

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '07, PT I

— POLYNESIAN RENDEZVOUS

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As the map below confirms, there's an enormous patch of open water between the west coast of the Americas and French Polynesia — roughly 3,000 miles of it. In fact, if you were to circumnavigate the globe via the tropics, this vast, blue expanse would be the longest stretch of ocean you'd have to cross without any possibility of making a pit stop at some remote landfall.

This fact explains why we dedicate so much ink to the annual spring-time migration that we like to call the Pacific Puddle Jump. Since we first coined that phrase 10 years ago, hundreds of West Coast sailors have completed this ambitious crossing, most often making landfall beneath the dramatic, sculpted peaks of the Marquesas. We've made it an annual tradition to meet with as many of them as possible, pre-departure, by staging send-off parties for them, then featuring their photos and bios in these pages.

This year, that task became more complicated. In the past, most boats jumped off from Puerto Vallarta, with a smaller contingent leaving from Zihuatanejo. This year, though, there are also a half-dozen boats leaving from La Paz, one or two jumping off from Mazatlan, a few sailing straight from California, and some going via Ecuador and the Galapagos. In this two-part feature, we'll attempt to introduce you to as

many of these bold adventurers as possible — starting with the PV group this month. As a follow-up, we hope many of them will occasionally report in from 'out there', in order to keep the cruising dream alive for those of us who hope to someday follow in their wake.

For the first time, *Latitude 38* held two send-off shindigs this year. The first was hosted by the Vallarta YC, and was generously co-sponsored by Paradise Village Resort & Marina and — another first — Tahiti Tourisme. The second was hosted by Rick's Bar, Zihua's 'cruiser central', and, again, co-sponsored by Tahiti Tourisme.

These Polynesia-bound cruisers were practically dumbfounded by the fact that the Tahitian government sent lovely Stephanie Betz all the way out to PV and Zihua to welcome them and share firsthand cruising info — not to mention the fact that she raffled off black pearls and overnights in swank hotels. Accompanying her was Laurent Bernaert of Polynesian Yacht Services, who clarified rules and fees for immigration and other government regulations.

Neither had been to Mexico before and they loved it — even the bona fide adventure of getting from PV to Zihua by bus. That 12-hour trip turned into 20 due to an engine breakdown, and the fact that Federales had to hold it for six hours while they cleared the route of banditos! Nevertheless, our Tahitian friends hope to return next year to welcome members of the 2008 fleet.

Historically, the Puddle Jump has never really had a structured gathering in the islands to celebrate the crossing. But this year the Tourisme folks have designed an event exclusively for Puddle Jumpers called the Tahiti Tourisme Cup (July 7). In addition to a cruise-in-company from Tahiti to Moorea and exhibitions of traditional music and dance, entrants will have a chance to test their paddling prowess



"Which way to the Marquesas?" Ray and Peggy's retirement plans have changed a bit.



ALL PHOTOS LATITUDE / ANDY

in authentic dugout canoes. (Look for a report in August.)

With that as background, we now introduce you to the Pacific Puddle Jump Class of 2007. Smooth sailing!

Sol Searcher — Trans Pac 49 Ray & Peggy Wilson, Long Beach

You might think that all who attempt the Puddle Jump are longtime sailors with saltwater in their veins. Not so. Meet Ray and Peggy. Although she spent some time around waterski boats as a kid, Ray had never even set foot on a boat until twelve years ago, at age 40. "Growing up in New York," he explains, "my 'backyard'

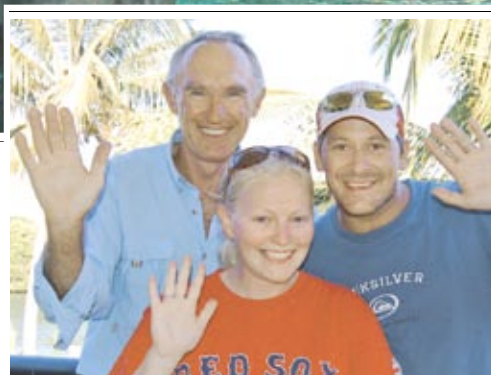
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The PV Puddle Jumpers strike a pose amid the dramatic Mayan 'ruins' at Paradise Village.

was a fire escape!"

Ironically, they were heading for a comfortable retirement, having just completed an extensive remodel of the home they expected to live in for the rest of their lives, when they began asking each other, "But what are going to do in retirement?" Neither playing golf nor sitting on the couch fighting over the remote was very appealing. "In 2000 we were literally paddling around in kayaks in Huntington Harbor when we decided to do this," says Peggy, despite the fact that they were both novice sailors at the



Terry won't have to singlehand after all. His crew showed up just before the end of the party.

time.

Within months they had bought this boat, moved aboard and rented out the house — selling it not long afterwards. "We never even looked at it again," recalls Ray. This season they'll island-hop to New Zealand, then reassess.

Southwind — Seawind 45 Terry Pope, Vancouver, B.C.

"Why am I going cruising? 'Cause there's more ocean than land, and you can go anywhere on the ocean," explains Terry, a retired auctioneer.

When he says he's been planning for this cruise for decades, he isn't kidding. He was on the verge of making a similar trip back in '64 when he fell and broke his back. "I've been waiting ever since to get going again." And this time, he's determined that nothing is going to stop him — "Even if I have to singlehand!" His young crew, Jeremy and Michelle, were MIA at the time. They did finally show up, however, in time to get their 15 minutes of photo fame.

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Arabella — Swift 40

Mike & Barb Fulmor, Oxnard

You might say that Mike is following his father's lead, as Ira Fulmor's

Staghound was the corrected-time winner of the TransPac in both 1953 and '54. Although Mike has been sailing all his life, this will be his first ocean crossing and he's rarin' to go — ultimately he'll travel much farther afield than his dad did back in the day.

Mike and Barb have already been cruising Mexico for four seasons. Now, though, the game plan is for Mike and two buddies, John Higbie and Bob Edmonds, to make the crossing to the Marquesas, where Barb will fly out to join them. The couple will then work their way to New Zealand, with an open-ended itinerary afterwards. To the wannabes back home, Mike advises, "Just go for it! This life is not a dress rehearsal, it's the show!"

Southern Star — Island Packet 45

Mark Rogers, Berkeley

Mark's voyaging dreams were kindled when he was a teenager back in his native South Africa. He volunteered to help a neighbor build a boat from scratch, and when the guy finally took off, Mark vowed to someday follow his lead.

After moving to San Francisco, he honed his sailing skills in classes at Spinnaker Sailing of San Francisco. Then last fall he and his wife, Molly, and three-year-old daughter, Kendall, headed south with the Baja Ha-Ha fleet and went on to explore the Sea of Cortez together.

On the crossing to Tahiti, Mark will be joined by Michael Sullivan, his best friend's dad, plus young bucks Andy Jenkins and Kurt Talke, as Molly and Kendall have adopted the philosophy that "nothing goes

to weather like a 747."

At the end of the Pacific cruising season, the family plans a two- or three-year respite in New Zealand before venturing on over the top of Oz and through the Indian Ocean to South Africa.

Cutthroat — Island Packet 52

Elise & Roger John, San Diego

Having grown up sailing along the Eastern Seaboard — as far north as Newfoundland — Elise has been dreaming about long-term cruising for decades. By contrast, Roger explains that he "just found out this was my 'lifelong' ambition three years ago!" You guessed it, that's when he hooked up with Elise after moving to San Diego.

They lived aboard for a year, taking every ASA sailing course that was offered, then headed south last fall. Their plan is to jump the puddle, but not the whole puddle. That is, this time around they're headed for Hawaii with a fairly complex plan afterwards to cruise the Pacific Northwest, then return to Mexico, transit the Canal, gunkhole through the Caribbean and along the U.S. East Coast, eventually crossing to the Med.

Although Roger is fairly new to sailing, he's no stranger to adventure and physical challenges, having spent 28 years in the U.S. Army, most of which was in Special Ops. He and Elise will be joined on the crossing by another Green Beret, John Mirus, plus retired LAPD Captain *The 'Southern Star' crew are rarin' to go: L to R are Cap'n Mark, Michael, Andy and Kurt.*



Elise to Roger: "I wanna go cruising aboard 'Cutthroat', and you're coming with me!"

Ed Washington. Whoa! Father Neptune better not mess with this crew!

Moonshadow — Ta Yang 50

Howard & Sheira Hudson Auckland, NZ

Moonshadow's route to French Polynesia hasn't been what you'd call typical. But then Howard and Sheira, aren't exactly typical cruisers either. Howard, a Kiwi airline mechanic, met Sheira in her native NYC when he was there visiting his "best mate" (her former brother-in-law). One thing led to another and, well... fast forward ahead a couple of decades and here they are about to jump the puddle, bound for his native New Zealand to rendezvous with their two adolescent daughters.

During the uneasy aftermath of 9/11, Howard decided to act on a long-held dream and bought this vintage cruiser with the idea of packing up the family and heading out — although Sheira and the kids knew nothing about sailing at the time. During the past 4.5 years the couple and their daughters cruised the Caribbean, transited 'the ditch', explored Ecuador and the Galapagos, then sailed north to Mexico. Having just shipped the kids out to stay with their Kiwi grandparents, Howard and Sheira intend to reach Auckland by Christmas. "Having the kids on board was amazing," says Howard. "You drop the anchor in a new anchorage and within seconds the other boat kids are all around."

Cardea — Vagabond 38

Jim & Ryan Todd, Muskegon, MI

Jim and his 26-year-old son Ryan have only been in Mexico for a few months, but during that time they've struck up many new friendships — one with the father/son crew on *No Regrets*. We congratulate both duos on orchestrating such

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a meaningful way to spend 'quality time' together — no doubt many *Latitude* readers would love to be in their shoes.

Unlike most folks in this year's fleet, the Todds' previous sailing experience was on the Great Lakes, where they cruised Lake Michigan and Lake Huron extensively during the past 15 years.

So how long will they stay 'out there'? "It depends on how I feel," says Jim, "but I could be gone two to 10 years." Ryan, however, says, "I'm planning on rejoining the world in October, 07," quickly adding, "but I have no real need to if I don't want to!"

Howard hooked Sheira long ago. Now he's taking her home to New Zealand.



Jim and Ryan are working toward a grand father-son adventure.



DreamKeeper — Pacific Seacraft 40 Gar Duke & Nicole Friend Sausalito

Both in their early 30s, Gar and Nicole are one of the youngest couples in this year's fleet. "We believe in living life now and making the big adventures happen while we still have our health, drive and wonder," says Nicole.

Both having worked as outdoor educators, they have a keen interest in the environmental issues facing our planet, and they hope their trip will give them a clearer perspective on the current challenges facing the ocean realm. Also, they regard cruising as a "more environmentally sustainable way to travel and live," noting, "We have significantly reduced our environmental footprint."

In recent years, they both took classes at OCSC. This season their game plan is to make the milk run to New Zealand. Next year, they'll head up through Fiji, Vanuatu and New Guinea, then on to Palau, a favorite destination from Nicole's previous travels. Yeah, they both love the underwater world.

Sisiutl — Gulfstar 44 Bob Bechler, Portland

This comfortable 44-footer has been mentioned in *Latitude* so many times in Pacific cruising articles that we can now actually pronounce the name without getting tongue-tied! (It's a Northwest Indian name for a legendary snake-spirit.)

Longtime readers may remember how Bob and his then-wife Laurie were first smitten by the cruising bug: In 1999 they were vacationing in Cabo when the Baja Ha-Ha fleet came in. They watched with envy, deciding then and there to pursue the cruising lifestyle. Four years later they did their first Puddle Jump together. Today, although Laurie is now on another path, Bob has jumped the puddle three times, logging over 30,000 ocean miles in the process — enough to have circumnavigated. "This



These 'DreamKeepers' want to explore remote ocean realms.

time, though, I'm going all the way 'round," says the retired computer consultant. "I've gotta get out of this whirlpool!"

Crewing for him this year are two wide-eyed 25-year-olds who met Bob by chance at a recent Puddle Jumper meeting. Although they are neophyte sailors, they

both come with useful talents: Mark makes his living as a clown — perhaps he can charm some uncooperative gendarmes! — and Isabelle, being a native of Quebec, speaks perfect French.

No Regrets — Cal 39

David & Patrick Kelly, Boulder Creek

For more than one reason, David and his 20-year-old son Patrick have dedicated this voyage to Grandpa — David's dad. Lying on his deathbed, stricken with cancer, he awoke briefly from a coma, looked up into David's eyes and simply said, "No regrets."

David took that as his mantra, symbolic of his intent to make the most of the rest of his life. Because he and Patrick had both been involved with the Santa Cruz Sea Scouts for several years, they were invited to crew on the communications boat for the 2004 Pacific Cup, a 65-ft trawler named *Steves*. That trip ignited their dreams of bluewater voyaging, and within a year they bought this vintage Cal with the inheritance Grandpa had left them.

"Hmm... Yeah, okay. You two look like fun," says 'Sisiutl' Bob. So what if they're novices.



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David and Patrick have 'No Regrets' about catching Carly the willing wench.

Although they were both novice sailors at the time, a year later, in the fall of '06, they entered the Baja Ha-Ha and were one of only a handful of boats that sailed the whole way — for which Cap'n David earned a coveted lime-green T-shirt. The plan now is to island-hop to Kiwiland.

Patrick's girlfriend, self-proclaimed wench Carly Dennis, is a recent addition

to the crew: "Hey, every boat needs a wench," she explains. "Patrick is the boat bitch, because he does all the work, David is the skipper, and I'm the wench!"

**Wintersea — Kelly-Peterson 46
Dr. Jack Wynters, Victoria, BC**

Dr. Jack and his longtime mate Linda have done a lot of sailing together during

the past five years: Alaska, the Queen Charlottes, all around the Gulf and San Juan Islands, and the Oregon Coast. But their trip along the Northern California coast was "just God-awful!" They recall being so elated when they rounded Pt. Bonita and saw the Golden Gate that they were literally jumping up and down with glee!

2007 PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP FLEET

Boat Name	Owners & Crew	Boat Type	Homeport
Adagio	Tim & Pam Burke	Pacific Seacraft 34	N/A
Ali Baba	Timothy R. Lutz	Baba 35	Bodega Bay, CA
Arabella	Mike Fulmor, B Edmonds, J Higbie	40' Ketch	Channel Is, CA
Bold Spirit	Kathi Bailey & Jeff O'Neill	Passport 40	Seattle, WA
Cardea	Jim & Ryan Todd	Vagabond Westwind 38	Muskegon, MI
Cutthroat	Roger & Elise John	Island Packet 485	San Diego, CA
Dirigo	Denny Mosher, D Anderson, T Kane	Catalina Morgan 440	Napa, CA
DreamKeeper	Gar Duke & Nicole Friend	Pacific Seacraft 40	Sausalito, CA
Far Niente	Eric & Gisela Gosch	Island Packet 420	San Diego, CA
Fetching Light	July Fontana, P Holland, M Wapner	Hylas 46	Santa Barbara, CA
Gypsy Soul	Glenn, Barb, George & Larry	Lafitte 44	Duluth, MI
Infinity	Susan Travers & Elba Borgen	Cape George 31	San Francisco CA
Irie	Christian & Poki Breeding	Tahitiana 33	Eliza Island, WA
Katie Lee	Larry, Trinda & Don Littlefield	Passport 45	Belfair, WA
Kosmos	Eric & Christi Grab, Richard Burkland	Nordhavn 43	San Diego, CA
Magnum	Uwe Dobers & Anne Crowley	Peterson 44	San Francisco, CA
Marcy	Peter & Ginger Niemann	Custom 47-ft sloop	Seattle, WA

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Dr. Jack and Linda hope for smooth sailing aboard 'Wintersea.'

With any luck, though, that will be the worst weather they'll see on their entire proposed trip to New Zealand and back — as has been the case for many long-haul sailors who've preceded them.

As cruising sailors often do, Jack and Linda radically changed their plans — just in the past few weeks. "We actually had intentions to sail south to Ecuador



Crew life aboard 'Sassona' is a democracy — they vote on continuing after each leg.

and Chile," explains Linda, "but the more we thought about it, we said, 'Why not head west instead and see the beautiful South Pacific?'"

Moonshadow	Howard & Sheira Hudson.....	Ta Yang 50	Auckland, NZ
Nereida	Jeanne Socrates	Navad 361	Hamble, UK
No Regrets	David & Patrick Kelly, Carly Dennis ...	Cal 39	Boulder Creek, CA
Odessa	Robert Garney & Melissa Closson	West sail 32.....	San Jose, CA
Pacifica	Greg & Melissa Davids.....	Ericson 39-B	Berkeley, CA
Papillon	Jim & Julie Parker	Crowther 50 cat.....	Bokeelia, FL
Reflections	David & Janet Fosh.....	Hallberg-Rassy 42.....	Portsmouth, UK
Rogues Scholarship	M Haley & E Weirauch	Morgan O/I 51	San Diego, CA
Sand Dollar	Don Pratten.....	Crealock 34	Beaux Arts, WA
Sassona	The Alger-Smith family	Truant Triad 37	Quadra Island, BC
Sisiutl	Bob Bechler, M Louch, I Martin.....	Gulfstar 44.....	Seattle, WA
Sol Searcher	Ray & Peggy Wilson	Transpac 49	Long Beach, CA
Southwind	Terry Pope.....	Seamaid 45	Vancouver, BC
Southern Star	Mark Rogers, et al.....	Island Packet 45.....	Emeryville, CA
Splinters Apprentice	Bone & Beth Bushnell	Saltram 36.....	Maryport, UK
Star Struck	Paul & Star Dempsey.....	Maple Leaf 48	Pt Vila, Vanuatu
Surprise	Steve & Susan Chamberlin.....	Schumacher 46.....	Pt. Richmond, CA
Talerra	David & Melanie Boots	Cape George 38.....	Shelton, WA
Volare	Greg & Debbie Cockle	Catalina 42.....	Sydney, AUS
Wintersea	Dr. Jack Wynters & Linda.....	Kelly-Peterson 46.....	Victoria, BC

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Sassona — Truant Triad 37 **The Alger-Smith Family** **Quadra Island, B.C.**

When this good-looking foursome set out from British Columbia last September, they were careful not to establish cruising goals that might be impossible to attain. Instead, they just completed one leg at a time, checked their pulse and took a vote: "After completing each step of the trip, we decided to go farther," explains Leslie, a former B.C. park ranger. "Sometimes the big picture seems overwhelming. One step at a time gets you there."

She and husband David, who worked with the B.C. Fisheries Dept., bought their first boat 11 years ago, but they credit the recent circumnavigations of two other cruising families — former island neighbors — with inspiring their current globe-trotting wanderlust.

Both Genoa, 13, the boat's Ham radio 'officer', and her sister Jordyn, 9, are following a standard B.C. home schooling curriculum, in addition to the education they'll gain from 'the school of life'.



Luckily for Eric and Gisela of 'Far Niente', his brother has no cruising ambitions.

Far Niente — Island Packet 420 **Eric & Gisela Gosch, Hemet, CA**

For the past two years, Eric and Gisela have had one foot in the cruising life while keeping the other firmly planted in the U.S. mainstream. That is, since

bringing *Far Niente* south with the 2003 Baja Ha-Ha fleet, they've been commuter cruising — "doing the Mexican yo-yo," as they say.

Having kindled their cruising dreams through a series of bareboat charters all over the world, they bought this sturdy 42-footer in '95 and began working toward 'the big cruise' shortly afterwards.

Their hero, they say, is Eric's brother, who has agreed to run the family business while they leap-frog across the Pacific to New Zealand. (Thankfully, he's not a sailor, so he's not even jealous.) Speaking of heroes, when nobody volunteered to act as the PV fleet secretary, Gisela accepted the role, spending hours assembling the fleet database, as well as other organizational chores.

Where *Far Niente* will ultimately end up is anybody's guess, but Eric and Gisela have a long list of far-flung destinations on their wish list.

Dirigo — Morgan 44 **Denny Mosher, Napa**

Denny's inspiration for crossing to

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French Polynesia is a bit different than most: While in college in '73, he had a chance to join a shark research team in the Tuamotus. "For six months I lived on a 45-ft sailboat and dove with sharks every day," he recalls. Although based in Rangaroa, he also visited many other islands. "Throughout my working career (in the construction biz), I often thought back fondly of those times, and I've always wanted to relive them." He'll soon get his chance to do just that.

Joining Denny on the cruise will be two highly-experienced salts, Dale Anderson and Terry Kane. All three men have done Baja Ha-Has and crossings to and/or from Hawaii.

Unfortunately, Denny's family isn't into the boating life, so he'll keep his travels relatively short. Plan A is to dive and explore French Polynesian waters until July, then head north to Hawaii, returning to the Bay Area by September.

**Surprise — Schumacher 46
Steve & Susan Chamberlin
Pt. Richmond**



ALL PHOTOS LATITUDE / LADONNA

After 10 years, Jeanne is happy to finally be heading all the way 'round aboard 'Nereida'.

Although already a decade old, *Surprise* is undoubtedly one of the more high tech boats in this year's fleet. Her composite (glass/Kevlar) construction was done by the Ian Franklin yard in

Christchurch, New Zealand — an island nation where she'll probably return to in a year or two. Carrying a fractional rig with masthead spinnakers, she was designed and built for cruising, including her 145 gallons of fuel tankage.

Both Steve, a real estate developer, and Susan, an architect, have many years of racing and offshore sailing under their belts, as have their crew: AJ Benham (aka Nurse Ratched) and John Gillespie (aka Silly Goose).

Wisely, the Chamberlins have chosen not to rush through the South Pacific in a single season. They'll cruise French Polynesia until October, then put *Surprise* on the hard through the cyclone season. Next year, they'll push on to the Cooks, Tonga, Fiji and "who knows?"

Nereida — Navad 361

Jeanne Socrates, Hamble, UK

A retired math professor turned ocean voyager, Jeanne's sailing history is probably the most remarkable of anyone in this year's fleet. She took her first sailing course in 1994 and three years later she and her late husband George bought this

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boat in Sweden and did a shake-down cruise through the North Sea. After two years in European waters, they crossed to the Caribbean, sailed north as far as the Canadian Maritimes, and back to the Eastern Caribbean islands and west to Bonaire. While there, George lost his two-year battle with cancer, and Jeanne decided to continue on alone, as her husband had hoped she would.

Tracing the tracks of her singlehanded endeavors since then would be a dizzying experience: she gunkholed up to Florida, shipped *Nereida* to Vancouver, cruised British Columbia, sailed south to the Sea of Cortez, shipped the boat to Ketchikan, explored SE Alaska, sailed to San Francisco where she joined the Singlehanded TransPac as a late entry, raced to Kauai, then north to Sitka — having to repair her engine en route — and south again to California.

Recently, somewhere along her route, she decided to radically change her style and make a beeline around the globe,



Greg and Melissa of 'Pacifica' claim to be addicted to 'Latitude' and the cruising dream.

beginning with the Puddle Jump — as you read this — and crossing her tracks sometime next year. As spunky as she is, we have no doubt that she'll do it!

***Pacifica — Ericson 39B
Greg & Melissa Davids, Berkeley***

"This is our 'practice cruise'," explains Melissa, who is headed for Hawaii this

time, rather than Tahiti. "We had allowed ourselves 11 months to enjoy Mexico and Hawaii before returning home to start preparing for the next one!"

Greg claims he's been dreaming about the cruising life ever since he read his first *Latitude* years ago. Melissa got the bug — and the reading habit — shortly after meeting Greg. The serious prep started 4.5 years ago when they upgraded to this 39-footer, which they've been living aboard full time ever since.

To the wannabes back home they strongly recommend their 'practice cruise' concept: "It will give you a big taste of what long-term cruising is all about. And, if nothing else, you're virtually guaranteed to make some great friends who will enrich your life."

With that thoughtful comment, we'll take a break until next month, when we'll introduce you to Puddle Jump contingents leaving from Zihuatanejo, La Paz, Mazatlan, Ecuador and California.