

Ia Orana from the Mandolyn Crew!

Just over a year after leaving Salt Spring we find ourselves in French Polynesia, nearing the end of our 90 day tourist visa. We post photos and updates on [our blog](#) if anyone is interested, but that's mostly beaches and sunsets for my aunts. As this is a group of boaters, I thought I'd take the opportunity to discuss some of the nautical misadventures we've observed over the past year.

The first that comes to mind was as we were leaving Coos Bay, Oregon. We had befriended a family of 4 there aboard a Mason 43, Luna Pacifica. We left the dock in the morning heading south, and they left a few hours later. Shortly after exiting the Coos Bay bar, their wind failed and the captain turned on the engine, but experienced no thrust whatsoever. With the help of an underwater camera on a stick, they realized that their propeller had fallen off. It was a feathering style prop which they suspect was not installed correctly. Instead of calling for assistance they chose to sail forward, their anticipated one night passage turned into seven days, and included an unplanned rounding of Cape Mendocino in some heavy weather. They were able to sail the boat right up to the dock in San Francisco where they effected repairs.

The next excitement we were party to was on an overnight passage down the coast of Mexico. We responded to a distress call on the VHF from a sailboat which had struck a freighter! Their bow was severely damaged, but they were remarkably unscathed considering who they were up against. We wrote up the details of that one on [our blog here](#). We ran into them again a month or so later, and they had mostly repaired the boat and were continuing to cruise.

Further south in Mexico, another family we had befriended left Barra de Navidad on their Amel 50, Eventide. Shortly into their journey, they felt a terrible vibration when under engine power. This boat actually has a propeller inspection window built right into the hull. This time the prop was still there, but missing a blade! They were able to sail back to the dock, using a dinghy to manoeuvre the last bit. They wrote more details [on their blog here](#).

On March 9 we departed Mexico heading into the Pacific. We were 4 days at sea when we started to see many distress notices posted on behalf of SV Raindancer, a Kelly Peterson 44, who were crossing the Pacific from Panama. They had struck a whale and the boat was sunk in a very short time. They spent the night in their life raft and were picked up the next day by a catamaran SV Rolling Stones. We met the crew of Rolling Stones a little later in the Marquesas to hear their story. Some major news organizations reported on that story.

On March 24 we were still on that same passage to the Marquesas when we learned that a sailing family behind us on a Westsail 42, Niniwahuni, had been dismasted, about a week after departing Mexico. The wife and 2 children were evacuated to a cargo ship, while the husband/father remained on the boat. The sailing community in the area did an incredible job to organize the delivery of fuel and crew to the vessel, which made it's way back to Mexico for repairs. [This youtube video has all the details](#).

After arriving safely in the Marquesas we watched eagerly for updates from friends doing the Pacific crossing behind us. One of those friends was the crew of SV Lucky Dog, a Catalina 470 from Vancouver, that we had befriended a few months earlier on the Oregon coast. 650 miles from the Marquesas, they lost steerage. A waterproof camera on a stick revealed that they no longer had a rudder! A sheared rudder stock was all that remained. After 24 hours of attempting unsuccessfully to rig a drogue steering arrangement, they made the decision to leave their boat, accepting a ride from the next boat behind them, SV Beleza (who had already dropped off fuel to the Niniwahuni above on this same passage). Once they arrived in the Marquesas, the Lucky Dog crew fabricated a heavy duty bolt on emergency rudder, chartered a boat to take them back to their vessel, installed the rudder, and finished their passage! This was a very impressive recovery and we couldn't be happier for them. They are currently still in the Marquesas working on a permanent rudder replacement.

A month later in the Tuamotus Islands, a strong weather system came through. We rode this out at the atoll of Tahanea. We saw wind in the 30s with gusts near 40, but we were lucky that the main brunt of the storm missed us. In nearby atolls several boats dragged anchor and two boats broke free of moorings. At least two of these were beached. A boat we had met just a few days earlier, Pegah, was struck by lightning. All of these boats were ultimately recovered and repaired. Pegah lost many electronic systems, but was otherwise unharmed.

A week or so later another family we had met aboard Falkor, a Moody 42, was on a mooring buoy in an atoll pass waiting for slack tide. The mooring broke during full ebb, and they were hurled out the pass at high speed. The crew throttled up the engine to steer away from reefs, but the still dangling mooring rope wrapped around their propeller, and their entire engine was pulled backwards 30cm, right off its mounts! They used their dinghy to avoid the reefs, and after ensuring they weren't sinking, decided they had little options but to sail directly to Tahiti, which took a few nights in very little wind. We met them in Tahiti and helped them remount and align their engine on new feet. Miraculously, despite 800lbs of Perkins flopping around in the engine compartment, there was almost no damage beyond the destroyed feet, and they are already back out cruising.

Thankfully nobody was injured in any of these incidents. Sailing over here is quite different from home, with help and supplies usually much further away. Accidents do happen, but we have found the cruising community to be incredibly helpful in supporting anybody with a problem.

In summary, keep your propellers on tight and be skeptical of mooring bouys in the South Pacific!

We always love to hear from home if you have a question or want to say hello. <https://www.raisethe-main.com>

All the best,

Doug, Sarah, Nyah & West

SV Mandolyn