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As all of you know, Vic-Maui runs again this summer. The whole thing started in 1965, running in conjunction with the Transpac. The next race was 1968 to move the race out of direct competition with Transpac. Since that time Vic/Maui has happened every two years with 2002 being the 19th time the race has been undertaken.

Your committee has asked me to put together my thoughts of how running around on the foredeck of a 35 foot sail boat crossing from Victoria to Maui has changed over the last 45 years (its hard to believe that I can still walk, talk and bend in various directions after some of the experiments in that regard that have gone awry over the last few decades). You see I was lucky enough to be a participant in that first race, one that included a total of four boats and some 26 people.

While the principal of trying to keep from walking on the water while setting, gibing or taking the damn think down has not changed, the shape of the boats, the power and shape of sails and, most particularly the weight and position of the pole have done dramatic things for those that dance on the foredeck.

Those of my vintage will remember Royal Vancouver Yacht Club coal harbour as the main mooring area for non-dinghies, and in particular, will remember the mast house and sail drying sheds that formed a big part of the marina. Every fall the wooden masts were lifted out of the boats and stored in the mast area where they could be varnished and cleaned in readiness for the following spring. On wet days or when one had managed to drag the spinnaker through the salt they were hoisted and air dried in the sail drying sheds. Thank God nylon and Dacron made the drying sheds disappear quickly but wooden masts were going to be with us for many years yet.

Many of us will remember the wooden spinnaker poles on the L-36's that we most often end for ended during a jibe. We can also remember the very broad shouldered nylon kites that rarely got below three quarter ounce of somewhat porous fabric and the shoulderless 1.5 ounce heavy weather spinnakers that were good to about 30 knots at which time either a seam would open up or the stainless steel rings in the clues decided that they'd had enough and would break at the weld. This was always entertaining as the foredeck crew tried to take down the beast with only one clew attached to the boat and not get stabbed or beheaded in the process. This was always done with careful, thoughtful and much appreciated advice from those in the cockpit who were well out of range of the thrashing sail but not from the verbal abuse heaped upon them by those attempting to douse the spinnaker.

While wooden masts and booms stayed for same time as standard equipment on many boats the move to aluminum spinnaker poles happened very quickly. They were lighter, stronger and more up to the demands of the more efficient and larger spinnakers that sailmakers cranked out with great abandon and sailors lapped up with equal relish.

With the change in boat design that the IOR rule brought it wasn't long before, under certain conditions, the spinnaker (and its smaller brother the blooper) controlled the boat, rather than the poor guy at the tiller or wheel. During this era the aluminum mast got lighter and thinner and the loads on the rig occasioned by a combination of spinnaker and blooper caused many masts to collapse, out of simple compression. Mast failure was also caused by the ability of the spinnaker and blooper to take control of the boats direction, turn it 180 degrees, and back these sails into the rig, again causing structural failure (if I remember correctly we called this the "banana surprise"). On a couple of occasions we were turned from a sailing machine to a powerboat in about two seconds (and the insurance companies loved [?] us).

On numerous occasions I remember hanging onto the lifelines for dear life while the boat rolled its crazy way downwind while always threatening to take things under its own control at any second. I also recall scrambling to the stern of the boat for two reasons, one was that the weight of the foredeck crew was needed back there to keep the bow as light as possible (ie that is to try and prevent its complete disappearance under the next wave). The second reason to be at the back of the boat was that it was usually safer back there as the rig, if it was going to go, usually went over one side or the other.

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The Vic Maui race began in 1965. It was the idea of Jim Innes who, at that time was a Captain for Canadian Pacific Airlines. Jim talked incessantly about the idea of a race, similar to the Transpac but originating in Victoria and ending in Maui. At the start of the first race, which began at night (due to favourable tides) off of Brochie Ledge there were four contenders. Jim with "Long" (a Lapworth designed L 36), Lol Killam with "Velaris" (a sloop of about 45 ft), Ron Ramsay of Royal Victoria Yacht Club with "Norena of White" (a ketch of about 45 feet) and Boo Paskel from Seattle Yacht Club with his 73 foot "Tataosh".

The first race had no official sponsoring Club (although both the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club and Lahaina Yacht Club were in the foreground as interested parties), no official starting committee and no one at the finish line to take times and calculate handicaps to determine who the corrected time winner might be. It was a fun race with no escorts, no safety inspections, and no committees. Everyone was trusted to put their boat in shape, appear at the starting line on time, check in on a daily basis as required, and join the party at the finish line. The boats took their own finishing times and waited to see how the others did before being able to calculate whether they were first, second or last and I don't think anyone was very worried about what their finishing position might be.

The weather was typical for most of the passage with westerlies in Juan de Fuca and down the coast to about the latitude of San Francisco. Passage time to this point was about seven days. Shortly after passing this point the wind eased, the swell became more confused and within an hour we had the spinnaker up and were heading from Maui in 15 knots of northeasterly trade winds. The downhill ride to Maui had begun.

As many people know the problem in making a prompt passage to the warm isles is trying to figure out what the Pacific high pressure area is going to do. If it swings over you winds will lighten, or disappear completely, and your next day of sailing will occur when that high makes a move (usually to the north). Proper knowledge of this high pressure area and which direction it is moving is much easier today than it was in 1965. Weather fax, computers, and better monitoring of marine conditions make the route an easier one to plan - that is not to say that the plan will not be fooled by nature's actions taken without our knowledge and approval. In 1965 we navigated around the high pressure area using a barometer, a series of charts and conversations with the two flights a week to Hawaii that were operated by Canadian Pacific Airlines at that time. Our biggest problem with information from the airplanes is that they gave us the weather at 30,000-40,000 feet, not a sea level, and we, as a result, found the airplanes were primarily useful in relaying to our families that we were still on the right side of the waves.

Yes the more modern instrumentation of today makes navigation easier but it is easier for everyone, thus the problem remains the same - where is the wind going to benefit our boat the most.

The ride to Maui took us nine days in trades that varied from 15 knots to 30 knots. We pulled gear apart, tore sails (primarily because of failures in the welds of the stainless steel rings that formed the head and two clews of the spinnakers. We used our fair share of extra sail cloth, needles and thread to put sails back together after each of these events.

On the morning of the 16th day I was at the wheel as the sun rose in the east and in the mist ahead emerged the volcanic pinnacle of Maui known as Haleakala. The race's imaginary finish line was the breakwater at the entrance to Kahalui harbour on Maui. We were greeted by wives and friends, as well as customs people when we tied up at the dock in Kahalui at about 10:00 am. The party was well underway by 11:00 but we had all agreed that Napili Bay would be where the boats would rendezvous after the race so we headed back out through the breakwater and by 14:00 were anchored in Napili.

At this point we were aware that Lol and "Velaris" were only about six hours behind us. After the welcome we had received we had better do the same for them so we headed (in a borrowed car) for Kahalui. By the time "Velaris" was nearing the finish it was really blowing (35-40 knots) and the entrance to Kahalui meant that "Velaris" had to gibe to make the turn and enter the harbour. Velaris had everything up when we first sighted her, just before they gibed the crew stripped the spinnaker off and around she came. It was the first time Lol had been able to check that closely on the marine life in the area through the

cabin windows. Velaris cleared customs quickly and made Napili just after dark – then the party started getting going at a new level.

Tateosh → “Norena of White” did not finish for another three days and, again, we crossed the island to watch her finish, welcome the crew to Maui, and point them in the direction of Napili Bay. Where, you might ask, had “ ” and her crew ended up. Boo was running about even with us as he reached the latitude of San Francisco and was unhappy with the wind and the resultant speed he was making. The net result was that he called the next one morning to say that he had powered up in light winds on day seven only to run into the trades about six hours later. He was therefore disqualified and power/sailed his way to Lahiana. But did he and his crew have a good time – you bet they did.

With three of the boats anchored in Napili Bay and on tied up in Lahiana it was time for the usual rounds of socializing and great fun. It was decided by Jim, Lol and Ronald that the prizes for the race should be made of wood native to the Hawaiian islands. The prize for first place was beautiful wooden bowl presently to Jim Innes, the man with the idea of the race, the smallest boat and, the best crew (in view of the fact I was a lucky enough to be a member of that crew).

By the end of the first week of September 1965 we were all back in Vancouver, Victoria or Seattle. Of the six who took “Long Gone” from Vancouver to Victoria to Maui, four returned with the boat and one fellow flew down to assist us in our homeward journey. It was an, at times very rough and, on other times very calm, slow experience that took us twenty one days. When we arrived in Vancouver the round of parties began again and I am married to one of the ladies I met at those parties. Things had to settle back to a more normal way of life and they did, It was time for Jim to get back to flying, time for Gus and I to get back to University and for all of us to move back to the real world but, we did have a great time.

As an aside, Jim passed away in November 2001 and I am sure he passed on with the happiness that we all loved in the first Vic Maui race – 1965.