





The crew of *Longshot II*, a Hans Christian 43, encountered challenging conditions on their approach to Hawaii. But not enough to keep them from catching dinner.

HOW TO GET YOUR BOAT BACK TO
BRITISH COLUMBIA AFTER YOUR
DOWNWIND SAIL IS OVER

By
Sara Johnson

We put our boat *Wondertime* on the market in New Zealand and flew back home to the Pacific Northwest.



Y

YOU'VE SPENT YEARS DREAMING of a voyage to the South Pacific. You've prepped your boat carefully and finally escaped the Pacific Northwest chill. You've sailed downwind to the warm waters of Mexico, then crossed to the lush and steamy South Pacific, finally landing in New Zealand. Then, even after completing such an epic sail, you find yourself dreaming of being back in the protected, calm, still and beautiful waters of the Pacific Northwest.

What now? If your cruising plans don't include continuing westward around the globe, how do you get yourself, and possibly your boat, back home? The easiest way is, of course, to sell your boat in New Zealand and ride a 747 jet back to your homeport. But many people are quite attached to their vessels and wish to re-

turn themselves and their boat home for more B.C. cruising. Getting a boat back to the Salish Sea from the other side of the ocean can be done in only one of two ways: sailing it back or shipping it home.

We arrived in New Zealand in November 2012 aboard our 38-foot Benford ketch *Wondertime*, after our family spent a delightful 18 months sailing from Seattle, around Vancouver Island, down to Mexico, then across the South Pacific. While we've lived in New Zealand since then, we've always known that we'd find our way back to our beloved Pacific Northwest, where our extended family also lives. We've seriously considered each option to find our way home again.

THE EASY WAY: SELLING

Lauren Smith and Lauren Buchholz of the Wauquiez Pretorien 35, *Piko*, departed their homeport of Seattle in 2010 and spent two seasons exploring the South Pacific, including islands in French Polynesia, Tonga and Fiji. After spending two cyclone seasons in Auckland, New Zealand they decided it was time to return home to Seattle to be near family and

friends. Since their plans also included upsizing to a larger vessel for some future family cruising, they chose to leave *Piko* in the care of a yacht broker. Her sale was finalized after only four months on the sales dock in Whangarei.

Sam Cannell of Vinings Yacht Brokers in New Zealand says that there is a current demand for good, quality cruising yachts in New Zealand. "New Zealand has an aging fleet and very little in the way of new boats being built locally. Kiwis and Aussies either buy new European-built yachts or wait for the right cruising yacht to sail in." He notes that New Zealand has also recently extended the time for temporary import exemptions for yachts to two years, giving owners more time to decide if they wish to sell, sail or ship their boat out of New Zealand.

For boat owners who don't wish to return their boats back to B.C. the reasons are many: expense, a desire to change boats (upsizing or downsizing), or perhaps the lack of desire for further ocean sailing. It's a common decision for off-shore sailors to make and the waters



The Morgan 385 *Cheers* ready for shipment in Tauranga, New Zealand.

of New Zealand (and Australia for that matter) are filled with well-built, well-outfitted, former North American cruising vessels.

In order to sell an un-imported vessel in New Zealand, it will need to be listed with a licensed yacht broker. The good news is that there are many to be found on both the North and South islands, particularly around Auckland and Whangarei. New Zealand brokers' fees are typically five percent of the yacht's sale price. For an un-imported vessel, the New Zealand government will charge GST and duty totaling 20 percent of the vessel's declared value when it arrived in the country. This can be paid as a bond, and returned if the vessel departs New Zealand within one year.

Since people are always coming and going to and from New Zealand, the shipping industry is a large one and there are many options for shipping personal items back home. The current rate is approximately US\$500 per cubic metre of packed goods. Then, it's just a matter of buying a one-way ticket on Air New Zealand and loading yourself on a plane.



THE PRICY OPTION: SHIPPING

Mark and Michelle Graves have owned and made their home aboard their Morgan 382 *Cheers* for 25 years. When they decided to return to the Pacific Northwest after their successful trip across the South Pacific in 2012, they knew that their beloved boat would be returning home with them. The couple seriously considered sailing *Cheers* home, but when an excellent job offer was presented in Seattle, they decided that *Cheers* would be freighted back across the Pacific so they could be home sooner.

For some crews, shipping their boat home may be prohibitively cost-intensive: we obtained estimates for shipping our own 38-foot ketch back to Vancouver from NZ and were given quotes from US\$30,000 to US\$35,000. *Cheers* reports that when all was said and done, they'd spent US\$30,000 on the entire shipping process. On the other hand,

if time is an issue, then the months necessary to sail upwind to Hawaii and on to the Salish Sea could be spent earning the money to get your vessel home hassle-free. And certainly if the boat is also your home just a few years of living aboard can easily make up the shipping cost with saved housing expenses.

While it's certainly more comfortable than sailing the 7,000+ miles back home, shipping preparations for even a small yacht take many weeks to complete: Masts and rigging must be taken down, stanchions, pulpits and biminis ▶

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removed, everything stored and protected down below. A custom cradle is built and the boat is strapped securely to it for the journey.

Then, the entire de-rigging process is reversed once the boat arrives in its final port destination. Altogether though, as *Cheers* notes, "the abuse that the boat would suffer during the sailing trip home" was avoided. In the end, *Cheers* was back in Puget Sound after a month at sea and a two-week re-commission, and ready for a beautiful summer of sailing.

Note: The float-on/float-off company Dockwise offers a voyage from Auckland to Costa Rica early in the year. For crews wishing to avoid the time- and labour-intensive de-commission/re-commission process and willing to work their way up the coast, this could be an appealing option.

THE LONG WAY: SAILING

For the family of five (Doug, Susan, Charley, Riley and Saylor) aboard the Hans Christian 43 *Longshot II*, sailing back home to Victoria from New Zealand wasn't simply their best option, it had been their plan from the beginning. They had prepped their boat from the outset for a 16-month-long voyage from Victoria, to Hawaii, then onto New Zealand, and then home again.

Three days before their return landfall in Hawaii, however, they were having second thoughts. Susan writes in the ship's blog: "The winds are steady 25 to 30 knots and the seas have now built to four metres with the odd five-metre wave thrown in just to make us go, 'Oh, there's a big one!' Nice to keep it interesting. We have reefed down to nothing and the next step is bare poles. We are making over seven knots in the big gusts and that is usually when we start shipping water in the cockpit... Doug asks how it is that I talked him into this but then I remind him it's all going to be worth it."

This is not a trip for the fainthearted: all those smooth and easy downwind miles sailed on the way south? It's largely upwind on the return. But there are several strategies that can make the trip more manageable. One, which Jimmy Cornell recommends in *World Cruising Routes*, is to ride the westerlies along 40 degrees south back to French Polynesia. From there, riding the northeast trades back to Hawaii is made more comfortable the further east you depart from. The final leg, Hawaii to the Juan de Fuca Strait, is a distance of

2,700 miles. Cornell recommends sailing due north out of Hawaii, then turning east once westerly winds are encountered, resulting in a comfortable—albeit chilly—reach all the way back home.

This is the route the crew of *Longshot II* chose, sailing northeast out of New Zealand, bound for the Austral islands of French Polynesia. Then, the crew encountered a deepening low halfway between New Zealand and Rarotonga. Susan notes, "You are a week out from NZ before you know if you are going to get hit by low pressure or not." Cornell notes that crews should expect at least one gale on their way back to the tropics from NZ. With a gale heading right into their path, *Longshot II* changed course due north to avoid the worst of the depression and ended up landing in Rarotonga.

On the bright side, the course change allowed them a second visit to Penrhyn atoll, one of the Line Islands enroute to Hawaii. *Longshot's* crew stayed a month there, helping the villagers with a number of improvement projects and allowing their children a chance for an unforgettable atoll school experience. From Penrhyn, it

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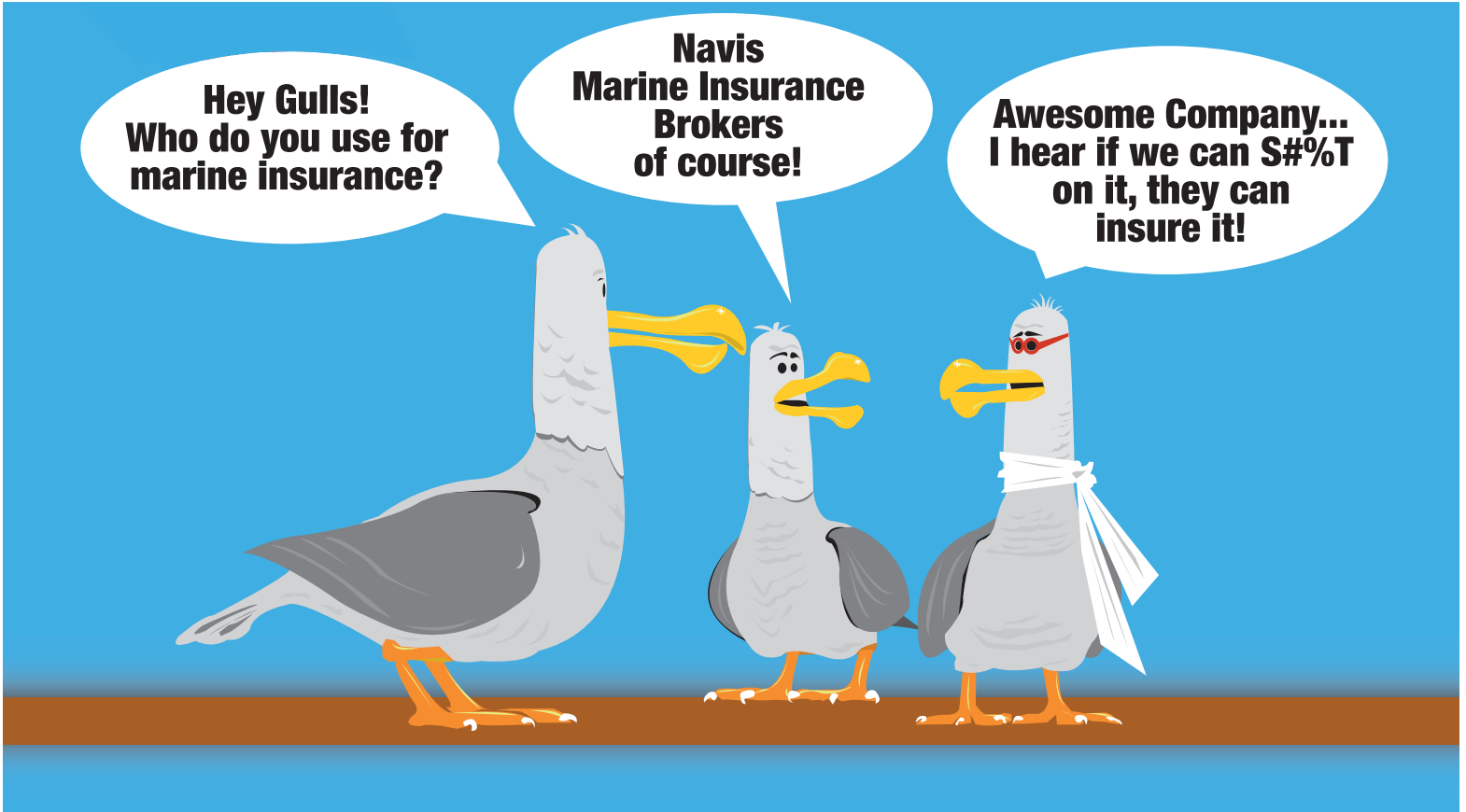
was a challenging, variable upwind sail to Hawaii but they eventually arrived. "It's quite the wicked weather south of Hawaii so I'd hate to be tight on the wind there," Susan advises.

Several weeks later, *Longshot II* was sailing on to the Juan de Fuca Strait. Although the air temps dropped quickly on their way north, the wind was steady and they made good time, arriving back in Victoria in time for the three kids to start back up in their respective schools.

GETTING YOU AND YOUR BOAT home (or not) from New Zealand is not something every sailor thinks about as they are enjoying the journey south. But it's worth looking ahead before you go so you are prepared with the time, and money, that is needed to get home the way that is best for you. ☺

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