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S/V ASTRAEA

DEPARTING SAN FRANCISCO ENROUTE SAN DIEGO AND THEN TO THE CHESAPEAKE BAY IN MARYLAND.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2009

Engine out and disassembled

After almost two months since hearing a problem in my new Westerbeke engine the engine has been removed and disassembled in the diesel shop. It turns out it was NOT what I expected. It was not a bent rod or a bad rod bearing as four mechanics had thought. The noise was a result of the 4th cylinder only occasionally firing due to serious corrosion. The 3rd cylinder was not much better. Also, the entire interior of the engine was full of carbon and gunk due to incomplete combustion caused by excessive backpressure. The damage is the result of the cumulative process of water intrusion through the wet exhaust system since the engine was installed.

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YACHT ASTRAEA HOME PAGE

The engine is basically destroyed and beyond economical repair.

The engine was laid out at the diesel shop in Chula Vista like something from "CSI Diesel". All the parts laid out for inspection, analysis, and photographing. What an ugly mess. The poor combustion and the heavy salt water backflow had left it black and gooey and rusted all through the interior.

It could be worse. I am just thankful that I detected the strange sounds from the engine the week before I was scheduled to sail with my crew to Mexico in the Baja Haha. I am thankful that I made the decision not to leave port until the problem was resolved. Had I not taken these actions then I would probably be sitting in Mexico with an engine that is totally destroyed, an improperly designed exhaust system, and far from people who could help me resolve this problem.

Here are some pictures of the engine removal. It was must easier than I expected. Three men had the engine out and on the dock in about 2 hours. I was really surprised. However they were very experienced professionals and knew what they were doing. That always helps.



LINK

Click here

www.yachtastraea.com
to visit Astraea's website for information on the Cheoy Lee 41 and the recent extensive refit of Astraea in preparation for extended blue water cruising.

BLOG ARCHIVE

- ▶ 2010 (4)
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LINKS TO PHOTO ALBUMS

Click on the below links to visit sailing photographs.

**June 2009 Solo Sailing
from San Francisco to
San Diego**

SAILING VESSEL ASTRAEA

Here is the engine being disconnected from fuel, water, cooling, shaft, etc. and prepared for lifting.



Lifting the engine out of the engine compartment, which is below the cockpit sole.



Cheoy Lee 41 Sail Plan

CHEOY LEE 41 SAILING
VESSEL "ASTRAEA"

Astraea's hull number is 3670 (CHLo36700481) and her construction began at Cheoy Lee Shipyards in Hong Kong on September 4, 1979. She was sold through Jack Barr Yacht Sales and delivered on April 7, 1983 to San Francisco to her first owners.

Astraea underwent a complete 14 month refit at Svendsen's Boatworks in Alameda, California, which was completed in December 2008.

Details of the boat and her refit can be seen at Astraea's website at
<http://www.yachtastraea.com/>

Cheoy Lee 41 Ketch
Specs
LOA.....
40'9"
DWL.....
32'6"



The engine resting on the cockpit sole and ready to be manhandled aft to beneath the companionway.



Beam..... 12'6"
 Draft..... 6'
 Sail Area Ket..... 835 sq ft
 Displacement..... 22,000Lbs
 Ballast..... 8,700Lbs
 Fuel 75 Gal
 l*Water..... 130 Gal

ABOUT ME



ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA

Most of my life has been associated with the sea. I learned to sail at the US Naval Academy when I was a midshipman where at the age of 17 I had my first sailing lessons during "plebe" (freshman) summer on small wooden sailboats without engines. Over the next four years at the Naval Academy as part of the Naval Academy Sailing Squadron I sailed and raced beautiful 41 foot Luders yawls throughout the Chesapeake Bay. After graduation from Annapolis I spent 21 years as a Surface Warfare Officer, retiring at the rank of Commander (O-5). During those 21 years I spent 14+ years at sea and traveled throughout the world on a number of naval warships in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Persian Gulf,

The engine comes up through the companionway. The end of the boom is being used as a lifting point for the hoist.



The engine, without the transmission, is swung out over the pier using the main boom as a crane.

literally travelling every major area of the world. After the Navy I entered the corporate world in the field of Information Technology. In 2005 my new career took me to San Francisco where I renewed my long relationship with the sea by buying Astraea, my Cheoy Lee 41 ketch. As of December, 2008, I retired early and began preparations for extensive cruising beginning in October 2009.

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)



The engine is apart and layed out in the diesel shop like something from "CSI Diesel Engine". It is apparent that there was serious water intrusion form the wet exhaust system and also incomplete combustion due to excessive backpressure.

The engine is ready for the boatyard to inspect. Now I wait and see if the boatyard will accept responsibility for their work. I trust they will.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 12:07 PM 3 COMMENTS:

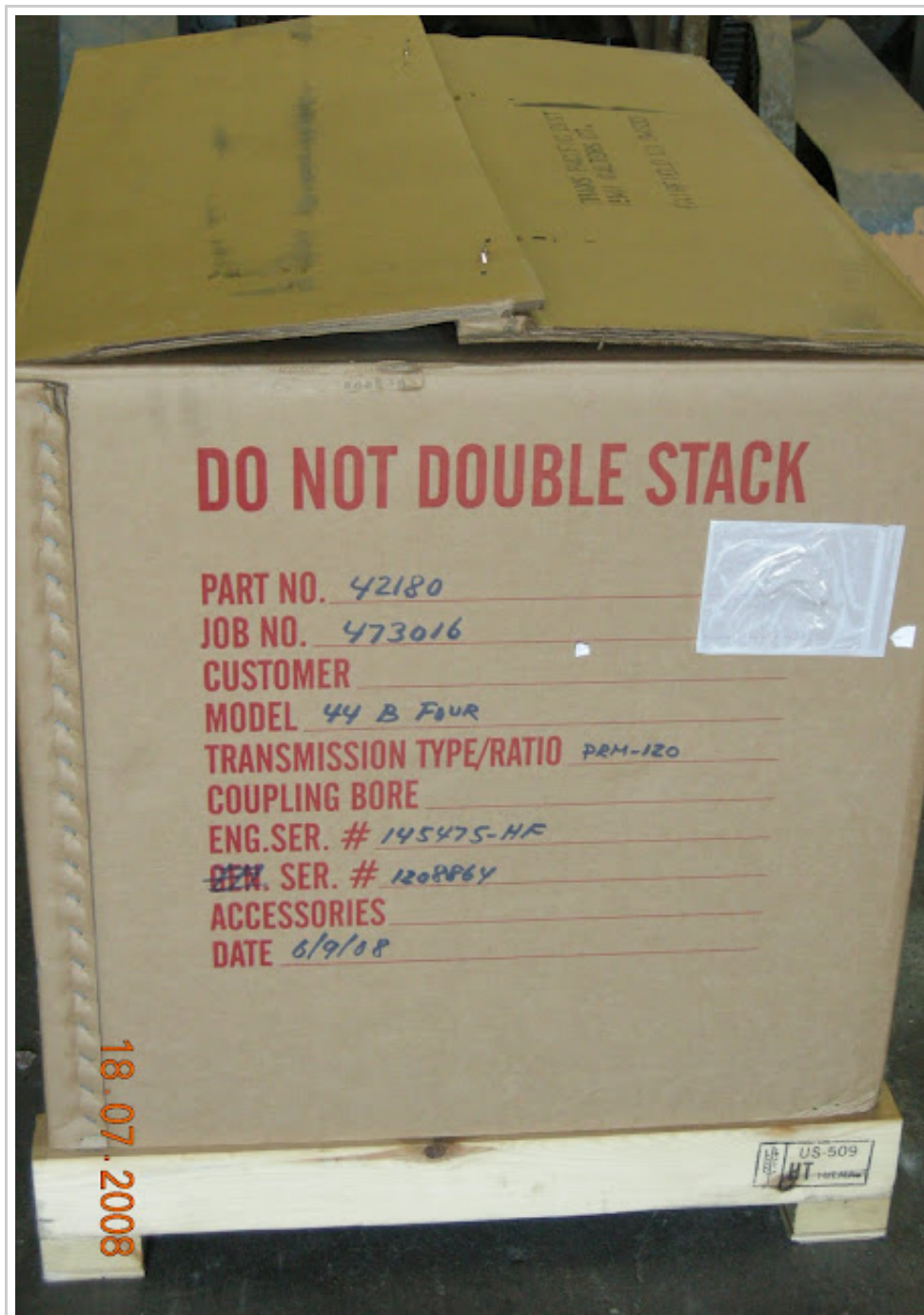
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2009

\$40,000 Toast

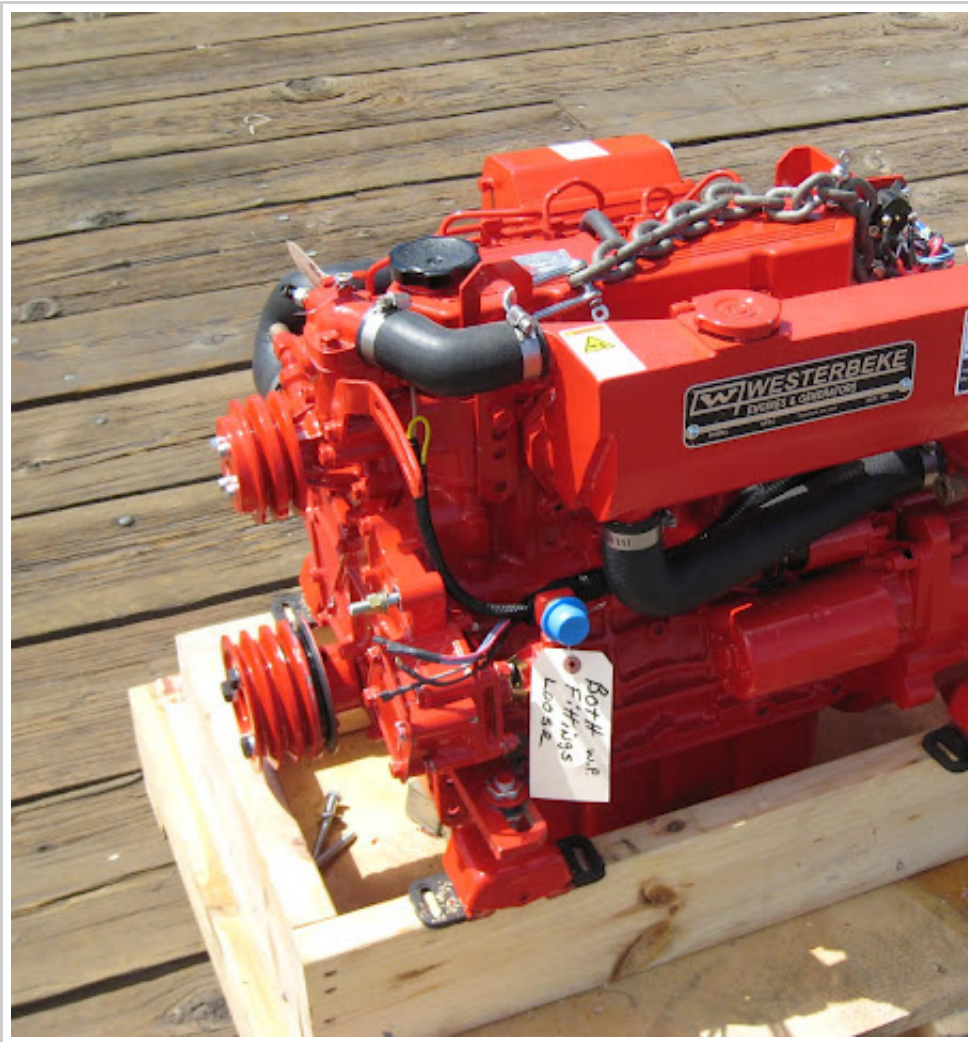
The mechanic from A to B Marine came on Friday. This was the third master mechanic and their fourth trip to the boat over four weeks of waiting. This time they did a pressure test of the cooling system, which held at 14psi and passed. They then did a compression test and this showed a compression problem with cylinder four. The theory is that the rod bearing, rod connector, or something

else in cylinder four has failed, resulting in metal particles scoring the cylinder lining. According to Richard Rock, one of the owners of A to B Marine, this engine is toast. So now I have this big new red Westerbeke engine, which only has 180 hours on it, which cost about \$14K+, and which cost another \$22K-\$26K to have professionally installed, and it is worthless. Also, plans for Mexico and the South Pacific this year are looking grim unless somebody steps up to the plate and takes care of this under warranty QUICKLY. The Westerbeke Warranty is a full parts, labor and material for the first two years, and full warranty for five years. This engine has one year and only 180 hours, which is nothing for a marine diesel.

The Westerbeke reps tagged out the engine and disabled it so it could not be started and we wait, just like we have done for four weeks now. Wait for Westerbeke reps to make decisions on what they are going to do. Currently Astraea sits needing a heart transplant. A big red Westerbeke heart. Let's hope that Westerbeke stands behind their products and that this does not become some huge battle between a consumer and a big corporation.



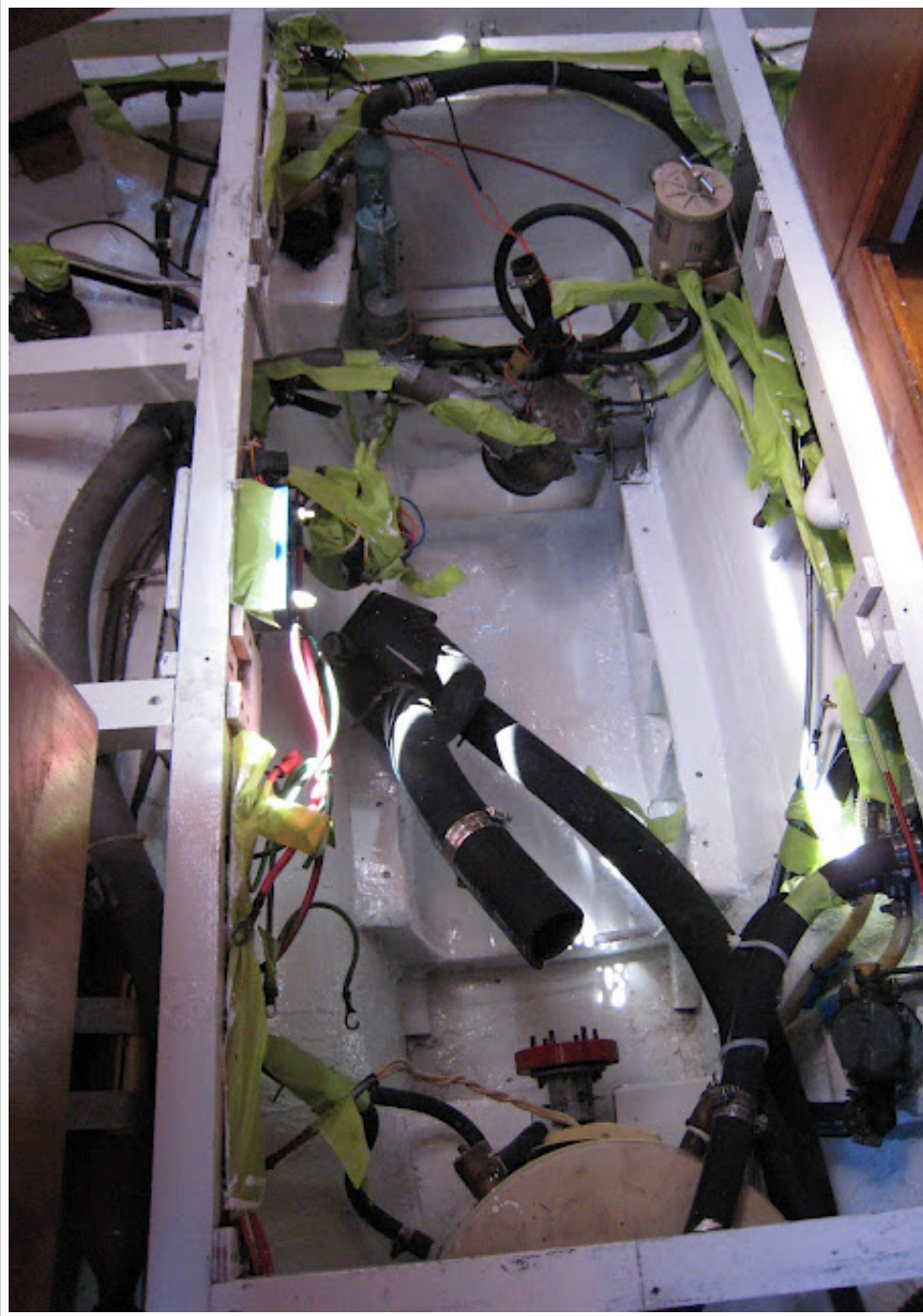
The New Westerbeke 44B4 arrives at Svendsens's. An exciting day!!!



The engine. What a beauty!



My old loyal Isuzu. She did not look like much but she performed well for 27 years. The only problem with her is getting parts, service, maintenance, etc. The new Westerbeke (theoretically) should provide years of worry free service.



The engine compartment steam cleaned, new engine base built, ready to take the new Westerbeke.



This is like a heart transplant for a boat. A major evolution. Took two master mechanics two weeks to do the work, plus lots of cleaners, painters, electricians, ship fitters, and riggers.



The new Westerbeke being lowered into place and connected.



The new Westerbeke installation complete with new high capacity alternator and dual Racor 2 micron filters. Little did I know that this \$36,000 to \$40,000 worth of new engine would be totally "toast" within 180 operating hours. I am beginning to wish I had kept the old Isuzu and had it rebuilt. I would now be in Mexico and preparing to sail to the South Pacific if I had not done this engine replacement. I would also have had a lot more money in the bank and a lot less stress in my life.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 9:11 AM NO COMMENTS:

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2009

Waiting for Westerbeke

This weekend is three weeks since I first heard the strange noise coming from my new Westerbeke diesel engine. This Monday will mark three weeks since I started calling the local San Diego distributor of Westerbeke, A to Z Marine, and asked for help. Technically we are no further along now than we were three weeks ago. After a year of planning and weeks of preparation Astraea sits all fueled and ready to sail to Mexico yet we just sit in the marina and wait..... and wait..... and wait. Everyone tells me that I am fortunate that this happened in San Diego and not in Mexico, however I am beginning to feel like San Diego is a third world country as far as getting anything done on my engine.

The West Coast Westerbeke representative told the San Diego people at A to Z that they were certain that I had a classic and apparently common case of what he called "injector knock". He said that apparently I had gotten some contaminated fuel and the contamination had gotten to the injector and fouled or damaged the injector and this was causing the knocking sound. I found this difficult to accept in that I had only purchased fuel twice since the engine was new, one time in San Francisco and the other time in Half Moon Bay. Both fueling depots were in excellent marinas and operated under brand names. Also, the new engine has a top of the line dual Racor filter system with 2 micron filters, plus there is a 5 micron filter on the engine. It did not seem possible that any contamination could have gotten through the gauntlet of those filters. However as this guy is the West Coast honcho we had to wait until he had someone come out to do another test. This test was to swap the injectors from cylinder one and four. If after swapping the injectors the knocking sound moved from cylinder four to cylinder one then it would be apparent that the problem was the injector. This would simply require the injector to go to the injector shop for inspection and repair or replacement. Simple.

However Thursday the A to Z Marine people told me that a third master mechanic specializing the Westerbeke engines was coming to the boat on Friday morning to swap the injectors for this test. I drove to San Diego the night before in order to be there when they arrived. As promised the mechanic, Roger, showed up on Friday morning and swapped the injectors. He then bled the engine fuel system of air and then we started the engine. Unfortunately swapping the injectors resulted in no change in the engine noise. The knocking was still coming from cylinder four.

In three weeks we have had three master mechanics sent by the Westerbeke reps come to the boat and do tests. All three have now come to the same conclusion,

that cylinder four has a bad rod bearing, bad rod connector, or other serious problem in the cylinder that, if not corrected, will result in throwing a rod through the side of the engine.

A to Z Marine promised to get back to me late last Friday (which they did not) or this coming Monday with further guidance from the West Coast Westerbeke rep. I am beginning to worry about how long this is all going to take to just get authorization to fix this problem. I have requested a new engine. If this engine failed at 180 hours with a bad bearing then what is to say the other bearings will not also soon fail? Also, trying to repair this engine would be a major job, much more complicated than just a swap out for a new engine. The engine would have to be disconnected, lifted off its engine mounts and up into the main salon, and then disassembled, inspected, repair parts obtained, engine reassembled, lowered back into place, reconnected, and tested. I would have very little faith in the engine after having it all disassembled and reassembled, therefore I want a NEW ENGINE!

I am anxious to get this whole project quickly started as every day of delay is another day in the Mexico cruising season lost forever. Also, I have missed the Baja Haha, which I had been anxious to be in for the past year; I lost my crew, and they lost their airline tickets back from Mexico. I have also lost my non refundable marina deposit of \$600 for LaPaz, and my ticket back to Palm Springs from Cabo for the holidays. Lots of plans and lots of dollars have been lost due to this engine failure. Counting additional marina fees in San Diego, lost deposits, lost airline tickets, wasted Mexican insurance fees, etc., so far this little debacle has cost me about \$4000 in direct costs, not to mention the loss of cruising time..... which is priceless.

What is really frustrating is that I spent \$40,000 for this new engine just so I would not have to worry about problems like this. I bought Westerbeke due to their excellent reputation and my experience with them in the Navy. To have this happen is disheartening and disappointing, to say the least. To see what this entailed click here for pictures and description of installing this new Westerbeke engine.

I am attempting to be patient and polite, however three weeks have passed and I have gotten nowhere other than three different mechanics coming to the same conclusion. If something definitive does not happen soon then I am going to have to decide what step to take next. I am still hopeful, however, that Westerbeke, who has been in the marine diesel business since 1937 and is an American company, will step up to the plate and do what is right: move quickly to fix a serious problem with an very expensive engine that is still under full warranty.

Weserbeke, please do the right thing!!!!

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 4:21 PM 2 COMMENTS:

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2009

Engine problems delaying departure for Mexico

Well, it looks like for Astraea and her crew the Baja Haha has become the Baja Boo Hoo. We are not going to be able to leave on Monday October 26th as scheduled.

I had not posted a blog update for the past week as I have been working day and night getting Astraea ready to leave for Mexico along with the other 190+ sailboats taking part in the 16th annual Baja Haha regatta from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas. The "to do" list was almost complete, the "buy" list was complete, and we were ready to head South to Mexico. Then, last Sunday, it happened. I started the engine to do routine engine checks and to warm up the transmission in order to change the transmission fluid. I heard this rather distinct metallic noise coming from the engine. It was a noise that I knew was not there before. It sounded like something was loose on the engine and rattling or banging against the engine. I checked every part of the engine and could find nothing loose, no oil leaks, nothing apparently wrong with the engine.

Now this was NOT expected as the boat has a brand new Westerbeke engine that was installed last year by the boatyard in Alameda and the engine has less than 180 hours on it. That is not even broken in for a new diesel. I called the Westerbeke dealer in San Diego first thing Monday morning and was told, of course, that they were "very busy" and would "try" to get someone out to listen to it. I told them that it could be nothing, but that I was not willing to go to sea on this nearly 800 mile trip without an experienced mechanic inspecting the engine.

Finally, four days later, on Thursday afternoon, the mechanic arrived. He turned out to be a very experienced master mechanic with 30+ years of experience. This guy knows diesels. He listened and started doing what I had done, looking for something loose on the engine. He then proceeded to open each of the air injectors and when the air injector for cylinder #4 was opened the metallic clanging noise stopped. This was not a good sign. In fact it was a very bad sign. The mechanic looked a bit concerned and said he would return on Friday afternoon with some special instruments. I could see our underway date for Monday starting to fade.

On Friday the mechanic showed up with a second mechanic and some sound

isolation devices. He also conferred with one of the mechanics at the boat yard in Alameda, Svendsen's, who installed the new engine. The analysis was not good. It appeared that there was a bad rod bearing, rod, or rod connector in cylinder #4. Continuing to run the engine would soon result in throwing a rod through the engine block and destroying the engine. The mechanics took an oil sample and departed, and I called my crew to give them the sad news that we were not going to make it.



The guilty party. New Westerbeke looks beautiful but apparently has a mechanical flaw

Everything now is in limbo. We are waiting for the oil analysis results on Wednesday, and then the dealer will talk to Westerbeke about doing the warranty work to repair the engine. Fortunately the engine is so new that it is still under full warranty for parts and, most importantly, labor. I

have my fingers crossed that Westerbeke will come through on this without a lot of hassle and red tape as the repair is likely to be extensive. The mechanic said that the engine will have to be disconnected, lifted out of the engine compartment, disassembled, repaired, reassembled, lowered back into place, and then reconnected. I have no idea, none, nada, when the work will start nor how long it will take.

After a year of waiting, and weeks of preparation, and all of the excitement and anticipation leaving next Monday I was surprised to find that I was not really angry nor frustrated or really upset, much. I was primarily relieved that this happened in port in San Diego and the engine did not throw a rod 50 miles out off the coast or in some small village in Mexico. That would have been a much more difficult situation.

Meanwhile I am back home in Palm Springs doing what I do not do well.... waiting. Once the repairs are authorized and scheduled then I will start to look for probably one crew to go with me to Cabo and LaPaz, Mexico. Or, perhaps, I may decide to single hand her down there. We shall see what unfolds once I know what is happening.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 3:31 PM NO COMMENTS:

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2009

Update via satellite

This is a test of updating my new blog page via my satellite phone. If this shows up on my blog page properly it will mean that I can blog from anywhere in the world via my Iridium phone, a modem, and my tiny little Acer laptop that is set up to work with the Iridium satellite phone.

This gives me some pause as I sit here and contemplate all of this technology and the pace that technology is moving. When I hit the "send" button on my laptop this e-mail will transfer from my laptop via a modem to my Iridium 9505A satellite cell phone, a portable phone that looks like a large cell phone with a one foot antenna sticking out the top of it. When I click send on my e-mail interface the cell phone will lock it's signal onto one of the 66 Iridium satellites orbiting the earth, broadcast my blog entry into space to the satellite where the satellite will then send then beam the message back to earth to the Iridium land network. This e-mail will then pass through countless switches and routers as it connects to the Internet, and then post on my blog. This will all happen in a few seconds, probably a few milliseconds.

Amazing this day and age we live in. When I graduated from the Naval Academy and went to sea for the first time in 1972, the words "laptop, e-mail, blog, Internet", were not even in the vocabulary. I can also remember as a child when the Russians launched the first satellite into space, Sputnik, in October 1957. I stood outside with my grandmother and like millions of other people looked up in the sky at night to try to see this thing flying overhead in space.

Now, 52 years later, which is a long time relative to our lifespans, but a mere blink of the eye in the history of mankind, I am using all this technology and these gadgets to do easily what would have then been the subject of science fiction. A hundred years ago it would have all been called magic. Yet we take it all in stride. Could even DaVinci have dreamed of this type of consumer technology?

It is easy to become jaded in our age of technological miracles. If however we stop and think about it, wow, it is really in fact quite miraculous.

Now, if I can just figure out how to post on Facebook via satellite! So totally kewl.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 8:02 AM NO COMMENTS:

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2009

Three weeks and counting!!!!

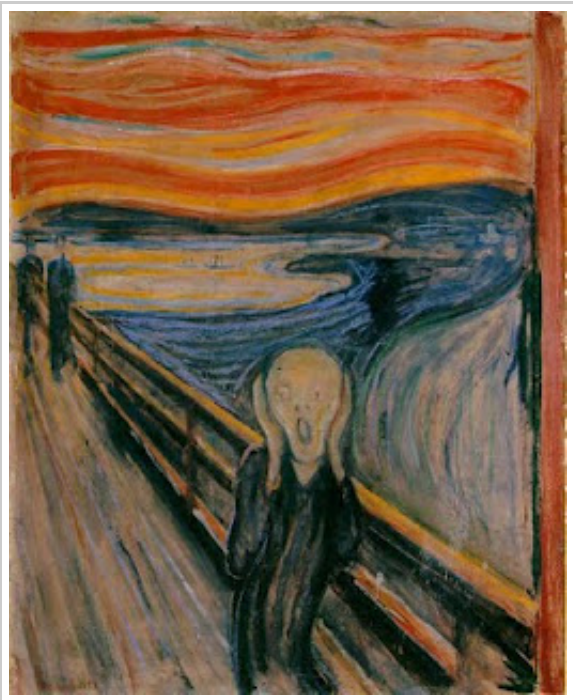
It is hard to believe that it is only three weeks to go until time to cast off the lines and sail *Astraea* 760 miles to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Last week I flew to Little

Rock to see my mother and sister and attend my 42nd (yikes) high school reunion. Then this past Tuesday it was back to the boat to get some work done. Time is getting short and I am starting to freak out! How will I ever be ready!!!!

However right now it is Fall in San Diego and the weather is changing and it is absolutely beautiful. The mornings are foggy, the days bright and sunny but cooler. The nights are getting downright chilly, soqn in rhw loq 70's. Brrrrr.

There are so many things that I want to get done before leaving, but time is getting short therefore I am starting to prioritize those jobs which really need to be done before leaving from those that I can do once in Mexico.

The reefer and freezer are working



How much time is left???

perfectly. I have been purchasing all the last minute "must have" items like dinghy wheels (who ever heard of wheels on a boat, but yes, they are necessary in Mexico), spare parts for the engine, and all those other necessities that may be needed once extended sailing begins.

This week I was able to connect the new salt water pump at the galley sink to the thru hull, fix the leak on the sink in the head, install three 12V fans, and complete a few other small but important jobs. It seems like

every project on a boat takes much more time and money than is planned.

I brought all the upholstered cushions from the main salon of the boat to Palm Springs to clean them. They have several years of sun tan lotion, sweat, salt water, wine, and other things on them and are a bit musty. Today I set them out by the pool in the Palm Springs sun and cleaned them with an upholsterey cleaner device from Rug Doctor. I cleaned them three times as the first pass produced disgustingly dirty water, the second pass light brown water, and it was not until the third cleaning that the water from cleaning the cushions showed that the cushions were actually clean. It is amazing how dirty these chusions had gotten.

Some people poke fun at my "flower tapestry" upholstery. I like it a lot. It reminds me of the amazing flowers that I saw in French Polynesia back in the Spring of 2008 during my month sailing there with Modern Sailing Academy. Most modern boats have blue ultra suede or faux leather that looks great in the showroom but would not necessarily hold up well under the conditions normally found on a cruising boat.

When Dave and Ingrid lived aboard Astraea Ingrid made the upholstery. Ingrid is a master seamstress and she did an incredible job making these cushions. She even perfectly matched the complex pattern at every seam. The fabric itself is thick and bulletproof. When I had new cushions made for the quarterberth and the v-berth those four relatively simple cushions and the upholstery for them cost \$3200. I cannot imagine how much it would cost to try to reproduce Ingrid's work. She said that that making these was so labor intensive that she almost got carpal tunnel syndrome. Now after a thorough cleaning and sitting in the Palm Springs sun they are clean and bright and ready to go back aboard.



Cabin cushions from Astraea drying
in the sun at the house in
Palm Springs after three
cleanings with a Rug
Doctor upholstery cleaner.

I am home in Palm Springs for this week and will be back in San Diego in a week to do the final preparations, provisioning, fueling, cleaning, and stowing of gear in preparation for getting underway. Will I be ready to leave on October 26th? Probably not. Will I leave anyway, definitely yes.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 10:33 AM NO COMMENTS:

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2009

Thoughts on cutting the mooring lines

I am having thoughts about how it is getting close to time to cut the mooring

lines. Everyone tells me that getting underway that first time, casting off the ines for cruising, is the hardest part. I had a small taste of that when I left San Francisco in June bound, solo, for San Diego. However I knew that it was going to be more than four months before it was actually time to leave for Mexico and the first step of extended cruising.

That four plus months is now down to five weeks. Where did the summer go? Well, much of it went to Guatemala and working on the house here in Palm Springs. Not much went to Astraea. However she has sat patiently waiting for her turn, and that time is coming very quickly.

I was on her for a couple of days this week to do a couple of projects from the punch list of things to do before leaving. She is such a great boat. Her bilges were bone dry, no smells or mold or mildew anywhere, everything working. She is a good old girl and I am lucky she found me and I found her. For someone who has never owned a boat is difficult to describe the special relationship that boat owners can develop with their boats. It is almost as if the boat is a living breathing thing. Like many sailors I have always felt that boats have a soul. There is something very special about them. I have also always felt that there are few things than man builds that are as beautiful as a sailboat. She and I are both itching to get underway and seek out our next adventure. There is much to do before we leave, however, so now at the end of the day I sit aboard her in San Diego at the pier and think about being aboard in a warm anchorage somewhere watching the sunset and swimming and just enjoying life aboard. But there is a lot of work to do first.

On Wednesday of this week I drove to San Diego and visited all of the major boat supply stores. West Marine in San Diego is awesome, much nicer than the ones in San Francisco. I also visited Downwind Marine and the San Diego Marine Exchange, which I had been introduced to briefly by my friend Jacob of Pisces.

Thursday found me working HARD on Astraea doing a couple of high priority projects.

Refrigeration or no refrigeration is always a big issue of debate for cruisers, right up there with water makers. Astraea came with a major big time reefer and freezer installation. It is almost 20 years old, but is top notch quality from Technautics and would cost at least \$15,000 today. If I did not have such a high end system already on the boat I would just go without refrigeration, as many cruisers do - including Beth Leonard . However since it is there I might as well use it and enjoy it.

The system consists of a good sized 110V compressor for when on shore power,

and an engine mounted compressor for underway. There are two holding plates in the freezer, one being a giant four inch thick model, the other two inches thick. Together they really can keep the freezer cold. On the trip down from San Francisco the system stopped working and after some simple trouble shooting I discovered that the old Technautics analog thermostat inside the freezer box had failed. This became obvious when I removed it and connected the two wires that went into it and the system suddenly worked again. However I have found that the engine mounted system is not putting out much cooling, so I have requested a service visit from a local San Diego company. This system was removed when the engine was replaced, and it probably lost some of it's charge. I have all the tech manuals but these marine Technautics systems are so complicated that I think it best to hire a professional. Several places in the tech manuals on the instructions on how to recharge the system are big WARNING paragraphs about blowing out the seals or doing other greivous danger to this expensive system. Not worth the risk.

I called Technautics and of course they no longer offer a simple little manual analog thermostat. They now only offer a \$300 digital thermostat, which is probably ten times what the original cheapie cost back when it was new, and which will probably not last 20 years like the one that failed. I did get the new thermostat installed and I must admit it is pretty kewl. One sets the desired temperature and the thermostat provides a constant digital readout of the reefer temperature and controls the compressors. It was made to install on a control panel or in a bulkhead. I did not want to cut a hole in my teak, so I found a nice little electrical box at West Marine and used it to mount the thermostat. It did require running six wires, two for power, two for the temperature probe, and two for the compressor controllers, however it was pretty easy to do with a very long drill bit that would reach through the thick freezer walls.



Fancy new digital controller for the freezer/reefer. I installed it where it would not get wet and where I could see it easily. Excuse the sawdust. I had to drill several holes to install this thing as it has six wires involved with it that I had to run through the cabinetry.

The next project was rough on the old back. I had decided to put in a second GPS system as a backup, and to install it in my cabin where it can provide me course, speed, and position in the night, and also function as a back up anchor alarm when I am asleep at anchor. This involved installing a new GPS antenna on the stern rail and running 25 feet of coax under the cockpit. This involved removing two large anchors, and two chain/rope rode and other heavy gear from the starboard lazarette. It also involved taking up deck boards inside the boat and emptying several storage lockers. Nothing on a boat is easy. Nothing. However I like the result.



Astraea has a new Furuno NavNet system with integrated radar and GPS with a large monitor at the navigation desk and a smaller remote monitor at the helm, however this simple GPS in my cabin provides a backup and also lets me glance up when I am sleeping to see position, course, speed, and also provides a backup anchor alarm when at anchor.

The third project that I was able to complete on a very busy day, and which also was rough on the old back, was installing a salt water faucet at the galley sink. I had already installed a new faucet for hot and cold pressurized water, and also a small faucet with a Whale foot pump for fresh water when the water pump is turned off. This is important as when far from water sources it is not a good idea to have the water pump on as a leak can quickly result in pumping all the fresh water into the bilge and thence over the side. This happened to me on the shake down trip from San Francisco to San Diego. This was not big deal as I was close to fresh water sources, but out in the ocean, without a water maker, it could be a serious problem. Hence the foot pump for fresh water.

I also had decided that I needed a salt water pump at the galley sink in order to be able to reduce fresh water use. One can wash dishes in salt water and then rinse in fresh, cutting down on precious fresh water usage. Also, when cooking pasta, once of my favorite things to eat on the boat, why use fresh water and then salt it when one can boil the pasta in seawater? I had the boatyard put in a new thru hull during the last yard visit for this salt water faucet and for a possible future water maker. Here is the new faucet. It is Swedish made and supposed to be really good quality.



Anyway, here is my new salt water pump. My young friend and experienced cruiser Jacob suggested a bucket and a rope. Ah, the energy of youth. The new salt water pump is on the right. Pretty kewl! The small faucet on the left has a foot pump on galley deck and provides fresh water without the need for the water pump to be on.

This will be all the work for a while. I am heading back to Palm Springs to spend some time at home, and then making a trip to Little Rock to see my mother and sister and friend Carol. I am also attending a high school reunion. (I won't say which one!!!!).

Will be back on the boat on September 29th ready to finish the final projects for the October 26th departure!!!!

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 10:45 AM NO COMMENTS:

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

Punch list for departing October 26

Visited Astraea this past week for a couple of days to see how she fared during my time away in Guatemala. She was ship shape and bristol fashion, no problems. Ah, she is a good old boat. I am always pleasantly surprised by the lack of smells or mildew or mold or other problems. That may change once we are in Mexico. HA! Wednesday was such a beautiful day in San Diego that I decided to take her out for a quick day sail in the Bay. She had been dockside since our arrival from San Francisco in June. I really do not like getting underway from our berth in Chula Vista, the southernmost part of San Diego, about as close as one can get to

Mexico and not need a passport. In fact I can see Mexico from my kitchen window.... er, galley porthole. Anyway, the channel to the marina is long and narrow and winds through very shallow water. Also it runs right along the Navy berths at the Amphib base. Also, the marina slip where they put me is too small. I cannot even use my fenders when exiting or entering my slip it is so narrow. Also there is not enough room in the fairway to back out without several "backing and filling" maneuvers. Docking into the slip is a bit hairy too as there is no room at all for error. Just not worth the trouble to get underway. If I were not leaving for Mexico in October I would change marinas, or at least get a bigger berth.

Anyway, the day sail did not turn out to be much fun. We were about 45 minutes up the narrow channel when the engine suddenly died on me. My new engine with 180 hours on it. My \$30,000 engine! At the time it died I was only about 100 feet from a barrier with a big sign saying US Navy Property Keep Clear. Of course the current was moving me TOWARD the barrier. I did not have time to try to restart the engine, so I rushed forward and dropped the anchor. Once I was certain that I was secure and would not drift down onto the Navy barrier then shifted the dual Racor filter over and the engine started right up without a problem. Still don't know why this happened, both of the fuel filters are totally clean, but it was a bit nerve racking at the time to lose power as I was so close to the restricted Navy area. I could just see some boat load of Navy SEALs coming out with their machine guns to board me and search the boat. Anyway, all's well that ends well and we were soon underway again. However I decided that I had enough excitement for the day and headed back to the marina and had no problems. Ran the engine almost an hour at the berth with the shaft engaged to try to reproduce the problem, but everything is perfect. Must have been some air in the fuel line. The Westerbekes are self bleeding, which is probably why the engine started up instantly after this "hiccup". Mystery.

The next day I spent working on my list of things to do on the boat before leaving for Mexico. The list is so long it is a bit frustrating. I have classified tasks into Priority 1, things that must be done before Mexico; Priority 2, things to do in Mexico; Priority 3, things to do IF I decide to cross the Pacific.

I stopped by the All Roads Satellite store in San Diego and got my new Iridium 9505A satellite phone, a remote satellite antenna for it, a data interface cable, and a new laptop just for satellite e-mail. I am also going to subscribe to a satellite weather information system that will send me digital weather maps and forecasts via the phone. Up to the minute weather maps, voice, and e-mail all via satellite. So totally kewl! This type of technology was unthinkable back when I was in the Navy. It all cost me a couple of thousand dollars, but it will give me a lot of peace of mind to know that I am in voice and e-mail touch with home and the rest of the world. The phone even has it's own "Extreme" water tight hard case that is

International Orange and Floats. If I ever have to go into the life raft the phone will definitely be in my ditch bag.



New Iridium 9505A, new laptop for satellite communications, and satellite modem for the Iridium. Also a portable Sony SSB receiver. Kewl new stuff.

I have also purchased a sweet little Sony SSB receiver. So many people LOVE their SSB systems and get their ham licenses and spend hours a day on the radio. That is not me. I did not even like talking on the radio when I was in the Navy. Don't like talking on my VHF. Therefore a SSB is not me. However this Sony will allow me to listen to the cruiser nets, weather forecasts, and with the Short Wave bands, to commercial short wave radio stations.

I have ordered new LED lights for the inside of the boat. I had replaced all of the old light fixtures with LED a couple of years ago, but they turned out to be total crap. The company that made them went out of business. There is a new vendor, called LunaSea, that makes a really awesome LED fixture. I bought two and installed them as a test. They are super, bright, wonderful! I have ordered another four to replace the remainder of the cabin lights.

Also ordered mosquito netting and velcro to make mosquito nets for the deck hatches.

So many things to do and so little time left to do it! Yikes! Also the budget is getting a bit stretched so some things I would like to have are just not going to be

purchased right now.

Back in Palm Springs for a new days. When the netting and new fixtures come in will go back to San Diego to install the lights and make the mosquito nets.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 3:43 PM NO COMMENTS:

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2009

Catalina Island to San Diego - Entering Marina in Pitch Dark

Tuesday morning at sunrise I was ready to head for San Diego. When I had decided to pick an isolated little cove at Santa Catalina to anchor I had thought about perhaps staying for a couple of days in ideal solitary splendor. As you will see from my previous post this was far from an ideal anchorage. No wonder there were no other boats anchored here. Note to self: if nobody else is in an anchorage there may be a reason.

We weighed anchor with no problems and were underway by 5:50am heading to San Diego. Again, as is typical for this trip, the morning was flat calm without a ripple on the water from any wind whatsoever. Another day of motoring.

Fortunately about noon the wind picked up a bit to about ten knots, and fortunately for us it was from the South-East which meant that we were on a beam reach, *Astraea's* favorite wind position. I bent on the main, full, no reefs, let out the jib, and with a little help from the engine we were flying all afternoon at 7 - 7.7 knots. Now I had not planned this very well, and the trip from our anchorage to San Diego was actually about 80 miles, which meant that we needed the speed to get to our new marina before sunset at 8:00pm. My computations had us in the marina just at sunset, which would work out well.

Things do not always go as planned. Although we did have great winds all afternoon a couple of complicating factors came up. First, off the coast there was some huge oil tanker alongside an offshore oil rig and security boats were requiring all boats to stay at least two miles away. Of course they were RIGHT in our planned course toward San Diego. This meant that the security boats made us make a huge loop around the oil tanker, which added some delay. Also, as we approached San Diego the wind DIED. Time to douse the sails and motor. Also, as we are a small boat, I had no intention of going all the way out to sea to the entrance buoy. That was for BIG SHIPS like aircraft carriers and cruise ships. We little fellas can cut the corners. Then as we approached San Diego I read the sailing directions and it warned of heavy kelp that came out more than two miles from Point Loma, the entrance to San Diego. Now kelp feeds the fish and has some good purposes for existing, however it also fouls props and engine water

intakes. This meant a large swing out to seaward to the entrance buoy, just like an aircraft carrier. This added an hour to the trip which I had not anticipated. Lesson being reinforced: on a sailboat never depend on a trip going as planned. Schedule in delays.

Note: A major lesson was learned here. In the future when sailing from Catalina to San Diego I will plan to leave Catalina after lunch, take advantage of the afternoon and evening winds, and sail through the night to arrive in San Diego in the morning. I should have done it this way this time and would have if I were not actually getting a bit anxious to get to my new marina. Lesson learned: never be in a hurry; take advantage of afternoon winds; factor in unforeseen delays; arrive in unfamiliar ports in daylight.

Anyway, we entered the channel into San Diego at 6:30pm. We were NOT going to make it to the marina by sunset at 8:00pm. No way no how, but there was nowhere else to go. San Diego is NOT anchoring friendly and there are no places to anchor without prior arrangement. Well, I thought, another first, I will just have to enter the marina after dark.



Point Loma.

It might not be the South Pacific, but after 536 miles down the coast it looked beautiful to me!

The trip through San Diego Harbor was exciting and fun and brought back fond memories of my years here as a naval officer. Navy helicopters were overhead, boats of SEAL's (the Navy kind, not the barking kind) were zipping across the

harbor, and we passed countless US Navy ships in Coronado and National City. However the temperature was dropping, the sun was setting, and the clouds were coming in thick and dark. It was going to be a very dark night.



I spent a lot of time on one of these during my years in the Navy. Fond memories of the Navy flooded over me as I passed the many ships of the US Navy that were in San Diego and National City.



**Downtown San Diego at sunset.
Had I been a bit smarter I would be seeing this at Sunrise rather than**

sunset.**Arriving late was not a good idea.**

Joshua Slocum, my idol, was probably one of the greatest navigators of all times. He circled the globe with nothing but a sextant. He did not even have a chronometer to help him determine Longitude. Thankfully I have Furuno in my life. As we moved through San Diego Harbor I kept cranking down the range until we came to the end of the San Diego channel and entered the Chula Vista Channel. Now the words Chula Vista Channel should be in small letters, no capitals, as it is a SMALL narrow poorly lit channel with SMALL buoys with weak lights. To make it worse, in the distance is Tijuana, Mexico, which is brightly lit and obscures the small lights on the buoys. Also the track into Chula Vista takes several hard turns. It was pitch black. It was cold. Amazingly the Furuno GPS was accurate to within feet, as each time I passed a buoy it was right there on the GPS screen just where it should be. When I purchased the Furuno system I thought about whether I should put a second repeater at the helm. It added a lot of extra costs. In retrospect it was worth it. Without the GPS I probably would have been aground outside Chula Vista somewhere.

I slowed to five knots, then three knots, as we wound our way along the sinuous course through the chula vista channel. We found the entrance lights to the marina. Now we were in the marina. Now, where was our assigned dock, C-36? So close but yet so far. Where was our little spot in this huge harbor of several hundred dock spaces? I made several circles in the marina while using my spotlight to try to find some markers at the end of the many rows of docks to show me which was C dock! Of course there we NO MARKERS of any kind. Fortunately luck was with me and a police boat came in as I was circling. I called to them asking them if they knew where C-36 was and they shined their spotlight on the dock and showed me where I was to go. Thank you harbor police!!!!

With my heart a bit in my throat I turned down the fairway, praying that this was in fact the right channel and that there would be an open slip where it was supposed to be. It was dark. Very dark. Pitch black dark. Note that boats do not have headlights. The only headlights on a ship are the lights in the "head". (Old Academy joke). Now these fairways are MUCH narrower than what we had in San Francisco. Much more narrow. I was actually very concerned about making my turn tight enough in the dark to line up properly with the slip. However once more luck was with me and we turned just right and were headed directly into the darkness of the slip when a voice yelled. "STOP! STOP! My dinghy is in this slip." The guy who had the next slip did not know I was arriving and had left his dinghy and motor in my new slip and was frantically waving his arms. Now I was

committed to entering the slip at this point. There was no going back. I stopped halfway into the slip and we quickly agreed that he would move his dinghy to the side as far forward as possible and I moor at an angle in the slip. I was not about to leave the slip and go circle around again while he moved his dinghy. Luck had allowed me a perfect approach under very difficult conditions and I was not going to press Lady Luck into doing it for me twice in a row.

So, at about 9:00PM I was moored in slip C-36 at CYM Chula Vista. *Astraea* and I had completed 536 miles together. There were many firsts for me in this trip, many of them you can read about in this journal. I had made my first single handed trip under sail. I had learned to dock *Astraea* single handed and had done so several times. I had single handed moored to a buoy - twice. I had anchored in windy conditions with rough seas. I had rounded Point Conception, the "Cape Horn of the Pacific", at 8.5 knots in 25 knots of wind on a broad reach without an accidental jibe. I had been skipper, deck hand, cook, navigator, mechanic. I had stayed awake and alert as long as 36 hours, sailed through the night twice. I had learned to raise and lower and reef and unreef the sails by myself. I had entered a strange, crowded marina in pitch dark and safely docked in my assigned slip. I must say that sailing my own boat 536 miles, single handed, down the California coast, and doing it safely and successfully is a real feeling of accomplishment.

Astraea and I have come a long ways since that day in July, 2005, when Bob and I got underway for the first time with her and ran aground in Emery Cove within the first five minutes. I kept thinking of all that I had learned from my sailing instructors, Suzette Smith and John Connolly of Modern Sailing Academy. They gave me the skills and knowledge and courage to undertake this trip and to finish it safely. Having this trip behind me I now realize that I not only learned a lot about sailing and about *Astraea* on this trip, but I realized that I still have a lot more to learn.

Sailing a well found boat like *Astraea* is sheer joy. The feeling of flying through the water on one's own boat with only the power of the wind is a a natural high. As I rounded Point Conception at 8.5 knots in 25 knots of wind the feeling of accomplishment and joy literally brought tears to my eyes and as unsophisticated as it sounds I found myself yelling into the wind, "Yee Haw!!!".

To have faced the challenges of sailing the California coast alone, when there was nobody else around to whom to turn, is a true feeling of achievement.

A trip of 536 miles is an hour in an airplane, a full day in an automobile. Along the coast of California in a small boat it is an adventure. Doing it alone: priceless.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 3:47 PM NO COMMENTS:

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2009

Channel Islands to Catalina Island - Sleeping on a Mechanical Bull



Channel Islands Harbor. Not necessary a place to revisit.

Saturday the weather had been a bit overcast, but sunny in the afternoon. Sunday morning at 5:30am as I started the engine to leave Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard the sky looked ominous. Dark clouds were on the horizon to the North and the wind was brisk inside the harbor, unusual for early morning. We backed out of our dock at 5:50am and headed for the harbor master dock. My favorite time of day, early morning, but Oxnard was not like some of the earlier ports where my companions of the morning were seals and ducks and egrets and pelicans. Channel Islands Harbor is really an overcrowded harbor with a lot of poorly maintained boats that I think are really used for floating platforms to drink beer and watch TV. Not really a place that appeals to me in the least.

The harbor master office, a very professional office here, had the red flag flying in the brisk wind, the flag that means "Small Craft Warning". Fortunately the wind

was blowing us onto the harbor master dock and there were no other boats there, therefore we were able to easily get alongside and get our lines over. I was wearing my foul weather gear and anticipating some heavy weather sailing. For a brief moment I actually had a thought of staying an extra day to wait for the winds to die down, but then I realized that most of my trip had been with very little wind and what I had wanted was enough wind to actually sail! Now I had PLENTY of wind, so no time to be timid. Time to sail and sail fast! Also, I had already been in beautiful downtown Oxnard for three nights and that was more than enough. I was rested and ready to go.

At the Harbor Master office the officer on duty appeared surprised to see me so early in the morning. "You sure you want to head out into this?" he said. "Gonna be rough going out there". I assured him that I was ready to go and that I felt up to handling the weather. After all, I thought, it was really no worse than the weather that we were accustomed to in San Francisco. It is said that if one can sail in San Francisco Bay, one can sail anywhere. There is a measure of truth to that.

The officer stood up and looked out at *Astraea* at the pier, her flag snapping in the brisk 15-20 knot wind. "Yep," he said, "that's a perty fine rig ya got there". I agreed that she was a "fine rig" and quite up to handling the local weather.

As we headed out the breakwater at 6:20am I did have a few second thoughts as the waves were about six feet high and the frequency of just a few seconds. The wind was about 20 knots. To raise the sails one has to head into the wind, which of course normally means to head into the seas. Because of the height of the waves I put on more speed than usual and set Eloise to head us directly into the wind and seas. The waves were breaking over the bow and the wind was howling and the horizon was dark with ominous heavy clouds. I had asked for winds, and here they were! Having rounded Point Conception, however, I felt somewhat "seasoned" and confident in my ability to get the sails up and head toward Catalina. Hopefully with some good wind!

I left the cockpit with "Eloise" the auto pilot in charge of the helm. I was wearing my foul weather gear, PFD, harness, and safety harness hooked to the "jack lines", which would keep me from falling off the boat if a wave were to hit me or I was to lose my footing on the pitching deck. Due to the high waves that we were taking directly on the bow *Astraea* was definitely pitching. The main went up quickly with no problem, double reefed, and I carefully made my way back to the cockpit, disengaged the autopilot (Eloise), cut the throttle and headed toward Catalina. The wind was on our starboard quarter. I let out the jib and we

were off under green sail power. As luck would have it, over the next couple of hours the sky brightened, the seas settled, and the wind died down to less than five knots. We had a long run to make, about 64 miles, and were going to anchor in one of the secluded coves on Catalina, which I really did not want to do after dark, therefore once again I engaged the "iron jenny" and we motor sailed through most of the day at 5-5.5 knots. I guess I used up my allotment of wind at Point Conception.

It was a quiet sail and we did not encounter another boat for the entire trip except for one rusty derelict old metal fishing boat flying a Canadian flag that refused to observe the rules of the road and forced us to jibe to miss colliding with them. They were the "give way" vessel but as they passed close ahead of us with me busy jibing to avoid hitting them the guy on the bridge came out and looked at me and shrugged. I am beginning to think that Navy ships and *Astraea* are the only vessels that know and observe the rules of the road. Otherwise it is just the "Law of Gross Tonnage", which means the bigger vessel has the right of way.

It was 5:00pm as we approached the anchorage at Rippers Cove on the North-East shore of Catalina Island. I had thought about continuing on South to the large recreational port of Avalon Cove. Avalon has several hundred moorings, and is a very structured port. One has to meet a harbor boat outside the harbor, be assigned a mooring, and then weave through the marine equivalent of a Wal-Mart parking lot to find one's mooring, and then use their special mooring system while people on power boats sit and sip their drinks and amuse themselves watching sailboats with their small engines and inability to back in a straight line attempt to maneuver bow and stern into position to moor properly. Being by myself and having not been in the harbor before I was more than a bit hesitant to be the evening entertainment, therefore I had decided to moor in an isolated cove. Also, I was not interested in going ashore for the facilities. There was also a huge cruise ship anchored outside the harbor, so this was probably a good idea as the harbor was more than likely packed with tourists.

Instead *Astraea* and I headed into a picturesque cove called Ripper's Cove. It was a small cove that offered a sand bottom (good holding) in 15-30 feet of water. It is one of the more shallow harbors on Santa Catalina and an ideal depth for us. Of course, as usual, after a day of no wind the wind began to pick up significantly about 4:00pm as we headed into the island to anchor.

If you have read of my rather frantic anchoring adventure in Cojo anchorage just south of Point Conception you will recall that in that instance where I had heavy winds and was going close to shore to get to shallow water to anchor my anchor

chain fouled in the anchor locker and I had to frantically dig out my secondary anchor and anchor rode (chain and rope), rig it all up, and use it as a backup anchoring system. One of the purposes of this trip is to learn and become a better and safer sailor. This time as Eloise the auto pilot steered us toward the cove under power I dug out the secondary anchor and rigged it into the anchor holder that is attached to the bow pulpit. A very convenient place to rig the anchor. I then pulled the chain and rope anchor rode from the lazareete and flaked it out on deck in such a way that it would properly pay out if I needed to use this anchor. When I had used this anchor at the Cojo anchorage in an emergency situation (caused by my lack of proper preparation) I had discovered that I did not have a proper "swivel" on the secondary anchor. A swivel allows the anchor to stay "set", or dug in, even as the boat moves around. While in Channel Islands Harbor I had gone to West Marine (or as we sailors call it, Tiffany by the Sea) and purchased a very nice, heavy, proper swivel.

Now, as we are approaching the anchorage I had the anchor in the anchor holder, which means it was attached to the bow pulpit and hanging over the side, ready to deploy. My anchor line was properly laid out on deck. Now I needed to run the anchor line out the bow anchor guide and bring it up and attach it to the anchor. I felt a big smug in that I was going to be ready for anything this time. Just as I was attaching the anchor rode shackle to the new swivel on the anchor Astraea took a sudden and pronounced pitch and roll, all at the same time, which is not unusual with following winds and seas. You guessed it, I pitched forward against the anchor shank, which I had raised up vertically to attach the anchor line, I hit the anchor, the locking mechanism sprang open and the anchor went over the side and into the water - without the anchor line attached. Now in retrospect it is probably a good thing that I had not yet attached the anchor line as when it fell the reaction would have been to grab the line and I could have either lost the entire line and rode, gotten it tangled in the prop, or even gone over the side myself. (Not a good idea if one is holding onto an anchor). I watched rather helplessly as my expensive anchor hit the water and, of course, immediately sank in several hundred feet of water.

Plan B. I went back to the lazarette and pulled out my new and very expensive Fortress anchor, which is kept aboard for storms or conditions where I need the very most holding power. It is one of the largest of this type of anchor, Fortress, and would securely anchor a boat larger than Astraea in gale conditions. I took this anchor to the bow and, leaving it on deck, bent it onto the anchor rode. Of course my new swivel had left the boat with the anchor, so I bent on the Fortress with just a shackle, not the best way, but it works.

At about 6:00pm we were close to the shore, about 100 yards out, and I let go the main anchor, my 45 pound CQR, which is Astraea's main anchor, which has 350

feet of heavy chain attached. This time, since I had carefully prepared a second anchor, and lost my good secondary anchor and swivel over the side, the main anchor paid out perfectly and we were anchored securely in Ripper's Cove.

The cove was sheltering us somewhat from the afternoon winds; however the seas were still heavy swells from the North, most likely from a storm that was now hitting the areas up north of Point Conception. This made for a very very rough anchorage. The experience was somewhat like one of those mechanical bulls that are in the large bars like Gilley's down in Texas. Now most people ride those bulls for just a few minutes, they don't try to cook dinner, use the bathroom, and sleep on the mechanical bull. That, however, is just what I experienced this night.

Now I am one who loves a gently rolling boat in an anchorage, like we experience at the moorings in Sausalito back in SF Bay. That makes me sleep well. Also, in Sausalito we would be secured to a mooring buoy where one feels very secure. A mooring buoy is securely connected to the bottom and is not normally going to drag and put one on the beach. However, as I explained earlier, this was like being on a mechanical bull. I cooked some pasta on my new Force 10 propane stove. This stove is made for sailboats and has gimbals so the stove stays "somewhat" level even as the boat rocks and rolls. I threw some sausage into the pasta and ate it in the cockpit from a bowl held securely between my legs while I watched the sun set. This was not exactly what I had pictured as I had planned for my solitary anchorage in a picturesque cove in Santa Catalina. My image had been one of quiet breezes, a gentle roll, a nice dinner and perhaps one small glass of wine, a warm breeze, and an evening watching the stars come out. Here I was huddled in foul weather gear, the wind at 15 knots, the seas at least six to eight feet, the period of the waves very short, and *Astraea* bucking and rolling. Add to this that my cell phone did not have a connection here. The reality of cruising was stiking home.



Ripper's Cove Santa Catalina Island. Anchored 140 yards off the beach.



My faithful Furuno watched through the night and kept track of our position off the beach as we anchored for the night. The red marks show how Astraea moved in a semicircle offshore from the anchor through the rough and windy night.

The anchor alarm was set and by 9:00pm I was confident that the anchor was holding well despite the wind and the heavy seas. I slept for an hour at a time,

getting up every hour until midnight to check the anchor and the GPS. By midnight I felt secure and slept for two hours at a time, trusting my anchor was well set and my trusty anchor alarm would wake me if we moved outside our anchor circle.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 3:58 PM NO COMMENTS:

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2009

Rest and Maintenance

Today was a day to recover physically after a rather grueling week of sailing, three 'all nighters' and two days that lasted 30 hours! We are not as young as we used to be and need a little recovery time. Also, *Astraea* needed a little maintenance.

Despite the rigors of the trip *Astraea* had done quite well thus far. This has really been a "shake down" cruise as she has not had much sailing on her since her last yard work and except for two trips from San Francisco to Half Moon Bay really not done any significant sailing since November.

One annoying problem was that the fresh water system had sprung a major leak while in Monterey. Upon leaving Monterey I discovered that the tank that was "on line" with the water pump was totally empty. I had just filled it in Monterey. Also, when I turned on the electric pressurized water system, I could hear water running somewhere but could not find where. I therefore decided to just leave the pressurized water off and use the back-up, the foot pump at the galley sink. Really more of a nuisance than a serious problem. That is unless I ended up losing all my fresh water! However I had three cases of bottled water onboard so I was not that worried.

Today I determined to find the source of the leak. I removed all the deck boards in the cabin sole (the floor of the main cabin of the boat) to expose all the plumbing. When I turned on the water pump I could hear water "gushing" and the bilge was filling with fresh water, but I could not find where it was coming from. Finally I found the source of the leak and it was under the new hot water heater, which is in the bilge aft of the engine. This was going to be a major undertaking. For the next almost two hours I disconnected all the wiring and connections to the new hot water heater and lifted it out. There was no piping below it. Then I realized that the water supply line to the hot water heater had been missing before I took it out. I fished around in the area under where the hot water heater had been located and found the disconnected fresh water hose. The culprit! However had I been a bit more observant I could have avoided the two hours of work to remove and reinstall the hot water heater. I think my tired brain was not working up to speed or I would have noticed this. The problem is now

fixed and *Astraea* once again has hot and cold running water!

Also climbed the mast and replaced the bulb in the 20 point light that had burned out. Also did some cleaning and transferred fuel from tank #2 to tank #1.

A long afternoon nap was followed by some tidying up and organizing things again. Had dinner at a local Thai restaurant and now ready to hit the rack early tonight. Tomorrow is another day of rest and maintenance and then on Sunday it will be time to head for Catalina Island, last stop before San Diego.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 4:09 PM NO COMMENTS:

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2009

Channel Island Harbor, Oxnard, CA



One of the many offshore oil rigs in the Santa Barbara Channel.

Today was a first for this cruise. There was a sun! And it was warm! Rounding Point Conception is a dramatic change from the cold and damp of Northern California to the sun and warmer temperatures of SoCal. Also, today, for the first time I put on shorts and a T-shirt. The first day without foul weather gear! In fact, in four years of sailing in San Francisco I don't remember ever sailing in shorts and a t-shirt! Definitely a welcomed change.

I had decided to bypass Santa Barbara and press on for the Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard. According to the sailing guide this is a nice, modern harbor

with plenty of facilities.

It was a long day and the highlight was definitely two more whale sightings, this time I saw one close aboard blowing water out it's blow hole into the air! Also lots of dolphins and sea birds. Once again there was virtually no wind, so the iron jenny (the engine) helped the boat along to keep us at an average of knots in order to reach the harbor before night fall. I feel badly using the engine so much this trip, but if I had not I would still not be to Monterey. All the wind thus far this trip was within 20 miles of Point Conception!

It was a long day, about 12 hours, of motor sailing. Saw no other boats but passed a number of huge offshore oil rigs. The wind picked up about five miles out of Channel Islands Harbor, but by that time I was rigging mooring lines and fenders and preparing to enter port.

By dinner time I was safely moored and was able to crash and get some much needed sleep. It had been a long week.

POSTED BY ROB OF S/V ASTRAEA AT 4:11 PM NO COMMENTS:

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009

Point Conception and Cojo Anchorage

Wednesday. Point Conception is known as the "Cape Horn of the Pacific" and can be treacherous. This is the point where the colder winds from the NW meet the warmer climate of Southern California, and where the southerly flow of the cold currents meet the northerly flow of the warmer currents from the south.

Rounding Point Conception has been a test of a sailor for hundreds of years, since the early days of the Spanish explorers. Now it was my turn.

I slipped the buoy at sunrise in Morrow Bay. It was of course overcast and chilly, the same as it had been every day except the one sunny day I was in port in Monterey. This is one of the moments that I love, however, leaving a port early in the morning at sunrise. There are very few people around, perhaps a few fishermen, and it is normally quiet and calm. I was lucky in that the current was slack, so getting underway from the buoy was easy, and I was quietly gliding down the river toward the sea and Point Conception. There were blue herons and white egrets in the early morning hunting for fish and once again nature was in all her glory.

Once again there was very little wind. I raised the sails, however as Point Conception was ahead I put two reefs in the main, but did raise the mizzen and let out the jib. I was ready. Or so I thought.

At about 8:30 in the morning as I was clear of Morrow Bay and about eight miles off shore I had my first whale sighting! Spectacular! I was sailing along and suddenly this huge black and white fin comes out of the water off my bow and this monstrous creature appears. He or she was at least as big as Astraea, probably much larger, and it was a bit frightening but even more exciting. I have always wondered how people could slaughter these beautiful creatures. However as I watched the whale with total awe I could not help but think that once in a great while a large whale takes a dislike to a sailboat and will attack it, often sinking it. Fortunately this whale seemed to be in a better mood than that and was just enjoying it's day.



There was a GREAT BIG WHALE here just a moment ago.

The seas were on my beam with large swells and Astraea was rolling much more than usual. I was glad that I had been spending a lot of time in stowing everything away securely, however there were still a few bangs and crashes coming from below. Hopefully nothing important.

It was cold. Very cold. Overcast. However there is no rain today nor is any forecasted. Hopefully this forecast would hold out and this would be my first day of this voyage without rain while underway. I was so looking forward to Southern California!

There was not much wind, so cranked the engine up to about 2200 rpm to give us enough speed to pass Point Arguello by 3pm. The area between Arguello and

Conception is where all hell normally breaks loose.

We passed Point Arguello and it was not so bad. There was maybe five knots of wind and we were actually motor sailing. However over a period of about half an hour all that changed and the wind started howling and in no time was at least 25 knots from the port quarter. Now a broad reach, or having the wind on the rear quarter of the boat, provides good speed, but is dangerous as if one does not carefully control the course of the boat the stern can move through the wind and the wind is then on the opposite quarter and, bang, the main boom goes flying across the cockpit and can actually break the boom and the controls that handle the main boom. This can be very very bad. Of course, being a fully fitted out boat, I have the latest boom brake technology to slow the movement of the boom when doing an "accidental jibe", or even intentionally jibing, however I had forgotten to rig it. Too late now. We were flying along at over eight knots, the wind howling in the rigging, *Astraea* was heeling at least 30 degrees and the water was almost up to the toe rails (the uppermost sides of the boat). The rule here is to let out some main sail to slow down the boat, but I was clutching the helm and it was taking all my concentration to keep *Astraea* on course and not jibe her in these heavy winds. What was making matters even more difficult was that the waters had become like a washing machine, with huge waves breaking all around us, mostly from astern, which was throwing our stern from side to side and making it even more difficult to control *Astraea* and keep her on a safe course. All hell had broken loose. The adreneline was flowing, and I was calling on all of my sailing experience and instruction, but I could not help also thinking "what the hell have I gotten myself into?"

This is one of those situations where the new solo sailor looks around and says, "I am on my own". There was nobody to help me. Nobody but *Astraea*. She is a great boat, and I knew that she could easily handle this if I could. I was determined to get us through this safely.

We rounded Point Conception at 8.5 knots under sail, two reefs, mizzen (which was not a good idea, but too late to take it down), and full jib. From the sailing guide I knew that there was a sheltered beach area just a few miles past Point Conception where I could anchor for the night and get out of the fierce NW winds. This anchorage, called Cojo anchorage, has been known since whaling days and is used for people to wait for the weather to be acceptable to go North, or for people to rest after coming South. I needed a place to rest. I was beat, and I did not want to sail another six hours to Santa Barbara, the nearest port, and enter there at night. I decided to turn into the shore and find this obscure anchorage.

Now this is totally against common sense, to turn toward the shore, now with 25+

knots of wind on the beam, and head at full speed toward sheer cliffs and crashing surf. It did not make sense, however logically I knew this was what I had to do. The sheltered anchorage was in there. Somewhere. The cruising guide said to look for a railroad embankment and the center of the anchorage was directly in line with a large culvert that ran under the railroad embankment. Well, what the guide does not tell one is that one has to be VERY close to the shore to FIND the damn railroad embankment. Fortunately as I was moving toward shore at full speed a large silver train passed down the coast. The gods were with me! I was able to see where it passed across the embankment and then disappeared into a tunnel. I headed for the shore with my heart pounding and my mouth as dry as cotton. If I screwed up I would find my boat and myself on the pounding surf under a huge cliff.

As I approached the shore there were no other sail boats there. This of course made me wonder, "is this the right railroad embankment"? After all the damn train runs all the way down the coast. However there was one large commercial ship at a mooring buoy near the shore. I turned into the wind, turned on the auto pilot, and wrestled down the three sails that were luffing (flapping) noisily. With the engine on I headed toward the shore and what was, hopefully, the Cojo anchorage.

I had prepared my anchor for letting go, and as I was about 200 yards from the shore I put the boat into neutral and ran forward to drop the anchor. Now 200 yards sounds like a long ways. If one is running down two football fields it is a long ways. If one is heading toward a crashing surf at the base of 200 foot cliffs it is not very far at all. I let go the anchor brake and the anchor started to fall and then - CLUNK. It stopped. With about 20 feet of anchor chain and my large CQR anchor out it just stopped. The water was 30 feet deep, so this was going to do me NO good. I was just dangling a lot of chain and anchor into the water. I tried to pull up on the anchor chain to pull it up the hawse pipe and out of the chain locker, but it would not budge. Something was wrong down below in the chain locker. I ran frantically to the cockpit, then down into the boat, and forward to the anchor locker, which is forward of the v-berth inside the boat. The anchor chain was in a huge knot inside the anchor locker. Now when one has a bunch of line, or "rope", in a knot, it is usually a matter of working with it. This is not as easy with heavy (3/8" inch) steel chain. I dragged a huge ball of fouled chain out of the chain locker and onto the deck of the v-berth and stared at it. What the hell to do now? How am I going to untangle this mess!

I realized I had better run topside and see what was happening. Fortunately the wind was blowing me away from the shore, but it was also blowing me directly toward the anchored commercial vessel. I engaged the engine and gave her full

throttle to move away from the commercial ship and toward the pounding surf, with my anchor and 25 feet of chain hanging off the bow. Also, this is an area of lots of kelp. Kelp is huge thick globs of sea grass that grows from the ocean floor and is good stuff in that fish eat it. Kelp is bad stuff in that it can wrap around propellers and get sucked up into the cooling water system for the engine and cause the engine to stop. This was NOT a time to loose the engine. There was some lee due to the protection of Point Conception, but there was still a good 20 knots, even in the sheltered anchorage. (Sheltered is a relative term).

Lesson learned. When going into a dangerous anchorage have a second anchor on deck and ready to let go. After getting *Astrea* back closer to shore and away from the anchored commercial ship I frantically dug into the starboard locker in the cockpit and dragged out a smaller anchor and 200 feet of chain and rode (thick nylon rope) that is used as a second anchor or as a stern anchor (I have aboard a total of four anchors). I dragged the anchor to the bow, bent on the anchor chain and rode, and threw it over the bow. Of course the rode then jammed in a knot and was tangled on the bow as I had not laid out the line properly for it to feed over the side. With tremendous exertion and some luck I was able to get the anchor rode untangled, and the second anchor grabbed and the anchor line tightened and we were holding. Yeah!!!! Now it was time to try to get the primary anchor out. I ran below and dragged about 50 feet of anchor chain into the main salon of the boat and was able to get it untangled. I then ran topside and was able to feed out the main anchor and 150 feet of heavy anchor chain. We were now anchored with two anchors and we did not appear to be dragging. About 200 yards ahead the surf was pounding, almost as hard as my heart was pounding! The sun was setting. The wind was blowing. It was cold. I sat there on the bow, my chest heaving, my mouth as dry as cotton, my legs weak, and I thought of my cardiac surgeon who did my bypass about eight years ago. I think we just tested out her work, big time, and I felt that it was holding. I could not remember the last time that I had put such a physical demand on my body. I vowed that I was going to learn how to do things better and try to not get myself into a dangerous situation like this again.

It was a long night. I put the GPS on anchor watch, which would alert me if the boat dragged anchor, ie moved from her anchored position. The wind was still howling and the current was strong, but I had two anchors down. I set my alarm clock for an hour and slept. I checked the anchor, the weather, the GPS, reset the alarm, and slept another hour. I woke up every hour through the night to ensure that *Astraea* was safe. It was a VERY long night.

In the early morning at first light we weighed both anchors and headed for our next port. Point Conception was astern as we headed toward the Santa Barbara channel.



Looking toward Cojo anchorage. Not an easy place to find.

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