

Kailani Passage – San Francisco to Tonga – ship's updates
23 days, 16 hours ... 4,657 nm

29 May 2012

Kailani has set sail from San Francisco bound for the Kingdom of Tonga! Joining the captain (Harley) and 1st mate (Tom) as crew for this leg are Adrienne, Bill and Alvin. They left the slip in Sausalito yesterday afternoon at around 5pm, and spent the night anchored out in Richardson Bay to get settled in aboard and ready for the long passage ahead. They upped anchor at 11:15 am this morning and are sailing out under the Golden Gate on the morning ebb tide.

For those of you new to these updates, Harley will typically send me an email update from the ship via SSB radio about once a day, which I will then relay. Please note - the absence of a daily report should not be cause for concern – sometimes equipment issues, weather conditions, and other factors can impact the ability to get out an email.

In addition to the emails, those interested can track *Kailani's* position updates at the following link:
<http://www.pangolin.co.nz/yotreps/tracker.php?ident=Kailani> Please note that the time associated with the position posts is in UTC, which is 7 hours ahead of Pacific coast time.

30 May 2012

34 50 N 124 02 W
Course 192M Speed 9.2kts
Wind NNW 25kts Waves 8-10 ft
0945 local
4278 nm to Vavau, Tonga

One thing you can say about *Kailani* is she is fast. Since 1300 yesterday when we made the turn south at the San Francisco sea buoy we have come nearly 190 miles and at the pace will log almost 225 miles in 24 hours. We are sailing under single reefed main and the staysail on a beam reach hitting 12 plus kts on the surf.

The crew has passed their first largely sleepless night at sea as the motion as the the beam seas roll under us is like being rocked to sleep by a maniacal nursemaid. Moreover Alvin, Bill and Adrienne are all sleeping on the starboard side so the are hard on their lee cloths when in their bunks. They'll have to put up with this for another 72 hours or so and then they get their revenge on Tom and the skipper when we get stuck on the uphill side for the rest of the trip.

Some of us are still waiting to find our sea legs, but this will happen over the next couple of days. Everyone is still enthusiastic, or as enthusiastic as one can be while trying to sleep in a washing machine.

31 May 2012

31 28 N 125 59 W
Course 205M Speed 7.5 kts
Wind N 15 kts Waves 8-10 ft
1100 local
4073.3 nm to Vavau Tonga

The wind is beginning to veer and lighten and our speed has dropped accordingly. With all the crew now up and about we'll take in the staysail and roll out the genoa which should give us another knot or so in boat speed. Over the next couple of days the wind will continue to veer around more to the east and assuming a moderate pace we should see some of the NE tradewinds within the next four or five days.

The crew is for the most part settling in and finding their sea legs. They are sleeping better on their off watch and the slightly warmer weather, though still a bit chilly, makes the dark watches a little easier.

Tom has kept the galley turning out hot nourishing meals and the plates all come back clean so we assume that it's tasting good. Either that or the fish are being surreptitiously fed when Tom's not looking.

The forecast looks good for the next few days and everyone is looking forward to shedding all the heavy foul weather gear one layer at a time.

1 June 2012

28 59 N 128 13 W
215 M 8.5 kts
NNE 18kts Sea State 3-5 ft
1100 local
3889 nm to Vavau Tonga

We're continuing to follow the gradual veering wind around and make more west in our progress on starboard gybe. Another 24 to 36 hours and we'll gybe over to port and head more south south east letting the trades fill in and set our track back on the rhumb line to our planned equatorial crossing of between 140 and 150 W. Kailani is sailing sweetly and the lighter winds have taken some of the roll of the motion.

Everyone has found their sea legs and seem to be sleeping well during their off watch. Adrienne with her many years of experience working long night shifts in the hospital seems to love her night watches, at one point volunteering to stay up the whole time. The skipper did not relay her offer to the crew who would have no doubt jumped at the opportunity. The group is currently in the cockpit (where, by the way, it is getting noticeably warmer) learning to tie exotic knots under the tutelage of the first mate.

Another three days and we should be at the latitude of Hawaii solidly in the trade winds and shuck of all these layers of warm clothes.

2 June 2012

26 35 N 131 16 W
185M 6.5 kts 1630 local
ENE 12kts
3671 nm to Vavau, Tonga

After breakfast with all hands on deck we gybed over to port tack where, barring out of the ordinary wind shifts we will remain for at least the next 1500 miles or so. Gybing Kailani is not a racing maneuver but rather a methodical slow process starting with heading up, re-rigging the boom preventer (a line run from the end of the boom to the bow and back to the cockpit designed to prevent the effects of an accidental gybe when running off the wind, furling the jib, centering the main, steering through the wind, unfurling the jib, re-establishing our new course and then having a cup of

tea. The whole thing including boiling the water takes about a half hour, not up to race boat standards, but safe and simple.

Our new course has us running due south to catch the trades which look like they will fill in tomorrow night or Monday morning. The crew took their first showers today and everyone is enjoying the feeling of clean clothes and less of them as the outside temperature warms up. Adrienne pulled her first night watch alone waking the skipper up only twice, once to point out a ship, a ship that the skipper couldn't see for another ten minutes. Clearly her eyesight and judgement rates her able to handle her watch and allows me to sleep soundly.

3 June 2012

23 58N 131 22W
180 M 6 kts
NE 8-12 Seas 1-3 ft
1600 local
3562 nm to Vavau, Tonga

We've slowed down the last 24 hours only making good a little over 100 nm toward Tonga. Part of this is due to the light and fickle wind that exists on the boundary of the North Pacific high and the NE trades and part is due to the fact that we have been heading due south to escape these winds and hit the trades around latitude 22 which we expect to do sometime tomorrow.

The calm has been well received aboard as we have taken the opportunity to clean up below, do a little laundry that is drying on the lifelines and enjoy some galley fare produced by Alvin on his day off. Breakfast burritos were a big hit and we are awaiting his culinary surprise for supper. Regardless of how it turns out Alvin can trot out some of his wife's delicious toffee for desert and all will no doubt be forgiven. Bill is currently on watch watching pretty much nothing as the horizon remains clear of traffic all around and the light air doesn't give him a lot to do with the sails although he bravely chases each puff to squeak out a little more boat speed. Adrienne has had a lesson in the boat's electrical systems and is taking the time to review the difference between 24v, 12v and 110v power complicated by 220v to 110v step down transformers.

The crew seems to genuinely enjoy each other's company and this has saved Tom and me from having to fill in the conversation with too many sea stories. But with 3500 miles to go there will be plenty of time for that. And of course there are Bill's sea chanties yet to come.

4 June 2012

21 09N 131 22W
185M 8.5 kts
NE 15 Seas 3-5ft
2359 UTC
3450 nm to Vavau, Tonga

The wind began gradually building early this morning and while it is still pushing us more south than west, it is at least blowing hard enough to push our boat speed back up to where we can log 200 miles per day for a couple of days. We sailed out from under the marine layer around 1100 this morning and are clearly on the edge of the trade winds. The

ocean is an unbelievable color of indigo and the sun is warm although the wind and water still are a bit cool. The foulies are no longer required and a pair of sweat pants and a windbreaker is enough to keep the night watch comfortable.

We set the ship's time back an hour today as we have 4 hours to gain before we arrive in Tonga (minus a day lost despite Tonga being east of the dateline).

Going into their second week the crew is all cheerful and enjoying the special magic of being out here. It is Adrienne's "off" day and it looks like a special pasta dish is in the works. Alvin and Tom spent the afternoon reading and relaxing in the sun on the foredeck, while Bill kept me company during my extra long midday watch as I absorbed the added hour. We started dragging a meat line this morning but no fish as yet. We'll add a rod tomorrow and who knows, maybe there is fresh fish on the menu soon.

5 June 2012

17 54 N 132 27 W
200M 9 kts
NE 18-20 Seas 8-10ft
2350 UTC
3280 nm to Vavau Tonga

Rockin' and rollin' along. The wind piped up late last night and dawn brought a series of squalls with the apparent wind climbing into the low 30s and the seas building accordingly. The squalls have been with us off and on all day and the crew has been practicing driving in the heavy wind and surfing the bigger waves. Kailani is hitting 12+kts on the surfn and we are able to hold a rhumbline course to our projected equator crossing of between 140 and 150W. It looks like the ITCZ will move back east and we may have a seamless transition to the southeast trades.

Cooking in these conditions is quite a challenge, more like a combination of dancing and juggling as everything you put down takes on a life of its own. It's Bill's scullery day as the crew has come to call their day off and he is cleaning the head as we speak. They are learning that simple fare is better, so after Alvin's made from scratch curry and Adrienne's delicious tuna melts Bill is aiming for boil in the bag Indian food and rice although there are rumors of corn muffins on the side.

We are still in search of a little warmer weather, but patience when passage making as in life is a virtue. Plus the fact that in a couple of days everyone will be wishing it was cooler as we melt under the tropical sun.

6 June 2012

15 02 N 133 51 W
220 T 8.8 kts
NE 15-18 kts Seas 6-8 ft
2325 UTC
3109 nm to Vavau, Tonga

This morning after sustaining ourselves with the last of Bong's (Alvin's wife) zucchini bread and an orange slice or two we deployed the pole to windward and rolled out the jib to go wing and wing. This process, much like the gybe described earlier, takes about a half hour to complete (including the obligatory cup of tea when it is all squared away). First we

furl the jib then go rummage around in the forward hold (aka "garage") for a suitable length of line which with the crew's newly learned farmers knot tied in the middle is rigged as a fore guy and after guy. Then two crew wrestle the pole out of its lash point, stub the one end to a fitting on the mast and attach the topping lift and aforementioned foreguy/afterguy line to the working end of the pole and pass the port side jib sheet into the jaw. Assuming this is all done right and the lines are all run fair, the pole is hoisted, swung aft with the afterguy and then both guys and the topping lift are made fast. Now you have the main sail out to starboard and a pole out to port. Then we head almost dead down wind, unfurl the jib, trim it tight and off we go. Sounds more complicated than it really is (Tom refers to it as carefully managed chaos) and the net result, besides earning the cup of tea, is a course dead on toward Tonga surfing straight down the waves. This will allow us to make more westing than we could on a broad reach trading the lee lurches off the waves for a side to side roll.

Alvin has spent his off day (after sleeping in) largely in the galley preparing an excellent grilled cheese and coleslaw for lunch and doing all the prep work for and as yet unknown culinary delight for dinner. Bill finally caught a nap before his afternoon watch (apparently the cabin he shares with Alvin was invaded by a snoring moose last night). With the water now warm and the sun out, both Bill and Tom enjoyed the first showers on the swim step while underway. Adrienne being wiser than her fellow crew members chose to shower in the actual shower. So, most everyone is clean and all are enjoying rolling down the trades.

8 June 2012

12 33N 136 27W

223T 9 kts

ENE 15-20 Seas 10-12

0144 (8 June) UTC

2898 nm to Vavau, Tonga

For the first time since leaving San Francisco the day dawned more or less clear, and although it has clouded over in the past couple of hours, we enjoyed sunny skies and warm wind most of the day. Last night the wind went a bit light and the rolling of the boat mad sleep difficult for some of the crew (Alvin refers to it as bunk surfing), but it freshened in late morning and we have been rolling down the seas toward Tonga. We just hit 14 kts on the surf and we have made better than 200 miles in 24 hours. The wind is forecast to hold for another day or so before going light and squirrely across what we hope is a narrow ITCZ. We will probably motor through that stretch and hope to see 10-12 kt southeast trades filling in around latitude 5 north.

Adrienne is just finishing up dinner, something exotic with chicken, peanuts and a raft of spices culled from Kailani's cabinets. We are still discovering provisions that we either did not know we had or had forgotten where they were stowed, one of the mysteries of ocean passage making. Alvin, Bill and Tom have been using the swim step as their shower while lashed to the boat with a line. Balancing on a rolling boat with your feet in the ocean as the boat surfs at 10 plus kts and dousing yourself with buckets of saltwater followed by a freshwater rinse is an experience that few can fathom.

9 June 2012

07 48 N 140 32 W

215 T 8.5 kts

NNE to ENE 12-15 Kts Seas 6-10 confused

1809 UTC
2532 nm to Vavau, Tonga

The ITCZ (Inter Tropical Convergence Zone) is a band of weather where two dissimilar wind patterns meet, in this case the NE and SE trade winds. Sometimes it is narrow to non-existent, sometimes hundreds of miles wide and filled with violent storm cells. Kailani is now and has been for the past 24 hours sailing into the ITCZ on the last of the NE trades. We have been overtaken by a seemingly endless parade of rain squalls, milder than those in the trades but much broader and more maddening for the watch keeper since they have to respond to the shifting wind pattern as each squall overtakes us. First the wind backs ever so slightly, almost imperceptible when the boat is rolling through 40 degrees and then it will abruptly veer and strengthen then back and go light and finally fill in again from the predominant direction. This is hard enough to manage in daylight but almost impossible to do right at night particularly given the overcast that obscures the stars and the waning moon.

The crew has performed admirably in these conditions despite the depressingly grey sky and rain showers that drive all but the watch keeper below decks. If you ever went away to summer camp, it is the same feeling you got when you had to stay in your tent all day with the added benefit of having the tent in constant motion. By Monday we should be on the other side of this, although we expect to be motor sailing by tonight for most of the rest of the way through the ITCZ. I have promised the crew that it is different world on the other side, but we'll see.

10 June 2012

05 48 N 142 23 W
234 T 6.5 kts
Wind ESE 8 kts Seas 1-3 ft
1745 UTC
2372 nm to Vavau, Tonga

We are crossing our fingers that we are nosing into the southeast trade winds. After a night of shifting winds and drenching downpours (at one point you could barely make out Tom at the wheel) that would start and stop as if some unseen hand was playing with a large faucet, we had a beautiful sunrise under mostly puffy trade wind like clouds. We are currently close reaching in a light breeze and even in these conditions Kailani seems to effortlessly glide through the water.

Adrienne who had the 0300-0600 watch is just making her breakfast, and once she is done we'll all hit the foredeck to take down and stow the pole, retrieve the light air sail from the garage and deploy it to try to pick up a little boat speed. No doubt another half hour to 45 minutes of activity but I'll spare you the details until tomorrow.

The skipper came on deck at 0645 with Alvin on watch, and no sooner had we settled in to watch the sunrise when we passed through a school of tuna. And then suddenly it was, "fish on". Moving as quietly as possible so as not to wake the off watch we retrieved the gaff, boated the fish on the swim step, cleaned it and it is now ceviche for lunch and tuna steaks for dinner. A good omen for sure.

11 June 2012

03 48 N 144 47 W
225 T 6 kts

ESE 8-10 Seas 1-3 ft
2350 UTC
2185 nm to Vavau, Tonga

We motor sailed all night at about 7 kts in calm seas and virtually no wind, somewhat an anathema to a sailing purist, but the crew sleeps like babies. The drone of the engine and the absence of serious motion are a delight and everyone gets up with a smile. The skipper had to spend the obligatory hour or so in the sweltering engine room on the graveyard watch trying to fine tune the voltage regulator on the high output alternator, but with that accomplished and after a liter of gatorade to replace the lost fluids, he too got a few hours of solid sleep.

We all are hoping for more wind to get us back up to 200 miles per day, well, all except Adrienne who never wants the trip to end. Everyone is getting along famously and there seems to be no end of entertaining stories to tell one another when we find ourselves together. During the day the crew spreads out across Kailani's decks taking in the tropical sun, napping in the shade of the sails and reading in the cockpit. Night watches now are beautiful with the Southern Cross just off the port bow and a sky chocked full of stars. Meals are a highlight (chili and cornbread tonight unless another fish decides to sacrifice itself on our trailing lure) but all in all its is somnolent trade wind sailing with an empty endless expanse of ocean around us.

12 June 2012

FYI, for some reason the boat position tracking has changed the link – it is now:

<http://www.pangolin.co.nz/tracker?ident=Kailani>

Also, it does not appear to be working correctly, in that it shows Kailani off the east coast of Africa, and it does not show the history of past position updates – rest assured, she has not taken a detour... I guess the only helpful aspect is that it shows the accurate lat / long so those of you plotting vigorously can have an extra data point besides the daily update info...

Today's update*****

01 44 N 146 38 W

225 T 8.5 kts

ESE 12 Seas 2-4 ft

2350 UTC

2021 nm to Vavau, Tonga

This morning a little after yet another spectacular sunrise the trade wind freshened and despite our close reach point of sail we have been logging better than 25 miles each three hour watch. The forecast is for more of the same, perhaps even a little stronger wind and Kailani is once again back in her element. She is heeling about 15 degrees to starboard which makes the galley crew climb up hill to the stove, but the seas are calm for now so we are not subject to the frequent lee lurches we get on this point of sail in bigger seas. This means the uncooked rice stays where it is put rather than hurling itself to the cabin sole in an effort to escape being put in the pot.

With all of us in the cockpit following lunch of Tom's delicious tuna salad and fresh baked bread we were idly watching a brown booby swooping over the waves and making approaches toward the boat. This one unlike our visitor a few nights back seemed uninterested in the mast so we paid him little mind until suddenly he set his wings, dropped through aft under the bimini and landed square in the captain's lap. One can imagine the hulabaloo this created, and by the grace of Bill, most of it was captured on video which once we reach Tonga will no doubt go viral on You Tube or whatever. We

shooed him out of the cockpit, but he refused to leave the boat and now, two hours later, he is still with us on the gunwale. Much longer and he will get put in the watch rotation.

13 June 2012

00 00 S 148 03 W
210 T 6.5 kts
E 8-10 Seas 2-4 ft
1751 UTC
1880 nm to vavau, Tonga

Just before 0900 ship's time with Alvin on watch and the entire crew in the cockpit Kailani crossed the equator, that invisible line that separates the northern and southern hemispheres. By coincidence today is Alvin's father's 89th birthday so as we poured champagne first into the sea to appease Neptune and then into the gunwales to thank Kailani, we raised a glass to our good fortune and to the good health of Alvin senior who crossed the line in this ocean aboard a U.S. Navy ship in 1941. By another coincidence my father gave me a copy of Alvin senior's book ("Crossing the Line, a Blue Jacket's Odyssey") the last time I left this hemisphere under sail back in 2004 and until this morning I never got the connection. But then again some of us believe that coincidence is simply God's way of remaining anonymous.

So on we go under lighter air than we had expected but with the idea that we are on the last leg of this adventure sailing into the fabled waters of the South Pacific.

14 June 2012

The tracking website is apparently doing some rebuilding – the link has changed daily, and now has the nomenclature of “test” in it .. so they are working on fixing glitches, I imagine. Anyway, for those interested, the link is now: <http://www.pangolin.co.nz/test.php?ident=Kailani> – shows accurate position & track since departure, but no details (lat long) ...

03 01 S 151 15 W
230 T 9.5 kts
SE 15-18 kts Seas 5-7 ft
0100 (15 June) UTC
1628 nm to Vavau, Tonga

After a very squally night with occasional gusts to 35 kts and lots of rain the skies have cleared and we are moving along at a fast, if a bit uncomfortable, pace given the beam on seas. We are about 250 miles from a waypoint we have set to take us clear by a wide margin of a couple of islands and reefs. At this pace we should make that point tomorrow around dusk and be able to bear away a little for another 350 miles to clear Penryn Island and then bear away even more for the final 1,000 nm down to Vavau. The winds are forecast to lighten up tomorrow before strengthening again on Sunday making for a wild ride down the last leg.

The crew are mastering the art of dealing with the squalls of the southern hemisphere where the cyclonic winds are clockwise in the lows. Thus everything they learned north of the line has to be relearned now. While everyone is in good spirits the motion of the boat is keeping the crew off the sun deck and out of the pool which means in their bunk or in

the cockpit keeping the on watch company. I can tell that while they are not going stir crazy yet, there are the classic symptoms of a long passage on a small boat. They spent almost three hours this morning fantasizing about food by constructing elaborate imaginary meals that stand in stark contrast to the canned culinary delights we will be enjoying for the remainder of the passage. We have some strong galley talent aboard, however, and the bar is set low on the open ocean.

15 June 2012

05 39 S 153 43 W
220 T 8.5 kts
ESE 12-15 Seas 2-4 ft
0133 (16 Jun) UTC

Another day in the trades close reaching on port tack under a single reef in the main and full jib. We posted 233 miles noon to noon, a pretty fair run considering our point of sail. We are on a pretty steady 20 degree heel, about the slope of a shallow roof. The galley is on the port side so whoever is cooking is climbing uphill all the time to tend to the stove. Meanwhile everything else is sliding downhill with the occasional lee lurch sending unsecured items tumbling off the counter toward the chart table. So far in the past two weeks we have vacuumed up a cup of rice, washed up a half a cup of salad dressing and righted and returned several pieces of garlic bread to their proper plates. Experience is the best teacher, however, and almost everyone is now proficient at properly securing their utensils and ingredients and even at catching in midair the errant potato or cabbage head.

We are about 40 nm from land in the form of a couple of small atolls in the Northern Cook Islands. This is the closest we have been to terra firma (and as close as I care to be) in over two weeks, but we will not see anything until we raise Vavau in a week. We did, however, receive confirmation of land's proximity as we were visited by a lone frigate bird, that common thief that robs other hard working birds of their catch. But once he figured out that we were not surrendering anything he gave up and headed home.

16 June 2012

07 30 S 155 04 W
220 T 8.3 kts
ESE 5-8 Kts Seas 1-3 ft
2145 UTC
1287 nm to Vavau, Tonga

The wind went light during the night and we are presently motor sailing on course using the opportunity to put a full charge on the batteries and make some headway. We are waiting on the forecasted increase in the wind to reestablish our boat speed to try to get into Neiafu on Saturday which because Tonga is a day ahead (even though they are on the wrong side of the 180 degree meridian) is Friday back in the States. If we cannot make it in on Saturday, the Tongans may not check us in until Monday as the Kingdom strictly observes the Sabbath. Keeping a crew aboard in full sight of the pleasures of land after 25 days at sea may be cause for mutiny.

We have spent the morning cleaning below and reeving a new reefing line. The cover of the clew line keeps chafing through despite our best efforts to prevent it with leather chafe guards. It is an opportunity for the crew to learn some basic marlinspike seamanship skills, but the real lesson is to install the right type of line in the first place.

While it is still hot and muggy you can sense a little cooling in the air, particularly at night. In 5 days it will officially be winter and sleeping at night will gradually become more pleasant.

17 June 2012

09 53 S 157 44 W
240 T 9.1 kts
SE 15-18 kts Seas 8-10
0045 (18 Jun) UTC
1077 nm to Vavau, Tonga

After a night of intermittent motor sailing due to light winds we are now in the thick of the SE trades again. There are reasons why right thinking people do not choose to sail directly to Tonga from the US west coast and one of them is having to cut almost perpendicularly across the trade wind belt on this last stretch of 1,000 nm. Most sensible cruisers spend a leisurely time island hopping through French Polynesia and then sail with the wind well aft of the beam to Tonga or Fiji. In contrast to these sailors, many of whom will begin arriving in Tonga toward the end of August, Kailani's crew will be there before the end of June and the price we pay is sailing for four or five days on our ear. Meals will hereafter become much simpler, and even that will be with the boat headed off to flatten her out during preparation and cleanup. But Kailani keeps hurtling on shouldering the rollers off her port beam and logging better than 200 nm each day.

Each crew member is being introduced to the concept of systems management starting with a morning trip to the engine room. Here crawling around with a flashlight and balancing themselves against the roll they check the fluids in the main and the generator, check the fuel in the day tank and have a good look around for whatever might be out of place, not an easy task if you don't know what it's supposed to look like in the first place. Then it's off to the chart table to check the water supply, fridge and freezer temperature and battery voltages. Then they develop a plan to allocate the 30-35 amps of 110v output of the generator to freeze down the cold plates in the reefer boxes, bring the batteries up to charge and run the watermaker. Somewhere in there we try to run the AC so the off watch can get a nap in as we cannot open the hatches in this seaway without risking taking on water below. Once the plan is in place we fire up the generator and subject to the vagaries of warm water and a warm engine room which sometimes cuts off the compressors early, we start the process. Depending on where we start from this can take most of the daylight hours.

If this hasn't bored you, tomorrow we can discuss doing laundry at sea. Or not.

The crew joins me is wishing a happy Father's Day to all those dads out there. Your children may seem to lack sense but they are all well.

18 June 2012

11 45 S 160 44 W
235 T 9.1 kts
SE 15-18 Seas 8-10
0130 (19 Jun)UTC
868 nm to Vavau, Tonga

The wind is a fickle master and sailors should never be on a schedule. After going light last night the trade wind has filled in this afternoon and we're now making better than 9 kts over the ground with the odd surf of 11-12 kts. This

makes the calculation our arrival time problematic as one moment it looks like we'll miss our Saturday arrival and be confined to the boat until Monday and the next has us making it by Saturday afternoon. Clearly we would be better off not thinking about it at all, but after all it has been three weeks (or will be tomorrow) and the lure of landfall is strong.

Alvin is on galley today and this has turned into a day we all look forward to as he is the most imaginative of the crew when it comes to cooking. His discovery of the "After Death" brand hot sauce and his incorporation thereof into chicken enchiladas required a doubling of the beer/soda rationing for the day, but he was quickly forgiven and encouraged to ply his culinary skills without restraint. (We did try to bury the hot sauce deep in the spice cabinet.) Bill, on the other hand, has not progressed much beyond rice and peanut butter (not together, thank goodness), but what he lacks in galley skills he more than makes up for in his willingness to jump in on any job including cleaning which he has done to the point of working his fingers to the bone (almost literally). He has, however, opened Bill's Deli and Bowline Shop which turns out perfect grilled kielbasas and corned beef sandwiches every time. Adrienne finally overcame her run of bad luck with pressure cookers which previously have exploded in her presence and turned out spaghetti Manu Kai complete with meatballs. And of course, there is Tom, breathlessly waiting for his chance to jump in and whip up pasta pesto or, for a little variety, pesto pasta.

A huge difference on this passage has been the daily baking of bread. Like the ancient sea captains that reserved navigation for themselves so the crew would not mutiny and take over the ship lest they sail in circles, Tom and I have kept the recipe a secret insuring our continued usefulness to this crew that is becoming more able by the day.

Yesterday we logged the first sighting of humans for more than 2 weeks when a rust bucket of a fishing boat crossed our wake. Later during the early evening we sailed between what we assume were a couple of his flashing buoys marking his long lines.

19 June 2012

13 11 S 164 02 W
242 T 9.5 kts
ESE 20-25 Seas 10-12
0157 (20 Jun) UTC
658 nm to Vavau, Tonga

Kailani smells the barn and is making a steady 9-10 knots in pretty much beam on seas falling off the occasional wave with a lee lurch that makes even the simplest tasks time consuming. The upside is that a Saturday daylight arrival in Neiafu now looks possible.

We have been having problems with the refrigeration compressors cutting out and after a largely sleepless night running through all the possibilities the skipper spent the better part of the morning rolling around the engine room with his tools. For those of you who may be interested (and to give myself a rare opportunity to extol my virtues as a mechanic) I took a faulty 120v AC circulating pump off line, used the 24v DC circulating pump wired to the engine room blower circuit to push water through the 120v AC compressor and voila, cold beer. It still cuts out after an hour or so but that is probably due to the climate and overcharging with refrigerant. We'll solve that problem in Neiafu when the boat is quiet.

Now it's less than 72 hours of this infernal rocking and rolling. If the seas get up too much more we'll bear away a bit but our vmg should still keep us on schedule.

20 June 2012

15 03 S 167 02 W
240 T 8.8 kts
ESE 15-18 Seas 6-8 ft
0045 (21 June) UTC
457 nm to Vavau, Tonga

The wind has abated a bit and our boat speed fallen. While we're still logging better than 200 nm per day, we need a bit more to make our arrival before dark on Saturday. While everyone is keeping a watchful eye on the heading and sail trim, we can only do what the wind will let us do.

To put this trip in perspective, we are traversing a route equivalent in distance to that from Union Square in San Francisco to Piccadilly Circus in London without using the great circle route over the pole favored by airliners. Over this entire distance we have seen nothing but sea and sky to a horizon perpetually seven miles off. We have spied only three ships in three weeks and have seen no other humans and only a handful of birds, dolphins and turtles. Other than brief contact with our loved ones by email we have spoken to no one except our fellow crew members. We have no knowledge of world events, but experience says that things will be much the same as they were when we left. We have slept a lot and have been deprived of sleep. We have lived in a world of constant motion and yet for the most part don't notice it much any more other than the exceptional lee lurch when we are trying to do some mundane task. Every sunrise and sunset has been spectacular in their uniqueness and while we try to capture those moments on our cameras, the 16 mega pixels at our disposal can't begin to do those moments justice. We are ready to make landfall but not ready to let go completely.

This is ocean passage making. It is certainly not for everyone, but for some of us it is pure magic.

21 June 2012

16 59 S 170 06 W
243 T 9.5 kts
ESE 10-12 seas 2-4
0230 (22Jun) UTC
242 nm to Vavau, Tonga

The wind went light early this morning but we called Customs on the sat phone and persuaded them to clear us in at 0800 on Sunday so we were content to amble along at 6 kts thereby avoiding anchoring up or standing off and on until daylight. But contentment only lasts so long among Kailani's crew when there is speed to be had. So after the obligatory cup of tea to see if the wind would freshen we called all hands, pulled the asymmetrical spinnaker out of the forward hold, rigged all the necessary lines and blocks and now we're off to the races on course making 8-10 kts in these calm seas. We'll sail this rig until night fall and then go back to our white sails. Before you purists out there scoff at such a move, remember we watch a single person and all it takes is one squall and a slow douse and you can find yourself on your ear with a good chance of tearing the sail. I asked for volunteers to triple the watch but the cruising mentality prevailed. As it should.

Anyway, Alvin's enchiladas (with the After Death sauce on the side this time) are back by popular acclaim tonight and by noon tomorrow we should see the smudge of Vavau on our bow.

22 June 2012

18 03 S 172 59 W

242 T 9.6 kts

SSE 20 gusts to 28 Seas 8-10 building

0113 (23 June) UTC

56 nm to Vavau, Tonga

After a leisurely 6-7 kts in a 10-12 knot breeze this morning the winds have veered about 20 degrees and are now blowing in excess of 20 kts. Our sailing angle is now a close reach and every third or fourth wave we fall off and the next one we bury our bow in with green water pouring down the deck. We're down to the staysail and one reef in the main but as always, Kailani just takes it in stride logging a steady 9-10 kts.

The mileage to Tonga given in these logs is to the north end of the island. Once we hit that waypoint there are another 20 miles to go to get into Neiafu harbor. Tom has put together a detailed plan of arrival and has walked the crew through his thought process. Our plan is to arrive at night and pick up a mooring but if the weather is against us with wind and rain and poor visibility we'll stand off and on until first light.

All is well, but the motion of the boat combined with frequent spray across the cockpit is keeping the off watch below in their bunks.

I'll send another update after we're moored up in Neiafu probably around 0200 local time, 0600 back in California.

23 June 2012

18 39 S 173 58 W

On mooring Neiafu, Tonga

24 June (on the other side of the dateline) 0130 local

Malo a leilei

After flawlessly executing Tom's arrival pilotage we threaded our way through the inter island passages of Vavau and picked up a mooring off the town of Neiafu a little after 0100 local time. The crew is in the cockpit enjoying a beverage and will shortly turn in for some rest before our 0800 rendezvous with Customs at the town wharf.

We have sailed approximately 4,657 nautical miles in 23 days and 16 hours for an average speed of 8.2 kts. The crew is healthy, the boat is no worse for the wear and the skipper plans to sleep without worry for 5 hours for the first time in three and a half weeks.