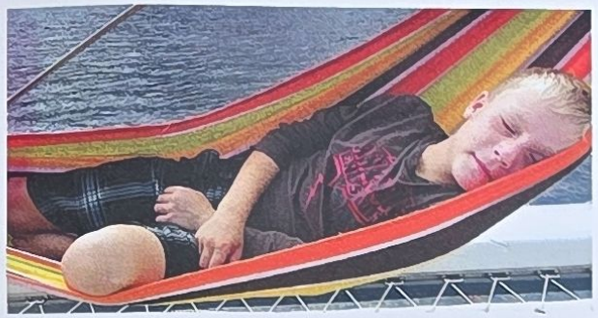


Far and Away

A Sailing Adventure to the South Pacific—with Seven Children Aboard a 45-foot Catamaran

Text by Marianne Scott
Photos by the Schafer family

Every spring and summer, a group of sailors leave the West Coast of North America on an offshore adventure, perhaps to winter in Mexico, explore the Hawaiian Islands or to venture forth to the fabled South Pacific. Usually, these offshore voyages are the result of a long-nurtured dream: this was certainly true for Victorians Normand and Kirsten Schafer, who'd talked for years about making an offshore voyage with their entire brood. "We used to look out at the boats anchored off Sidney Spit," said Kirsten. "And we'd say, 'we'd like to sail away some day.'"

Photo above - Eli in total relaxation. Photo below - Eli with Orin's parrot in Vanuatu.



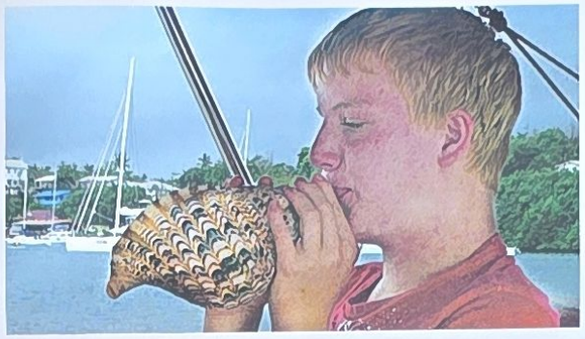
The first time they contemplated such a journey, they had five children. In 2013, when they were able to fulfill their vision, they were the parents of seven.

Norm and Kirsten own Cheap Tickets Canada, a full-service and web-based travel agency. Their manager ran the business while they departed with their children ranging in age from one to 18: Alyssa 18, Jaeden 17, Dailin 15, Orin 12, Eli 10, Teyauna 5, and Zakary 1.



Photo above - A family of monkeys in a banyan tree in Fiji. Photo below - Far and Away *anchored in Bora Bora.*





Dailin blowing the conch and calling family members.

"It was our last chance to unite the whole family for an adventure," Norm told me. "The older ones are leaving the nest. Alyssa was already attending university and Jaedan has just joined her. We started looking for a boat in 2011, but didn't find one suitable for us. So we continued the search in 2012."

They found a 45-foot catamaran in San Francisco in October 2012 and renamed her *Far and Away*. With four cabins, it had enough space (the baby, Zakary, slept with mom and dad). Moreover, it was located on the West Coast, so didn't need to be transported across the continent. Even though some of their friends thought them to be nuts, by the end of the year, the family had rented out their house, packed a U-Haul, driven down to San Francisco and moved aboard. "When Norm has a goal," said Kirsten, "he brings it about.

"It was quite a challenge to move from a 4,500-square-foot house to a 45-foot boat. A lot of bodies in a small space. We had boxes everywhere. I'd brought a ton of freeze-dried food to make sure the kids had enough to eat. We also had to disconnect from such things as Facebook, a good thing for the family."

The Preparations

As a teenager, Kirsten had sailed in the South Pacific with her family. "But it had been a long time and it's different when you have responsibility for your own offspring," she said. Similarly, Norm had crewed on sailboats as a teen, but again, going offshore is a different challenge. To become more knowledgeable, Norm took a Power Squadron course and

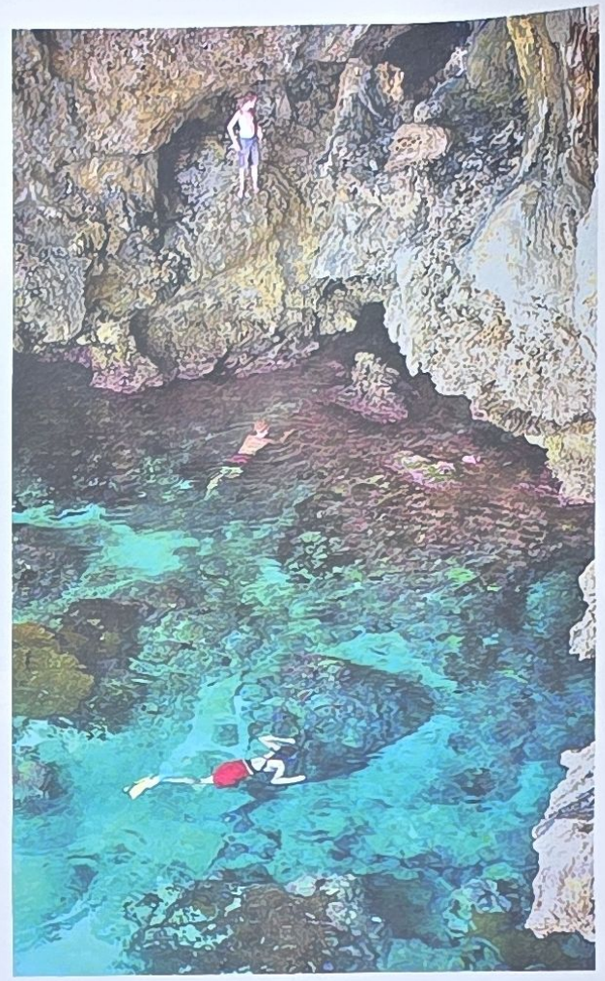


Photo right - Swimming in a rock in Vanuatu was a highlight. Photo below - Coming back from a local church in Tonga (Vava'u Group) off the shore of Talihau.



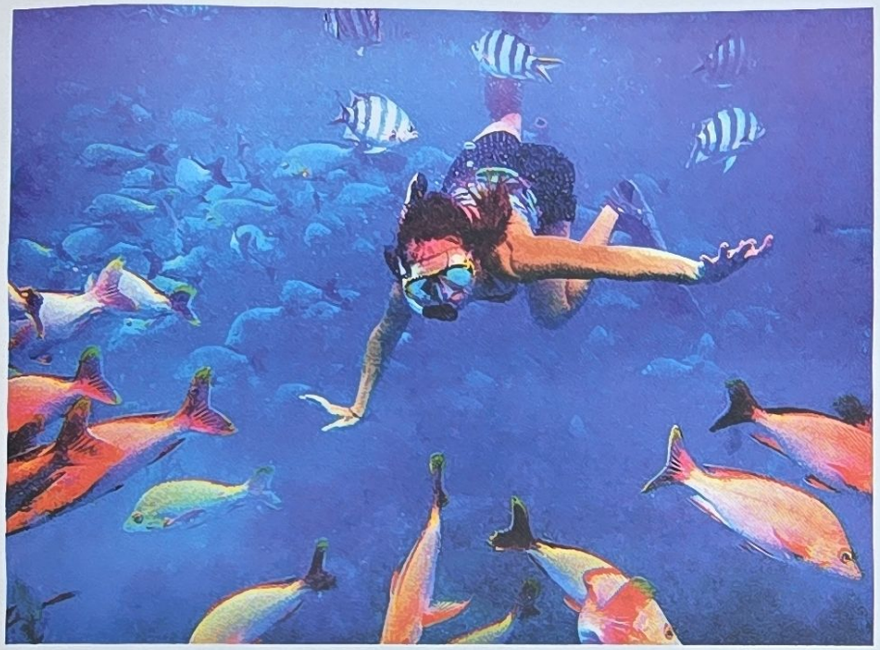


Photo above - Alyssa snorkelling with the reef fish.

earned his HAM operator license. The older children were so excited to go to the South Pacific, they took sailing lessons and four of them also qualified as HAM operators.

While living aboard for the first two months in San Francisco, Norm spent much time learning and tweaking the boat's systems. The boat was well equipped. Three 40-W solar panels aided by a generator helped run *Far and Away*'s single-sideband radio, AIS, GPS, radar, chart plotter with Navionics charts, a watermaker and the large fridge and freezer. "And then, of course, we all had things that need charging all the time, electronic devices, iPads, phones, cameras, etc.," said Norm. "The kids made movies which needed downloading. And the single-sideband HAM transmissions gulp electricity."

Kirsten tried to make sure that everything was stowed properly and that provisions would be ample. "We made 12 trips to Costco," she said, smiling. "And I bought a lot of freeze-dried foods from Thrive in Utah. You can get almost anything. Broccoli, strawberries, meats, more veggies and lots of premade meals which turned out to be great for the crossings."

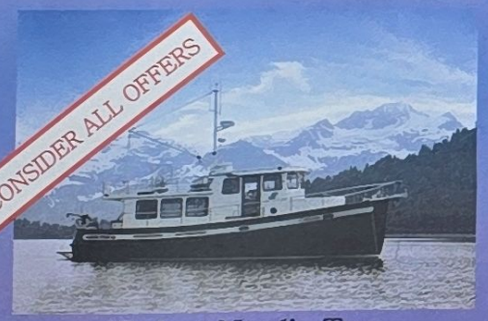
Freeze-dried foods (including perishables) are made by using a dehydration process which preserves foods and reduces their bulk. As the name implies, food is frozen and then reduced pressure draws out any moisture. Usually, packets of freeze-dried foods are stored in airtight cans.

First Time Offshore

The previous skipper of *Far and Away* took the family from San Francisco to Santa Barbara, a three-day sail. The weather was rough and a lot of learning took place. The next stop was San Diego to pick up Alyssa, who flew in from Hawaii to

Yachtfish MARINE INC.

SPRING SALES EVENT



42-foot Nordic Tug

$377,000

*2004-2014 completely refurbished
*New 450 HP Cummins with warranty
*New generator with warranty
*Warranty on all equipment



36' Sportfisher & Island Cruiser

$297,000

*Custom built in 2011
*Teak cabin and decks
*Interior features full cabin w/ berth, shower, head, galley and storage

Yachtfish Marine offers full service boat yards in Seattle and Port Orchard.
Call 206-953-9030 or visit yachtfishmarine.com for more information.

206-789-8044

SEATTLE YACHTS
Power & Sail

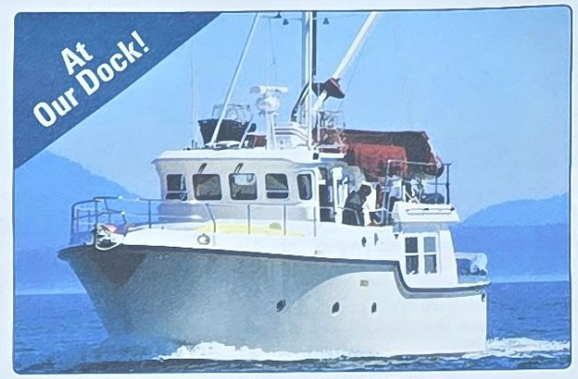
206-789-8044

Start your adventure with us...
Shilshole Bay Marina • Seattle, WA
www.SeattleYachts.com

Catalina Yachts 12' - 47' | Tayana 37' - 64' | EAGLE TRAWLER

Select Brokerage

49' DeFever	122,000	42' Catalina MKI	99,500
46' Pacemaker	68,500	42' Catalina	3 SOLD
40' CHB	SOLD	40' Cheoy Lee Offshore	54,000
40' Eagle Trawler	279,900	40' Kettenberg	19,900
40' Nordhavn	415,000	37' Hunter	SOLD
39' Mainship	SOLD	36' Bavaria	94,500
36' Grand Banks Classic	159,000	36' Catalina	2 SOLD
34' Californian	SOLD	36' Morgan	27,500
30' Sea Ray Sundancer 290	SOLD	35' J105	PENDING
30' Sea Ray Sundancer 290	19,900	35' Ericson	26,500
28' Bayliner 289	79,900	35' Catalina 350	PENDING
26' Nordic Tug	69,500	34' Catalina	SOLD
Sail Listings		34' Cal	SOLD
58' Tayana Cutter	569,000	34' Cal	PENDING
56' Nordhavn	SOLD	34' Gemini 105M	SOLD
47' Vagabond Ketch	189,900	32' Aloha 32.5	42,000
47' Catalina	249,500	31' Cape Bay Liberty	49,500
46' Formosa Cutter	99,500	30' Islander	12,900
46' Peterson PH	69,900	30' S-2	24,900
45' LeComte Fastnet 45	89,500	27' Nor'Sea	SOLD
44' Lafitte	89,500	25' Catalina 250	SOLD
43' Cheoy Lee Pilothouse	SOLD	22' Catalina	2 SOLD



2000 Nordhavn 40 – $415,000

Featured Boats

Your Boat Pictured Here!
Listings Wanted!



New Eagle 53 & 57



2008 40' Eagle Trawler - $279,900



42' Catalina MkII $99,500



46' Pacemaker $68,500



46' Peterson PH $69,900



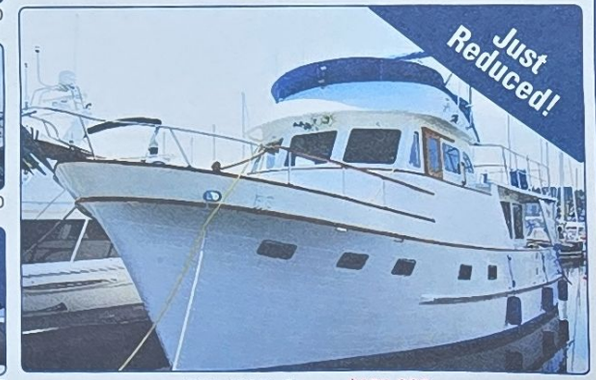
36' Grand Banks $159,000



36' Bavaria $94,500



26' Nordic Tug $69,500



1979 49' Defever - $122,000

As your exclusive Catalina and Tayana dealer, we are uniquely qualified to sell your used Catalina or Tayana

Visit us online, stop by our office, or give us a call: 7001 Seaview Ave NW, Suite 150, Seattle, WA 98117
phone: 206.789.8044 toll-free: 877.223.2023 | info@seattleyachts.com

Find us on: facebook

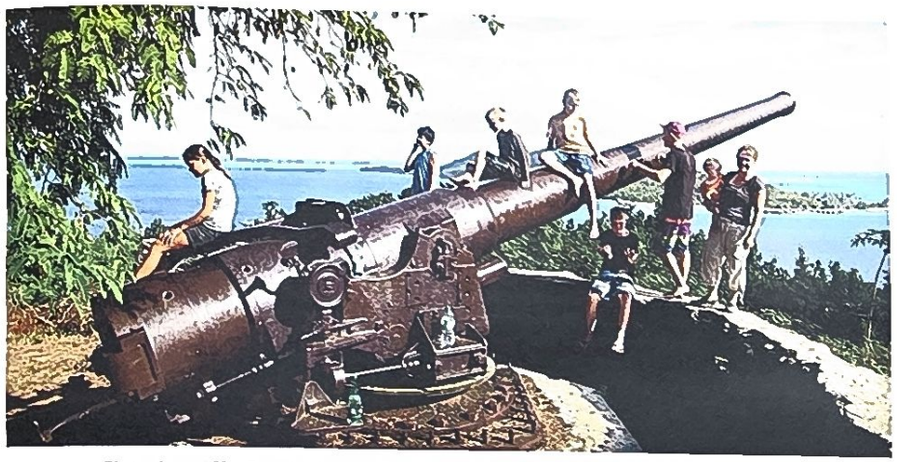


Photo above - The Farepiti Guns - World War II cannons on the mountains of Bora Bora.

join her family. "We were still preparing," said Kirsten. "It was stressful at times. We tethered Zakary all the time so he couldn't crawl far enough to fall off the boat. We had gates. Yet one day, his harness was somehow missing and he fell in. Jaeden scooped him up."

Catalina Island was the first stop. "We anchored and thought we were well set," said Kirsten. "Norm and I went ashore. When we returned a half hour later, there was no boat. The kids were all aboard. The anchor had dragged in a kelp bed. But the kids had fired up the engine and were just waiting around for us. We jumped into the dinghy and were quickly reunited. We were a lot more frightened than the children."

The next stop was 23 days later in Hiva Oa, in the Marquesas, one of French Polynesia's archipelagos. There were days that the trade winds pushed *Far and Away* along with hardly an adjustment to the sails, cruising along at seven- to seven-and-a-half knots. Naturally, there were adventures and mishaps. While crossing the Intertropical Convergence Zone, often called the doldrums, they ran into turbulent weather.

"Light fluky winds had forced us to motor-sail for about three hours," said Norm. "Then a sudden gale of 35 knots hit us on the nose. The jib tore. We lowered the sails but had no momentum and were lying ahull to 12-foot waves. Dishes were breaking. Kirsten and I were on the helm. We were at the mercy of the sea. We prayed. The event taught us a lesson. We're not in control of our lives but have to put our trust in a higher power. It was a powerful experience for the whole family."

The Schafer children in their own words

The Schafer children learned much during their year aboard *Far and Away*. They are confident and articulate. As their Mom said, "They had so many chances to learn by being weeks away from land, to meet all these different people living in different cultures, to play with kids without a language in common, to see gorgeous islands, experience nature and 'live in the moment.'"

These are some of the reflections the children wrote about their adventures:

Alyssa, age 18, in Fiji, from the blog

"I tried my best not to hyperventilate as I jumped backwards into the water with all my scuba gear and started my descent. Within seconds, however, the exact opposite happened. My breath was taken away at the beautiful sights all around me. Great walls of coral and millions of tiny fish sprouted all around me as our group went deeper. A jet of bubbles caressed me, as my brother right under me in the water let out a breath of air. Clown fish danced around sea anemones and when I touched a spot of soft coral, it instantly transformed from bright blue to white. This was magic. I was in love..."

Jaedan, age 17

"My favorite place to sail in the South Pacific is Tonga. The Vava'u group of islands are small and close together. This enabled us to cruise on glassy waters and keep the wind speed up so we could sail at top speed. With caves, arches and coves the Tongan islands were sprinkled so close, some days we would take our kayak and paddle to three or four and explore them for 20 minutes before going to the next. Exploring and finding less known spots made these islands tons of fun. One day while cruising around we saw a little island with a white sand beach. We stopped, dropped our anchor and swam to shore for the afternoon. Those unplanned spontaneous days were the best."



Photo left - The whole Schafer family in Niue's Talava Arches and Caves.

Orin, age 13

"Some people think that falling off the boat would be scary but I think my Mom was more scared than me.

My favorite place on the sailing trip was in Vanuatu at the top of the active volcano, Mt. Yasur. As we walked up to the top of the crater, the ground shook and smoke puffed out of the volcano. Even though it took until dark before we could see the glowing blobs of lava, it was amazing to see the booming fireballs. As it got dark we watched nature light up the sky like a huge firework display."

Eli, age 10

"On the boat we had to get really creative with our entertainment. The craziest thing we would do at sea was when the winds died down. If the seas were calm we would swing off the halyards into the open ocean. My Mom never liked us doing this but my Dad would jump in the water with us. Another thing we loved to do in stormy weather was put on our harnesses and clip in. Then as the huge waves swelled up we would jump in the air. As the boat dropped it felt like we were flying in the air at the front of the boat.

"When we arrived in the islands we found land adventures. My most favorite was in Samoa where we found natural rock slides. Fresh water splashed all around us as we slid over the waterfall and into the crystal pools below."

Teyauna, age 5

"As we sailed through the big ocean I missed my friends a little bit but mostly I wanted to see mermaids. I would sit at the bow of the boat on the nets and search the whole ocean for them. I never did spot them coming to the top of the water but I did see lots of magical dolphins. They would swim and dive and even flip in the air right in front of our boat. I loved it. I still hope to see a mermaid next time I cross the Pacific Ocean.

"I was pretty excited to see land for the first time after we had been sailing for so long. I loved to listen to the drums and the island people singing. In the Marquesas I even learned to do some really fun dancing from a pretty Tahitian girl with long wavy hair."

Dailin, age 15, Monday July 1, 2013

"Today I woke up at 10:00 am because I was the unlucky one who got the 3- 5 am night watch. I read my book and played some card games with my brothers Orin and Jaeden before we arrived in Raiatea. As we approached the island our favourite holiday [Canada Day] was not forgotten. Starting with fireworks, red painted faces, and even a maple leaf pizza, we partied like one of the locals on shore. The locals must have thought we were crazy but we had a blast belting out "O Canada" at the top of our lungs and waving our flag around. Canada Day was now complete as we topped it all off with a banana cake decorated and iced like a Canada flag of course . . . Leaving home and sailing across the South Pacific was the adventure of a lifetime. We never really left our home entirely behind, we took a part of it with us."

Keeping Busy

Then the watermaker stopped working and although they still had about 360 gallons of water, they decided to ration it. That said, the family enjoyed the voyage. The kids played games. They read. As they're already home-schooled, they were used to studying on their own. They sang songs. Alyssa did most of the cooking and also wrote in her journal every day. They created a blog to which Norm, Kirsten and the older children contributed. It was sent out via email to their website, familyadventuring.com/blogs.

Chores were ever present. Sometimes, the kids were tasked to perform a white glove cleaning of their cabin. It was a time to find things that had gone missing, or had gotten grunged up or wet when a porthole had not been properly closed. And Norm cut the boys' hair when they all got shaggy. "We had to do it on the bow with the wind behind us so the hair wouldn't blow into the cockpit. It was hard balancing through the waves."

Laundry was another time-consuming task. "We didn't have a washer," said Kirsten. "We had invested in quick dry towels and easy-to-wash clothing, but with a baby aboard, we did have laundry." She'd brought some hand-operated equipment that was supposed to wash small loads but was useless. "We ended up with a bucket and a plunger that served as washing machine while at sea."

Alyssa recounted that at first being aboard was not as much fun as being surrounded by her friends at college. "Being aboard with only family was an adjustment. But after a while, we grew very close again. We invented a lot of activities. In the doldrums, when it was calm, we rigged up a rope and we would swing from the mast. Another day, we acted out the movie *Beauty and the Beast* for our parents. There were dolphins to watch and birds alighting on the bow."

One day about 20 flying fish landed on the trampoline, through portholes into various heads; one even landed in a wastebasket. According to Norm, Kirsten didn't like the little creatures and especially the way they smelled in the blazing sun. As the yacht neared the equator, Alyssa had been distracting her little sister, Teyauna, with tales of dolphins and mermaids riding them. Then, as Kirsten wrote in her blog, "Dolphins magically appeared as if out of nowhere. Everywhere we looked sparkling silver creatures were diving and surfing the waves around our little ship. Teyauna finally got the welcome she had been waiting for although she still hoped to see the mermaid princess that usually rides with her dolphin chariot."

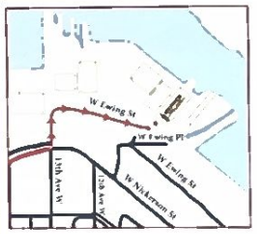
One day Orin, 12, decided to fill a bucket with salt water. He stepped down to the swim platform, bent down and began scooping; immediately, with the sailboat traveling at six knots, he was dragged into the ocean. Fortunately, Jaedan saw him, yelled and threw the man-overboard pole. With sails lowered, the sailboat turned around and was able to retrieve him. It was a harsh reminder for the whole family on how unexpectedly danger can pop up on the sea.

One day, Alyssa related, they were so bored they decided to compose a rap song, complete with drums and lyrics. And when going through some lockers, they found forgotten craft supplies and Zakary, Eli, Teyauna, Orin and Alyssa painted and colored paper sea turtles, sea horses and tropical fish. The lifelines and clothesline came in handy for drying their creations.

French Polynesia

After 23 days at sea, the arrival in Hiva Oa, the first of the Marquesas Islands, was a revelation in many ways. The bay was packed with boats—a bit worrisome as Norm likes lots of swinging room. But the children were ecstatic to be able to go ashore. While yachts with a couple aboard might not attract much attention from the local population, a family with seven children was an instant hit. The children became ambassadors. "We looked for opportunities to build relationships," said Kirsten. That included visits to the local church (the family is Mormon) and enjoying the terrific a capella singing so common on South Pacific islands. As there are many Mormon churches on the various islands they visited, making local friends was simplified.

"We did accept help from people sometimes," said Kirsten. "Laundry for example. And sometimes families would row up to the boat and bring us fresh fruit and fish. They knew which of the reef fish were safe to eat. Often we took people for a sail which they really enjoyed. We've had as many as 28 people aboard. And we practiced 'cinnamon roll diplomacy.' Everyone loved them. I also gave away straw-




REDDEN MARINE SUPPLY INC
· Est. 1939 ·

Now in Seattle

The Right Gear at the Right Price to get the Boating Season Started!

- Paint & Maintenance Products
- Anchor & Docking Essentials
- Safety & Survival Gear
- Knowledgeable Staff
- Open 7 Days a Week!

1080 West Ewing Street
On the Ship Canal next to Nickerson Street Marina.
Minutes from Elliott Bay, Shilshole Bay Marina & Fisherman's Terminal!

www.reddenmarine.com 855.916.2746

Bellingham ❖ SEATTLE ❖ Anchorage ❖ Cordova ❖ Homer

Providing Real Estate Services In Ketchikan & Surrounding Areas



www.SalteryPoint.com

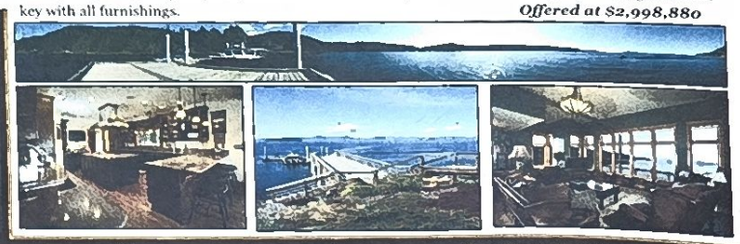
Coastal real estate group

Chart your course for Saltery Point located just 20 minutes from Ketchikan, as you cruise Alaska's Inside Passage. The 62 acre site was once the home to a thriving cannery in the late 1800's and artifacts can still be found on its 2000 feet of shoreline. The current accommodations include a luxurious fully furnished 6,000 sf, 6BR/6BA main residence, 5 additional buildings offering storage, shop & crew/guest quarters. Enjoy the serenity of remote, off-grid living with the convenience of power, water, heat, high speed internet and telephone so you can stay connected. There is a private dock to accommodate your yacht, a salmon stream and a 40 foot waterfall. Property is being sold turn-key with all furnishings.

Offered at $2,998,880

Property Presented by:
Mary Wanzer
CRS & Broker
907.617.0196





www.coastalak.com | 855-247-5811 | 344 Front Street, Ketchikan, AK 99901

berry and raspberry jam. They're not fruits found in the tropics."

They learned spear fishing and diving. They had meals with local families. They collected limes and papayas and bananas, which tasted much better than the ones at home. And then it was time to move on.

The family learned the hard way that being well anchored can also be a problem. They had been obliged to put out both a stern anchor and bow anchor. But when they went to pull up the stern anchor, it wouldn't budge. After much tugging, Dailin and Jaedan dove down but were unable to dislodge the entrenched metal. Norm donned his scuba diving gear and followed the chain to the anchor. With much digging and creating clouds of murkiness, he was finally able to haul out the deeply buried anchor. It only took 90 minutes!

After Hiva Oa, *Far and Away* moved on to Nuku Hiva, where (as I can attest from my own weeks there), no-see-ums abounded and the itching, especially for Kirsten, was intense. The next stop was Ahe, one of chain of atolls in another French Polynesian archipelago, the Tuamotus. These islands are much older than the Marquesas, whose volcanic mountains are so recent that no fringing coral reefs have had time to grow. The Tuamotu atolls are the leftover fringing reefs that



Photo above - Tanna Island's market in the village of Lenakel, Vanuatu.

once surrounded ancient volcanoes that have subsided back into the earth's magma. The coral "soil" is not very fertile and obtaining fresh water is always a challenge.

Tahiti

After a visit to Rangiroa, the Tuamotus' largest island, the family arrived in Tahiti's capital Papeete, French Polynesia's largest town. They stayed for nearly a month. It was good for the children to have others to play and communicate with. They roamed around the island and church members again took them under their wing. They visited a school and shared their sailing adventures with the first- and second graders. They were shocked at the high price of food—something we too experienced 16 years ago while sailing in this area. And we didn't have seven offspring with healthy appetites aboard.

Norm also learned the plight of all boaters: the never-ending repairs. Although having stowed a host of spare parts aboard, he still didn't have enough. So, ever organized, he made a list of the broken bits on his blog and took advantage of shops and repair places in Papeete. As his mom was flying out to join the family, he asked her to bring some of the hard-to-locate parts. This is the repair list:

1) Replace the four missing battens that blew out of the mainsail.
2) Repair the Plexiglas in Jaeden and Dailin's bathroom hatch (it cracked into three pieces during the Pacific crossing).
3) Sew the Mainsail (areas where the mainsail batten pockets rubbed on the shrouds).
4) Sew a tear in the sail cover and Bimini.
5) Bleach out the kitchen sink saltwater hand pump.
6) Replace the broken gear lever on the dinghy's outboard motor.
7) Patch up a small hole in the port rudder (Stern anchor chain rubbed up against it in the Marquesas).
8) Seal up water leak in port window.
9) Fix one of the solar panel charger displays.
10) Replace the water-maker filter membrane.
11) Propeller zinc replacement.

By the end of June, the Schafers trekked further west. Moorea, Raiatea, Tahaa, Huahine and Bora Bora—the major isles in the Society Island archipelago—were on the menu. Snorkeling was terrific, but the mooring buoy in Bora Bora broke





Photo above - Teyauna rides a turtle.



Marianne Scott is an award-winning writer who has covered the marine scene for well over a dozen years and has been contributing to *Northwest Yachting* since 2001. She sails with her husband, David, on their yellow Hanse 411, *Beyond the Stars*, throughout Puget Sound and British Columbia.

Marianne is also the author of *Naturally Salty, Coastal Characters of the Pacific Northwest* and of *Ocean Alexander—the first 25 years.*

loose and Norm and Jaeden and Dailin frantically started the engine just before *Far and Away* got stuck on the outer reef.

Although they were occasionally seasick, the family remained healthy. Kirsten had a highly allergic reaction to the no see ums in the Marquesas and Daelin developed a boil on his leg that was painful enough to impair his walking. Antibiotics helped.

The family sailed on to the Cook Islands' Palmerston, and then on to Niue and its incredible caves, although Norm noticed the Polynesian population on this paradisiacal, raised-coral island—the smallest nation in the world with an association to New Zealand—had dwindled to fewer than 1,500.

Further visits to Tonga, American Samoa and Western Samoa rounded out their journey. When they reached Fiji, Norm began to search for a way to sell *Far and Away*. It would be impossible for the family to sail it back to the Pacific Northwest. Would they have to sail to Australia to find a buyer?

Luck, or as the Schafers think of it, divine intervention, came to them after arriving in Vanuatu. After being greeted again by local church members, Norm spied a bulletin board announcement: a family was searching for a 45-foot catamaran. Three days later *Far and Away* had a new owner. The family toured the island and had more fantastic outings. They showed the new owners the ins-and-outs of the boat, packed up way too much gear and flew to Australia. They arrived home at the end of 2013.

What They Learned

"The most challenging," said Norm, "was learning all the systems on the boat. Knowing how to troubleshoot. Fortunately, other yachties helped. But the greatest reward was the quality time with our kids. We hiked and swam and dove and snorkeled. All of us met the most incredible people."

Kirsten also emphasizes the stories the family can recall. "We talk about all the things that happened. We have those experiences in common. It wasn't all smooth sailing. There was the storm, Orin falling overboard and Zakary ending up in the San Diego marina. But it was a wonderful family adventure, an adventure we'll always remember and tie us together." NWY

