
Latitude 38

CHASING THE SETTING SUN —

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP 2011 PT. 2

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Most sailors are familiar with the Panama Canal's most popular nickname: The Ditch. But we like to think of the venerable waterway as The Great Funnel, because every winter and spring sailors from all over the world converge on this 50-mile track through the Americas en route to long-dreamed-about anchorages in French Polynesia, and the patchwork

own boat ever since," says Midene. Although they're now based in Texas, they claim they "lived and breathed *Latitude 38*" during their 9-year stay in Sacramento. Are they anxious about making the jump? "Oh there's fear," admits Michael, "but we handle it. We raised five children, so we're used to living in fear!" They now also have 11 grandkids.

WorldWind — Hiscock 40

Thomas Colligan, St. Pete Beach, FL

Cap'n Tom probably has more sea miles under his belt than any other member of the fleet. After all, he started sailing 60 years ago and had a career as a merchant marine officer. He's also designed a few boats along the way. Why is he heading off to Tahiti now, at age 67? "After easing into retirement, a good friend warned me I was rusting away in my waterfront condo in Florida, so I sold it, bought this boat, and here I am!" When we met him, he was interviewing crew for the crossing.

Ocean Air — Beneteau 473

Hilton de la Hunt, GBR

One of Hilton's current goals is to combine "high adventure and peace of mind." How? By singlehandedly this recently purchased sloop to Thailand, where he intends to start a charter boat fleet and live the good life — that's where the 'peace of mind' comes in. If things work out, *Ocean Air* will be the first of 10 boats in his charge.

Alcheringa II — Van de Stadt 44

Bill Campbell & Benita Richardson Edmonton, AB

According to Bill, the boat's name means something like The Garden of

Eden in the traditions of Aussie aboriginal spirituality. "Of course, when we chose it we didn't know how difficult it would be to pick out on the radio," admits Benita. After buying this sturdy yard-built ferrocement sloop in the Netherlands eight years ago, they crossed to the Caribbean and were seduced into lingering for six years. "We never thought we'd go around the world," explains Benita, "but about year ago we decided to break out of the Caribbean and head west."



ALL PHOTOS LATITUDE / ANDY

Finally, Midene and Michael will get to see the islands from the deck of 'This Side Up'.

of sunny tropical islands that lies beyond. As regular readers know, we call that 3,000-mile passage to the islands the Pacific Puddle Jump.

At our second annual Panama Puddle Jump Sendoff Party February 12 — generously co-hosted by the Balboa YC — we had a chance to meet dozens of international cruisers. Some had been out exploring for many years, while others were relative newcomers to the cruising life. But they all shared at least a few common attributes: thirst for adventure and genuine curiosity about the people and places they were about to 'discover'.

As a follow-up to last month's profiles of Puerto Vallarta-based passage-makers, we'll introduce you here to some representatives of the Panama fleet. May they all arrive safely with precious memories of the crossing to savor. (The complete fleet list for this year's loosely defined Pacific Puddle Jump rally can be found at www.pacificpuddlejumps.com.)

This Side Up — Kanter Atlantic 45 Michael & Midene Reynolds Seabrook, TX

Michael and Midene got a taste of the South Pacific 15 years ago, but back then they were soaking in the scenery from the deck of a cruise ship. "We've been dreaming about cruising those islands on our



Bill and Benita finally broke out of the Caribbean. They've now pointed 'Alcheringa II' west.

Quicksilver — Nautique Santonge 44

Mike & Hilde Gill Hamble River, GBR

Mike and Hilde have owned this lovely boat for 18 years, and we'd bet much of that time they've been looking forward to someday making a world cruise. They



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No wonder they're smiling. Hilde and Mike have waited 18 years to make the Jump.

finally got started in September with an Atlantic crossing. Four months later they were in Panama, poised for a crossing to the Galapagos before making the big jump to the Marquesas. "We're really looking forward to the whole of French Polynesia," says Mike. At the end of the season they'll probably find themselves in New Zealand, where they'll assess their future options.

Wadda — Allied Mistress 39 **Moe Wick & Margaret Johnson** **Valley City, ND**

"Hmm. . . Wadda. Is that like, 'water'?" "No, in order to understand our boat's name," Margaret explains, "you have to understand cricket: It's like 'Wadda catch!'" The boat's hailing port is also a bit curious, but as we learned, Moe hails from North Dakota. He and Margaret picked this boat up in Florida 12 years ago at the very beginning of their sailing careers. They're now taking her across the Pacific to Australia, where Margaret was born and raised.

Kindred Spirit III — Venus 46 **Brad & Gloria Smith** **Philadelphia, PA**

Since setting out from Philly 10 years ago, Brad and Gloria have seen many different panoramas — stretching from Nova Scotia to Cape Horn. And they're nowhere near close to settling down. They've learned to keep their itinerary loose, but they're absolutely committed to making one Pacific stopover: "Our boat was designed by Bob Salthouse of Auckland," Brad explains. "A bunch

of them were built, but oddly enough, Bob's never had a ride on one. So we've promised to change that."

They hope to circumnavigate. "But we're not totally committed to the idea," says Brad with a laugh, "you see, we don't like to tack."

Good News — Cascade 42 **Michael Gallagher, Deer Park, WA**

In our experience, Michael has taken a unique approach to making friends while cruising: Being a chiropractor by trade, wherever he goes he offers free bone-cracking services to the people he meets, especially in remote areas. It's a gift that's opened many doors for him and led to many memorable experiences. His plan is to sail north to Hawaii after



"It's a deal," says Michael (right), as Chris signs on as crew.

touring French Polynesia, then eventually circle back home to the Northwest. Although he often sails solo, in Panama he picked up a fit, cheerful crewman named Chris who'll stand watches during the jump. It's worth noting that Chris has gotten at least three different rides pretty easily since setting out from Florida last year.

Pelagic — 46' custom cat **Graeme Arnall & Iris Schepelmann** **Gladstone, AUS**

"We're basically on the homeward run now," explains Iris. After building this cat themselves to a Crowther design, they headed west in 2002 across the Indian Ocean, through the Med to Northern Europe, across to the U.S. and down to the Caribbean. Having proven herself during all those miles of travel, *Pelagic* is obviously a sound vessel, but we'd never before heard of a cruising cat built out of steel. "Due to my engineer-

ing background, it was a material I was comfortable with," explains Graeme. "We sacrificed some speed, but we've got a very strong boat that's really comfortable at anchor due to her weight."

Shango — Pacific Seacraft 40 **Roger Block & Amy Jordan** **Newburyport, MA**

Having grown up near Boston, both Roger and Amy started sailing before they were teenagers. They'd owned at least three previous sailboats before upgrading to this Bill Crealock-designed cruiser five years ago. And they intend to take her around the world. What do they value most about the cruising life? "The sense of independence you gain and the natural beauty you're exposed to," says Roger. "It's a great lifestyle to experience as a couple."

Reality — Flying Dutchman 50 **Vaughn & Sharon Hampton** **San Francisco, CA**

"We set out from San Francisco with a plan to go around the world in seven years," explains Vaughn with a laugh. "We're now 13 years into it and still have quite a ways to go!" "But now at least we're going in the right direction," Sharon adds, "downwind!" When they set out in '98 all their cruising friends were headed to the South Pacific, but they were determined to go to Europe, where they eventually spent five years. "By the time we got to the Red Sea," says Sharon, "we figured we probably would have had a lot more fun if we'd been heading in the



Vaughn and Sharon of 'Reality' are happy to finally be heading in the "right direction."

opposite direction." So this time they're happily sailing westabout. What are their favorite places so far? Turkey and Panama. "Although neither of them was on our radar when we started out."

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Idyll Island — Voyager 440 **Derek Gale & Cathryn Corbett** **Victoria, BC**

Although we don't know Derek and Cathryn well, we think they're pretty wise. Not only did they take a sabbatical 14 years ago and spend a year sailing the



We have little doubt that Derek and Cathryn of 'Idyll Island' are still in love.

Caribbean with their son, but three years ago, when they were ready for another stint of cruising, they flew to the Virgin Islands and bought this boat there, in the heart of the prime Caribbean cruising region. Having spent the past three years exploring the islands of the Antilles, they're now ready to explore the Pacific. "We'll focus on the out-of-the-way places, as we always do," says Cathryn.

Endorfin — Coronado 35 **The Guesnel family** **Sault Sainte Marie, ON**

It's not often that a big, strapping guy introduces himself as "Swabbie." But

Guy was thrilled when his parents asked him to crew to Tahiti aboard 'Endorfin'.



once we got to know this family crew we understood why. While his parents, Gilbert and Katrina, have been sailing for 15 years, young Guy (aka Swabbie) has only been at it for two weeks! "I always assumed I'd never leave Canada," says the heavily tattooed recruit, "but when Dad asked if I wanted to go, it didn't take me long to say, 'Sure!'" After visiting relatives in Australia, they hope to go all the way around.

New Morning — Custom Paine 54 **Russ Irwin & Fay Mark** **Sausalito, CA**

"Sailing to French Polynesia hasn't just been a dream for us, it's been the dream," says Fay. "We both got into sailing early in life," she explains. "Not long after we met we started talking casually about the idea of sailing around the world together." This custom-built



Russ and Fay are thrilled with their new custom-built ride, 'New Morning'.

54-footer is a lot of boat for two people to sail, but she's a spectacular ride for crossing oceans. They had her custom-built in Maine, and took possession in the spring of 2008. "While cruising since then, a lot of the world cruisers we've met warned us not to spend too much time in the Caribbean. 'The Caribbean is great,' they'd say, 'but the South Pacific is awesome!'"

Irma — Hallberg-Rassy 40 **Otakar & Jana Hons** **Praha, CZE**

You don't often meet sailors from the landlocked Czech Republic, but Otakar and Jana are not typical Czechs. They were introduced to sailing 10 years ago on a Mediterranean



yacht charter. They honed their skills later by chartering on their own, then did offshore trips from Gibraltar to the Canaries and from France to Croatia. In 2009 they made a giant leap by buying this ocean-ready 40-footer in Sweden, where their much-anticipated round-the-world cruise began.



Of course Jana and Otakar are happy. They're heading to Tahiti aboard the lovely 'Irma'.

Sailaway — Motiva 45 **Werner & Anne Overhaus** **Bremen, DEU**

We can only imagine what it's like to find yourself sailing in the sun-baked tropics after beginning your sailing career in the ice-cold waters of the North and Baltic Seas. That's precisely what Werner and Anne have experienced, and they're lovin' it. Having upgraded from a heavy steel boat to this sleek fiberglass beauty, their plans are open. "We haven't

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Rafted up after transiting the Miraflores Locks, two cruisers head west toward the Bridge of the Americas and the Pacific beyond.

ruled out a full circumnavigation, but really, we just want to live aboard in warm areas." Knowing how cold it can get in central Germany, where they're from, we can understand why that would be a high priority.

Two Amigos — Gulfstar 50 Bruce Stevens & Clark Nicholson Dana Point, CA

This curious pair obviously gets along famously despite the fact that they have fundamentally different personalities. "He's a gentleman; I'm a dog," explains Bruce, who is a former U.S. Marine and cop. "I don't have a leash," adds Clark, "so I let him do anything he wants." Wonderful memories from a trip to Polynesia

These 'Two Amigos' are about as similar as oil and water, but they're happy shipmates.



30 years ago inspired Clark to head west this year, while Bruce's motivations are more primal: "To meet women all over the world!"

Rio — Tartan 4300 George Greenberg Steamboat, CO

When we met George in Panama he was solo, and anxiously waiting for at least one of several friends to commit to the upcoming passage. If necessary, he was prepared to go it alone. So how does a guy from Steamboat Springs, CO, end up on the brink of a 3,000-mile ocean crossing. "Well, when I was young I read a lot about

Lewis and Clark." Apparently that sparked his lust for high-risk adventures, and today his cruising plans are open-ended.

Pyewacket II — Aleutain 51 Noel & Jackie Parry, Jervis Bay, AUS

"We enjoyed cruising the Pacific so much during a trip in 2005, that we decided buy a boat on the West Coast in order to take in the whole stretch of islands," explains Jackie. After cruising previously on a 34-footer, their priority was to find the longest waterline they could afford. They eventually found this 51-footer in San Rafael. So what favorite places are they eager to revisit? "Actually, it's a bit hard to find a place you don't like," says Noel. "We're going to try some different islands, but I don't think you can go wrong no matter which route you take."

Aroha — Jeanneau 42 Eric & Monica Schwartz Nice, FRA

When we asked Eric, who is French, and Monica, who is Austrian, what was the meaning of their boat's name, they both laughed. "Well, we *think* it means 'love' in Tahitian. We sure hope that's right, but we're not really certain because we looked it up on the Internet!" explains Monica. Even before they met, Eric had ideas about going cruising. "He talked about it for a long time," recalls Monica. "Then one day we just did it!" They left France three years ago, and now, as they head to the South Pacific, their itinerary is yet to be determined.

Theofania — Vagabond 39 The Ivanov family St. Petersburg, RUS

In all the years that we've been reporting on the Puddle Jump, this is the first time we've ever encountered a group of Russians. But Maxim and his wife Natalia tell us there are others. Setting out from their home on the bitter-cold Baltic Sea nine years ago, they sailed all the way to Colombia in a boat they built themselves before upgrading to this sturdy Ron Amy design in Cartagena. They claim they're definitely heading west this season, but Panama has had a strong grip on them for the past four years. In



If the 'Theofania' crew can break loose of Panama, they'll soon anchor in a Tahitian lagoon.

fact their youngest daughter, Polina, was born there. Their elder daughter, Xenia, will help crew on the crossing as will a young friend, Tatiana Matrekhina.

Because a continuous parade of cruisers passes through Panama at this time of year, the folks you met in these pages represent only a small sampling of this year's roster of westbound voyagers. But we hope we've proved our contention that they're a truly diverse group.

Many of the sailors profiled here met for the first time at our Balboa YC fiesta, and many more will get acquainted after the crossing at the annual Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous, June 25-27. No doubt they'll be sharing boatloads of passage tales during that three-day fun-fest, and with any luck you'll be able to read some of their anecdotes this summer in our annual Pacific Puddle Jump Recap article.

Until then, please join us in wishing this year's fleet fair winds and the best of luck during the crossing.

— **latitude/andy**