

VICTORIA-MAUI

International Yacht Race 1992

Some people call it a race, others call it a cruise. Betwixt and between lie everything from broken records to broken hearts.

By Sandi DuBrule

There was no panic. There were no long lines. No one was being pushed, shoved or trampled. There was no sound of howling animals and no one was screaming as they clambered for passage as on Noah's Ark.

Quite the contrary. Royal Vancouver and Lahaina Yacht Club's highly-advertised, international, off-shore race from Victoria, British Columbia to Maui, Hawaii attracted 80 requests for applications and 27 enthusiastic crews braved the 2,400-mile Pacific crossing. This year's Vic-Maui was one of the largest ever, especially in the Maxi Division.

Wayne DuBrule photo



Donnell A. Tate photo



Photos courtesy of Vic Bilan, Sandi and Wayne DujRale

On MC Fastrack, as on the other boats, big seas and broaching were all part of the adventure.

Floods brought Noah's passengers on board the Ark. Had they had the choice, they would never have chosen to be there. The force that formed the crew on board MC Fastrack, a 65' MacGregor, was the pure desire to challenge the unknown elements of nature. A year and a half prior to the race, syndicates and crews were forming at clubs up and down the coast. At the False Creek Yacht Club our syndicate was formed with over 30 sailors vying for berths. By the time MC Fastrack was bound for the start line, 10 sailors had decided to get on board. Only two of our 10 had been offshore before, and neither had experienced handling a maxi sled that had a reputation of a sailing speed of 27.5kts in down-wind conditions—exactly the course we were to be travelling.

As my first offshore experience, I can easily say it was a little like Bambi versus Godzilla. Somehow, through inner strength, I

soon came to the conclusion that you don't have to be "bigger" to endure the 38kt winds that hurled you about; you have to adopt a David and Goliath approach. The green water blasting over the foredeck, submerging the foredeckman till only his hair was visible, changing and dousing sails, trimming, rounding up, rounding down and inevitably broaching were all part of the adventure.

Adrenalin glands were never lethargic, and fear was always an emotion hidden deeply within.

Flattery Will Get You To Maui

Before rounding Cape Flattery, we found ourselves ankle deep in water in the cabin. A water tank fitting clamp had jarred loose on a hose and water was pouring in fast. We had no more cleaned up that mess than a headsail stowed on the foredeck flushed overboard in 21kt winds with waves breaking over the bow. The doused sail filled

with water and became a sea anchor. One of our mainsail winches was slipping and had to be stripped down and rebuilt. Our water maker was still not producing water.

At 1700hrs it was customary for the racing boats to call in on short-wave with their positions. Although we could receive the information and position ourselves, no one could receive our calls. Merlin [see Ron Boyd's sidebar], a Santa Cruz 70 and holder of the course record (1978), was leading, Hokulele, a Nelson Merrick 68, Lucille, a Frers 68 and Atalanta, a 74' sloop, followed behind.

If ever there was a time when I doubted the logic of my decision to participate in the race, it was in those first hours after the start. We had spent five months rebuilding the boat from top to bottom, but things were still going wrong, breaking, or had become non-operative.

As we started dinner preparations, we dis-

VICTORIA-MAUI

covered the stove would not work. The deck vent had picked up saltwater in the line and had become encrusted. Only after blowing out the line, cleaning and reassembling the apparatus was dinner served.

At 1200hrs MC *Fastrack* rounded Cape Flattery. Four other unidentified boats sat stalled in 2kt winds. We had the current with us and were able to slide past them, but quickly our speed dropped to that of our competitors. It was not until 1530hrs that we got 6kts of wind and then only sustained our speed for 45 minutes. We had doubted our decision to follow the rhumb-line (shortest line of travel). Our weather fax confirmed that the winds on the coast were no better. There were two high-pressure areas, neither helpful to our course. Our skipper commented, "My mother said there would be days like this!"

The first three days were simply the calm before the storm. We spent our leisure time rigging a 200-lb test line with a bungee cord (using washers as weights) to an alluring trophy tacker which attracted several hungry fish. *Carmanah* [ex-*Flattery*], a Peterson 41, was still within our sight and she was also trolling fishing gear off the stern. The lazy summer days enabled us to get caught up on our work, settle into our environment and make an effort to get to know one another.

We had repaired our short-wave radio and contact was now being received. It appeared that it was flat everywhere and was still anyone's race. In the dark shadows of any perfect day lurked a situation that was developing into a major problem. We had not yet got our new water desalinator working. Two mechanics had been up all night, nearing a second sleepless night, trying to make it operative. Our skipper informed us that "if it was not working by tomorrow morning we would turn back and withdraw from the race." We had accomplished only 361 miles and would only achieve another 199 miles that day.

The men became boys as they giggled with joy when the wind picked up on day four. We averaged 9.58kts with a peak speed of 12.1kts. We covered 230 miles. Our water maker was operative and it looked like we were on our way. In the evening we experienced our first accidental round-up. During the 0200hr watch we experienced a round-down (sort of a knock down, but not as severe).

..... IOR CLASS

FIN	DIV	BOAT NAME	TYPE	ELAPSED				CORRECTED			
				D	H	M	S	D	H	M	S
1	2	<i>General Hospital</i>	Farr 40	13	17	6	5	8	22	42	38
2	2	<i>Mad Max</i>	Davidson 40	13	18	10	0	8	23	49	5
3	1	<i>Maverick</i>	68	10	7	32	20	9	3	25	45
4	2	<i>Carmanah</i>	Peterson 41	14	17	5	34	9	6	12	34
5	1	<i>Lucille</i>	Frers 68	12	23	55	3	9	11	52	49
6	1	<i>Hokulele</i>	68	10	23	6	1	9	18	57	16
7	2	<i>Foxfire</i>	Kaufmann 44	DNF							

..... PHRF CLASS

FIN	DIV	BOAT NAME	TYPE	ELAPSED				CORRECTED			
				D	H	M	S	D	H	M	S
1	1	<i>Merlin</i>	Santa Cruz 70	9	23	15	59	10	22	20	47
2	3	<i>Nuance</i>	Hughes 80/20	17	2	33	33	11	15	46	21
3	1	<i>Atalanta</i>	Tripp 74	11	21	46	12	11	19	50	48
4	2	<i>Panache IV</i>	Centurian 47	14	7	14	7	11	21	32	7
5	2	<i>Sanfire</i>	C&C 43-2	13	20	7	54	11	21	58	18
6	2	<i>Lady Meg</i>	Spencer 44	14	16	3	4	12	0	34	52
7	2	<i>Eclipse</i>	Perry 45	14	1	22	4	12	7	3	16
8	3	<i>Windancer IV</i>	Shannon 50	15	1	34	19	12	9	27	39
9	3	<i>Luna</i>	Yamaha 33-2	16	0	17	14	12	9	44	14
10	3	<i>Meredith II</i>	C&C 38-2	15	12	55	42	12	9	55	6
11	3	<i>Wind Chaser</i>	Islander 30	17	11	35	22	12	10	25	10
12	1	<i>Charisma</i>	S&S 57	14	5	39	2	13	10	25	2
13	2	<i>Passing Cloud</i>	Route 68	16	4	32	53	13	13	4	41
14	1	<i>MC Fastrack</i>	MacGregor 65	13	12	49	21	13	20	30	57
15	1	<i>Ajax</i>	Santa Cruz 40	DNF							
	2	<i>Rocket J. Squirrel</i>	Swan 39	DNF							

..... IMS CLASS

FIN	DIV	BOAT NAME	TYPE	ELAPSED				CORRECTED			
				D	H	M	S	D	H	M	S
1	1	<i>Vendetta</i>	Moody 44	14	8	12	27	11	0	11	49
2	1	<i>Hooligan</i>	Cal 40	14	13	46	30	11	8	19	44
3	1	<i>Jo</i>	J-44	12	23	6	51	12	11	45	59
4	1	<i>Hone Koa</i>	X402	14	7	45	46	12	12	52	21

The tension mounted as we saw the first of the huge, erratic waves, some towering 20'. Day five was proving to be the action we had been searching for: 30kt winds, gusts to 38. We experienced a round-up and the waves pooped the decks. It was no surprise to have the gale forces crest and break over my back.

The sensations on the MacGregor were awesome, unmatched by any other thrill of speed that I have ever experienced. I knew as soon as the winds picked up I was born to be a racer. It was clear, this was what all the training had been about.

A fitting on the outhaul-car fractured, releasing the main sail while doing 11.5kts; we immediately reefed the main, while a

fearless crew member, in monkey-like fashion, shimmied out on the boom and repaired it by jury-rigging a reef line to the clue of the main. Immediately after this, the foredeck crew called for assistance in hoisting a sail. Giant, pitching waves were breaking over the foredeck with much crashing and banging while the sail was luffing up. This day was proving to be character building. By the end of it we were higher than a kite on the experiences, and our bond seemed to have deepened.

We learned early to do with little sleep. Exhaustion was becoming evident with the crew as they suffered mood swings. Most crew were growing quiet by day six and starting to feel some dislike towards some

Breaking Merlin's 1978 Record

My landlubber plans for the summer were changed in March when Jack Pacey recruited me for the Vic-Maui Yacht Race to crew with Dan Sinclair and his charter group on *Merlin*, a 70' ULDB, which set the record to Maui in 1978 under the helm of Doug Fryer of Seattle. Could she do it again? What about El Niño? Where would the Pacific high be this year?

Having raced to Maui before in *Incantation* (SC 50), *Charley* (Holland 67), and *Sorcery* (Mull 84) and completed a Transpac in *Incantation*, Dan assumed I should know where Maui was and asked me to navigate.

..... Instruments

A lot has changed in the field of navigation since my first race when only a sextant was allowed. Although *Merlin* was well equipped we added several instruments from our own boats to round out the package:

- Signet Marine instruments • Furino Ioran—only used to beat out of the Straits. The plotting feature in this was great. Hawaii chain is scheduled to be turned off this summer.
- Magnavox SatNav • Interphase GPS—was the backbone of our navigation
- Garmin GPS—handheld battery powered for backup
- Raytheon Weather fax • SeaRay 209 HF Transceiver and ICOM Ham radio • Statpower Inverter—manufactured in Burnaby and used by *America*³
- Two laptop computers to record data from the Signet instruments and run custom calculations.

..... Plan

Psychologically the crew were prepared to watch *Maverick* and *Hokulele*, both Nelson/Merrick 68's, lead out of the Straits. Their lead was bigger than intended thanks to our sailing away from a major westerly wind shift.

Out in the Pacific we agreed to follow close to our competitors and when the opportunity presented itself try to cut the corner around the Pacific high. *Merlin*, with a narrower beam, just like *America*³ was expected to be faster than the competition in the trades. If we sailed smart and avoided gear failures and foul-ups we hoped to catch the leaders before Maui. It would be close with four other big boats racing this year.

..... Charting

The Ioran and plotter were used in the Straits. From Tatoosh to Maui only plotting sheets were used in lieu of charts. Ron Ogilvy programmed the laptops with formulae from Bowditch's *The American Practical Navigator*. Great circle courses were instantly available. After each roll call we immedi-

ately knew the course sailed, distance, compass heading etc. of all the competitors. The hourly plots became half-hourly and then every 10 minutes as we approached Maui, closely monitoring the route of the yacht and helmsman performance. The "fast watch" was racing the other "fast watch".

..... Weather

El Niño had given Vancouver a most unusual winter and spring. Through the weather office we had tried to obtain knowledge on what effects this current may have on the Pacific high.

After a low-pressure trough moved into Washington State the North Pacific was dominated by a very stable high pressure system. With no fingers cutting across the course toward California, the corner could be cut this year. I observed on the weather fax a deep low of 1002 millibars with winds over 50kts south of the Aleutians. Maybe just wishful thinking but I wondered if this might move the high's centre north or at least in conjunction with the high, suck up air from the south and create wind on the southern flank of the high. Indeed the high did move to 45°N and was intense at 1037 millibars compared to the usual of 1026 millibars.

..... The Corner

The first leg to the corner was planned by sailing to an imaginary point 6 millibars from the high's centre. When we had reached this point (40°N) we were well south of the centre. *Maverick* and *Hokulele* were still directly ahead. There are no "turn here" signs out in the ocean, but this looked like the right place. We couldn't turn the corner with the spinnaker up and with some reluctance on the fifth evening the crew took our bold orange and black spinnaker down and we turned west toward Maui. *Maverick* and *Hokulele* kept going south.

We sailed our new westerly course for 36 hours. Could we choose a 1,300 mile layline? I became a little anxious having seen stars at night for the first time. Were we a little too close to the high? Was it time to head south? As the wind veered north our one and only gybe was completed baldheaded to allow rigging maintenance. Wind angles of 10 to 15° were drawn on the isobar lines down the rest of the course. A further 15° wind shift to the east was predicted.

Hokulele continued south but *Maverick* had come up to cover us. We had cut the corner significantly on her and thus saved valuable miles. We still had good winds and would now be advantageously downwind of *Maverick* relative to the coming wind shift.

..... Port Gybe

Thirteen hundred miles to sail on port gybe to Maui. *Maverick* was off our port bow over the horizon. We sailed hard, utilizing the polar angles with continual adjustments for wind speed. The spinnaker was never cleated. The big chute was now kept up at night. We had to catch *Maverick*.

At Roll Call on the seventh night we knew for the first time that we had sailed almost an identical course as *Maverick* but were faster. No helmsman was allowed to reach up for speed. The computers graphed out speed, course and wind shifts. Each watch and helmsman was monitored aggressively. Subtle diurnal wind shift had now been identified and would be used to advantage.

..... The Finish

On Sunday we caught *Maverick*. Only gear failure would prevent us from first to finish. The record now became the challenge. Could we better 10 days?

The trades were not strong. We were averaging 10.5kts. But now we needed 10.2kts directly down the rhumbline to Maui. We had insufficient boat speed to sail the extra leg that a gybe would create and beat the record. For the last 24 hours the cross-track error was called out to the helmsman. Every extra mile would cost time.

I had planned to come into Pailolo Channel from the south to take advantage of currents and wind coming through the northern tip of Maui. Three nasty squalls kiboshed this plan. In compensation we roared along with the blustery gusts with one eye on the sails and the other on the time.

As the ninth day drew to a close, Dan Sinclair steered *Merlin* along the shores of Maui and across the finish to beat the 1978 record by 46 minutes and 3 seconds. The 10-day barrier had now been broken.

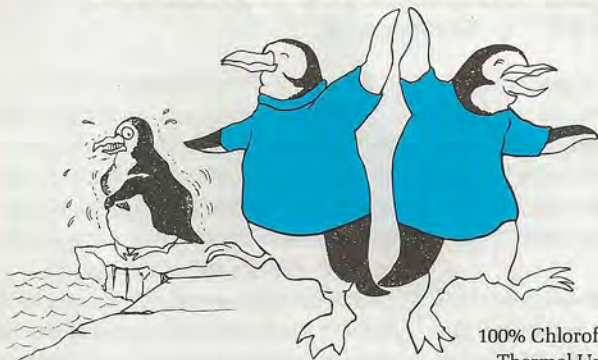
—Ron Boyd

..... Crew

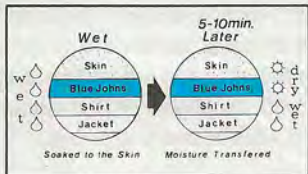
Dan Sinclair	Skipper
Ron Boyd	Navigator
Dr. Jack Pacey	Surgeon
Ron Ogilvy	Computer Consultant
Jay Sinclair	Foredeck
Peter Fargey	Sail Trim
Vlad Kahle	Ship's Engineer
John Robertson	Mast
John Vogel	Foredeck
Dominic Soave	Celestial Navigation
Ron Draine	Winch Expert

Don't Endure the Cold,

Enjoy It!!



100% Chlorofibre
Thermal Underwear



- * Blue Johns beats the competition with faster moisture transfer.
- * Provides a warm, dry layer next to the skin, eliminates after-chill.
- * Non-flammable. It will not sustain flame or form molten drops.

* The unusual versatility of Blue Johns affords satisfaction over a wide range of requirements.

* Blue Johns' high thermal quality and lightweight softness give a totally new experience in undergarment comfort.

THE WORLD'S BEST UNDERWEAR
Blue Johns

Made in Canada PHONE 604 / 753-6021 FAX 604 / 753-3778

Blue Johns Ltd.
950 Old Victoria Road,
R.R. 1, Site Z2
Nanaimo, B.C., Canada
V9R 5K1

VICTORIA - MAUI

situations and some actions. One of my sailing mates greeted my cheerful "How are you" with a "Better than dead" comment. One member of the crew commented he just wanted off the boat, while another commented he was sick and tired of putting on wet clothes. Exhaustion finally took over, you never slept longer, just harder, and your body recuperated more easily. In the days to follow these feelings never surfaced again.

MC Fastrack had travelled 203 miles in the harrowing 25- to 30-foot swells with winds peaking at 38kts.

Two boats, *Rocket J. Squirrel*, a Swan 39' and *Ajax*, a Santa Cruz 40, lost their rudders, and were adrift approximately 300 miles off San Francisco. The American Coast Guard confirmed that they would assist the *Rocket*, but would not arrive for three days. Without steering, they drifted 41 miles south in two days. Hovering nearby were "Estelle" and "Frank," a couple of unwanted full-fledged hurricanes. *Ajax* attempted successfully to navigate to San Francisco with a self-made rudder.

Luna, a Yamaha 33, reported keel problems. *Sanfire*, another False Creek Yacht Club entry, reported spending the night sewing sails. Many boats had broken hal-yards.

After discovering we were on our last bottle of gas, we started conserving our CNG as well as water. Coffee was eliminated—cold turkey—and the crew were weaned from their habit with some understandable complaints.

As we entered the trades there was sunshine and the feeling of tropical air. The swells were playful and joyful after such previously demanding days.

Flying fish, dolphins, whales, tropical birds, rainbows and beautiful sunsets were all part of the incredible adventure but nothing topped the extraordinary phosphorescent light show. The whitecaps were set aglow while the fish swam freely about us, veering frantically as they panicked near the hull of the boat. The size, depth and presence of the fish was mesmerizing. The luminescent glow seemed a reward for only those willing to come so far.

We had blown one spinnaker, not necessarily from overtaxing it, but a recent repair failed almost immediately after hoisting. The remainder of the trip we flew wing-on-wing twin head sails.

FEEL THE HEAT

New!

FORCE 10
Blue Jet



- WARM • DRY • RELIABLE
- 32,000 BTU marine heating system
- Super quiet
- No show start-up
- Low current draw
- 100% efficient combustion
- Uses diesel fuel
- Propane & CNG Radiate heat
- Quiet automatic operation
- Minimal current use
- Power venting assures clean healthy air
- Two models from 3000 BTU - 6000 BTU



It's the
Platinum Cat

FAB-ALL 120
Bulkhead mounted Diesel cabin heater



FAB-ALL 180
Floor standing Diesel. Brass or stainless steel. 18,000 BTU



PROPEX 3000 & 6000 BTU's
The LPG only, fan assisted compact unit



SALES • SERVICE • INSTALLATION

Extend your cruising season with these heaters from

120 - 8060 Capstan Way,
Richmond, B.C.

River Marine 270-9455

VICTORIA - MAUI

Merlin set a new record, completing the race in 9 days, 23 hours, 16 minutes. Maverick crossed in second place, Hokulele, third, Atalanta fourth. Jo, a J/44, crossed fifth, with Lucille hot on her tracks [see results].

Squalls were usually a welcome gift, the warm rain washed the salt from parched, chafed skin. My hands were cut and chapped so badly that handling the salt-encrusted sheets was miserable. Approaching our boat we could see another squall, but this one was different. The waves were moving faster than our boat, stalling us between the waves, leaving us without steering. The boat hurled over on her side in a broach. Just as we were righting her, we were hit again and put back on our side. We were in a 28kt wind. It was still raining and we kept trying different sail combinations to beat the challenge. The depressing part of the event was that with the waves stalling us, we were not even making 8kts.

The squall apparently found its quest in ripping the rudder from Foxfire, a Kaufmann 44. After their 14-hour attempt to navigate on a well-built self-made rudder, they threw up their arms in defeat, called the coast guard and were towed into Hawaii begrudgingly; the tow bill exceeded \$15,000 US. Sanfire, suffered spinnaker problems and in total blew four. Crew from Wind Chaser reported broaching as many as 10 times a day on their spinnaker flying days.

As we neared the finish, sadness came over me. My husband, son and daughter were waiting for me in Maui and I longed to see them, but I was also saying goodbye and bringing to an end the most spectacular thrill of my life.

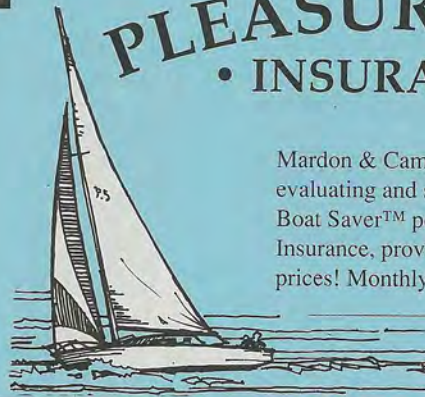
We were the seventh boat to cross the line, on the thirteenth day. My reply to "Did you win?" is "Everyone who crosses the finish line is a winner."

I come from a powerboat family. There were many doubts from my friends and acquaintances as to how well I would survive the elements. I was completely prepared for it, with contingency plans for every conceivable possibility. I had thought out each hazard, imagined the worst and anticipated the horrors.

It's a good philosophy: Little can be as evil as our own imagination. ☺

Sandi DuBrule is first mate of Starship, a sleek Bayliner 32 with twins and a lot of other non-sailorish stuff.

PLEASUREBOAT • INSURANCE •



Mardon & Campbell Brokers are experts at evaluating and satisfying your insurance needs. Our Boat Saver™ policy, underwritten by Wellington Insurance, provides comprehensive coverage at low prices! Monthly payments available.

Call Richard Today!

Mardon & Campbell Brokers

Richmond
274-9971



Vancouver
876-3366

BOAT SERVICES

- Awlgrip® spray painting
- Fibreglass work (polyester & epoxy)
- Custom additions & modifications
 - Keel rudder & hull fairing
 - Gelcoat blister elimination

CALL US NOW FOR BETTER SERVICE & FAIR PRICES

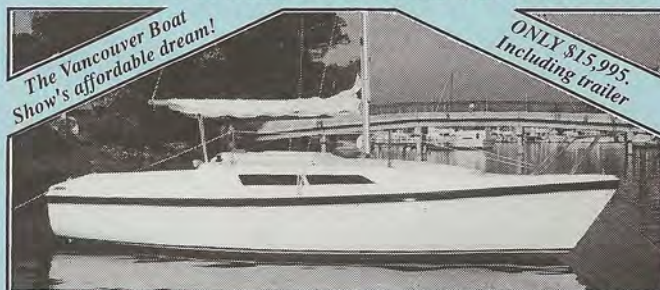
ALVIS MARINE LTD. (604) 985-3905

104 - 80 Orwell Street, North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 3R5. Fax: (604) 985-4552

Builders of

Optimist • Pirate • Tasar & B14 Dinghies & Evetts 31

TROUBLE FINDING MOORAGE?



The Vancouver Boat Show's affordable dream!

ONLY \$15,995.
Including trailer

Powerboating & Sailboating???
Let us show you the exciting new **POWER SAILER!**

Call us for more details....

Only \$10,990 including trailer.

The MacGregor 26 is a revolution in boat building. Total weight of boat and trailer is only 2200lbs. which makes for a comfortable tow, even with a 4 cylinder car. The MacGregor 26 uses a unique water ballast system. Why tow that extra 1200lbs. of ballast when you can drain it? Enjoy our 45 minute video in the comfort of your own living room, and then let us show you the MacGregor 26 on the water.

"You saw the MacGregor 26 & the MacGregor 19 Powersailer at the Vancouver Boat Show... Let us show you them in the water!"

GERRY BERG HOLDINGS LTD.

1221 Glen Drive, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 3M8

Call **254-6121** or 24 hr. cellular services at **250-4100**

