

SIGHTINGS

it just takes time

Alyssa Alexopolous cruised for three months with her parents Alan and Reina aboard their Sutter Creek-based Hunter 46 *Follow You, Follow Me*, and didn't really like it. It was 2009 when she joined her parents, vets of the 2008 Ha-Ha, for the crossing from Puerto Vallarta to French Polynesia, and then some cruising around the French islands. Alyssa thought it was boring. Which is why it's curious that now, a little more than four years later, she's begun a circumnavigation of her own and remembers the three-month cruise as "awesome."

Part of the reason she thought cruising was boring at the time of the cruise was that she was 19, an age when young adults naturally want to break off from their parents and develop their own lives and social circles. And there just weren't a lot of other young adults cruising in the South Pacific. The only ones Alyssa remembers are a couple of 18-year-olds from Canada — brother and sister twins actually — who

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ppj

presentations and more — is intended to introduce new arrivals to highly revered Polynesian cultural traditions in music, dance, sport and cuisine. Because Jumpers set sail from a variety of locations along the West Coast, many of them meet and swap tales for the very first time at the Rendezvous.

Although exploring French Polynesia is normally a highlight of any sailor's cruising adventures, there's one aspect of visiting these archipelagos that's often a source of grumbling: the requirement that every non-European Union crew must post a (refundable) cash "repatria-

Love conquers all. Alyssa and Lewis aboard his Tartan 37 'Eleutheria' in Mexico.



PHOTOS LATITUDE / RICHARD

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tion bond" upon arrival, that is equal to the value of a plane ticket back to his or her country of citizenship.

Through our Tahitian contacts we've helped to facilitate an alternative again this year: Tahiti Crew Company is offering registered PPJers a special package that includes clearance in and out, bond exemptions and duty-free fuel beginning in the Marquesas, all for a reasonable flat rate. See the website for more details, plus photos and articles on previous fleets that include fascinating tables of crossing data: www.pacificpuddlejumps.com.

— andy



The lovebirds, Alyssa and Lewis.



time — cont'd

had worked in boatyards, loved sailing, and were crewing on various boats across the Pacific. In addition, Alyssa says she was eager to get back to start school at San Francisco State and be more active.

Alyssa now looks back at the three-month cruise "as the best experience of my life, one that I'm ready to do all over again and more." When we asked her why, she first cited the fact that it gave her a chance to spend "a lot of one-on-one time bonding with my dad." And that she learned a lot about coping with other people in a confined space for a long period of time.

"While in Zihua, my parents had signed on this flaming gay Dutchman to sail with us. [Laughter]. He was balding, had a big belly because he always ate

potatoes and cheese, yet he always wore a Speedo. He was a kick, and dressed up like King Neptune when we crossed the equator. But we all have habits and tastes in things that other people find annoying. For example, our Dutch crew listened to ABBA nonstop, which can get really annoying. And I would listen to 311 or Rocked Out, which bothered him. One time he just turned off the music while my dad and I were bonding over a memory, and just freaked out. So we had a meeting at the end of the day to hash things out. Actually, we did that every day, where every little annoyance was aired. I think it was good. I think that's how it has to be in business, too, where if you're going to work with others in tight quarters every day, things have to be hashed out." (Alyssa, by the way, got her degree in finance.)

Alyssa returned to San Francisco in 2009 and started at S.F. State. Meanwhile, her parents continued across the Pacific to New Zealand. It was a fine trip — until the composite rudder shaft broke 100 miles out of Kiwiland. After having a new stainless shaft built there, they had their boat shipped back to Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico, and then cruised up in the Sea of Cortez. After that it was time to get back to work, so they brought their boat up to Bair Island Marina in Redwood City, where Alyssa lived aboard to save money while going to school, and Alan used the boat as a midweek apartment while working in the South Bay tech world. The rest of the week he spent at a land home in Sutter Creek. Done cruising for awhile, Alan began selling some of the boat's cruising gear, including the watermaker.

One of the buyers of the cruising gear was Lewis Allen, who lived aboard his Tartan 37 *Eleutheria* — it means 'freedom' or 'liberty' — three berths down from *Follow You, Follow Me*. Having grown up in Walnut Creek and later living in Mountain View, Lewis had a lot of sailing experience in Hobies and Lasers. Although then just 27, he'd already made his mark in investment banking in New York City, but had given it up to follow the dream of singlehanded around the world. "Investment banking was exciting in the beginning, and even though you make more and more money each year, it's all so similar it becomes mundane. I gave up the big apartment, the fancy cars and all that to do a singlehanded circumnavigation. Ideally, I'll never have to go back to investment banking again."

As you no doubt suspect, Alyssa and Lewis's courses would soon cross.

"Since I was in finance, my dad kept saying I needed to meet this guy with the boat down the way, as he'd been successful in investment banking and could give me career advice. So one day Lewis came over to my dad's boat and was in the cockpit measuring the watermaker. I

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Alyssa thought cruising was boring when she was younger but has a newfound appreciation.

time — cont'd

heard him up there, so I figured at least I could go up in the cockpit. We locked eyes and I thought, 'Uh oh!'"

Was it love at first sight? "Yeah," says Alyssa.

"Kinda," says Lewis. "Her dad introduced us for the career thing, having no idea it would alter the course of his then-21-year-old daughter's life."

"Although it was love at first sight, we didn't tell my dad for two months," Alyssa laughs. "But then he started to notice that I wasn't staying on the boat anymore. Finally, he said, 'So, you and Lewis, eh?' But then he added, 'You're not going off sailing until you graduate.' I told him not to worry." Indeed, Lewis postponed his trip for one year — spending six months of it at the KKMI yard in Sausalito working on *Eleutheria* — so Alyssa could complete her studies.

The two have now sailed down to mainland Mexico, on the beginning of what they view as an open-ended cruise that will see them sailing across the Pacific this spring. The thing we notice the most is that the couple — he is now 29 and she is now 23 — are as much in love with each other as they were the day they met. We're not romantics, but they are a lovely sight, and we wish them the most glorious of passages and lives together.

— richard

nautical tourism suicide in mexico

Is Mexico committing nautical tourism suicide? We sure hope not, although thanks to the actions of a new sub-agency of Hacienda (the Mexican IRS) called AGACE, it appears the country is on the verge of doing just that — and even worse, perhaps setting the stage for possible problems with the United States government.

Since November 26, AGACE, which was created by the new Peña Nieto administration to be auditors for foreign commerce,

has been checking the paperwork of foreign boats in 12 marinas in Mexico. To be legal in Mexico without having to pay duty, foreign boat owners are required to possess their boat documentation, proof of clearing into Mexico, and a Temporary Import Permit, and have all these documents on file in the office of whatever marina the boat is in. This is perfectly reasonable.

According to a harbormaster

who attended a big meeting in Mexico City on December 19 with AGACE, Tourism, and other officials, 338 foreign boats were found to be out of compliance with these rules in just the 12 marinas that were checked. That's a huge number, so let us give you a hint why.

Boats were found to be out of compliance because of misspellings made by officials in the US and Mexico; because hull identification (HIN) numbers were painted over after many years; because AGACE officials who know nothing about boats didn't know where to look for various identification numbers; and so forth.

We at *Latitude 38*, who have undoubtedly been the biggest promoters of nautical tourism to Mexico for the last 30 years, aren't exempt. Our catamaran *Profligate* was put in what's called '*embargo precautorio*' (precautionary embargo) simply because we weren't on our boat when AGACE officials — backed by armed Marines — came through the marina checking paperwork.

Since we weren't around to show our paperwork, AGACE assumed

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ladonna bubak

Cruising has been a way of life for this writer for decades. Ever since my parents built a sailboat and took me cruising to Mexico during my junior year in high school, I've known that sailing would be a huge part of the rest of my life.

This was in the mid-'80s, and on our way down the West Coast from Oregon, we stopped in the quaint little town of Sausalito for a much-needed break from offshore sailing. I fell in love and vowed to one day live in the little waterfront



Recipients of Zihua-Fest aid play beach games.

For a dozen years Zihuatanejo Sailfest has served as both a fun-filled celebration for cruising sailors and a major educational fundraiser for disadvantaged kids from the surrounding hillside communities. More money is raised for charity via Z-Fest than at any other sailing event in Mexico.

Slated for February 4-9 this year, Z-Fest #13 will be an extra-special affair, as the event's educational impact has earned Zihuatanejo certification by the United Nations as a "Community of Peace" — the only city in all Latin America to be so honored. So if you're sailing the coast, why not join in the fun and fundraising?

LATITUDE / RICHARD



If the Mexican government doesn't change course, many marinas could look this empty very soon.