

Sailing was awesome. I can see why people love it. This trip took 3+ days from Victoria, BC to Portland, OR. We were on a Catalina 310 cruiser (31 feet long), which was lovely, but for 3 people was about at capacity. My friend Max (the owner/skipper of the craft) and Ian (a friend of Max's with sailing experience) all met up in Victoria. The boat is tricked out with basically every piece of tech you can imagine... Max is a gearhead. Redundant GPS and AIS systems. Radar. Raymarine autopilot. The spoils were not lost on me, as at one point I'm pretty sure we were on autopilot for the better part of 16 hours. And AIS + Radar saved a bit of consternation more than once.

I flew into Victoria, BC on Tuesday, May 27th. Max had a slip at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club - RVYC - (which has reciprocity with his club, the Portland Yacht Club - PYC). I was in charge of provisioning the boat, which I managed to do via Instacart while flying from BOS -> SEA.

Max had a winch that, as he put it, sounded like "you were murdering a cat" when used. I had made a trip to Defender down in New London, CT the weekend before and brought replacement parts. When I arrived, the starboard side cockpit winch was literally in pieces, Max having taken it apart and cleaned it well earlier that day, and we quickly set to work putting it back together. I was both pleased and surprised by how quickly the whole thing came together. Although we did end up having to remove some of the gear packages more than once to get the greasing right, the result was a winch that purred like a kitten.

Ian arrived later in the day. I cooked us steaks with garlic and rosemary and roasted broccoli on the boat that night. We had cocktails at the club and talked about when to leave. The weather looked generally good through Sunday, when they were forecasting gale force winds. A partially drunk Canadian sailor urged us to, "just go tomorrow, you'll figure it all out."

Around 10pm, Ian and I bed down in the aft berth under the cockpit. Max had the v-berth.

Max roused the crew around 4:30 the next morning so we could get moving. We had to sail around from the RVYC to another spot in Victoria to pump the blackwater tank. There were an awful lot of logs to dodge along the way. After pumping out, we motored until we caught the expected tide, which was moving at 6 knots... despite the fact we had only 3 knots of wind, we were able to move under sail around 5 knots over ground, dodging logs along the way. We saw some porpoises. The tide, at times, sounded like a waterfall, as the currents at different depths moved at different speeds. The skies were blue as we sailed into the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Around late-morning the wind started to pick up, and the tide started to change. We quickly went from 5 knots of wind to 10, to 12, to 17, to 23. The seas kicked up to 4-6 feet. We put the first reef in the sail. Around noon we needed to cross the strait, which is 15-20 NM. The winds had kicked up further and we were pushing 25-30 knots. Seas were 6-10 feet, with swells (and breakers) that would be 12-15 feet on 6-10 second periods. We got the second reef in, and furled the jib up most of the way as we moved 6 knots over ground (the max hull speed on this boat was somewhere around 7-8 knots.) Shit got real. Fast. We were in full weather gear. Clipped in at all times.

At this point Max got *\*very\** sea sick, just as we were about to cross the shipping lanes. I had to go down below to get him meds, but being in the cabin, under sail, in those seas, is basically like being in the devil's washing machine. At one point I got *\*thrown\** from the galley into the head, bruising 3 vertebrae on the sink as I collapsed to the floor in pain. Fortunately nothing was broken, and after collecting myself, and finding my courage, I managed to get back into the cockpit to give Max his seasickness meds. I slipped (despite my Zhik boots) another time or two, including falling and bruising 4 ribs on my right side as I crashed into the "seats" in the cockpit.

Since Max was sick, I found myself working the radio, negotiating with other vessels and "Seattle traffic", who manages commercial traffic in the strait. We didn't have any close calls, but there were a few vessels (a tanker and container ship, included) that we needed to make sure "saw us" and knew where we were travelling. After what felt like 3 lifetimes we reached the southern side of the strait, but now the tide had completely turned and we were fighting 4 knots of current. Max was out of commission, and Ian, having just piloted the boat in 10 foot seas with 25 knots of wind for the last 4 hours, was exhausted. I took the helm and motored us along the coast at a (sad) 2 knots over ground. Fighting the current, we eventually reached Clallam Bay.

We dropped anchor, talked to US Customs and Border Protection (as this was our first entry into the US) and took stock. It was around 19:00 by the time we got settled. I was about as sore as I've ever felt - between my ribs, back, and knees, I was *\*really\** feeling 38. I turned from 3rd mate into chef and got to work on dinner. Halfway through cooking the Italian sausage and peppers and onions in the oven, my stomach decided it was time to evacuate. I'm pretty sure it was a stress reaction -- my hands were shaking from all the adrenaline from the last 7 hours of sailing. Afterward I (audibly) recited the Lord's Prayer, and went back to finishing dinner for the gang.

Max was keen to keep moving, but Ian and I "convinced" him that we should take the night. We had the time, it's not like there was weather pushing in, and the wind wasn't great. We also had to make some repairs to the boat as the jib furling line was in bad shape and we had inadvertently pulled some slugs out of the mast when putting in the reefs. They gave me the v-berth (for both their and my comfort) while they took turns doing anchor watch in the aft berth, checking an iPad, connected to the GPS, hourly to make sure we hadn't moved. Around 23:30 we were dragging anchor, so Max and Ian got up to reset the line. Of course the windlass is right above my head in the v-berth, and we had something like 180 feet of line out, plus 50 feet of chain. They hauled it all on board, fired up the engine, and re-seated the anchor. Ian managed to drop the anchor and all 50 feet of chain off the bow at once, which basically sounded like an explosion above my head. They were trying to be quiet. I figured so long as there wasn't screaming I shouldn't bother getting up.

[This was all Day 1 (Wednesday)]

Around 4:30 or 5am (Thursday) Max and Ian got me moving again. It was cool and foggy, but I had a decent amount of sleep under my belt (and was still mostly on East Coast time). Given the limited wind available, we motored towards the mouth of the strait. Somewhere in here I failed

at cooking French toast – it got stuck to the foil pan in the oven. The wind picked up enough (12-15 knots) for us to get some good sailing in as we headed around Cape Flattery. We made a silly mistake thinking we could cut the corner between some rock and the lighthouse, and rode through some awesome swells, but suddenly the wind died and we needed to fire up the engine to motor back out and around Tatoosh rock.

After this we ended up with a beautiful day of sailing. There were some decent swells (like 10 feet, but on long periods) but overall we were able to keep 5-ish knots over ground in 12-ish knots of wind. I even piloted us under sail for about 3 hours with the wind about 140/150 degrees to our stern (easy sailing). It was fun. But given the swells both Max, and now Ian, had issues with sea sickness. Around lunch they asked me to make them tacos. Which I (not surprisingly) had supplies for. But honestly, greasy tacos? When you're as green as Kermit? In any case, I obliged, for them... and had a ham sandwich myself.

As evening approached I went below, clipped into the jack line through the window, and made chicken meatballs from scratch. The stove is on a gimbal. And that gimbal is a \*hero\*. I was able to boil the pasta, make the meatballs, and sauce everything, without issue... in 5-8 foot swells. The jacklines helped keep me in the kitchen, vs. breaking my back in the head again. Max and Ian were laughing at me from up above because I looked like a "child in a jumper". But whatever.

As I was cooking we got buzzed by an F-35 fighter jet who was 200 feet off the deck and about 1/2 a mile away. Most of the area we were passing through along the Washington coast was prohibited from commercial vessels for this reason. About 5 minutes later Ian called me up to the cockpit, and not 30 seconds later a whale flipped its tail about 20 feet off the port side of the boat. It was incredible.

We had dinner, cleaned up, and started prepping for night watch. I got some great shots of the sunset and ocean. Ian went down first and I stayed up with Max until about midnight. I went down, sleeping in my gear (and clipped into the mast stay in the galley) until Max woke me and Ian up at 1-ish to see the bioluminescent plankton behind the boat. I stayed up with Max for another 30 minutes or so, before needing to turn in for some sleep. I grabbed the v-berth until about 4-ish when Ian woke me up (Max had gone down at some point). In the cockpit, Ian was still not feeling great, so just after first light I sent him down. Just prior to Ian going down for some sleep, the wind died. We pulled in the main sheet, (the jib was already furled), and fired up the motor.

[End of Day 2 (Thursday)/Start of Day 3 (Friday)]

At this point, I was alone above deck piloting the boat, as we're approaching about 15 NM offshore of Gray's Harbor, WA. I had to work out with a few vessels which side to pass on, including a tug that had 2000' of line behind it, pulling a massive barge. There was also a container ship that had lost power and was literally drifting. The AIS and radar were super helpful here. Around 8AM, Max and Ian started to get up, but we were still limited on wind. The seas were calmer, so it was a nice morning of motoring. Pretty sure I made scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast. We also discovered earlier that morning that our drinking water filter

basically leaked all the remaining water on board into the bilge... We got lucky as we were only a few hours away from Astoria and had backup water to drink for the next few hours. Had this happened the day before, it would have made for an interesting time.

Around 11am I took the helm again, having studied the charts for the Columbia River Bar (Cape Disappointment).

Cape Disappointment is one of the more dangerous intercoastal river entrances in the US. As you know we've got a few fun ones here in New England too (like the South River/Humarock) -- which I've got experience in a (much) smaller power boat. Max trusted me enough to take the boat, under motor, across the bar. And wow was that fun. Ian heated up some lunch (dinner leftovers) down below, as we rode through some pretty awesome swells. At one point Ian pointed back and said "see that?!" as a 15 to 20 foot swell came from our stern, lifted us up, and pushed us forward. There were seals sitting on some of the buoys.

After clearing the bar, we had 17 knots of wind and sailed for a bit as we came into Astoria. At this point it's now Friday around 16:00. We pull into a marina. After tying up, we went into "town" to grab a burger at a local dive bar, some snacks at the gas station, and 2 gallons of backup diesel at another gas station. Around 20:30 we pulled out of the marina to motor up the Columbia River as the sun was setting.

Motoring up the Columbia, in basically the pitch dark, was a 2-man job. I went down first and slept from ~10pm to 1am when I swapped out with Ian. Ian slept for 2 hours before switching out with Max around 4am. At this point the fact I had been on East Coast time actually worked to our advantage as I was feeling real good from about 1am to 6am or so. But navigating the river was challenging. The visibility was \*excellent\* and we had all the instruments to make sure we stayed in the channel. But we were counting the flashing lights on the channel buoys and sometimes talking to commercial traffic about our location to ensure we didn't get killed by a barge/tugboat/tanker/etc.

[End of Day 3 (Friday), start of Day 4 (Saturday)]

Around 7 the guys woke me up as we were coming into a marina to get fuel. While we technically had enough to make it the rest of the way to Portland, we stopped anyway. We came into the marina around 7:30 Saturday while all the "dudes" were launching their 12-17 foot aluminum boats. None of them were wearing life jackets. They were all in comfortable clothing. Meanwhile we're in full foul weather gear, boots, wearing class V PFDs, and harnesses to be clipped in. It was quite the juxtaposition. After I managed to "spiderman" the boat onto the cleats, and we got fuel, we were off again.

Most of the rest of the day was great. Max got some more sleep. We snacked and enjoyed the calm "seas". At one point we rounded a bend in the river and there's this giant cruise ship with 2 tugs. Max exclaims, "what is that ship?!" and I reply, "Oh my God, that's the Pride of America!" The Pride of America is the only US flagged cruise ship, owned by NCL, based in Honolulu. It's the ship Nikki and I went on when we got engaged in Kauai (and celebrated our engagement at the Chef's Table that evening in January 2014.) It was another moment of

serendipity. Almost like a "you made it" kind of welcome into the greater Portland area. Apparently the ship had come to Portland for drydock in the Willamette River for a month of refurbishment and was just on its 14-day trip back to Hawaii. I'd be lying if I told you there weren't tears in my eyes as we passed the cruise liner.

As we descended into Portland I made cookies in the oven and popcorn on the stovetop. I had planned for these "treats" back on Tuesday... it's now Saturday. It was wonderful. We arrived back in the PYC (Portland Yacht Club), emptied the blackwater tank, and then pulled into Max's slip. His partner Mayra met us, along with Ian's wife Ashley and their two children... and champagne. It was a satisfying moment. Day 1 really pushed me (and likely the other guys) to the limit. Days 2, 3, and 4 had been downright beautiful.

It was my first true offshore experience. And honestly the ground was moving for like two weeks. All my scouting skills came in handy, as did my experience navigating intracoastal waterways. I lost 7 pounds, and was rock solid through most of it. I can name most of the sails, moves on those sails, and maybe one or two of the ways to sail (ie: we're in a dead run). Broad Reach/Beam Reach/Close Haul -- I know the words, but I couldn't tell you exactly what those mean practically. I'm really glad I did it. And it was great doing it with Max and Ian.

There's something about that level of trust -- "Hey, you pilot my boat while me and Ian sleep" -- that makes you feel a certain level of confidence and responsibility that truly builds character.