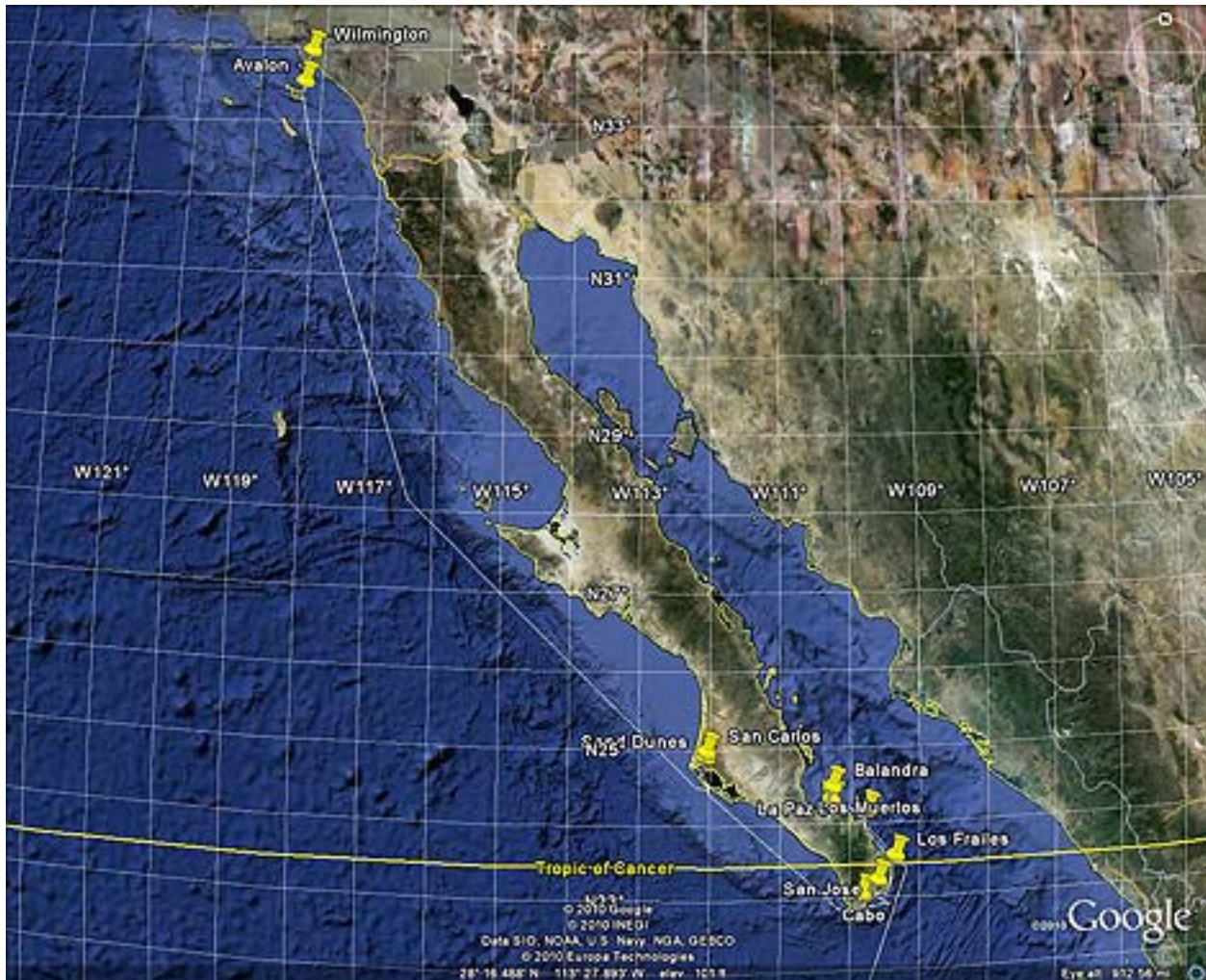


Avalon to Bahia Magdalena - Passage



747 nautical miles sailed from Avalon to San Carlos

On March 4, 2010 the sailing vessel (s/v) Skylight headed away from Avalon, embarking with her crew to Mexico. The destination was La Paz Mexico with possible stops in San Diego and/or Isla Cedros Mexico should the weather force the crew inshore for another stop over. Heading out and away from the island, the weather was fine with a brisk wind carrying Skylight at eight knots to her destination. The seas were comfortable and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forecast showed that the winds were to be a consistent less than 17 knots out of the North, and seas of eight feet or less at 11 seconds. The day after departure it began to rain, and it continued to rain, by the fourth day we sailed past Isla Cedros and on the morning of the fifth day the seas began to build along with the wind. Already downwind of Isla Cedros, and no other port of entry to pull into to wait out the weather, the crew had no choice but to continue on route to La Paz. By the

fifth day, it was already part of the schedule to have the vessel trimmed for the evening by four pm so that the person on night watch had only to maintain the heading and to be alert for any changing conditions. However, by this time the swells had increased to 18 feet with occasional wind-waves of 10 to 18 feet on top of that with a very short duration between the waves. At this time, Skylight was already running barepole (without sails) at 6 knots down the slope of each wave that was coming from the stern. Exhausted, the crew hove-to to get some rest. After only about an hour a wave crashed down on top of Skylight knocking her out of position which left her dangerously broadside to the waves. Claudia had been suggesting the use of the sea-drogue during the day and with the worsening conditions, and breaking 36' waves, Brian finally acquiesced. With the precision of a well rehearsed team, they deployed the drogue, and once its anchor chain hit the water, the drogue smoothly ran out to its full 420 foot length. This time as a wave lifted Skylight to send her down its slope, the drogue held her back and let the wave pass underneath. The drogue slowed the vessel down to drift safely with the current at one knot. There was nothing left for the crew to do but to tie down the wheel, go below, rest, and get nourishment to continue the journey ahead.



The Crew was latter told that they had sailed Skylight into a low pressure tough that was to stay in the area for about a week. No forecast had shown this system in the area, and the severe seas and the wind had not been projected.

The morning after the crew had set out the drogue, Brian knew he had to get the vessel out of these stormy waters. The team waited until there appeared to be a lessening in the seas

and wind to a manageable state. To get free they could cut the drogue loose but it was decided that the life-saving drogue would be kept in case it was needed in the future. The drogue was then, over a two hour period, painstakingly winched back on board in between the tug and pull of the 12 to 16 foot waves. There was an addition mishap between getting the vessel from barepole to fully sailing again, when the headsail sheet got bound into a knot, but the team remained calm and took control of the situation and vessel getting the sails deployed and Skylight going once again.



On the morning of the eighth day March 12th, the weather turned fine for sailing and the team's mood lightened as land was sighted. Opting to make landfall in Bahia Magdalena they began their approach with Mount San Lazaro as their guide. It was a great feeling as they knew they would be anchored by evening.

The team realized that they had another dilemma before they could safely anchor. The two swing battens on the main sail had come loose and each one now swung freely by one string. These loose battens prevented the mainsail from being rolled up into the mast and put away. Claudia watched in amazement as Brian lay on the deck of Skylight while he patiently sawed each line off with a razor he had duck-taped to the pennant halyard.



Brian could now relax and enjoy the sail into "Mag Bay"

The main entrance into Mag Bay is Punta Estrada. Mount Isabel is on the right and Isla Santa Margarita on the left of the entrance. The winds were perfect and on a beam reach as s/v Skylight headed into the bay and sailed at 6.5 knots past the local fishermen in their pangas.

The immensity of the bay was amazing and it felt like entering another ocean.



The sails were soon taken down and a twelve nautical mile zig-zag course was followed via green and red buoy markers to the puerto of San Carlos. The markers had to be carefully followed as the shoals and sand banks quickly rose to just below the surface on each side of the very narrow channel.

The team safely anchored off the small town of San Carlos just before sunset and soon settled down for a well deserved night's rest after 8-days at sea.