



CRUISING SPECIAL



DELIVERING A KADEY-KROGEN 55 FROM FLORIDA TO NORTH CAROLINA TEACHES ONE EDITOR THAT SLOWING DOWN ISN'T ALWAYS A BAD THING. BY DANIEL HARDING JR.

Rite of Passage

The night was as dark as they come. Thick cloud cover blanketed the moon and stars, making it impossible to tell where angry Atlantic swells ended and the sky began. My heels dug into the edge of the helm dash—chocking myself into the Lebroc helm seat—as 10- to 12-foot swells bucked *Olympia* heavily. My eyes labored to adjust from the dimly lit radar to the abyss of nothingness before me.

This, my first night watch on an overnight delivery, was something I had dreamed about for months prior. I envisioned standing alone at the wheel under a starry sky with the vast ocean ahead of me; it would all be very romantic. Alas, much like the movie is never really as good as the book, my fantasy passage was far—OK, very far—from reality. I had joined *Olympia*, a Kadey-Krogen 55 Expedition, from Stuart, Florida, to North Carolina in order gain delivery experience. At this moment I couldn't help but think of the old adage: *Be careful what you wish for.*

THE TRIP HAD BEGUN ORDINARILY ENOUGH. I met Kadey-Krogen's VP of sales and marketing, Tucker West, in Stuart. I've had the opportunity to meet many marine-industry executives, most of whom are pleasant in their own right, but believe me when I say, West doesn't fit the traditional mold. Standing 6 foot 4, sporting a T-shirt, sandals, and a 5 o'clock shadow, we spent the better part of Easter Sunday (the day before our departure) sitting at a waterfront bar talking about nothing but sports, friends, and family.

We would eventually make our way to *Olympia*, and our home for the next week. Walking up to her dockside, her high bulwarks and tall, reversed pilothouse made it immediately clear that this ship was designed to be at sea. Stepping through the heavy, weather-tight cockpit doors we received a warm welcome from the surprisingly spacious saloon. Dual leather seats to starboard face a large pop-up TV and settee that easily seats four. Yeah, this is going to work, I thought as I removed my sunglasses to admire the rich cherry joinery more closely. Walking down the passageway and into the amidships guest stateroom that West and I would be sharing elicited a different kind of reaction. The twin bunks are separated by about 2 feet and just placing our bags down had us bumping into one another. Our initial space concerns would be short-lived. After stowing our bags in the locker and drawers, the space proved to be a more than suitable place to crash, especially after a couple night shifts.

Rounding out our crew was Capt. Mike Warren, a man who wears an air of self-assurance that complements his white beard and glasses and John Stemke, a tall, wiry delivery captain who is quick with a smile and even quicker to offer a helping hand. As *Olympia* made her way towards the inlet, we chatted idly, sizing up one another and trying to gauge how the week ahead of us would go. As tales of past deliveries were recounted, it was obvious I was the greenhorn aboard.

As the afternoon wore on, the start-of-an-adventure adrenaline burned off, being replaced instead by the stark reality that, with seas building to 10-plus feet, we were in for a very long night. The only redeeming quality about the rough afternoon was that we had picked up the Gulf Stream about 18 miles offshore, which nudged us from 8 to 12 knots with the twin 160-horsepower John Deeres pumping steadily at 1,800 rpm.

AS SEAS SUBSIDED, a new challenge found its way aboard *Olympia*: getting into a routine and accepting that slow and easy was the new normal. For Warren and Stemke, seasoned captains both, this seemed to happen naturally. For West and me, not so much.

In the months leading up to this delivery we had both started new jobs, spent a little too much time in airport lounges, and had numer-



As special as it is watching a sunset at sea, after a long week it was Stemke crouches down and uses his iPhone flashlight during one of

ous deadlines looming just on the horizon. Today's fast-paced world had a hold of us, and its grip was tight. Spending long hours at sea with no cell service sent us pacing.

Midway through the second day, Warren announced we were diverting our course to Hilton Head, South Carolina, a move that spared us from a second night in a washing machine, but at the cost of adding another day to our already long delivery. If we had taken a vote, I know West and I would have opted to continue pushing the tough 55 on towards North Carolina.

We pulled into Hilton Head's Harbour Town Marina just as the sun began to sink behind its shop-lined shore. Nearby a musician strummed his guitar, providing a smooth soundtrack for flocks of strolling tourists. Our collective mood and morale began to shift.

"Maybe stopping wasn't such a bad idea after all," I suggested as a dockhand handed me a complimentary bottle of red wine.

"Yeah, maybe you're right," West replied.

Stemke made full use of the four-burner Viking range and stocked full-sized Jennair fridge, and treated the famished crew to a hearty meal of rib roast, potatoes, and broccoli. It's amazing the effect a hot meal and a glass (read: glasses) of wine can have on morale. Before long we were sitting around the saloon table laughing at the events of the previous day. Hindsight being 20/20, the decision to stop in Hilton Head confirmed my earlier suspicions about Capt. Warren. His calculating mind knew one of the most dangerous things at sea is neither huge swells nor passing ships but a tired and restless crew.

"Sure, we could have pushed on but that's not why we do this," says Warren, swirling the vino in his glass. "It's supposed to be fun."



STEVE STANKIEWICZ

nice watching the evening light fall upon Olympia (top). Capt. John Stemke crouches down and uses his iPhone flashlight during one of

The next morning, we nursed cups of coffee as Warren pointed *Olympia* back towards the open ocean. Relaxed and rejuvenated; we silently slipped past beautiful homes on the shore as sunlight glistened atop the water. Warren set the day's course; I snapped a few frames of a Pelican gliding by. The swooping bird was a symbolic reminder that we were still very much in the Deep South and had a long way still to go.

"You know how pelicans die?" asked Tucker with a wide grin. By now the crew had come to recognize West's unique penchant of humor.

"How?" we mumbled, waiting for the punch line.

"No, this is actually a serious one. They go blind from diving into the water so much. Then they starve to death because they can't see and can't catch fish."

None of us would look at a pelican the same way again. Yup, there was a lot of trip left.

AS MINUTES TURNED TO HOURS AND HOURS turned to days, we would find our rhythm. Every two hours we'd go down into the large and immaculate engine room to look for any leaks or developing problems. This was an easy chore since a single drop of oil would have stood in stark contrast to the freshly painted space.

Meals would be prepped and prepared in the galley. With the TRAC fin stabilizers canceling out the roll from modest seas, you could calmly spread out paper plates, condiments, lettuce, and cheeses (yes, we ate well on this trip) and never worry that the spread would slide out of reach.

In the afternoon everyone would find their own space to relax for a while. Sometimes that meant reading a book in the cockpit,





Capt. Mike Warren

catching some Zs on the aft bridgedeck, or taking a hot shower. Whatever the vice, it was nice to be on a boat where you could escape to your own space and enjoy some alone time. I imagine the owner will appreciate that too, especially with plans to cruise with her children and grandchildren aboard.

In the evening we'd snack on some fruit, cheese, and crackers (OK, so we ate *very* well on the trip) and swap stories. Over the days, conversation

shifted from lies about past girlfriends, wives, and second wives to sporting glory days, politics, and past adventures. But more often than not we talked about the one thing we all had in common, a passion for boating and spending time on the water. We took turns recounting favorite destinations, dreamboats (Capt. Mike was sitting on his. A serial Krogen owner, he would take ownership of a 55 Expedition later in the year) and trips we hope to take one day.

Everything was falling into place. On day three, I even got that night shift I'd been hoping for. Sitting leisurely in the helm chair, I watched as the moon and stars provided light to the horizon. Leaving the top half of the pilothouse doors open allowed a gentle sea breeze to waft through the pilothouse. It was interesting to see where your mind would wander during those uninterrupted early morning hours, where distractions came not from social media, texts, or e-mails but a lone dolphin jumping the bow wave. I was left to ponder the question: Does it get any better than this?

OUR ZEN-LIKE CRUISE WAS DISRUPTED by our arrival in coastal waters and the inevitable return of cell signal. The real world had found us. A series of devices vibrated, rung, chirped, beeped, and blared. With heads bowed to our devices, a chorus of grumbles surged, "ugh, dammit." "What an idiot, I better call this guy," permeated the living spaces. Frantic phone calls were made, news was recounted, and stress levels blew through the top of pilothouse.

It was a less jovial jaunt that day until we decided to stop for the night at Adam's Creek, North Carolina. We found a quiet spot and dropped the anchor. Stepping into the saloon, we were treated to the aroma of roast pork and fresh asparagus. "John, you idiot, you don't have the bottle of wine breathing," laughed Warren as he eyed our small feast. As we set the table a funny thing happened; we found ourselves in a dead zone of cell coverage. Tweets and chirps were replaced again with continued storytelling and laughs.

After a final day of cruising we found ourselves pulling up to Coinjock Marina in Coinjock, North Carolina. This would be the jumping off point for West and me, who minutes later would be in a cab bound for the airport and the "real world."

Looking back on my experience helping to deliver *Olympia*, I have to say, I learned a lot. I learned not just about the seaworthiness of a Kadey-Krogen but the importance of regular engine checks and log entries; I learned about navigating and course planning at night. But more importantly, I learned the value of turning your phone (and the world) off for a while and enjoying the simple things, like a long conversation in the saloon, a midafternoon nap, or a starry night alone in the pilothouse. I guess slowing down isn't such a bad thing after all. □

Kadey-Krogen, 772-286-0171; www.kadeykrogen.com

From a the oversized fridge to the acreage of granite meal-prep space, the 55's galley (top) has earned the title of: kitchen. The delivery-sized wine cooler to port in the saloon comes in handy when entertaining guests, or spending nearly a week at sea.



Rosemarie Eccleston

STORM OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Twelve-foot seas at night are nothing when compared to the tumultuous ups and downs owner Rosemarie Eccleston faced when commissioning *Olympia*. Just weeks after she and her husband Tom made a deposit on their 55, Tom passed away. Grief-stricken and overwhelmed, Eccleston found commissioning a 55-foot Expedition to be as intimidating as the yacht's ocean-going profile.

"I had just lost my husband of 42 years," says Eccleston. "And I was facing life on my own. I think I was overwhelmed because it was such a big boat. Yeah it was my third, but I'm a Brooklyn girl, I didn't grow up on a boat."

She credits both the management of Kadey-Krogen as well as the close-knit owners group for helping to see the project through.

She briefly considered downsizing to a smaller Kadey-Krogen but in her heart she knew she wanted to fulfill her and her husband's dream. "The 55 is configured in a way that was perfect for my lifestyle. I want to have a bunch of friends aboard, I want the sound of laughter bouncing off the walls. I want to create huge dinners for 50 people. *Olympia* is the perfect boat to do all that."

Eccleston would face commissioning questions at a frantic rate. From the appliances to fabrics, and sink fixtures to the countertop, once she took ownership of the project one thing was certain: She was going to get the boat of her dreams.

She even wanted a hand in picking the exact granite slab that would be used in her galley. "I said to those guys, 'I know you guys are going to kill me but [because every stone is different] I need you to drag out the actual slab that's going to be used in my galley so I can see it.'" Sure enough Eccleston received a picture from Kadey-Krogen VP Larry Polster of eight sweating Taiwanese workers holding up my countertop. "He said, 'I hope this is good enough because I can't have these guys drag out another slab.'"

Besides the management support, Eccleston explains that it was the outpouring of kindness she received from the Krogen owners group that got her through the project emotionally. "I wouldn't have this boat if it wasn't for the Kadey-Krogen community," says Eccleston flatly. "I remember my first rendezvous was in October of 2012. As I got off the boat people were welcoming me. I went again in 2013, weeks after my husband's passing, and people were hugging me as soon as I got off the boat. And they never stopped hugging me. And I embraced all of them like they embraced me. All I kept hearing was, 'Whatever you need, we're here.' They're the real reason I'm doing this."

LOA: 60'11"
BEAM: 18'0"
DRAFT: 4'10"
FUEL: 1,880 gal.
WATER: 500 gal.
STANDARD POWER: 2/160-hp John Deere 4045AFM85s diesels
GENERATOR: 16-kw Northern Lights
TRANSMISSION: ZF 280-1A
PROPELLER: 4-blade 31 x 16.5
WARRANTY: One year on everything, three years osmotic blistering, five years structural
PRICE: Upon request

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
900	3.9	.6	10,998	63
1200	4.4	1.3	5,727	62
1500	5.9	2.1	4,754	66
1800	7.6	3.9	3,297	72
2100	8.2	6.3	2,202	82
2300	8.8	7.9	1,885	83

CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 62°F; humidity 90%; seas: 1'; load: 1,880 gal. fuel, 300 gal. water, 4 persons. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/Garmin GPS display. GPH taken via John Deere engine displays. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured in the pilothouse.