

## Anacortes Wa to Coos Bay Or

It was a dark and stormy night. We were in Neah Bay on the Northern coast of Washington, that morning we had left Port Angeles at 0630 with Gale Warnings chasing us out. That area of the Straits of Juan De Fuca is well known for strong winds and steep seas. We had fifty miles of rough water behind us before arriving in Neah Bay that afternoon with choppy seas putting spray over the bow. Rounding the point we thought our troubles were over. Anchoring in 25 feet with 100 feet of heavy chain and anchor we were set for a good night before rounding Cape Flattery in the morning.

We, Don Starbuck, fellow USPS member and adventurous soul, and I, Michael Gibbons Cdr. were in Washington to bring Sea Dreamer home. I had been leaving the boat in a boatyard in Anacortes Washington in between summer cruises, driving up in the spring and home in the fall. It all became too much driving, and too much storage fees, so I decided to just bring the boat home and retire from cruising. We needed to get the boat ready to sell and could not do it in Washington.

In the fall of last year we thought we could set up a broker in Washington to sell the boat for us. With that in mind we removed everything to either take home or discard in the boatyard. Unfortunately, the brokers in that area were used to selling million dollar boats and couldn't be bothered with Sea Dreamer. The boat was as empty as when it was first acquired in 1999. The trip up had our car full of essentials, tools, coffee pot, frying pan. What would you need for a week at sea in what is essentially a new boat?

With a pandemic raging in the country the logistics of this operation were to be somewhat difficult. The boatyard would no longer allow customers to stay aboard while the boat was in the yard. Hotels are not cheap and we needed two rooms. My lovely wife Karen drove us up and will take the car home when we get started on the wet portion of the trip. I booked two rooms in a local hotel for two people for two nights sight unseen. Not the best plan. The rooms were adequate but barely. Oh well, we never had to come back.

We allowed one day to get Sea Dreamer ready in the boatyard before launching on July 24. One thing I like to do is run the engines before launch, just to make sure they start after several months of sitting. They did, best engines I have ever had. Launching went well, after a trip through the fuel dock to fill Sea Dreamers 400 gallon tanks, and a slip in Cap Sante Marina for two more nights we would depart for Coos Bay on the 26th.

While in Cap Sante Marina we provisioned at Safeway with easy to make meals and

microwaveable snacks. Hey, I didn't say it was a gourmet cruise. The weather looked good for a departure on Sunday, July 26. Our plan was to spend one night at the dock in Port Angeles and one night at anchor in Neah Bay.

Don and I got underway about 0730 bound for Port Angeles, my wife Karen, and puppy Finnegan, left to drive back to Coos Bay, a far more dangerous trip. It was an easy run down Rosario Strait, we had the ebb with us for most of the way and arrived at the dock in Port Angeles mid afternoon. Don took a walk and I sat on my ... never mind.

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Last month we left Sea Dreamer in Port Angeles after an easy run down Rosario Strait, the last easy run we were to have. We being Don Starbuck and Mike Gibbons. Sea Dreamer is a 40 foot trawler style powerboat with twin diesel engines. The weather report was deteriorating so we left Port Angeles early the next morning for Neah Bay. The Straits of Juan de Fuca are notorious for high westerly winds and steep seas. The marine weather report for the eastern half was for gale warnings in the afternoon. Gale warnings are for winds in the 30-35 knot range and/or seas over 10 feet. We were underway by 0630 with 50 miles of rough water ahead of us. As it turned out it wasn't too bad, I have been traveling the Strait for almost twenty years, it is the kind of trip where you are always holding on to something. West bound is always rough. We didn't run into real difficulties until the last few miles. The seas were building for most of the trip but we didn't get spray over the bow until near the end. We were glad to get into Neah Bay about 1330. The wind was steady at 15 kts from the west, we anchored in 25 feet with 100 feet of heavy chain and a 55 lb Delta anchor. About 1500 the wind was up to 22-25 knots and I put out another 25 feet of chain. 5 to 1 anchor rode doesn't sound like much but you have to take into account the weight of the anchor and chain combined. The chain weighs 1.5 lbs per foot so there is 187 lbs of chain plus 55 lbs of anchor, it takes a lot of wind to pull the curve out of it. The kind of anchor rode that requires a windlass to get it back in. Later in the afternoon I watched a small boat dragging its anchor before finally giving up and leaving the anchorage, it can happen. I set my tablet anchor alarm for 200 feet and went to bed. By morning the wind had died off, after a delicious meal of microwaved breakfast sandwiches we were underway on the last leg of our trip. This was to be non-stop down the coast of Washington and Oregon to Coos Bay, and should take about 48 hours. Neah Bay is 5 miles east of Cape Flattery, there

are also small islands and rocks to get around before you turn south. The locals go through a passage between the rocks, I tried it once, now I go out to the buoy. Usually getting to the buoy and turning south is a relief from slogging to windward, this time it didn't make much difference. It was looking to be a choppy trip. On the good side, with no fog, it was one of the few times I could see the cape as I went around it.

It is not unusual to be twenty miles offshore and be able to leave a coffee cup on the table. This was not one of those trips. Learn more next month as I dodge shipping and fishing boats in the middle of the night, and we will get to those whales, stay tuned

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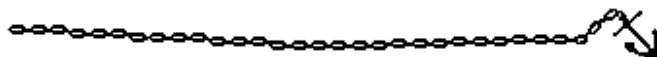
Finally, the whales. I almost always see whales at least once on this kind of trip. This time we saw whales at least a dozen times, mostly smaller Minke or Sei whales. Don was on the helm on the second afternoon and shouted "Hey, Hey" I thought maybe the stress had finally gotten to him, I jumped up to see a Humpback whale breaching dead ahead. He came out of the water at least 4 or 5 times. It was one of the highlights of the trip and only the second time in 20 years I've seen a Humpback breach.

I took the night shift about 5pm, and settled in for a long night. I wasn't disappointed, finding the fishing fleet out of Greys Harbor around 2300 provided some distraction. The fishermen like to cluster together and drift overnight. By cluster I mean a few miles between them. Still makes it interesting to avoid them. Usually there are between 8 and 12, this time there were only about 6. I also ran into some traffic about 15 miles off the Columbia river at 0200 There is almost always shipping either coming or going in that area. I always try to stay at least a mile away, I am a small boat with small lights in a big ocean, I will go a long way out of my way to avoid someone that probably isn't even standing a proper watch. In any case we got through with no problems.

We made good time with the wind and seas behind us and got into Coos Bay about 2300 on Wednesday the 29th. Don had made a comment earlier about the boat feeling like it was planing, something you don't do at 8 knots. After we got tied up I noticed the bow was at least a foot higher than it should be. I didn't know what was going on until I got back to the cockpit and discovered the dinghy full of water. I don't know why or how it happened but it probably added at least 800 pounds to the stern. Don is tall with long arms, he was able to reach the plug and we got the water out so we came off

"plane". I am still scratching my head over it. Overall it was a good trip and we made good time, but it was tiring. Sea Dreamer is in her slip, the same one she left 4 years ago, it's good to be home. Don was excellent crew, doing more than his part and I am grateful for his assistance with the last trip Sea Dreamer is making. She is going up for sale to a younger adventurer with more stamina than I have.

*Cdr Michael Gibbs, JN*



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