

# *Latitude 38*

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06, PT II

— CHASING DOWN THE SUN

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# PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06

There's a lot of talk about migration these days. While cash-strapped laborers flood north across our borders to find work, a constant trickle of recent retirees heads south in search of inexpensive, tranquil places to retire. Inside our borders, wide-eyed country folk migrate toward the bustle and bright lights of the big city, just as work-weary city-dwellers migrate 'back to the land', hoping to bond with Ma Nature.

The migration that intrigues us most, though, is the annual pilgrimage of adventure-seeking sailors from mainland Mexico to French Polynesia — an epic 3,000-mile passage we like to call the Pacific Puddle Jump.

As you read this, some are just leaving the coast, others are en route, and several have already made landfall in the Marquesas — one of which dismasted within hours of arrival.

While no departure point along the Mexican coast has any great advantage over any other, in recent years roughly

**Meet the fleet. According to one Jumper, this year's Zihua contingent is "a bunch of anarchists." As such, they didn't identify themselves when they sent in this photo. But they know who they are — in fact, they'll probably get to know themselves better than ever during the 3,000-mile passage.**

half the fleet has jumped off from Puerto Vallarta, and the other half has set out from Zihuatanejo, which lies roughly 200 miles to the south. Having profiled the P.V. Jumpers last month, we'll introduce you now to the southern contingent. (Drum roll. . .) Here then, are the Z-twin members of the Pacific Puddle Jump Class of 2006 — bold adventurers, one and all.

## **Maggie Drum — Whitby 42 Joe & Cindy Barnes, Anacortes**

Back in the late '90s, Joe and Cindy had been looking for a way to escape Colorado's growing congestion and the working world of "suits and ties," when a chance conversation in a coffee shop steered them

toward the cruising life. "I met a fellow who had a sailboat in Washington and had gone to Mexico and back. It sounded like just the ticket for us," recalls Joe, a

*"We have absolutely no regrets so far. We will die broke but happy."*



**Cindy and Joe of 'Maggie Drum' have found the perfect means of escape**

jack of all trades who now specializes in marine electronics. Although they had very limited sailing experience previously — other than windsurfing on Colorado lakes — Joe and Cindy followed the stranger's lead, soon buying *Maggie Drum* and sailing her avidly in the Pacific Northwest.

Five years later, they were ready for greater challenges and headed south with the 2004 Baja Ha-Ha fleet. "We have absolutely no regrets so far," they say. "We will die broke but happy."

The game plan now is to follow the so-called coconut milk run west to Tonga, then reassess, perhaps ping-ponging between the South Sea islands and New Zealand for a couple of seasons. The couple shared a lot of good advice about the cruising lifestyle. The line we like best is: "Attitude and patience make all the difference in the world. You are definitely not in Kansas anymore."

## **Ranger — Island Packet 40 Paul & Marie Miller Marina del Rey**

When we met Paul and Marie during the 2004 Baja Ha-Ha, they were relatively new to sailing, so they were careful not to announce any grandiose voyaging plans until they'd 'tested the waters' of the cruising lifestyle.

Obviously, life afloat suits them just fine, as they are now embarking on a three-year South Pacific circuit, which will hopefully take them as far as Australia.





# — CHASING DOWN THE SUN

This will be the first ocean crossing for both Paul and Marie. Other than that, we don't know a heckuva lot about this pair, but we hope they'll keep in touch as the adventures unfold.

## **La Vie — Beneteau First 405 David Kane, Seattle**

David explains how the seed for his cruising dreams was planted a few weeks before he graduated from college in '96: "I was flying to Costa Rica for a vacation and had the good fortune to sit next to a cruiser. From that moment forward," he recalls, "I was acutely infected with the desire to go cruising someday myself."

As soon as he returned home, he began shopping for a boat, and within two weeks he'd bought a Catalina 30. That first year, he sailed 50 out of 52 weekends. Now, two boats later, David, a construction contractor by trade, has completely refurbished this sweet Beneteau and is heading out on a 5- to 7-year circumnavigation.

Crossing with him to the Marquesas are Karl Horeis, a Portland area sailor, and Julie Clavert, who's done two transatlantics and lots of coastal cruising.

## **Whistle Wing V — Peterson 52 Mike & Leslie Chase, Coronado**

"You don't get that many chances to have the experience of a lifetime," notes Mike, a college teacher. So his advice to the wannabes back home is to "Go as soon as you can." Mike acknowledges that it takes a while to get your life and your finances organized, but he cautions that, "The downside of delaying is huge. The fact is, you don't need a lot of money to have a ball, and you'll learn everything that you need to know along the way."

He and Leslie, a CPA by profession, have owned this vintage aluminum cutter for 20 years, and have put her through her paces during that time. Their game plan is to explore French Polynesia, then reassess.

Crewing on the passage west are two salty Navy vets, Jack Oliver and Joe Mobley. Joe's a former Vietnam POW who is said to possess a great attitude.

## **Sarabi — 55' Custom Cat The Philbrook Family, Victoria**

Undoubtedly one of the newer and more distinctive boats in

this year's fleet, *Sarabi* is a custom design, launched in 2003. She was built by owners Barry and Karen Philbrook over a three-year period. Construction began shortly after they completed their last voyage, a two-year circuit that took them from Canada to Mexico, out to Hawaii and north to Alaska.

Despite all that, they say, "The South Pacific has been calling us for many years. We'll get there and see what happens." This time, they are happy to say that their cruising timetable is open-ended. Crewing, at least to French Polynesia, are their son Mark Philbrook and friend Dave Hutchinson.

## **Esprit — Kelly Peterson 46 The McWilliam Family, San Diego**

As we went to press, Chay, Katie and *Meet Cap'n Hook, Tinkerbell and Peter Pan, aka the McWilliam family. (From the '03 Ha-Ha.)*



their eight-year-old son Jamie were exploring the Galapagos Islands before heading off to the Marquesas.

They'll undoubtedly feel a great sense of satisfaction when they finally make landfall in French Polynesia, as this is actually their third attempt at Puddle Jumping. In 2004, some sort of nasty flu forced them to turn back, and in '05 major engine problems caused another delay. But this year, it's 'all systems go!'

Unlike many Puddle Jumpers who've sold the ranch and cashed out completely, Chay and Katie still have a business in the States — an engineering firm — which they've flown home to check on several times since heading south with the 2003 Ha-Ha rally.

Now, as they sail across the Pacific, their long-term goal is to complete a circumnavigation sometime before Jamie is high school age. Their advice to future cruisers? "Be completely fluid in your cruising plans and accept what happens as what was meant to be."

## **Endeavour — Roberts 40 Kim Sherback & Linda Tait Vancouver**

Like many cruisers, Kim and Linda got a feel for the cruising life by chartering bareboats in the Caribbean, as well as cruising their home waters.

They left B.C. in the summer of 2004, and intend to spend another

# PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06

7 to 10 years exploring the world under sail — unless "it's not fun anymore." What inspired them to cut the cord? "We love to travel," they explain. "And, in terms of finances, this was the only

*As a kid, he spent four years living aboard a 50-ft, home-built steel ketch in the Caribbean.*

way to see the rest of the world."

Back in the real world, both Kim and Linda had careers in the telephone biz, so we imagine it's particularly sweet for them to find themselves out on the open water, seemingly light years away from the nearest phone or fax.

## **Sandpiper — Yorktown 35 Tom & Amy Larson, Oakland**

"You don't have to be rich to go cruising," say Tom and Amy. "The majority of the boats out here are just making it happen."

*Linda and Kim of 'Endeavour' plan to take their sweet time to circumnavigate.*

Tom learned a thing or two about life afloat long before heading south with the Ha-Ha fleet last fall. As a kid, he spent four years living aboard a 50-ft, home-built steel ketch in the Caribbean, and later made his career in the U.S. Coast Guard.

One of the highlights of his 20-year stint as a guardsman was visiting Palau, an island the couple definitely plans to visit during their Pacific circuit, as it is one of Tom's favorite places on earth.

Amy's sailing career began seven years ago, after meeting Tom. The first time she crewed for a friend in a race, they ended up on the rocks shortly after the start. "Is this supposed to happen?" she asked.

The pair was married in Vegas not long before the start of the Ha-Ha last year, and, as far as we can tell, they've been honeymooning ever since.



*With Elvis' blessing, Tom and Amy's honeymoon will continue aboard 'Sandpiper'.*

crewman Mike Irvine and ship's mascot Kip McSnip, a border collie, were all unharmed.

Jessica tells us that she "tumbled into sailing" 15 years ago, while on sabbatical in the Caribbean — she is a professor and writer. "I fell in love with the sea and all boats, then went home, saved money, bought *Blessed Be* and untied the docklines!"

She admits to being a reluctant singlehander, but says, "until my knight in shining foulies shows up, it's better to be out there alone than not out there at all."

## **Aquarelle — Mao Ta 42**

### **Ken & Diane Kay, Long Beach**

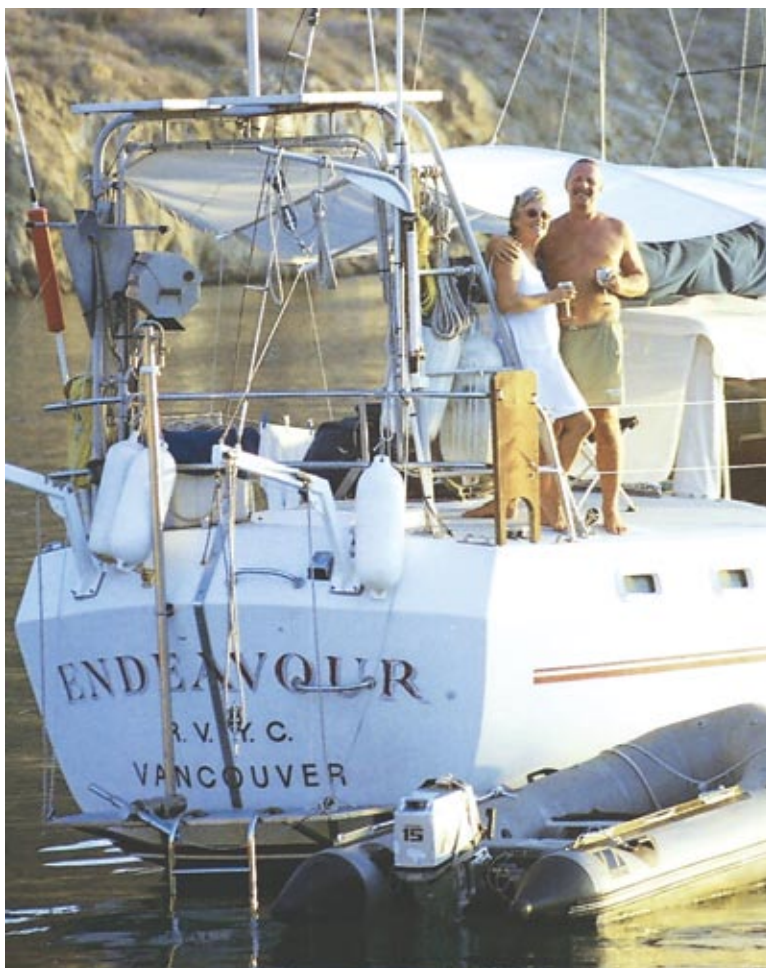
We haven't seen Ken and Diane since the end of the last fall's Ha-Ha rally, but we know they were eager to get to the



*If you hear a tuba solo out on the ocean, that's Ken. Apparently Diane doesn't mind a bit.*

fabled waters of French Polynesia. In fact, they were one of the first boats in this year's fleet to make landfall there.

Although we meet lots of folks on the Ha-Ha, we remember this couple well because she was one of several lady captains — she learned to sail at OCC School





# — CHASING DOWN THE SUN

of Sailing and Seamanship at the age of 24 — and because he is a music teacher whose favorite instrument is the tuba. Both are 'battle-hardened' teachers who feel their careers have prepared them for the worst: "Bring it on! Twenty-five years of middle school teaching prepares you for anything!" they said prior to the Ha-Ha. "We're ready for whatever Mother Nature cares to dish out." Plan A is a complete circumnavigation.

## **Oz — Talisman 37**

### **John Pasternak & Audrey Schnell Port Townsend**

In their pre-cruising lives, John made his living as a carpenter and Audrey was an epidemiologist. But since officially becoming cruisers two years ago, they've fattened their kitty by delivering boats up and down the West Coast.

Just two short years ago, when we met John and Audrey during the 2004 Baja Ha-Ha at the beginning of their cruising career, John said, "The most interesting thing about our entry is that my wife

is actually joining me!" Obviously, she has adjusted quite nicely to the cruising life. As we wrote in '04, "If every sailor's

*John and Audrey of 'Oz' have fattened their cruising kitty by doing deliveries.*



spouse was so accommodating, there'd be a lot fewer singlehandlers out there!"

The game plan now is to do a complete circumnavigation on an open-ended schedule.

## **Capaz — Perry 48**

### **The Cordill Family, Portland**

We don't know if Tod and Juli are wise about all things, but they certainly made a smart move when they chose to buy this center-cockpit pilothouse ketch. She'd already proven herself during a 2.5-year Pacific circuit by her previous owners — a couple with three boys. Tod and Juli will follow their lead, bringing sons Jake, 11, and Zack, 8, along on the big adventure.

Tod's fantasies about bluewater cruising began when he first read voyaging tales as a grade-schooler. But the couple decided to turn those dreams into reality just two years ago. During the five months they've been out so far, they've already learned a lot about family dynamics aboard. "Cruising with children," they explain, "has its own special rewards and trials." Here's a

# PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '06

tip for families with similar ambitions: "Parents cruising with preteens really need to be prepared to sail singlehanded. Because when conditions are less than ideal, one spouse needs to attend to the kids while the other attends to the boat's needs."

Plans are not yet etched in stone — or coconuts. *Capaz* may end up in Hawaii by Christmas, or the family may continue west. Tod's nephew, Ryan Howard, is crewing on the Puddle Jump.

## **Blue Sky — Down Easter 45 The Mather Family Redondo Beach**

Jim and Emma say they've been talking about going cruising for 14 years. About seven years ago, however, they seriously put the plan into action.

So why go this year? "The children hit what we consider to be the Golden Age," explains Jim. "We plan to circumnavigate over a 5- to 7-year period, which will



***Phoebe, 7, and Drake, 6, are about to get an education in the 'school of life'.***

allow us to return to the U.S. when the children will likely need to be with 'their own kind!'" The kids, Phoebe and Drake,

are currently 7 and 6 respectively.

During the past 10 years, Jim and Emma have raced and cruised extensively in SoCal and Mexico. They bought *Blue Sky* in the fall of '04, and in less than a year and a half, "replaced nearly every item on the boat." They set out with the kids on this cruise just last December.

**W**e'll call it a 'wrap' here, as we've profiled all the folks we have info on. Undoubtedly there are others

making the crossing this year who didn't make it onto our radar screen — not everyone is eager to attain their 15 minutes of fame. In any case, we wish them all fair winds and the best of luck as they pursue the sort of adventures that many of us back home wish *we* were having.