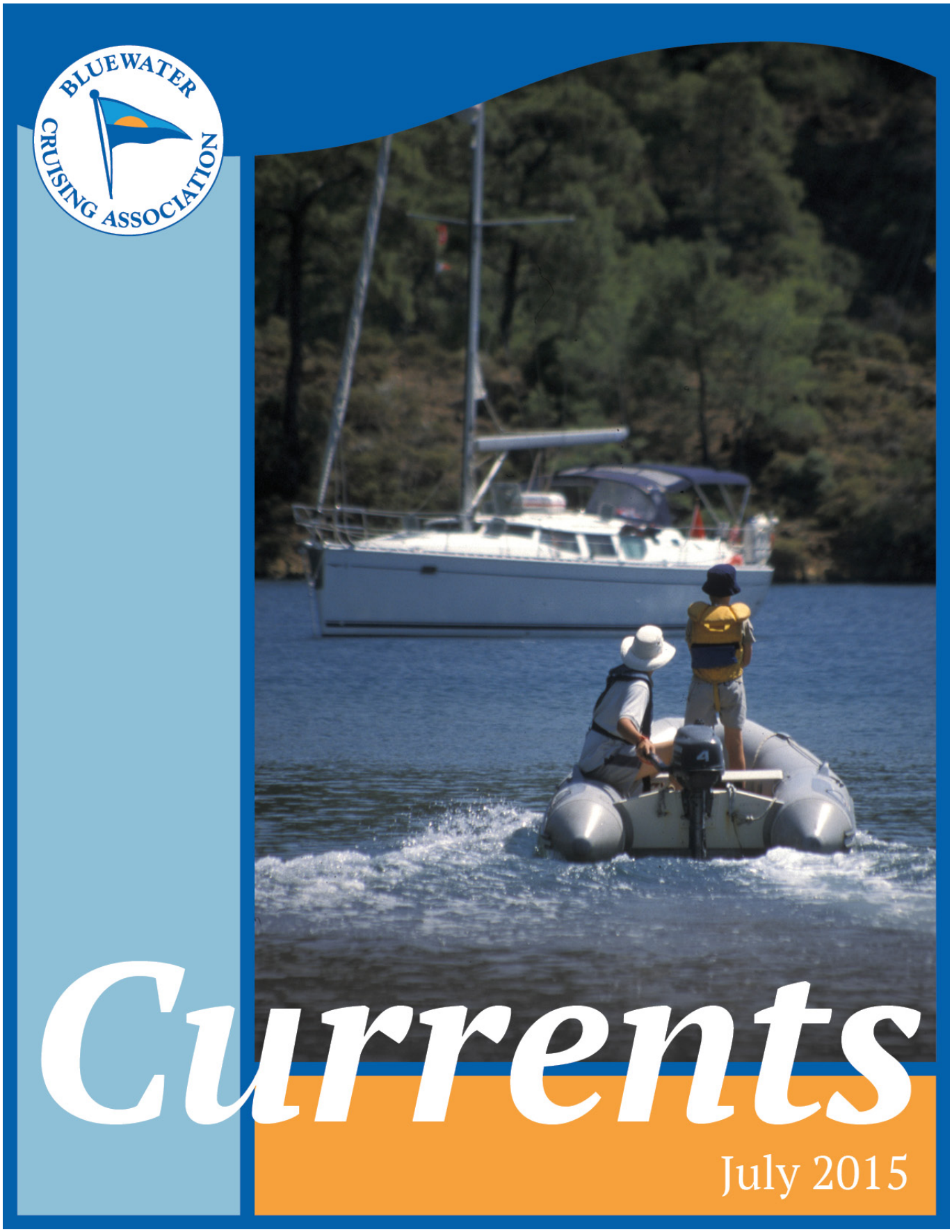
BLUEWATER
CRUISING ASSOCIATION
Currents
July 2015

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BCA's Website - A Constant Work in Progress!

http://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news/bcas-website-constant-work-progress/

The Bluewater Cruising Association website is a constant work in progress, never complete, always in need of updates, and often the topic of discussion as users find “issues” to bring to the attention of the Webmaster and/or Board of Directors or want to see changes/improvements. Managing our website is a huge, time-consuming undertaking, with its content-rich “front end” and its large membership data base, the “back-end”. And for the past 2+ years, BCA has been extremely fortunate to have had Jean Baillargeon serve as Webmaster – many members have called upon him for assistance with such things as dealing with their membership profile, figuring out how to pay their annual dues, finding Fleet documents, updating Watch membership lists, uploading information about upcoming events, revising layout; others have had lots of ideas about what he could do to improve the site, while others have offered assistance creating or managing content. Since he first agreed to take on the role, Jean has kept his cool through thick and thin, and devoted probably close to 2000 hours (all volunteer!) to making the BCA website “work” for all of us. But his primary focus now is preparing to go offshore and the BCA Board accepted, with regret, his resignation from the position effective May 31. Many thanks, Jean, for your unwavering support of BCA and the website; it would not be where it is today without your efforts.

S/V Downstream, Jean and Helen's Discovery 47

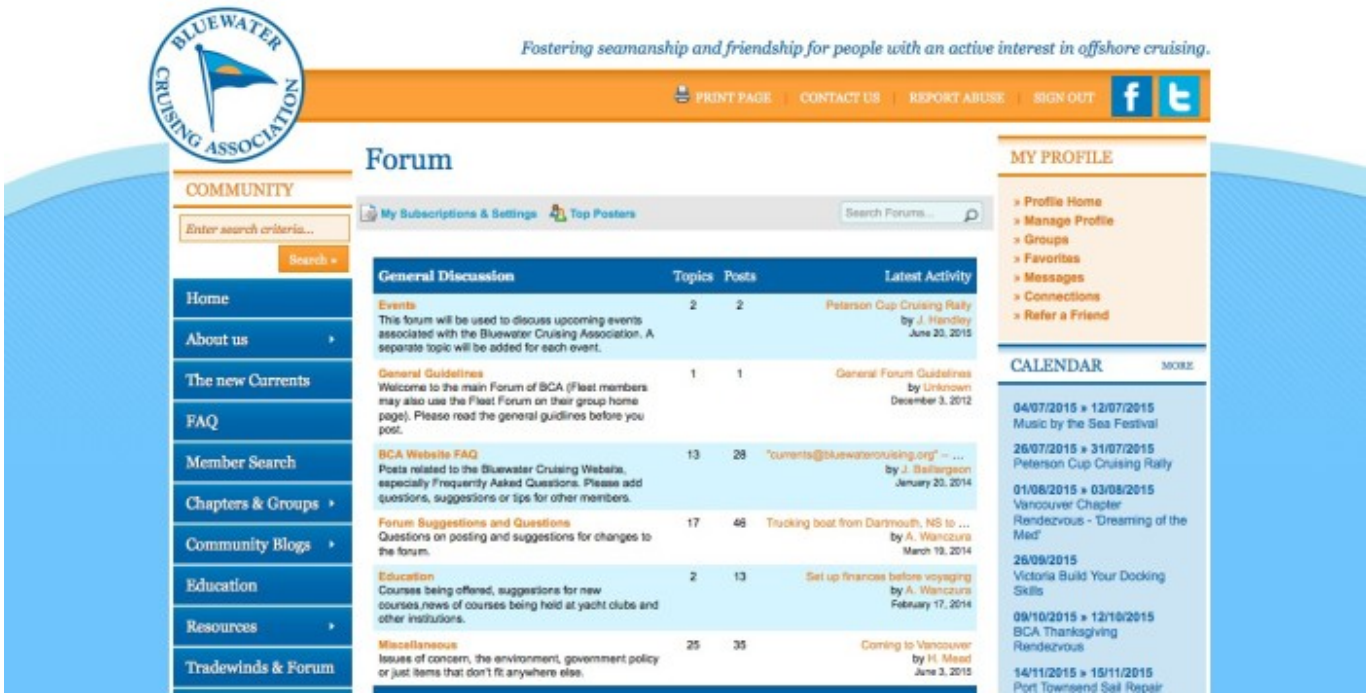
Fortunately, Jean gave the Board notice of his intent to step away from the position six months ago, and that allowed us to search for and find a new Webmaster: Rudy Witt is a relatively new member of BCA, based in Victoria and he too has plans to head offshore in a year or so, but in the meantime, we are thrilled that he offered to get involved in this way. He has only been in the role for a few weeks, but if you have any questions or need help navigating the website, Rudy can be contacted at *webmaster@bluewatercruising.org*. Please recognize that any new position comes with a steep learning curve; added to that, it is summer and, as many of us have done or plan to do, Rudy has slipped the lines and gone cruising (local waters) which means a possible delayed response time.

There has been a recent flurry of activity on the website with additions, revisions and updates, many of which were done in response to member requests. While not all of the following updates require you to log-in, it is recommended that you do so:

- BCA award recipients from 2002-2014
  - If you received an award during that time, please review the list(s) just in case there are any errors or omissions.
  - If you received an award prior to 2004, please check back in a few months; this is definitely a work in progress!
  - Learn more about BCA's member and perpetual awards.

BCA Offshore Award presented to the skipper and crew of S/V Camdeboo in 2007

- 2014 Financial Statements and DRAFT 2014 AGM Minutes (log-in required to view)
    - The Financial Statements will be brought to the membership at the Dec 2015 AGM, as will be the Minutes from last year's AGM.
- Updated Board and Chapter Watchkeeper lists with contact info
    - BCA Board of Directors
    - Calgary Chapter
    - Vancouver Chapter
    - Vancouver Island Chapter
- Online Store (be sure to log-in to get the member price)
    - Purchase your new burgee!
    - Purchase a name tag to replace the one you lost



New BCA Forum – EVENTS

- New EVENTS Forum
  - For all your questions, comments, suggestions for any BCA event, i.e. Peterson Cup, Rendezvous, etc
  - Related to the creation of the new forum, please note the new promotional banner on the home page that draws attention to BCA's on-the-water activities.
- Fall Education Courses
  - Yes, they are starting to appear on the BCA calendar
- FAQs
  - These are great examples of Jean's work to help us use the site efficiently and easily; if you have not updated your member profile recently, please do so after you read the handy "cheat-sheet".
  - If you are heading offshore this year or are home for the summer, please review the latest addition to the FAQs, "Before You Go".

As noted above, the website is always changing and in transition; if you are interested in helping to ensure that the website remains vibrant, current and a "go-to" place for all things BCA and/or if you have technical expertise that you would like to offer, such as graphics design, content management, etc, please contact Rudy.

About The Author

Jennifer Handley

Camdeboo - Lavranos 50 Cutter-Rigged Sloop

Jennifer Handley and Campbell Good sailed Camdeboo to the South Pacific in 2006 with their two

daughters, a niece, nephew and Jennifer’s brother. By the time Camdeboo returned to Victoria in 2011, she had 25,000 nm under her keel, visited 14 countries and 27 people had come aboard as crew. Jennifer is Commodore of BCA.

Bon Voyage, Leavers!

http://currents.bluewatercruising.org/articles/bon-voyage-leavers/

As BCA Commodore, it is always a privilege for me to present leavers' packages to those members who have decided this is the year to cast off the dock lines and head offshore. The June BBQs in Victoria and Vancouver are a great opportunity to applaud their preparations and pursuit of the offshore dream, and this year was no exception.

What was particularly moving for me on both occasions was the fact that there were members in attendance who joined BCA in 1978 (the year BCA was established) and every decade since, right through to those who joined in the past year. Scattered among the doners and dreamers-about-to-become doers, was also significant representation from the Currently Cruising group – members who are temporarily "home" but whose boats are awaiting them in far off, exotic places. What more could a leaver want than to be surrounded by such a supportive group!

At this time of year, I always hope that BCA has helped prepare members so well that they and their

boats will not just sail off into the sunset, never to be heard from again, but that they will return home safely with stories to tell and a desire to give back by encouraging and helping the next bunch of dreamers. This month, the expressions of thanks for support and the kudos given to individuals, Watchkeepers, and the Association as a whole were heartwarming to hear. As Nigel Calder repeatedly told us during his visit in April, BCA is indeed a unique organization in the cruising world.

Thanks to Chris Stask (VI) and Debra Zhou (Vancouver) for taking the pics below of presentations this month in Victoria at the Vancouver Island Chapter's end-of-year BBQ and in Vancouver at the Fleet BBQ.

Wes Whiting, S/V Arcola

Don and Heather Cudmore, S/V Buenaventura 1

Bjarne Hansen and Barb Peck, S/V Hoku Pa’a

Darryl and Janet Lapaire, Ella and Iris, S/V Maple

Dale Gebhard, S/V Adios

After receiving his package and telling us a bit about his plans, Dale reminded all of us that "I am Canadian" (a reference to the Canadian content in the package, including flags, lapel pins and an iconic Molson coaster); a second video, "Canadian, Please", while not as familiar, was also appreciated by the younger crowd too… (Viewing tip: turn on CC in order to see the lyrics.) If you were not able to attend the BBQ, you can enjoy the videos now – just in time to celebrate Canada's 148th birthday!

To the best of our knowledge, there are about 20 boats leaving this year; the majority are heading out from BC, with a few ready to launch further afield. By the end of June, 10 leavers' packages had been presented; the remainder will be distributed over the course of the coming months. Information about leavers' packages and the work that goes into their assembly can be found here. If you are interested in becoming part of the Leaver Package Committee for 2016, please contact me.

Most importantly, we wish all leavers "fair winds and following seas". Please stay in touch.

About The Author

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What Is a ‘Peterson Cup’, Anyway?

http://currents.bluewatercruising.org/articles/peterson-cup-anyway/

Traditionally, Bluewater Cruising Association has been about gaining experience in preparation for offshore cruising. There are other kinds of associations and other boating clubs. They have specific spots, pubs, and docks at which to meet. In contrast, BCA is beholden to no one place in the world as being its specific port of call. Anywhere can be home for a while, as blue water singer, Eileen Quinn, sings:

There is no easy way to navigate the heart / I take a fix here and now, I plot it on this chart / But what lat and long can mark the place, if home’s a point in time not space? / Absence makes the heart grow fonder but up ahead way over yonder / There’s always one more harbour, there’s always one more town / Always one more wave to crest and the next one to slide down

The Peterson Cup was created in this tradition. It brings local sailors together for a few days to cruise to places where there might be only what you could expect to find on a South Pacific island… no Internet, no grocery store, just folks with a suntan. There are no pit stops needed during the rally. All boats are able to go anywhere for as long as needed, stop anywhere, and they’re able to handle conditions found on the voyage.

The Peterson Cup is a casual race from anchorage to anchorage, with all of the crew – or perhaps just a solo admiral – deciding on a whim which anchorage would be a good venue for looking at the sunset tomorrow evening. Independence is allowed; after all it is your voyage from one South Pacific isle to another, without the expense or the distances, but with all the camaraderie, kisses, and hugs.

So, let's pick a sunset that will suit the happy ending of a fine happy hour on the deck of whichever boat first arrived at this interesting anchorage and serves as this evening's host boat. As usual, food for happy hour is made during the voyage and is served on an island of rafted-up dinghies drifting free, or across the decks of our rafted-together boats, or perhaps around the beach campfire, where anything is possible.

In years past, the Peterson Cup has had various themes such as, voyages to uncharted islands; pirates; cannibals; lazy drifters; long distance voyages; racing skills; and the discovery and founding of a new country. This year, the theme is continued exploration of exotic places. The organizing committee has picked the Isla Hornos –Cape Horn – the traditional feared point for sailors, who, after rounding the Horn and heading for the sweet Pacific Isles, were known as Horny (*editor's note: Officially, they are known as Cape Horners!*).

During his voyage around the Horn, Ken proudly wore his Peterson Cup t-shirt.

I was the 2014 Peterson Cup winner, and had just returned from around Cape Horn. The islands and channels of Patagonia in southern Chile look are very similar to those of our own Gulf Islands. However, in British Columbia, the currents and tide differences are larger, there are fewer shipwrecks, and more areas are fully charted. So, let's just flip the Gulf Islands sideways, change a few names, and call the 2015 Peterson Cup 'Around the Horn in Four Days'.

During the Peterson Cup happy hour on July 26th, we will go over maps and charts and stories that cover the joys and dangers of cruising at the bottom of the world, while remaining at the top of the world. We will also cover some of the passages, tides, differences in weather patterns, and the preparations one might dream up to make such a voyage around Cape Horn. (Please don't take this part too seriously…)

Skipper and crew are free to arrive and free to leave at anytime, or they can choose an alternate route to get to the same destination. This happens to be just the way Bluewater cruising works. And, in fact, crew members are encouraged to jump ship, and perhaps have a bonfire on the island (subject to fire regulations) to enjoy the naturalness of a Tierra Del Fuego potluck.

Lex Peterson, a Past Commodore, created the event that, after his death, was named in his honour. What

wasn’t known to others at the first rally was that Lex had only two years to live. His motto is passed on to us: ‘Celebrate life.’ While Lex was an avid racer, he also knew that people sharing in the freedom of sailing and living in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others is the better way to go. The strict competitiveness of racing, where one person wins and everyone else loses is not what life is about.

I suppose that Lex also saw folks hell bent on equipping their boats and in gaining technique and planning, and by the end of all the preparation, they were very short of a couple of things they really needed for a long voyage: to have fun and also to be able to be a good, giving companion, and be fair to others. Violence – physical or psychological – and demeaning behaviours have no place in a cruising community.

BCA recognises the ways in which we respect the talents of all and engage both men and women. We have a new effort that women will be encouraged to develop the same skills as men, and to be equal and competent skippers. Every person on board needs to be able to run the ship, including being able to turn around and fully rescue a crew overboard. The Peterson Cup provides an opportunity for women to seek new competencies. The rally is an ideal place for them to experiment with their boats, hone their skills, and get some very easy and kind feedback everyday during Appie Hour.

Because the Peterson Cup is done in the relaxed and happy cruising mindset, no one gets pushed and no one loses. In fact, there are boxes of useful and fun prizes to supply their boats! Every participant gets a t-shirt and the sailors who actually cruise the designated courses and passages, and around the designated Isla Hornos, get the earring as well!

Ken at the bottom of the world! (Note the classic and tasteful Peterson Cup t-shirt.)

A note on Lasqueti Island, we have the mirror image (reverse) here of the Falkland Islands' complex. Whereas the Falkland isles have a lot of people wearing a lot of clothing and the islands have no cover, the Lasqueti / Jedediah group are covered in trees and the people are not necessarily covered in anything. This part of the 'Round the Horn' voyage is just beyond our 5-day adventure. However, it is a recommended destination.

The Peterson Cup theme song might be from Eileen Quinn's song, 'We Gotta Regatta'.

Gotta Regatta © Eileen Quinn, from her album, 'Degrees Of Deviation' (1997)

Intro: **F Dm7 | C**

Verse: **C | Am**

1. My little boat, she's not so fast

C | G7

We don’t come first but we don’t come last

C | Dm

When it comes to the trophy, we fail the test

F | G7

But you know we can always party with the best

Chorus:

C | Am

Gotta gotta gotta regatta

F | G7

Gotta gotta gotta regatta

C | Am

Gotta gotta gotta regatta

F | G7

Gotta gotta gotta regatta

2. We trim the sails, do the best we can

Still it’s like racing in the Indy in a mini van

Got so much gear aboard, she barely floats

Who are we kidding, racing these boats?

Repeat chorus

3. We’re slow even by corrected time

Although we’re often near the front of the buffet line

Takes us a while to sail very far

But we can strike like lightning at an open bar

Repeat chorus

4. To the ones who are serious about the cup

All I can say is “lighten up”

Some come to race, some to chew the fat

Me, I came for the t-shirt and the hat

About The Author

Ken Christie

Blue Rose - DeKleer Bros. 30 Sloop

Ken Christie joined Bluewater Cruising Association in 2010. He served as part of the organizing team for the 2015 Peterson Cup.

Advantages of External Alternator Regulation

http://currents.bluewatercruising.org/articles/advantages-of-external-alternator-regulation/

Alternator regulators were traditionally built into or attached to the back of the alternator and were functionally either producing power or not producing power. This approach is fine for many applications, particularly with power boats that run their engine and, therefore, the alternator for long periods of time. Other vessel operators, however, may run their engines for shorter periods of time. This is prevalent with sailboats that will operate their engine typically for a fraction of their cruising time or for power boaters doing only a short cruising day. External regulators present several advantages to maximize charging efficiency and shorten engine run times to fully charge the battery bank from the alternator charging source.

Most external regulators take advantage of the digital processing technology to create charging regimes that maximize charging efficiency. The power output will be tailored to the battery type and follow the three step charging protocol (a bulk phase, an absorption phase, and a float phase). This will charge the battery bank quickly and completely without over charging the batteries. The battery bank voltage can give the regulator a voltage reading that is more accurate as it eliminates any error that may be introduced due to voltage drop on associated cabling.

There are other small advantages that are gained with external regulators:

- A soft start up protocol allows the engine to be well started and belts to be well seated in before output power is ramped up.
- The ability to limit the output from the alternator in cases where full output is unnecessary or undesirable.

However, the main reason for choosing external regulation over internal regulation is efficiency.

-Lyle

PYS Electrical Technician

About The Author

Jeff Cote

Pacific Yacht Systems -

Jeff Cote is a systems design engineer and owner of Pacific Yacht Systems, a full service shop delivering marine electrical and navigation solutions for recreational boats. Visit their website and blog for info and articles on marine electrical systems, projects and more: www.pysystems.ca.

A Day in the Life of Ty Dewi - Part II

http://currents.bluewatercruising.org/articles/day-life-ty-dewi-part-ii/

In 2007, Nick Ward and his young family emigrated from England to Canada, by way of a two year cruise from England to the Caribbean and the Eastern Seaboard of the USA. Nick's wife, Gesa, didn't relish the idea of an Atlantic Crossing with two young and active toddlers, so Nick, his father Dave and two friends made the passage to Antigua. This is the second of two articles describing a day at sea, mid Atlantic. You can read the first one here.

Now that we are set up for the tradewinds that seem to be firmly established, we can leave the boat and autopilot to sail on and get on with the simple chores of daily life. We have a strict rota for the four of us. Day 1, you're making Breakfast and Lunch, day 2, Dinner and snacks, day 3, the nasty day, you do all the washing up, sweep the boat and clean the heads (toilet). Day 4, you are rewarded by having the difficult duties of inventing the evening cocktail and choosing music. Today, I'm making dinner.

Now though, I turn to a little job I've been meaning to do for a while, and permanently wire in the navigation lights. Up to this point, lighting up at night has been done by joining two bits of wire together. Effective but inelegant. All I have to do is lead a wire under the floor and up to the switch panel, but doing anything in this rocking, rolling world takes a long time. After an hour, I've done it and the lights can go on at a flick of a switch.

I lie down and read. The current book is ‘Ninety Degrees North’, a well written and entertaining history of the quest for the North Pole. Those guys were mad.

After another couple of chapters, I get up, check the radar – still no ships – and revise our course slightly. The weather analysis suggests that we want to be positioned a bit further south by Friday, so I set a course that will take us 60 miles south and about 100 west over the next day. Playing this game is always a bit tricky, sailing extra miles takes longer, but falling into a calmer patch does too. Of course, the light winds might not materialise or might be somewhere else but we go on the information we have and if we can optimise our route, we do.

I realise that the past couple of hours have been solitary. This happens quite a lot, we have a burst of communal activity – sail handling, meals or just a meeting up in the cockpit – then everyone finds some time and space to themselves. It’s good, a nice mix and avoids the pressure of being sociable all the time.

Soon enough, it’s time for lunch. Ian consults our little menu page, a laminated card for each day listing what is needed for breakfast, lunch and snacks, plus a recipe for dinner. Today, up from the galley comes crackers, ryvita, paté, cheese, pickled onions and olives, plus another litre bottle of beer from the fridge. Despite the boat’s constant attempts to tip these things over, we’ve got quite good at balancing our food, so we sit in the cockpit and enjoy our lunch, chatting away. After a while, the cleaning wallah – it’s Ed today – gathers everything up and washes, dries and puts away to leave the galley nice and clean.

At this point, I look again at the dinner menu for which I am responsible. A little warning light goes on in my head when I read ‘chocolate pudding – from mix’. Hmm, I dig out the pack and sure enough, it says make then chill for a couple of hours. Lucky that I read that one, so I get on with it, boiling some milk and making a passable imitation of a chocolate pudding to be put in the fridge. If I say ‘Angel Delight’ the Brits will probably know what I mean.

I lie down again with my book and then try to catch up on some sleep. Once more, the boat, or rather the seas, are against me. With every roll, something clatters from one side of a cupboard to another. We have a variety of chopping boards, and I’ve almost thrown the round one overboard as it was stored on edge, rolling nicely from one side to another. I saw reason and stuffed it, flat, in a locker somewhere. The biggest annoyance is that, after a meal, we’ve used some tins from the cupboard and there is now space for the remainder to slide around, which they do with the delight of kids having finally been released into the playground. I shut them up by digging more tins out of the storage boxes, and wedging them in with the bags of dried fruit. I wedge other things by using almost our entire collection of tea towels to jam in the gaps between bottles, plates and anything else that disturbs me. But you never get them all.

Eventually, I sleep for an hour or so. I wake from my snooze at about half past four and realise that it’s time to send the blog entry, position report and an email home. I sit and write the messages at the chart table, which is gently rocking back and forth but still a comfortable place to work. The position report is automatic, I click a button in the email software and it reads from the boat instruments to get time, position, speed and heading, then formats that and puts it in my outbox ready to go.

It’s now time to send email. The procedure is the same as the morning, although I have a little more trouble finding a frequency – it seems that this is a busier time and radio conditions aren’t great around now, they get much better after dark but I’ve promised to send updates before six each day so off we go.

As I finish, Dad's completing his cocktail creation. There seems to be a bit of a generation gap where cocktails are concerned, us younger ones having a bit more experience of mixing odd combinations of ingredients to form bizarre drinks, but Dave and Ed are catching up quick and getting more inventive with each turn. We gather in the cockpit to toast the day and chat whilst we sip – gin and orange today.

Happy Hour Mid-Atlantic Style – A little earlier in the crossing – less wind and less suntan!

It's my turn for dinner, so I disappear pretty quickly to start preparation. This one is a greek salad omelette, according to the recipe. I chop red onion finely, making sure to time the slicing of the knife with the roll of the boat and avoid adding any fingers to the mix. Once the onion is sizzling in the olive oil, I break open ten eggs into a bowl which I've placed in the sink to be low down and immune form the rolling. Or so I think. As I open a tin of tomatoes and chop up some cheese, the boat puts in an extra big roll that doesn't tip the bowl, but causes the eggs to slosh and two yolks make a bid for freedom. I'm too quick for them; swearing heavily to slow them in their tracks, I sweep them up with a large spoon that I'd already placed nearby. Back into the bowl and the whole lot goes into the big pan with the onions, tomatoes, cheese and some dried parsley. It sets nicely into a thick eggy cake, and I amaze the team by successfully placing a large plate over the pan and flipping it upside down, depositing a perfect circular cake onto the plate. It is cut into quarters and handed around. We open a bottle of red wine to accompany it and it's another good meal. Thanks Gesa, recipe goddess.

After dinner, Ed clears up and washes whilst Dad reads below. Ian and I sit in the cockpit and chat about a wide range of stuff, covering a lot of ground as usual and watching the waves roll by in their endless variety. We comment on how the waves are so mesmerising, we can watch for ages as the shapes morph and change yet stay essentially the same.

By 8pm it's almost dark and time for my watch. I get my lifejacket, it's still too warm for a sweater or long trousers, and stand on deck looking around. The sails are set well, the boat's going as fast as she will in this breeze, and the horizon is clear of lights or dark shapes. I go below and flick the switch to turn on our navigation light at the top of the mast so that other boats can, hopefully, see us and know which way we are heading. The light is in three sections – seen from behind it's white, from the left, or port side it is red, and the right, or starboard side is green.

Whilst I am at the switch panel, I put on the compass lights and make sure all our other lights are out, apart from anyone staying up to read. At night, we use red lights inside the boat for writing the log or looking at the chart, the red colour preserves our night vision for once we go back on deck.

I check the radar, and see that we have nothing within its twenty four mile range. That's good, I can relax a bit and sit at the chart table and write on the computer.

After half an hour writing, I take a break to go up on deck. Before going, I check the radar. No contacts. Up on deck, I stand and watch the waves, enjoying the power as the boat surges forward. It's not quite right though, a little slow perhaps, so I reach for the furling winch, carefully unwind a loop of the line and ease it out, allowing the sails to unroll a little more. Securing the line again, I watch the instruments as the boat speed leaps up from 5.5 to 6.1 knots. I do the usual mathematical games in my head – half a knot more is twelve miles a day, is two hours of sailing, is a day earlier at Antigua. Satisfied, I stand and watch again and even in the dark I can see the flying fish leap from the waves and escape this bizarre predator. Five minutes later I return to the computer and write this.

By nine pm I am decidedly sleepy. As Ian noted, you get to that point where if you were driving, you'd have to pull over and nap. I check the radar, go back to the cockpit and lie back, watching the stars roll above us. I doze lightly, standing to check the horizon every five or ten minutes until ten pm comes round, not a moment too soon. I go below, write up the log and nudge Ed. 'Your watch'.

The Destination – Ty Dewi at Anchor in the Caribbean

About The Author

Nick Ward

Ty Dewi - Young Sun 43 Pilothouse

In 2007, Nick Ward and his young family emigrated from England to Canada, by way of a two year cruise from England to the Caribbean and the Eastern Seaboard of the USA. They, and, Ty Dewi, now live in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island.

Landfall in Antigua

http://currents.bluewatercruising.org/articles/landfall-in-antigua/

Back in 2007, the crew of ***Ty Dewi*** is on the home stretch of their Atlantic Crossing. After many days at sea, the crew is well into the offshore rhythm. But the recipe for happy sailing has been missing a couple of important ingredients – the wind has faded away and they are on the last few bottles of European wine…

December 2nd, 2007. 21:30UTC 02/12/07 16'39N 054'52W Wind SE3

It's been a bit frustrating last night and today, after a superb day yesterday; top speed all day and making 75 miles in 12 hours – that would be a 150 mile day. Then the wind disappeared. A slapping, flapping, drifting night and engine on at 6am, so by 9am we'd done our 117 miles in the 24 hours, but the engine stayed on for 10 hours today and we've only just turned it off. Coupled with a pretty grey and occasionally rainy day, it's been fairly subdued on board and I've spent most of the day with my nose in my book.

The wind is back at last, fairly steady right now, but who knows. The forecast is unhelpfully vague, light-

ish airs all the way through Wednesday when we would hope to arrive. I sense we may burn some more diesel and read a few more books before then.

But all's well. Cocktails recently have been: Final Ginger Peach (rum, vodka, peach juice, ginger), and Antiguan Honey (rum, pineapple juice and chunks, honey, white wine)

December 3rd, 2007. 22:00UTC 03/12/07 16'45N 056'32W Wind Variable

It's been another quiet and windless day. The sun has shone brightly and the sky is full of small clouds; in fact it has been a quite gorgeous day if we weren't wanting to go sailing. To add insult to that particular injury, the forecast predicts that it will stay light until Wednesday night, then a 15-20 knot breeze will come in from the north east on Thursday. Perfect for us if we weren't expecting to drop anchor at exactly that time.

The crew, sensing my frustration, managed to liven up the day considerably by blocking the loo. When the pump didn't work, it wasn't because the vandals had taken the handle, but because one of them had tried to dispose of a cleaning wipe ("but it says flushable on the packet, skipper") Now the rule is, he who blocks it fixes it, so this crew member soon had the whole pipework assembly in pieces, and we narrowed down the blockage to just before the pipe goes through the hull. This is not a bit that is easily reached from inside.

The obvious solution, really, was to take a wire or thin pipe and prod the blockage back up the pipe from the outside. Easily said, but that is 6 inches below the waterline. However, at least the water is warm, so we stopped the boat, put out the bathing ladder and I took a swim. Despite a good ten minutes pushing a piece of wire into the outlet, as the boat rocked and rolled above me, we weren't much further along. This needed more thought. In a moment of inspiration, I found the air pump for inflating the dinghy. Opening a porthole, we could operate the pump from inside the boat and the hose would reach to the outlet. Swimming again, I held the hose in the toilet outlet, whilst pressure was applied. It worked! A resolutely intact cleaning wipe, plus an amount of unpleasant debris, popped back out of the pipe. Fortunately, the crew weren't looking down said pipe at the time, although that might have been a deserving reward for those who had blocked it in the first place…

That done, we put the engine back on, set the autopilot, cleaned up and had a much needed beer.

This evening, nature treated us to a sunset of indescribable beauty. The range and intensity of colour, changing every minute, defies words and I suspect even the pictures will not do it justice. A real treat and something unique to voyages like this. The photographers were in seventh heaven.

Another fabulous sunset in the open Atlantic

We made 106 miles yesterday, and expect to do about the same today. We motor for about 80 miles then have quiet time and let the boat ghost along at 2-3 knots at best. Less than 300 miles to Antigua.

December 5th, 2007. 21:30UTC 05/12/07 17’04N 60’27W Wind ENE3

If you want to cheer up this crew, the recipe is simple. Turn off the engine and reveal the existence of a reserve wine supply. We did both last night, and the difference in crew morale is remarkable.

At dinner time, I revealed that, like an aircraft with reserve fuel tanks, we had a reserve of three bottles of wine. To resounding cheers, we opened the Wolf Blass Cab-Sauvignon and thoroughly enjoyed our dinner. A couple of hours later, Dad realized that we had enough breeze to sail, so we cut the engine and unfurled the jib. The wind held through the night, and by daybreak we were only 120 miles from Antigua. We’ve been able to continue sailing during perhaps one of the best days of the trip, so far, perfect wind, not rolling much, beautiful sunshine and the knowledge that we’ll be in harbour tomorrow.

The forecast has the wind strengthening overnight, so we’ll go a bit faster and probably arrive outside English Harbour at daybreak. We’ll wait until the light is good before entering the anchorage; it would be a shame to hurry in during darkness and mess up our arrival after 2750 miles of travel!

This beautiful day, and being under sail, has made for a much happier crew. We have spent the day chatting, doing maintenance tasks, making lists for things to attend to once in harbour, and generally

enjoying life. Tonight's cocktail, the 'Leading lights' refers to the lights that bring a ship home safe into harbour, and was expresso, evaporated milk, Baileys and vodka.

There's a bottle of Beaujolais in the locker for tonight, and a small Christmas pudding for dessert. It being December and we've not missed the Christmas hype one little bit, but perhaps we can allow ourselves a taste of the forthcoming season.

Land in sight after 2700 miles – Antigua off the starboard bow

December 6th, 2007 12:00UTC 06/12/07 17'00N 61'46W

At anchor in English Harbour, Antigua. 2772 miles sailed.

About The Author

Nick Ward

Ty Dewi - Young Sun 43 Pilothouse

In 2007, Nick Ward and his young family emigrated from England to Canada, by way of a two year cruise from England to the Caribbean and the Eastern Seaboard of the USA. They, and, Ty Dewi, now live in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island.

Currents

The Bluewater Cruising Association

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