

Island mariners return from journey around Vancouver Island

Challenged only by a little rain, a few mechanical gremlins and some insidious sea growth, Dick Pattinson and his fellow mariners completed a sailing circumnavigation of Vancouver Island last week.

Three local sailboats set out June 5 for a voyage of adventure and discovery. But the trip was nothing new for Pattinson, who has now completed the odyssey 13 times.

"There's still things I haven't seen," the 86-year-old sailor said.

Pattinson was accompanied on his 26-foot trawler, Gwaihir, by fellow Salt Spring Sailing Club members Jim Sinclair (up to Port Hardy) and Michael Byrne (for the rest of the journey).

Two other crews, comprised of Harold Brochmann and Gary Railer on the 30-foot Gypsy and John Prothero single-handing his hulk 32, completed the local contingent.

But the group rushed the trip with a case of "get-me-itis," Pattinson said.

"If we weren't in such a mad-dog hurry, we could

have stopped to investigate more things."

As it was, the local mariners still managed a collection of interesting stops along their four-week trip.

A highlight along the northern leg of the journey included the discovery of a weird vegetal growth living in the water intake of Pattinson's boat.

"It caused a problem for the engine. It was some kind of insidious thing."

After a wet-suited friend removed the mysterious stowaway from the Gwaihir at Comox, the three sailboats continued up the Inside Passage to Bull Harbour.

"That's the jumping-off spot for the west coast," Pattinson said.

Over the next leg, the Salt Spring flotilla cruised past Cape Scott, Experimental Bight, Sea Otter Cove and Winter Harbour.

The local Argonauts even met up with a group of Calgarians who were attempting their first trip around the big island.

"They tagged along for several days and offered a different perspective on things," Pattinson said.

During a stop at Kyuquot, the group received a fascinating tour of the World War II vintage vessel Uchuck III that supplies logging camps along the coast.

"It has portholes in the wheelhouse instead of windows. The glass could get hit by a machine gun without shattering."

They also saw the remnants of an old decommissioned coast guard ship that ran aground at Columbia Cove.

"On a beach nearby you can find all kinds of stuff like sake bottles and fishing floats from Japan."

During the visit to Columbia Cove, Brochmann took a spill and banged his head but the old salt healed quickly, said Pattinson.

He also recalled a visit to Bunsby Island, where sea otters have been re-introduced.

"Now you can see them all around, floating around on their backs. They're cute little buggers."

The group of local explorers cruised past Esperanza and Zeballos and stopped at the Nootka Light Station in Friendly Cove.

"The church there has stained-glass windows sent from Spain."

They hoped to stop to visit Cougar Annie's garden near Estevan Point but the wind was blowing too hard and the group had to settle for a warm soak at Hot Springs Cove.

Another highlight involved a slice of raisin pie at a cafe in Ahousat.

"That was the best piece of pie on the whole trip. She cut a raisin pie in four pieces and served it with a big dollop of whipped cream."

Prothero's engine refused to start at White Pine Cove so Brochmann towed the 32-foot boat all the way to Tofino.

Once at dock, they discovered the mechanical problem stemmed from a simple broken wire and Prothero treated his mates to a shore-leave dinner out of relief.

"Not ones to tarry, we went down to Ucluelet right by Long Beach but it was a little rough going in so we stayed for two nights because it was miserable."

When the weather cleared,

they set off for Bamfield and then Port Renfrew the following day.

But the Renfrew floats were all occupied by local fishermen, so the sailors continued on to Sooke.

"We started at 5 a.m. and arrived at 8 p.m. I had no trouble going to

sleep that night."

The group arrived home safely last Wednesday.

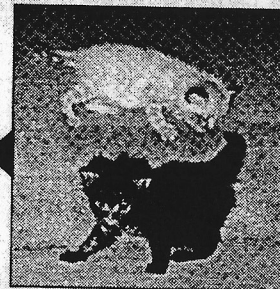
"It's my 13th trip around the island. I don't think I'll do that again," Pattinson said.

"But my wife says 'I heard that last year,'" he chuckled.

Cats of the Week



These two fluffy boys named Bart and Mike were born April 28th. Very playful!



Willy and Wally were born early June. Their sisters are spoken for but they will need homes by the end of July.

Please call the SPCA at 537-2123 or come to the open house every Saturday from 2:00pm to 4:00pm

The adoption fee of \$60 for a male and \$70 for a female covers the cost of spaying or neutering and a vaccination.