



**The prize:** Remodeled and upgraded 1987 43' Wellcraft Portofino with twin 3208 Turbo Aftercooled Caterpillars.

**The catch:** I had to bring her home from Mission Bay, San Diego.

At 4:30AM on Sunday, January 22, I left Petaluma for the Oakland Airport and boarded a flight to San Diego for what would be the cruise of a lifetime. Right away I had my first challenge which was making it to the airport with only 45 minutes to spare to go through security and get on the plane. Fortunately, CHP was no where to be found that morning and I made it on time. Landing in the airport was no fun either. I could clearly see the highway and buildings at ground level with our approach to land. As I crumpled up a magazine until we landed, I kept thinking of the old PSA accident in San Diego.

My hired boat captain and his family picked me up from the airport. I was a little nervous because I did not know what he would be like until I met him (I was carrying cash). We booked him on UShipIt.com for around \$2700 including the cost of fuel and were not allowed to talk to him or even see a copy of his license before paying almost \$400 online. It was the Captain's first time on UShipIt too, he had no online reference. He told us he set the price low so we would give him a reference to launch his UShipIt business. His payments were to be delivered in cash in thirds before leaving, mid-way and at the final destination. For all I knew, I would be the victim of a scam. Fortunately for me they were extremely nice people. It turned out my captain was a retired electrical engineer who managed government projects with NASA and private military contracts with Boeing and Lockheed Martin. His son was a young aeronautical engineer. The propeller head wash from the two was pretty strong.

We arrived at Driscoll's Marina in Mission Bay and met up with my diesel mechanic who had just installed a new automatic bilge pump. He gave the Captain, Fred, a detailed overview of the mechanicals. Fred immediately went over a check list of items with his son while his wife started loading the boat. The mechanic was impressed with how thorough Fred was. He was also concerned about our trip and let me know we were heading into some rough conditions and wanted a phone call when we passed Point Conception, my nemesis.

Right out the gate of Mission Bay we were met by an 11 foot swell with high surf advisory. I clutched the seat with great apprehension while Captain Fred very calmly looked at me and said, "This boat just passed its Sea Test." From there we operated until about 10:00 PM and pulled into an anchorage in Newport Beach to wait out a storm. The storm produced a significant amount of rain on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. We decided it was a "no go" day. During the rains I found a leak in the hatch in the master state room. Fortunately I brought an old shower curtain just in case for a situation like this. We made a dingy run to West Marine for some duct tape to back the curtain up. It worked and my bed dried out.

On Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup>, after pulling up the mud caked anchor and chain we headed out to LA Harbor for fuel. When we left Mission Bay the tanks were a little less than ½ full. We put a total of 273 gallons of diesel in and noticed a leak in the starboard tank. After extensive research we figured out it was just the filler hose. At the same time the water line got bumped near the water heater and the boat started filling up with water. The breaker for the water pump did not shut it off. I had to turn the main D/C panel switch off until we could repair it. After we were done with these blunders we headed off to Marina Del Rey for a side tie at Burton Chase Park. We made it in time to watch a beautiful sunset as we proceeded into the calm protected waters of the city. The Marina was nice. Unfortunately, some local residents thought the park was nice too, if you know what I mean. I woke up to a violent shouting match at 11:30 PM that night. Fortunately it resolved without knife or gun shot wounds. In the morning, we could not start the starboard motor. Fred was able to jump the starter with a large bolt and we used this procedure all the way to Petaluma.

On Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup> we left early in the morning and decided we would make it as far as we could with another storm on the way. The conditions appeared to be fairly calm and I had great views of the Catalina Islands. We had bottle neck Dolphins following the boat everywhere. They thought it was challenging to jump in front of the bow and swim alongside the boat. In the Ventura area we were ordered by the Coast Guard to go about 6 plus nm out to avoid a naval firing range that was conducting target practice. We had to make direct contact with the firing range to advise them we were in the area. In the early evening things got really rough that day as we approached the Point Conception area. I told Fred there was no way in hell I wanted to go through Point Conception with Santa Anna winds. We stopped at Cojo Beach just south of Conception and anchored in 30 feet. We set both of the anchor alarms on the two chart plotters. At 11:00 PM I woke up to a horn sound and freaked out. I thought the anchor slipped and walked outside in time to see the train going around the point. I calmed down again and went back to bed.

For the next two days we were trapped at Cojo Beach with other boats. The winds were blowing 30 to 60 miles per hour and it felt like 85 degrees. The second day things calmed down a bit and we made another attempt at Point Conception. During this attempt the auto pilot quit working for a while and muddy anchor chain came out of the anchor closet and onto my bed. This proved to be a bad idea in small craft warning conditions as we once again retreated to Cojo. The brutal conditions and big wind waves won. Sleeping there at night was miserable with the strong waves and wind conditions. I felt every wave and heard every gust of wind with great anxiety. While we were anchored there I discovered the holding tank had leaked. Nice huh? I was lucky the previous owner had left a dry/wet vacuum with an arsenal of cleaning supplies. It turned out the vent was plugged. During our down time we used a volt meter to discover the starting problem was attributed to a bad solenoid.

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, we left Cojo in fair conditions and made the passage through Point Conception and Arguello. This is the mid point of California and considered to be the most treacherous part of our journey. I snuck some anti-nausea pills and survived the passage. I turned back and flipped off the area in celebration considering it took three attempts to make it through that spot. Next up I had great views of the Channel Islands

and more dolphins and whales near the boat. We pulled an all-nighter and took turns piloting the boat for a 36 hour shift to take advantage of the good conditions. Unfortunately, the radar took a dump at 4:30 in the morning. We were operating about eight miles out to avoid crab pots and other similar fishing devices when this happened. There was a bright light in the distance on my port side. We had to open the eisenglass to occasionally look at it. In the daylight we finally passed it. It was a tug boat pulling a barge.

We continued with our journey and had great views of the Channel Islands. Monterey Bay proved to be another rough spot. Fred looked at me and said, "This is a little snotty out here." Later in the day the water became calm. Fred told me he knew today was going to be good based on his observation from the night before.



He said, "Red sky at night is a sailor's delight."

We continued into Pillar Point Marina in Half Moon Bay for our next stop. Linda, my mom, and the kids met us there. We went out to Half Moon Bay Brewery for dinner. The food and the beer were excellent considering we had to ration our food on the boat for a trip that took longer than expected.

The following morning a fishing boat took off right next to us with about thirty seagulls chasing the boat for chum. These little bastards were all over my canvas and bombed my freshly washed boat. Oh well. The peace was restored when the fishing boat was finally gone. We fueled up before we left the Marina to top off my tanks. The diesel was only \$4.00 dollars a gallon, so we took on 171 Gallons.

Once we left the break water we were greeted with white squall type conditions with high surf advisories on all the beaches. Our newest challenge besides the weather was dodging all the crab pots which were popping up in up to 600' of water. Typically these pots on our trip were found no deeper than 300'. Half Moon Bay was littered with them, thankfully we made it through the area safely. This area started to remind me of Point Conception. Once we made it through the Golden Gate Bridge everything was calm and the end was near.

The rest of the trip was scenic and uneventful. We arrived in the Petaluma Marina around 4:30 PM on, January 30<sup>th</sup>. The repairs from the trip were minimal considering we traveled approximately 450 nm or more with fairly rough conditions at times. The trip took us eight days with four actual days of travel. The other four were attributed to weather delays. Blue Crew will be in Petaluma for the next couple of months so I can catch up on repairs and regular maintenance. We look forward to many PYC cruises and Delta fun with her.

- Forest Blue