

Chapter 6: Bamfield to Astoria and home

Monday, August 4

After leaving Bamfield at 9:15 am we made our way west to our first waypoint just off of the coast of Vancouver Island. When we arrived there we turned to our next waypoint near Columbia River entrance buoy number 1 which was 160 miles away. We motor sailed with a 5 to 10 knot south wind the rest of the morning and until mid afternoon with the wind died. We saw four whales breach including one about 50 yards away.

Later in the day the wind came back up from the northwest at 10 to 15 knots and we put the Genoa back out. We were making 7 to 7.5 knots most of the time with a 4 to 6 foot swell.

We started our night watch system at 8:00 where each of the three of us taking 1 hour on and 2 hours off.

At 11:00 pm I was coming on deck to relieve John when we hit something very hard. It made a loud thumping sound like we had hit something that was hard but not metal. John and I both froze and waited for the next shoe to drop but after a couple of minutes nothing happened so returned to our routine. I assumed we had hit a whale since we had been seeing them all day. Later when we had the boat hauled out at Rocky Point marina I found that all of the fresh white paint had been rubbed off of the leading edge of the keel.

Tuesday, August 5

We continued thru the night. About 2:00 am the clouds and fog moved in and obscured the stars.

Around 3:00 am we had a close encounter with a large fishing boat, probably a crabber that had come out of Gray's Harbor. I know that because I heard them on the VHF a couple of hours earlier talking with the harbor master. At the time Donnie was at the helm and John and I were trying to get a bit of sleep. Donnie called me up on deck and pointed out the fishing boat bearing down on us from the port side. It had just turned on their foredeck lights and it was lit up with many hundreds of watts of halogen lights. I immediately turned to port and we passed within yards of each other. They kept on going without slowing and I estimated they were making twenty knots. I was so dumbfounded that I did nothing other than put us back on course. I should have called them and the Coast Guard and reported it but I was so relieved to be alive that I just kept going. I didn't sleep the rest of the night, nor did Donnie or John.

Later that morning we were nearing the entrance of the Columbia River. We were about five miles off of the coast and eight miles away from the river when we spotted a small bird circling the boat. It circled a few times and then came in and landed on the port lifeline. It sat there for a brief moment and then moved to the boom vang and began to groom itself. It

finished grooming a few minutes later and seemed to then go to sleep for about thirty minutes. After its nap it began to hop and fly around the boat looking for something to eat and drink. It drank from some dew drops on the deck but wouldn't accept a crushed cracker I put on deck. It did try to eat one of my fingers when I offered my hand to it. Dang, that little fellow can bite! Figure : Hitch hiker

It stayed with us for about another hour and only left when it could see the shoreline off in the distance.

As we neared the Columbia River entrance the Coast Guard put out an announcement on the VHF that the Columbia bar was closed to small craft due to six foot swells. Since small craft are officially described as less than or equal to twenty foot in length, we continued on. We did alter course to start our entrance at entrance buoy 6 instead of buoy 1 which put us into deeper water all of the way in. It was a bit rough but no worse than what we had experienced before. The tide was going out and we slowed to only two to three knots over ground. We finally crossed the bar at 11:45 am. 170 miles in 26.5 hours from Bamfield to the Columbia Bar. That an overall average of about 6.4 knots and pretty good time even with hitting a whale and almost getting run over by a big fishing boat.



Illustration 1: Hitch hiking bird

We pulled into the West Mooring Basing at Astoria a couple of hours later thanks to the tide changing to flood at about Cape Disappointment. We checked in with Custom and two agents came down to check our documents but weren't very interested in anything else.

We relaxed in the cockpit for a while after moving over to a slip and then went up for a shower. Later we went for an early dinner at KFC. Donnie and I started to watch a movie but neither of us could stay awake. We went to bed and I went to sleep in two minutes of less.



Illustration 2: Hitch hiker on John's head

Thursday, August 7

I went to Englund's to pick up the Navionics US chip and also got some new line to replace our lazy jacks. Donnie walked to Safeway for some basic supplies and took the tram back. Later we both walked into town to look around and rode the tram back. I also bought some line and replaced that on the furler. It's an overcast cool day.

Friday, August 8

We started back up river leaving about 9:00. It was a pleasant day even if it was cloudy and cool. We passed, or they passed us, lots of heavy ship traffic of various types, freighters, tankers, and car shippers. We stopped at Rainier about 6:00 and were just in front of a couple we had met in Astoria. Unfortunately I don't remember their names but we had a nice chat with them.

Saturday, August 9

Up early and off to Portland. Again lots of ship traffic. As we neared Portland I prepared to call the railroad bridge (49 Vancouver) but it was already open when we got there.

We arrived at the Rose City Yacht Club about 2:00 and tied to the outer breakwater. Mary Lou and Steve (their son) are driving down to pick up John. They arrived at 4:00 but we still hadn't been able to get a gate key so getting them in was a problem. After some head scratching I saw an old 55 gallon drum near by the gate. I rolled it over to the sensing coil buried in the asphalt and it was enough to trigger the gate and it opened. John left and we went back to the boat.

A few minutes later John and Cherie Armstrong came in and docked behind us. They had been in the area with their boat for a week and saw us. They were preparing to trailer their boat later in the day and go to the San Juans for two weeks. They had a key to the clubhouse which we took. When they left we walked to Sexton's for dinner. There were quite a few bikers there and a group from Miller Beer that had been in a golf tournament and were passing out prizes, long drive, closest to the pin, etc.

After dinner we walked back and talked a while with Steve, a fellow that is refurbishing a large ketch named *Seapeace*. It's an old style boat with fancy stained glass windows in the stern.

Sunday, August 10

We spent the day relaxing and doing small maintenance jobs such as oiling the bright work, cleaning and polishing the windows and deck fittings.

Monday, August 11

We went to Rocky Point for a haul out and repair of the damage I'd done when leaving there in the spring. We also got the hull repainted. The orange went away and is now a deep blue that matches the sunbrella blue we have on deck. It really looks nice. We kept a remembrance of the old orange by putting a pin stripe of orange down the hull between the white and blue.

The Panacea stayed at Rocky Point for several weeks while the work was being done. Work also done was the repair of the damage done by the Yard when they hauled her out. That is another story for another time. The bottom line is she made it back to the WWYC in the fall and is nestled safely in her slip just waiting for our next big adventure.



SINCERELY YOURS

DWAYNE AND DONNIE