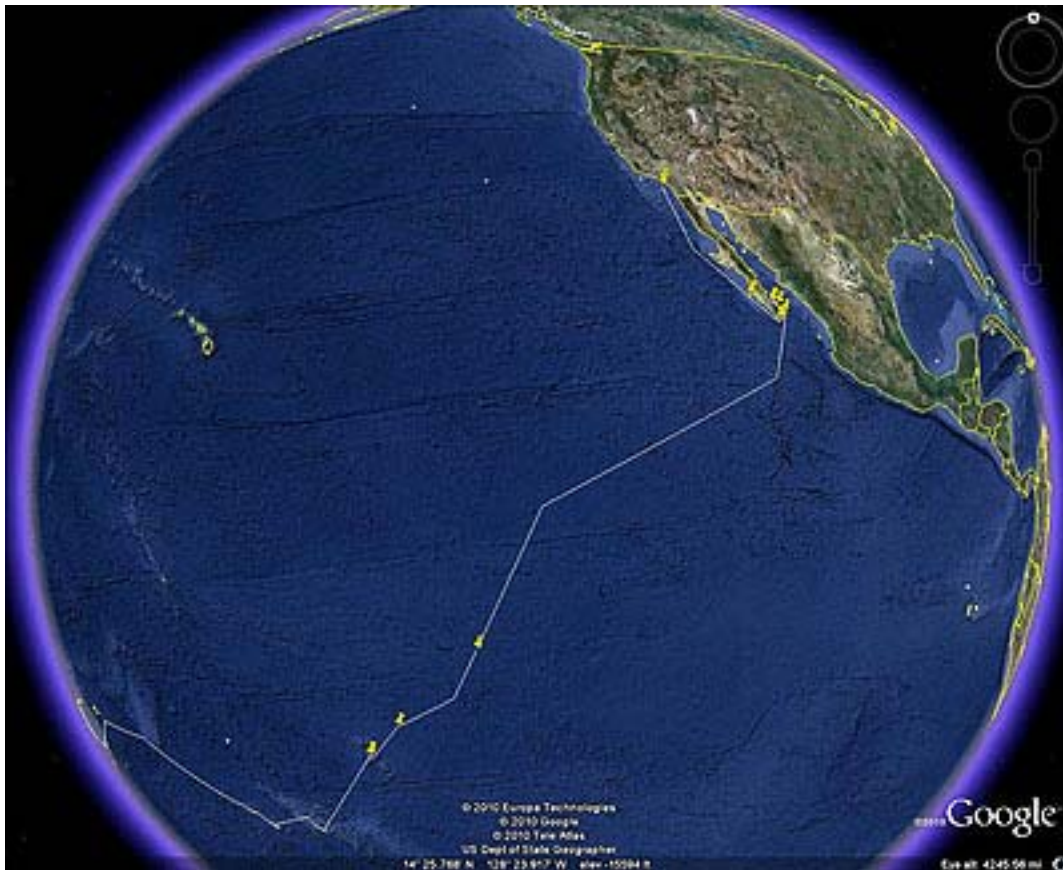


RisingTides – Expedition 2010

Marquises

April 14th through June 12th, 2010



Ocean Passage from La Paz Mexico to Nuku Hiva Marquesas (first pin from Baja California), French Polynesia

On April 14, 2010 the crew of RisingTides, on s/v Skylight, began a long and arduous journey from La Paz Mexico in the northern Pacific to the Marquesas Island Nuku Hiva in the southern Pacific. Fortified with provisions from the U.S.A and Mexico and establishing scheduled radio contact with the "Puddle Jump", a small group of sailing vessels making the crossing at the same time, the crew began a 3,260 nautical mile trek across the ocean.



Vibrant Sunsets Rewards Crew during Passage

The crew experienced rough seas and strong winds that eventually became the entire crossing. Brian Basura and Claudia Richardson became accustomed to the conditions as the days turned into weeks and slowly watched the nautical miles to their destination count down. On April 16th the crew motored for three days to make their way through the Intertropical Convergence Zone. An area known for its unpredictable foul weather as the opposing currents of the north and south pacific meets.



Crossing the Equator

The crew pressed on, and on May 6, 2010 the team accomplished the momentous occasion of crossing the equator.

On the 24th day of the passage, a strong squall hit the vessel. The headsail roller furling broke and let out the headsail, unfortunately shredding it to pieces. The crew could not salvage the sail and it eventually had to be cut loose.

Using a storm jib (smaller sail used for storms) the crew tried to maintain a southerly route, while strong currents pushed the vessel slowly westward and away from their rumblines that lead to Marquesas Islands. As the days wore on, the crew projected ahead with their current course and determined that they would be pushed to far west to make their destination. Out of fuel and with no other recourse, they contacted the United States Coast Guard to request a fuel drop. Within 24 hours, a Russian containership MOL *Serenity* not only was located, but was able to make their way to the crew's location and provide a harrowing fuel drop.



Container Ship "MOL *Serenity*" Crew



Success Obtaining Additional Fuel

After filtering the fuel, Brian was able to replenish the tanks onboard Skylight and bring the vessel back on course via motoring. Once back on course the crew continued to sail to Nuku Hiva.

During the long passage, the crew noted that floating trash was seen only occasionally. Wild life observed was many brown boobie birds, terns, and frigates which navigate far from land and out into the open ocean. A large green sea turtle was spotted at the surface with a bird resting on its shelled-back. This turtle was in deep ocean water and thousands miles away from land in any direction! The crew was delighted when a pod of Pilot Whales steamed from far behind their vessel, and then crossed under the stern where the crew sat in the cockpit. As Skylight leaned over, a mother and her calf looked up and was seemingly close enough to touch.



Pilot Whales visit during ocean crossing

Many times large pods of dolphins swam along with s/v Skylight. Some of these groups included hundreds of dolphins that would span both sides of Skylight. At times, it appeared that the dolphins used the vessel for babysitting purposes as the young ones were put alongside Skylight, sometimes for hours, while the larger adults would go off to hunt.



Dolphins Welcomes S/V Skylight to the Marquesas

As the team approached the northern islands of the Marquesas, Spinner dolphins greeted the crew. After a 31-day Pacific Ocean passage, the elation the crew felt, could not have been expressed better than watching these beautiful mammals.



Nuku Hiva, Marquesas, French Polynesia

The team pulled into Baie de Taiohae on May 14, 2010. Taiohae is a Port of Entry for French Polynesia, which is governed by the country of France. Vessels must check into the country here at the office of the Gendarmerie. The figure above shows that Taiohae was entered first, then a trip to Baie de Taioa (Daniel's Bay), then to the north tip of Nuku Hiva where the team anchored in Baie de Anaho. And finally a last trip to Taiohae for reprovisioning and to check out of the island group.



Lava tubes evidence of what was once an active crater



View of Taiohae Bay.

The town of Taiohae resides in the remains of a volcanic crater with the caldera walls surrounding the town. With its volcanic history, the bay boasted black sand beaches and black sand for anchoring. It was in Taiohae that the English writer Herman Melville jumped from a whaling ship in 1842 at the age of 23.

In Taiohae, the fresh water available is contaminated, as people tie horses, pigs and other livestock next to or actually in the rivers and streams in order for the animals to drink. Thus, the fresh water spreads disease and the water in the bay is considered polluted as well. The bay is murky, and visibility is poor. Jellyfish abound in the bay.

On shore, the town was found to be very tidy, it was interesting to find that people are employed to rake and keep the roads and beaches clean of debris and leaves. However, the team was surprised to find that in this small town, brand new, diesel

guzzling, 4-wheeldrive, SUVs were owned by most of the locals, and although they appeared to only travel a short distance from one spot to the next, everyone drove there. Later, it was learned that the American show, *Survivor*, was filmed here and brought temporary wealth to the locals. The team was told that the cost of living used to be much lower but, with the advent of the show, prices were raised and had not declined back to preshow levels.

While in Taiohae, repairs had to be made, and Brian Basura was up to the task. Navigational lights had to be fixed, the spare headsail was raised, and the headsail roller furling had to be jerry-rigged so it functioned again.



Brian Basura uses electrician skills to fix the navigational lights



Repair to the headsail roller furling



The Puddle Jump group that kept in contact via the SSB Radio, from left to right around the table, Don and Judy of s/v Wind Ryder, Joe of s/v Blue Bottle, Gary and Lorraine of s/v Seaflyer, Adrian of s/v Blue Bottle, and RisingTides crew Claudia and Brian of s/v Skylight



Baie Taioa (Daniels bay)

May 24th through 26th

The crew moved onto Baie Taioa on May 24th. The freshwater here is known to be suitable for drinking. The team went ashore asking permission and found a young local couple that was outgoing, friendly, and offered up fresh water. Their simple home's ceiling was lined with flags from other boats that had visited with the couple.

The crew found this bay to be murky as well. Not from pollution, the black sand below and the organics here lead to poor visibility. The team decided to stay out of the water. Brian and Claudia also hiked up to Vaipo waterfall that was located up the valley. What was noticed was old stone ruins and carved stone statues that were found along the way of the hike. Most of the way up to the falls had a walkway made of large lava boulders at least six feet across went up for miles. This valley has maybe five families that remain in a very small village, but a one time it must have been a large population of Polynesians that lived here in Nuku Hiva.



Majestic view is the backdrop for the village of Hakau. The valley ends at Vaipo waterfall.



Old stone statue found at ruins of Hakau

Claudia asked the couple who lived here about the stone statues, and was told that at one time there were many, many artifacts such as this. But that these were taken away to French museums. Interestingly, Rose Corser, a French woman, researcher, and long-time resident of Taiohae, who owns a small boutique and museum with a collection of Marquesan artifacts denies that this is the case.

The team also met a local couple and returned to their house the following day for a traditional style afternoon meal. Conversation around the table was done in English, French, Marquesan, Dutch, Spanish, and sometimes by just pointing and laughing.



Claudia enjoys a traditional Polynesian meal with crew of s/v Spirit. Raw fish in coconut and lime juice fried bananas, goat, and taro.



Baie de Anaho May 27th through June 5th

Now with a full water tank, the team headed for the northeast anchorage of Anaho. They had heard that there was snorkeling and diving available in this bay and looked forward to getting into the water for surveys.

While there the team took the opportunity to hike to an archeological site.



Holes made long ago for pounding/grinding plants that were used in food making



Brian stands at the me'ae (temple) to the Goddess Tevanaua'ua'a



Stone faces remain at Kamuihei

The team was able to get in three dives at Anaho Bay. This was their first introduction to the waters of the Marquesas. The visibility was around thirty to fifty feet. There was an abundance of particulates and/or organisms in the water that caused a decrease in visibility. On each dive were octopus sighted. There was the presence of coral, but most coral appeared to be dead so there was no opportunity to perform surveys. The bottom was sand, coral rubble and fallen rocks.



Claudia dives the cloudy waters of Anaho Bay



Plate Coral with Reef fish



Black sea sponge thrives in Anaho Bay

Although disappointed by the poor visibility and lack of healthy coral, the team was delighted to snorkel and dive with the Giant Mantas that would come into the bay to feed on the microorganisms. At one point, over nine Mantas circled the divers.



Three Giant Mantas feed on the microorganisms at Anaho Bay

On June 6, 2010 the team returned to Taiohae to spend the next week in preparation for their next leg of this journey to the Tuamotus. The fuel tanks were refueled, including fuel for the spare jerry cans. Fresh provisions and meats were taken on board, scuba tanks refilled, and the team checked out of the Marquesas at the Gendarmerie.

This time the crew took on a new crew member. Lorraine Goodwin, who signed up to aid in taking surveys and perform crew duties, would sail with the team until reaching Tahiti where she would fly back to Kansas, U.S.A. Lorraine is a retired nurse and avid snorkeler with a compassion for people and wildlife.



Lorraine Goodwin joins the crew for the Tuamotus

On June 12, 2011 the team of three left the Marquesas headed to Tahanea, Tuamotus, French Polynesia and the next leg of the expedition.