

**THE GREAT POTTER YACHTER
NORTHWEST ESCAPE AND MESSABOUT
SEPTEMBER 2003**

It all started when Bruce Hood started recounting his adventures trailer-sailing around the San Juan Islands. Soon, Bruce, Don Person, Mike Westfield and Dick Herman were planning an exploratory trailer-sail to the southern Puget Sound area.

A timely E-mail from a northwest Potter was most helpful in planning the route. As Dick subscribes to the six Ps (prior planning prevents piss poor performance), the tides and currents, marinas, and navigation were carefully checked. Bruce solved a lot of problems with a helpful letter on how to pack a Potter, which is no small feat.

Circumstances changed and six intrepid (Don said to use this word as much as possible) Potters departed Orland, CA on Wednesday, Sept 10th. Don and Judy Person were there with Sarah Anne, Pat Brennan with Eaglet, Dan Phy with ASAP, John Wheeler in his yet unnamed 15, and Dick Herman with Muddy Duck, the token non Potter. We spent the first night in Cottage Grove, Oregon and had dinner at the Covered Bridge, a neat little restaurant.

We made Fair Harbor Thursday afternoon and launched our redoubtable fleet. Now Fair Harbor is an absolute gem but we learned one thing true of every launch ramp we saw on the Sound – they don't have finger docks. This was the occasion of our first Keystone Cops drill. But we got the boats launched.

Then we caravanned through the back woods to drop our vehicles and trailers off at Gig Harbor where we planned to pull out. Somehow we made it without a single wrong turn. But it took us forty-five minutes to find Arabella's Landing Marina where we

had made arrangements to park. (Okay, so Dick hadn't quite planned this part out.) Don and Judy's daughter, Jennifer, lives in Gig Harbor and was waiting at Arabella's. We had dinner at the Harbor Tides before Jennifer drove us back to Fair Harbor. Thank goodness Jennifer has a sense of direction, not to mention humor.

We were up bright and early Friday morning and had breakfast on the boats. After a navigation meeting, we left for Jarrell's cove at 10:30. The weather was magnificent except for one small detail – no wind. So we motored the six nautical miles on glassy-smooth water. The marina at Jarrell's cove was closed for the season but there is an excellent state park with docks and showers less than a hundred yards away. There was also a flotilla of forty kayaks in the harbor manned by sex-crazed teenagers. (By definition, all teenagers are sex-crazed.)

While deciding where to stay, a lovely retired couple, Tom and Mary Ryan, who live a quarter of a mile away wandered by. Being hospitable, Mary hinted that we would be welcome to drop in. Never one to miss a chance for free booze and goodies, Dick immediately jumped on the invitation. Dick warned the intrepid Potters that as Tom was a retired Naval aviator and that he once flew for the Air Force, the first liar never stands a chance. So we motored over to the Ryans whose home overlooks Pickering Passage.

This was the occasion for our second Keystone Cops drill. Tom has two mooring buoys and a mooring line that works like a clothesline between his seawall and a pulley anchored in the water. Don demonstrated how to pickup a mooring buoy stern-first and the other four tied our boats to the mooring line. Tom and Mary were not ready for this show of intrepid nauticalmanship. Judy was kind enough not to laugh. Somehow, we got

ashore without getting too wet. The Ryans were charming hosts, and have a lovely home that Mary designed. Tom and Dick swapped war stories and while the Ryan's have invited the Potters back, we're not sure if that extends to Dick. Thanks to John and an incoming tide, launching went much smoother.

The teenagers at Jarrell's Cove were amazingly well behaved that night and there was not a single reported case of "skip and go naked." Saturday morning promised to be another fine day with the same minor exception – no wind. We also discovered that John is a minimalist and uses a tin can for a coffee cup. We left at ten A.M. and motored past the Ryans with sails set. Dan was thoughtful enough to sound five warning blasts. They wisely were not home or still in a state of shock. We motored down the west side of Hartstene Island and four of us took Peale Passage while John went down the west side of Squaxin Island. We all joined up just outside Boston Harbor and motored in together.

Boston Harbor Marina is the type of place that grows on you. The owners and staff are very friendly and helpful, they have a well-stocked store, the prices are reasonable, and they have an excellent Sunday brunch on the deck overlooking the harbor. But there are no showers.

And there was this old codger who wandered around the docks smoking a big briar pipe. There was something about his boat that looked familiar and we discovered that he is the new owner of Kea, the boat in the book "My Old Man and the Sea." Any boat that has made it around Cape Horn deserves a lot of respect.

After brunch on Sunday morning, we decided to advance on the state capital at Olympia, which is located six nautical miles away at the head of Budd Inlet. Again, the

intrepid Potters sallied forth, this time with wind! We docked at Percival Landing and had a late lunch on the deck of the Oyster House overlooking the inlet. The hostess was absolutely taken by the line of “cute little boats” and wanted to know all about them. Again, we sallied forth and made it back to Boston Harbor in one hour and thirty minutes on a beam reach.

It was a gorgeous evening and we gathered on the deck at Boston Harbor Marina for an impromptu happy hour. Events become fuzzy at this point. For some reason, we called Bruce on Dick’s cell phone with a tale of a battle with the Montgomery Mommas, Judy being kidnapped, and us in jail. Dan corralled a passing sheriff in uniform and got him to volunteer his handcuffs, all for the sake of realism. We would have pulled it off if Pat hadn’t of dropped the cell phone in the cheese dip. We are happy to report that Bruce is still talking to us and has promised to go along the next time to insure we maintain proper Potter decorum.

After that, we decided a quiet departure Monday morning would be the wisest course of action. We left Boston Harbor at 11:00 A.M. after the morning fog lifted. This time we were able to sail most of the way and made Longbranch Marina in less than three hours. Longbranch is a community-developed marina and another little gem. It would have been perfect if there were showers. Needless to say, some of us were getting a little ripe, but again Judy smiled and carried on with aplomb and dignity.

That afternoon, Don, Pat, and Dick took Muddy Duck on a sail over to McNeil Island where a U.S. penitentiary is located. They sailed around Eagle Island in Balch Passage and learned what “a confused sea” means. It was a great afternoon.

We had a quiet dinner on the dock that night and talked to some of the friendly natives. We received numerous warnings about the dreaded Tacoma Narrows and rechecked the tide tables. It rained around eleven o'clock that evening but we were all snugly bedded down. We had to wait for the tide on Tuesday morning and had a leisurely breakfast. A rain shower passed through just before we left. We motored out of Longbranch at 10:40 and headed for the north side of McNeil Island. The wind kicked up when we entered Carr Inlet, and the Potters took to their heels, making over four knots.

We entered the dreaded Tacoma Narrows with the tide and a following wind, and Dan reported making over seven knots on his GPS. We paraded under the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and treated the natives to a rare display of massed Potter power. We reached Gig Harbor at 2:30 P.M. along with a thunderstorm. We all furled sail and donned our foul weather gear.

The rain really dumped on us as we motored in but this time found Arabella's Landing Marina with no trouble. Bobbi, the manager, checked us in and made a fresh pot of coffee. There was general rejoicing when we discovered they had showers. Again, Jennifer joined us and the intrepid duo, Don and Judy, treated us all to an excellent dinner at Anthony's. None of us had any trouble sleeping that last night on the boats.

Jennifer brought a box of Starbuck's home brew and muffins the next morning. We milled around outside the Marina, reluctant to take our cars over to the launch ramp. We finally made the drive and Jennifer took us back for our boats. Again, there was no dock at the ramp but we were pros by now and bypassed the Keystone Cops drill. After pulling out, we milled around again, all reluctant to leave. We split up and Dan, John, and

Dick were on the road by ten A.M., headed for points south. Everyone made it safely home.

On the face of it, it was a silly thing, driving almost 800 miles one way to spend five days and nights on the water to motor-sail 56 nautical miles, smell like an old rubber boot, and get rained on. Would we do it again? In a heartbeat!