

Dear Pops & Mom,

December 8, 2011

It has been so long since I have written you and I have so much to say I am going to have to split this into two letters. First off I hope you both are doing well. I heard from Glenda that Pops is starting treatments soon and I do hope that goes well. I wish I lived closer so I could visit you and bring you chicken soup to make you all better but Glenda says I already took care of one sick Verhoeven and that was enough. I thought that was pretty funny. At the end of October I spent two weeks in Colorado visiting Denise, Andrea, and Paul. My niece Lisa and her husband went to Africa for two weeks so I helped take care of her 5 and 8 year old boys as well as 6 year old



*Denise got a new job working for a development firm in downtown Denver. I have no idea how she gets anything done with that view! She and Andrea still love making jewelry.*



Andrea. What a handful the three were! When you are used to only having to watch one kid it is overwhelming how much attention three take. You would think they would entertain each other but NO! They fought, played, screamed, wanted to be fed, made messes, ignored my rules, and basically acted like kids. I was sure glad when the two weeks was over, the parents were home, and all the kids were back in their places! Colorado is starting to grow on me. I am glad I have this chance to spend some time there. It was one of Dales

favorite places and he really treasured the time he was able to live there. I am going to spend the month of January there. Ha, ha then we will see if I still think it is nice. Brrrr!

After Colorado I only had a few days to get the boat ready before the Baja Ha-Ha. I had to make the menu, do all the food shopping, and load everything into the boat as well as clean, organize, and make room for the crew. It was a good thing I had done so much before I left for Colorado as it made the job a whole lot easier.

One night before the race I went out for a happy hour with my friend Tiffany. We ran into a guy (Harry) who was on the Baja Ha-Ha last year.



Harry had bet me \$100 that his boat would beat my boat. We did beat him last year but he never paid up! So when Tiffany and I saw him at the restaurant we had a lot of fun teasing him about it. It was all in fun so we finally decided to bet again.... double or nothing! I could win \$200... this is a race! I better get serious!

The crew showed up on Saturday which gave us some time to go over the boat, review some safety issues, and do some last minute shopping. On Sunday there was a skippers meeting where rules are set out, questions answered, and race instructions are reviewed. This year 196 boats entered but for various reasons only about 150 started. It is very scary for some people to sail down to Mexico and that is one big reason my friends Richard and Donna put on the event. It makes people feel more comfortable among other boats, getting help on the morning nets, and checking in at roll call every morning. Once they get to Mexico and they are on their own they feel much more confident in their abilities after having done the Ha-Ha.

I hadn't found a great place to moor the boat near all the



*I'm not much for costumes but found a pirate hat & mustache*

events so we were anchored in La Playa right off San Diego Yacht Club. After the skippers meeting is the costume kick-off party. When the party was over we got permission to spend the night at the Shelter Island fuel dock. Perfect! We could charge the batteries and fridge and in the morning get fuel, dingy gas and water.

The next day the race started with a parade out of the harbor (it was even on the news!) and then an 11 am start. This year my crew were 4 sailboat racers from Portland. Eric & Kim Rimkus who race on their 30 foot sailboat in Portland and their crew Brian Lockwood and Elizabeth Reed. Everyone was under 40 and full of energy.

The race is divided into three legs. Leg 1 is 336 miles from San Diego to Turtle Bay, the second leg is 217 miles from Turtle Bay to Bahia Santa Maria, and the third leg is 164 miles from Bahia Santa Maria to Cabo San Lucas. One the first day we put up the 3/4 oz spinnaker that has been repaired so many times before. It immediately ripped about a 5 foot tear so we took it down and I sewed it... then the next day it completely blew into pieces. It has a pink panel that is very weak fabric so I am thinking of bringing down some fabric after Christmas and spending some time in La Paz where I can spread it out on that



dock and replace the panel. I need to really look it over though. It may just be a goner. It is so sad because it is so big it increases our speed from 6 knots to 7-1/2 knots. That makes a big difference when you have Harry and his \$200 right behind you!

Speaking of goners the ham radio never worked! I got it back from the ICOM factory in October and they said there was nothing wrong with it. When I hooked it up it would not send or receive. So when we got to Turtle Bay I got on the VHF radio at the morning net and asked if there was anyone in the fleet that was a ham and could help me figure out what the problem is. A guy came over to *Talion* that has a nickname "Dr. Electron" (he is very smart on anything electrical and especially on ham radios). He spent over 2 hours on the boat going through my installation and determined that I installed it OK but there is something wrong with the radio. I am supposed to ship it to his shop in San Diego and he will figure it out. YAY!

It took us 3 days and two nights to sail to Turtle Bay. We sailed all the way and didn't use the motor. On this race it is OK to use your motor (that makes a lot of those nervous and inexperienced sailors happy) but there is a stiff penalty for doing it. Once we got anchored we headed up to town to watch a baseball game between the Baja Ha-Ha guys and the Mexican fishermen in the little town's new baseball field. The Mexicans won by a long shot and it was great fun to watch. The next day there was a Ha-Ha group pot luck on the beach, volleyball, music, and great stories of the first leg. Harry beat us by 5 miles. Uh oh! We better sail faster! We started the next leg at 8 am and slowly sailed towards Bahia



*The pot luck attracts about 400 people out of the 600 in the Ha-Ha.*



*Without the watermaker Elizabeth had to have a salt water shower via the hose and a little assistance from Brian.*

Santa Maria. On the first leg we were using the generator to charge the fridge while we sailed and it worked flawlessly. On the second leg when I tried to start it smoke belled out of the engine room. I shut it off and we determined it was a loose belt. In Bahia Santa Maria I tightened the belt but when I went to start it all I got was a clunk sound like a solenoid. I banged on the starter a few times but got the same response. So now we had to idle the engine for refrigeration. Colin the mechanic will not like that! And we cannot run the watermaker (after I had spent so much time working on it) because it only runs off of the generator. Leg two was a little slower and took us two full days and one night. We finished well after midnight and anchored in the dark. Harry finished 2 hours before us. Oh boy this does not look good. We really needed that big spinnaker!

The next morning I woke up in my bunk and flipped on my little ham radio receiver. The radio only receives so at least I can hear the daily weather reports and positions of the others in the fleet. Richard was on the radio



*The party at Bahia Santa Maria*

never have to worry about me doing!

Bahia Santa Maria has no town, fuel, or shopping but it does have a few fishing shacks and a larger cooking and meeting room. The fisherman and their families put on a fish feast for our group complete with ice cold beer and a live band playing 60's rock and roll music. This event is very popular. I think the fishermen make more money from this party than they make all the rest of the year.

On the third and last leg we had little to no wind. I knew Harry would not stand for that and sure enough after flopping around for 3 hours with no wind he gave up and motored in to Cabo San Lucas. We, on the other hand, stayed out there

starting his morning net and said "There is a boat on the beach 3 miles north of us and it is *Talion*". I thought to myself... no way! Someone would have woke me up! Apparently he woke up on *Profligate* to someone telling him *Talion* was on the beach so he started his motor and headed up there to rescue me and tow *Talion* off if it was possible. On the way there he found out it was not *Talion* but a boat called *Tacion* and not a part of the Baja Ha-Ha fleet. He continued motoring up and got as close as he could for pictures for his magazine. That day 50 of the sailors in the Baja Ha-Ha fleet (including the 4 crew from *Talion*) rode in their dinghies and walked miles up the beach to help the owner of the boat remove anything of value. The boat could not be rescued. Apparently he was sailing alone, fell asleep, and ran onto the beach. Something you will



*Time for Kim to get some reading in when there was no wind*



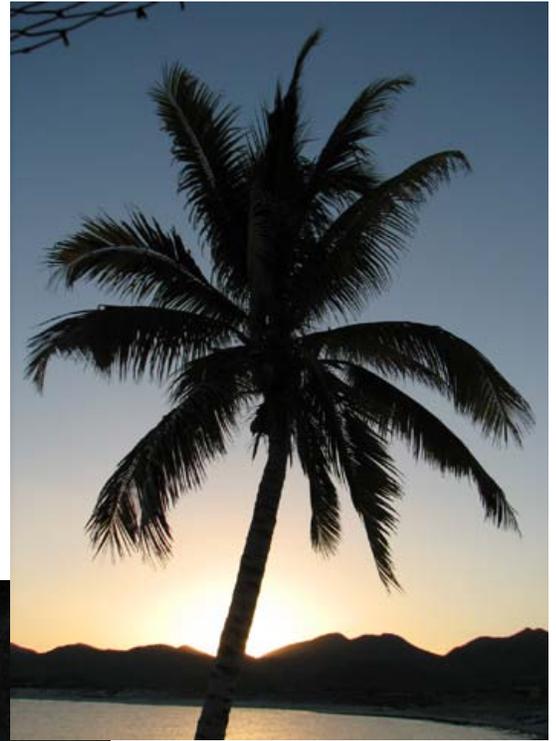
*Sunsets and more sunsets!*

for days in no wind. We were having a great time in the sun and listening to the stereo... and we wanted to win!

We sailed all the way and finally finished 11 hours before the time limit . We pulled into Cabo in the dark so I motored around while the crew slept. It was really windy so I didn't want to go to the dock until it got light. We didn't need fuel but we were almost completely out of water. We had been told that the marina was charging 3 pesos per gallon. Yikes! That's \$50 for water! But what are you going to do... so when it got light we pulled into the harbor and total mayhem. There were at least a hundred fishing boats pulling out, milling around, and trying to get to the fuel dock. There was a fishing tournament starting at 7 am. There

was no way to get close to the fuel dock so we tied up to a dock close by to wait. While we were waiting for the fuel dock to clear we filled the water tank at that dock and then got the heck out of there! We anchored just off the beach and the wind was hooting. The boat rocked and rolled all day while I checked into immigration and ran errands. That afternoon was the Baja Ha-Ha beach party at a beach restaurant right where the boat was anchored. After the party we wandered around town for a bit and then finally went to the boat for 12 hours of sleep.

We didn't break much else on the race. The crew ate more than I expected. I had enough food for all the meals but no leftovers. They drank twice what they expected so there was not one beer on the boat and only a couple of bottles of wine. We do the race on shared expenses so I am going to sit down with all of my receipts and make sure I came out OK money wise before I tell next year's crew how



much they will owe.

The last night was the awards ceremony and sure enough I beat Harry. Patience paid off! We got first in our class and Harry paid his debt right on the spot. We were also one of the only three boats that sailed the entire 717 miles.

The next day the crew moved off and I got ready for the

*The awards ceremony is very casual! It's in a parking lot behind the Cabo marina. That is Richard in shorts, t-shirt, and tuxedo jacket. Donna is in the black dress.*

next group. Three gals for the sail to La Paz. The La Paz racing group had intended to do a casual race from Cabo San Lucas to La Paz so I had recruited Shelly from La Paz, a girlfriend from Portland named Karen and another gal who doesn't sail much but cooks up a storm... Jo. They did not have many entries





in this experimental race so they called it off. There were 4 boats that had entered so we stuck together and sailed the route the race committee had intended. What fun we had. 4 gals that knew very little about each other and yakked, gossiped, and shared stories about kids, boyfriends, experiences. Karen's husband was a great friend of mine. He died of a brain tumor in 2000 just after my boat blew up. Karen inherited the moorage *Talion* was moored at and owned the houseboat Dale died in. She has been a great friend throughout the years and we have so much in common. I didn't know Jo very well but

do now. She grew up in Nova Scotia and moved to New Zealand where she met her husband (now divorced) and had her three kids. Her son Dylan was along on this race/trip on another boat. I have known Shelly for all my years in La Paz she is a great friend, has a husband Jody, neither of them drink (which I find a nice break), and she is part owner of La Paz Yachts the only boat brokerage in town. Shelly is also the race instructor that goes out with me to train people on sailing and man overboard rescue. We sailed the first day from Cabo San Lucas to Bahia Frailes. There the gals hiked up a very high hill. I stayed on the



*The whole group for a pot luck*

*Karen is on the left, with me driving, then Jo, and Shelly trimming the spinnaker*

boat for some much needed alone time. The committee had intended to have a pot luck on the beach the next day but with so few boats we invited the whole group to a pot luck on *Talion*. We fit 13 around the dinner table and everyone had a great time.

The next morning we sailed on to Bahia de Los Muertos. Where there is a huge new hotel the girls and I explored. One of the workers gave us a tour in a golf cart. It is a

development done by a gringo from Los Angeles. It is just beautiful with condos, pools, restaurants, a horse stable, golf course, tennis, gardens, all on a beautiful beach with a reef for snorkeling. On the walk back we found about 10 sunbaked baby turtles. We gathered them up and took them to the boat to revive them and then let



*We got up at sunrise to get around the corner before the wind picked up. The fancy hotel even had a stables!*



*Upstairs from one restaurant is the guys train collection. 4 gals with baby turtle to nurture... perfect!*



*A well deserved victory beer at the dock.*

them go around the boat. They were so cute. The last day was a race from Roca Lobos to La Paz. About 20 boats came out from La Paz to join us. The girls and I raced hard, flew the spinnaker, changed spinnakers when the wind died. We got second and had a great time! Time to bring this letter to a close... another will follow shortly. Been working hard on the boat with my new friend Dylan! Again, I worry about you two and especially about Pop's health issues. Please know I am thinking of you often. Love, Patsy