

The Fun Sail **Back** from Hawaii

By: Jim Quanci

Few people on this earth have done more than a few passages back from Hawaii (folks like John Jourdane, Skip Allen and the Commodore) – so are really in a position to give a definitive view on how to “best” sail from Hawaii to the West Coast – and I am not one of them. That said, having done the return trip four times on my Cal 40 *Green Buffalo*, I hope to share with you some of the things I have learned about how to make the trip home not a chore but a whole lot of fun. My having raced to Hawaii from the West Coast a number of times, you might find it odd to hear that I find the voyage home to be more intellectually stimulating, emotionally fulfilling and just plain more enjoyable than the race over. I feel sorry for folks that have only raced to Hawaii – and missed the joys of the trip home (though I understand the time investment is large which makes sailing both ways for most people difficult to impossible). Hopefully this article will give you a sense of just why that is – and how you can also have great fun getting your boat home. Delivering your boat home from Hawaii is one of just a very few challenging and fun long distance passages in the world of sailing that unfortunately very few people have experienced. I hope you can join the “club”!

Pre-Race

Get Your Delivery Crew Right

You’ll need one good sailor and one good mechanic on your crew if you want to deliver your boat home without undue “drama”. It’s a long way home, likely 2500 nautical miles through the water, with a good piece of it upwind. It will likely take you from 14 days (50 foot boat) to 17 days (40 foot boat) to 19 days (30 foot boat) at sea – if you are going back to California (add another 3-4 days to that if you are headed to the Pacific Northwest) - and you can be sure some things will break along the way. The process of spotting things that are starting to “break” and repairing them is an integral – and one of several fulfilling – parts of the adventure. If you personally have strong sailing and mechanical skills, you’ll love proving to yourself how capable you really are – and sharing your skills with inexperienced crew. If you are not, you are going to learn a lot, return home a much better “seaman” with a number of new skills, and the confidence to sail your boat to almost anywhere in the world.

It Is Very Important You Like Your Crew

The first week can be trying, beating into large seas in what can be a brisk breeze for several days. If you find you do not like your crew, or your crew doesn’t like you, it’s going to come out – and having it come out a thousand miles from land is not the way to have a great fun passage. So pick your return crew carefully (dare I say “wisely”?). Make sure they are people with great personalities – as talking with them will be your main source of stimulation and entertainment. Depending on the size of your boat, you may have a crew between 2 and 5. On my Cal 40, I go with a crew of 3 or 4 people – the number on board driven as much by who I think it is fun to be with as anything else. If you already have one or two crew with strong sailing and mechanical skills, and have room for another crewperson, I strongly recommend you bring a “newbie” with a great personality. I find newbies to be engaged and interested in everything that is happening – as well as bringing fresh new eyes, ears and views to the boat. They “keep the boat fresh” for everyone. Having a newbie as one of your delivery crew will turn what you might first see as a dreary maintenance chore into an interesting learning experience for all. Also be on the lookout for crew that have interesting skills and experiences that can add zest to the trip home – such as fishing, cooking, photography, music, or an unusual background (one of my two time return crew grew up in Zimbabwe leaving him with a wealth of coming of age in Africa stories).



Teaching a newbie crew how to clean and lube the two speed primary winches – as we motor across a high pressure region in calm seas. Nothing like pulling back into your home berth with the boat in better condition than when you left for Hawaii several weeks back.



Sewing practice when the main split a seam a few days out of Kaneohe - during the first long starboard tack. Needless to say my delivery sails are very old – over 30 years old - and need to be retired. We double reefed the main and sailed on. When we reached the light winds and flat seas of the high, we all took turns sewing the split seam – all 15 feet of triple stitched seam! Took us the better part of a day.

Ship Return Gear to Kaneohe

Be sure to take advantage of the shipping container the Pacific Cup race organizers have arranged for to ship your return passage gear to Hawaii (<https://www.pacificcup.org/store/container-shipping-ca-hi>). The cost is very reasonable. Heavy delivery sails, boarding ladder, and space consuming empty fuel jugs are best shipped via containership to Hawaii – and nothing is easier than the Pacific Cup organized

container that is delivered just 150 feet from where your boat will be moored. I even ship over several cases of fresh water – as its one less (heavy) thing I need to buy and lug across town to the boat.

Rodger Dodger

One can debate the merits of having a dodger on the boat for the race to Hawaii (I for one wouldn't leave home without it) – but for the trip home you really do need a dodger. Ask any delivery crew what the most valuable pieces of equipment are on the boat – and almost all will tell you the dodger is one of their “top 3” items to have on the boat for the trip home – and most will tell you they wouldn't do a trip home on a boat without it. The dodger creates a “second room” on your boat where the crew on watch can relax, read a book, watch the fishing line, and gaze at the stars in peace and quiet while staying dry. It's amazing how a simple piece of canvas can turn a cold, wet and inhospitable section of your cockpit into a warm dry “porch” overlooking the ocean. If you plan to sail your boat home from Hawaii, you really do need a dodger. I'll introduce you to one of very few people I know that have delivered boats home without a dodger to share their tale of woe with you if you do not believe me.

Otto the Autopilot

Right up there with having a dodger, you will also want a good autopilot – as he will be your “extra crewperson” – a crewperson that is tireless and uncomplaining. I call my autopilot “Otto”. Ask anyone that has done a return trip who the MVP on the crew was and more often than not they'll tell you the autopilot was. Otto lets the crew on watch hang out under that dodger where they can be dry and stay out of the (unrelenting at times) wind and water. Otto turns what can be the chore of driving the boat day in and day out into a relaxing day at the beach. Can you do the return trip without an autopilot? You can – and I know several people that have done so – and again I would be happy to introduce them to you so they can convince you that yes you really do want/need a good robust autopilot to deliver your boat home. On a typical 17 day delivery on the Green Buffalo, Otto drives all but maybe 8 hours of the trip -the first few hours as the new crew gets their fill of driving to weather in the trades and maybe a few more hours hand steering for fun if the wind gods allow us to fly the spinnaker for a time.



What is wrong with this picture? On this delivery, we ended up north of the high pressure region on a dead run in a very pleasant 10-12k of wind and small seas. Being on a dead run, watching the main to prevent an accidental jibe got tiring so we dropped the main and flew the chute alone for two straight days - making 6-7 knots directly toward the west coast. It was a magical two days of warm winds, smooth seas, great food, good music and catching up on our reading.

Post Race

Fix Everything

So you thought this article was going to be mostly about how to sail the boat home – how far north to go before tacking onto Port. We'll get to that soon enough – but like with most things, from painting to racing, success and enjoyment come from careful preparation. When you get to Hawaii, you will assuredly have a several things that need to be fixed before heading home. I keep a pad of paper handy during the race over to quickly jot down what needs fixing when we reach Hawaii – so I have a good handle on what needs to be done in what becomes a very short week between finishing and heading back out to sea. At times, while still at sea before the finish, I (Iridium) call or (Sailmail) email my brother to order stuff needed for repairs - to be delivered to Hawaii (or delivered to a friend that will be flying to Hawaii to partake in the post-race revelry). With a little luck and a bit of planning, I try to have all the repairs complete by the Wednesday morning before the Friday Awards Banquet. This is most important to keep the family happy – having a few days to play with the family on Oahu, have a picnic

with the family and incoming delivery crew on Sand Island, and just plain having some time when I can relax and goof off a bit. After all, this is about having FUN – not just work! What kinds of things might you need to fix? Not unusual to have found a few irritating leaks in the deck during the trip over. Also not unusual to have some sort of electrical problems it would be nice to get fixed before heading home. Twice I have had boom vang connection problems that needed fixing (yes your boom vang gets a real workout on the race over). So keep track of what needs fixing as you go, call ahead if needed to get materials you need for repairs, and talk to your race crew about what help you'll need from them getting the boat ready for the trip home. As I mentioned earlier, the trip home is harder on the boat and crew than the race over – and things not working right will detract from enjoying the trip home.

Fuel, Fuel and more Fuel

This is a personal belief of mine that not everyone subscribes to. I like options and alternatives. I like being able to make choices during the trip home – choices driven by the unpredictable weather served up by the weather gods. Having lots of fuel gives you choices on where to take the boat and how fast you get there. It's typical to have to make your way the better part of the way across a windless high pressure system to get home. This high pressure region can be a few hundred or several hundred miles across. And there can be more than one of them (buy me a beer and we'll talk about a delivery home that included passing through the windless middle of two high pressure - and one low pressure - regions – and yes the center of a weak low pressure region can be quite large and windless). There is nothing worse than being 200 miles off the California coast becalmed with no fuel – with the weather man telling you a full gale is going to hit within 48 hours. Having lots of fuel gives you the ability (and luxury) to both speed up or slow down to miss an undesirable weather system. Lots of people talk about how to best handle their boats in heavy weather – but anyone who has been there will be quick to tell you the best thing to do is to invest time and effort in avoiding getting caught in tough conditions. Fuel, fuel and more fuel gives you options - enables you to sail (and at times motor) home in great weather while avoiding the nasty stuff. How much fuel should you have for the trip home? Let me suggest you have enough fuel on board to motor for 4-6 days - be able to motor for 500-700 miles (though I recognize this may not be possible for smaller boats). For my boat, that is 110-130 gallons of fuel. There is a small marina – [He'eia Pier](#) - with a fuel dock just a few miles from Kaneohe YC where you can “filler up” (the most expensive fill up of my life!). I like to take the crew and friends out on the boat for a relaxing mid-day picnic on Sand Island on the Wednesday or Thursday before the Awards Banquet – to relax, see the turtles, and fill up the fuel tanks (I hate being rushed and potential last minute surprises).

Kailua Safeway

What about food for the trip home? You probably did careful food planning and had a detailed day by day menu for the race. Suspect you don't have the same level of planning for the trip home – and likely aren't sure what your delivery crew likes to eat. No problem! The trip home is relaxed. Spontaneity with food is a good thing. Get a piece of paper and pencil and hit the Safeway supermarket in Kailua with your crew. Just start walking the aisles with your crew looking at the food and asking them what they like to eat. Start grabbing the food they like as you ask them what days they might want to eat it. As you grab food just mark on your pad the days you expect to eat it. You'll quickly fill in the big food items for most days – and then can start filling in the meals for days that are still under defined. Be sure to keep the food simple the first few days – as beating upwind in big seas reduces appetites and few people will want to cook for more than a short time. Also be sure to bring food that is fun (I love a crate of apples and oranges) – and food you can eat if you find yourself in heavy weather the last few days before you arrive home. I always have a few large cans of Dinty Moore stew on hand that is also edible uncooked - should you have cooking problems (if you buy me another beer, I'll tell you a good story of cooking over the exhaust manifold for a few days when we ran out of propane). Last you want to be

sure to bring several cases of water in small pint size bottles. Should your tank water get contaminated or lost, or should that new water maker decide to give up the ghost, several cases of water will get you home.



All you need to eat on the trip home can be found in the aisles of the Kailua Safeway. Be sure to bring your delivery crew along for this shopping trip. Don't be surprised if you run into other members of the fleet buying food for the trip home. Be sure to ask them what fun food they are bringing for the passage – as well as what day they plan to shove off. The Kailua Safeway is a great place to arrange for a daily radio chat with a fellow voyager!

Be Flexible (Weather)

This is a bit of philosophy – philosophy all long term cruisers have learned. The weather is what it is and you cannot and shouldn't try to fight it. If the trade winds are blowing hard out of the Northeast, it's not time to shove off for the trip home – it's time to relax for a day or two or three. Don't have a hotel booked for the next few days? Live on the boat. You don't want to beat your boat and crew up for the first several days. It's a long trip and you want to be nice to your boat and crew. It's a long trip home. If the trade winds are light out of the Southeast, don't delay leaving. Leave now. Family not leaving for another day and have that house rented for another two days? Take advantage of the lovely weather and get out of dodge right away. There are countless stories of folks letting things shore side dictate when they shoved off – when they should have been listening to what the wind and the sea wanted. If you break the boat or the people, best case you'll have a not fun "I will never do that again" trip – and worst case you'll have to return to Hawaii for repairs (boats, bodies or minds).

Saturday Weather Briefing

Every PacCup there is a wonderful weather briefing at Kaneohe YC the Saturday morning after the Awards Banquet. You want to be there. Bring your delivery crew too. And you want the boat and crew on standby – ready to shove off that afternoon if the weatherman recommends it. I always "plan" to shove off the Sunday morning after the Banquet – but shore side family and delivery crew know we'll be leaving when the weather is right – which could have us shoving off as early as that Saturday afternoon or several days later. I have seen the weatherman tell folks to "leave now" because the forecast is for heavy trade winds in a few days – only to see a few people ignore the advice, leave a few days later into

the teeth of strong trades. Seeing them break their boat or crew and have to turn back to Hawaii after a few days (with the ugliness of crew having to fly home, you sitting there with the boat and no crew, all that food, your own work schedule to consider, and so on) - while those boats that left right away are already north of the trades in lighter air, starting to make good easting, and enjoying the wonderful sail home. There are two important “entry and re-entry” times on the voyage home where you really need to listen closely and plan around the weather – first when you shove off from Hawaii and second when you approach the California coast - two critical times that can make your voyage wonderful – or not. The Saturday weather briefing is also where a casual “communication schedule” is put together by folks leaving in the next few days –setting a daily call in schedule, figuring out who has the best SSB set-ups and can act as a central communications boat, and so on. Sharing via SSB during the trip home is one of the most fulfilling and fun parts of the trip. Unlike the race over, where the large number of boats limits chatting on SSB, the trip home includes informal talking between maybe a dozen boats – people you will get to really know well. Guaranteed you will make a few new friends – and for sure a few people will have equipment challenges which the return fleet will have great fun making suggestions on how to solve.

Who is the Weatherman?

If you are comfortable interpreting weather maps and can get GRIBs while under way, you are the weatherman (or woman). If you are not, you can get professional weather routing help at a relatively low cost (few hundred dollars) – weather routing recommendations that are tailored to the performance of your boat - that are sent to you by email every few days. This typically includes a contact you can call (assuming you have an Iridium phone) to talk about what lays in front of you in the coming week. There is nothing like having a real person to talk to with that has deep experience predicting the weather. These weather routing professionals are very good – and I really recommend you look at engaging one if you are not comfortable interpreting – or don’t have access to – GRIBs. So if you want/need professional help, weather routers I have used or have seen other use with good results, include – [The Weather Guy](#) (Rick Shema, who is based in Hawaii and usually gives the weather briefing at Kaneohe YC) and [Commanders’ Weather](#) (I use these folks for the race to Hawaii). Of course you also want to talk to the other folks on the water during the daily SSB chat session about the weather they are experiencing – along with the what and why of their route plan for the next several days.

Fishing

Don’t forget to bring a hand line and a few lures for fishing. You don’t need anything fancy – just 150 feet of parachute chord from your local Ace hardware store – and a small lure with a 10 foot or so steel leader. Don’t know what lures to get? There are several fishing shops in Kaneohe that would be happy to point you at the lures you’ll want to bring (they sort of look like squid and come in several colors). Ask them for a small lure good for mahi mahi. Don’t let them talk you into buying the large mahi mahi lures – as big lures will catch you big fish – fish too large to deal with in your cockpit. A few bits of advice to make your fishing easy. Get at least 3 lures of different colors – as good chance you’ll lose at least one lure when you hook into something “too big” and different colors work at different times – and for different kinds of fish. The basic mahi mahi lure will also get you an occasional yellow tail tuna (great for sushi), and, as you get closer in to California, some great fresh albacore tuna (think sushi and tuna tacos). Oh, bring a small bottle of cheap vodka or gin. A shot in the gills will quiet the fish down – avoiding fish blood splattering everywhere. Don’t forget to bring a large long pole fishing net too – but it’s not to net fish. It’s for netting glass balls. When crossing the high, while you motor or sail in the light winds and flat seas near the high, you may come across an increasingly rare Japanese fishing net glass float. They float quite high on the water – unlike common plastic fishing net floats – so are pretty easy to spot from a distance. They can be as small as 6 inches and as large as 18 inches in

diameter. In four return trips, I have nabbed three glass floats – two basketball size and one cantaloupe size. They come in a variety of colors and textures and, if you can find one, are lasting mementos of your adventure. I know one boat that came back from a delivery with nine glass floats. Wow!



It's common for fish in the deep ocean to run in pairs (mahi mahi) and schools (tuna) – so frequently you will catch two fish in quick succession – just like these two tuna. That smile is all about the sushi and fish tacos to come in just a few hours. Did we remember to bring the wasabi and soy sauce? Do we have all the ingredients to make a good Hawaiian poke too? Don't forget when you are shopping in the Kailua Safeway.



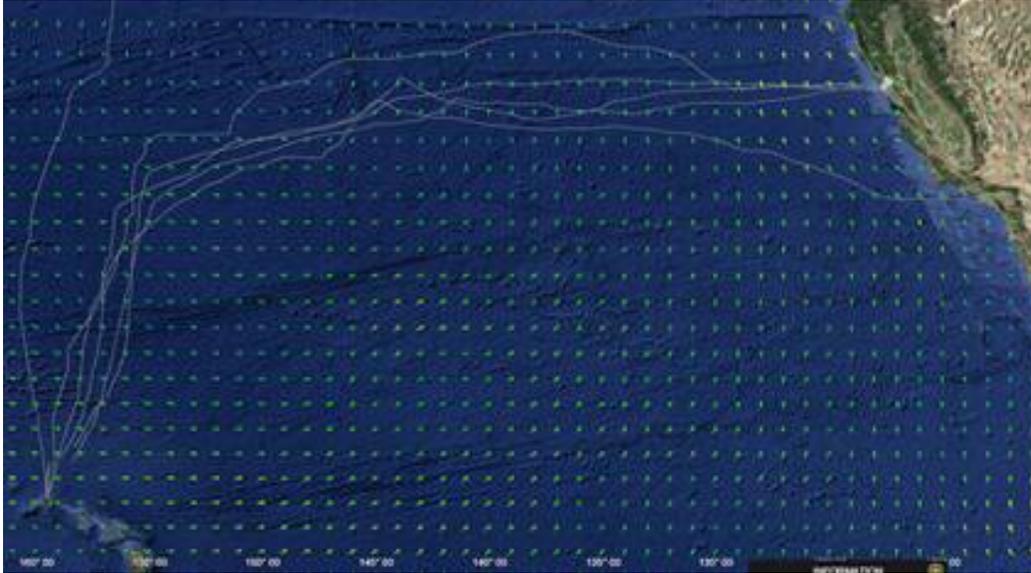
You are likely to see lots of “fish” you don't want to catch too. Most trips I have seen pods with hundreds of dolphins – and a few times schools of large 100 pound or so tuna. Of course there is the occasional whale too. Maybe the only time you will ever see a sperm whale.

The Long Starboard Tack

Assuming you have checked the weather and are not leaving into the teeth of strong trades from the northeast, you'll leave Kaneohe on Starboard tack - a long 5 to 7 day starboard tack - the longest single tack one is likely to see anywhere in the sailing world. Though you could put the boat hard on the wind, you don't want to. A tight beat into large seas and stiff trade winds is hard on the boat and the crew - so crack off a bit when you leave Kaneohe. Yes you'll be on a beat - but make it a loose one that is easy on the boat and crew - and gets you to the beautiful weather near the high pressure region. If you are lucky, whether by a blessing of the wind gods or your boat likes going to weather, your compass course will be between 0 and 15 degrees (magnetic). It's possible the best you will make is 350 degrees magnetic (heading true north). You'll be heading north to a high pressure region where you can then easily motor eastward in clear skies, flat seas and warm air. If you find yourself getting launched off an occasional wave and falling down the backsides of the waves landing with a "bang" - it's time to slow the boat down a bit by reefing - or possible footing off. Every boat is different so you'll need to play with speed and heading to find that magic place where the boat makes good progress without the banging. Do note if you have leaks in your deck they are sure to leak for several days. And if your boat has been bone dry, don't be surprised if you find you have a new leak or two. Beating to weather for a week loosens things up as the hull flexes. It's a boat so a little leak here and there is nothing to worry about (as long as it's not dripping on your bunk!). I keep a bit of plastic sheeting and tape handy should a leak show up in an undesirable location - channeling the drip to a better place. If your head (toilet) is the starboard side of the boat, you might find its water intake is out of the water in which case you will need to coordinate with the person on watch to pinch the boat up so you can flush the toilet. Or if your engine cooling water intake is on the starboard side of the boat, you may find you need to pinch up while running the engine to keep it cool. You do look at your cooling water temperature (and oil pressure) frequently when running the engine, don't you? Of course you do. If your boat has the head or engine cooling water intake on the port side of the boat, you may find you have the same water intake issues as you approach the west coast on port tack. Be sure to once a day have a good look at your standing rigging - as its highly likely your port side rigging will be "loose" on this long starboard beat - which can lead to things "really shaking loose" over several days. You want to give the standing rigging a very close look at just before you make that first tack onto port - a week or so after having left Kaneohe.



The track home in 2008. We had a great southeasterly breeze leaving Hawaii allowing us to get quite a bit of easting on the first long starboard tack. You can see where we put in a few short (day long) tacks before the wind died and we started motoring.



Here are the tracks of several boats returning from the Singlehanded Transpac in 2012. Green Buffalo is one of the “middle” tracks – the one with just a single tack (no short tacking this year). The boat going due north was bound for Alaska. You can still see these tracks in detail on the Yellow Brick website at <http://yb.tl/transback2012>.

When Do You Tack Onto Starboard? How High Do You Go?

The following are rules of thumb – that really need to be applied based upon what the weatherman is saying. You should find the wind lightening as you get north of 30 degrees. You will also find yourself getting headed from time to time – no longer making easting and at times feeling like you are heading toward Japan. If you don’t have a lot of fuel, you’ll need to evaluate if the high pressure region is south and stable enough to go over the top (stay longer on the starboard tack) – or its too far north so you’ll want to do some short tacking in the light air underneath it (a short tack being 12-24 hours long).



This is what the high looks like. You might motor for 2-4 days across flat water like this. Bring a few good books. In flat conditions like this, you can see a glass Japanese fishing float from

a few hundred yards away. The star gazing is great too (be sure to get a star finder app for your iPad to use on the voyage)!



And don't forget to stop for a swim in the high! It's a bit surreal swimming a 1000 miles from land - and spooky watching the boat sailing away from you. What is wrong with the photo on the right? Hope they come back for me if I let go of the line!

Going to California

If you have little fuel, you may take your first tack onto port as soon as 32 degrees – short tacking your way northeast till you reach 35-36 degrees. If you have plenty of fuel, just stay on the starboard tack until the wind goes light and your boat speed drops well below your motoring speed – and then motor northeast for what can be 2-4 days - depending on the location and size of the high pressure region. As you make your way northeast – whether short tacking or motoring, you'll eventually see the wind swing out of the north – and you are solidly on the long port tack to the coast. When the wind from the north is still light, head east northeast - making good way east while still gradually climbing north – as you want to be near 38 degrees when the northerly really fills in (34 degrees if you are going to SoCal). This will make for a fast reach into the coast – getting you quickly across gale alley. On rare occasions, if you are going to California (the norm if you are bound for Portland, Seattle or Vancouver), the high will be south enough that you find yourself running with the wind out of the west. There is also a rare occasion where the high pressure region is so far north and west, you will never get near it and will end up short tacking for several days. Should you go higher than 38-39 degrees (for San Francisco, 34 degrees for SoCal) so you can run off in a blow? In my experience you don't. Going further north leaves you in gale alley (and at sea) for an additional day or two. The faster you get out of gale alley the better - so going further north "in case of a gale" makes it harder to avoid a gale. And going "too far" north will frequently leave you running deep in big seas the last day or two – which is very hard on the crew, the boat and the helm. If you do get caught in a full gale and need to run off, so you end up in Monterey safe and all in one piece. Don't let your destination or time plans dictate how you sail home! The ocean and weather is in charge – not you. Okay now pay attention. When you are 700-800 miles off the California coast, you'll likely be reaching along in light air – maybe sailing and maybe motoring. You are 5-7 days from landfall in California. Now is the time to pay VERY close attention to the long range weather forecast. 5-7 days is too far in the future to have a highly accurate weather forecast – but the forecast is still "reasonably good" – and will be quite accurate for the time you'll be passing through

“gale alley” 200-400 miles off the coast. If the weather looks like a gale starting in 4-5 days, it’s time to push your boat to reach port before the gale hits. That could mean motoring at 6 knots instead of sailing at 4 knots. That might mean dropping the working jib and raising the jib top and/or shaking a reef out of the mainsail. What if the weather report shows a gale in the next few days – right in your path? Slow the boat down, throw in a second reef, drop/rollup that jib, or take all the sails down and do a bit of swimming (its unforgettable going swimming that far from land). Net net, good seamanship is doing your best to avoid getting yourself in rough conditions that can hurt you , your crew and your boat. There is no guarantee you will succeed avoiding heavy weather – but you sure want to do your best to avoid it. During four deliveries, I have never seen over 25k of wind, and have taken a fresh water shower on the foredeck more than once in the middle of gale alley – while other boats sailing home a few days earlier or later have had to struggle through a gale. If you have a small boat (say under 30 feet), slow boat or are heading to the Pacific Northwest – this strategy of avoiding gales isn’t as effective as you’ll be spending 7-10 days in gale alley – too long a time for accurate weather predictions and too long a time to avoid the gales that come through every week or two.

Going to the Pacific Northwest

Now I have never delivered a boat from Hawaii to the Pacific Northwest – so my thoughts need to be taken with a grain of salt. Watching others, it looks like you want to stay on the first starboard tack until you are north of 42 degrees (going to Portland) or 46 degree (going to Seattle and Vancouver). After tacking onto port, you’ll also want to continue to head northeast and then east northeast till your destination is due east of you when you are still 600-800 miles off the coast. Recognizing I haven’t done this before, I suspect you want to then get 1 to 2 degrees further north of your destination so you have the ability to easily run off a bit in a gale. Returning to the Pacific Northwest really does mean you need to assume you’ll have at least one gale to sail through. Can you watch the weather closely, find a weather window you can slip through, and speed the boat up or slow the boat down to avoid sailing through a gale? I don’t know – and would love to hear from folks that have tried to do it - and whether you succeeded or not.

The Last 100 Miles

The last 100 miles can be a brisk breeze and big waves – just like a typical race to the Farallones. If you get lucky, or pick your return route carefully, you should try to pass near the north Farallon Islands in daylight. We all know they are there but few of us have ever seen them. The North Farallon Island has spectacular rock walls that come straight out of the ocean. More often than not, I have found ourselves motoring the last 100 to 150 miles - so be sure to save enough fuel for a good days motor. There is nothing worse than being becalmed with not enough fuel and home just over the horizon (or worse yet, with a gale forecast for the following day).



Coming in under the gate at 11pm after the 2012 race. We pulled into the St. Francis so the crew could spend the night in their own beds – and then took the boat to its berth at Richmond YC the following morning.

Odds and Ends

It is a long sail home – so there will be significant wear and tear on both your sails and your engine. Along with making sure your sails and engine are “good to go” – do be sure you have enough “spares”. You are not worried about saving weight like you were for the race over, so no reason not to add a bit of extra insurance by bringing more spares. Having a few extra engine belts is goodness – as you will likely be pushing them hard running the engine frequently to feed the batteries that feed the autopilot. Running your engine for a few days in a row may bring out a weakness or two. I bring a gallon of engine oil for the trip home – having found the engine will at times use more oil than “typical” when running at high angles of heel (though maybe that is because I have a 40 year – virtually antique 4-107 diesel in the Buffalo). Also bring enough thread, needles and “palms” to do significant sewing should you blow a seam on a sail. Going to weather for a week or two can lead to a seam opening up in your delivery sails – that quickly “unzipper” to several feet in length. It will take a lot of thread and a few people sewing to get it fixed. You’ll be able to use all that thread to also “redo” any of your running rigging that needs some touch-up- while you teach the crew how to do it (or they teach you!). You’ll have several days in the middle of the delivery that are quiet – and a perfect time to remake up the ends of halyards and other lines that might have had their ends worn a bit during the race to Hawaii. Nothing better than arriving home with beautiful freshly made up halyard ends.

Medical

One thing I have noticed that is different about the trip home – compared to the race over – when it comes to medical issues – is staph infections. I have seen one case of a staph infection on the way to Hawaii – but several cases of staph infection on the way back from Hawaii. Staph infections can be life threatening – an infection that can start from a simple paper cut or a pimple. I am not a doctor so am

not sure what is going on – but I think the extended time on the water with a few people in close quarters does lead to significant increased risk of staph infections. Staph infections are tricky to treat, treatment needs to start early, and if one person gets it, it's likely another person will too. Guess how many pills it takes to treat a staph infection using a broad spectrum anti-biotic? It can be several pills per day over a several day period. That is a lot of pills for one person – and a whole lot of pills if two or three people come down with staph. Some staph infections are resistant to some antibiotics too (I hope I am not scaring you, staph is relatively rare, but common enough you want to be prepared). The safe thing is to have three broad spectrum antibiotics on the boat - commonly Cipro, Keflex and Ampicillin - and enough to treat two or three people. So be sure to talk to your doctor about the trip home – so they can set you up with the antibiotics you (or a boat near you that isn't so well prepared) might need.

Last

I hope you can join the “return fleet” for the sail back to the west coast. It's a whole lot of fun – and an adventure you will never forget. I will be there on the Green Buffalo (WhiskeyDeltaCharlie7036) – and look forward to getting to know you during the 17 days it typically takes the Buffalo to reach its paddock in Pt. Richmond. Still have some questions about the trip home? I encourage you to drop me an email and let's talk – jim.quanci@autodesk.com. What can be more fun than talking about sailing in the big blue sea!

It's A Family Affair: Jim Quanci has raced in 12 Pacific Cups, 2 Transpacs, and in 2012 he won the SSS Singlehanded Transpac overall. His wife Mary Lovely has raced to Hawaii 8 times (7 with Jim), and their 2 sons have joined them twice.