

## Walkabout to Mexico

*Below is a nice article sent to us by member Anne Slater about a Luders 33 cruise from San Francisco to Baja California (that's in Mexico for you Right Coasters). Tech director Bob Banzett has added some footnotes.*

I have been delaying this note thinking I would write the perfect article, but I am starting work next week so it could be now or never. Our trip really started with a relocation package a few years ago. What? Yes, human resources didn't mind us transporting the boat from Bellingham to Napa, CA with some household goods stowed away for good measure. So, hey, once the boat was in California she might as well sail to Mexico.



And...being the kind of people that need deadlines, my husband Stu and I joined the Baha Ha Ha<sup>i</sup> and "raced" down the Baja coast from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas. This is a cruisers rally which awards third place to all boats which don't get first or second and also claims that no one will laugh at said cruisers for lugging along all their cruising gear (i.e. sit upon kayaks and the requisite twenty jerry cans on deck). So...we did get third place and a FLICKA won our division. They sailed the entire coast without motoring! They still made it to the parties!

From Cabo we sailed across the Gulf of California to Mazatlan and then hopped down the coast as far as Manzanillo. We then turned around and repeated our journey back up to Mazatlan and headed back across the Gulf to La Paz in April. We spent nearly a month in Marina Costa Baja which felt pretty luxurious after living at anchor most of the winter, but we were ready to explore again after our respite. The anchorages and sailing were beautiful between La Paz and San Carlos which is on the opposite coast in the state of Sonora. It is a five hour drive south of Tucson, AZ.

What about the boat and the sailing? The boat did great. This was mostly a downwind journey and we took it easy...reefing early, etc. We did a lot of wing on wing and used the cruising spinnaker a few times. We did use the "real" or symmetric spinnaker a couple times. Once we flew it in insufficient wind with a little bit of slop and naturally it wrapped around the headstay, but we were able to unwrap it. It was looking pretty dire, but we lucked out. The cruising spinnaker worked well on a beam to broad reach. It took some fiddling to learn to use it and we're not done yet. I would like to get a sock for the symmetric spinnaker and use it more often<sup>ii</sup>. The boat handled pretty well. I think she rolled quite a bit and sometimes was hard to steer in large seas, but when I mention that to people they say, "all boats roll". Nevertheless, compared to say an Islander 36 she does roll. I guess that is the keel and the shape of the underbody.<sup>iii</sup>

It is interesting to note that most boats were bigger than the Luders. The average boat in the Ha Ha was 44 feet. Many boats had tons of systems. We kept things simple. For our dinghy we used sit upon kayaks and these were great. Although I did flip in the surf a few times (which Stu NEVER did) and had a wet butt most of the time, the kayaks allowed us to do some great birding, we got some exercise and there was no outboard to fiddle with. We had a Garmin chart plotter with which the first mate was totally enamored. I grew to like it as well. It can make for lazy navigators though.

We had 2 solar panels which provided plenty of juice. We did not use our fridge. We may try to insulate the icebox next year and use it, but that will require more vigilance with the amperes...such hard work. We use a 35lb CQR with 200 feet of chain and have an electric Lofrans Tigres... A great machine. We also carried a Fortress anchor and fifty feet of chain with 200 feet of Megabraid . We heard about the Megabraid at a boat show and it turned out to be a good investment. It doesn't hockle and it is light and strong. It is abrasion resistant and we did confirm this. We

used a little Danforth for a stern anchor and it worked out well, too. We hung it off the stern pulpit with the appropriate hardware. The diesel tank holds about 30 gallons and we had 1 extra 5 gallon jug. Water was more of an issue. The tank holds forty gallons and we had three extra jugs of about 5 gallons each. We kept these below decks in strategic places. The big surprise was the Raymarine wheelpilot. It worked!.. even going downwind in sloppy seas. Occasionally we would take the helm if it was really windy, but it did surprisingly well. The unit had a harder time dealing with a beam reach in windy conditions. We did not buy a windvane. One other piece of gear we enjoyed was a “rock n roll” stabilizer from Magna<sup>iv</sup>. This we deployed off the spinnaker pole. It made anchoring on the Pacific coast a lot more comfortable. That swell was always present and eventually we got used to it.

In the last few years we have had some work done on the boat. We had a “thunking” going on before we left which emanated from the rudder. This did turn out to be an issue with the shoe as I discussed with fellow owner, Paul Merry. The hole that holds the rudder pin in the shoe had worn and the rudder was slopping around.<sup>v</sup> We had that fixed and they did a great job. We also added a couple of knees next to the rudder tube as it seemed to shake a bit when the rudder was moved vigorously. We had the oak mast step replaced with Delrin<sup>vi</sup> and the inboard end of the spreaders cut off and solid aluminium welded in their place. The rigging is 7 years old now, the main and genny are pretty new and the asymmetric was brand new.

I have to admit we are getting away with a few things which need to be addressed. The chain plates are the originals. I do ponder that from time to time. The boat sprung a leak right through the fiberglass just aft of the rudder tube.<sup>vii</sup> This is disconcerting. It was a slow leak of course, but still...what the heck? The starboard deck drain which travels under the stringer in the lazarette also sprang a leak right through the fiberglass, but it does not communicate with the drain opening below the waterline.<sup>viii</sup> I guess fiberglass wears out. I will have these things repaired in Mexico. I am having the deck drains permanently glassed in and will try to neatly cut out some drain holes in the toe rail.<sup>ix</sup>

This was a great trip about which I like to talk and Stu LOVES to talk so if anyone wants to know more nitty gritty or hear some sea stories give us a shout or email. Meantime, the boat is drying out in the desert (she is covered up) and we have work to do on Stu’s boat. Up here in Washington he is the captain and I revert to first mate. Not a bad life as long as you are really in to old boats. Cheers [aslater@pocketmail.com](mailto:aslater@pocketmail.com) 360-734-1488.

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<sup>i</sup> For you right coasters – this is a ‘race’ organized by Latitude 38 – the SF Bay sailing rag (usually a really good read)

<sup>ii</sup> I put a sock on Puff’s cruising spinnaker, and it works very well.

<sup>iii</sup> The larger lateral area of the Luders keel ought to reduce dynamic roll compared to the cutaway keel of the Islander. However, the Luders is smaller, and thus may roll more in certain conditions. I’ve also found that sail trim downwind can greatly affect roll you can set up dynamic wind forces that exaggerate roll. A tight vang/preventer can help, as can a whisker pole and the right sheeting angle. Sails trimmed too close can hurt.

<sup>iv</sup> I always figured roll stoppers were a gimmick, but with this advice I’m going to look into this!

<sup>v</sup> Another source of rudder thunk is the upper bearing. I made an extra bearing of 1” polyethylene plate that bolts onto the cockpit floor and it cured my thunk. Still fine after about 8 years. Will also take the strain off the rudder trunk tube.

<sup>vi</sup> I’d keep an eye on that Delrin for creep under constant compression unless it’s fiberglass reinforced. I made mine of aluminum – a wide plate to spread the load. There were some reports of the lower mast buckling to starboard in heavy racing because the starboard side of the step is unsupported (the port side sits on the head bulkhead). The deck in way of the step had compressed on Puff – the solid wood core had been misplaced (probably because the deck molding was also used on the Seabreeze which has a different mast location). I also dug out the balsa core and put in solid fiberglass and put a knee under the deck to starboard of the head bulkhead that supports the mast.

<sup>vii</sup> These boats were apparently molded in two halves and joined along the centerline. The join layup was bad in that area on Puff (Hull 56), although it did not leak there was a fine crack. I ground it out and re-glassed it using West epoxy about 18 years ago – no problems yet. Other boats have had similar problems. I have not seen a problem elsewhere along the seam on Puff.

<sup>viii</sup> I worry about freeze damage in this area if the lower end of the drain gets plugged during winter storage – the yard once placed the stand right over this hole on mine!

<sup>ix</sup> Drain holes in the toerail will be less troublesome, but the runoff water is likely to stain the topsides, so I haven’t done it.