

They Also Serve Who Only Sit and Wait

by Kerri Glynn

In mid trip, Tim, my husband, having finally fixed the e-mail he's been fussing over for more than a year, he tells me that "this is the wild and wooly ride" he's always wanted. He says, "While there will be no confetti, no fire boats, no band and no badges, I will know. I may have banished some of my demons, who, by the way, were out there in force."

I wish I could find him a brass band to play at the dock in St. Thomas when they get in. I did make him a badge, though, but he's never worn it. Maybe after this trip, he'll feel as though he's earned it. Heaven knows, I think he has. Men ARE different from women. I don't have to face hailstorms or squalls to prove anything. Whatever demons I have are not related to weather, although plenty of them are related to the worries of waiting and not knowing.

Before he got the e-mail to work, reports have always come from Gale Anderson, a seafaring woman who mans the phones, for a scheduled SAT call to his office. The first report came in at 3:42 - sent by "Landlubber Gale" as the official recording secretary.

Monday, October 30

Egraine cleared Montauk at 11:00, which is the official start time. They have two reefs in the main and are averaging better than 8 knots. The winds are north of west at 25-30 knots; the seas are 6-8 feet. They had a school of dolphins escort them for about one hour today. Their coordinates: 40 degrees 33'N / 71degrees 32'W.

The only part that I understood was the dolphin escort. So cool. But even the promise of multiple "Fippers" cavorting outside the cockpit is not enough to get me on the journey south.

Twice a year, Tim and a couple of friends set off in our Hylas 45.5 for their sea adventure. In the fall they head to St. Thomas. In the spring they come back to the Northeast. Why, you ask, would a group of otherwise sane men leave land for 9-12 days at a time, facing squalls, waves, hailstorms and a host of mechanical difficulties? Technically, it's the "North/South Rule" - insurance companies require that boats not be south of 25 degrees before November 1 or after June 1. "There's this box," my husband explains. But I know better. He'd go anyway.

Tuesday, October 31

Egraine is in the Gulf Stream and making good progress at about 10.2 knots. They traveled a total of 175 miles in 24 hours. The seas are calm, the weather is warm, and they were in shorts today, which is unusual. Their coordinates: 37 degrees 59'N / 70 degrees 20'W.

When our sailboat returns each spring, we make a list of all the things that have to be repaired - all the things that broke on the trip back. This past June we had to fix the tiller pin in the autopilot and the hydraulic lock on the main engine. We had to replace the water pump and anti-siphon vales and the reef lines. We also had to rebuild the back end genset and the sheave box at the top of the mast. There's no end of fun.

Wednesday, November 1

Egraine crossed the Gulf Stream north wall at 3 p.m. yesterday at 70 degrees W, 38'N. They had a sunny day and enjoyed a great sunset. The night was rough, however. The winds blew at 25 knots and "something" got caught in the prop. Luckily they were able to clear it without the captain's having to jump into the water. Friday the winds will be high -

at 50 knots. *Egraine* will head to Bermuda and sit out the storm.

Storm? They left four days late to avoid a storm, so where did this one come from? Tim was on the phone with his "weather planner" every hour for a week before he left home. And Bermuda? My husband swore he'd never set foot in Bermuda again because it gave the crew a chance to get off. Now I'm worried.

Thursday, November 2

As of 3 p.m. today, *Egraine*'s speed has slowed down to let the weather pass. The winds have shifted south 25-30 knots, and the seas are 8-12 feet against them. They'll make the Bermuda decision tomorrow. Their coordinates: 34 degrees 09'N/ 66 degrees 58'W.

This summer we sailed to the Elizabeth Islands and Block Island. But, most of the time we hung out in the boat as though it were a condo. For about a month we just enjoyed her, and then it was time to get her ready for the journey south.

Friday, November 3

Egraine is on her way to Bermuda - they're expecting to arrive about 9 p.m. tonight. Last night they had a tough 12 hours with winds of 20-30 miles and gusts much higher along with heavy rain and hail. They had to slow the boat down because they were getting hit so hard by the waves. They are also having some water-maker issues. Their coordinates: 33 degrees 12'N/ 65degrees 43' W.

Hail? Water maker issues? I don't know which one to be more concerned about. We fixed that water maker - we spent WEEKS fixing that water maker. My husband keeps threatening to take it out and replace it with another 100 gallon tank. I don't want them on blue water passages without guaranteed fresh water, but there are no guarantees, especially on a boat.

Saturday, November 4

All is well. The crew of *Egraine* got into Bermuda at 11 p.m. They tied up to the Customs Dock and spent the night. It's raining and windy there and the only swimming they did was around the boat to fix things. Unfortunately, they couldn't fix the water maker, but they have plenty. They just have to cut down on showers.

Tim wants to take me into the Bermuda Yacht Club, but if I have to get there by sea... thanks, but no thanks.

Sunday, November 5

Egraine left Bermuda early this morning. As of 3 p.m., she was in 9-10 foot seas with NE winds in the high 20s with gusts around 35 mph. The weather is overcast with minor squalls. They are doing about 8 knots. Their coordinates: 31 degrees 30'N/ 64 degrees 39'W.

Besides the water maker, we also re-bedded the hatches, changed the zincs, and repainted the bottom. The rigger put in a new antennae cable, the electrician installed a new inverter and the mechanic put in a new throttle cable and water pump. Wait a minute, didn't we install a new water pump in the spring?

The captain himself sent this message:

Monday, November 6

This is the first time I've been able to sit and think. While I have never made a passage without at least considering that this is not a reasonable thing for middle-aged professionals to do, this time I asked

myself what I must have been thinking three days in a row. This is truly nuts.

(Is this a good thing or a bad thing, I'm wondering.)

Anyway, we finally have found our door into summer. For the first time we have sunshine. We also have 8-10 waves and 25 knot winds gusting to 30 from the ENE. We could have better progress if the seas would lie down and could put on more sail. We have been running with two reefs in the main, the stays'l and about a quarter of the genoa. It is a pretty comfortable ride, but very wet. The crew has been outstanding. Tony insists on doing all the dishes since he is convinced that we will poison him if he lets us do it. Mike has performed a medical miracle in what looks like a successful re-attachment of the last digit of his ring finger which was mostly cut off.

(Which was what? Is this note supposed to be reassuring?)

As for the weather, it's been pretty much a blur. We had some intense BB size hail. Our highest recorded wind speed was 39.8 knots. But a catamaran that rode through it indicated that their anemometer quit showing 62 knots at the same time their hard bimini top came loose. I can say that the gusts roared like a fast-moving freight train. Look forward to finishing this trip.

I am too. The first four days I visited my alma mater and had a wonderful time taking long walks, hanging out in the art gallery, dining at the pub, and buying college clothes. Then I came back to real life - cleaning up after the nine animals, painting the kitchen cabinets. That's what I can do when he's gone - initiate projects. But, I miss him. I find myself fasting during the day in an attempt to lose five pounds when he's gone (another project). Instead I break down and eat a quart of Java Chip ice cream at 10:00. Despite the fact that he makes meals like Kung Pao Shrimp and Chicken Enchiladas, he's going to lose ten pounds on this trip, and I'll gain them.

Tuesday, November 7

The captain writes: Every woman who has given birth to two or more children bears witness to the fact that the human organism has a bias toward the good and no real memory of pain. Today, on a close read in 25 knots of mostly east wind, 6-8 foot seas, with Orcas gamboling in our wake and around the boat, the reasons for doing this seem clean and the reasons for not doing it are almost forgotten. Lucky I wrote it down yesterday. We have moved 194 miles south and 15 miles further east. My scopolamine patch is wearing off and the new one hasn't kicked in yet.

I am almost tempted by the Orcas, but when I realize that he, who never gets sea sick, is clearly sea-sick, I wise up.

Wednesday, November 8

Good news. Bad news. They have 287 miles to go to St. Thomas and made 171 miles southing yesterday even though conditions were adverse. They had made fun of a guy yesterday who seemed hysterical about the weather conditions he's just endured and they were heading for. But there were 15' confused seas and 30 knot winds. Tim says he should not have insisted on cooking Chicken Eland, but he did, and it was good despite the tendency of everything to fly around the room.

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