



Pat Carson, the owner of *Big Daddy*, waving at Jervis Inlet.

Bringing **BIG DADDY** Home

BIG DADDY'S LAST LAP

By Bob Naquin

Pat and Barbi Carson had just spent an enjoyable summer of 2004 in Canada with their new 56-ft. Navigator yacht *Big Daddy*. With autumn coming and bringing with it calm seas, the time was right to head south. After the ride north from Newport Beach (see “Bringing Big Daddy Home” in the September issue of *Bay & Delta Yachtsman*), I was sure that all of the bad mojo had been used up in this boat and a pleasant cruise south with following seas was in the offing.

The crew – Herman Meyer, Richard Ballentine and myself – flew to Vancouver on Monday, Oct. 4, 2004. As we flew north we saw Mount St. Helens belch up some ash. We met Pat and Barbi Carson on the boat as they were returning from an outing up in the northern regions of Jervis Inlet.

Barbi's brother, Richard, was down in the engine room making some last minute repairs. Pat had a worried look on his face, but nothing fatal seemed to be wrong with the boat. Barbi and I took off on a provisioning run and picked up some salmon that I had caught up there earlier in the summer. Once the chores and repairs were made, we all went to the Elephant Castle for a good meal.

Time to Head Out

We left at 9 a.m. the morning of the 5th after waiting for a bridge to open to let us out of the harbor at Richmond, British Columbia. The morning was

beautiful and we kept busy negotiating the log rafts that seem to be everywhere in those waters. We made our way through Harold Strait, around Victoria and into the Straits of Juan de Fuca. The only noteworthy thing was a pod of whales that joined us for a while. The seas were calm and it had begun to rain, but the boat was warm and running well so life was good.

We made Neah Bay in mid-afternoon and managed to find a docking space and some fuel before the sun went down. Barbi, who was driving the chase car, caught up with us and we settled in for a good dinner of some of the salmon I was transporting south. A good day!

Bad Weather on the Horizon

Weather reports from the local commercial fishermen and from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce for Wednesday the 6th indicated that some bad weather was moving in. We got a 3 a.m. start to try to stay ahead of it. Then we encountered 6- to 8-foot seas, which are not bad unless you get seasick – which I always do. Richard Ballentine was in worse shape and I took some comfort in that. I did get to see two whales doing tail stands on the water, so that was rather special.

In an effort to stay ahead of the weather we went past our intended stop at Westport in Grays Harbor, Washington, and pushed on to Tillamook, Oregon's, Giribaldi Bay. The weather was foggy, the seas were less than kind and the entrance to Giribaldi a bit tricky, so we called the Coast Guard for an escort into the harbor. They were more than accommodating and after finding us bobbing around in the fog, led us into the harbor. After getting the boat tied up, meeting up with Barbi, and accommodating the Coasties that stopped by, we all had a wonderful dinner at the Pirates Cove Restaurant overlooking the bay. What could possibly go wrong?

Well what went wrong was the weather caught up with us. Weather reports indicated 75-mph winds and 20- to 25-foot seas just north of Tillamook. Since we had already turned in we did the only appropriate thing: We left Barbi on the boat and the rest of us drove home to Stockton where it was safe.



Just anchoring out.

Another anchorage stop on the way at Fulford.

Above and below: Sunset scenes at Tillamook.

Let's Try it Again

We watched the weather for the rest of the week and thought it safe to return on Monday, Oct. 11. We lost Herman on this leg, but Richard, Pat and I drove up to Tillamook arriving at 1:30 a.m. The faithful watchdog, Barbi, had the boat ready to go. After a couple of hours of sleep we left the dock at 5:30 a.m. Tuesday. The weather was good with well-spaced 6- to 8-foot swells, which are a lot nicer than the square waves we had been having.

We arrived at Coos Bay at around 4 p.m. and heard that the crossing was closed to boats under 30 feet. Since we were over 30 feet long we proceeded, but encountered a hairy ride into the harbor. For future reference we decided that if the bar has restrictions on it at all it is best just to stay out. In any case we fueled up and had a nice dinner and went to bed early, as we were all beat.

We went back out at 7 a.m. on Wednesday and negotiating the bar even at slack tide was not


fun. The seas were 6-8 feet with a 5-6 foot wind wave all out of the north. I had never seen a 5-6 foot wind wave with a wind speed of 15 knots, but there it was. With these waves pushing us south, the ride was pretty nice and dry. We were making 15 knots so life was good again.

Our intent was to make Crescent City during daylight and spend the night, but since reports indicated the entrance was closed that was not an option. Our next choice was Fort Bragg, which was way down the coast, but was as far as we could get at the rate we were burning fuel. We fixed ourselves a nice dinner of brown rice, salmon and salad and pushed on into the night.

Next Stop: the Golden Gate

Realizing that we would be getting to Fort Bragg at 3 a.m. we made a decision to cut back the speed, conserve some fuel and go all the way into the Golden Gate without stopping for fuel. We puttered along at a stately 10 knots all night, taking turns standing watch and getting what sleep we could.

At 11 a.m. on Thursday we were near the Golden Gate, but the fog blocked the view. What we could see on the radar was a fleet of fishing boats clogging up the northern entrance to the Gate. We took our time picking our way through them with only the radar to go by and eventually went under the Gate at noon. Low on fuel, we immediately went into Richardson Bay and took on enough fuel to make it to Stockton.

Now things started to get really good. We had an incoming tide helping us on an otherwise perfect autumn day. We throttled up and were at the slip by 7 p.m. safe and sound with no major problems to report. We burned a lot of fuel, had to make some tough decisions along the way, ate pretty well and never really got in harm's way. It was a good trip and we learned a lot of good experience to use the next time out. 



Above: The crew posing for a "We made it!" photo. (l to r) Bob Kidder, Stockton, Herman Meyer, Oakview, *Big Daddy* owner, Pat Carson, Village West Marina home port, and Bill Kisinger, Twain Hart.

Below: A few days at the San Francisco Yacht Club.



Barbi Carson ready to take the dinghy for a spin at Jervis Inlet.

