

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06 RECAP

— COMMUNING WITH NEPTUNE

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PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP

March in Mexico marks the start of final preparations for boats planning on heading into the Pacific. By then, the South Pacific cyclones are winding down and the Mexican hurricanes are still a few months away.

Because of the sheer enormity of this open-water crossing — the largest to be encountered when circumnavigating through the tropics — would-be Puddle Jumpers go to great lengths to become adequately prepared, sharing tips and info through a series of meetings. As in years past, Dick Markie, manager of Paradise Village Marina outside Puerto Vallarta, hosted the first gathering of the Class of 2006 Puddle Jumpers to get things started. After that, the cruisers

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took over, staging a variety of get-togethers focused on different areas of preparedness such as rigging, mechanical (engine, refrigeration), medical and provisioning. Local Ham radio experts gave classes and tests for Ham radio licenses. Several cruisers left with new licenses that allowed them to communicate via SSB radio.

A new addition to the pre-cruise process this year was setting up a Yahoo Group called "pacificpuddlejumps," as a centralized online data resource. Cruisers subscribed to this private group and then had access to a database of all members' info, a calendar of events, email exchange, data files and Internet links for information important to the passage-makers. The database was seeded with information from past Puddle Jumps and supplemented with information added by this year's cruisers. Before they left on their passage the Puddle Jumpers could print the 400+ page book or copy it to a CD for use on their personal computers.

The book contains a wealth of information on weather, provisioning, radio networks, medical issues, entry requirements to countries on the routes, safety, and other important topics. Puerto Vallarta and Zihuatanejo Puddle Jumpers were able to coordinate their efforts by the use of the Yahoo Group. Future Puddle Jumpers can use the database to educate themselves on the various aspects of Puddle Jumping, and can add to it.

Water, Water Everywhere

The Pacific Ocean is a serious body of water. The size of it cannot really be appreciated until you spend weeks crossing to French Polynesia and realize that you have only arrived at the first stop in the crossing. To give some scope of the vastness of the Pacific, consider these facts: Every continent on earth would fit inside the Pacific and still leave room to just about squeeze in another South America. One of its island nations, Kiri-

bati, has a border-to-border distance equal to crossing the Atlantic Ocean. If Papeete, in French Polynesia, was overlaid on Paris, the Marquesas would be in Sweden and the Australes would be in Romania. The Pacific Ocean is a *very* big place!

As soon as the trade winds started building, boats began their crossings. As in the past, timing was everything. Boats that left even a few days apart experienced huge differences in weather. This



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year, calms and winds from odd directions found many cruisers. Other boats breezed through with ideal conditions. The Port Townsend-based Talisman 37 *Oz* reported that at one point it rained so hard that the life jacket skipper

Below: Aboard 'Sisiutitl', Kitty (left) and Brenda share some 'bubbly' with Neptune. Right: A fairy tale landfall in the Marquesas.

INTERLUDE



John Pasternak was wearing inflated automatically! They saw rain for 25 out of 27 days. The Oakland-based Yorktown 35 *Sandpiper* reported that the hardest rain they experienced was north of the equator. They were able to top off their water tanks with 50 gallons in 1 hour! Other boats only had a few showers during the entire passage. As luck would have it, aboard my own boat, *Sisiutitl*, a Gulfstar 44 from Portland, Oregon, we saw no rain at all and we needed it most, having lost our watermaker shortly after leaving Mexico. Who says King Neptune doesn't have a sense of humor?

A Bounty of Breakdowns

The number of breakdowns this year seemed to be typical although a couple of boats had some serious problems. The most serious breakdown was experienced by the Seattle-based Morgan Out-Island 41 *Blessed Be*. Skipper Jessica Stone and crewman Mike Irvine were dismayed just 10 miles from Hiva Oa, their intended landfall in the Marquesas. Some emergency repairs have been made and *Blessed Be* is moving again toward a facility where more permanent repairs can be made. (See the May and June issues of *Latitude 38* for more on this mishap.)

After the boom broke aboard the Connecticut-based Westsail 32 *Serenity*, her crew simply sailed the remaining distance to French Polynesia with a loose-footed main.

Throughout the rest of the fleet there were typical failures due to chafe, plus bilge pumps and heads to be rebuilt, broken shackles and blocks, blown spinners, etc. Considering that the boats were under sail 24/7 for weeks, such failures are, of course, understandable. Needless to say, having plenty of spare parts and an intimate understanding of your boat are prerequisites for undertaking this kind of passage. Help and repair facilities are few and far between out here. A couple of boats, the Seattle-based Passport 40 *Bold Spirit* and the vessel *Thulani*, turned back to Mexico due to mechanical problems. By the time they were repaired their owners decided to head for Central America and do the crossing next year.

Medical Woes

Medical emergencies are always a constant threat for cruisers. In the blink of an eye, a delightful cruise can



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become filled with some kind of medical priority. Diane Kay, aboard the Long Beach-based MT-42 *Aquarelle* suffered a painful broken rib. Even on shore this kind of injury can be hard to deal with. But imagine that the room you're trying to convalesce in is constantly moving — sometimes with extreme force — and consider how difficult that would be to handle.

Wolfgang Boehle, skipper of the Coronado-based Kelly Peterson 46 *New Horizons IV* had a medical emergency that included evacuation out of the Marquesas. Seven days out of PV, he suffered a herniated disc in his back. For 14 days he endured severe pain — only Vicodin helped. His crew contacted the French Navy for possible evacuation from the boat, but decided against it. Upon his arrival in Nuku Hiva, Wolfgang stayed seven days in the hospital just to get the pain down with morphine. He was then flown to Papeete, Tahiti's capital, for back surgery. I'm happy to report that 14 days later he was back on the boat, and has been happily sailing ever since. Beyond those serious problems the rest of the fleet got away with the expected 'boat bites' that are common to all sailors.

Route to Paradise

Most Puddle Jump boats head west from Mexico, either jumping off from Puerto Vallarta or Zihuatanejo. The traditional course is to head out away from the coastal wind effect, then turn south to cross the equator around 130W longitude. The Alaska-based Valiant 40 *Neried* crossed at 120W, while *Aquarelle* crossed at 132W, so there was a wide range of strategies in course selection.

Aboard *Sisiutl*, we made the crossing at 125W. This choice was decided by fluky winds encountered north of the

Being from Port Townsend, John Pasternak of 'Oz' is used to rain. But on the crossing it poured so hard that his lifejacket auto-inflated.



EMERALD

equator. After a few days of calm winds, I turned directly south along 125W to get to the equatorial current. After crossing the equator we caught the current and had daily runs exceeding 160 miles, while riding the current toward the Marquesas. We were finally moving! (See the table in this article for details on how various boats did in miles/day and distances covered during the crossing.) The best miles-per-day record was 225, reported by *Whistle Wing V*, a 50-ft Peterson sloop from San Diego.

The Path Less Traveled

One very different passage was made by Steve and Valerie on *Kaien*, a Waterline 45 Cutter from San Francisco. They made the crossing directly from San Francisco to Nuku Hiva. Their distance was 3,100 miles and took 22 days. Their best miles/day was 170 and the worst was an enviable 129 — enviable to those who, at times, made less than 50 miles a day in calm wind areas off Mexico. *Kaien* was in the upper tier for miles per day.

Steve reports, "All of the other cruisers we met made the crossing from Mexico or Central America. They all reported light-to-no winds for a large part of their passages. The trip directly from San Francisco

Don't forget the water toys! One of the rewards of making it to the islands is spending tranquil days enjoying clear, calm lagoons.

to the Marquesas did have much better wind this year and, once the north Pacific high pressure system sets up at the beginning of the season, it should continue to offer the better passage from a sailing standpoint. It is definitely underrated as a strategy.

"Several sailors we met beforehand thought we were stupid to plan this route, but we're surprised more cruisers don't try it."

From Pollywog to Shellback

No matter which course Puddle Jumpers took, sooner or later they crossed the equator. This event is marked by all cruisers with some sort of celebration. Pollywogs (those who have not crossed the equator before) are usually subjected to an initiation ceremony marking the event. After the ceremony they become Shellbacks.

Aboard *Sisiutl*, 'King Neptune' issued a written summons for lowly pollywogs Brenda and Kitty to report for judgement and initiation. As one of their initiation rites, they were asked to eat SPAM, but the rest of the ceremony was more appealing. This was *Sisiutl*'s third equatorial crossing since 2003, and we've developed a tradition for southbound crossings: eating pineapple upside down cake and making champagne toasts to Neptune.

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Aboard *Oz*, the captain earned an earring upon crossing the equator. On *Sensei*, daughter Claire made 'shellbacks' for everybody on board including the cat. They were worn ceremonially as they crossed latitude 0°. *La Vie*, a Beneteau First 405 from Seattle, reported that their ceremony included costumes, speeches, pompous ceremony, cigars and drinks at 1 a.m. "We intended to heave-to and swim across the equator, but nighttime prevented our folly." Aboard *Sandpiper*, Tom has crossed several times in the past, but Amy was a newcomer. Her shellback ceremony included the reading

A SERVICE WORTH NOTING

Many of the Puddle Jumpers used the services offered by Polynesian Yacht Services for checking into French Polynesia. Their services included the checking in process, duty free fuel certificates for cruising around French Polynesia, getting the bond exemption letter for crews of the yachts, and handling the import of parts needed by some of the boats for necessary repairs. There is, of course, a fee for these services but the duty free fuel certificate saves \$2.00 per gallon. The bond exemption allows cruisers to stay an additional 60 days without going through the bond posting and refund process (which have their own set of fees and problems). The savings from these services offsets much of the cost of the PYS fees.

of the "rights of passage" for the ancient order of the deep, giving a rum toast to King Neptune and dropping a bottle overboard with a message in it at 0°. Aboard the Victoria-based cat *Sarabi* Barry and Karen had a Rasta party, complete with dreadlock hats and a champagne offering to King Neptune while singing Bob Marley's *Satisfy My Soul* ("Oh please, don't you rock my boat. . ."). Ross and Laura aboard the Alaska-based *Valiant 40 New Dawn* had a midnight plunge with a Champagne toast to Neptune.

As you can tell, by this time in the passage the Puddle Jumpers, as with sailors over the centuries, needed a break in the long passage — and they had way too much free time on their hands.

Most of the boats fished along the passage and most had some level of success. In addition, all of the Puddle Jumpers seemed to be unsuspecting participants in what I like to call the fishy Olympics. On many mornings the passage-makers found their decks littered with flying fish and squid that were not successful in their attempts to jump over the boats. *Sarabi* and *Sisiutl* both had flying fish come down their hatches and land on unsuspecting crew below decks. The crew of *Serenity* took advantage of the deck litter and ate these uninvited passengers. They say that squid are good in omelettes, while flying fish are good fried — you just gut them and cut off their wings. The smaller ones are better, as you can eat the bones.

Thoughts and Reflections

Everyone who made the nearly 3,000-mile passage from Central or North America to French Polynesia had a different story, but all agreed that it was quite an undertaking, and their previous sailing experience was quite a departure from a major ocean passage. Thinking back to my own crossing experiences, I think my personal 'wall' of patience is about 21 days. After that the arrival at the islands is greatly anticipated. This passage marks over 25,000 miles in the Pacific for me and *Sisiutl* since heading south with the *Baja Ha-Ha* in 2002. If I'd 'straightened out' all those offshore passages, I could have done a circumnavigation by now! The following are thoughts, tips and observations from others in the fleet.

Serenity, Westsail 32, Co-skippers Jim and Eva Moresco from San

Diego: "We had a lot more squalls than we expected — about 15 on a couple of days. It was very tiring. We felt beaten down by day 21 by the nearly constant squalls during that period. Finally seeing land made us cry — to think we had made it was overwhelming. We had never done anything like this before."

Andiamo, Wauquiez Pretorien 35, John and Lisa Caruso from Seattle: "The first squall came up on John's watch in the middle of the night with sudden winds near 40 knots. A waterspout really got our attention during another squall.

"Our canvas was designed for shade, not rain going sideways. Make sure you can keep the cockpit dry."

Whistle Wing V, Peterson 50, Mike Chase, Joe Mobley and Jack Oliver from Honolulu: "We had great weather the whole trip. The ITCZ was a non-issue. Having a boat that is a good sailing hull makes all the difference. Be sure you know how to fly a spinnaker. If you like the sailing part of the passage-making, this is a great trip!"

Sensei, Norseman 447, Chris and Claire Mellor (age 10), and Kelley Montana from Albany, CA: "The first two weeks were exhilarating, the last week was a saltwater sauna below, but beam reaching under a triple-reefed main and staysail gave us back-to-back 172 mile runs — awesome! Being underway for

Author Bob, et, ah . . . King Neptune, is prepared for the initiation with SPAM, pineapple upside-down cake and champagne.



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three weeks out there, far from land, was something very few mortals can experience."

La Vie, Beneteau First 405, David Kane, Julie Calvert and Karl Horeis from Seattle: "We had great sailing all the way. The ITCZ did not exist for us, just blue skies and nice winds. We ate great meals the entire trip made easy by the perfect sailing weather. The fruits and veggies lasted much longer than expected and we wish we would have brought more along. Cabbage was still around until just last week, lasting nearly three months hanging in a well ventilated hammock. Potatoes, garlic, onions and ginger easily lasted two months in wire baskets at the galley."

"Having a watermaker would have been nice, but we only used 70 gallons between three people in 21 days. Frequent swimming helped us minimize water use while staying tolerably clean. Great crew made for an enjoyable and happy crossing."

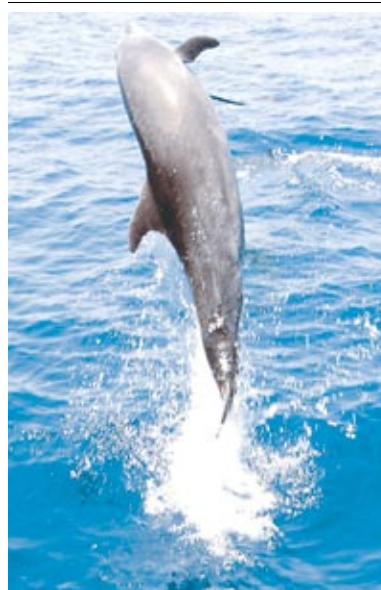
Sandpiper, Yorktown 35, Tom & Amy Larson from Oakland: "We had trouble making bread as our yeast refused to rise, but that's okay, as Mexico's Bimbo Bread is so full of preservatives that it would take years before it would ever get moldy."

"The Puddle Jump Net was great, as we were able to keep track of everyone's



BLUE SKY

No doubt, sighting dolphins was a highlight of Phoebe and Drake's 29 days at sea aboard 'Blue Sky'.



We spotted whales and an unbelievable dolphin show off Mexico. We all missed ice cream, and the beer ran out three days prior to making landfall."

Sarabi, 56-ft custom cat, Barry, Karen and Mark Philbrook, and Hutch Hutchison, from Victoria, BC: Karen (the only woman on board) recalls, "One day I was doing the nagging thing, saying, 'I think we should reef,' as it was blowing over 25 kts with higher gusts. The guys were doing the 'woo-hoo' thing, because we were just flying

and surfing down waves. We finally got a big one and surfed at 23+ knots. . . a new boat record. After that, they decided to reef. Of course, then it was *their idea!*"

New Dawn, Valiant 40, Ross and Laura Emerson from Anchorage: "Nearly everything has been recently replaced and we sailed our boat rather conservatively. Luckily, there were no major breakages. However, I made frequent rounds on deck with a screwdriver tightening everything I could. I was amazed at how many parts were coming loose."

Arctic Fox, Valiant 40, Tim, Cynthia and Cameron (age 11) Bowie from Portland: "Tim enjoyed the passage and was a little disappointed when it ended. Cynthia and Cameron became discour-

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2006 PUDDLE JUMP PASSAGE DATA

Boat Name	Boat Make & Length	Captain & Crew	Boat's Homeport	Departed From / Date	Landfall & Date	Days Xing	Miles Xing	Eqtr X Long.	Engine Hours	Best 24 Hr	Worst 24 Hr	# Fish Cght	Breakage & Breakdowns
Andiamo	Wauquiez 35	Lisa & John Caruso	Seattle, WA	Cabo, 3/9	Hiva Oa, 3/28	19	2,721 nm	129.47W	1	172	114	2	chafe
Aquarelle	MT-42	Diane & Ken Kay	Long Bch, CA	Zihua, 3/5	Nuku Hiva, 3/28	24	N/A	132W	100	140	90	1	luff tape, battens, autopilot
Arctic Fox	Valiant 40	The Bowie family	Portland, OR	PV, 3/6	Fatu Hiva, 4/7	22	2,700 nm	130W	53	148	80	3	whisker pole
Blue Sky	Down East 45	Emma & Jim Mather	Redondo Bch, CA	PV, 4/08	Hiva Oa, 5/4	29	2,800 nm	127.39W	60	130	30	many!	none
Espirit	K. Peterson 46	The McWilliam family	San Diego, CA	Galapagos, 4/14	Fatu Hiva, 5/8	24	3,250 nm	80.37W	59	170	30	2	autopilot
Kaien	Waterline 45	Steve & Valerie Saul	San Francisco, CA	SF, CA, 4/17	Nuku Hiva, 3/10	22	3,100 nm	131W	23	170	129	N/A	motor mts, water pump, chafe
La Vie	Beneteau 405	Dave, Karl & Julie	Seattle, WA	PV, 4/2	Eaio, 4/23	21	2,820 nm	131.33W	9.5	165	101	2	spinnaker, swageless fittings
Maggie Drum	Whitby 42	Joe & Cindy Barnes	Anacortes, WA	Zihua, 3/21	Hiva Oa, 4/15	25	3,013 nm	129W	120	N/A	N/A	N/A	watermaker, wind pilot
Neried	Valiant 40	Ray & Judy Emerson	Anchorage, AK	PV, 3/28	Hiva Oa, 4/21	24	2,800 nm	120.07W	18	142	22	N/A	wind generator frame
New Dawn	Valiant 40	Ross & Laura Emerson	Anchorage, AK	PV, 3/20	Hiva Oa, 4/13	23	N/A	130.54W	90	157	93	N/A	none
New Horizons	K. Peterson 46	W. Boehle, E. Hepp	Coronado, CA	PV, 3/21	Nuku Hiva, 4/13	23	3,083 nm	129.57W	12	170	68	3	none
Ohana Kai	Catalina 42	The Martin family	Port Orchard, WA	Zihua, 3/30	Fatu Hiva, 4/17	19	2,900 nm	130.15W	50	183	N/A	0	none
Oz	Talisman 37	J. Pasternak & A. Schnell	Pt. Townsend, WA	Zihua, 3/22	Hiva Oa, 4/17	27	3,008 nm	130W	80	151	70	0	trans cooler, bilge pump, vang
Ranger	Is. Packet 40	Paul & Marie Miller	Marina del Rey, CA	Zihua, 3/22	Hiva Oa, 4/14	23	3,138 nm	129.12W	96	160	92	2	chafe
Sandpiper	Yorktown 35	Tom & Amy Larson	Oakland, CA	PV, 4/6	Hiva Oa, 4/27	28	3,179 nm	129W	100	141	90	3	mtr mnts, impeller, DC genset
Sarabi	custom cat	Barry & Karen Philbrook	Victoria, BC	Zihua, 3/27	Hiva Oa, 4/12	15	2,832 nm	129.40W	58	218	132	2	autopilot motor brushes
Sensei	Norseman 447	The Mellor family	San Francisco, CA	PV, 4/10	Hiva Oa, 5/1	21	2,634 nm	126W	50	172	59	4	reef points
Serenity	Formosa 41	Anderson family	Portland, OR	La Cruz, 3/22	Hiva Oa, 4/18	27	2,700 nm	128.15W	12	140	36	4	main boom, topping lift
Sisiutl	Gulfstar 44	B. Bechler, B. Maddox	Portland, OR	PV, 4/6	Nuku Hiva, 5/3	26	3,163 nm	125.17W	50	169	35	2	wtrmkr, bilge pump, water pump
Whistle Wing V	Peterson 16m	Chase / Mobley / Oliver	Honolulu, HI	Zihua, 3/16	Hiva Oa, 4/3	18	N/A	129.54W	19	225	150	1	none

* Not all 2006 Puddle Jumpers reported their data.

— COMMUNING WITH NEPTUNE

aged on the eighth day when they heard on the net that one boat in the fleet had already arrived in the Marquesas. Everyone felt the crossing was peaceful, but humdrum at times. You do not need a lot of sailing experience to do the passage. We had very little prior experience. We used the monitor wind vane all the time except when motoring or during very light wind.

"Cameron read 20 books and listened to all the Harry Potter books on CD. Also, Cameron did his schoolwork on all but two days, except for weekends, of course."

Kaijen, Waterline 45, Steve and Valerie Saul, from San Francisco: "We had pretty good weather except for three nights of

"The ITCZ did not exist for us, just blue skies and nice winds."

severe lightning storms approaching Paapeete. The lightning started each evening as soon as it got dark and did not abate until just before dawn. We thought with a steel boat that we would be cooked, but we were not struck once.

"We were greeted by a school of large dolphins at the entrance to Taiohae Bay in the Marquesas. Several jumped over the bow pulpit which was really impressive. The best welcome we have ever had at the end of a passage. Consistent with our past experience, we sailed on the Monitor windvane more than 95% of the time, and only used the autopilot when we motored. We notice that windvanes are becoming something of a relic at anchorages where cruisers congregate, as autopilots have become more popular. We like a device that works with no electronics being consumed, and it works better the harder the wind blows."

Nereid, Valiant 40, Ray and Judy Emerson from Anchorage: "At nighttime we would triple reef the main and run with the staysail if the weather looked at all challenging. Otherwise we made our best time crossing the zone with genoa and double-reefed main for our record 142-mile day. The ITCZ turned out to be a piece of cake and where we had our best consecutive sailing days.

"The operative suggestion to others is, 'Just do it.' We had a great time and at the end of the journey — we still liked each other!"

Zafarse, Baltic 42, Paddy and Alison Barry from San Diego: "We found the passage very squally, but the rain kept the boat clean and was refreshing. The radio nets allowed us to see how others were fairing, and gave us kind of a community feeling. We looked forward to the net everyday. We saw a few pilot whales at sea but not much else in the way of sea life, which was disappointing. I didn't miss anything while on the passage. I would do it again!"

Ranger, Island Packet 40, Paul and Marie Miller and Jim Garvey from Marina Del Rey: "We had many squalls and lots of rain. The highest wind in a squall was 37.7 knots. We had large areas of very little wind, especially when first leaving Mexico and near the equator.

"We participated daily in the Puddle Jump Net and talked to Don Anderson about the weather. The net and weather were very helpful. We were pretty happy during the crossing. We think we were pretty well prepared for the reality of the crossing. Maybe we missed uninterrupted sleep, but with three aboard, we know we got more sleep than the single and double-handed crews.

"It was a wonderful feeling when we saw our landfall and started to smell the
Upon their arrival at Tahiti, the Puddle Jumpers were welcomed with a special sailing and cultural event called the Tahiti Tourisme Cup.



The picture tells the story. . . "Oh, yeah, that's why we sailed all the way out here: white sand beaches, coco palms and no one in sight."

flowers and the scent of the earth."

Maggie Drum, Whitby 42, Joe and Cindy Barnes from Anacortes: "What we missed most were margaritas and spicy food from Mexico — and uninterrupted sleep!

"Make sure all systems are in good working order, especially batteries and charging systems. Have plenty of oil and fuel/oil filters for everything. Make sure you have an SSB radio in good working condition. A 'must have' item is protection from sun, rain and spray in the cockpit.

"Our watermaker did not work when we left (after a major overhaul), but I tinkered with it and got it fixed. Our Monitor windpilot started falling apart with broken welds, so had to use the electric autopilot. Nighttime squalls were the worst, but we have had much worse squalls since our arrival in the Marquesas.

"The crossing was easier to handle than expected after we got good wind and were in our 'groove'. Our scariest moment was when the gennaker double wrapped around the forestay in some good wind, thankfully in daylight."

Espirit, Kelly Peterson 46, Chay, Katie and Jamie (age 9) McWilliam from San Diego: "This was not the milk run advertised. Jamie called it the 'milkshake run.' We had 12-foot confused seas and lots of squalls the first two weeks out from the Galapagos. Then things settled down a bit for the last week of running wing and wing.

"Katie learned the benefits of the gimbale stove during the passage after having a bowl full of pancake batter fly across the galley and into the nav station. We'd never had to use the 'gimbal' in our previous two years of



TAHITI PRESSE / TAHITI TOURISME

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cruising, which says something about the seas on this passage."

Ohana Kai, Catalina 42, Bruce, Lisa, Tristan (age 10) and Matthew (age 7) Martin from Port Orchard, WA: "Traveling with our two boys, Tristan and Matthew, has been fantastic. They are so amazingly flexible and adaptable. There were great discussions before we left about what we expected and what it takes to be a great crew and help each other out. When they needed to get a little extra energy out, we just cleared off our main cabin bed, shut the door and let them wrestle to their heart's content. They could spend an hour in there belly laughing.

"Each morning on the nets, Tristan would sit next to Bruce and write down all the coordinates he could hear. He and Matthew would then move little cut-outs of Puddle Jumper boats that we had made across a laminated map of the Pacific. It really helped them to see our progress and to get a feel for where we were traveling.

"Crossing the equator had to be the highlight as we all took the opportunity to swim in the waters at the middle of



BLUE SKY

Sometimes you see the strangest things out in the middle of the ocean — such as a boobie resting atop a sleeping turtle.

the planet."

Aquarelle, MT42, Diane and Ken Kay, with Howard Lund, from Long Beach: "I thought the crossing was peaceful, just like a pleasant trip to Catalina, but many

times multiplied. I suggest bringing lots of beer if there are beer drinkers on board. The beer in the Marquesas was \$2.50 a can — quite a shock from beer prices in Mexico. Produce is also very expensive, so bring lots of cans in place of fresh.

"We went through the process of getting the long stay visa for French Polynesia. It took some effort, but when we entered the High Commissioner's office in Papeete, we were greeted warmly and were told that they would go out of their way for those who took the time to get this visa. We heartily recommend getting your long-term visas in advance, even if it means flying back to the States to get to the consulate, as we did. We now have a year to enjoy French Polynesia, and never have to look over our shoulders."

All in all, the 2006 Pacific Puddle Jump was an amazing experience for one and all. And, although completing that formidable crossing was a great challenge, it merely marks the beginning of many more South Pacific adventures yet to come.