

Ahoy Pacific Puddle Jumpers,

Please read the following notices:

**A Serendipitous Bluewater Rescue** — Two completely unrelated search and rescue missions intersected last week, resulting in the nearly miraculous sighting and rescue of Aaron Carotta, who was adrift in his liferaft more than 500 miles east of the Marquesas, after being forced to abandon his offshore rowboat, Smiles, and losing the ability to communicate with his support team ashore. Although sailors David and Zachary Wysopal, the original targets of the US Coast Guard's exhaustive three-day aerial search, were not found, the community of people now looking for them has probably expanded exponentially.

A little background: Nearly 70 days ago David and his 12-year-old son Zachary departed La Paz, Mexico aboard their 45-ft Island Trader ketch, Yasukole, bound for the Marquesas and later American Samoa. They had registered with the PPJ rally but didn't announce their departure. Nor did they opt to participate in the PredictWind tracking program. However, they did have the ability to send out periodic position coordinates to friends and family via a Spot device. These updates came semi-regularly until May 13, a month into the trip. The big ketch was then located near 03\*25N 130\*46W, roughly 800nm NE of Nuku Hiva.

After several weeks without updates, friends and family had become quite concerned, despite Dave's reputation as being a highly experienced and self-reliant seaman.

Initially, it was not clear if they had a functional EPIRB on board. We now know that they do, but it is registered to its previous owner. In any case, although no mayday had been announced, we alerted the US Coast Guard, JRCC Tahiti, and the PPJ fleet of the situation in early June. (Note: It is our understanding that Spot devices are not widely used by sailors anymore as their usefulness has been eclipsed by other technologies. We are told that there are huge gaps in Spot's satellite coverage in the Pacific and elsewhere.)

Precise details of Aaron Carotta's ordeal are still a bit sketchy, but we understand that his rowing craft was swamped and badly damaged by rough weather, leaving him with a nearly useless electrical system, and hull damage that eventually forced him to abandon ship into his tiny liferaft.

Carotta put out a mayday signal on May 31, but there was just enough power left in his PLB to activate it for a few seconds, several days apart — and that wasn't long enough for rescue personnel to get an accurate fix on his location. Five merchant ships and four private vessels participated in a widespread search for Carolla. But without a reasonably defined search area, the hunt had to be suspended on June 12, at least temporarily.

Yasukole, however, is a bigger target. So last week Coast Guard JRCC Honolulu

dispatched a long-range, low-flying C-130 Hercules aircraft from Hawaii to French Polynesia. After flying 2,000 miles to reach the search venue, pilots flew low-altitude grid patterns for three days, with multiple observers scanning the sea surface below. By the third and final day of the search effort last Thursday, the flight crew had found no clues about Yasukole's whereabouts, but they did get a completely unexpected surprise. Aaron Carotta had turned on his PLB again – this time long enough for the guardsmen to pick up a complete set of coordinates. They did a flyover to confirm they'd seen him, and within hours he was picked up by an oil tanker that had been diverted to rescue him.

It's probably fair to say that the chances of a search party accidentally finding a guy in a liferaft without location info in advance, is about one in a million. Truly serendipitous!

Even though David and Zachary Wysopal remain unaccounted for, we have high hopes that they will soon show up in French Polynesia or some neighboring island downwind and down current. Literally, thousands of people are now keeping a lookout for them.