

August 10, 2010
Nordhavns Venture to Ta Shing
Leaving Japan a lesson in patience and good judgement

By Jeff Merrill

(Ed. note – this is the second of a multi-part series on the very first Nordhavns ever to return to the factory where they were constructed. California-based Nordhavn sales representative Jeff Merrill, traveling aboard one of the boats, Nordhavn 62 Seabird, had the privilege of participating in the historical event which took place July 3, 2010, and documented the days preceding, during and following the occasion. [Click here](#) to read Part One.)

Everyone was geared up about the trip to Taiwan and getting around to finishing up last minute things. One of the projects Steven was looking forward to completing before we took off was scrubbing his keel coolers. *Seabird* has a keel cooler for the wing engine and the main engine (not very common on Nordhavns to have a dry exhaust wing) and he'd found some wire bristle brushes to clean off the coral and barnacle build up. I told him that the An Ping harbor in Taiwan would not be a place he'd want to swim and here was like paradise – I had a hard time keeping



John out of the water and once he was in he didn't want to come out. Steven rigged up his hookah dive compressor, jumped in the water and I powered up the hookah, handed Steven the regulator hose and – bummer, it quit. Back aboard Steven diagnosed that the inverter had failed and instead of an underwater project this turned into an under the forward bed project (where the inverters are located on *Seabird*). We did a re-boot and it worked for a bit, but something was wrong here so we remained in inverter bypass mode for the rest of the trip and Steven emailed Rachel at Ta Shing to see if they had a replacement that could be installed during our visit. How you react to a “bump in the road” like this helps set the mood for the whole crew. Steven's calm analysis and reaction, including having an immediate back up plan, let me know that if things went south we had a captain who would keep us on course.



Ken came over to discuss the inverter. They went online to find the manual and, after realizing that they could not diagnose the problem with what they had available, just let it go. It was so typical of the companionship and teamwork of these GSSR crews. I know it's been mentioned countless times before (by me and the Sushi Runners themselves), but the importance and abundance of the solidarity amongst the convoy cannot be over stressed. It was clearly such a vital piece to the success of their mammoth adventure. We've all been on trips before where we've simply not been on the same page with a bunkmate, navigator or crew. Personality clashes can be the death of an otherwise awesome trip. No worries of that here. The Argosys, Jones and Williams (and Davises) are all there to help and support each other; one boat's problem becomes a group problem and there is an abundance of intelligent minds available for counsel.

Soon talk shifted from electricity to our departure. We wanted to leave soon, the boats were provisioned, but we needed to take on more fuel and do the correct paperwork for exiting Japan.

The GSSR fleet had become “domestic” (Japanese) boats during their tenure to make clearing in and out of each Japanese port less cumbersome. But, prior to departing Japan for good we needed to reverse this process – and by doing so would also be able to take on fuel at a dramatically reduced rate (\$2.65 vs. \$4.25 a gallon). The GSSR Japanese agent, Mr. Furuno from Interocean Shipping, coordinated with his local counterpart and we pulled out passports, signed paperwork and effectively cleared out...meaning we had to leave the same day – as soon as we took on fuel. Another act was playing out behind the scenes: Jeff Sanson (*Sans Souci*'s captain) was flying in this same day and we had to wait for him to arrive before *Sans Souci* would be ready to go.



The fuel truck first went to Ken and Roberta's boat and about half way into the fueling process there was a distressful VHF broadcast amongst our fleet that the fueling had stopped and it was possible that the truck had delivered the wrong type of fuel. My immediate reaction was how could they put in gasoline instead of diesel? But it was a lot trickier than that. The GSSR fleet communicates on shore using Motorola talk-about radios and often use channel 71 on VHF hand

helds – much easier than cell phones – and Ken's dilemma got Steven looking for an email about different diesel fuel oil types in Japan. Steven actually dialed up “Lugger Bob”, Bob Senter, who was several times zones away



enjoying his evening in Seattle when the urgent call came in. Bob confirmed the diesel variations (I guess I should have known, but it had never occurred to me about all of the different grades of diesel available throughout the world) and to shorten what was a pretty frantic and potentially long story, the diesel was fine, was not going to hurt our engines and *Sans Souci* could continue fueling. Taking on the wrong fuel and running it through your engines can result in any of a number of problems like having to rebuild your transmission, getting your timing redone, redoing your injectors, rebuilding pumps...all unfun projects to be avoided! (MGD, MGO, MDO are diesel variations and KU is the local grade we all took on. There are several “definitions” of diesel that the fleet had received from Bob Senter and you can learn more about this from www.dieselnets.com). An hour later it was our turn and we moved to a closer seawall that had a sidewalk wide enough to allow the fuel truck to drive out to us to deliver her load. Braun Jones had some “magic goo” (Kolor Kut water finding paste to be exact) that detects water and so he asked me to go hunt for a long wooden stick so we could sound the bottom of the fuel truck tank and evaluate the quality of the diesel before taking it on. I scavenged about, found a branch, filed down some nubs on the concrete seawall and presented it to Braun. Braun reminded me of some kind of spiritual tribal wise man, a diesel Shaman – the big floppy hat, billowing cape over his neck, miracle potion, divining rod and empty jar for sampling– cool stuff Braun san! The fuel was carefully inspected by viewing it in the clear glass

jar (looked clean – and not dyed red like we are used to) and the delivery driver opened up the top of his tanks and probed the bottom – no muck and the Kolor Kut did not show any traces of water – so we fueled up and then cleared the dock for *Grey Pearl* to take on her load.

While *Seabird* and then *Grey Pearl* took on fuel, *Sans Souci* took on crew – Jeff Sanson, who is an experienced captain with hundreds of hours aboard the 68 and runs Pacific Yacht Management in Seattle was a big part of last year’s GSSR and has worked on all three boats in the fleet. He was summoned by the Williams to fly over for this leg of the trip. He arrived about 2:00 pm, with just enough time to cab to the boat and get a shower in before we got ready to head out. The immigration people came by to have some paperwork signed and return our passports – a very easy process that was initiated through Furuno’s agency. Our team was ready to leave the docks and slide into adventure formation.



And so on our sixth day in Japan and with our crews all aboard (6808 *Sans Souci* – Ken and Roberta Williams with Jeff Sanson, 6208 *Grey Pearl* – Braun and Tina Jones with Wayne and

Patricia Davis, 6204 *Seabird* – Steven and Carol Argosy with Jeff and Jonn Merrill) and the boats all provisioned and fueled up, we were ready to go. The original plan was to leave around 3pm, I think it was closer to 4:30 when we finally got underway. At last, departing Japan, next stop Taiwan! Or so we thought...after cutting across the harbor and heading under a bridge to take a local recommended short cut that would save us an hour and a half we saw a vaguely marked channel with breaking waves in the distance and Jeff Sanson, who was skippering the lead boat, *Sans Souci*, decided we should back track so we all made a tight turn in the harbor channel, back tracking and then re-set sail for Taiwan.



Jeff Merrill is a Nordhavn salesman based in Dana Point, CA. Jeff has been with PAE for over 10 years and enjoys sharing his experiences aboard with nordhavn.com readers. Jeff and his 13-year-old son, Jonn, flew to Japan at the end of June, 2010 to join the GSSR fleet on their historic homecoming trip to the Ta Shing boat building yard in Tainan, Taiwan. All three of the GSSR boats have blogs you will enjoy, they are:

Grey Pearl

Braun and Tina Jones

Nordhavn 62

<http://greypearl.talkspot.com>

Seabird, Steven and Carol Argosy

Nordhavn 62

<http://www.seabirdlrc.com>

Sans Souci

Ken and Roberta Williams

Nordhavn 68

<http://www.kensblog.com>

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