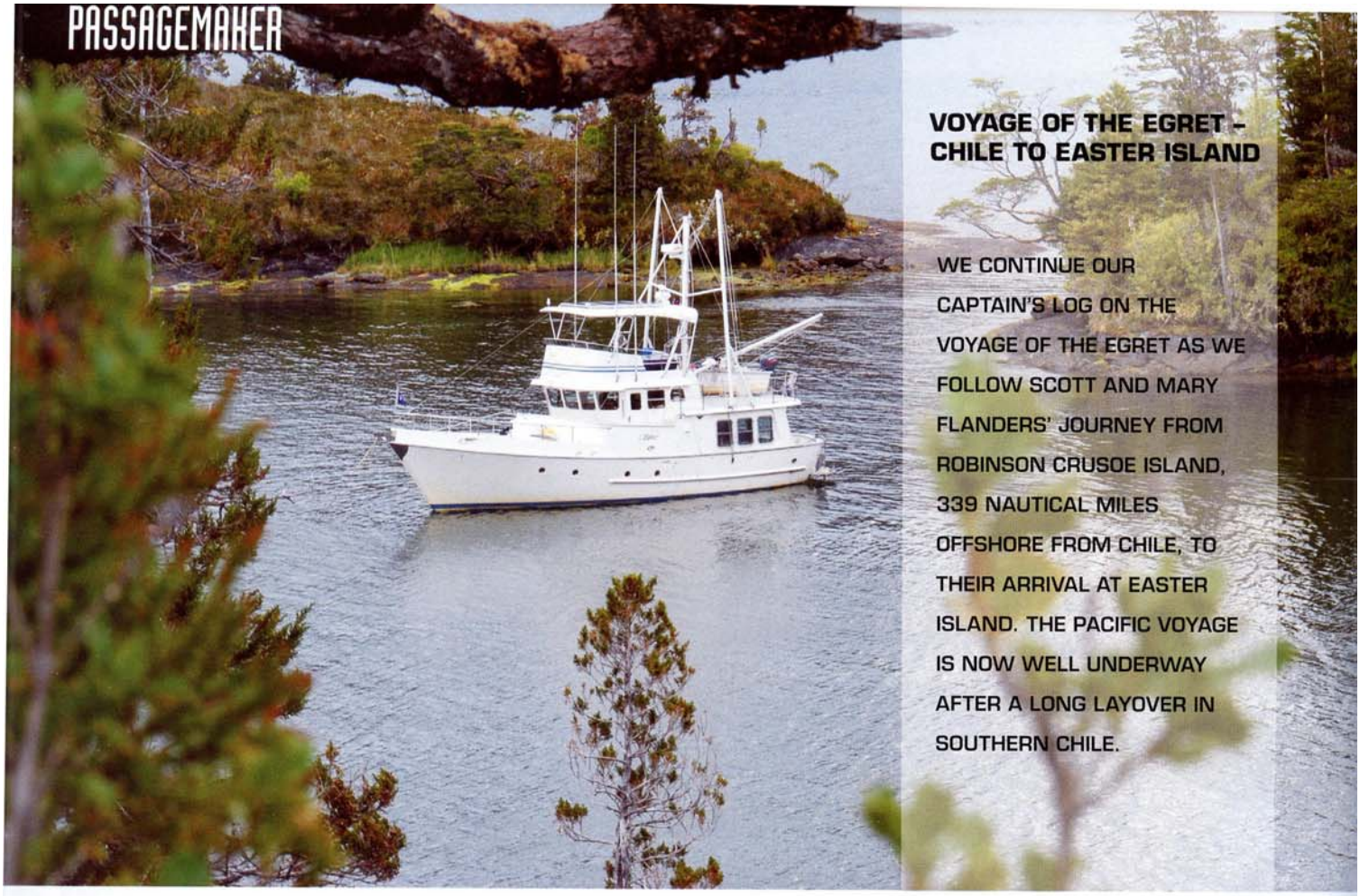

VOYAGE OF THE EGRET – CHILE TO EASTER ISLAND

WE CONTINUE OUR CAPTAIN'S LOG ON THE VOYAGE OF THE EGRET AS WE FOLLOW SCOTT AND MARY FLANDERS' JOURNEY FROM ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLAND, 339 NAUTICAL MILES OFFSHORE FROM CHILE, TO THEIR ARRIVAL AT EASTER ISLAND. THE PACIFIC VOYAGE IS NOW WELL UNDERWAY AFTER A LONG LAYOVER IN SOUTHERN CHILE.

The Pacific Voyage Begins

7 April
Talcahuano, Chile

Well, mis amigos, lots to report. Egret arrived at Talcahuano just at dark after a sleigh ride up the Chilean coast with following winds, seas and a grande current push. At daybreak the morning before arrival we pushed up the throttle to 1400 rpm trying to make a daylight landing. The last hour we went to 1600 rpm. We found the yacht club docks just before dark but it is a yacht club in spirit only with mainly small sailboats stern to a small pier and no place for Egret. We anchored in their large basin for the night.

The following day after a half hour process of squirting heavy oil caked on Egret's anchor chain off we went to the fishing harbour for our gas n go and new zarpe (cruising permit). Yeah, right – fairy tale! The harbour was a swarming mass of fishing boats in constant motion, a zillion sea birds feeding on the boiling waste of fish bits constantly being pumped from shore, sea lions feasting on the same along with the fish feeding on the same mess. Along with the mix was oil and diesel floating on the surface with small dead baitfish mixed in. Pollution at its best!

In due time there was an opening at the Copec fuel station shown in the guide. We slid in, with the entire waterfront waiting to catch the lines from this unheard of la di da yacht. We were trying to sort through the Spanish being shouted by different folks – folks of more importance as time went by. In the end we were rescued by Jimmie, the local hustler/agent. Dockside fuel must be subsidised by the government for the fishermen and they wouldn't sell to a private boat.

EGRET APPROACHING ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLAND, JUAN DE FERNANDEZ ISLAND GROUP, CHILE.

It's a very long story but in the end we anchored in the harbour, de-rigged one side of the paravanes, launched the rubber dink into that mess and went ashore with Jimmy to sort tings out. We ended up with a local guy and his antique hand cart carrying our 9 jerry jugs (243 litres total) back and forth from a service station across the street, transferring them to a panga (10' down from the dock – low tide) and offloading them onto Egret. We then used our Jabsco water puppy pump to pump the fuel into the port tank first, then the 378-litre cockpit fuel bladder, then stowed the jerry jugs along the starboard side. What was described in the last two sentences was a five-hour endeavour.

The guys hanging around the waterfront reminded me of the bar scene in the first Star Wars movie. You could arrange one group by teeth. 1 tooth, 2 teeth, 2 teeth & 2 snags, 3 teeth and so on. By age 40 these guys were used up and on the beach.

ALEXANDER SELKIRK'S VIEW OF CUMBERLAND BAY FROM THE LOOKOUT HE VISITED DAILY SEARCHING FOR PASSING SHIPS.

Rounding the headland to head offshore we hit 28 knots of sea breeze making lumpy going for a bit. It laid down then picked up with SW and WSW winds up to 25 knots and seas just forward of the beam. Lotsa spray for a while but around 4:00am this morning (Sat) the seas laid down a bit and all is well. Our speed has increased from

Tell the Kiwis to leave the light on

around 5 knots to 6. We are running 1300rpm carrying a total of 1350 gallons of fuel, 350 gallons above our normal tankage. She is handling surprisingly well for the extra fuel weight along with the extra provisioning weight. The electronic Naiad Stabilisers (Multi Sea II) are magic. When the going was sloppy I turned up the controls to about half and the worst of the rolling went away. Only when we got slapped by the extra big guys rolling through from time to time did we roll about 20 degrees. So, it's 244.3 nautical miles to go before our waypoint off the Juan de Fernandez Islands. All is well and we're heading west...finally. Tell the Kiwis to leave the light on.

Monday morning. Egret's anchor, TK, dropped into 52' of clean water in Cumberland Bay at 0930 local time after comfortable overnight seas. When we were within 8 miles of the island we reversed course to stand off until we could make a daylight landing.

8 April

Cumberland Bay, Robinson Crusoe Island, Juan de Fernandez Islands, Chile (on anchor)

Well, mis amigos, this place is great. After a quick trip to the Armada and check in we took a short hike around the waterfront. The small town (800 folks in summer – 300 in winter) is spotless, particularly considering most of the town's trade is fishing. The majority of their commercial fishery is for lobster (more like a large crayfish) which is a clean fishery with the lobster kept alive in pens. The second main trade comes from eco tourism and its attendant businesses/administration. Robinson Crusoe Islands is a Chilean National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's comforting to know this place will remain pristine in the years to come. The town has a road, mostly gravel but is being paved with concrete. Nearly all the paths to the houses and trails have been finished.

After our generator burn and a quickie breakfast we took the dink to the dock to begin our hike to the mirador (overlook), the place where Alexander Selkirk (real life Robinson Crusoe) hiked every day to look for passing ships (over a mile trail and 1800' high). Four years and four months worth until he was rescued in 1709. Musta had legs like a racehorse! He was deposited on the island in 1704 after an argument with his captain.

17 April

Just offshore Robinson Crusoe Island

Well, mis amigos, it is time to be on our way. We are ready to begin our next leg of the southern route into French Polynesia. Due to the weather report we may have to alter course from time to time to be more comfortable on this long leg to Easter Island (Isla Pascua or Rapa Nui). We are in no rush, with comfort and safety our main

CREWMAN FRANK AND MARY ENJOYING CUMBERLAND CAFÉ'S GRANDE FISH SANDWICH AND A CERVEZA (BEER).

THE TINY HARBOUR AT EASTER ISLAND.

objective. This leg should take between 12 and 13 days, about the same as from Bermuda to the Azores. We have put in a number of sea miles since we undertook that journey in June 2004, so it won't be the daunting mileage it was at the time.

Offshore voyaging isn't rocket science. It is a matter of acclimatisation – doing the sea miles, gaining experience and doing your homework. Along with sea miles and gaining experience is included the necessary asset of self reliance in taking care of boat issues. It isn't the big stuff that fails, it's the little things. Little things are nothing more than common sense and a bit of practice. Most things are avoided by proper preparation.

23 April

942.1 nautical miles from our first Easter Island waypoint

Tue morning just after daybreak. We spent last night and early this morning comfortably riding largish waves down-sea with mid 20s wind. It was a beautiful night with a full moon and a few stars including the Southern Cross.

The price we paid for last night's comfort is we are making more northing than we should to keep somewhat near our WNW rhumb line to Easter Island. We are having to use tactics our world cruising sailboat first cousins have employed for years. We are working the sea sets to make landfall in the shortest and most comfortable way. It isn't often we can't simply put in our waypoints and pull the trigger. The first item we missed is tiny Podesta Island marked by a triangle and warnings on our C-Map charts. We were within 18 nautical miles but couldn't mark the island on radar in the high seas meaning it must be a very small, low island.

We were able to continue on our rhumb line course to Easter with smooth sailing the early part of the evening with wind and seas picking up. The wind is blowing between the mid 20s and low 30s consistently with a bit lower and higher occasionally. As we move into early morning the seas have increased proportionally and rain showers are marching by on 12-mile radar. Fortunately they are following seas. Whatever great navigator first named this ocean Pacifico, (placid, tranquil, calm) must have been jacked up on Mountain Dew, Mount Gay or perhaps a bit of Jamaican weed. Altered mind for sure. You get the picture.

25 April

633.2 nautical miles from our first waypoint at Easter Island

Well, mis amigos, last night and early this morning (Wed - Thu) was a gentle downhill ride. Our speed has risen to over 6 knots, stacking up the fuel reserves in this game of give and take. Let's get techno for a bit and talk about fuel economy. In a nutshell, fuel economy is in your right hand (throttle hand). If you look at a fuel burn chart for your engine it is surprising how much more an engine burns as you increase rpm. All I will say is that the last knot and a half on an Egret size waterline comes at a dear premium (full displacement hull). Conversely, if you drastically reduce rpm your fuel economy is extraordinary.

The voyage Egret is now undertaking is well over 4000 nautical miles. In addition to straight line distance we need to include a healthy reserve

WOODEN ROW BOATS USED BY LOCAL FISHERMEN.

EASTER ISLAND IS A BARREN AND HARSH LAND.

plus the variables of generator burn, and like a few days back when we 'hove to' for an afternoon and full night going the wrong way. The lost time doesn't matter. Time means nothing on a trip like this and should NEVER be allowed to matter on a long trip. Lost fuel is the issue and needs to be part of pre-planning contingencies.

We planned this particular route about three years ago. We can't make the trip on our own tanks, including a healthy safety margin, without guaranteed fuel. When you know a little about South American efficiencies you understand there are NO guarantees.

With the confines of the bladder placements we believe we have about 1080 litres of fuel in bladders, another 243 litres in jerry jugs and 42 litres in our fuel tank for the diesel heater. Egret's total fuel when we left Talcahuano, Chile, for Papeete, Tahiti, was 5150 litres.

We hit a minor milestone yesterday. 6000 engine hours on our happy little Lugger L668D. Original injectors, original everything except belts, filters and oil. NEVER a problem. A great fuel system, 2-micron Racor filters, and fresh oil on schedule are the key. When you are 'out here' clean fuel is VERY important!

30 April

Hanga Roa Harbour, Easter Island, Chile

Well, mis amigos, it's Tuesday morning, before daybreak and the morning before landfall. Our new/old buddy Southern Cross is marching by the pilothouse window. There is a reddish star low on the horizon to the west we have been chasing all night.

Wed morning before daybreak. Easter Island came up on radar during Frank's watch. Shortly after, he saw a tiny light in the distance, first thinking it was a running light but as we grew closer he could see the light was on the north end of the island. Now Frank is off watch and I am watching the island slowly come to life. A few more lights are shining in the distance but we have yet to see the dark outline of the island. In reading the different guides last night on watch, one, South Pacific Handbook, had some interesting statistics. "Barren and detached, Easter Island lies midway between Tahiti and Chile, 4000km from the former and 3600km from the latter. Pitcairn Island, 2100km west, is the nearest inhabited land. No other populated island on earth is as isolated as this." Geesh, I guess we are out there! The first light to the north is simply a marker. We can now see the second lights are the town of Hanga Roa shining between the mountains on either end of the island. The island is starting to take shape at 6 nautical miles out. It will be daybreak in 45 minutes. Can't wait.

Dropped anchor into 55' of water in Hanga Roa Harbour. There are five boats in the harbour; three

MOAI ARE EVERYWHERE (EASTER ISLAND HEAD CARVINGS).

THERE ARE OVER 650 OF THESE STONE ON THE ISLAND.

we know from the Deep South. We have cleared in with the Armada by radio but still have to go to shore and formally clear in. The anchorage is a bit rolly, however. With little wind there are no safety issues except the fact the sandy bottom area of the anchorage is limited so we are anchored tighter than we prefer.

5 May

Hanga Roa Bay, Easter Island, Chile

Well, mis amigos, did we roll or what?? Yup, buried the master head portlight from time to time. Aquarium glass. Glass sided boat. So Friday afternoon and night we were boat bound in a rocking machine. Sat morning was beautiful, with a relatively slight swell. Fuel day. We made five rental car trips to and from the gas station with eight jerry jugs – that's 216 litres of fuel per load. That took from 11:00am until nearly dark, with a quick stop for a sandwich our only break. Geesh, felt like a sailboater. So that was Saturday.

Sunday was different. With Advil working its magic off we went in the rental car to explore the island. We took a clockwise route trying to catch the sun at its best angles for picture taking at the various places of interest. Easter Island is the REAL DEAL, Egret's highest compliment. Everything you have read about since childhood and later is here and accessible.

Moai are everywhere (Easter Island head carvings). There are over 650 of these stone guys around the island taken from a single quarry. How they transported them is still a mystery. One of the most impressive sites was the quarry where there are still figures lying unfinished cut into the hillside as if it were a weekend break. No one knows for sure the early history of the island but it is thought Polynesians arrived in two waves.

The touristas are here but not swarming. We didn't see a single two-storey hotel/pension in our travels. Most are small, 2-6 units. November thru April are the best months (spring - fall). May has the most rain. Easter Island is off the beaten path but certainly worth a week. There are flights from Santiago, Chile, and Papeete, Tahiti.

Next issue: Egret heads to Pitcairn Island and beyond. PMY

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