



Bringing BIG DADDY Home

By Bob Naquin

My friends Pat and Barbi Carson led hectic lives. They had sold their waterfront home in Stockton's Brookside development, just off the Stockton Deep Water Channel, and had to move post-haste. This was no big deal other than that I had to help them move to a third-story apartment. Citing a recent operation and giving an occasional pathetic little cough did nothing in the way of getting me off of the hook for that one.

But, more important and exciting, was that Pat and Barbi had purchased an almost-new 56-foot Navigator boat named *Big Daddy* that the couple eventually intended to live on. There were only a few things that stood in the way of that happening. First, they had to pay for it, which was virtually painless – well, at least for me it was painless.

Second, they had to get it from point of purchase in Newport Beach, CA., to Stockton. Since I had made this trip a couple of times and my buddy, Andre Klein, had been around the world in his boat, *Big Daddy's* new owner enlisted us to help him bring it north. It did not seem like a big deal to move a boat 450 miles. It sounded like fun. We didn't hesitate to go on what sounded like a pleasure cruise in this dream boat.

What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

We gathered in Newport Beach on Sunday night, May 2, 2004, and got acquainted with *Big Daddy*. Pat took his crew, which now had added Herman Meyer, a couple of my friends, John and Johnny Warren, and Pat's wife Barbi, out to dinner. It was an expensive meal as everything is expensive in Newport Beach. If I had known that it would be the last solid food I would hold down for 48 hours, I think I may have enjoyed it more.

On Monday, the third of May, we sent Barbi home by car. Then we prepared to take *Big Daddy* out of the harbor. It was a beautiful morning with little wind and just a slight roll to the seas. It appeared to be just a typical Southern California morning on the water. However, we all knew that this had no relationship to the ocean above Point Conception. Point Conception is where California goes from running east to west and starts running almost due north. It is where the southern ocean meets the northern ocean and the seas can get a little confused and rough; but we pushed along at 15-plus knots making good time throughout the day.

We arrived at Point Conception in late afternoon with the intention of taking a peek at the waves and turning around if it didn't look good. We were going to head back to Santa Barbara until conditions got to our liking, but as luck would have it, the ocean was a bit choppy – nothing more than one would expect for this area. So we pushed on.



Pt. Conception looks peaceful on land, but the seas were very rough for *Big Daddy*.



Although Barbi Carson gets seasick and is usually content to act as the driver “chaser” for the men’s trips on the *Big Daddy* in open ocean, she had to go with husband Pat three miles off shore to complete the deal. Here she and Pat Carson are seen handing the check to yacht salesman Ken Wright with the Crow’s Nest Compass Point Marine Group.



In the first rough seas shakedown cruise around Point Conception, the yacht’s salon was in shambles with furniture tossed everywhere. Andre Klein keeps the refrigerator from breaking loose after applying duct tape. Barbi Carson said it was not a marine brand refrigerator and the doors came open. It has since been replaced with a marine brand with a pin that keeps the doors closed in rough seas.



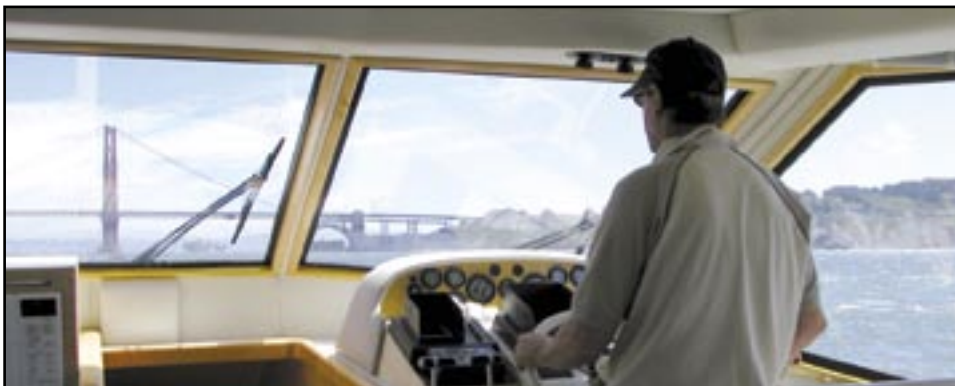
Retrofit work was done on the dinghy at Village West Marina before continuing on to Canada. Seen working on the dinghy’s base support that got dinged up on the rough open ocean trip are Rob Kidder, Rick Holcombe and owner Pat Carson. On the dock are Wolfe and Pat Coloumbe and Herman Meyer.

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night

After going around Point Conception, one would expect the ocean to calm a bit and take on a decided northwest to southeast direction. As we pushed on, the ocean was not laying down as much as we hoped and nightfall was upon us. We checked the weather buoys up ahead and they indicated that conditions up ahead were not too bad, so away we went into the night.

We were working on four-hour shifts with Pat and Herman on one shift and Andre and I on the other. Once a shift was over, the general idea was to get some rest. The motion of the boat was such that finding a decent place to sleep was difficult. The bow of the boat was swinging through an up and down arch that made sleeping in the forward berths a weight-free experience. As you lay in your bunk, it would fall away from you as the boat pitched downward. When the boat found the water again, the boat and your bunk would come up to greet you with a smack. Some of this is tolerable, but the conditions were such that sleeping was an iffy thing.

So I moved to the rear salon and slept on the couch. The motion there was much less. Sleep was the only option for me as I was seasick. Actually, I am pretty much seasick anytime I’m in the ocean, but this day had been worse. I had lost my expensive dinner hours before and had no intention



Owner of *Big Daddy*, Pat Carson, as his yacht approaches the Golden Gate Bridge.

of refueling the toss-up machine until I could put my feet on dry land. So I slept. Being awake was just too uncomfortable.

***“The sea was angry that day, my friend.
Like an old man sending soup back in a deli.”***

- George Costanza on the “Seinfeld” television show

Andre and I got up at 4 a.m. on May 4 and I for one did not like what I saw. The ocean generally lies down at night and gets rather calm. This ocean had gotten worse. Usually as the day dawns, the winds will pick up, and the sea will get rougher. This sea was already rougher than I liked and we were not even at daylight. We checked more buoys and the conditions they were reporting from up ahead sounded a lot better than the stuff we were in, so we pushed ahead.

We did not have many other choices, as there are only a couple of ports on this part of the Pacific. If we had known that they were reporting weather conditions from some other planet, we may have reconsidered.

Waves are reported in height and in interval. A 6-foot wave every 12 seconds is pretty good. The same 6-foot wave every six seconds is considered a square wave and is not good. There is also a wind wave on top of the ocean swell that sometimes adds to the swell or subtracts from the swell depending on whether the waves synchronize themselves, which they always do at some point. We were experiencing 10-foot seas with a 5-foot wind wave at an interval that was way too close together. Conditions up ahead were reported to be 8- to 9-foot seas at 13 seconds, which sounded better.

And it Kept Getting Worse...

Now the boat was being tossed around pretty violently. To keep from making it worse we slowed down to six or seven knots. The problem with this is that at these speeds the autopilot does not have enough rudder response to keep the boat going in one direction, so we kicked off the autopilot and I hand steered it – giving me something to do besides throw up.

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And it kept getting worse. The seas built to 15 feet with 5-foot wind waves and the wind started spiking up to 44 knots or gale force. The wind was right on our nose with the boat being basically a wind vane that did not want to point up into the wind. The waves were helping the wind turn the boat to the south. The rudders, at the speed we were going, were barely able to keep the nose pointed into the weather. If the boat turned sideways to the waves it could broach or go over on its side. This is considered poor form in the boating world.

So I steered, trying my best to keep the bow pointed somewhere into the waves. Sometimes I made it and sometimes I didn't. Even with the bow pointed into the waves all was not good. An ocean swell and a wind wave would sync up and pass under the boat sending the bow pointing skyward. And just about the time it cleared the stern of the boat, the bow would free fall through the air and slam into the ocean. Having a 50,000-pound boat fall through the air is not good. As an added benefit, the bow would bury itself in the next wave and the wave would travel up the deck and wash over the windshield. The windshield is not the strongest part of the boat and I was concerned that it would break and things would get a lot worse. Meanwhile, back in the stern, the cockpit door was coming open and the cockpit was filling with water.

This violent set of events happened every two or three minutes when everything in the boat would free fall and then slam into the floor. That included people. So the only way to avoid this was to sit down and hang on, except that things kept breaking loose and needing attention. By this time we had used duct tape on every door in the boat,

which kept most of them closed. The refrigerator pulled free from its mounts, so we duct taped that too and then sat Andre in front of it to keep it from falling across the cabin. The hard bottom dinghy we had on top of the boat came out of its davits and was slowly destroying its bottom and the davit it sat on.

The bait tank on the rear swim deck had left us during the night leaving only the holes where it had been mounted. Basically, we were in this container being shaken and slammed around along with a bunch of miscellaneous items.

Around noon, I had been at the wheel for eight hours, yanking it back and forth trying to keep us upright. I was about to turn the wheel over to Andre to get us the rest of the way in when I noticed hydraulic fluid leaking out of the steering. This was not a good thing because if we lose the lower wheel we would have to steer from the flying bridge and that was not something I wanted to do. The leaking fluid did not seem to affect the performance of the wheel, so we kept going.

Stupid is as Stupid Does, Sir!

We pushed on to Monterey, which was our closest port. It was only 50 miles away, but at six knots it takes a long time to make 50 miles. Sometime in early afternoon we made Monterey Bay where conditions started to improve. Around 3 p.m. we finally made the breakwater at Monterey where things were finally calm. It is a very narrow channel with a promenade up above the entrance used by the boats. As I was up on the front deck of the boat preparing the dock lines, people were staring at us incredulously. It reminded me of the scene from the movie "Forrest Gump" where Forrest's boat is the only one that is stupid enough to be out in a hurricane. Stupid is as stupid does I suppose.

We pulled up at the fuel dock to take on some diesel and found out we were the only customer


the guy had had all day. Go figure! We put *Big Daddy* in a slip and surveyed the damage and started making repairs and cleaning things up. We had not lost anything essential, except possibly the steering. A check of that indicated that it was still functioning and had plenty of fluid, so we decided to continue with it the way it was.

This kind of boating experience will tire you out – a quick shower, a good dinner on shore, and then into bed by 8 p.m.

I Left My Lunch at Point Conception, but Left My Heart in San Francisco

The next morning we were up by 4 a.m. Actually the fishing boats next to us started up at 4 a.m. and there was no sleeping once they started their big diesels. We were all anxious to get going, so we had some coffee and shoved off. When we cleared the entrance we could see that this day was going to be a lot better than the previous. The swells were 4 to 6 feet at a decent interval and the wind was down to 10 knots. We poured the coals to *Big Daddy* and got up to 18 knots. We were inside the Golden Gate by noon.

We went over to Alameda and put in at the guest dock. I had a car there so Andre and I got off, and Barbi and Bob Knobloch got on. I took Andre to his home in Novato and then went on to Stockton to meet *Big Daddy* as it tied up at the yacht club dock. Talking to Pat upon his arrival I found out that the lower steering had finally given out just as he was maneuvering away from the dock in Alameda.

Big Daddy will undergo some work, some repairs and upgrades and then we are taking it to Canada. It's going to be FUN! 

Be sure to read next month about *Big Daddy's* trip from San Francisco to Canada.

BIG DADDY'S CREW



Bob Naquin, author



Pat Carson, owner



Barbi Carson, co-owner



Bill Kinsinger



Andre Klein



Herman Meyer



Rich Balentine



Rob Kidder