

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '05, PT I

— WESTWARD MIGRATION

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As far as we can tell, the annual Pacific Puddle Jump is completely unique among sailing events. It requires participants to sail roughly 3,000 miles across open water with no possibility of an emergency landfall. Its participants begin on different dates from a variety of different locations and 'finish' at one of several remote South Sea islands. It attracts roughly 50 boats a year, yet is neither sanctioned nor administered by any yachting authority and receives no commercial sponsorship. It has no rules and finishers receive no trophies.

For the uninitiated, we're talking about the annual springtime migration of cruisers from Mexico to French Polynesia, which we've dubbed the Pacific Puddle Jump. For would-be circumnavigators traveling through the tropics, this crossing is the largest patch of open water they will encounter while circling the globe. Regardless of a boat's size or the number of crew aboard, completing the Puddle Jump is a substantial accomplishment, the likes of which most sailors only dream about. Thus, we've dedicated a substantial amount of 'real estate' this month and next to profiling members of this year's disparate fleet.

While the Puddle Jump has no official organizing body, sailors who intend to make the crossing somehow find each other and typically hold a variety of pre-departure meetings to share information, routing strategies, charts and related literature. During the passage, few, if any, attempt to sail in tandem. But most participate in daily HF radio nets in which the leaders relay weather

Are 'Latitude' Crew List parties worth attending? Gary and Sally of 'Navigator' think so.



info back down the line.

In order to become acquainted with the passage-makers profiled here, we relied on a time-honored technique: We lured them to our annual Kickoff Party with the promise of free beer and hors d'ouvres! As in years past, our little shindig (February 28) was generously cohosted by the Vallarta Yacht Club and the luxurious Paradise Village Resort and



"How did they talk me into this?" wonders singlehander Susan Meckley of 'Dharma'.

Marina, located on Banderas Bay, just north of Puerto Vallarta.

As you read this, roughly half the fleet is in mid-ocean, closing in on idyllic landfalls that most of these sailors have been dreaming about for decades. We salute their bold adventure and wish them all the best of luck. (Look for a second installment next month, profiling those PJers leaving from Zihua and elsewhere.)

Dharma — Challenger 32 Susan Meckley, Alameda, CA

Susan gets top billing here because she was courageous enough — or should we say foolish enough — to allow herself to be shanghaied as this year's de facto group leader. Her organizational chores will end when *Dharma* leaves the dock, however, as she is the fleet's only singlehander, and will be sailing aboard its smallest boat.

But Susan isn't your average lady sailor. She's over 6 feet tall, broad-shouldered, and, at 72, has more spunk than most 40-year-olds. She learned to sail more than 50 years ago, at age 16, and before she turned 20 she'd conjured up a voyaging goal that has stayed with her all her life. After earning her first Ham radio license at age 19 (in 1952), she followed the travels of an early South Pacific cruiser named Danny Weil, who

broadcast Ham calls to listeners on the mainland from many remote Pacific Islands. (This practice is called a DXpedition in Ham circles.)

Now retired from a military career in both the Army and Navy, Susan has plans to make Ham calls from 23 remote locations including rarely visited Wallis and Fortuna Islands. Her other goal is to find an island to call home, perhaps in the Marshalls, Samoa or Palau. If none of them seem right, she'll continue on to Phuket, Thailand where she *had* a home before the tsunami destroyed it.

But why singlehanded? Apparently she just likes solo sailing, as she's been at it for many years. Two years ago, however, before beginning this grand adventure, she thought it wise to downsize, so she traded her Brewer 46 *Ménage à Trois* for this 32-footer. "At 70, I figured I was too old to singlehand my old 46-footer offshore." Susan is the mother of five, but none of her grown 'kids' are sailors, so we weren't surprised to hear her say, "They all think I'm crazy!" But, we certainly don't agree. In fact, sailing west to points unknown sounds like a perfectly rational idea to us.

Navigator — Beneteau Oceanis 461 Gary Cook & Sally Hose, Ventura, CA

Since we first met Cap'n Gary on the 2000 Baja Ha-Ha, some things have *really* changed aboard *Navigator* — most notably, the first mate.

After Gary's marriage ended several years ago, he met Sally at a *Latitude 38* Crew List party, one thing led to another, and, well... they're now heading off to Tahiti together.

We have a feeling their union will last, as they are both longtime sailors, they're well accustomed to the cruising life — she's been at it for 11 years, while he's been cruising since 2000 — and they both share similar dreams of bluewater sailing.

When he was a kid, Gary's military family was stationed in various areas off the South Pacific, so parts of this cruise will be a homecoming of sorts. He can still vividly remember his first opportunity to crew on a sailboat in the Philippines — a voyage credited with launching his cruising dreams.

Like most Puddle Jumpers this year, Gary and Sally plan to explore French Polynesia, then island-hop to New Zealand before the beginning of typhoon season. Once there, they'll ponder further plans.

ALL PHOTOS LATITUDE / ANDY

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The Banderas Bay contingent of the Class of 2005 Pacific Puddle Jumpers strikes a pose atop a mock Mayan temple at Paradise Village.

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No more waiting on charter guests for Dennis and Cindi. This trip is a pleasure cruise.

**Sea Bear — Gulfstar 68
Dennis Roquet & Cindi Scott
Friday Harbor, WA**

You might say that Dennis and Cindi are on a bussman's holiday, as they have worked together for years running back-to-back charters in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Now it's time to enjoy the fruits of their labor, as they begin their much-anticipated South Pacific cruise aboard one of the slickest boats in the fleet.

Dennis has been working aboard boats since his early 20s. (In fact, many moons ago he and *Latitude's* Managing Editor, John Riise, spent a year and a half crewing together in the Med.) During his long career chartering and running private boats for wealthy owners he's been just about everywhere *except* the South Pacific. Hence, this year's cruise.

Cindi — who first met Dennis at a Long Beach high school — may not be quite as 'salty' as Dennis, but she can whip up gourmet fare while under sail and, as she puts it, "I'm always up for an adventure." Among the places they'd like to visit eventually are the Greek Islands, where Dennis hopes to reconnect with fishermen he knew there 30 years ago.

On the trip to French Polynesia, *Sea Bear* will have additional crew: Tommy

Two years after buying 'Laelia', Howard and Judy are eager to tackle the blue Pacific.



and Binkey Pichard, and Tom Pezman.

**Laelia — Kennex 42 cat
Howard & Judy Wang, Ventura, CA**

Howard and Judy began thinking seriously about going cruising about 10 years ago. Then in 2003, when Howard retired, they went boat shopping and eventually found *Laelia*, one of only two Kennex cats on the West Coast.

Among the things that inspired them to embark on this ambitious cruise, Howard remembers reading Tania Aebi's 1989 book *Maiden Voyage* and thinking, "Hey, if this 16-year-old can do it. . ." High on their list of must-see destinations is Tonga, where they hope to spend a good deal of time before crossing to New Zealand.

After a couple of years of cruising, Howard's advice to the wannabees back home is to "Do some serious shakedown cruises and get your boat totally ready before you leave home. It's very hard to do upgrades in Mexico due to the lack of parts here and the heavy import taxes." To that, Judy adds, "Due to the heat and humidity here, and elsewhere in the tropics, it takes twice as long to do anything. It really slows you down."

**Northern Lights — Nordic 44
Larry and Jeff Pollock, Fox Is., WA**

Here's a crew combination you don't often see these days. Cap'n Larry and first mate Jeff are father and son. Crossing an ocean together seems like an ideal bonding opportunity to us. "Well, I hope so," says Larry with a laugh. "So far we haven't been able to spend too much time together without wanting to kill each other."

The pair came down in the fall of 2003, spent the winter in La Paz, then relocated to Puerto Vallarta this year. On their open-ended cruise they expect to island-hop along the 'cruiser milk run' to New Zealand, then reassess. Hopefully they'll still be speaking to one another! Meanwhile, Mom and two other grown children are expected to fly in to various choice locations along the way to enjoy the less challenging side of cruising.

**Velocity — Hallberg-Rassy 43
John & Lauren Kutschka**

"On our third date (back in 1989) he asked me if I wanted to go cruising," says Lauren. "I thought, 'What the heck is cruising?' But he was cute, so I said, 'Sure, I'm in.'" According to John there was a bit more to it than that, but 16 years — and three boats — later here

they are ready to jump off for the Marquesas. Pretty cool, eh?

Whenever we meet cruisers with Hallberg-Rassys, we always have to ask if they know sail training instructor John Neal — who has long been a vocal proponent of these sturdy Swedish-built boats. Sure enough, John Kutschka took a course in the South Pacific with John Neal in '97, which not only inspired him to buy a similar boat, but also "sealed his fate" in terms of his desire to go cruising.

Over the years John and Lauren also prepped for cruising by doing 10 bare-boat charters in Caribbean with The Moorings. "The only bad part was that we never wanted to give the boat back," says John. Their advice to the wannabes back home: "Life is short. You'll never have 'enough' money, so just go!"

**Whinchat — Seabird 37
Raine & Liette Riutta
Vancouver, BC**

For Raine and Liette, this Pacific cruise is a rebirth of sorts. Thirty years ago they set sail from Mexico bound for Hawaii, and they've yearned to get back 'out there' ever since.

We loved hearing about that first cruise — back when life was simple. "We really roughed it," recalls Raine. "We took off with no charts of the Hawaiian Islands, only a large planning chart of the entire Pacific. And we had no radio." A day or two out their engine crapped out, but they did have a "wonderful" Monitor Windvane and a sextant which they more

When Lauren hooked up with John (of 'Velocity'), she also adopted his dream of cruising.



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Having paid their dues in the working world, Bill and Joan of 'Sage' are rarin' to go.

or less knew how to use. And, of course, they also had the optimism of youth on their side.

These days, notes Liette, they have plenty of charts and loads of high tech gear on board. But, ironically, they now have to "worry about it breaking down."

On that first trip they only got as far as Hawaii, so now they are eager to explore all the must-see South Pacific islands that they've been reading about for decades. "We've always remembered how we felt when we arrived at the Strait of Juan de Fuca from Hawaii 30 years ago," says Raine. "We'd fallen in love with the ocean and the sailing way of life, and we didn't really want to see land again. If

we could have afforded it at the time, we would have turned around and headed for Australia." Now, finally, they've got a second chance.

**Sage — Beneteau
Oceanis 461
Bill & Joan McKnight,
Larkspur, CA**

Bill, an engineer, and Joan, an elementary school teacher, are world travelers who have already seen a variety of South Pacific islands, but never by boat. Back in the early '70s they hopped on a Swedish freighter and 'cruised' from San Francisco to Tahiti, then island-hopped by plane to Tonga, Fiji and points west. They realize they are probably in for a shock, especially in the Tahitian islands. Thirty-five years ago they were invited to crew aboard local fishing boats and they remember "introducing the Frisbee

to the people of Tahaa." They would meet an occasional cruiser, but there were no charter fleets and few roads.

This time they look forward to seeing more remote areas such as the Marquesas and Tuamotus, as well as reconnecting with old friends in Tonga and Fiji.

Both are longtime sailors: Bill first learned seamanship in the San Francisco Sea Scouts, while Joan's initiation into the sail-

ing world was on her first date with Bill — aboard the Snipe that he'd built himself. That was their only boat until a few years ago when they made the radical upgrade to this sleek 46-footer.

One bit of advice they offer to future cruisers is: "Do it, but remember, there is so much more to cruising than just sailing. . . Every-

thing takes longer and sometimes things go wrong. Expect it, be patient and don't forget to laugh! The highs will outnumber the lows."

**Wandering Star — Hallberg-Rassy 352
Russ Spencer & Shirley Higginson
Abbotsford, B.C.**

Russ and Shirley aren't concerned about hitting rough weather during the long trip to the Marquesas, as they figure they've already endured their quota. Here's their logic: In the book *Storm Tactics*, authors Lin and Larry Pardey apparently wrote that you'll typically only see stormy weather about 3% of the time while cruising. But, according to Russ, during their five years of cruising to date, "Every time we've gone out on a passage of five days or more, we've been hit by a storm — including a particularly nasty blow off Cape Mendocino. So you don't want to sail with us!"

For them, the dream started while on vacation in the Bahamas. They were



Russ and Shirley are hoping to see plenty of blue skies on their trip west.

walking the docks, when they met a young family who introduced them to the concept of cruising under sail. "Wow," said Shirley, "you can do this?" Upon returning home, they immediately enrolled in a sailing course, learned to scuba dive and soon after bought their first boat.

Early retirees from entrepreneurial careers, they now seem equally invested in the cruising dream. No wonder. They've been together since they were 15. One difference, though, is that Russ was always a 'water person' while Shirley was not. In fact, she's still a nonswimmer. "For me this was a fearful thing for quite some time, but I'm really excited about moving beyond that fear. I think I'm going to achieve another level by doing so, and that will make my whole life

Three decades later, Raine and Liette of 'Whinchat' are finally heading back 'out there'.



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Opting out of the crossing, Susan will fly out to meet Kit and 'Wind River' in the Marquesas.

more enjoyable."

Wind River — Tayana 37 Kit Hanes, Seattle, WA

Although Kit, a retired mathematics professor, had done a lot of rock climbing and wilderness camping in his earlier years, he only got into sailing in 1999 with the purchase of *Wind River*. Seems as though it was a long-delayed impulse, because he clearly remembers being inspired by the writings of the Hiscocks

many years ago.

Kit and his ladyfriend Susan, also a neophyte, paid their dues while coming down the Washington coast, as they faced "40-knot winds and seas as big as houses." As Kit recalls, "We learned that the boat is stronger than the people in

it!"

Although Susan says she and Kit get along amazingly well at sea, she admits that she's a "high anxiety sailor" when offshore, so she's opted to skip the actual Puddle Jump and rejoin Kit in French Polynesia. They will then island-hop to

2005 PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP FLEET

BOAT NAME	CAPT & CREW NAMES.....	BOAT TYPE & LGTH	HOMEPORT	DPT FROM
<i>Anduril</i>	Don & Erika Sandstrom	Cross 40 tri	Richmond, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Akauahelo</i>	Brent & Susan Lowe	Royal Passport 47	Seattle, WA	Hawaii
<i>Calliope</i>	Skip & Wendy Rodriguez	Valliant 40	Seattle, Wa	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Carmelita</i>	The Reid Family	Kelly Peterson 44	Santa Cruz, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Costa Vida</i>	Mark Schlichting & Jean Wood	Brent Swain 36	N/A	Zihautanejo
<i>Dharma</i>	Susan Meckley	Challenger 32	Alameda, CA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Er Nibs</i>	Norah & Merle Zarow	Hunter 42	San Diego	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Eros</i>	Shelly & Jody Ward	N/A	N/A	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Gemrit</i>	Brian & Susan Gochoel	C&C 38	N/A	Zihautanejo
<i>Grasal</i>	Gregg & Jean Tranter	Ontario 32	Victoria, BC	Zihuatanejo
<i>Icarian</i>	Brian Woodward	N/A	N/A	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Interlude</i>	Frank & Linda Szerdahelyi	Cheoy Lee 32	San Francisco, CA	Mazatlan
<i>Jamboree</i>	Bruce & Nora Slayden	Island Packet 485	Sisters, OR	Zihuatanejo
<i>Laelia</i>	Howard & Judy Wang	Kennex 42 cat	Ventura, CA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Paloma Blanca</i>	Tom Dameron	Jeanneau 45	Las Vegas, NV	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Med Viking</i>	Bernard Debbasch	Beneteau 411	Newport Beach, CA	Los Angeles
<i>Moana</i>	Sam & Sally Peterson	Downeast 32	San Diego, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Moonlight</i>	Ron Olson	N/A	N/A	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Navigator</i>	Gary Cook & Sally Hose	Beneteau Oceanis 461	Ventura, CA	Puerto Vallarta

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New Zealand. An old friend, Tom Tennes, will crew for Kit on the crossing.

Seafire — Searunner 40 The Dean Family, Seattle, WA

When you consider all the trials and tribulations they've endured since leav-

ing Seattle three and a half years ago, it's amazing how upbeat and cheerful the Dean family is. Their vintage 1979 tri needed a lot of repairs on the trip south, and by the time they reached the Sea of Cortez, she had sprung



A new generation of Deans prepares to conquer the South Pacific aboard Grandpa's trimaran.

a leak in her centerboard trunk which put the family's proposed Puddle Jump back a year. Then, seven weeks after they finally resumed active cruising, the aptly named *Seafire* was struck by lightening. Five more months of repairs in San Carlos set their Pacific crossing back another year. Then, a month after

BOAT NAME	CAPT & CREW NAMES	BOAT TYPE & LGTH	HOMEPORT	DPT FROM
<i>Nereida</i>	Kate Graeme & Tom Hollingshead	C&C 39	Vancouver, BC	Puerto Vallarta
<i>New Focus</i>	Paul Biery	Catana 431	Livermore, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Northern Lights</i>	Larry & Jeff Pollock	Nordic 44	Fox Is., WA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Novia</i>	Ann & James Parry	Dreadnought 32	Southampton, UK	Zihuatanejo
<i>Pegasus</i>	The Stephens Family	Cheoy Lee 40	Bainbridge Is., WA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Redwood Coast II</i>	Don and Anne Taber	Marples 44 tri	Santa Cruz, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Sage</i>	John & Bill McKnight	Beneteau Oceanis 461	Larkspur, CA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Seaductress</i>	Fred Cassell	N/A	N/A	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Seafire</i>	The Dean Family	Searunner 40 tri	Seattle, WA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Seayanika</i>	Erik & Katriana Vader	Cal-Vader 49	Vista, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Sea Bear</i>	Dennis Roquet & Cindi Scott	Gulfstar 68	Friday Harbor, WA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Shearwater</i>	Bob & Terry Hood	N/A	N/A	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Sidetrack</i>	Frank Keavy & Brenda Howard	Passport 42	Portland, OR	Mazatlan
<i>Skua</i>	Richard Herring	N/A	N/A	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Sonrisa</i>	Greg & Deb Claesson	Hunter Passage 450	Long Beach, CA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Suka</i>	Doug & Debra Barnsworth	CT41	Long Beach, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Tequila</i>	Quinn Closson & Mikey Zeck	Roberts 53	San Diego	La Paz
<i>Tin Can</i>	Ian Knowles & Becky Lloyd-King	Bruce Roberts 434	N/A	Zihuatanejo
<i>Tournesol</i>	Scott Duncan & Pam Habek	Valiant 32	San Francisco, CA	Zihuatanejo
<i>Velocity</i>	John & Lauren Kutschka	Hallberg-Rassy 43	Seattle, WA	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Wandering Star</i>	Russ Spencer & Shirley Higginson	Hallberg-Rassy 352	Dublin, Ireland	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Whinchat</i>	Raine & Liette Riutta	Seabird 37	Vancouver, BC	Puerto Vallarta
<i>Wind River</i>	Kit Hanes & Tom Tennes	Tayana 37	Seattle, WA	Puerto Vallarta

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arriving at Banderas Bay, Bill (aka Dad) broke his back due to a freak medical accident which led to a year of convalescing.

We're happy to report, however, that now the entire family — and their boat — seems to be fit and ready to tackle the big blue Pacific. Although *Seafire* is equipped with many modern conveniences, Bill and his wife Karryn try to maintain some of the old-style mariner's spirit that Bill experienced as a kid when he sailed to French Polynesia with his parents aboard a home-built Piver Victress. (His parents later built *Seafire*.) For example, they shun inflatables and outboards, preferring instead to commute ashore in their two sailing/rowing dinghies.

With their kids, Jackson, 12, and Naomi, 9, being 'home-schooled' along the way, the Dean's cruising plan is flexible. Initially, they expect to visit French Polynesia, the Cooks and Samoa before heading up into Micronesia — the less-traveled path.

Er Nibs — Hunter 42

Merle & Norah Zarow, San Diego, CA



For Skip and Wendy of 'Calliope', a two-week cruise morphed into a 30-year romance.

Although Merle has some sort of difficult-to-diagnose disease which has led to chronic weight loss, he and Norah seem determined to make this 3,000-mile crossing this year — "Before we get too old."

When we met them they were interviewing potential crew, to make the passage easier on them. "I like to travel," says Norah, "and I like to go to places I've never been before." Unlike the dynamics of many sailing couples, Merle jokes that, "She's dragging me along." They expect to spend at least two seasons in the South

Pacific.

Merle and Norah first came down to the sunny latitudes of Mexico in '96 with Baja Ha-Ha III, and have been splitting their time between their Mexico-based boat and San Diego ever since.

Calliope — Valiant 40 Skip & Wendy Rodriguez Seattle, WA

"When I was 29 years old," recalls Skip, "I was down in Florida sailing aboard my Alberg 35, while taking a break before beginning my medical residency. My crew had abandoned me after running into a gale in the Gulf of Mexico and I was about to set off to the Bahamas when this cute girl walked by. We chatted, arranged a short interview and the next day set off across the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas." He didn't realize at the time that the girl, Wendy, was only 19. She had intended to stay on for a couple of weeks, but stayed for six months. Five years later they got married and 30 years later they're still cruising.

Over the years, they've managed to squeeze in six years of cruising, including a return trip to the Bahamas and

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a two-year cruise from the Great Lakes to Turkey. They upgraded to this Valiant for that trip.

This time around they expect to spend two years doing a South Pacific loop out to New Zealand and back home to the Northwest. By then they will have seen both ends of the spectrum, as they began this cruise by first sailing north to Alaska! Ren and Wanda Bilkey will crew to New Zealand.

Sonrisa — Hunter Passage 450 Greg & Deborah Claesson Long Beach, CA

Greg apologized for being a bit grumpy the day we met him, but he'd just had a very frustrating experience with customs regarding boat parts he'd shipped down. He's not alone. Import headaches are one of the few complaints we ever hear about Mexico from cruisers.

Other than occasional bureaucratic snafus, however, Greg and Deborah have thoroughly enjoyed their two years in Mexico. "We've been most impressed by the wonderful local



By the end of the season, Deborah and Greg may take 'Sonrisa' all the way to Australia.

people, as well as the cruising community and the ongoing adventure of discovering new places — truly amazing."

They've done lots of land travel over the years, and, although they started sailing together 25 years ago, this is their first major cruise. With an open-ended timetable, they expect to work their way west to Australia, then eventually circle home via Hawaii. Their advice to the wannabes back home: "If you don't go cruising when you have a chance, you're a damn fool!"

Nereida — C&C 39 K. Graeme & T. Hollingshead Vancouver, BC

Tom didn't make it to our little fiesta, but Kate filled us in on Nereida's plan.

"Ours is a little different story," explains Kate. She had decided to take a year's sabbatical from her career as a marketing manager and invited Tom, a mechanical engineer, to go traveling with her. He accepted, but convinced her to do their

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traveling under sail. They bought *Nereida* last March, spent three months getting her organized and took off.

"So far, the biggest lesson I've learned about sailing is how plans *always* change." They'd originally intended to head from Vancouver directly to the South Pacific but instead spent half of their allotted time dawdling in California and Mexico. Nevertheless, Kate has no regrets and now knows that she loves the cruising life. If they stick to their new Plan A, they'll swing out to the Marquesas, then head home via Hawaii. But Kate is already making future plans: "I want to go home, pay everything off and start building a nest egg for an open-ended cruise."

Akauahelo — Royal Passport 47 Brent & Susan Lowe, Seattle, WA

Having recently sampled South Pacific cruising, Brent and Susan's timetable is substantially different from that of most Puddle Jumpers. "Instead of crossing all the way to New Zealand in one season as most cruisers do, we're going to take several years to see the South Pacific Islands," explains Susan. "There's just



Although they sail a fast boat, Brent and Susan of 'Akauahelo' advise cruisers not to rush.

too much to see."

They developed this 'go-slow' philosophy after sailing first to Ecuador in 2003, then out to the Galapagos and on to the Marquesas. A combination of minor boat problems and a reluctance to move through those remote islands too quickly, kept them in the Marquesas for five months, during which time they made many Polynesian friends and hiked to dozens of lofty waterfalls. When typhoon season approached, they headed north to Hawaii.

Last spring, they set off from Ho-

nolulu toward French Polynesia again. But about 1,000 miles out they ran into a stretch of very rough, confused seas which lasted for days. The beating that *Akauahelo* endured eventually led to her dismasting in the middle of the night. They lost the whole rig, but were able to motor back to the Big Island without outside assistance.

Now, both they and their 47-footer are primed and ready for more cruising. After seeing more of French Polynesia, they intend to jog north to the Marshall Islands at the end of the season. (Brent and Susan flew out to our Puerto Vallarta party from Hawaii just to meet other Puddle Jumpers.) "So far," says Brent, "the greatest highlight for us has been the local people we've met." To future cruisers he advises, "Don't be on a schedule. Be prepared to slow down if you find a place you like. You'll regret it later if you rush through."

On that note, we'll give it a rest until next month, when we'll profile another batch of Puddle Jumpers leaving from Zihua and Mazatlan.
