

## Travels with Kadey-Krogen Owners

# 2008 Regatta del Sol al Sol Celebrates 40th Year

*Not to brag here, but anytime you can go into your boss's office and say, "I am going to visit a customer...on their yacht...in the Yucatan...for a week or so...and I intend to write it off as a business trip"...and the reply is..."That's great, a terrific use of your time"...then you have made a wise career decision!*

*"The event is part open ocean sailing yacht race, and part friendly cultural exchange mission..."*

This past fall, our friends Jack and Jo Brinkerhoff of the good ship *Bodacious*, a 1999 Kadey-Krogen 39', told my fiancée Sally and me that they were considering joining the Regatta del Sol al Sol, which is a sailing regatta organized by the St. Petersburg Yacht Club. Their course was from St. Petersburg, FL, to Isla Mujeres, Mexico—an island about eight miles northeast of Cancun. Of course it didn't take long to agree to crew with them, and while *Bodacious* spent the winter hopping around some of the more far-flung islands of the Bahamas (the Ragged Islands, the Jumentos, the Exumas and Andros) we exchanged e-mails as Sally and I sat in front of our fireplace (the only advantage to living on land that I have been able to find) planning and dreaming of open ocean, warm breezes and a place where our cell phones wouldn't work.

### The Event

The Regatta Del Sol is celebrating its 40th year. The event is part open ocean sailing yacht race, part friendly cultural exchange mission, part annual festival and part beach party. The first race was held in 1969 and is one of several regattas initiated by the Mexican Secretary of Tourism Miguel Aleman to promote closer ties between the



Jack Brinkerhoff preparing a fresh mahi for the table.

boating communities of several U.S. and Mexican coastal communities. Another race, the Regatta de Amigos, is run every even numbered year from Houston to Vera Cruz.

Now you may wonder how Krogenites would end up in a sailboat race, other than the beach party part! Well, each year Dave and Sandy Dumas of Krogen 42' *Kinship* serve as a committee support boat. This serves two purposes. First, sail racers being the breed that they are, leaving them to decide how to divide the weight of all the trophies, plaques and other awards paraphernalia would undoubtedly lead to bloodshed. Secondly, a key component of the event is the delivery of goodwill packages to what has become, to these folks, a sister community on Isla Mujeres.

To expand this capability, *Bodacious* and her bilges were invited to participate. Among the items we stuffed under settees and into engine room spaces before we left were bags of baseball bats, balls and gloves, some pieces of a new item of medical equipment for the local clinic, school supplies, and bags of t-shirts. This was along with several boxes of trophies and other goodies for the awards and parties to come. We left on April 25, 2008, along with *Kinship* and 45 racing boats.

### Bodacious

The Brinkerhoffs have owned *Bodacious* since early 2003. She was built in 1999 and, despite their concerns over this or that small item, is in just amazing condition.

I get to spend a good bit of time aboard Krogens. I try to get offshore as much as I can for deliveries, sea trials, etc., but Sally had really only done one extended trip aboard a Kadey-Krogen before, when we took the Eisenhart's Krogen 44', *Icy Devil*, from Annapolis to Newport for a show. The weather was fairly kind and *Icy Devil* has stabilizers, and that trip was wonderful. This trip was interesting not only because it would be a several-days, non-stop crossing, but because *Bodacious* is not stabilized.

"Not stabilized?" you ask. Yes, that is correct. Stabilizers, as I have mentioned before, are misnamed. They should be called "motion dampeners" or "added comfort fins" but they do not affect the inherent stability of a hull. While I am a big fan of what they can do, stabilizers are not absolutely necessary on a correctly designed, true full displacement hull.

Suffice it to say that *Bodacious* is a fully found cruising yacht, with a real full displacement hull (no chines), a wineglass stern, a lead ballasted keel, plus a GPS, 24-mile RADAR, a depth sounder and an autopilot. Absolutely everything that you need. For navigational purposes, we took the numbers for the GPS (a device that tells you your position and speed, etc., not by 3D-HDTV-1028 color-18-inch plasma screen chart plotter but just by a couple of numbers). We then took those numbers and plotted them on a "chart" which is a detailed map of an ocean area printed on "paper"

and you write little X's and draw lines on them called "rhumb lines"... Oh never mind.

One interesting part of the trip for me was how Sally, who had only cruised extensively aboard our older Gulfstar 44 Motor Cruiser, with four-inch chines and a flat, square stern, was going to enjoy the Kadey-Krogen.

### The Crossing

We left on a brilliant morning with *Kinship* right behind us. As we made our way out of the canals of Marco Island and out into the Gulf the sky was a brilliant blue, the weather about 76 degrees with a light breeze, and a big dolphin came and gave us a leaping salute to send us on our way. It was like we had custom ordered it. So we set a waypoint near the northwest tip of Cuba and put Florida behind us with literally quite fair winds and following seas.

During the first day's travel we reviewed a few systems and procedures on the boat and got familiar with where everything was. We were interrupted several times by large pods of dolphin putting on a surfing seminar in our bow and side wakes. It had been a while since I had crossed the Gulf of Mexico and I had forgotten how many more species there are here as opposed to the Atlantic bottlenose "Flipper" species that we all see on the east coast. We saw spotted dolphin, spinners, grays and some porpoises as well.

*Continued on page 18*

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*Continued from page 17*

As we neared sunset, the wind began to freshen up a bit and during the night built into four to five footers from our port-stern quarter, with occasional whitecaps. One afternoon and evening these built into steep six footers. Still manageable, but the really striking thing for me was Sally's comments. She has of course heard me explain many times about the reaction of rising, wine-glass aftersections and a true full displacement hull form, but experiencing it just brought everything into instant, sharp focus.

Sally was amazed. It is not that a Kadey-Krogen is immune to the laws of physics. We were rolling. Not uncomfortably, but we weren't leaving open cups of coffee sitting around either. We made dinner and had a sunset cocktail and it was very pleasant, but the motion was just so different from that of our old boat with a different hull form.

Sally described it as just a natural motion in perfect tune with the waves, rather than a slow build up to a feeling of dropping off a cliff as with our square-sterned trawler. There was no "timing" involved she said, referring to having a plate in your hand as you walk to the galley and feeling the boat go up, and stopping to hang on and wait for the "drop" before taking your next step. The boat just went gently up and over and gently back down with her ballasted keel, not nearly so far over as we were used to, and Sally realized that

she was moving around the boat without thinking about it.

The other thing that Sally pointed out and I certainly noticed was that the autopilot did not seem to be working nearly as hard as the one on our boat did in similar conditions. The rudder indicator did not go through anywhere near the range of motion as we would have experienced when quartering seas on our flat stern attempted to yaw the boat, and the autopilot worked the rudder to correct our course. In fact, I was reading the blog of a cruiser on another make of trawler who said that in quartering seas he was getting an error message on his autopilot of "rudder limit reached." Frankly, after years of cruising on trawlers, I was not even aware that error message existed!

In the wee hours of our last night at sea, we hit the current and our progress slowed from around 6.5 kts to about 1.5 kts. We watched our anticipated first-light landfall slip to afternoon and then into the next evening as the distance seemed to become further and further away. However, by first light we had cleared the axis of the current and were again making good time towards the island. We arrived mid-morning to a cannon salute and a bag of Regatta t-shirts and cold beer from the Regatta Committee on the docks!

There is nothing like making landfall on an island in the tropics after a pleasant crossing!

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### **Isla Mujeres**

I had visited Isla Mujeres, and also Cancun, about 20 years before, and frankly was expecting to see some of the same changes that I have seen in so many tropical locations I had loved in the past that now look like South Beach spit all over it. While I would go to great lengths never to set foot in Cancun ever again, Isla Mujeres still retains her charm with not a high rise, water park, mini-golf, or 20,000-square disco to be seen.

The main mode of transport is scooters and golf carts, several of the main streets are closed to traffic after dark, and the cafés and cantinas put out tables for dining under the stars while music drifts up and down the alleys.

The restaurants that line the downtown beaches do not have, nor have they ever had, walls or floors. Just big thatched roofs, and grills where fresh pico and cilantro are being laid over fresh mahi, snapper, conch, lobster and octopus. Ceviche here is a staple, not an unusual appetizer, and I did my best to try every single restaurant's offering of my favorite dish. If you are even wearing shoes in the first place, you walk into the sand, sit down at a table 10 feet away from the Caribbean, and dive into a fresh bowl of ceviche that was alive two hours ago!

Sally's birthday was the day after we arrived. For dinner we walked down to the beach to a table whose grill smelled good, and five of us plowed through

huge platters of grilled conch, lobster, octopus, fish and scallops plus fresh salsa and plantains for about \$70 US, with drinks.

We attended many different activities organized by the Regatta, from happy hours to the annual Cruisers vs. Locals basketball game on one of the town squares. However, the highlight of the trip for me was the festival ceremony put on by the community for their Regatta visitors.

The main entertainment of the festival was several dance troupes, all made up entirely of children of various ages, performing dances and with costumes from different periods and influences in Central American history. Some of the costumes and dances had hints of the Maya, some the Caballero and the Vaquero and some the dress, music and dance that we associate with Mexico today. All performed by children. It was fantastic!

### **Impressions**

Since this is the Kadey-Krogen newsletter, let me hit a few Krogen and cruising related things that I took from this trip.

To repeat myself, *Bodacious* has all the electronics any cruising boat "needs" with the possible exception of an AIS (Automatic Identification System) receiver that is reasonably priced and useful in some situations. In my humble opinion,

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*Continued on page 20*



*“The thrill of setting out across an ocean and arriving on a beautiful island...”*

*Continued from page 19*

the rest are just cool toys that tend to make inexperienced sailors feel safe and experienced sailors lazy. Cut your electronics budget in half and take the money and go cruising for years!

The most important point I would like to impart here is also from Sally’s point of view. In our cruising together, from the Chesapeake to the lower Exumas and home, we never chose to do a “real” overnight. We made some 14-18 hour runs. We have certainly been in weather where I thought I might lose the boat, and had our days where I did not ever want to see the damn thing again.

Obviously we did not hit any real storms or anything like that on this trip, but the important point is that Sally was never afraid. Now, I would love to tell you that the reason for this is her unshakeable confidence in my seamanship, but frankly, it was mostly the boat. She said that she felt safe and secure the whole

time. The boat felt stable and solid and we got to share things that so few ever get to see: The sunrise at sea with no land or other boats in sight. The cloud smudge in the early morning light of land over the horizon. The communities of dolphin and flying fish and mahi that may have no idea that there is land on this planet. The dim red lights and quiet coffee smells of a pilothouse at 3:00 A.M. under a bright moon when you come up for your watch.

The thrill of setting out across an ocean and arriving on a beautiful island where everything is so different from home is something that so very, very few people ever get to experience.

Will you?

Isla Mujeres

