

## Update on N62 Island Greeter:

### Part II in one Nordhavn's preparations for long-range cruising

By Jeff Merrill

If you have flown up and down the west coast and traveled over the coastline from Santa Barbara to San Diego, you have no doubt looked down to see the glorious Channel Islands. Beautiful and isolated, they are rarely visited. Boaters worldwide have probably heard of Catalina Island – the closest paradise for Los Angeles based sailors, but there are actually eight major islands in the chain and most locals have only ever visited a few, myself included.

Last December I joined the crew of 6234 Island Greeter for a [shakedown cruise](#) to Catalina – a 30-mile trip from Dana Point which gave owner Frank Adams his first taste of leaving the commissioning docks and heading out to sea to start playing with his new yacht. On that trip Frank's long time boating friend, Dick Farrell joined us, and the three of us had a fun overnighter, which helped identify a few items needing attention by the Nordhavn crew when we returned.

The ultimate plan for Island Greeter is to head up to the Pacific Northwest later this spring and Frank understands there are a lot of systems to learn and a lot of equipment to test and become familiar with before undertaking this long passage. We agreed that the best practice would be to continue active local use of 6234 and that a longer-ranging trip up to a more remote island like San Miguel would be a smart next step in our preparation.

We blocked out a 5-day window in February that would fit our schedules. I flew in to Orange County straight from the Miami boat show and on the way Frank had called to see if I would bring a potato peeler...hmm. I heard the start up of the main as I walked down the dock. By 06:50 we were clear of the slip and underway.

In the time between my first trip and this adventure Frank has been over to Catalina twice including a loop all of the way around with 62 project manager Wylie Hurd. Dick has been along on every outing and each time their teamwork has been honed and their confidence swelled; meanwhile the punch list has diminished.

#### **Wednesday February 21, 2007**

We set out of Dana Point with a fresh oil change recently completed and exactly 100 hours on the main so our high load break-in period was now successfully completed. The boat was fully stocked with fuel and provisions and even though I can't imagine Island Greeter is wanting for anything, there is still plenty of room to take on more supplies and provisions.

After about an hour we were settled on our course, one that would take us straight to Santa Barbara Island, approximately 70 miles away – a track which paralleled close to the mainland-facing western half of Catalina Island. While on watch I noted our rpm at 1325, 45% load

running at 8.7 knots speed over the ground and burning 6.5 gallons an hour. It was a clear California morning with about 15 miles visibility, calm seas and 5 knots of wind.

It's amazing to think how far Island Greeter has come in the past two months. She's gone from cardboard and blue tape protection to glorious carpeting and decorative upholstery. Her beautiful gloss cherry shines and the black granite counters sparkle. As I checked in to my familiar stateroom I had to do a double take. The bed was made with the sheet gracefully pulled down (hey Frank where are the mints?) This was a far cry from the "BYOSB" (bring your own sleeping bag) first run back in December.



[Heading out in flat seas](#)

Frank and Dick were busy with breakfast chores so I enjoyed the solitude of the pilothouse and took inventory of all of the electronics in front of me. It is overwhelming to scan the displays – the amount of input data available to process on a modern trawler is simply amazing. Aside from things like seawater temperature, wind speed (true and apparent) and direction, heading, course and eta to next waypoint, we also have radar images, sonar images, VHF and weather channels...I could go on. And those are just a few of our earth bound data inputs – thanks to NASA we have satellite

telephone, satellite television, satellite compass, XM satellite radio and XMWX satellite weather. All of this is nice, but it wouldn't really be "modern" boating if we hadn't removed the steering wheel – heck, those things aren't necessary to hang on to when you are nestled in a Stidd. And since the waypoint is already being steered to by Nobeltec navigation, why tempt yourself by putting your hand on the wiggler? Frank used Top Cat marine from Anacortes to set up his electronics package and Tom Gilbert did a great job. The system is pc driven with several large display screens that can be manipulated with computer mice. No buttons to push or dials to twist, just roll the mouse and find what you want on the tool bars. And there is a nice camera system with three locations – forward and aft in the engine room and in the cockpit . Each camera can be brought up on a flat screen monitor and you can zoom and pan to track your crewmates' every move – a great safety feature. There is so much going on it will take this whole trip to get used to what is available let alone learn how to manipulate and fine tune. With good visibility and a solid autopilot I pretty much just have to make sure I have water under the keel and steer away from land and other boats...but is sure is nice to know I will never be bored if I get tired of looking out with binoculars. You can almost command Island Greeter without ever having to eave the pilothouse.

And on the subject of never leaving, I thought I'd take up Beebe's suggestion from *Voyaging Under Power* and bring my slippers on this trip. They are a pair of low cut Uggs and I made sure I scrubbed the soles since Frank doesn't allow street shoes inside. Why not relax and make myself at home? It's a tough assignment to head out to sea for a couple of days, but somebody has to do it...and for me it's a vacation from the real world: no e-mail, a brief reprieve from shaving, and a ball cap on top of my head.

So while Frank and Dick were chopping onions and garlic and filling up a huge stainless steel cooking urn with carrots and about 7 pounds of top sirloin (I could smell their progress), I peered from my pilothouse lookout on what might as well have been Pacific Lake, we didn't need the active fin stabilizers, and once again I was reminded how fantastic the visibility is from the bridge of the 62. You have about as close to a 360- degree visibility as is possible.



[Frank and Dick working hard on a hearty stew](#)

Island Greeter's magnetic charm resonated out through the ocean hailing all kindred souls and soon we saw the first of many porpoise playing in our bow wave. The foredeck of the 62 is high and forward and it is difficult to safely view the proceedings below around the bulbous bow, but we were attracting all kinds of action. The porpoise seem to sense the boat, forget about their work and chase on over to have a go.

Still solo in the wheelhouse I had a question for Frank about his sonar. In a slightly raised voice I called out for Frank, who responded from the galley. We held a pretty decent conversation between the two levels – illustrating how quiet a Nordhavn runs while underway. Another example happened on our return trip home a couple of days later when at about 4 am Frank opened up the port wheelhouse Dutch door and we could hear the porpoise breathing as they swam along side us.



[A Valentine's Day balloon litters the ocean](#)

Scanning the surrounding waters I did come across one irritating recurring theme – nylon party balloons floating on the surface. Most were red or pink and at one point presumably Valentine gifts for loved ones who I hope would be appalled to see their fleeting joy drifting on the surface - a potentially deadly lure for an unsuspecting sea creature.

Man, that stew downstairs was really starting to smell good. I wish I could describe the aroma, but anyway it made me hungry so down to the galley for a slice from the sandwich roll. Eating often and well is another theme that seems to permeate the trawler lifestyle. I remember in my sailing days the gaunt long distance sailor who would scrap his way to a distant port and arrive as flesh and bones. Not so for us big daddy trawler types. Would you like red or white wine with your dinner?

Back at my perch I tuned in the weather. Having been out of town for the past week I hadn't been around to see how things were developing, but I did hear that we were expecting rain and some wind. NOAA confirmed that we should have a peaceful day with a system bringing small craft advisory due to arrive this evening, so we just chugged along at 9.1 knots running 1300 rpm and burning 6.2 gallons an hour – we even centered the stabilizer fins and couldn't tell the difference.

We passed the west end of Catalina at noon and could see our destination, Santa Barbara Island, about 20 miles away on the horizon. Normally you can't see Santa Barbara Island from the mainland and though I've been to Catalina easily a hundred times or more and to San Clemente Island a handful of times, I've never stopped to enjoy any of the other So Cal islands – just passed them coming and going. So I was looking forward once again to helping 6234 live up to her Island Greeter name.

As we pulled in to the one safe anchorage and got ready to drop our ground tackle we could immediately hear we were not alone. Hundreds of sea lions were barking and the cliffs echoed their cacophony.

With the anchor set the boys installed Frank's elegantly simple home crafted anchor bridle complete with red and green color coded shackles, custom chain slot keeper and chafe protected lines. They released a few more feet of chain so that the windlass was unburdened. By 15:30 we had both flopper stoppers holding (with an inquisitive seal lion checking it out – giving his seal of approval?).



[Choosing a spot to anchor near the arch point at Santa Barbara island](#)

There is a dock landing, a fixed mooring and some sort of island keeper's house up on the hill, otherwise just a lot of seals and birds. Not many trees, but a nice green glow on the ground from the recent rains, speaking of which were now forecast to come in earlier than originally expected.

Frank told me about times years ago when he would take his sailboat out to Santa Barbara Island and dive for abalone. Coming to this same spot today in the plush luxury of his Nordhavn 62, it was unfathomable that he once felt "camping" out in his sailboat was the only way to go. Yes, we have a true trawler convert here (myself included).

Once settled it was time to have a bowl of stew (tasted as good as it smelled while simmering). We watched the day turn to dusk and the sea birds return to land in the fading light while we caught some news on the television.

Total run time today: 67 miles in 8 hours.

### **Thursday February 22, 2007**

Up at 5 am after a good night's sleep. Frank has set an anchor watch with alarm diameters using the Nobeltec software and we stayed well within our safety boundaries. With the cover of darkness it was easy to see the faint glow of light from the mainland 35 miles away. There were clouds in the sky, so unfortunately no stars. At 5:20 we cranked up the main, pulled in the floppers and upped anchor. By 5:40 we were leaving Santa Barbara Island, sipping on coffee and Frank told me he could hear the seals playing in the flopper stoppers all night – guess I slept through that. One habit I have tried to develop is looking behind me when ever I leave a place by

boat. You never know when you might come back and it is reassuring to have something look familiar. It was interesting to see the larger rock called Sutil Island that was hidden from our view on the back side, but loomed large in our wake. The seas were starting to build and our lake walk of yesterday was not to be repeated. Bumpy 2–3 footers off the port bow with a bit of a head swell. To a Nordhavn 62 that's like a mosquito trying to irritate a rhinoceros.

We could see San Nicholas Island about 24 miles out to sea – none of us have ever been there and Frank told me it is a very difficult place to anchor so someday I guess I'll have to go see for myself. To get to San Miguel Island, today's destination, we set a course to cut between Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa islands.

This would be about a 70 mile/12 hour day so we had a large breakfast and chatted in the wheelhouse. The engine room temperature check list that I developed on our last trip had proven very useful for all of us getting dialed in to the holy place, but it was time to update it to include logging in inspections, like bilge and seachest levels (which require lifting hatches not just pointing the laser beam). We slid along the backside of Santa Cruz, past Anacapa and our XM weather showed in Doppler what we could see out the windshield – gray clouds and rain squall ahead. Winds had stayed around 10 knots and then later came onto our beam and we were making 8.5 knots over the ground.



[Frank the gadget man with his remotes](#)

By 11.20 we were into the rain, the seas were up to 5' and the wind closed in on 20 knots. It was cold outside and we all commented on how nice it was to be in the pilothouse. As our rolling started to increase Frank and I discussed adjusting the fin speed on the stabilizers and after some fine-tuning found a comfortable rate that smoothed out the ride. A couple of books fell off their shelves and we realized we had been a bit complacent and did a quick run through the rest of the ship to secure lockers and clear off counters. Frank, who is a Mr. Gadget kind of guy, was sitting back on the wheelhouse bench with the remote autopilot in one hand and his Wesmar sonar controls in the other. I haven't played with sonars much before – looks like an underwater radar display – but Frank is determined to tweak and learn how to use it and he was the only one to see a whale surface near us, so there must be something to this.

We cut through the pass between the islands and made our approach to San Miguel. This was a new place for all of us and the prime destination for this trip. I enjoyed reading the descriptions in the Douglas and Douglas book Exploring the Pacific Coast (San Diego to Seattle) which describe Cuyler Harbor and does a great job introducing all of the mariner points of interest up and down the west coast. (Most of the information provided from observations made while aboard their Nordhavn 40 research vessel Baidarka.) We passed by the rough and beautifully craggy green sheer of Prince Island. By 14:30 we had our hook on the bottom and were setting up the bridle and floppers. Frank has a Maxwell automatic chain counter and once he knew our depth of 52' he calculated how much scope he wanted, punched in the numbers and with all

hands clear he put out our chain from the wheelhouse. He has the chain marked with red at 50' and black at 100' intervals to visually back up what the display is showing and this system works really well. Did I mention that Frank likes to anchor out?

Admiring our sandy beach surroundings with a rolling swell passing through every few minutes I saw some weird movement ashore and got out the binoculars for a closer peek. Elephant seals! Man, they are big, slow and ugly (I know, it takes one to know one). They were scattered around the beach like huge trunks of drift wood – immobile, then they would raise their heads, push up with their shoulders and undulate like “Godzilla the inchworm.” These giants come into the beach belly surfing the waves and you can tell they don’t want to be on land. They make sure that the swell has pushed them up as far on the tide line as possible before they give in and surrender to gravity that presses them into the sand. In the water is another thing, they glide along just as slippery as fish. I have seen elephant seals before on the central California coast so this must be where they go on vacation. Tell you what, I was happy to be aboard the 62 and quite content to save shore side exploration for my next visit.



[Arriving at Cuyler Harbor at San Miguel Island](#)

Photo of elephant Seals



[Elephant seals lounge on the beach at San Miguel.](#)

So, secure with our anchorage and satisfied to have completed our trip objective of arriving at San Miguel safely we retired to the upper aft deck with a bottle of wine and the binoculars and enjoyed watching the elephant seals all afternoon. Later while taking a shower and cleaning up before dinner I was amused that the sound of the Whale gulper sump pump might somehow beckon the elephant seals, but when I got dressed and went outside to look I saw they were all still on the beach.

Using the sat phone I called home to check in and convinced my wife Pam that we need to come back to Cuyler some time to explore, but maybe after elephant seal vacation is over so that we can go ashore on San Miguel and walk along the beach.

Total run time today was just over 9 hours to cover 75 miles.

It got cold outside so we retired to the saloon and after a great chicken and salad dinner Frank popped in a DVD.

### **Friday February 23, 2007**

A day to sleep in as we only had a short trip planned. The rain squalls pelted us during the night and the wind must have been 20 – 30 knots, but we held solid and our blubbery friends were still

flaked out on the beach. Frank told me he had gotten up a couple of times on anchor watch - the alarm had gone off due to his setting too tight of a boundary – we had swung 360 degrees, but the anchor held. By 8:00 we were floppers up and anchors aweigh just as the sky behind the island turned black and a beautiful rainbow shined above the island. Perfect timing because the wind whipped up and the rain came down as all three of us took up our positions in the pilothouse. I had suggested that we consider a loop around San Miguel rather than a straight retreat back to Santa Cruz Island as originally scheduled. “When is the next time any of us will be out here?” What a dumb question to ask. Frank and Dick, up for a challenge decided we would do a circuit and as we turned to port we were facing 30 knots in 10 – 12’ seas – and everything that we hadn’t secured came crashing to the floor – Dick and I spent the first few minutes getting things settled while Frank adjusted the rpm to find a comfortable motion. Ah, this is more like what I remember bashing up the coast and what a timely reminder being so close to Point Conception. Well, this is what we had come for, to test the boat and see how she handles the varying conditions. Whew, that bulb lifting out of the water and crashing down sends a tremor through the hull, but never once did we doubt our safety and though we could have easily turned around we toughed it out and completed our plan. There are several “rocks” well away from San Miguel – you really need to pay attention and I’m sure there have been some unlucky incidents out in this seaway. We were pitching about fairly steeply, but it was not an uncomfortable ride. Dick commented that he felt like a goldfish in a bowl (think of a goldfish being transported to school by a first grader preparing to get up in front of the class for show and tell). As we rounded the back side and got to run down swell we marveled out how Island Greeter handled all points of sail beautifully. Particularly satisfying was the solid ride when we were cutting across beam seas – thank you ABT for the great TRAC active fin stabilizers!

Walking on deck was like being inside a salt shaker. Everything is caked. You can’t put your hand down without a crusty crunch. Down wind we started calculating our arrival to Forney’s cove on Santa Cruz Island and were figuring out what time in the middle of the night we would have to wake up to get back to Dana Point by mid-afternoon. Things were running smoothly, we weren’t on a set schedule so we decided to press on an additional 19 miles and instead stay the night at Albert’s Cove on Santa Cruz Island, a place where Dick has anchored numerous times before. It is impressive to see all of the sandy beaches, and yes, my Elephant Seal friends were scattered about like so many prizes on top of a cat litter box. Large kelp beds protect the shore. This was a fun run.



[Heavy winds and seas greeted them as the boat departed San Miguel island](#)

We arrived at Albert’s and anchored by 14:55 – with another 53 miles under our keel and another 7 hours of practice (including some good head sea pounding) under our belts. Frank got the barbecue fired up and rotisserie cooked a leg of lamb that was outstanding. We were done with dinner by 17:00 and with the prospect of getting up and out at 03:00, it was an early night for all.

Total run time today: 53 miles in 7 hours.

### **Saturday February 24, 2007**

This is not the first time I've awoken in the 0:300 hour aboard Island Greeter, and we soon had everything organized and ready to leave. Here the advantage of a chain counter really came in to play. It was dark and cold and raising the anchor from the pilothouse was relatively civilized. Dick was on deck in the ready position and secured the snubber once we had the anchor up on roller, but I can't imagine trying to see the painted chain in this type of situation. Today's return trip to Dana Point would be over 100 miles – Island Greeter's single longest run to date – and gave us night running practice as well. The dawn lit up the sky at 6:00 and the sun parted the horizon at 6:30. We had a big freighter follow us for most of the run, but it was essentially uneventful. Of greater significance was when Dick noticed that the seachest was only half full during his hourly engine room check at 07:00. Frank and I went down to check the intake valves and strainers. It appeared somehow the starboard hose after the strainer had become clogged. We had enough water in the half full seachest to support the hydraulic cooler intake so we could continue running as is and keep an eye on things. Thankfully this intake is along the bottom row of the sea chest!



[A school of porpoise tags along](#)

And actually even though this was our longest leg, it was our most peaceful. With great visibility and wind ranging from 0 – 5 knots we just had to stay on course and enjoy a following sea that pushed us down swell. There was little pleasure boat traffic and a couple of Navy ships out practicing, but we kept on our track and never had to alter course. Our friends the porpoise kept stopping by. We interrupted feeding time for one huge pod who came over to play and ran with us for about 5 minutes before returning to their lunch.

As we approached our Dana Point home base in a nice rolling swell with very little wind we talked about the issue with the low water sea chest. For docking it is nice to use the hydraulic bow and stern thrusters, which require that the wing engine be run to power the hydraulic pump, but the wing engine draws its' cooling water from the seachest and, unfortunately, the intake line is mounted in the upper seachest which was dry. Still unclear what was causing our seachest water deficiency we tried backing down in the hopes that it might dislodge something even though we were pretty sure the problem existed between the strainer and the seachest\*. We finally agreed that with the light wind we could manage using the main in neutral to power the thrusters. It would just be more shifting gears for Frank. As we approached our slip Frank went outside to take control from the starboard wind station. A crowd of Saturday afternoon harbor strollers stopped to watch us and Frank muttered that he didn't have any steering response and we were headed for the seawall. We immediately reversed for more maneuvering room and he took command from the pilothouse. The new drill was that with dock lines and fenders ready I was going to "coach" Frank in from the Portuguese bridge – essentially giving him verbal instructions from outside while he ran the controls inside the wheelhouse and was "flying blind."

It reminded me of my old sailing tactician days and we slowly glided into position with Frank concentrating on shifting and me talking us into the slip. Mission accomplished. Who needs a wing engine?

Today's run 108 miles in 13 hours.

Tied up and caked with salt from our pounding around San Miguel Island I left Frank and Dick to head home. We logged 308 miles in four days, put 38.5 hours on the engine and burned 200 gallons of fuel. We did three anchor sets and retrievals, and got to really check out rough water running on all points of sail. All of the ship's systems were placed into operation except the dinghy, water maker, air conditioning and clothes washing (all at our choice) and we had a fairly pampered hotel Nordhavn holiday.

\*Post trip note: I always hope to take away some new knowledge or experience with these adventures and actually enjoy passing along what I learn in the hopes that I can help someone else if they read these articles and find themselves in a similar predicament. The seachest scenario was explained to me by Dan Streech and Jeff Leishman. With all of our pounding around in the rough seas off of San Miguel Island we managed to trap air under the hull which worked its way into the seachest. The seachest is designed with a set of low intakes and high intakes depending upon the types of pumps requiring cooling. Those systems use a centrifugal pump taking water from the bottom. These types of impellers will get slippage and not operate correctly if they suck only air (the bottom has both air conditioners, etc.) The upper intakes of the seachest feed cooling water to positive displacement pumps which can move air through the system. These include the wing engine, deck wash pump and generator plus others. Had we not known better or paid less attention we could have easily started up the wing engine unaware of the air in the chest and within seconds all of that air would have been sucked up through the wing without any harm and the seachest would have become replenished. Actually some pretty smart engineering here, but that shouldn't surprise anyone who has followed our boats!

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