

## **Fleet Letter #8**

Ahoy Pacific Puddle Jumpers,

Please read the notices below.

### **The Fleet's Youngest Skipper**

Just as I began writing this fleet update, a young man's voice crackled across the VHF. It was 18-year-old singlehander Garrett Tarter, the youngest skipper in this year's Pacific Puddle Jump fleet. He was about to make landfall in the rally's smallest boat, Hooligan. This stout Nor'Sea 27 proved to be a reliable choice for Garrett's nonstop passage from Hawaii to Tahiti, and as we learned from his parents, Shaen and Laura, he earned the money himself to buy the boat and fit her out after opting to be homeschooled during the COVID pandemic, as an alternative to online instruction via Zoom.

We're not sure who inspired whom, but Shaen and Laura sailed their own boat – the Island Packet 40 Arctic Tern – from Hawaii to French Polynesia this season also, on their own route and timetable. Our congratulations go out to the whole family.

### **Good Luck After Bad**

During the 40 years that I've been involved with running and reporting on offshore sailing events and incidents, I have never before heard of an episode like the following, that seems to have had such equal measures good luck and bad. As reported earlier, it was terribly bad luck – to say the least – when the rudder dropped out of the ironically-named Catalina 470 Lucky Dog, roughly 600 miles from the crew's intended landfall. The breakdown led owners Dan and Jeanne LeBlanc-Streiff to abandon ship and catch a ride to Hiva Oa aboard the only cruising boat in the vicinity, Beleza.

But you might say that the couple's luck soon changed 180\*, from bad to good, because they were eventually able to find and retrieve their boat in the open ocean with the help of a Marquesan fishing boat and its crew. We've never heard of anyone anywhere successfully retrieving a boat after abandoning it hundreds of miles from shore. So, despite the breakdown, Lucky Dog lived up to her name.

It's also worth noting that when such incidents occur, Coast Guard and/or Naval authorities often insist that the boat being abandoned must be scuttled. But fortunately, there was no such order this time.

We are happy to report that Dan and Jeanne are in the process of replacing the rudder, and are determined to get back to active cruising as soon as possible.

### **Selfless Heroes**

No report on the above incident would be complete without acknowledging the heroes of this story, Chris and Michelle Maler of the Hermosa Beach-based Hylas 46 Beleza, which was the only boat anywhere near Lucky Dog when she became disabled. Chris and Michelle selflessly accepted Lazy Dog's exhausted crew aboard Beleza for the remaining miles to their Hiva Oa landfall. This display of old-school generosity came only weeks after Chris and Michelle had participated in the refueling effort of the dismissed Niniwahuni (a boat traveling independent of the PPJ).

(We should explain that because the Lucky Dog crew was not officially "in peril," this was not a mayday situation, so no commercial vessels were diverted to the scene by search-and-rescue authorities.)

### **Yasukole's Location Unknown**

As announced on June 6, the crew of the Island Trader 45 Yasukole has not been heard from since May 13, now a full month ago, when their Spot tracking device plotted them near 03\*25N 130\*46W. (Roughly 900nm from the Marquesas Islands, sailing on a fairly steep angle; 1600nm from Tahiti.)

Skipper David Wysopal and his 12-year-old son Zackary departed from La Paz, Mexico, in mid-April, and had been sending regular position reports to family and friends via their Spot transmitter. Unfortunately, the PPJ was not included on the device's recipient list. We have had absolutely no contact from this crew since they registered, and the boat apparently has no easily trackable equipment, such as AIS, sat phone, IridiumGo, etc. And there is no EPIRB registered to this boat name.

We are encouraged, however, to hear from several friends and family members that David is an exceptional sailor and seaman, with a good deal of offshore experience under his belt.

Needless to say, any number of minor breakdowns could have hampered the vessel's progress or kept the crew from her from sailing her their originally intended course. But If Yasukole is now drifting west rather than sailing, it is good to know that there are many Islands 'downstream' where the crew might make an

emergency landfall, in the Cook Islands, the Samoa Islands, as well as the many islands of Tonga.

If you have info on this vessel please contact:

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