

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP '05, PT II

— WESTWARD MIGRATION

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So what did you do last month? Whatever it was, we'd bet it wasn't nearly as challenging or memorable as the activities of the folks you'll meet in these pages. As you read this, they are either partway through the 3,000-mile passage from Mexico to French Polynesia, or have recently made landfall there. We like to call that trip the Pacific Puddle Jump.

As we mentioned in our first installment of Puddle Jumper profiles last month, this is the biggest patch of open water that these cruisers will face, even if they were to travel all the way around the world via the tropics. So accepting the challenge is a biggie! We salute them, one and all, and admire their courage.

We met many members of the Pacific Puddle Jump class of 2005 in late February down in the sunny latitudes of Banderas Bay, when we threw a farewell fiesta in their honor at the Vallarta YC at the Paradise Village Resort (generously co-hosted by both organizations). Having profiled that group last month, we'll introduce you now to those who disembarked from Zihuatanejo, Mazatlan and elsewhere.

As in years past, this year's fleet is made up of a wide variety of boat types sailed by mariners from many different walks of life. The common denominator is a lust for adventure and an ability to hear the faint call of the trade winds luring them to the fabled South Sea islands.

Costa Vida — Brent Swain 36 Mark Schlichting & Jean Wood Bella Bella, B.C.

Mark and Jean are not your typical cruisers. They got into the cruising scene

Jean and Mark undoubtedly know every inch of 'Costa Vida' — having built her themselves.



the old fashioned way — by building their own boat from scratch.

That's not something most cruisers would even dream of doing, and, of course, many backyard builders give up long before their boats are ever completed. Mark and Jean, however, knew exactly what they were getting into. Previously, she'd been a partner in a yacht restoration business and, although Mark had been a white collar worker, he took quickly to the wood and metalworking tasks.

"We had built *Costa Vida* primarily to live aboard and cruise the coast," says Jean, "but we knew she was a good strong boat capable of going anywhere in the world." In September of last year they decided to test her offshore abilities with a nonstop trip from Canada to Ensenada. After six months of exploring Mexico, apparently they've caught a bad case of the cruising bug. They're now en route to the Gambier Island group (of French Polynesia) and may visit remote Pitcairn before heading to the more well-traveled parts of the region.

The pair expects to continue west to Samoa, then north through the Marshall Islands and home by the summer of



After riding out three hurricanes in 2003, Debra and Doug of 'Suka' are ready for anything.

2006.

Suka — CT41 Doug & Debra Barnsworth Long Beach, CA

"As with all cruisers, our plans are set in Jell-O," say Doug and Debra.



ALL PHOTOS SAM PETERSON EXCEPT AS NOTED

Tentatively, though, they expect to spend a couple of years cruising the South Pacific, and eventually continue on around the planet.

We assume that both Doug and Debra are 'handy types', both having bailed out of the construction industry. He was a construction superintendent and she was a public works inspector. "We figure if we ever find that little island to settle on, we can make our own little town, with Doug building all the houses and me building all the roads!" jokes Debra.

Their cruising life began in the spring of 2003, and it was a raucous introduction. That summer they weathered Hurricanes Ignacio, Marty and Javier in the northern Sea of Cortez, yet also found plenty of time for their passion, scuba diving — they're both NAUI instructors.

Grasal — Ontario 32 Gregg & Jean Tranter, Victoria, BC

"Grasal is one of three 32-footers going across," say Gregg and Jean, "so we'll have company at the rear of the fleet." Like so many other small-boat sailors from the Pacific Northwest, they can take comfort in the notion that they probably won't see any conditions during the Puddle Jump worse than what they experienced on the trip from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to San Francisco.



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Drawn to Zihuatanejo by January's Z-fest, the Puddle Jump fleet split in two this year, with half leaving from P.V. and half from Zihua.

They've owned *Grasal* for 18 years, keeping her at Sidney, B.C., on the east coast of Vancouver Island, although they lived far inland at Calgary, Alberta. Over the years they've sailed extensively through British Columbia and Southeast Alaska. Then in 2002 they sailed to Mexico, leaving *Grasal* in San Carlos while Gregg wrapped up his career as an accountant.

After owning 'Grasal' for 18 years, Gregg and Jean finally left Alberta and set sail in 2003.



Today their primary plan is to cross to New Zealand, where they expect to linger for a year. As they headed west into the setting sun, they left us with this quotable quote: "God hates a coward!"

Sidetrack — Passport 42 Frank Keavy & Brenda Howard Portland, OR

A retired merchant mariner, Frank has "sailed most of the world on anything from tugs to tankers." He and Brenda, a CPA, officially transitioned to the cruiser lifestyle in the spring of 2003, harbor-hopping down to San Diego, and eventually on to Mazatlan, which they adopted as their base. While *Sidetrack* idled in the marina, Frank and Brenda took side trips to Mexico City, Rio and Buenos Aires, as well as several trips back home so Brenda could do stints of work and fatten the cruising kitty.

Apparently they've adapted well to their new lifestyle, but Frank has had to make some major adjustments: "Traveling on a sailboat is quite different from merchant ships," he notes. "You find yourself without the watchkeepers, engineers and comforts that large ships offer!"

Sailing in company with *Interlude* and *Novia* out of Mazatlan, *Sidetrack* will work her way west, hopefully arriving in

New Zealand by November.

Interlude — Cheoy Lee 32 Frank & Linda Szerdahelyi San Francisco, CA

A longtime ocean sailor, Frank believes in self-reliance. "Be prepared to take care of yourself, and don't become someone else's problem," advises Frank, referencing *Interlude's* aborted Puddle Jump attempt last year. When an upper shroud chainplate failed 650 miles offshore, they simply jury-rigged a solution and sailed back to the mainland.

In the late '70s "midlife wanderlust" inspired Frank to set sail on a six-year cruise of the Caribbean, Atlantic and Med with his former wife and two young kids. The same boat is now taking Frank and Linda — his wife of 14 years — across the Pacific to new adventures.

Having spent three years cruising mañanaland, Linda says, "Living in Mexico has taught us that the United States — although a wonderful place to



INTERLUDE

Linda and Frank of 'Interlude' are trying again, after having to abort their attempt last year.

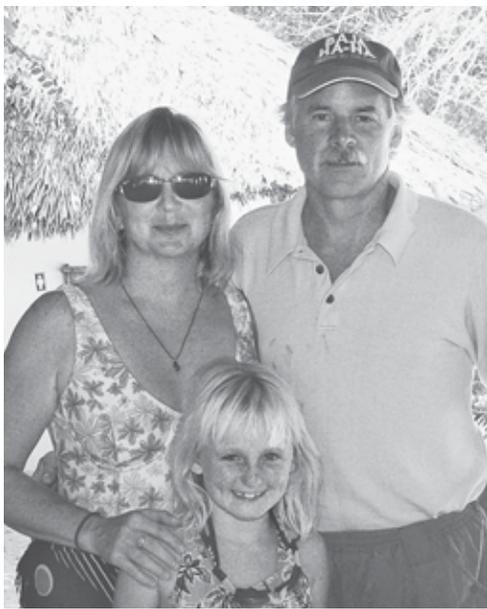
live — does not have all the answers." Now, as they work their way west, they are in no particular hurry. They expect to spend several seasons crossing to New Zealand or Australia, then eventually transit the Red Sea and enter the Med if the political climate allows.

Pegasus — Cheoy Lee Offshore 40 The Stephens Family Bainbridge Is., WA

Sue and Gary have spent nearly 20 years living aboard, much of that time on a Philip Rhodes-designed Traveler 32. In the beginning they barely even knew how to sail, but after six years of practice and preparation they set sail from Seattle on a two-year, 14,000-mile circuit of Mexico and the South Pacific.

After eight years ashore, they upgraded to *Pegasus*, another Rhodes-design woodie — which, like their first boat, was a real fixer-upper. In 2003 they joined

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Having fixed up their fixer-upper, 'Pegasus', Sue, Gary and little Amy are ready for adventure.

the Baja Ha-Ha and headed south again, this time with their daughter Amy along. (She's now 9.) "We're looking forward to getting farther west in the South Pacific this time," they explain. "We'll spend two years there before deciding which direction to go to replenish the cruising

kitty."

Redwood Coast II — Marples 44 tri Don & Anne Taber, Santa Cruz, CA

Both Don and Anne have crossed the big blue before — and so has their boat. Don started building this big tri back in the mid-'80s, and sailed her to Hawaii after completion. Anne, too, has crossed to Hawaii, and has done a previous South Pacific circuit. She left a 10-year stint at West Marine to make this dream cruise, while Don used to make his living as an electrical contractor. No doubt he'll be a popular guy out in the remote cruiser anchorages.

Don and Anne wasted no time dawdling in Mexico. They left San Diego in January, apparently having promised not to get hung up in pursuit of their South Pacific fantasies. When they reach the Cook Islands, they plan to reassess their game plan, deciding whether to head for New Zealand or the Marshalls to wait out typhoon season.

Moana — Downeast 32 Sam & Sally Peterson, San Diego

You've got to envy Sam and Sally. Not only are they headed for the South Pacific on an open-ended cruise, but they're young (both 30ish) and good looking. When they participated in last year's Ha-Ha, Sam was the youngest skipper.

As we noted in their Ha-Ha bio, *Moana*

Anne, Don and 'Redwood Coast II' have all done previous Pacific passages.



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'Youngsters' Sam and Sally are taking 'Moana' back to her former homeport, Bora Bora.

was "cosmetically challenged" when they bought her, but after more than 1,000 hours of TLC she's been restored to her former glory. While working in the boatyard, Sally and Sam discovered a piece of *Moana's* history. These San Diego sailors were intent on removing "Los Angeles" from her transom. In doing so, they uncovered the name of her former homeport: Bora Bora. So this trip holds special significance. Perhaps they'll run into some old-timers who remember *Moana* from years past. If so, we'd love

to hear the stories.

**New Focus — Catana 431 cat
Paul Biery
San Francisco, CA**

Stepping back from his career in manufacturing, Paul bought *New Focus* in the summer of 2001. "Eight weeks later," he recalls, "I left on the Baja Ha-Ha." Apparently he quickly took to the cruising lifestyle — and the camaraderie of cruiser rallies — as he came back and did the Ha-Ha again in '02 and '04. Earlier in 2004 he added to his pool of experience by crewing aboard *Latitude's* cat *Profligate* on the 1,200-mile beat across the Caribbean from Panama to Antigua.

Joining Paul on

the crossing will be Alan and Susan Berg, as well as Adam Thorson. Paul met the Bergs at a *Latitude* Crew List Party two years ago and they crewed for him on the Ha-Ha. Both are very experienced sailors who cruised the Caribbean with their kids in the late '70s. Adam is a "21-year-old hitchhiking wanderer" who is

Paul Biery and his crew should have a relatively comfortable ride aboard 'New Focus'.



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Scott and Pam of 'Tournesol' are both legally blind, but that hasn't slowed them down.

reportedly "overwhelmingly excited" to be part of the *New Focus* crew on their "sail to paradise." Paul plans to do a Pacific loop before heading back home.

**Tournesol — Valiant 32
Scott Duncan & Pam Habek
San Francisco, CA**

This boat's Puddle Jump attempt is

undoubtedly unique in the annals of Pacific maritime history. Not because of the boat — we're pretty sure that other Valiant 32s have done it successfully. But because both Scott and Pam are legally blind.

When we first heard about their intention to doublehand to Mexico, then on around the world, we thought they were nuts. But after spending some time with them, we were very impressed with their thorough planning and preparation, and their sober approach to this ambitious voyage. They both have fascinating backgrounds and are living testaments to the idea that almost any handicap can be overcome. As you will learn on their highly-informative website, www.blindsailing.com, part of their motivation for making this trip is to inspire others with disabilities to strive for goals beyond the norm.

Among other admirable attributes, Scott and Pam also have a refreshing sense of humor: "We're not totally, Stevie Wonder blind," notes Scott. "So don't worry about us crashing into anyone."

Jamboree — Island Packet 485

Bruce & Nora Slayden, Sisters, OR

We weren't able to get in touch with Bruce and Nora before they headed west, but we remember them from last fall's Ha-Ha.

Bruce grew up surfing and sailing dinghies in San Diego, but eventually moved to Oregon, where he met Nora in high school. They've been together ever since. After 28 years of running a

"Hmmm... Let's see. Why not sail 'Jamboree' to Australia?" say Nora and Bruce.



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When Erika agreed to go cruising aboard 'Anduril', Don rushed her to the altar.

construction company, they hung up their tool belts last fall and headed south with the Ha-Ha fleet. Now, they're off on greater adventures — and we assume that their timetable is open-ended.

**Anduril — Cross 40 tri
Don & Erika Sandstrom
Richmond, CA**

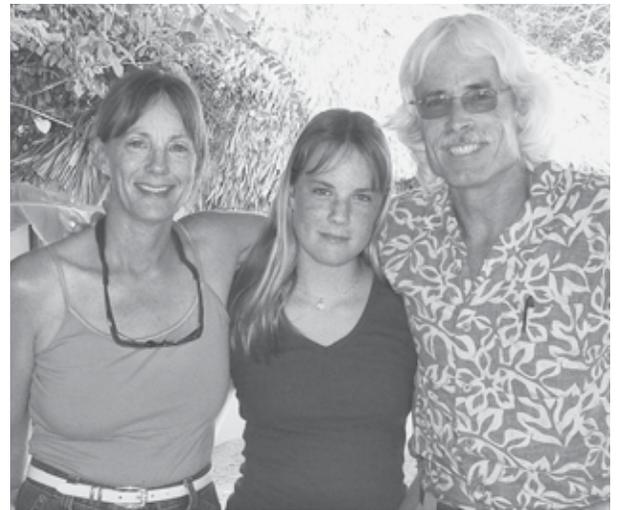
To those who like to 'dis' '70s-era trimarans, take note: this one has been around the world twice already — and she's headed out again. After Don's father finished building *Anduril* in 1975, the family set off on their first circumnavigation, completing it while Don was still a teenager. He may be the only

2005 Puddle Jumper to have already done a full lap around the globe.

This trip may *only* be a South Pacific loop, however, as Don is initiating his newlywed bride Erika to the world of off-shore voyaging. "When you find a woman who's willing to go with you," explains Don, "you marry her quickly and cast off the dock lines before she figures things out!" Plan A is to spend about a year on a loop out to French Polynesia, up to Hawaii and then back home. But you never know, Erika may find that she likes the cruising life too much to quit.

**Carmelita — Kelly Peterson 44
The Reid Family, Santa Cruz, CA**

Leaving careers in the tech industry and nursing, respectively, Paul and Carol decided to take the path less traveled in terms of raising their 14-year-old daughter, Kate. They're undertaking this foray into the South Pacific with the idea



Carol and Paul want to give Kate an education in the school of life.

of exposing Kate to "a different lifestyle from the mass commercialism of our urban environment, and to see another slice of life from what we have here in the good old USA."

Paul and Carol have enjoyed sailing since before Kate was born, gradually working their way up to this sweet KP 44. Their plan is to spend a couple of years ambling across the South Pacific,

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then planting their anchor in either New Zealand or Australia while Kate finishes high school.

Med Viking — Beneteau 411 Bernard Debbasch, Wilmington, CA

Med Viking's story is a bit different from others in the fleet. She is owned by Bernard, a Frenchman, who will be joined in the Marquesas by his fiancée Christina, who is Swedish. Hence the name: "I am the 'Med'," explains Bernard, "and she is the 'Viking'."

Although this is Bernard's first boat, he has sailed extensively in his native France and in the Atlantic, as well as here on the West Coast during his residency in California. He bought this five-year-old 41-footer a year and a half ago and has been upgrading her inside and out ever since.

Unfortunately this cruise will be limited to one year, as Bernard and the rest of his crew are taking leaves of absence from their careers to do it. Having just gotten a new job, Christina can only get away for three weeks, but that should be long enough to experience the classic downwind sail from the Marquesas



Mikey and Quinn of 'Tequila' aren't the most experienced, but they're fun-loving and lucky.

to Tahiti. Two other Frenchmen, Guillaume and Denis, will help Bernard jump the puddle, staying on at least until the crossing, later in the season, to Hawaii.

Tequila — Roberts 53 Quinn Closson, San Diego, CA

Last, but not least, we'll introduce you to two of the most fun-loving guys we met on last fall's Ha-Ha, Quinn Closson and Mikey Zeck. Both are studly ex-football players who look like they could

take your head off, but are actually as 'warm and fuzzy' as teddy bears. Being fairly new to the sport of offshore sailing, they flushed out their Ha-Ha crew with several more experienced family members. When the weather got rough, however, their supposedly salty relatives got sick and demanded that Quinn turn around and sail them 150 miles back to Ensenada. He and Mikey finally caught up with the fleet on Leg Three, where their adventures — and misadventures — continued.

Despite their limited experience, we have a feeling that their youthful exuberance and upbeat attitudes will see them through to the Marquesas and beyond.

So there you have it, the Pacific Puddle Jump class of 2005 — at least those we know about. If reading these profiles makes you yearn to get 'out there' yourself, we urge you to quit procrastinating and do it. As most of these folks will tell you, casting off the docklines and leaving the rat race behind is more about having the will to do so than having a million-dollar yacht and a bot-