

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06, PT I

— CHASING DOWN THE SUN

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PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06

Many have the dream, but few fulfill its challenge.

Walk any dock, talk to any longtime sailor, and the odds are better than 50/50 that he or she has long dreamed of becoming a bluewater passage-maker — of simply casting off the shackles of the workaday world to live the life of a modern-day vagabond. In reality, though, relatively few ever get beyond the pipedreaming stage.

It takes strong convictions to leave the comfort and security of life ashore behind in pursuit of the cruising life. The folks you'll meet in these pages have done just that. We think of them as 'the lucky ones' whose thirst for adventure has inspired them to tune out the voices of practicality and make the necessary sacrifices to get 'out there', voyaging under sail. As you read this, many of them are now chasing the setting sun over the horizon en route to eye-popping landfalls at the fabled isles of the Marquesas.

We like to call the annual springtime migration from the Mexican mainland to the outer islands of French Polynesia the Pacific Puddle Jump. This 3,000-mile trip can be gruelling and exhausting, yet also exhilarating beyond imagining; a series of highs and lows that are dramatically accentuated by the sheer magnitude of the journey. This is, in fact, the longest patch of open water a sailor will face if he or she circumnavigates the globe via the tropics.

As in years past, we flew down to Puerto Vallarta in late February to meet as many of this year's fleet members as possible. At a kickoff party held in their honor at the Vallarta YC — cohosted by *Latitude*, the Club and Paradise Village Resort and Marina — we spent time with each crew, learning about their cruising ambitions and the inspirations which helped nudge them toward this bold

Unlike some, John and Donna know exactly what they're getting into.



adventure.

Meanwhile, a second group was staging for departure 200 miles to the south at Zihuatanejo. We'll profile them in these pages next month.

Now, however, let us begin introducing you to the Pacific Puddle Jump Class of 2006:

Kohilo — Hans Christian 33 John & Donna McVea, Seattle

As many Puddle Jumpers head west, they question whether they'll like this new lifestyle of ocean voyaging. But not John and Donna. They've both been adequately 'road tested' on previous trips.

From '95 to '97, John, a lifelong sailor, crewed for Jerry and Sue Knecht aboard their Moody 42 *Nightwatch* during their fast-paced circumnavigation.

Many years ago, Sue took off cruising with her husband, who'd been given only a year and a half to live. She loved the cruising life and, amazingly, it bolstered her husband's health. They cruised together for nine years along the Eastern Seaboard and Caribbean before he passed.

Years later, in 2004, Donna and John found each other via *www.match.com*. We suspect that they felt a special connection right from the start. Seven months later they bought this boat, with the intention of cruising together; they were married last April and headed south in August.

At present the game plan is to island-hop to Australia, then circle back home. However, Donna says she's curious to see "if John can talk her into going further."

Nereid — Valiant 40 Ray & Judy Emerson, Anchorage

One of the pleasant surprises when getting acquainted with this year's batch of Puddle Jumpers was learning that there were two vintage Valiant 40s on the roster, one crewed by an eager young sailor and his lovely wife, and the other crewed by his spunky parents. We're told they will more or less cruise in tandem, yet both couples joke that they are glad they have their own boat to retreat to!

Ray, a marine biologist by profession, claims that a novel he read in the mid-'60s first got him thinking about voyaging. He tested his enthusiasm when he got a chance to crew aboard the famous 76-ft racing ketch *Kialoa II* on a post-TransPac delivery from Hawaii to Fiji



If you see two Valiant 40s rafted together, it's probably Ross, Laura, Ray and Judy.

— but that trip was not all fun. What really got his cruising juices flowing, though, was a father and son bareboat charter through the San Juans years later. Right after the charter, while the



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inspiration was still burning in both Ray and his son Ross, someone introduced them to Valiants, and before long they each bought one.

It has taken a while for Judy to warm up to the cruising idea, but after three years of living aboard, she is now fully committed. To those guys whose wives are reluctant, Ray offers the following: "Just get her to go along with it for a while, and let a quiet passage on a moonlit night work its magic."

New Dawn — Valiant 40

Ross & Laura Emerson, Anchorage

You've gotta like Ross and Laura's story: Having spent her whole life in



While cruising the South Pacific, Cameron, 11, will be home-schooled by his willing parents, Tom and Cynthia aboard 'Arctic Fox'.

Alaska, Laura was into winter sports, but not watersports. So when Ross — who learned to sail while attending UC Santa Cruz — suggested that they take their honeymoon aboard a sailboat, she initially said, "No way!" Eventually she gave in, though, and two weeks after returning from a glorious honeymoon charter in the British Virgins, she asked Ross when they could depart on a world voyage!

Two months later they bought *New Dawn* — sistership to Ross' parents' boat — and moved aboard the following spring (April 2004). Then, last spring they set sail, first from Washington to Alaska, then south to Mexico.

They hope to be in New Zealand by Christmas, but their plans now are open-ended. Ross sees this adventure



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as a means for him and his bride "to develop as a couple in ways that are rarely encountered on land."

Arctic Fox — Valiant 40 The Bowie Family, Portland, OR

Young Cameron, 11, says he's known since he was a little kid about his parents' dream of voyaging under sail. Although he misses his friends back home, he's made friends with several other cruising kids and hopes to reconnect with them again during his travels. He'll be home-schooled along the way, and the plan is to return within three years — in time for Cameron to start high school.

Although the whole family seems equally committed to this adventure today, apparently it was Tom (aka Dad) who's had fantasies of bluewater cruising in the South Pacific for decades. It took a bit of coaxing to get Cynthia (Mom) to sign off on the plan, but at this point the whole family is rarin' to go. Plan A is to get to the Marquesas, then assess whether to head for 'Oz' or Hawaii.



"Say Paddy," says Alison, "how about sailing me to Australia. That cruise ship was a drag."

Zafarse — Baltic 42 DP Paddy & Alison Barry, Australia

We thought the term 'zafarse' sounded African, but it's actually Spanish, meaning 'to break away'. And that's precisely what Paddy and Alison are about to do.

Theirs is not a typical story, though. Alison, a native Australian, crossed to the U.S. aboard a cruise ship on a one-way ticket. It was after meeting Paddy, a lifelong boater, that she first got into sailing. "You could say I jumped in with both feet," she says in her delightful Aussie brogue.

Paddy proposed recently at La Cruz, and they plan to tie the knot, so to speak, upon arrival in the Marquesas. After-

wards, he'll sail her home to Byron Bay, Australia — the home, incidentally, of Crocodile Dundee.

Lawur — Ron Holland 43 The Schmid Family Santa Cruz

You've got to admire Robert and Niki. They had the guts to leave good jobs in high tech in order to pursue their dream of cruising with their kids, Sebastian, 9, and Benjamin, 6. And they're only one of several families heading 'out there' this year. These kids have become good buddies with the Martin kids of *Ohana Kia*. "In fact," says Robert, "The Schmid and Martin families hang out together so much folks are starting to refer to us as 'the Schmartins!'"

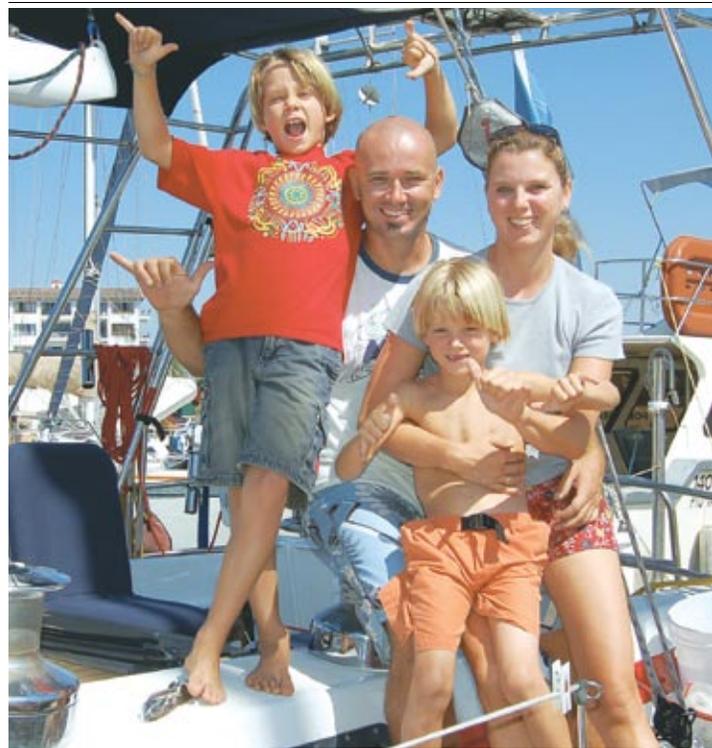
Robert and Niki, both now in their late 30s, are originally from Austria, but came to Santa Cruz with the high tech boom. They'd windsurfed in Europe, but their initiation to (boat) sailing was here on the Left Coast, with lessons at Pacific Yachting and Sailing.

For now, the family is keeping their cruising plans flexible: "We'll go until we run out of fun or money."

Serenity — Westsail 32 Eva & Jim Moresco San Diego

Among this year's Puddle Jumpers, this bright young couple is probably the most unlikely pair to find themselves sailing west over the horizon. But we give them a lot of credit for their fortitude — and their willingness to admit some embarrassing moments.

What Eva and Jim lack in experience, they make up for with youthful exuberance.



With their sweet boat to take them, the Schmid's might eventually sail back to Europe.

Their cruising fantasies began when Eva read *Dove*, the epic novel about a young kid singlehanded around the world. She soon gobbled up more books on voyaging and slowly coaxed Jim to share her dreams.

They were both graduate students in neuroscience back in January of 2002, when they made the decision to cruise the South Pacific. Having now achieved their PhDs, they bought this sturdy Westsail just last spring. "We were real novices at the time," admits Eva. "We were embarrassed to tell the boat broker that we didn't even know how to motor the boat out of the slip!" Thankfully, they've learned a lot since then, and are now heading west with cautious confidence. Hopefully Lady Luck will smile down on them.

Laule'A — Perry 47 Will Cloud, San Francisco

Here's another aptly named boat. Laule'a means freedom in Hawaiian.

Will, a retired computer guy, knows a thing or two about the cruiser blues. An aborted attempt to go cruising with his wife in 2001 eventually led to divorce. Sometime later, however, he fell in love again, and that relationship brought him to his current 'mission': His plan is to sail all the way to Thailand to reconnect with his Thai sweetheart. Eventually, they'll cruise on further from there.

Will was a California beach kid who learned to sail at age 10. He tells a great story about getting swept out to sea from

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Seal Beach by a strong breeze aboard a heavy wooden rowboat. He spent a terrifying, yet exhilarating night at sea and, he recalls, "I rowed into Catalina's Avalon Harbor the next day with the pride of Columbus arriving at the New World."

Crewing on the trip west will be Scott McGee, a singlehander who tragically lost his boat and everything he owned in a blow at Santa Barbara last year.

Scot Free — Bruce Roberts 36 Gerry & Donna Beauregard, Victoria

After two years cruising Mexico, Gerry & Donna figure they're ready to jump the big puddle, and will keep going "as long as we both have more good days than bad."

Although he grew up in landlocked Saskatchewan, Gerry's been dreaming of sailing the South Pacific since he was a kid. Donna, a native of Vancouver, grew up near the water, but it took a bit of convincing to get her to commit to this adventure. "When we decided to go," recalls Gerry, "our whole family thought we were crazy — and they still do!"

In contrast to many Jumpers who hopscotch across the Pacific in one season, Gerry and Donna plan to spend at least two seasons in the islands en route to Australia, in order to see as much as possible. Joining them on the passage to French Polynesia will be their adult son Clinton.

La Lynn — Aries Roughwater 32 Ken Wood, Richmond

Having met Ken on the Baja Ha-Ha this year, we've come to think of him as quite a remarkable guy, and not just because he's eager to singlehand across 3,000 miles of open ocean.

He survived a bout with polio at age three, but, tragically, it came back to haunt him in recent years — a condition called Post

Polio Syndrome which attacks nerve pathways and muscles. He's got the green light from both his doctor and his family, however, to pursue a complete circumnavigation. His wife and two adult daughters will join him for stints along the way.

Ken considers his father, a Columbia River sailor, to have been his inspiration for this trip. It is a touching tribute that Ken is now carrying his ol' man's ashes, and plans to spread them along the equator. "Try to do this before you get older," says Ken. "And don't worry about money. Worry about your health and happiness."

Dawn Treader — Contest 48CS Hal & Joan Kraft, Dana Point

"Since I now reside in New Zealand," explains Hal, "I figured this would be a great way to get the boat there, and have some fun doing it." Hal and Joan's game plan is a bit different from most other PJers. After reaching French Polynesia, they intend to base *Dawn Treader* in Raiatea for a season or two, flying out from New Zealand occasionally to enjoy the Tahitian islands. Later, they'll continue to explore other South Pacific islands, eventually making Auckland the boat's homeport.

Hal seems to have fully embraced the Kiwi spirit, as he offers, "Anyone traveling to the Auckland area of New Zealand should feel free to look me up. I will try to give you a warm Kiwi welcome when you sail into port."

The Krafts will have a full contingent of able crew for the passage to French Polynesia, all of whom have extensive offshore experience. They are: Tony DeWitte, John Berol and Kenzie Lobacz.

Sohcahtoa — Lafitte 44 Stewart, McNeese & Smith, Seattle

Even though it's been a long time since we sat in a geometry class, we could swear we never heard the term 'sohcahtoa'. Nevertheless, this threesome insists that its origin is in geometry. They ought to know. Jeff Stewart, Casey McNeese and Matt Smith are all engineers.

They were college buddies, who conceived the idea of circumnavigating even before graduating. The small problem of not knowing how to sail was overcome by taking lessons from



Will Jeff, Casey and their buddy Matt still be friends when they reach Hiva Oa? We say yes.

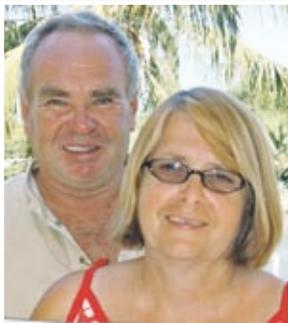
Windworks. They went to work for three years to finance the boat and the trip and "escaped before we all had houses, wives and kids."

For offshore experience they resorted to on-the-job training: "We sailed 10 days nonstop from Neah Bay to San Diego." Their message to the wannabes back home: "You don't have to be retired to do something like this."

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

Jeff and Kathi have only been married for five years, but they've each dreamed of long-range cruising for as long as they can remember. Their exotic wedding

A couple who dreams together is bound to stay together. Jeff and Kathi are two of a kind.



Gerry and Donna will have their adult son along as crew.



In our book, Ken is one gutsy guy.



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in Greece — accompanied by 30 close friends — was apropos of their current adventure. They spent their honeymoon cruising on a charter boat, and hope to return to those waters during their proposed circumnavigation.

"It takes a lot of sacrifice to do this,"

says Jeff. They sold their house and most of their possessions to make the trip possible. "But now," he muses, "we've got a home on the waterfront and can change our view anytime we want!"

They'll have some young talent on the

passage to French Polynesia: Kathi's 23-year-old daughter Bailey — a hot sailor who races in Hawaii — and family friend Jessica Fine, also 23.

***Ohana Kai* — Catalina 42**

The Martin Family, Pt. Orchard, WA

We almost missed meeting Bruce and Lisa and their sons Tristan, 10, and Matthew, 7, as they'd had to rush home suddenly when Bruce's dad suffered a heart attack. But grandpa wasn't about to let his minor setback quash the adventurous plans of the *Ohana Kai* crew. His orders were for them to get on with it — perhaps so he could enjoy it vicariously through them.

This handsome family is, of course, the other half of 'the Schmartins', mentioned earlier. What was their inspiration for 'unplugging' from the mainstream and heading west? "We just wanted to spend as much time together as possible with our two boys, exploring and experiencing this world." Having left Washington last summer, they plan to

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The Martins are on orders from Grandpa to get out there and explore the Pacific.

island-hop to New Zealand this season then reassess their options.

They offer this thought to would-be future cruisers: "All who wander are not lost."

Piper — C&C 40

Erhard & Ann Herrmann, Vancouver

We didn't have a chance to meet Erhard and Ann at Puerto Vallarta, but we were happy to receive their info via the magic of email. This happily retired

couple first delved into the cruising life in the late '60s. Then in '75 they bought a Morgan 34 in Florida and sailed her all the way home to B.C., via the Clipper Route to Hawaii.

Over the years they've had several other boats, but this sturdy C&C seems to be a keeper. They did the Victoria to Maui Race in 2002, then set off to Mexico. Last summer they returned from yet another trip to Hawaii, repainted the boat and sailed south again. But this time they'll venture farther west, to Polynesia, then keep cruising for what Erhard hopes will be "a long, long time!"

"I think we are just dreamers," he says, "and our dream is coming true."

Sisiutl — Gulfstar 44

Bob Bechler & Brenda Maddox Seattle

Bob has logged over 20,000 miles

since leaving Seattle in 2002, and his smile seems to get a little broader every time we see him. "I absolutely love passage-making," he confides, "the solitude, the challenge, the deep ocean swells, and hitting a little dot on the chart after 3,000

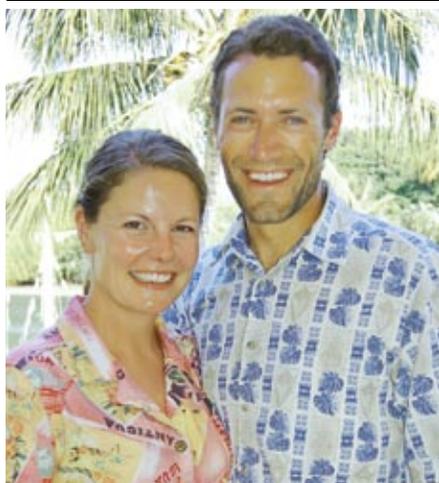


In a few weeks you'll find Bob and Brenda diving the reefs of the Tuamotus.

miles."

Believe it or not, he met his new love, and cruising partner, Brenda, via a sail-

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La Kelly and El Kelly of 'Moorea' will have to change their pronouns in French Tahiti.

ing website. From the beginning, they had what you might call cyber-chemistry, as they had much in common, including similar cruising ambitions. Since Brenda began cruising 18 months ago, she's logged 5,000 miles on the East Coast and Caribbean, plus an Atlantic crossing.

"There is so much to see in the Pacific that we are in no hurry to rush through,"

says Bob. This year they plan to do a loop through French Polynesia and up to Hawaii via Fanning Island, doing plenty of scuba diving along the way. "Eventually, our goal is a circumnavigation, but we are in no hurry."

Moorea — Dufour 35

Kelly & Kelly Waterhouse, Seattle

As this cute, bright-eyed couple explained, "In Mexico, we're known as El Kelly and La Kelly!"

As a kid, he had the sort of grandparents we all wish we'd had. Every year they would fly Kelly and his brother down to San Francisco and spend the summer

2006 PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP FLEET

Boat Name	Crew Names	Boat Type & Size	Home Port
<i>Andiamo</i>	Lisa & John Caruso	Wauquiez Pretorien 35	La Paz, Mx
<i>Aquarelle</i>	Diane & Ken Kay	MT-42	Bourne, Texas
<i>Aquarius</i>	Mark & Heidi Ribkoff	Olympic 47 Adventure	Hood River, OR
<i>Blessed Be!</i>	Jessica Stone & Mike Irvine	41' Morgan O.I.	Seattle, WA
<i>Blue Sky</i>	Emma & Jim Mather	N/A	N/A
<i>Bold Spirit</i>	Kathi Bailly & Jeff O'Neill	Passport 40	Seattle, WA
<i>Capaz</i>	Tod, Juli, Jake & Zack Cordill	Perry 48	Portland OR
<i>Carpe Vita</i>	Mike & Mary McCluskey	Shuttleworth 44 cat	Eugene OR
<i>Dawn Treader</i>	Hal Kraft & friends	Contest 48CS Sloop	Dana Point, CA
<i>Endeavour</i>	Kim Sherback & Linda Tait	Bruce Roberts 40	Vancouver BC
<i>Kavenga</i>	Steve & Kay Van Slyke	Lord Nelson 41	Gig Harbor, WA
<i>Kohilo</i>	John & Donna McVea	Hans Christian 33	Seattle, WA
<i>La Vie</i>	Dave Kane, Karl & Julie	Beneteau First 405	Seattle, Wa
<i>Laule'a</i>	Will Cloud, Scott McGee	Perry 47	San Francisco, CA
<i>Lawur</i>	Niki, Robert, Benjamin, Sebastian Schmid	Ron Holland 40	Santa Cruz, CA
<i>Long Tall Sally</i>	Greg & Penny	N/A	N/A

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sailing the Bay. That inspired him to read the classic tales of great circumnavigators such as Bernard Moitessier, but with the responsibilities of adulthood he thought he'd never realize his own voyaging dreams.

Much to his surprise, when he introduced La Kelly to sailing, she loved it and

soon encouraged the dream of cruising together. So for the past three years they've lived aboard and have now 'sold the ranch' in order to circumnavigate. Along the way, their boat's namesake island, Moorea, will be a must-see stop-over, but mostly they intend to seek out solitude in lesser-known, out-of-the-way



After exploring the depths, Claire, 10, of 'Sensei' show off her treasure of the day.

Boat Name	Crew Names	Boat Type & Size	Home Port
<i>Maggie Drum</i>	Joe & Cindy Barnes	Whitby 42	Anacortes, WA
<i>Neried</i>	Ray & Judy Emerson	Valiant 40	Anchorage, AK
<i>New Dawn</i>	Ross & Laura Emerson	Valliant 40	Anchorage, AK
<i>New Horizons IV</i>	Wolfgang Boehle, Eddie Hepp	Kelly Peterson 46	Coronado, CA
<i>OZ</i>	John Pasternak & Audrey Schnell	Talisman Sloop 37	Port Townsend, WA
<i>Ohana Kai</i>	Bruce, Lisa, Tristan & Matthew Martin	Catalina 42	Port Orchard, WA
<i>Ranger</i>	Paul & Marie Miller	Island Packet 40	Marina del Rey, CA
<i>Raven</i>	John & Heidi Bollinger	Nauticat 52	Madison, WI
<i>Sandpiper</i>	Tom & Amy Larson	Yorktown 35	Oakland, CA
<i>Sarabi</i>	Barry & Karen Philbrook	custom cat	Victoria, BC
<i>Scot Free II</i>	Gerry, Donna & Kinton Beauregard	Bruce Roberts 36	Victoria, BC
<i>Sensei</i>	Chris & Claire Mellor, Kelley Montana	Norseman 447	San Francisco, CA
<i>Serenity</i>	Eva & Jim Moresco	West sail 32	New Haven, CT
<i>Sisiutl</i>	Bob Bechler & Brenda Maddox	Gulfstar 44	Portland, OR
<i>Whistle Wing V</i>	Mike Chase/Joe Mobley/Jack Oliver	Peterson 49	Honolulu, HI
<i>White Swan</i>	Bob & Dianna Denny	Cape George 36	Port Townsend, WA
<i>Zafarse</i>	Alison & Paddy Barry	Baltic 42	San Diego, CA

places.

Sensei — Norseman 447 The Mellor/Montana Family San Francisco

Both Chris Mellor and his wife, Kelley Montana, admit to having an ailment which afflicts most Puddle Jumpers: "We have this lifelong virus running through our veins which loves sailboats and most things nautical. We can't get enough of

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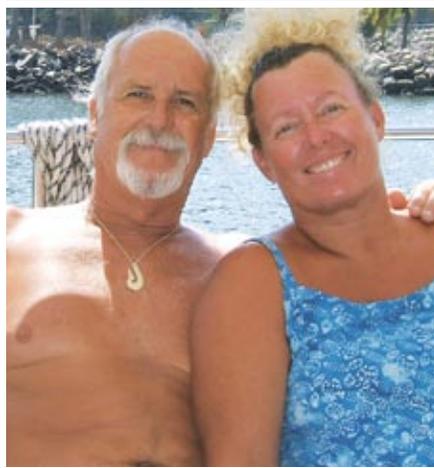
them."

They bought *Sensei* just a year ago and, to hear them tell it, worked nonstop to get her ready for the Baja Ha-Ha last fall. The couple had done quite a bit of recreational sailing over the years, but they credit Tradewinds Sailing of Pt. Richmond for helping them fine-tune their skills. Chris did the '03 TransPac aboard the company's Catalina 38, *Barking Spider*, which won her class.

The other members of the *Sensei* crew are daughter Claire, 10 and Mrs. Kily Rodriguez, a one-year-old feline whose acceptance on the crew roster was "a bribe to Claire so she would agree to cross an ocean." The family expects to island-hop to New Zealand this season, then circle back north again as weather permits, eventually arriving in Australia, where they'll reassess.

**Po'oino Roa — Kelly Peterson 44
Jerry & Kathy McGraw
Newport Beach**

This duo has got to be one of the most colorful and fun-loving couples in this year's fleet. Jerry's face is probably



Crazy in the head? Naw, we'd say Jerry and Kathy's plan makes perfect sense.

familiar to many West Coast sailors, as he spent 27 years working for the harbor department in Newport Beach. Kathy, who holds a 100-ton license, ran a business and taught sailing.

Their cruising career began in 1999 when they headed south aboard their Ericson 32. It was a bit too small for comfort, though, so when they returned to Newport a couple of years later they

upgraded to this late-'70s cruiser. They headed to the sunny latitudes of Mexico again with the 2004 Ha-Ha. It was then that we learned the meaning of *Po'oino Roa*, which translates as "very crazy in the head" in Tahitian.

So now they're headed west with flexible plans. No doubt they'll receive a warm, but perhaps cautious, welcome when they reach French Polynesia. On the crossing, longtime friend Kurt Sanders will be along as crew.

We'll take a break here, but will crank out another installment of Pacific Puddle Jumper profiles next month — primarily those leaving from Zihuatanejo.

Sure, we know. You wish it was you that was setting off for distant shores where coco palms sway and tropical fruits are free for the taking. But perhaps your time will come one of these days. And when it does, we'll be more than happy to give you your 15 minutes of fame in these pages. Until then, though, we suggest you enjoy the journey vicariously through these lucky souls.

— **latitude/aet**