

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '07, PT II

— POLYNESIAN RENDEZVOUS

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"Puddle Jump?" you ask. "What the heck is the Pacific Puddle Jump?"

With every passing year, we're reminded that there are a lot more things that we *don't* know about than we *do* know about. However, it just so happens that we *do* know the exact etymology of the curious phrase, 'Pacific Puddle Jump'. You see, we coined it 10 years ago to describe the annual springtime migration of sailors from the West Coast of the Americas to the fabled anchorages of French Polynesia.

If transiting the Atlantic is 'crossing the pond', we reasoned, then why not call a passage across the Pacific, the Puddle Jump? The phrase caught on, and these days sailors from Panama to Papeete are using it to refer to this ambitious 3,000-mile passage.

Even so, we should explain that the Pacific Puddle Jump is not to be confused with a yacht race or a cruising rally. Unlike the former, there is no organized starting date, no one to record the finish times and no pickle dishes to win for finishing first. This is not about competition.

On the contrary, the 'prizes' earned



Ginger won this black pearl at the Zihua fete. Now she and Peter will sail to its home waters on 'Marcy'.



here are a shared sense of accomplishment and the camaraderie between fellow passage-makers that invariably results.

Unlike a cruising rally, Puddle Jump participants don't all start or make landfall at the same places, and their only contact with one another for months may be via the radio waves.

What is a common denominator for all, however, is the challenge of crossing one of the largest patches of open water in all the world's oceans. Due to the enormity of that challenge, we feel it's appropriate to give members of each year's fleet their 15 minutes of fame in these pages. While last month's installment introduced you to the contingent leaving from Puerto Vallarta, this month we'll salute those leaving from Zihua, La Paz, Galapagos and California. Here's wishing them all fair winds, and grand adventures!

As noted last month, Rick's Bar hosted our Zihuatanejo Puddle Jump Kickoff Party, co-sponsored by the Tahiti Tourism organization. At least a half dozen boats jumped off from there:

Bold Spirit — Passport 40 Kathi Bailey & Jeff O'Neill Seattle, WA

If this couple looks familiar, it's probably because they were profiled with last year's fleet. They headed west alright, but when serious engine troubles developed 1,000 miles out, they made the tough decision to abort the trip. Sadly, they had just reached the trade winds.

"We think taking on one ocean at a time is probably a good strategy."

"It's funny," says Jeff, "before we left last year, I would look out over the horizon and say, 'That looks intimidating.' Now, when I look out there I can't wait to go again."

Both he and Kathi have



ALL PHOTOS LATITUDE / ANDY EXCEPT AS NOTED

Engine or no engine, this time Kathi and Jeff are determined to go the distance.

been around the water all their lives, and claim they were both born with a sense of adventure. They both learned to sail in college and, before heading south from Seattle in the spring of '05, they'd tested the waters of the Med, Caribbean and the Pacific Northwest.

A complete circumnavigation has always been in the back of their minds, but, as Kathi explains, "We think taking on one ocean at a time is probably a good strategy."

Marcy — Custom 47-ft sloop Peter & Ginger Niemann, Seattle, WA

"My theory," says Ginger, "is that anybody willing to do this has somebody in their past that planted the seed — someone who dreamt of doing it themselves."

"In our case," explains Peter, "it was my dad, who had a longtime dream of sailing around the world but never did it. Maybe that had something to do with why we're here."

Beyond that, they say they were inspired to head out by "the dark wet winters of Seattle, a vacation to Hawaii and a couple of reminders — such as the premature death of a close friend — that life is short."

Having spent less than a year in Mexico — which they love — they're

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anxious to experience "the culture and history of the South Pacific Islanders and the snorkeling along the way." With an open timetable, a full circumnavigation may be in the cards for them.

Their proposed itinerary is a bit different from most. As Janet was originally from Kenya, their route will extend far beyond the South Pacific.

*"Now, we're finally going the right way."
"West into the tropics!"*

Reflections — Hallberg-Rassy 42 David & Janet Fosh, Portsmouth, UK

David, an Englishman who worked as a director in 'real life', explains that he quit work in 1994, and he and Janet left Portsmouth for the Caribbean shortly afterwards. As with others in the fleet, they credit books they read decades ago with kindling their cruising dreams.

Both longtime sailors, they polished their skills in the waters of France, Spain, Britain and Scandinavia before crossing the Atlantic to sunnier climes. They spent six years in the Caribbean, followed by three years in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. "Now," says Janet, "it's time to see the rest of the world."

They plan to spend a good deal of time visiting places like Mombassa, Tanzania and Zanzibar before rounding the Cape of Good Hope and sailing up the South Atlantic to the Caribbean. There, of course, they'll cross their tracks, completing the big circle!

Splinters Apprentice — Saltram 36 Bone & Beth Bushnell, Maryport, UK

Sometimes it's the most unassuming folks who have the most impressive stories to tell. After years of pipedream-

It's hard not to have a good time at Rick's Bar in Zihua — especially during the Puddle Jump Party. Down in front are Laurent (left) and Stephanie (right) who came all the way from Tahiti to welcome this year's fleet.



Larry and Trinda of 'Katie Lee' have come a long way from their former life as ranchers.

ing about cruising the world — inspired by the Hiscocks' books — Bone and Beth left England in 1994 on an east-about circumnavigation. During the 13 years since, their route has taken them through the Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean to Thailand and Borneo, on to the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, south to Australia, across the Tasman to New Zealand, up to Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, Victoria and Alaska before heading south to Mexico.

"Now, we're finally going the right way," says Beth, a medical practitioner. "West into the tropics!"

"We had a 10-year plan to go cruising," explains Bone, who worked as a mechanical engineer. "But after eight years we said, 'Oh bugger this, let's go.'" With any luck this heavy, double-ended full-keeler will be 'out there' for many more years to come, as Beth and Bone have no plans to bury the anchor any time soon.

Katie Lee — Passport 45 Larry & Trinda Littlefield Belfair, WA

Not all world cruisers grew up around the water. Take Larry, for example: "I grew up on a cattle ranch in eastern New Mexico and was afraid of the water," he admits.

Trinda, however, is quick to add: "Not me! I actually always



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liked the ocean."

Decades ago, the couple had no intentions of exploring the world under sail. But when one of Larry's coworkers invited him to crew on a trip from



Unlike most Jumpers, Debbie and Greg of 'Volare' are simply heading home.

San Diego to La Paz, he found that he really liked the sailing life. Back home in Tucson, he and Trinda sharpened their sailing skills on a couple of small Catalinas. Then later, after moving to Seattle, they went a giant step further by trading their house for this boat, and began their cruising adventures.

After two seasons in Mexico, they intended to head west in 2000, but a stock market disaster wiped out their savings. They were forced to leave the boat on the hard at San Carlos and go back to work.

Today, they're a bit older, but a lot wiser, and they're thrilled to finally be chasing the sun over the horizon. Larry's brother Don will crew on the passage west.

Volare — Catalina 42 Greg & Debbie Cockle, Sydney, AUS

"Go now," advise Greg and Debbie, who are both native Australians, "time

is shorter than you think."

When you learn about their background, you know they speak those words in all seriousness. After cruising the Western Pacific with their then-young daughter during the mid-80s, they lived in Asia for 15 years, eventually becoming anxious to get back into the cruising life. They were all set to go again a few years ago when Debbie became very sick. They sold the boat and ditched the cruising plan.

Today, though, thanks to the miracle of modern medicine, they've rekindled the dream. "Now that I've got my new ticker (artificial heart valve), we're finally ready to go again," says Debbie in her cheerful Aussie brogue. The plan is to sail *Volare* home to Bateman's Bay, a day's sail south of Sydney, by Christmas. They bought this comfy Catalina on the West Coast sight unseen less than a year ago. Next season they hope to explore Vanuatu, Fiji and perhaps the Marshall Islands.

Magnum — Peterson 44 Uwe Dobers & Anne Crowley San Francisco, CA

Uwe and Anne used to be regulars at the Golden Gate YC Beer Can Races, but apparently that wasn't quite enough

excitement for them. In the late '90s they flew to Australia, bought a 52-ft gaff-rigged yawl in Darwin, and set off on a circuit that led them through Indonesia, Micronesia, Palau, Truk and the Solomons before returning to 'Oz' ("broke").

They came home to the Bay Area to replenish their cruising kitty — he is a general contractor — and bought this vintage Peterson in 2000. When we met them in Zihua in March, they'd only been back in the cruising life a few months. The notable addition to the crew this time 'round is sweet little Cara, who is 4. "We needed crew and couldn't find anyone," jokes Uwe, "so we made our own."

With their sights ultimately set on New Zealand this season, Uwe and a friend, Maxime Genauzeau, will make the crossing to the Marquesas, where

Anne and Cara will fly in and join *Magnum* for the rest of the adventure. Like their last cruise, they plan to keep traveling until they run out of money.

Talerra — Cape George 38 David & Melanie Boots Shelton, WA

"Our cruising dream started 30 years ago with a letter of proposal," says Melanie. She and David, both then in their 20s, had fallen in love not long after he returned to California from an eight-year circumnavigation with his family. David pitched what, at the time, seemed like a perfectly workable plan: She would move up to Washington state with him, they'd work hard for a year or two, save up about \$10,000, get a boat and go cruising.

"Of course real life set in," she explains, "including careers, houses, raising a son and building our ideal boat, a Cape George 38, all of which required a bit more time than the letter mentioned!" He is a contractor and she's a teacher.

Cruising has changed enormously since David's 69 - 77 trip — we hope to share some of his insights in a future article. For now, though, he and Melanie are off to create some new memories, hoping to reach New Zealand by the end of the season — a place David's family lingered when he was a teen. We'd bet that *Talerra* will eventually complete a full circumnavigation.

Anne and Cara will skip the passage, but will fly out to meet Uwe and 'Magnum' in the islands.



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Aboard 'Talerra', Melanie will help David retrace the steps of his earlier circumnavigation.

Arriving only recently in Puerto Vallarta, Papillon missed our coverage last month of PV departures:

**Papillon — Crowther 50 cat
Jim & Julie Parker, Bokeelia, FL**

This big cat is the only multihull we know of that's making the crossing this year — and she's a beaut. Custom built as a world cruiser in 2001, her Loch Crowther design incorporates many of the owners' specifications.

This Florida couple should be an inspiration to new sailors: "Neither of us had sailed before taking Steve Colgate's Learn to Sail and Bareboat Charter course in 1994," explains Julia. She followed up with an Indian Ocean passage with offshore instructor Nancy Erley, and that same year they began planning the construction of *Papillon*.

Since setting out in 2003, they've logged over 14,000 miles, including a circuit south from Charleston, west across the Caribbean, up to Hawaii via the Galapagos, across to B.C., and



PAPILLON

south to Mexico.

With their careers as middle managers in manufacturing now a distant memory, they intend to eventually complete a full circumnavigation, via South Africa. They obviously love the cruising life, although Julia observes, "Before going cruising, I never had to wax my house!"

Although it's not commonly done, this year, several boats jumped off from La Paz:

**Infinity —
Cape George 31
Susan Travers
& Elba Borgen
San Francisco CA**

If Susan and Elba were politicians, they might be branded as 'flip-floppers'. They'd originally planned to jump off this year, but worries about the El Niño effect had them threatening to delay. Ultimately, though,

they embraced the attitude that 'it'll be what it'll be'. After all, is there really any such thing as normal weather anymore?

Having bailed on successful entrepreneurial endeavors in real estate and small business while still relatively young, Susan, Elba and their Havanese

Jim and Julie have logged over 14,000 miles aboard 'Papillon' since 2003.

pup, Lola — who is *really* young — have a long list of 'must see' destinations for their open-ended cruise, including some in the Med. They're not comfortable promising that they'll sail all the way around the world, but they can guarantee that they'll be "sailing around" for the foreseeable future.



INFINITY

Elba, Susan and their mascot, Lola, are keeping their plans loose aboard 'Infinity'.

**Sand Dollar — Crealock 34
Don Pratten, Beaux Arts, WA**

"You only live once," notes Don, "so why pass on with regrets?" With that in mind, this retired dentist apparently began seriously considering this South Pacific adventure only after arriving in Mexico two years ago.

We don't have a lot of background on Don, but we do know that he has sailed the Northwest extensively during the past 30 years. Recently, though, Don seems to have developed an affinity for sunnier climes. Sailing solo, he plans to island-hop to New Zealand this season, then reassess his options.

**Irie — Tahitiana 33
Christian & Poki Breeding
Eliza Island, WA**

Considering that they're still in their mid-30s, both Christian and Poki already have a lot of adventures under their belts.

Christian has had the cruising bug ever since he accepted an offer to crew from Jamaica to Panama aboard the Dufour 31 *Waterhoen*, back in 1992. The next year he rejoined the boat in New Zealand for a loop up to Vanuatu and down to Australia. Somewhere out there he met Poki, who is English. They did a South Pacific circuit together, toured New Zealand and returned to the U.S., broke but happy.

"We got married, found *Irie* as an unfinished, forgotten project, rusted

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Poki and Christian are feeling 'Irie' about returning to their old stompin' grounds.

through on deck and sinking on the hard, bought her for a song in '97 and we've been preparing for this trip ever since." They set sail from Washington state in '03, doing a shakedown trip to Alaska before heading south to Mexico. Now, they intend to reach New Zealand

by the end of the season. Advice to others: "Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think."

**Odessa — Westsail 32
Rob Garney & Melissa Closson
San Jose, CA**

Rob and Melissa are 30-something dot.comers who "retired" from the Bay Area scene three years ago to begin a radically different chapter of their lives. They bought this stout double-ender (their first boat), sailed her to San Carlos, where they worked on her for a solid year — yeah, even in summer — then spent the past two years cruising the Sea of Cortez.

Now, they're ready to take the next big leap, out into the vast South Pacific. "We hope to visit the smaller, out-of-the-way islands," says Melissa. "For hurricane season, we're still up in the air as to whether we will head down to New Zealand or up to the Marshall Islands."

To would-be cruisers back home, Rob and Melissa offer this food for thought: "The most expensive item on

any boat is time. Smaller boats with the basics allow you to go sooner. . . Don't listen to all the 'should dos' and 'must

After two years in the Sea of Cortez, Melissa and Rob are ready to make new landfalls.



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haves' that you hear all the time."

A number of boats will be heading to French Polynesia via the Galapagos Islands this year. We were only able to correspond with one, however: Fetching Light.

**Fetching Light — Hylas 46
Judy Fontana & Phil Holland
Santa Barbara, CA**

Although Judy has been sailing since age 20, Phil got into the sport only 10 years ago — but he *really* got into it! Together, they bought a 34-footer for Channel Islands cruising and chartered overseas. John consumed dozens of nautical books and took an instructional offshore course with John and Amanda Neal. "Finally we did the financial homework and decided to purchase and outfit a boat for extensive cruising," recalls Judy, a self-proclaimed cruising addict. "I could not have been more delighted!"

They bought *Fetching Light* in September of '03, did the Baja Ha-Ha rally a month later, then did a circuit from

P.V. to Hawaii, north to Kodiak, Alaska, eventually returning to Mexico. This past New Year's eve they left Zihua and sailed nonstop to Salinas, Ecuador. With the boat safely berthed at the Puerto Lucia YC, they then toured Ecuador and Peru for six weeks before setting sail with crewman Mike Wapner. *Fetching Light* should be in New Zealand in time for the summer season there.

Last, but not least, are two boats leaving directly from California.

**Kosmos — Nordhavn 43
Eric & Christi Grab, San Diego**

There are few unique things about



this Puddle Jump attempt. First, *Kosmos* is a motoryacht. In the decade that we've been keeping tabs on this annual westward migration we can't recall another motoryacht ever attempting the crossing.

"Please don't hold it against us," asks Eric. "We're different from the normally loud, bouncing, fuel guzzling wake monsters you see along the coast." This 43-footer was built for ocean cruising,

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powered by a single 105-hp diesel with a range of 3,300 miles. We assume she'll make it safely to the Marquesas, but we wouldn't want to pay her refueling bill once she gets there!

Unfortunately, we have little other info on this crew, but we wish them the best of luck and mild seas.

Tuscany — Islander 34 Ciel & Angela Tierra San Francisco, CA

A lot of Islander 34s have gone off cruising during the past 30 years, but we'll bet none of them were quite like this one.

Ciel, who was trained as a marine woodworker, bought this boat as a bargain fixer-upper seven years ago and, well, he's the first to admit that he got a bit carried away. From stem to stern, he has replaced every bit of her original guts with fine ash and mahogany joinery. With Angie's help, he's given *Tuscany's* formerly modest interior the feel of a custom wooden yacht. Among her unique features are a roll-out computer drawer, a disappearing flat-field moni-



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Angie helped Ciel convert 'Tuscany' into a nautical work of art.

tor, and a double-hinged mahogany table with marquetry inlay of a sailboat approaching the Golden Gate.

Angie, a registered nurse from the midwest, was new to the sailing world when she met Ciel a few years ago. But she quickly bought into his long-held dream of bluewater cruising. At 30 and 29, respectively, Ciel and Angie are probably the youngest owners jumping the puddle this year. "We want to have this big adventure," explains Angie, "before we have kids and a mortgage!"

Their unconventional route plan is to sail from San Francisco to Santa Barbara as a shakedown, then head directly from there to the Marquesas. Future plans are open-ended.

We hear through the coconut telegraph that at least 60 boats are 'jumping the puddle' this year — although some slipped under our radar.

Look for a recap with all the details of this year's crossing in an upcoming issue.

— **latitude/at**