

Thank God *It's Always Friday*

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By Jeff Merrill



[Buddy, Kathy and one salty dog](#)

There's just something about Fridays. Is there anything more anticipatory than the end of the work week? I swear my endorphins kick in at the mere thought of an approaching weekend to kick back with my family or tackle around-the-house tasks. Sometimes leaving the responsibilities of my job back at the office for a couple of days is just what the doctor ordered. And in the case of Buddy Bethea, *Doctor* Buddy Bethea, it's exactly what he prescribed for himself. After

deciding to take a year off from his practice, he and wife Kathy purchased a Nordhavn 55 so they could pursue what they call their "vacation of a lifetime". Being the quick-witted man that he is, Buddy dubbed his new boat *Always Friday*. After all, you do tend to lose track of days and dates on vacation and in effect, it really does seem like it's always Friday.

It was nearly two years since the Betheas signed on to the 55 in preparation of a trip up the West Coast to British Columbia and finally their goal of Alaska to experience all that they've heard cruising amongst the icebergs and wildlife to be. They received their finished boat in June and even though the shakedown cruise we were about to embark on was merely to nearby Catalina Island, it was nonetheless exciting for them.



[It's "Always Friday"](#).

Typical of such cruises, I wanted to give Buddy a feel for the systems and get any kinks worked out of the boat that might be hiding. We started by heading to Newport Beach for fuel because Buddy had discovered cheaper prices than what was around the corner from our docks. At \$2.55/gal for diesel, filling up the tank with almost 2,000 gallons totaled what Buddy described as more than he paid for his first car.

With Kathy returning from taking family dogs Binky and Raleigh out for some "sightpeeing", we were off to Catalina. I've been on board a lot of different Nordhavns, but it's funny how each owner's own touches really differentiates one from the next. *Always Friday* is hull #21 and the bright, colorful interior Kathy put together lends itself perfectly to the fun, relaxing feeling you should get while on vacation. Kathy opted to stay in the saloon to knit and watch some TV while Buddy and I took to the helm and set sail for Avalon. While underway, we discussed all of the systems, played with the electronics and enjoyed watching the bow slice through any big seas that tried to take us on.



[Nordhavn 47 moored w/
Avalon in the
background.](#)

After years spending time offshore fishing on a Hatteras, Buddy finally realized that a seagoing trawler would be a better fit for traveling and his study led him to Nordhavn. In fact the 47 was his first choice. But after seeing what the 55 had to offer, the Betheas decided to stretch a bit and go for the larger boat, a decision they made with no regrets.

We pulled into Avalon and hopped the shore boat into town to find some dinner. It was a pre-summer summer day with a sunny calm and the harbor had a sparkle of anticipation that the high season was coming soon...much in the same way that this shakedown cruise was just a glimpse of what was to come for the Betheas.

The next morning we had a visit from Jim and Linda Lenthall who stopped by in their dinghy to say hello. We saw their Nordhavn 47 when we pulled in. The couples introduced themselves and spent a some time chatting. The Nordhavn community is fairly tight knit and Nordhavn owners love to talk with each other. I finally had to pry the group apart so that we could get on our way.



[Nordhavn owners
discussion group: the
Lenthalls and the
Betheas](#)



[Buddy goes over
engine room checklist](#)

We had a smooth crossing back home after sticking our nose around the east end to see a bit of the backside and I kicked back to let Buddy practice all of the navigating and engine room checks. I enjoyed a few porpoise from up on the flybridge and like all good things, our brief trip came to an end as we arrived back in Dana Point.

A few weeks later, *Always Friday* left Dana Point bound for British Columbia. The crew had a rough going – 12-foot seas, 40-knot winds and the sturdy sea dogs got so much ocean time that Buddy redubbed them Christopher and Columbus. Aside for a short reprieve to change the oil at the 100 hour mark and take on some fuel just north of San Francisco, the intrepid team traveled straight through to Victoria with only a couple minor hiccups.

Now in Alaska, the Betheas are thoroughly enjoying living every day as Friday. In fact, you can almost feel the laid back attitude in Buddy's [blog](#). If you can set your envy aside, it's pretty cool seeing their "vacation of a lifetime" come to life through photos of snow capped mountains, beautiful timber forests, salmon and bald eagles (including an amazing account of a salmon taking a bald eagle for a swim!)

I've often thought lately that Jimmy Buffett should write a song about *Always Friday*. He could steal from Buddy Bethea's real life experience of seeing the world from the pilothouse of a Nordhavn 55.

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