul Michael – I grew up boating in Michigan. Between fishing and hunting with my dad on the water, my introduction to sailing at summer camp, and our family trips to Florida and Alaska, I picked up the sailing bug and have now logged close to 10,000 nautical miles. I own a 2006 Hunter 45 Center Cockpit and enjoy escaping solo or with friends whenever time allows. I'm a flight test engineer for Boeing and am tied to the land for a few more years. Besides continuing to cruise and race, I plan to earn my merchant mariner's license and start chartering in the Pacific Northwest offering anything from whale watching, sunset dinner cruises, to journeys up to Alaska.

We have onboard two engineers, an aircraft mechanic, two firefighters, a doctor, a nurse, and an awesome cook. I'm fairly confident that we can handle just about anything out there.

We had a great dock party last evening with all the race crews and the race committee. A cold dip in the water this morning to inspect and clean our hull helped me feel better from the festivities. We're still working on last minute items around the boat and are almost done. The local news just did their weather update with us in the background. We're heading out for sushi tonight after the skipper's meeting.

Speaking of sushi (one of my favorite foods), we will be fishing during the race and the return. We hope to catch some tuna and mahi mahi.

The boats in the cruising class got started yesterday. They are slower so they get a two day head start. Ballymack is in the lead followed by Radiance, and Big Ben.

Each day, I'll try to send out updates around midnight with a recap of our activities. Thanks for following along!



*s/v Family Affair Crew Photo: Top row left to right: Sharina, Sandy, Dan, Greta, Henning. Bottom row left to right: Paul, Tom, Dave*

## **Race Day 1 - July 7, 2012**

Lat/Long = 48 deg 07 min N x 124 deg 56 min W Last 24 hours distance traveled = 108.1 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 108.1 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 2,236.7 nautical miles.

*"When you set out on your journey, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge." ~  
Constantine Peter*

We woke up to another beautiful but windless morning in Victoria. Victoria is a beautiful town set on the Southeast shore of Vancouver Island. It is the capital of British Columbia and has a very Victorian and London feel to it. We docked right in the inner wharf next to the Empress Hotel and Capitol building. Street vendors and musician performed all day long in front of the marina. It's a really cool place to visit. We took our final showers for a while and motored off to the race start off Brotchie Ledge. Ship's time was set to Hawaii Standard Time and this will be what we use for shift changes and the 6pm communications roll call with all the other race boats.

A strong outgoing current helped us inch toward Race Rocks where we caught the last of the ebb current thru the passage. Winds started very light out of the west at 5 knots. This allowed the really lightweight boats to walk away from us as we are one of the heavier of class 2 racing boats. We got a nice 4 knot flush out of Race Rocks and then chose to cross the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the American (southern) side during the ebb current. The ebb gave us a nice 2 knot assist until it went slack at 5pm, PDT. The winds picked up out of the WNW to about 15 knots. We had to climb the whole way out of the strait. It was kind of rough but none of us got sick. It was a much smoother exit than during the Swiftsure Race last month. At sunset, we were joined by a pod of Dall's porpoises for a few miles. We rounded the Duntze Rock buoy at Cape Flattery at 8:19pm. Frustratingly, the downwind running we were looking forward to wasn't there. Instead we were met with light 5 knot winds out of the southwest and had to keep pointing. We're hoping for more decent wind in the daytime tomorrow.

We had a great send-off escort by our close friends Andrew & Linda on the s/v Izarra, a nice Beneteau 411. I'm sure it pains them to watch us sail over the horizon bound for tropical waters as they head back to port.

For shift changes, we split our crew into two teams of four. Four crew are on and four are off at any one time. The four on are responsible for sailing and posting watch. The four off can sleep or do other responsibilities like cooking and cleaning. We use something called the Modified Swedish Watch System. I don't know the history, but it's a combination of 4 and 6-hour shifts split such that each team has a variety of shifts and aren't stuck on anything undesirable. Our shifts run 0600-1200, 1200-1800, 1800-2200, 2200-0200, and 0200-0600 hours.

Sandy made corn bread to go with our chicken noodle soup for lunch, but the oven isn't balanced and favors one side as it gimbals with the boat heeling to one side. She joked that we need to tack at regular intervals so that it rises evenly. For dinner we had black beans, rice, and chicken.

We had some excitement on board around noon when water started to come up from below the floorboards at a concerning rate. It had accumulated on the starboard side under the cabinets and furniture when we were on a port tack. When we tacked, all the water rushed to the port side and it was then obvious that we had about 50 gallons inside the boat and were taking on water. The culprit was quickly found to be the old engine cooling pickup hose. The thru-hull fitting was refitted with a tee connector so we could run a saltwater rinse line to our galley. Working it onto the new tee fitting caused a small crack in the old vinyl hose and it split. What was ironic is that the hose had survived a week in Everett, the sail to Victoria, and a few days at the dock there and was fine. We had a lot of mopping up to do, but aside from some soggy vegetables, we were okay.

That's all for now. Time for me to get an hour of sleep before my 2am shift.









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## Race Day 2 – July 8, 2012

Lat/Long = 44 deg 58 min N x 126 deg 10 min W Last 24 hours distance traveled = 198.8 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 306.9 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 2,087.8 nautical miles.

*"The acquisition of the knowledge of navigation has a strange effect on the minds of men." ~ Jack London*

We had a tough go last night in very light winds but finally found our footing with a building northwest breeze to 10 knots around 2am. Later it built to 20 knots. We're trucking down the coast with spinnaker and are averaging above 8 knots making our way to the south southwest. Skies started off gray with a low overhanging marine layer and it never really improved. Turicum was in sight alongside us for the entire day and night. The afternoon brought us some dream sailing. We had steady speeds over 9 knots with long stretches of double digits. I saw a top speed of 13.2 knots which is a new record for us. The seas built to about 8 feet and we rounded up several times, finally settling in with a double reef in the main. Turicum fell behind us to the horizon as they went bare headed and then finally to a heavier spinnaker. They caught back up to us when we wrapped our spinnaker around our forestay on one of our roundups. We finished the night with a smaller spinnaker.

I listened to KOMO 1000 AM news on our HF radio for long enough to hear familiar news... the Mariners lost again and the freeways in Seattle were jammed up. Their antenna transmits more in a north-south direction, so when we start to crack off to the west near California, we'll probably lose it.

I've been downloading NOAA weather faxes and the surface analysis today looks more promising than before, but not by much. When we left, there was high pressure set up further south than normal and

also a large ridge of high pressure that extended nearly all the way to the west coast. Where there is high pressure, there is little to no wind. My job as navigator is to plot a course that keeps us in the wind and sailing on angles that are strongest for the boat's performance. This means the most direct course to Hawaii is most often not the fastest.

The forecasts I'm seeing today show a weakened stationary high and a diminishing ridge on the east side of it. We'll still have to sail a ways south into the latitudes of California before we pick up the easterly trade winds. A rule of thumb is to keep in pressure lower than 1020 millibars (mb)... we're holding 1018 now and it's agreeing with the NOAA surface analysis.

Something we're watching closely is Hurricane Daniel near 15.1N x 122.4W. It has a 961mb low pressure center and maximum winds of 100 knots gusting to 120. It's tracking slowly towards Hawaii but is expected to be downgraded into a tropical depression over the next few days. Hot on its heels though is Tropical Storm Emilia which is also forecast to develop into a hurricane. While it's rare that winds this strong make it onto our race course, they can make a mess of the trade winds. The trades normally blow due east near 20 deg N latitude, but with the counterclockwise rotation of the storms and hurricanes, they are giving the trades a more northeasterly set. This might work in our favor since we have to run far south this year to avoid the high. A northeasterly trade would put us on a stronger wind angle for us to sail faster on course. We'll see what happens... so much can change over the next week on our journey south.



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## Race Day 3 – July 9, 2012

Lat/Long = 42 deg 11 min N x 126 deg 46 min W (125nm west of Crescent City, CA) Last 24 hours distance traveled = 190.4 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 497.3 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 1,970.2 nautical miles.

*"Ah! A heading. Set sail in a... uh... a general... that way direction. "* ~ Captain Jack Sparrow

If you've been following our track on the Yellowbrick website, I know what you're thinking. Yes, we were heading southeast back to the mainland this morning. No, we weren't in any trouble. We were just avoiding a large stationary high pressure system to the southwest of us. More about this later.

We saw our first sunfish of the trip today. They're large disc shaped fish with a long matching dorsal and pectoral fin. They are flat like a pancake and dive very deep for food. They eat junk like jellyfish and aren't very tasty. When they come up from a deep dive, they lay sideways on the water in the sun to warm up. When I was bringing my sailboat up from San Francisco, I first saw them and thought they were dying sharks because of their dorsal fin seen bent and flapping on the surface. The one we saw today was about 4 feet in diameter.

The water out here is a beautiful sapphire color. In the foamy wake around our stern, it has a turquoise color, almost a glacial blue... it's much more pleasant than the algae and plankton rich brown and green waters of Puget Sound. The water there was 45 deg F. As we travel southwest, the water is getting warmer; it's now 58 deg F. We're all really looking forward to reaching the tropics in less than a week.

At 6:30pm, HST (right at dusk) we had some excitement on deck. I had just finished roll call at the nav station and both shift crews were up and finishing dinner. Suddenly we heard a pop and the call for all hands on deck. Our guy on the spinnaker had broken. The guy is a line that attaches to the windward corner of the spinnaker. It was one of our older lines and was kind of stiff. It parted right at the splice behind the shackle. I took the helm and held us 150 degrees off the wind and was very careful not to jibe in the rolling seas since everyone was on deck. I didn't want to take them out with the boom. We had a preventer rigged to reduce this, but the boom still does some moving around. We wrestled the spinnaker down and got it down in the main cabin to be re-bagged for the launch and while it was down, it gave us a chance to patch up some small holes from last night's wrap. We re-tied the guy with a bowline knot and got the spinnaker flying again. When all was done, we were bare headed for only 21 minutes which for us is really well out here offshore. Our speed went from 7 knots back up to double digits again.

At roll call, I learned that the tight pack from last night is still very close to us. This includes Anne Bonny, Turicum, and Bravo Zulu. I do have the ability to pull in the race fleet's Yellowbrick position info at any time, but have been so busy with navigating, radio comms, helming, eating, cleaning, blogging, a little sleep, and even carpentry (I blew the bathroom door off its hinges, don't ask).

Weatherwise, we're being squeezed between a rock and a soft spot so to speak. High pressure to our west contains very little wind. All the favorable northwest wind is stacked up along the coast. The favorable heading with our northwest wind is to the southwest which works us into the lighter winds. The solution is a costly gibe to the southeast. It's a gamble to see if the risk is worth the reward. We did a 40 mile gibe this morning to the southeast and it seems to have paid off a bit as the recent Yellowbrick speeds I just pulled in show us with a 2 to 3 knot speed advantage over those to our west. We'll work out of the ridge of high pressure near 38 degrees north latitude and will have more room to work to the west. You'll see the race fleet begin to spread out starting there.

We were all really looking forward to beautiful starry nights offshore, but so far, we've had nothing but overcast skies. We even have drizzle at night. I downloaded an image from the GOES satellite and it shows cloud cover over thousands of miles out here. We won't have clear skies until we hit the trade



winds in the tropics. A brief hole did open up over us about an hour ago and it was impressive. It reminds me of the night skies in rural Northern Michigan where I grew up.



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## Race Day 4 – July 10, 2012

Lat/Long = 38 deg 52 min N x 128 deg 43 min W (300nm west of San Francisco, CA) Last 24 hours distance traveled = 214.3 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 711.6 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 1,803.8 nautical miles.

*“I don't know who named them swells. There's nothing swell about them. They should have named them awfuls.” ~ Hugo Vihlen*

Today has been some of the best sailing of our lives. If people go to Alaska to fish, they should come here to sail. The wrinkles on my face at the end of this voyage won't be from the sun but from smiling. On the North Pacific pilot chart for July, this area off Cape Mendocino is the windiest spot on average in the ocean. Twice I've sailed through here in the summer before but was heading north. It's much more pleasant to be going “downhill” instead.

We're in an area of a developing gale and have had about 25 knots of wind gusting to 35 knots out of the northwest. Sharina set a new speed record for us at the helm of 15.4 knots surfing down a big wave. Then it was bested by Tom on the next watch with 16.7 knots. In the early afternoon, Sharina regained her title at 17.6 knots! It's hard to describe how cool this is without being here. It sounds like a constant waterfall all around the boat. The speed over the rudder makes the helm feel like a sports car. The 8 to 10+ foot wind waves toss the boat and it takes constant attention at the helm to keep the boat on a strong wind angle and to prevent it from falling off through the wind on a crash jibe or rounding up into the wind, both of which could take us out of the race. The helmsperson has partners on the main sheet and boomvang, ready to dump energy from the main should a round-up start. It's a lot of work and a 4 or

6 hour shift can leave you very sore and drained. I have the beginnings of blisters on my hands from helming even with gloves. We love every minute of it.

Life below deck is a constant struggle for balance. The floor can be a wall and vice versa on a repeating basis. Before we left, we installed some floor to ceiling poles in the main cabin for handholds and they really help. It's loud and bumpy. It's difficult to drink from a Nalgene bottle. Of the boats in the race, Family Affair has a very comfortable interior. It must be a lot more unpleasant on the ultra-lightweight displacement boats. There is not much that's forgiving on a sailboat and we all have minor forms of scrapes and bruises. We were all pretty green for the first couple of days, but now we're adjusted which is good news. I was concerned about being stuck in the tiny nav station (formerly one of our heads) plotting and having to work on the radio and computer when sick.

We've had cloudy weather the entire time since we've rounded Cape Flattery. At night there are no stars for reference and you steer by magnetic compass and the wind instrument. You try to put out of your mind the chaos ensuing in the blackness that surrounds your tiny world.

How people had the courage to do this before GPS I'll never know. Sextants out here now in this cloud cover would be useless. Someone relying only on dead reckoning would have only a rough idea of their location after sailing hard for 4 days. When our crew member Dan Ohms did the Vic-Maui races back in the 80's, he had a stretch of days near Hawaii that were cloudy and prevented them from gaining a celestial fix. They knew they were close, but didn't know exactly. When the clouds lifted slightly, there was a pile of clouds that was bigger than the others. They steered for it and found the islands.

We've been routinely easing and taking in some of the higher loaded halyards, sheets, and guys every few hours. This lets the heat and friction points vary. At the 6am watch change, we decided to lower our main spinnaker to inspect for chafe. The winds had piped up to 20+ knots with gusts to 25. What we found was impressive and not very pretty. A 6 foot long span of the spinnaker halyard had its outer casing stripped nearly away and the core was beginning to fray as well. The bowline we tied on the guy yesterday after the splice failed had carried so much energy that it melted into a near-solid knot. There is

a lot of horse power involved when dragging 24,000 pounds through the water at the speeds we've seen. Also today, my 12-volt microcomputer let out a puff of acrid smoke but it's still working for the moment. I have a laptop for a spare if needed. Man and machine weren't designed to exist here long.

After being bare headed with a double-reefed main for 20 minutes, we were flying our small spinnaker. At about 8:30am the seas were building into a confused state and we had a significant round up. These occur during a combination of wind gusts and large waves. The gust puts pressure on the mainsail which is aft of the keel and causes the boat to pivot on the keel and turn up into the wind. A large and immediate rudder correction is needed along with easing the mainsheet to quickly command the boat downwind, hopefully without breaking the rudder. If during the large rudder command downwind a large wave sweeps under the boat from astern, the boat will slide off the passing wave and round up further into the wind. The spinnaker really begins to complain and make a lot of racket. Once rounded up, you can become stuck there about 60 degrees off the wind. It takes skill, timing, and a cool head at the helm to ease the rudder back to near neutral, build up speed, time a large oncoming swell, and then turn aggressively onto it as if on a surfboard. There are few times that you will ever see a large sailing yacht turn as fast as when rounding down the crest of a large swell.

Tom handled the first round-up and I was at the helm for the second one. We had a spinnaker net up to prevent a full wrap of the spinnaker behind the forestay. It saved our bacon once yesterday and twice today. We quickly got the smaller spinnaker down and one of our working jibs up for a headsail. After shaking out back to a single reef in the main, we were making tracks again, but not nearly as fast as before. The two spinnakers are our main engines but we can't afford to lose them in this gale.

With the jib we ran hard with a full main for many miles at 120 degrees off the wind before we put a single reef in when the winds picked up to 25 gusting to 35 knots. The seas grew huge and we had routine surfs past 14 knots. We had tons of whitewater over the decks and several waves that came over the rear quarter and got us all sogged. It's pretty wet and humid below decks. We're looking forward to the sunny trade winds a few days ahead of us.



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## Race Day 5 – July 11, 2012

Lat/Long = 36 deg 16 min N x 131 deg 08 min W (425nm west of San Francisco, CA) Last 24 hours distance traveled = 202.8 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 914.4 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 1,625.9 nautical miles.

*“Anyone who would go to sea for enjoyment would go to Hell for a vacation.” ~ Old Idiom*

My wife is familiar with my cell phone calls from the sea or hospitals that start with, “honey, I’m okay, but...”. Today was one of those days. The crew and the boat are fine, but we had one heck of a day.

I navigated us south onto the western edge of a gale off California. It’s nice to be able to dial in the kind of weather you wish to sail in. A few degrees of heading to the east and we’re headlong into a 35+ knot gale and pukerville, a few degrees to the west and we’re in calm seas and can’t sail fast. I aimed us for the 25 knot wind mark and we hit it. Then it hit us.

We sailed through the previous night heading about 190 degrees true, still skirting between the gale and high pressure. The winds held steady at 20 to 25 knots and we sailed under jib and single-reefed main. At daybreak the shift opposite me elected to try the smaller asymmetric spinnaker. I was just waking up at 6am from my 10pm to 2am midnight watch. As soon as the spinnaker caught the wind, it knocked us down. A knockdown is the granddaddy version of a round-up. The boat is completely on its side. The boom is dragging through the water and the mast nearly touched the water as well. The rudder is out of the water and useless. You must quickly eliminate the source which holds you down and do so without placing shock loads on your mast. I sprung up on deck ill-dressed but with my lifevest/PLB on. I took the helm from Tom so he could go forward. We got the spinnaker halyard lowered and the crew pulled the

sail on deck. Under main only, I managed to build some speed and pump the helm on the swells to get us back downwind.

Our second moment of excitement came at 11am when I was helming with our smaller spinnaker and a single-reefed main. We were trucking along in double digits when the downhaul separated from the spinnaker pole. The pole shot up into the air and the spinnaker ballooned into a big scoop high up in the air. We were flat on our side again. We had the engine running in neutral to charge our batteries. I could hear the sound of the motor change as the raw water intake on the bottom of our hull began to suck in air instead of water. I quickly shut the engine off to keep it from overheating. We got the spinnaker down within minutes and continued our journey with the jib for a headsail. We lost a lot of speed, but counted ourselves lucky and didn't want to push the boat further until we edged a little further into higher pressure and out of these stronger winds. Dan just came down off watch. I ask him how balanced the helm was with our new sail setting. He said it's like driving a fire engine from the 50's with hard tires and no power steering.

All during our events, we were very safe and worked well as a team to get back on our feet. We were at all times in our life vests and tethered to the boat. All of the ISAF Category 1 safety requirements required by the Vic-Maui race committee really make sense and paid off today.

We haven't seen any life out here in the big blue desert with us except some intrepid birds. One looked like a tern and darted low on the waves. We haven't seen one of those since about 150 miles off shore. The only other life we see now is the occasional albatross.

Just like the two Voyager spacecraft that are still probing where the edge of our solar system and interstellar space is today, I am happy to report to our Seattle friends that we have finally sailed out of the clouds. The edge lays 800 nautical miles to the southwest of our wet city. We thoroughly enjoyed our first starry night.





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## Race Day 6 – July 12, 2012

Lat/Long = 34 deg 28 min N x 134 deg 04 min W (785nm west of Los Angeles, CA) Last 24 hours distance traveled = 183.4 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 1,097.8 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 1,441.8 nautical miles.

*"If you want to see the sunshine, you have to weather the storm." ~ Frank Lane*

Break out the sunscreen! After a stellar starry night we started the day off with sun and great winds. This is what we came for. We Seattleites are shedding the fleece and long johns and our damp world is beginning to dry out. The music is playing. The pancakes are cookin' up.

We ran a full main and jib all night and the winds settled down for us to a manageable 15 to 20 knots. The high pressure system is moving to our north. We're entering the part of the race known as the slot cars where we pick a path of constant pressure around the high. The shorter the course, the lower the wind. A deeper course south means lower pressure and better winds, but extra distance to Maui. There are a number of our competitors to our northwest. I noticed at the radio roll call last night that they had decreased wind. Some had down to 10 knots and we'll leave them in the dust unless they can work out of the high. The slot I would like is 1019 to 1020 millibars. We're at 1021 now so I'm plotting us about 10 degrees south of the course for the finish.

At daybreak we noticed that the metal shackle that held the clew of our main sail had decided enough was enough and it left the boat. The only thing holding the aft end of our main in place was the outhaul and it was very frayed. We sheeted in and reefed to replace it. After that we stowed our jib and opened up our spinnaker. Off we went blazing southwest to the trades at double-digit speed.

At 11am we had a minor round-up and our large symmetric spinnaker blew apart. I was off-watch and ran up on deck to see the upper one-third of it flying like a pennant from the masthead. Luckily, the strings that give support to the edges of the sails were still attached to the foot and we were able to pull the entire sail down on deck. It was a big setback for us and will affect our performance for the rest of the race. It will be hard to achieve 200 mile days now. We continued on with one of our larger asymmetric spinnakers.

We discussed plans to do an Apollo 13 style fix on the torn sail, but it would take a lot of time and effort and in the end would affect the reparability of the sail in a professional sail loft once we get back to Seattle. So we decided to retire it from the race.

The frayed end of our outhaul joined the Poxo pile. Poxo is our ship's mascot. He got his name from the many gallons of epoxy resin we used to repair and strengthen the boat for this race. It's a stuffed animal slightly resembling a weasel. Some say it was part of a cat toy in its youth. Frankly, I don't know what it is. He was found in Tom & Sandy's previous sailboat and now sits on the hand rail above our galley. He's adorned with all our failures. He has our split engine pickup hose around his waist and dreadlocks from our frayed lines. He gets a little more haggard every day like the rest of us.

As I type this at 1am, we can hear that some friends have joined us in the darkness alongside the boat. Dolphins have arrived to cheer us on. I can hear their splashes and high pitched squeaks. They've been with us for 10 minutes now. While we can't see them directly, they excite the bioluminescent algae in the water and cause the water to sparkle with light. Now, several are alongside the cockpit. This is truly a unique and special place.



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## Race Day 7 – July 13, 2012

Lat/Long = 33 deg 08 min N x 137 deg 25 min W (960nm west of Los Angeles, CA) Last 24 hours distance traveled = 187.5 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 1,285.3 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 1,266.8 nautical miles.

*“All of us have in our veins the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and therefore we have salt in our blood, in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea whether it is to sail or to watch we are going back from whence we came.” ~ John F. Kennedy*

Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> was kind to us. I awoke in my usual fashion, with an all-hands-on-deck call. At least I got 2 hours of sleep. Tom discovered a small tear in our asymmetric spinnaker and we lowered it for a 30 minute repair. He also discovered that the end cap is missing off our starboard upper spreader. A sail must have caught and tore it off during the past day. Tom donned the boson's chair, helmet, and GoPro cam and we hoisted him while we were under full main, spinnaker, 5-6 foot wind waves and 6 foot following swells. We were making about 9 knots straight on a rhumb line for Maui. He wrapped a piece of fireman's hose over the spreader and then taped it down well. As if that wasn't enough, Tom got hoisted to the top of the mast 70 feet up to inspect the rigging and instruments. I was at the helm with my eyes glued to the wind instrument attentively holding us 150 degrees off the wind. He got the job done and came down to receive major kudos from the crew. We did another lower of the spinnaker in the afternoon to do some additional preventative repairs.

We were greeted by more friends cheering us on today. At about 11am what looked like a small sparrow jumped from the water right near the cockpit. It was a flying fish about 10 inches long. It was about 5

feet in the air. We briefly said hello and then he banked off the wind to return to the water. I'm hoping one jumps onboard so I can examine them closer.

Where there are little fish, there are big fish. I got my fishing pole in the water with a cedar tuna plug. Within an hour, I got a very strong hit that peeled off with my line. I had it on for about a minute and then he got off. No sooner did I reel in 10 yards before I got a 2<sup>nd</sup> hit which I then lost as well. The fish gave me two more chances and I blew them too. I was going to vary my technique on the next hit, but wasn't offered a chance. We trolled for a few more hours but didn't get any other hits.

We've been passing over some interesting topography on the chart. Places named Medocino Escarpment and the Murray Fracture Zone have come and gone. We'll be passing over the Moonless Mountains tomorrow. I wish I could explore these places but we're sailing in depths of over 18,000 feet so they shall remain something for me to imagine as we continue on our watery world.



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## Race Day 8 – July 14, 2012

Lat/Long = 31 deg 50 min N x 140 deg 40 min W (1095nm west of Los Angeles, CA) Last 24 hours distance traveled = 195.4 nautical miles

Total distance traveled = 1,285.3 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 1,480.7 nautical miles.

*“Everybody’s talkin’ at me. I don’t hear a word they’re saying, only the echoes of my mind. Bankin’ off of the northeast winds. Sailin’ on summer breeze and skippin’ over the ocean like a stone.” ~ Harry Nilsson*

Both watch shifts did an incredible job last night of helming with 100% concentration. We feel we couldn’t have gone any faster with our remaining smaller sails. We went through a series of small weather disturbances with increased winds and drizzle. With our sail set already pushing the boat to its fullest, gusts very much wanted to round us up. Our winds are from the northeast and are slowly clocking around to the east. With our asymmetric spinnaker, our boat sails the strongest at around 120 degrees off the wind. Holding this wind angle is slowly increasing our compass heading and you can see this in our track. Late in the afternoon, our heading became greater than 270 degrees and we needed to jibe to make better progress towards Maui. We jibed at dusk and I was at the helm. After being on a starboard tack for nearly a week, helming on a different tack was like trying to ride a bicycle backwards. The muscle memory was just too well established. But I soon got the hang of it and we were once again blazing away towards the south southwest.

Since we left, every 8 hours I’ve been taking weather observations. When we left, the water temperature was 48 degrees. It’s now increased to 70 degrees! Sailors in the Pacific Northwest who get tired of the gray and rain say they want to sail south until the butter melts. Well, ours just did at latitude 32 deg, 46 min N.



At last night's roll call, a lot of debris in the water was reported by the sailboats ahead of us. One reported a cement dock, 30x60 feet and just 12" out of the water at 34 31N x 136 38W. We had something similar to this wash ashore in Washington State last month. It was Japanese tsunami debris. Another boat last night reported two debris fields of plastic junk including a fishing net. Twice they had to stop sailing and clear debris off their rudder. We headed just north of this region in the night and kept a close look-out ahead with our handheld forward looking infrared (FLIR) night vision.

One of our secondary missions out here has been to gather debris data for Mary Crowley of Project Kaisei and the Ocean Voyages Institute. Both of these projects have a goal of cleaning up the plastics mess in our oceans and educating the public about plastics and ocean sciences. We record lat/long, date/time, and sea state of the man-made debris that we encounter. Mary sails out to the northern pacific gyre garbage patch aboard the s/v Kaisei, a 151-foot steel hulled tall ship. They collect up junk and take samples of the microplastics in the water and its impact on marine life. Mary relies in part on data gathered from volunteer sailboats out there crossing the Pacific to determine where they focus their cleanup and research efforts aboard the Kaisei.



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## Race Day 9 – July 15, 2012

Lat/Long = 29 deg 05 min N x 142 deg 20 min W (1,325nm west of San Diego, CA) Last 24 hours distance sailed = 188.6 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 1,473.9 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 922.4 nautical miles.

*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” ~ Mark Twain*

We pushed hard through the night with our asymmetric spinnaker. The weather was squally and rough. We continued to put a lot of side loading on our rudder and at night it began to complain with a heavy groan of parts not rubbing well together. Tom inspected it the best we could while underway and the prognosis most likely is that some shivs are working loose. The noise slowly dissipated in the night and the rudder felt normal for the rest of the day. We plan to lower it while at anchor in Lahaina to inspect it before our return trip.

The morning started off with beautiful sunny weather and more great sailing. Sharina drove for most of my shift and every time I checked in with her during the 4 hours, she was grinning from ear to ear. We had an albatross that came in close and circled us a few times. We were able to get a really close look at it. They are amazing birds and masters of aerodynamic slope soaring very low over the ocean swells. They stay airborne for most of their adult life, landing for long periods only to mate and raise their young. Many of them have stomachs filled with small pieces of plastic junk that we find floating past us and it can be lethal to them.

If there is one take-away from this trip that I wish to share with my friends on shore, it is to avoid single-use plastics. Recycle when possible. Be personally responsible for the products you purchase and use. It makes no sense for something that serves us only a month or two yet lasts for hundreds of years. These complex hydrocarbon chains of polymers are not easily broken down into smaller molecules. Furthermore, once they do, they mimic chemicals required by life on earth with damaging consequences to an unknown level. In layman's terms, plastics suck. Some Pacific Island beaches contain more plastic sludge on their shores than coral sands. It is one of humanities most daunting time bombs.

We've been seeing some patterns to the junk that we sail past. One curious item has been a lot of red light bulbs. They all look in relatively good shape. I asked Dennis back home to do a Google search and he says they're tsunami debris from Japan and that a lot of them are now washing up on the beaches of Oregon. I guess the red light districts of the world are lit by factories in Japan. Dennis joked that barefoot beach combing will be ruined for a while with all that broken glass.

The remoteness of our location is something to contemplate. We are nearly 1,000 miles from anything. Here there is no governance, no society, no culture, no police/fire/medical support. Nothing that we take for granted every day. We are starting to long for unavailable things although some of us came up with funny answers to what we miss most. Tom said milk. Greta said cottage cheese. Dave was on the foredeck with his cell phone and joked, "hey, I've got three bars!" From the helm I replied, "awesome... order some pizza and have it delivered!"



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## Race Day 10 – July 16, 2012

Lat/Long = 27 deg 31 min N x 145 deg 10 min W (1,486nm west of San Diego, CA) Last 24 hours distance sailed = 195.6 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 1,669.5 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 748.3 nautical miles.

*“The wonder is always new that any sane man can be a sailor.” ~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Dawn breaks and we don sunscreen like war paint. Wind is our weapon and Lahaina is our goal. Without our main symmetrical spinnaker, we cannot run as close to the layline for Maui as the other boats. Our course languished to the southeast so we jibed and threw up our smaller symmetric spinnaker. The jibe to the west will be costly and long before we can jibe back for the final run. The end is in sight though!

Our run to the west is demanding. We have northeast winds up to 30 knots. Our spinnaker flies high and wanted to roll the boat. Add to that the swells and the demand on the driver is great. The plan was to alternate our primary drivers at ½ hour intervals, but shortly after dark, the stress on the boat and crew was too much and we lowered the spinnaker for the jib.

We had another visitor in the night. This one didn't survive the encounter though. We found a 10 inch long squid on our deck in the morning. The poor guy had inked out all over the place. We gave him a prompt burial at sea.

Some interesting news during our 6pm roll call. Incantation was fouled twice more by abandoned fishing nets. There was also an abandoned racing sailboat drifting on our course. It was the s/v Bela Bartok, a

40' sloop that was being singlehanded. Something happened to the sailor and he was airlifted. The owners plan to salvage the boat. It's drifting towards Honolulu at 4 knots.

Here's a word on racing for my non-sailboat friends. Some boats are faster than others by design so each boat is assigned a handicap rating. Races are judged on corrected time, not actual time (unless all boats are the same design). The lower the handicap rating, the faster the sailboat. The difference between the rating of two boats is how much the faster one must beat the slower one by seconds per nautical mile. The official distance of the Vic-Maui race is 2,307nm. Family Affair is one of the slowest of the Class 2 racing division boats.





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## Race Day 11 – July 17, 2012

Lat/Long = 27 deg 12 min N x 148 deg 32 min W (1,677nm west of San Diego, CA) Last 24 hours distance sailed = 189.1 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 1,858.6 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 585.4 nautical miles.

“Sometimes we are lucky enough to know our lives have been changed, to discard the old and embrace the new and run headlong down an immutable course. It happened to me... on that summer's day when my eyes were opened to the sea.” ~ Jacques Cousteau

Just another awesome day for us in the trades. We're continuing our costly correction jibe to the west and planning our final 650 mile layline jibe for the Pailolo Channel between Maui and Moloka'i. In the early dawn we switched from jib to symmetric spinnaker after the cold squally weather settled down and picked up about 2 knots extra speed. We ran hard with the symmetric spinnaker all day and then in the late evening, we were surrounded by squalls and elected to put up the jib again. I'm torn between being racing hard and playing it safe. The nights all throughout this race have been difficult due to obscured skies and a new moon. Steering by compass alone without any external reference and not being able to see approaching squalls makes for very challenging sailing.

A pod of 4 pilot whales passed us by heading east in the early morning. I didn't get a chance to see them as I was sleeping, but was told they passed within 25 yards of the boat.

In the warmer waters and partly sunny days, we've been able to switch from sponge baths to full showers. We have two 5 gallon solar shower bags that we heat during the day and run into the shower stalls in the heads. We wash with salt water and then have a quick fresh water rinse.

We've all been comparing war wounds, bruises mostly. We've got some real big ones. Nothing serious, just the consequences of constantly walking about the cabin when the captain should have the seat belt sign on. It's been a constant bumpy ride. In a week we'll be with our spouses in bathing suits on the beaches of Maui. We've joked about making a scene in public... "No! okay... just please don't hit me again!"

The macerator pump for our waste tank decided that it had had enough of its crappy existence. The motor of the pump fires up, but the transmission connecting it to the bellows is busted. We didn't realize until the waste tank was completely full and now have no way to empty it. Worse, the tank is in the forward cabin of the boat and that much weight forward has had a negative effect on our downwind running speed. Fortunately, our aft head has a y-valve that allows us to flush waste directly overboard. We can pump out the tank and fix the pump in Lahaina.

The highlight of our day came just before lunch. We were running west fast at 9 to 11 knots and I had my line in the water with one of my cedar tuna plugs. We got a big hit that peeled out a lot of line. I kept increasing the drag on the 200 pound test line but it kept peeling out. I went to full drag on the Penn International reel and was just barely able to stop its run. It was pulling like a 250 pound halibut, mostly from our forward speed. I had the rod down to the stern pulpit and was trying to stay out of Sharina's way as she helmed. Finally it broke surface and we got our sight of a beautiful mahi mahi. There was no way to slow the boat quickly and we continued to blaze downwind at double-digit speeds. I reeled hard and finally got her to the stern and on board. We were all very very happy. It was about 15 pounds and 3 foot long. They are the most beautiful and colorful fish I've ever caught. We've got pics that I wish I could share with you through HF radio, but they will have to wait. Tom did the cleaning and I made a big platter of sushi rolls and sashimi with meat and roe. Then later for dinner, Tom seared most of the rest. We ate like kings. You can bet I'll try fishing again tomorrow.



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## Race Day 12 – July 18, 2012

Lat/Long = 25 deg 19 min N x 150 deg 33 min W (1,848nm west of San Diego, CA) Last 24 hours distance sailed = 168.4 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 2,027.0 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 406.9 nautical miles.

*“The sail, the play of its pulse so like our own lives: so thin and yet so full of life, so noiseless when it labors hardest, so noisy and impatient when least effective.” ~ Henry David Thoreau*

We sailed conservatively through the night in light winds and our jib up. It was a nice starry night and we began to see the slowest speeds in light airs since we began the race. Finally at daybreak, we got underway with spinnaker again, but the day was mostly light air as well. It was slightly frustrating. There was barely enough wind to keep the sails full and with the ocean swells, the sails flogged back and forth making a racket. It was only into the late afternoon that we got some decent wind to work with. After a great sunset, we continued on into the night with spinnaker travelling in and out of the rain squalls.

We've been starting to pick up AM radio stations on the HF radio from Hawaii. It's nice to see the miles tick down on our final approach to the islands. We all have mixed emotions. We love this sailing and being out here. Some don't want it to end. They're asking me if I can make a navigation error to keep us going on to the south. It's very tempting. On another radio related note, on VHF Channel 16, the short range international hailing and distress frequency, someone played the entire Sarah McLaughlin's Arms of an Angel. The channel has been mostly silent for over a week. I wonder if it was a tribute to someone lost at sea.

We tried fishing again today. Sandy had a really nice strike. It was pulling really hard as we were sailing at about 7 knots and weren't going to slow down. We had a nice mahi mahi up to the stern of the boat. A bit smaller than the one we got yesterday, but it came off the hook before we could get it on board.

We've been seeing many more flying fish. It is amazing how they school and how far they can fly. 50 or more will leap from the water and fly together a few feet above the waves. Perfectly synchronized, they can travel up to 50 yards at a time. It is very difficult to get a picture of them because they come and go so fast.

With the nice sunny days we've been having, it's giving us a chance to catch up on our laundry. We hang everything on the lifelines outside the boat and from the fishing poles mounted on the ceiling inside. Our only limitation is that we didn't bring enough clothes pins. I had a funny sight of Sharina today as she went topside. Not many women don a life jacket, carabineers, quick release tether, and a personal locator beacon just to hang laundry.



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## Race Day 13 – July 19, 2012

Lat/Long = 24 deg 17 min N x 153 deg 26 min W (1,980nm westsouthwest of San Diego, CA) Last 24 hours distance sailed = 172.8 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 2,199.8 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 276.5 nautical miles.

*"It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end." ~ Ursula LeGuin*

For better or for worse, there wasn't much to report on today. Morale is high as we plan repairs, provisioning, and vacations. We're looking forward to the legendary dock party upon our arrival with the Lahaina Yacht Club and some time on shore with our spouses. Time will fly and soon Tom and I will be setting sail around July 29<sup>th</sup> for Kauai and then for home with a new crew.

For most of the day, we had steady trade winds from the east at 15 knots. Tom went up the mast again to replace a halyard for our spinnaker while it was hoisted. Once that was done, he attempted to replace the 2<sup>nd</sup> reef line block on the main while it was up as well. He walked the boom while tethered to both a halyard and a tag line. We hoisted him up the leech of the main but it became a bit too rocky to perform the work so we returned him to the deck. Later, we performed this repair on deck with a partially lowered main.

On top of the responsibilities as captain, Tom has spent much of his time off watch keep up on boat repairs while underway. He's done so much that Dave has affectionately nick-named him Tune-Up Tommy.

I tried fishing today without luck. We're glad to have caught a mahi mahi, but it would be nice to complement that with a few yellowfin tuna. I still have a lot of fixings for sushi on board.

Some atmospheric disturbance interfered with my ability to report our position and weather at the 6pm daily roll call. I suspect there is a solar storm in progress as my ability to connect to shore-based amateur radio stations has been poor. I finally relayed the info to communications vessel Red Sheilla by satellite phone.

After a beautiful sunset played against cumulus clouds, we glided on into the darkness with a sky full of stars. With the warm 80 degree apparent wind low and to our backs, it was hard to believe such a smooth and pleasant ride was still giving us 7 knots of boat speed. It was as if some magical force propelled us forward. We saw many meteors and were even treated to a fireball that streaked down to the north leaving a shimmering tail.

Midnight brought us a heavy squall and rain. We pushed hard with our symmetric spinnaker up and had one significant round-up. Once it passed, we had light and fluky winds from every direction. We languished with boat speeds down to less than a knot for over an hour before the trades could fill in the microburst conditions from the squall.





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## Race Day 14 – July 20, 2012

Lat/Long = 22 deg 51 min N x 154 deg 50 min W (2,080nm westsouthwest of San Diego, CA) Last 24 hours distance sailed = 118.5 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 2,318.3 nautical miles Rhumb line distance to Lahaina, Maui = 156.5 nautical miles.

*"Hide the rum."* ~ Captain Jack Sparrow

Not much to report on today. The trades threw us a few curveballs. We're less than a day out and have more of our game faces on. Focused on the finish, we play the squalls as best we can. After a big squall, the easterly trades are reduced to sometimes zero wind and take hours to fill back in. We seem to be averaging around 6 knots towards Lahaina which would put us in early Sunday morning. It would have been nice for a daylight finish. I have to be careful what I wish for; there are plenty of chances for calm weather ahead.

For the first time in 12 days, we saw another ship on the horizon. It was only navigation lights and passed over the horizon behind us. From the Yellowbrick information, it was Anne Bonny.

The weather's great and it's given us a chance to a major cleaning of the boat. It's nice to air everything out. Things are becoming ship shape.

I found that yesterday's communications issues were due to the high voltage transmission cable falling off from the HF antenna. I reattached it and was able to connect back to the States.

At dusk, we had an albatross circle very close to the boat. It finally built up enough confidence to land on the top of our mast. He didn't seem to affect our instruments so we left him alone and he rested there for hours through calms and squalls.

We've seen a few other birds too, terns mostly. One was very interested in my fishing lure this morning. We've been sailing too slow to troll for the tuna I was hoping to get.



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## Race Day 15 – July 21, 2012 - Finish!

Lat/Long = 20 deg 55 min N x 156 deg 42 min W Last 24 hours distance sailed = 155.5 nautical miles

Total distance sailed = 2,473.8 nautical miles

*“O Captain! My Captain! Our fearful trip is done, the ship has weathered every rock, the prize we sought is won. The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting.” ~ Walt Whitman*

Our journey is at an end. We're a few miles from the finish. Our families are waiting for us at the dock party in Lahaina. We are very much looking forward to seeing each other and spending a week in the islands.

After a tough night of light to no wind in the wake of heavy squalls, we tapped into the trusty trades at daybreak and enjoyed a beautiful 15 knot apparent wind port close reach for the final 100 miles under white sails. The mountains of Maui were just coming into sight at dusk. Under a rising crescent moon, we can now see lights on the hills. For my first ocean crossing, it's nice to have a visual confirmation rather than just a blip of land on the computer screen. It's really there. We really did it.

Our cell phones sprung to life about 40 miles out. We had a chance to catch up with family.

We may not have placed in the top ranks of the race fleet, but we all learned a tremendous amount and have accomplished our goal of delivering an undamaged boat with an uninjured crew. Our first aid kit was virtually untouched. We dispensed a blister pad and some ibuprofen.

We joked about doing a blazing round up and knockdown, screeching across the finish line sideways, but we lost the swells and trade winds as we were shadowed by the island south of Hawea Point. Instead we and the boat both breathed a sigh of relief and enjoyed a gentle glide under the stars with city lights on the shore surrounding us.

After some vacationing, there is a departure party for the race crews on July 28<sup>th</sup> in Lahaina. We then set sail for Kauai with anchorages in Lihue and Hanalei Bay and a tour of the Napali Coast. From there, Tom and I will set out with a new crew of 4 plus ourselves for Seattle. It will be a new challenge for us of balancing time schedule, fuel burn, sailing performance, fishing, debris gathering and avoidance, and northern low pressure weather systems.

Thanks for following our adventures. Daily updates will continue around July 29th as we visit Kauai and return to Seattle.



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## Lahaina, Maui to Nawiliwili Harbor, Kauai - July 29/30, 2012

Lat/Long = 21 deg 57 min N x 159 deg 21 min W – Nawiliwili Harbor

Distance sailed = 198.1 nautical miles

*“Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.” ~Herman Melville from Moby Dick*

We are upon the sea again. It was with mixed emotions that we said goodbye to our loved ones again and trade one paradise for another. We departed Lahaina, Maui at 10am bound for Nawiliwili Harbor on Kauai. We headed north under sail out of the Pailolo Channel. Rounding Cape Halawa on the east side of Moloka'i was spectacular. We got a brief glimpse of deep canyon cliffs covered in lush jungle foliage with waterfalls thousands of feet high before the sight was obscured by clouds. By 9pm, we were passing the north coast of O'ahu and could see its lights on the horizon. We finally had a decent moonlit night for all the time we spent at sea under dark skies during the race. We made landfall in Kauai at 11am.

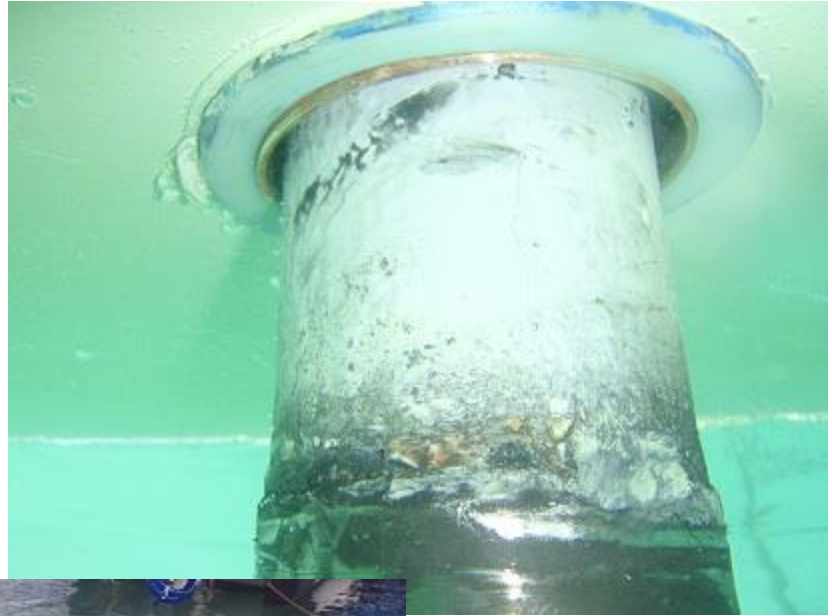
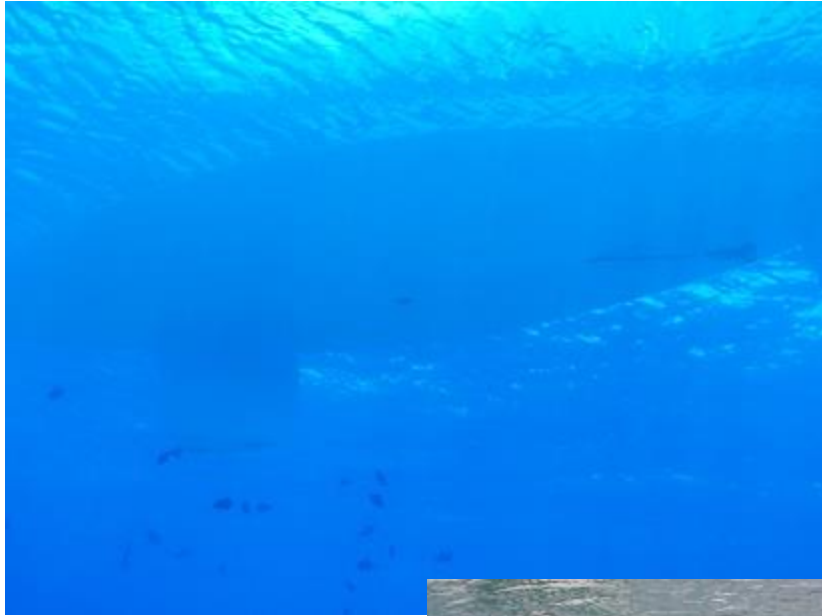
Our time in Maui was amazing. We packed in all the touristy things such as snorkeling, hiking, driving the road to Hana, winery tours, horseback riding, and summiting Haleakela. One highlight of the trip was sailing Family Affair to the Molokini Crater. We found dozens of underwater moorings there and tied up to one. You have to dive down about 10 to 15 feet to grab one of the uphaul lines that are connected to the submerged floats. It was something totally foreign to us who sail upon Puget Sound with its low visibility and water temps in the 40's. Diving there was the first time I was able to see the entire hull of the boat underwater and our shadow upon the coral sands some 35 feet below the boat. It was something you always see in the sailing magazines during the cold winter rains of Seattle.



We all experienced a similar phenomenon during our first few nights in a real bed on solid ground. It felt as though we were still at sea. I would be half awake and vividly feeling the motion of the ocean. Some of us had to take sea sickness pills to overcome the sensation.

The downtime in Maui gave us a chance to do some maintenance on the boat. We were concerned about the groaning noise we heard from the rudder while it was heavily loaded during the latter portions of our race. We had a chance to drop it and do a thorough inspection. It was the first time I'd dropped and reinstalled a rudder while a boat was still in the water. We did this in the Lahaina Harbor despite advice otherwise from the locals. I gathered that not all boats there used the waste pump-out facilities. On top of that thought was the stingrays we saw and the rumor of reef sharks that inhabit the harbor. Swimming around with the rudder I felt akin to the surfers that were just outside the harbor entrance. In the end, the rudder checked out fine. We found and fixed a few minor issues and it was working as good as new during our 200 mile run to Kauai.

Being here at Nawiliwili Harbor fulfills a small dream of mine. I was last here on Kauai several years ago and envisioned sailing here on my own. Back in Seattle I would view the harbor with Google Earth and armchair sail my way in. It's nice to finally be here. Next on the list is to anchor off Leonard's Landing Lodge in Yakutat, Alaska.









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## Return Day 1 - August 2, 2012

Lat/Long = 23 deg 11 min N x 158 deg 51 min W Distance sailed = 66.0 nautical miles

*“To young men contemplating a voyage I would say go.”* ~ Joshua Slocum, First to sail solo around the world.

We had a great yet brief stay on Kauai. The marina at Nawiliwili Harbor was dicey by Washington standards, but the location and view were tops. We filled out a form to rival a home loan application when we requested a few nights' moorage. In the end, when we went to square up with them before leaving, they told us our stay was no charge. Not a bad deal! The marina office woman even gave Tom some fresh tuna that was assumedly brought in by a charter boat.

Kauai felt so much more laid back, lush, and romantic than Maui. Each island has their own charm, but I think I like Kauai the best. I tagged along with Tom & Sandy while they visited with some friends they grew up with in western Washington. EJ and Diane are also Danish and moved to Kauai to start and run their own cottage rental business. We had dinner at their beautiful home and they were gracious enough to put us up at no charge in their seaside cottages. Super nice people. [www.kauaicove.com](http://www.kauaicove.com)

Our sail around the west side of Kauai to see the Napali Coast was spectacular. Being the wind shadowed waters, the trade winds came down off the huge 4300 foot tall cliffs and wrapped around each side to give us some confused and challenging sailing in up to 36 knots of apparent wind. We saw some really nice and remotely isolated sandy beaches at the base of the lush tropical cliffs. One had a nice arch carved through the volcanic basalt that you could walk through. I'd heard about a multi-day hike to these beaches and saw part of the trail and a few people on it. What was a shame is that some tour

boats motored in and dropped about 25 people off to run amok. I'm sure they didn't stay long. It would take the charm off of the hike though.

Our anchorage in Hanalei Bay was nice. It was quite crowded with other boats though. We enjoyed a nice evening on the water. A full moon illuminated the surrounding cliffs complete with waterfalls. We looked for Puff the Magic Dragon but didn't see him. If you remember the lyrics, he lives by the sea in a land called Hanalei.

In the morning we said goodbye to Sandy and hello to new crew members Evan Pierce, Jason Lund, Dan Taylor, and Steve Hansen. Evan and Jason are both friends of mine from Boeing. Evan helped crew Family Affair to Seattle from Los Angeles. Jason helped crew my sailboat Phoenix to Seattle from San Francisco. Both are very solid performers on the water and a lot of fun to be around. Dan and Steve are friends with Dan Ohms.

To save weight on the boat during the race, we opted to leave our dinghy at home. We'd hoped buy a small rowable inflatable boat at a sporting goods store, but during a half day's chase were unable to acquire one. We settled for a cute inflatable beach mattress complete with backrest, armrests, and a cup holder. We had to swim from the boat with this in tow 4 times to complete the transfer of gear and crew from the shore. I joked that we must look like a Hawaiian rickshaw.

After some safety training, and switching all our clocks to Pacific Daylight Time, we departed Hanalei Bay around 10am. We were met with the familiar ENE trades blowing about 15 knots. We began our relatively slow climb on an average heading of 032 degrees true. Our speeds varied between just 5 and 7 knots. Such is the life of a return voyage from 2400 miles of downwind running.

My long range plan is to aim for the western edge of the Pacific High, motoring if we must, and then hook into some nice low pressure systems piping up out of the west. I'd like to meet up on the edge of one forecasted to pass us on August 14<sup>th</sup> with 25 to 35 knots southwesterly winds. Forecasting out that

far is a bit sketchy, but those weather patterns are typical, so we should hit something favorable at the higher latitudes.

This return trip is a game of resource allocation played out very slowly. We have limited provisions and fuel plus winds that can't be relied upon to bring us all the way home within our rough timeframe to return to our jobs and families. Each resource must be used only when needed and not an ounce more. How much of a shortcut do we take across the Pacific High where there are light winds? Burning too much fuel too soon to motor us along may not allow us to be able to work out of a doldrum when needed. As a precaution we loaded as much diesel fuel on board as we could. Our 40 gallon main tank is topped off. We have 20 gallons more in a bladder tank and 30 gallons more in jerry cans. We have about 800 miles of motoring range but have to run the engine about 3 hours each day just to keep our batteries charged.

One blessing of the upwind climb is the ease of steering. After balancing out the sails the best I could, I locked the wheel with slight weather helm and the boat reached stability. We haven't touched the wheel in about 8 hours now and we're gliding along at about 6 knots.









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## Return Day 2 - August 3, 2012

Lat/Long = 25 deg 34 min N x 157 deg 09 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 172.0 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 238.0 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 2,162.9 nautical miles

*“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep.” ~Bible, Psalms 107:23-24*

There is nothing too significant to report today. The boat is still balanced nicely with the wheel locked. We're about 40 degrees off the easterly trade winds and averaging a steady course of 033 degrees true. The boat is heeled at a comfortable 25 to 30 degrees and aside from the occasional airborne landing on a hard wave, she is quite comfortable and not complaining.

Today's weather was a bit more disturbed. Mid level altostratus and high level cirrus clouds that we've seen today are usually harbingers of deteriorating weather, but we've only had the occasional cumulus squall to deal with so far. The short periods of rain feel good in our 80 degree heat. We know soon the rains will be cold and dreary as we head north.

Life on board has been a busy mix of cooking and cleaning. The crew is a bit more comfortable today and appetites are back. I truly do miss our former crew. I had no idea how busy they were below tidying up and keeping us fed. To Greta and Sandy, my hat is off to you. Thanks for all of your hard work. We miss you!!

Shortly after dinner we had a strike on my fishing pole and I reeled in a smaller 10 pound mahi mahi. I made 5 sushi rolls which disappeared in about 1 minute. I made another 5 rolls and we still have plenty of steaks for tomorrow's lunch. Dolphins briefly visited us to say hello at dusk. We had a spectacular moonrise through the low clouds last night and are eagerly awaiting tonight's show.



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## Return Day 3 - August 4, 2012

Lat/Long = 28 deg 04 min N x 156 deg 05 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 163.9 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 401.9 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 2,009.9 nautical miles

*“There was a grandeur in everything around, which gave almost a solemnity to the scene; a silence and solitariness which affected everything. Not a human being but ourselves for miles; and no sound heard but the pulsations of the great pacific.” ~Richard Henry Dana*

We're still continuing our northerly climb into the Pacific High. Skies are beginning to clear, the water and air have cooled a few degrees. We still have nice 15 knot trades out of the ENE. The helm is still locked and the boat balanced. No one has had to drive the boat much in the past 3 days.

A flying fish hit Tom in the leg while he was at the helm. We've read about that happening to other sailboats, but now have experienced it for ourselves. It was one of the biggest we've seen so far at about 10 inches. Tom gutted it out and it's in our fridge. Flying fish anyone?

At 0430 hours I was awoken to an all hands on deck call. I thought those were a thing of the past. Tom noticed a batten had worked loose from near the top of the main. We were unable to lower the main in time before it came completely out and sank to Davey Jones's locker. We continued on most of the day batten free. The main still had a decent shape but the leech was curled slightly. In true Tune-Up Tommy fashion, Tom macgyvered a new batten from a Hawaiian sling spear, a polymer fish tape, and some duct tape. Red Green would be proud.

We had three series of hits on our fishing line in the evening and I could see the V wake of the predator on the surface rushing up to hit the lure each time. We were so busy with the batten repair that I was away from the rod each time and was unable to make a good hookup. We ate the rest of yesterday's mahi mahi for lunch and it was fantastic. I'm sure we'll catch a couple more before the trip is done.

Tonight rewarded us with one of the richest sights of stars I've ever seen at sea level. There is zero light pollution out here. We enjoyed a few meteors, many satellites, and the expanse of our Milky Way Galaxy from horizon to horizon. We are anxiously awaiting word of the Mars Curiosity Rover as it makes its complicated entry to the Martian surface tomorrow evening. Here is to their successful voyage and ours!





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## Return Day 4 - August 5, 2012

Lat/Long = 30 deg 23 min N x 155 deg 12 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 153.5 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 555.4 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,876.2 nautical miles

*"Not all who wander are lost."* ~JRR Tolkien

If you've been following our track on the Yellowbrick website, I swear we haven't touched the rum too much. We've been holding 40 degrees off the wind on a starboard tack for 4 days now and dealing the best with what Mother Nature throws at us for wind, wandering some north and some east. Today, the trades had a more easterly than northeasterly twist and we were able to make some progress in that direction rather than north.

We had some strong squalls today with winds above 30 knots apparent and some of the heaviest rain we've seen on the trip. It was sorely welcomed though as large salt crystals from bow spray had covered the entire deck.

Evan took one for the team today. Our only functioning head got clogged up. The head is on our starboard side of the boat. It uses salt water to flush and since the intake has been mostly out of the water, we've had to shuttle buckets of saltwater in with us to visit the golden arches and beyond. I guess we haven't been using enough water to flush. Tom got the head apart and Evan cleared the clog. After that, bleach was our friend.

The highlight of today was our dawn to dusk near nonstop action on the fishing rod. Amidst squalls, heavy rain, a bumpy ride, and reefing the main, it wasn't uncommon for one of us to be fighting a fish.

We had no less than a dozen fish on the hook today. Ten more sushi rolls have come and gone and 5 large mahi mahi are now in the freezer. Our cup runneth over. The sea has been kind to us as we now have more food in our freezer than when we left. At some points in the day, I felt more like on a fish processing boat than a sailing vessel.

During the first fish, I ran to the deck half asleep in the early morning as my last watch had ended at 3am. I was sans life jacket and gloves, but when Tom lifted his first mahi out of the water, I grabbed whatever I could and fought to bring it on board. I sliced a finger open on the bare line and severely jammed my toe on a stanchion. I uttered something loudly that rhymes with truck-in-a-ditch and later in the day stubbed the same toe again. I don't think it's broken, but it is swollen and completely black and blue. All for a good cause though.





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## Return Day 5 - August 6, 2012

Lat/Long = 32 deg 20 min N x 153 deg 53 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 135.8 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 691.2 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,745.0 nautical miles

*"The good ship darts through the water all day; all night, like a fish, quivering with speed, gliding through liquid leagues, sliding from horizon to horizon." ~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

It was a day of days. We packed a lot in. The sun rose to greet us and at the same time, we said goodbye to our sailable trade winds. We motored all day and into the night, driving deeper into the heart of the Pacific High.

We had more fishing fun today with another 5 mahi mahi on board. That makes a total of 12 since we left Kauai. Our freezer is full for the moment and we took down the poles in the late afternoon. One attack on our lines was a double-header and we landed both. It started when I spotted at least two mahi mahi leaping through the water from about 100 yards out. They were coming towards our lures fast at about 20+ knots. I had enough time to get a pole out of the holder and waited a few seconds for the attack. Sure enough, the opposite pole peeled out line and Evan began the fight. Then I felt the strike and tightened up the drag. We managed not to get them tangled and after about 10 minutes, we had both in the cockpit bouncing and flapping about. All 5 yesterday and today were big fish in the 15 to 25 pound range.

Entering the Northern Pacific Gyre, we encountered our first garbage patch. There were so many plastic objects, it was impossible to document it all. A fine layer of plastic bits a half inch or less coated the

water amongst everything from truck tires to plastic water bottles, laundry baskets and giant coils of heavy gauge nylon rope. It was a total junk yard. Amidst all the junk, we spotted a pod of at least 6 whales that were just 200 yards from us. Presumably, they were humpbacks.

We recovered a large black plastic fishing float. It was about 30 inches long and about 24 inches in diameter. Tom says it will make good lawn art. It says MUSASHI on one side and PLA-V, V-230 on the other side. It was coated with exotic mussels that were white with yellow and black edges. We found several small crabs around the mussels too. We shaved all the sea life off and lashed it just forward of the mast base. It's coming home with us.

We had to shut down the engine to eliminate some HF radio interference for our evening position report roll call with the rest of the Vic-Maui return fleet. This gave everyone a chance to jump in the still 81 degree water. It was kind of spooky, but we soon got used to it and were all diving and cannonballing off the side. It gave me a chance to inspect the rudder, keel and prop which all looked fine. I've never seen water so blue and so clear in my life. I took some pictures with my underwater camera aimed down into the 18,000 foot depths.

The near zero wind we have now has the sea laid down pretty low. It's been a long time since I've seen glassy water. We had another spectacular sunset with a lot of clouds in the west lighting up as if on fire. The glassy water only added to the scene and all around the boat, it was as if we were on a sea of liquid mercury all reflecting the colors. Pictures won't do it justice.











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## Return Day 6 - August 7, 2012

Lat/Long = 34 deg 08 min N x 152 deg 28 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 130.9 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 822.1 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,619.2 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 14 mahi mahi

*"Wind is to us what money is to life on shore." ~Sterling Hayden*

We had another good day and our spirits are high. We had a solid 12 hours of decent wind starting in the early morning that had us sailing up to 7 knots. The rest of the time we motored. We are getting close to 40 hours on the engine since we left. Our engine speeds have been around 1800 rpm and Tom estimates that we burn just over  $\frac{1}{2}$  a gallon per hour. That speed pushes us along at about 5 knots. Not good, but not bad.

We had more action on the fishing rods again and were able to land 3 more mahi mahi into the boat. We've done some rearranging and still have more room in the freezer for tomorrow's catch. I added our success to today's fleet roll call and learned that other boats are catching a few as well including one boat 500 miles ahead of us. It appears we'll be catching a few more along our journey. I'm hoping that once we round the north side of the Pacific High and get into the eastbound North Pacific Current, that we'll start catching albacore tuna.

Evan and I are experimenting with sun drying and preserving the mahi mahi. We've cut some strips thin and have them marinating overnight in soy sauce with sugar. Tomorrow morning we'll rub them with sea salt and pepper steak seasonings then hang them over the life lines to dry.

I forgot to mention something from last night. We had a very bright moon casting light upon some rain squalls to our west. We saw our first rainbow created from moonlight. We called it a moonbow. I've seen ice crystals in the upper atmosphere create a prism halo around the moon, but never create a rainbow at night. Cool stuff.

We've entered into and out of a few garbage patches today above and beyond the normal flow of junk. We recovered another fishing float. This one was about 1 foot in diameter and orange in color. It was very faded and looked like it had been out here for years. It had the same microcosm of exotic bi-valves and crabs.

Along with the debris have been many small jellyfish. They are visible because of their see-thru clear fin that acts like a small sail above the water. The fins are semi-circular and up to 2 inches in diameter. They are clustered together in schools and look like a small regatta of sailboats.

Being alone out here for so long gives you a lot of time to pause and think about things. Cautious trepidation sets in while pondering "what if" scenarios. What if a massive high pressure system sets up and we get delayed by a week or more? What if we run out of diesel? What if our fresh water gets contaminated? What if we have engine trouble and get stuck here ourselves as a large piece of plastic circling the North Pacific Gyre? What if we lose our mast? Other more dark thoughts dance in my head to cast gloom. For the prepared, these are lower risk possibilities and to an extent, this level of thinking is healthy. Fortunately, our biggest problem right now is finding more room in the freezer to pack in mahi mahi fillets. With each mile covered, each stretch with sailable wind to conserve our diesel, each roll call seeing others around us making the same navigation decisions, it all slowly eases the dread and replaces it with a sense of accomplishment.



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## Return Day 7 - August 8, 2012

Lat/Long = 35 deg 50 min N x 150 deg 53 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 129.2 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 951.3 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,493.5 nautical miles

*"It isn't that life ashore is distasteful to me. But life at sea is better." ~Sir Francis Drake*

Not much to report today. We motored for 23 hours and had only light winds for the 1 hour we tried to sail. The waters were very reminiscent of Puget Sound in the summer time. We're expecting to feel the influence of a cold front tomorrow afternoon where southwest winds 10 to 15 knots should develop in our area. It will be so nice to be sailing again.

Motoring slowly doesn't entice the mahi mahi to bite. We had one on at dusk but it quickly shook off the line. At roll call, the s/v Kinetic reported 6 mahi mahi and 1 tuna caught today plus two glass Japanese floats recovered. Totally jealous, but they don't have a 3 x 2 foot black Musashi float on board!

Evan and I salted and seasoned our mahi mahi strips that we soaked overnight in soy sauce with sugar. We strung them up to dry near the mast and we'll sample them tomorrow evening. What we nibbled on today was delicious.

At 1:30pm we spotted a larger object on the horizon and it turned out to be a refrigerator front down and it was teeming with small fish around it. We turned it over and sadly the door was missing and it was void of contents. We were hoping for a few cases of Asahi beer. We did trap one fish on the righting and it was the shape of a freshwater bluegill, gray in color with white spots. The excitement was the two mahi

mahi that we saw about 15 feet deep around the fridge. Tom has always wanted to catch a mahi mahi on his salmon pole so we got it out. It is too light of a rod to troll at fast speeds with. He jigged a few times and we could see the mahi interested in the lure, but we were unable to make a hookup. We released the fridge and trolled fast several times past it without luck and then continued on our journey.

We had another incredible sunset, one of the best I've ever seen. For something different, we tied a glow stick to the fishing line just forward of a lure and will troll with it all night. I hope we catch something cool like a Humboldt squid.





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## Return Day 8 - August 9, 2012

Lat/Long = 37 deg 34 min N x 149 deg 08 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 135.8 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 1,087.1 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,362.2 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi

*"A sailboat is a fickle mistress. You've got to buy her things. You've got to understand everything about her. What you don't know she'll use against you." ~ Captain Larry*

Cruising life compared to racing life isn't very glamorous or newsworthy. We got our predicted southwesterly wind and are conservatively sailing under asymmetric spinnaker alone, running pretty much dead downwind to the northeast. The #3 batten came loose from our main today, but we were able to lower and recover it. Tom repaired all of the batten pockets.

With our increased speeds from sailing the mahi mahi action was back. We put 3 more in the boat for a total of 17 on this voyage. We have learned mahi anatomy very well and are becoming very efficient at processing them into frozen fillets. We will have many feasts with our families back on the mainland.

We sampled our sun dried mahi jerky this evening and it was phenomenal. We hope to make another larger batch tomorrow. The recipe is soy sauce mixed with sugar for the marinade. Then a dry rub of sea salt and montreal steak seasoning... hung a day or two to dry in the sun. There are no insects or hornets out here to bother us so it works well. Seriously good stuff.

At 6:30pm I was at the helm, Tom was preparing dinner. I spotted what appeared to be a plastic pelican case in the water some distance from the boat. We lowered the spinnaker and I motored on a reciprocal course, following our GPS track. It was no easy feat to find it again as about ½ mile had passed and the case was completely submerged with no windage at all. We were excited about discovering the contents. I was hoping for an uzi submachine gun. Evan was thinking it could contain the hand of a Yakuza don. Alas, we relocated it to find it was only an overturned plastic container slightly smaller than a milk crate. We recovered it from the water and it had some cool Chinese writing on the side along with some tag-along crabs and critters I've never seen before. We chalked it up as a good man-overboard drill and resumed our course for home.



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## Return Day 9 - August 10, 2012

Lat/Long = 39 deg 24 min N x 147 deg 10 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 146.1 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 1,233.2 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,221.5 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 2 albacore tuna

*“Life away from phones, television and the internet, helps rebuild your brain cells to do things like wonder, imagine, feel, and be content with who and where you are.” ~Margot aboard the s/v Fluid Elevation*

When I start each day out here in the middle of the big blue desert I wonder how motor-sailing through calm waters is going to make for good story-telling. Today I was reminded again how a seemingly boring place can be totally cool.

At 11am I awoke to some excitement on deck. I pulled out my ear plugs to listen. I didn't hear any fishing lines peeling out. After a moment I heard Tom say, “We've got to turn around”! I thought, “uh oh, this isn't good, what or who fell off?” Then I heard Tom say “GLASS BALL!!” It was an old Japanese glass fishing float; a big one at about 1 foot diameter still with the hand-tied netting around it. They are highly sought after and are the gold nugget of beachcombers on the West Coast of the US. I took the helm on a reciprocal course and we quickly had it on board. Yesterday's pelican case chase was a good rehearsal as today there were 3 to 4 foot wind waves to deal with this time. Now Tom & Sandy will have an heirloom to remind them of the great summer we had sailing in the Vic-Maui.

We have entered into the magical land of the albacore tuna migration route. We caught one of them today and released another small one. Each summer, juvenile albacore tuna migrate from near Japan along the North Pacific Current and run east to follow the continental shelf of the US and then head south. That we have caught them this far south is a good sign that we will get more over the days ahead. All that we catch will be small, mostly 20 pounders or less. Once albacore tuna mature into large fish, they get lazy and hang around the south pacific. I can't say as I blame them.

In the early afternoon, we spotted a sail on the horizon behind us. They were catching up to us rapidly. She was the s/v Defiance, a ~50 foot trimaran bound for San Francisco from Hanalei Bay on Kauai like us. They had spent several months in Hawaii, mainly around Kona. They have the dilemma of getting around the high pressure that has set up to our east. I gave them weather routing advice based on the GRIB weather file I downloaded last night and the prognosis wasn't good for them. They'll have to sail north to at least 44 degrees latitude before having sailable winds to cross the northern ridge of the high. They don't have enough fuel to do the 450nm easterly crossing of the high now via motor. On the upside, having a sailboat catching up to us spurred Tom to raise the mainsail and we got our speed up from 5.5 knots to 7.5 to 8. They approached nearly alongside us and we sailed together all afternoon. Upon an approaching squall, they bared away to the southeast as we entered in along its edge on our northeasterly course.

At 6pm, Jason and Evan spotted something on the horizon. It was TWO glass balls in very nice netting! Each was about 12 inches diameter, the same size as Tom's, but it was a double! We hauled it aboard with glee and began to pick the lifeforms off it. We discovered it was loaded with large edible mussels. We got about 10 pounds total. Tom boiled them up in wine with a stick of butter and we had a huge after-dinner feast in the cockpit.

At the 9pm roll-call, the s/v Incantation reported hitting a floating concrete dock in the night and they damaged their hull pretty good. They were not taking on water but were asking the fleet for fiberglass repair materials. s/v Kinetic was a day behind them and was going to email an inventory of materials they had. Their impact happened just 40 miles to our northwest.

At dusk we spotted a large object on the horizon. It was a piece of floating concrete dock about the size of a large chest freezer. It had a solid foam core and about 2 inches of concrete all around it. I suspect the concrete on the underwater side was much thicker. It was loaded with giant oysters. We did three fast orbital fly-bys with our fishing poles trailing behind us. On the first pass, we got a strong hit, but it shook free. We then came along side and Tom tried to jig a green squid with his salmon rod. He got his lure snagged on the dock and caught a clam as a prize once he got it back. Other casting attempts fetched him a nice sailboat dodger and a hole-in-one into the bathroom window.

It was a great day... hard to beat. I'll stop wondering what on earth I can possibly blog about when I wake up tomorrow.











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## **Return Day 10 - August 11, 2012**

Lat/Long = 41 deg 18 min N x 144 deg 17 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 178.8 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 1,412.0 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 1,048.5 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 5 albacore tuna

*"The man who experiences shipwreck shudders even at a calm sea." ~ Ovid*

We have been blessed with another day of adventure. I awoke to assist on a double-header albacore tuna attack. Both were landed and we later picked up a third. Another 10 sushi rolls plus sashimi were made with the last of the sushi rice and we had a great lunch. I LOVE the belly meat of a tuna as sashimi. The Japanese call it toro and it was nice to feast on the freshest possible.

Weather-wise, we are now feeling the effects of a strong cold front with gale force winds that is coming in from the west. We motored about 4 hours last night and then picked up a nice southeasterly breeze 10 to 15 knots. It's been holding our speed above 7.5 knots all day and into midnight. We're making great time and our fuel burn rate is becoming less worrisome.

Anticipating the cold front's full arrival, I've adjusted our course by 15 degrees to the east and we're on a better track for home. While this will head us more into an existing high pressure zone with little wind, by the time we get there the cold front will have dissipated the high pressure and replaced it with nice 15 knot southwesterly flow. Again, it's nice to be able to dial in the weather we feel comfortable with. A more northerly course would put us head-long into a gale.

What is worrisome is the debris out here. It's getting bigger. Yesterday's concrete dock that we saw and Incantation's collision has us on edge. Last night we struck a telephone pole sized object in the darkness. Tom, Dan, and Steve were on watch and said it was only a glancing blow and probably only removed some bottom paint.

At 6:30pm, I spotted a white object intermittently on the horizon about 8 miles to the east of us. It appeared like any another white-capped swell, but this seemed consistently in the same spot. We altered course to intercept. All hands were up on deck and we noticed it was an overturned vessel. Our first pass was a photo recon and it was a capsized fishing type tender, about 50 feet long with a white hull, blue anti-foul paint and no identifiable markings. It had a lot of marine growth on it and from its design we surmised it to be from the Japanese tsunami.

We'd only gotten about 10 yards past the vessel when both of our fishing poles sprung to life with a double-header. We were to battle stations and quickly reeled in two beautiful yellowtail. With Dan on the mainsheet, we tacked and made four more close passes of the derelict vessel. On the second pass, we could see swarms of fish fighting for the lures. It was like nothing we'd ever seen before. Evan landed a monster yellowtail amberjack about 20+ pounds. Jason, Tom, and Steve also landed fish. Dan controlled our sails. I was at the helm controlling speed and dodging fish, hooks, and knives. We all worked as a well-oiled machine to load the cockpit up with 7 yellowtail in about 20 minutes. We also had a mahi mahi up almost into the boat, but he fell off the hook upon lifting him up. He bounced off the swim step and got a second chance at life. Tom was concerned about freezer space so we continued our journey home.

It felt a bit eerie seeing the stricken vessel. We've seen the videos of the Japanese tsunami, but this capsized boat was really humbling. The boat was perhaps a man's pride and joy. He fished from it to provide for his family. I can only hope that he survived. In a way, with today's catch, the vessel was still performing its job.









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## Return Day 11 - August 12, 2012

Lat/Long = 42 deg 57 min N x 140 deg 52 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 183.2 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 1,595.2 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 866.0 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjack, 7 albacore tuna

*"I just steer the boat... don't really navigate. 'sides, if you do get lost, you just pull in somewheres and ask directions." ~ Captain Ron*

Believe it or not, today was rather mundane. We're still feeling the effects of the cold front and have been sailing strong in southwest winds of around 15 knots. We've covered a lot of ground and are starting to make estimates for our arrival. We'll share more when we are more certain. We still have a ridge of developing high pressure off Cape Flattery to deal with.

The only excitement came with the two large albacore tuna that Tom and Evan caught. They were beauties and we'll each now have some tuna to take home to our families. We hope to catch a few more before we're in port. In true Viking tradition, Tom ate the still beating heart of the largest one we caught. He said it tasted good. I'll take his word for it.

Several friends and family members informed us of the Perseid meteor shower which peaks tonight. The Perseids are an annual event that occurs when the orbit of Earth passes through the debris trail of Comet Swift-Tuttle. There is supposed to be up to 90 meteors per hour. Unfortunately, with the cooler

water temps and the cold front that hit us, the evenings have been setting us up with thick low clouds. Tonight we are totally obscured.

We're still on the lookout for debris, but didn't see much today except some large pieces of lumber. We're still searching for Tom's derelict vessel, an upright one this time. He wants to get it running again and sail it into Puget Sound, towing our sailboat behind. The rest of us are looking for more glass floats. I just want one of those large red light bulbs that I've seen all over the Northern Pacific.

Dan and Steve helped prepare a nice casserole dinner with corn tortillas and we slipped into darkness under asymmetric spinnaker and comfortably reefed mainsail. The seas are calm yet we have a 14+ knot following wind. We're currently making almost 8 knots gliding through the darkness. With the wind to our back, there is very little wind in the cockpit and it is peacefully calm. It's as if something magical propels the boat.





## Return Day 12 - August 13, 2012

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Lat/Long = 44 deg 05 min N x 138 deg 02 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 153.0 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 1,748.2 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 724.5 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 9 albacore tuna

*"Any damn fool can navigate the world sober. It takes a really good sailor to do it drunk." ~Sir Francis Chichester while loading his boat with gin.*

It's been another day of good distance, but nothing much notable. That's a good thing at this point I believe. We're crossing the northern ridge of the high pressure system that we've been climbing the western edge of for this past week and are now waiting for the strong northerly flow to set in on the far side. This flow will be assisted by the low pressure system to our west. It will squeeze the high pressure along the coast and set up a good pressure gradient for us. We should be in fresh northerly winds on our final run to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Another high pressure system is due to set up just off the coast later this week which may have us back on the iron jib (engine).

We are experiencing some larger swells from the gale that is several hundred miles to our northwest. Since we have lighter winds, it is making our progress difficult. The mast pumps back and forth and overcomes the light air pressure upon the sails. The sails slap back and forth and it is hard on the rigging and our patience. Dan and Steve learned how to drive today in light airs and a following sea. It's not easy to do. We opted to jibe early today and run more into the wind slightly. This increased wind pressure on our sails, made us a little faster, and is setting us up for better performing wind angles in the days ahead with northerly flow.

Okay, enough technobabble. It's starting to feel more like the Pacific Northwest every day. Our skies are overcast. The air temperature is dropping. The water is getting colder. We're actually getting into our sleeping bags instead of just laying on them. I put socks on for the first time in over a month. Heavy dew is settling on the boat at night. The return fleet is reporting fog ahead of us.

We're still in tuna territory. This morning Tom and I picked up a couple of lunkers. Tom's was around 20 pounds, mine around 15. It is amazing how much meat a single tuna has. After filleting one of them out, I realized that it's more than you'd get off a Thanksgiving turkey. We had to stop for the day to assess the freezer space. We now have room for a few more and will splash the lures at first light tomorrow.

We didn't see much junk in the water today which is another sign that we've climbed above the typical position of the Pacific High. Kinetic which is about 100 miles to our west did report seeing another overturned fishing vessel from the tsunami. Theirs was about 20 to 30 feet in length. At dusk I spotted a

string of 3 black plastic fishing floats each about 1 foot in diameter. We stopped to retrieve them. More souvenirs to bring home.



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## Return Day 13 - August 14, 2012

Lat/Long = 45 deg 29 min N x 134 deg 35 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 169.6 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 1,917.8 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 554.6 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 11 albacore tuna

*"If you live a life of make-believe, your life isn't worth anything until you do something that does challenge your reality. And to me, sailing the open ocean is a real challenge because it's life or death." ~ Morgan Freeman*

We covered some more ground today with nice northerly air flow. At the moment we're averaging close to 8 knots on a direct course for the Duntze Rock light at the southwest entrance to Cape Flattery. By tomorrow afternoon, we should be back within range of a rescue helicopter... more of those what-if scenarios playing out in my head. It looks like we'll arrive in Everett some time on Saturday afternoon. We'll share arrival plans closer to the date.

The tuna played out another repeat performance this morning, waking me up with a double header. I assisted the landing of Tom's fish and Dan's got off, unfortunately. An hour later, Tom got his second and we were done for the day while we scrambled to do the freezer shuffle again. We'll try to stuff a few more in the box tomorrow.



At 8pm Jason spotted some tuna jumping behind the boat and then we were treated to several whales surfacing very close to the boat, one just ten feet away. I assume them to be pilot whales, but I'm not an expert. They escorted us for several minutes then went on to other whale business.

Since the next few days will be light on news I hope, I'll share more of what daily life is like on board starting with my knot-hole in the nav station. Geek alert ahead:

Our communications are provided by an HF radio system that works on amateur and commercial marine frequencies between 0.3 and 30 Mhz. The radio is an Icom IC-M802. The radio is connected via a tuner to a vertical antenna made of 3/16" diameter steel multibraid cable that we strung up between the stern rail and the mast head, insulated by nylon line.

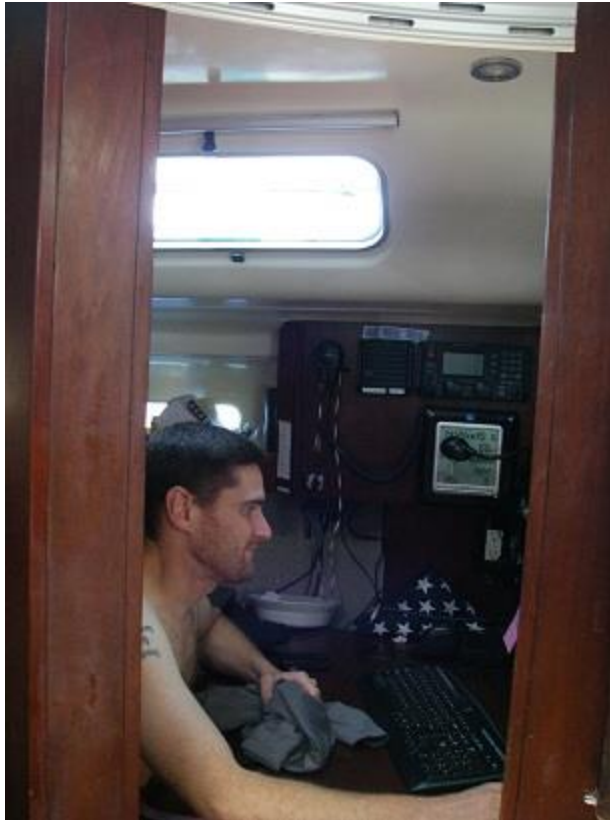
I have a computer here as well. It's a Fit PC-2 and is very small, about the size of two CD cases. It consumes only 7 watts of 12-volt DC power and has a full Windows 7 operating system. This computer is connected to the HF radio via a Pactor II-usb modem with the Pactor 3 license. The computer also lets me port music into the ship's stereo system and I can watch movies here now and then when I need a mental break.

For communications software, I am running AirMail v3.4.062 which is a freeware program created by Jim Corenman in Friday Harbor, WA. With AirMail, I can use my amateur radio license to connect to other shore-based amateurs who have their radios connected to the internet. These amateurs volunteer their own equipment and usually have the systems set up in their home. Once connected to them via the radio, software, and modem, I can send/receive emails for the crew and to other sailboats in our race fleet, get updated NOAA weather fax forecasts, satellite images, and GRIB files. During this trip, I've connected with amateur radio stations all the way from Fairbanks, to Hawaii, to Tijuana, Mexico and many stations in between.

For navigation, I've been strictly using a freeware program called OpenCPN v3.0. CPN stands for Chart Plotter / Navigator. Anyone can download and run it for free. You can also download every nautical chart

published in the United States for free and can find charts on the internet from many other places around the world. I connected a small USB GPS receiver that I got from Microsoft Streets & Trips back in 2008. With the GPS connected, OpenCPN will keep a constant track of our position, shows tides and currents, can be used to plot courses with many legs, and can import and display GRIB files. GRIB stands for GRIded Binary and is basically a grid of predicted wind vectors shown over a grid up to 1 degree latitude by 1 degree longitude density at up to 3-hour intervals out to about 7 days. Displaying the wind vector grid lets me plot a course that is safe, comfortable, and efficient. There are other programs like MaxSea or Expedition that will do automatically optimized route prediction, but they start around \$1500. I like to do the math and estimations anyways.





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## Return Day 14 - August 15, 2012

Lat/Long = 46 deg 42 min N x 130 deg 58 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 168.6 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 2,086.4 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 387.5 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 11 albacore tuna

*"One of the best temporary cures for pride and affection is seasickness." ~ Henry Wheeler Show*

Today was like a chapter out of the book about Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. We've entered the 20 knot northerly winds and are taking it somewhat comfortably on a port close reach, about 60 degrees apparent off the wind. We're flying the jib with a single reef in the main and averaging about 7.6 knots. These nice winds are forecasted to peter out on us Friday when we're within 100 miles of Cape Flattery.

Sea sickness has set in for some of us. The boat is heeled at about a 40 degree angle and although the roll is stabilized by the sails, it's still bumpy and wet. Waves are continuously spraying back into the cockpit. New bumps and bruises greet our body. Salt water enters the non-healing cuts on my hands. Potato chips, snacks, and even coffee come in sea salt flavor whether you like it or not.

With the rough sea state, we opted not to do any fishing today. We'll probably top off the freezer on Friday before we come into the Strait.

Dan and Steve managed under fire to prepare dinner for us which was great of them. Just getting a utensil or a bowl when you're tired under these conditions takes a lot of muscle and balance.

At dusk we were greeted by another whale. It was the same type and size as yesterday, again very close to the boat. Whales out here make me nervous. There was a racing sailboat off the coast of Oregon a few years ago that was attacked and heavily damaged by a whale. I am reminded that they are a wild animal larger than our boat and we're on their turf. A bump this far out could be costly.

For the first time ever since we left on July 5<sup>th</sup>, we have totally clear skies. Not a single cloud. We were treated to another starry night.

I noticed something interesting on the chart today ahead of us. It is the Cobb Seamount. While we've passed over countless seamounts, Cobb is a whopper. Surrounded by a sea floor nearly 10,000 feet deep, Cobb is only 12 miles wide yet reaches all the way up to a depth of 78 feet. It's nearly an island and probably was so during the last ice age. I altered our course 5 degrees to the east to pass it to the south just in case Cobb amplifies the sea state at all.

AM radio stations and even the Coast Guard's powerful shore station signals are beginning to reach us. It's a reminder of the daily grind to which we will each return in a few days. Humanity still exists. It didn't collapse or destroy itself yet. I always get a chuckle from listening to traffic reports while out sailing. "I-90 westbound is stacked up solid from 405 to the bridge." I can only hear Nelson's voice from the Simpsons, "Ha ha!"



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## Return Day 15 - August 16, 2012

Lat/Long = 47 deg 52 min N x 127 deg 03 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 175.8 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 2,262.2 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 213.1 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 11 albacore tuna

*“There is nothing like lying flat on your back on the deck, alone except for the helmsman aft at the wheel, silence except for the lapping of the sea against the side of the ship. At that time you can be equal to Ulysses and brother to him.” ~Errol Flynn*

We've made good progress today on our final ocean run with good wind. Soon we will be fighting tidal currents and dodging logs and commercial traffic. We've been sighting seaweed in the water today for the first time; a sign that land is close by. The 1<sup>st</sup> reef line chafed through and broke in the afternoon. Without a good way to fix it, we lowered the main to a double reef and pressed on. It didn't affect our speed much as the jib does most of the work when climbing upwind. We held an average of 7.5 knots. We still had a lot of whitewater over the deck and spray into the cockpit. The boat interior is damp. We're soggy and looking forward to the lessening winds and a chance to open windows tomorrow; also looking forward to cleaning and showers.

We put the fishing lines back in the water today around noon, but didn't get any bites. We might be in waters too cold for the tuna migration. We'll keep trying tomorrow until we get into Cape Flattery.



Dan and Steve rocked it again in the galley this evening, heating up some chili for us. It was really good. The galley has been on the uphill side of the boat the past few days. Working around the galley for any length of time requires you to strap in with a strap of webbing around your lower back. It helps keep you in place and from falling backwards across the interior of the boat.

At 1am we spotted a large freighter to the north that was going to pass very close to us. They were moving south and we closed to within a quarter mile. I hailed them, interested in their course and speed. After three hails, illuminating our sails, and no response, we altered our course slightly to ensure a safe passage behind the merchant vessel. It's nice to know the professional radio operators, the guys who get paid to monitor incoming hails, were awake and doing their job.

One of the benefits of clear skies is steering by the stars at night. You get on a desired heading and look up to find stars to use as reference against your rigging. Last night, the Pleiades star cluster was low on the northeast horizon and worked perfectly. The Pleiades is a stellar nursery. It's a large cloud of gas that condenses in regions with such intense heat and pressure that stars ignite and are born. The Pleiades has seven such young stars. Their stellar winds have pushed aside the remaining gas cloud and they are beginning their own journeys as we complete ours. We saw many meteors and satellites including a very bright one in the orbital direction of the International Space Station. Needless to say, it was going faster than we were.



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## Return Day 16 - August 17, 2012

Lat/Long = 48 deg 12 min N x 123 deg 57 min W Distance sailed last 24 hours = 136.9 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 2,399.1 nautical miles Rhumb line distance remaining to Everett, WA = 80.9 nautical miles

Fish count since Kauai: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 11 albacore tuna

*"Land was created to provide a place for boats to visit." ~Brooks Atkinson*

Land ho!! Sort of. We approached and passed Duntze Rock at Cape Flattery with a lot of fanfare, but no land in sight due to heavy fog. We put the navigation buoy down the starboard side just 40 feet away; gotta love GPS. Visibility was down to just a couple hundred yards. The fog lifted at Neah Bay and land never looked so good. We half thought about pulling into Neah Bay for a nice sit-down meal. Evan joked that they'd probably turn us away due to our ripeness and clothes that still smell of a successful catch. "We don't serve your kind here..."

We're getting reports of sunny days in the 90's around Seattle, but you wouldn't know that out here. We're in full foul weather gear with fleece underneath and are still cold. We all miss the warm tropical Hawaiian weather.

Shortly after midnight last night, Evan, Jason, and I were treated to one of the most incredible night time sights we'd ever seen on a boat. We were gliding comfortably along at about 6 knots under a full Milky Way of stars. There was a lot of phosphorescent algae in the water and each wash of the waves alongside the boat lit up brilliantly. The keel and rudder left a shimmery comet-like tail streaming behind

us into the darkness. Off the starboard side, we spotted streaks of light coming at us fast. Like torpedoes into a ship of war, I half expected there to be an impact but the streaks of light passed beneath us and out the other side. There were about six dolphins that had come to play with us, making passes by us in pairs. While we couldn't see them, we could see their outlines and bright light of their tails thrusting up and down to keep pace with us. They escorted us for about ten minutes.

The winds died for us in the early morning hours as predicted in the GRIB file and at about 2am, we wandered into a massive tuna fishing fleet. It was a game of dodge 'em as I helmed and with radar threaded the needle between many boats while we all kept look-out for about 10 miles. There were over 50 boats. We know where to go for tuna next year!

We're excited to see our friends and families tomorrow. We hope you can make it to our arrival party!



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## Return Day 17 - August 18, 2012 - Home!

Lat/Long = 48 deg 00 min N x 122 deg 13 min W Distance sailed in the final 18 hours = 82.1 nautical miles

Total distance sailed since departing Kauai, HI = 2,481.2 nautical miles

Mike Rowe narrating from Deadliest Catch, "The final fish count from the Family Affair: 17 mahi mahi, 7 yellowtail amberjacks, 11 albacore tuna, netting each of the crew a payout of 20 pounds."

*"You can sit here in my cockpit and argue philosophy, politics or religion all week long and in the end it doesn't matter. None of it matters a whit. What matters, what really matters, is that we sailed today and now we sit here with a full belly, a drink in our hands and friends to share it with. And life is good, this I know." ~Tim Fuhrmann*

There and back again. We've completed 5,463.4 nautical miles sailed and logged 35 days at sea. It was fantastic to see our friends and family waiting for us at the dock. Thank you to all who came and to all who supported behind the scenes. The food was excellent and beer has rarely tasted so good.

We had a dicey night of motors-sailing in pitch blackness along the south shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca in very heavy fog. Most radar targets we could see in the shipping lanes to the north of us. Some small boats, however, slipped into our path undetected and we had several close encounters.

At daylight we had some time to spare before the 6pm arrival party so we pulled into one of my favorite marinas at Point Hudson in the city of Port Townsend for breakfast. As we were pulling in, still in the fog, a husband and wife were leaving port on the s/v Solstice. They called to us and asked if we had just

crossed. We had to laugh for a moment. They meant if we had just crossed the Strait. We told them about the fog conditions ahead of them and that we had just crossed THE OCEAN.

As we were climbing up the gangway from the dock to land, Dan and I stopped to admire another Beneteau sailboat heading out of port. I said to Dan, "You know you're a hardcore sailor when you've just crossed an ocean and are jealous to see someone else heading out on a sailboat!" Tom lucked out on free moorage again during our brief stay. Marina managers Tony & Chuck said to say hi to everyone.

We've fetched our seaborne treasures home: glass balls, plastic floats, 35 large fish, and perhaps the best treasures of all, knowledge, experience, and solid friendships forged by adventure. Adventures aren't easy. They often aren't comfortable. But like a marathon, looking back, you can be proud of your accomplishment.

Back in days of past, many people had adventures as part of their normal lives. They sailed for a new land, crossed continents in covered wagons, hiked north with little gear in search of gold, or fought a world war to end oppression. They did these adventures not out of pleasure but necessity. They only wished to have the lives we take for granted every day. We now drive with ease in our cars. We sleep in houses safe from predators. We tap into an unlimited source of food at markets.

As we replace the age of adventure for the age of information, something inside of each of us is neglected. We genetically long for the open road, trail, or sea. We are explorers and must do so each in our own way for our health. As Carl Sagan once said, "Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known." We owe it to each of ourselves to keep reaching, dreaming, and exploring. Here's to many more miles together with each of you... my friends and family.







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