

# The BIG U

Alaska to Maine

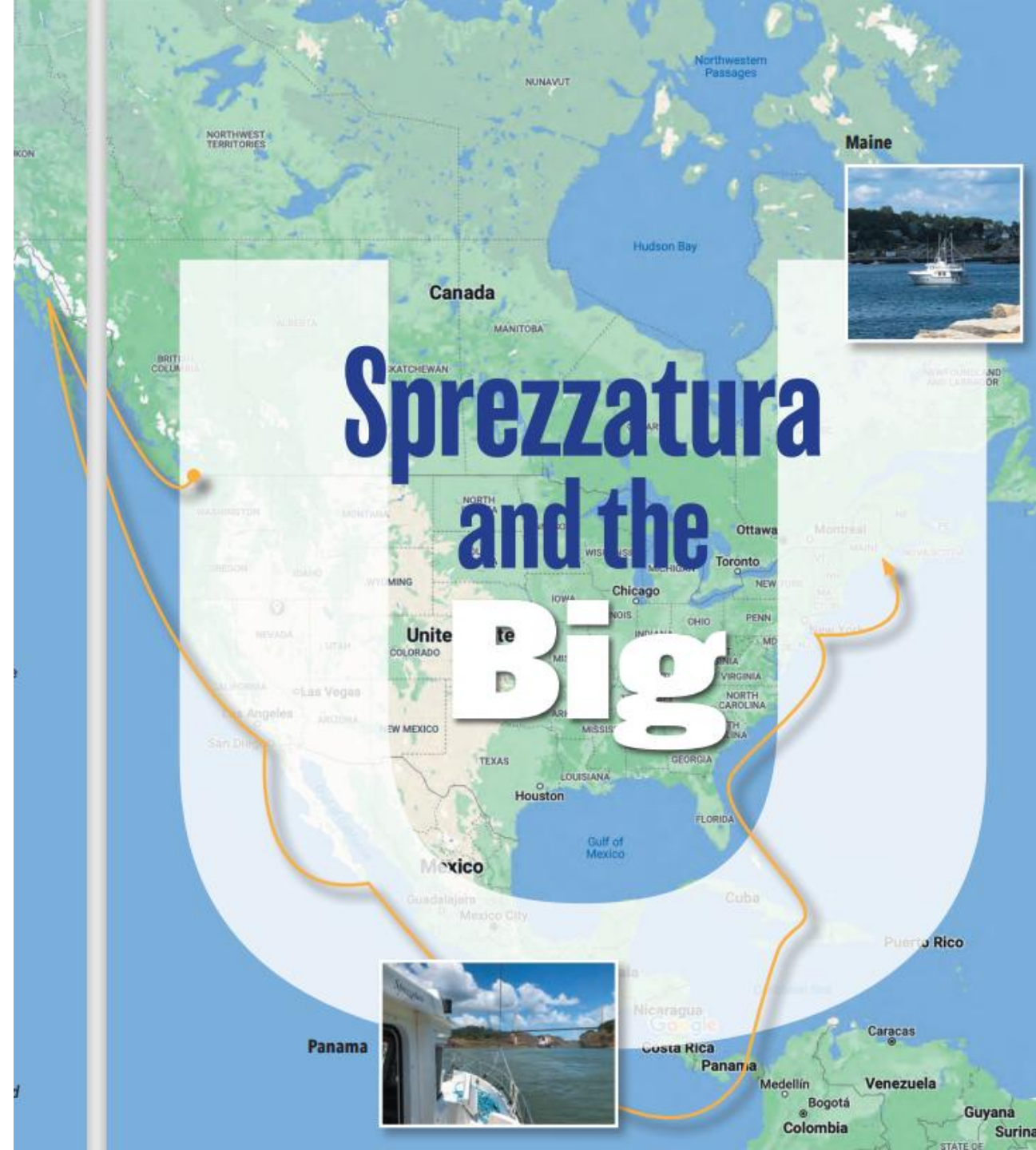
In The Nordhavn 40

*Sprezzatura*

Eric Bescoby

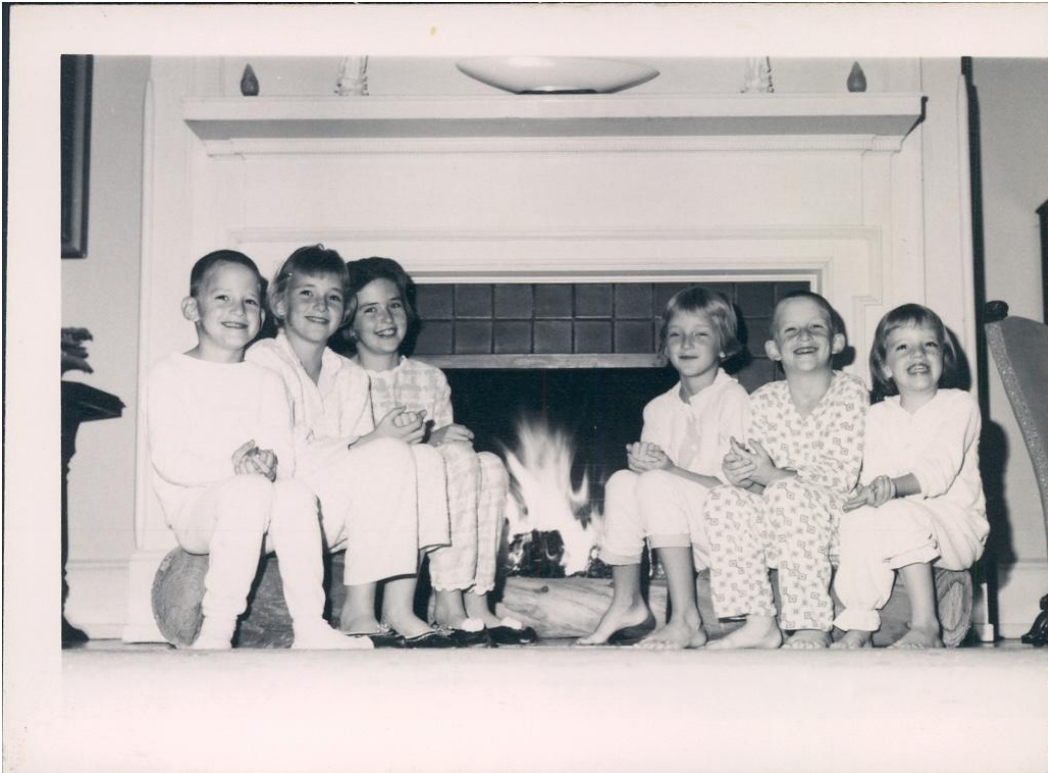
Trawlerfest, Anacortes

May 17, 2025



# A Short History

- Grew up in a large family in an 1903 “orange grove home” in Upland, California east of Los Angeles
- When I was 6, Mom and Dad bought a 25’ park trailer and 16’ Glaspar with a 75hp Johnson at Black Meadow Landing on Lake Havasu, California
- Spent every summer, all summer at the Lake through College





# A Short History

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- Bought a 1979 24' Campbell Cuddy Cabin, 454 V-8 Mercruiser 330 out-drive
- “Got Retired”
- Divorce final
- Daughter left for college
- Decided to make a change for a few years



# THE BIG U in 7 Steps

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1. Buy a Trawler – May 18, 2016
2. Move to Canada – November, 2016
3. Go North Young Man: Alaska - April – August, 2017
4. Get Warm, Go to Mexico – September - October, 2018
5. To the Panama Canal - November 2018 – March, 2019
6. Jamaica and Bahamas – May, 2019
7. ICW To Maine – June - August, 2019
- + 8. Back to the Sea of Cortez – September, 2019 – June, 2021



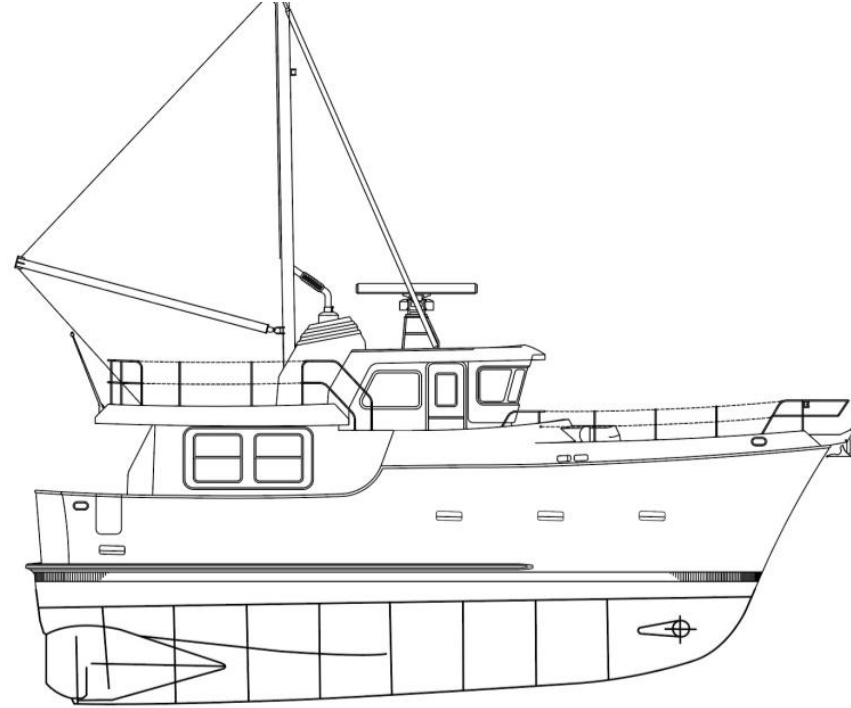
# Step 1

## Buy a Trawler

### May 2016

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- Read The Trawler “Bible”
- Newport Beach Boat Show
- Decided Nordhavn
- Looked at N40, N43, N46, N47
- Bought 2001 N40#29 in Seattle, May 2016



*Sprezzatura*  
*Los Angeles-California*

PANAMA CANAL - MARCH 2019



# Step 1

## Buy a Trawler

May 2016

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- Get advice from experts
- Kabola diesel heater
- Captain training for insurance
- Move boat to Canada



# Step 2

## Move to Canada

November 2016

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- Tax Avoidance
- Drove from LA to Anacortes in motorhome
- Moved aboard at Van Isle Marina, Sydney, BC

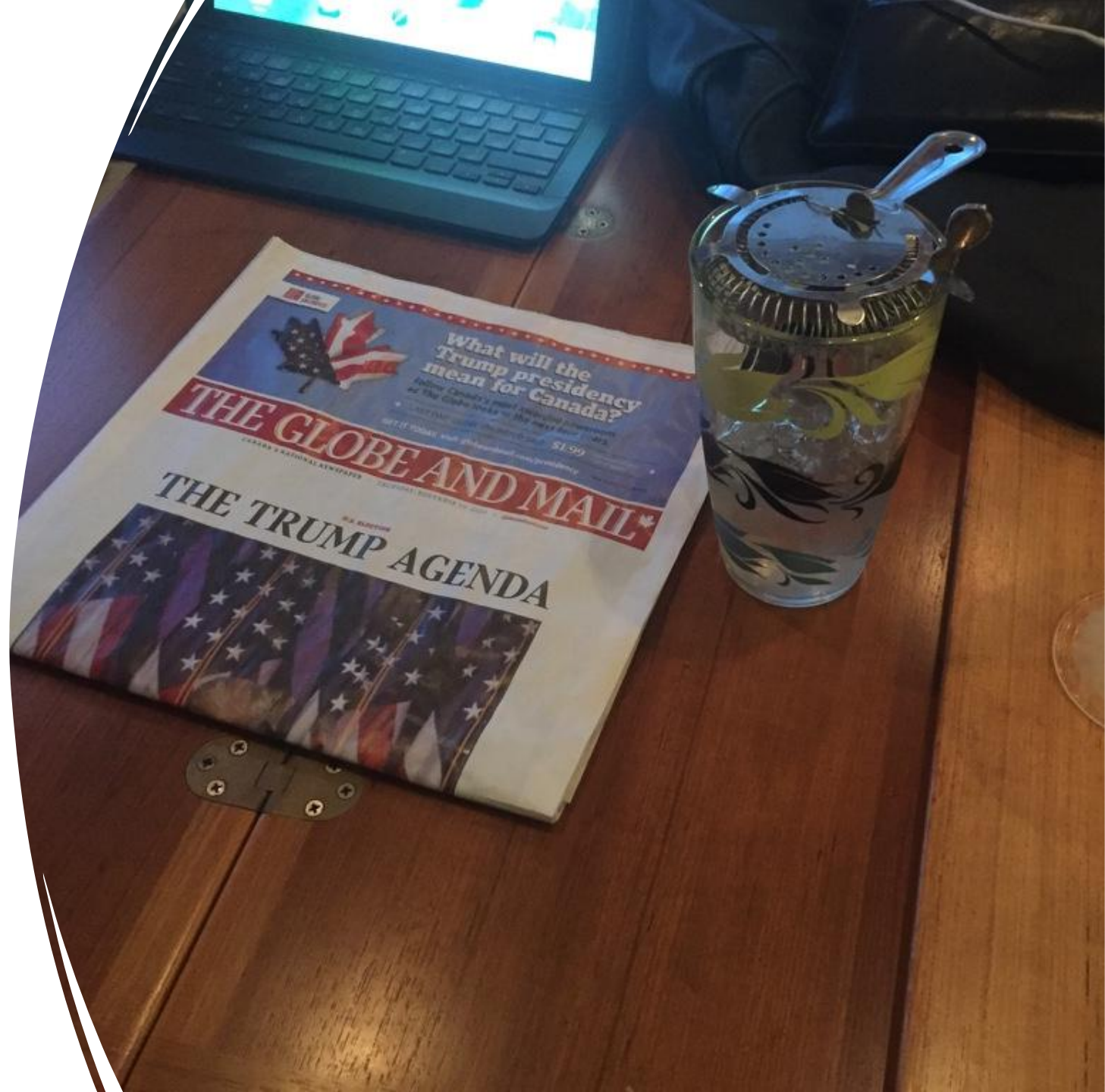




## Step 2

# Move to Canada

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## Step 2

# Move to Canada

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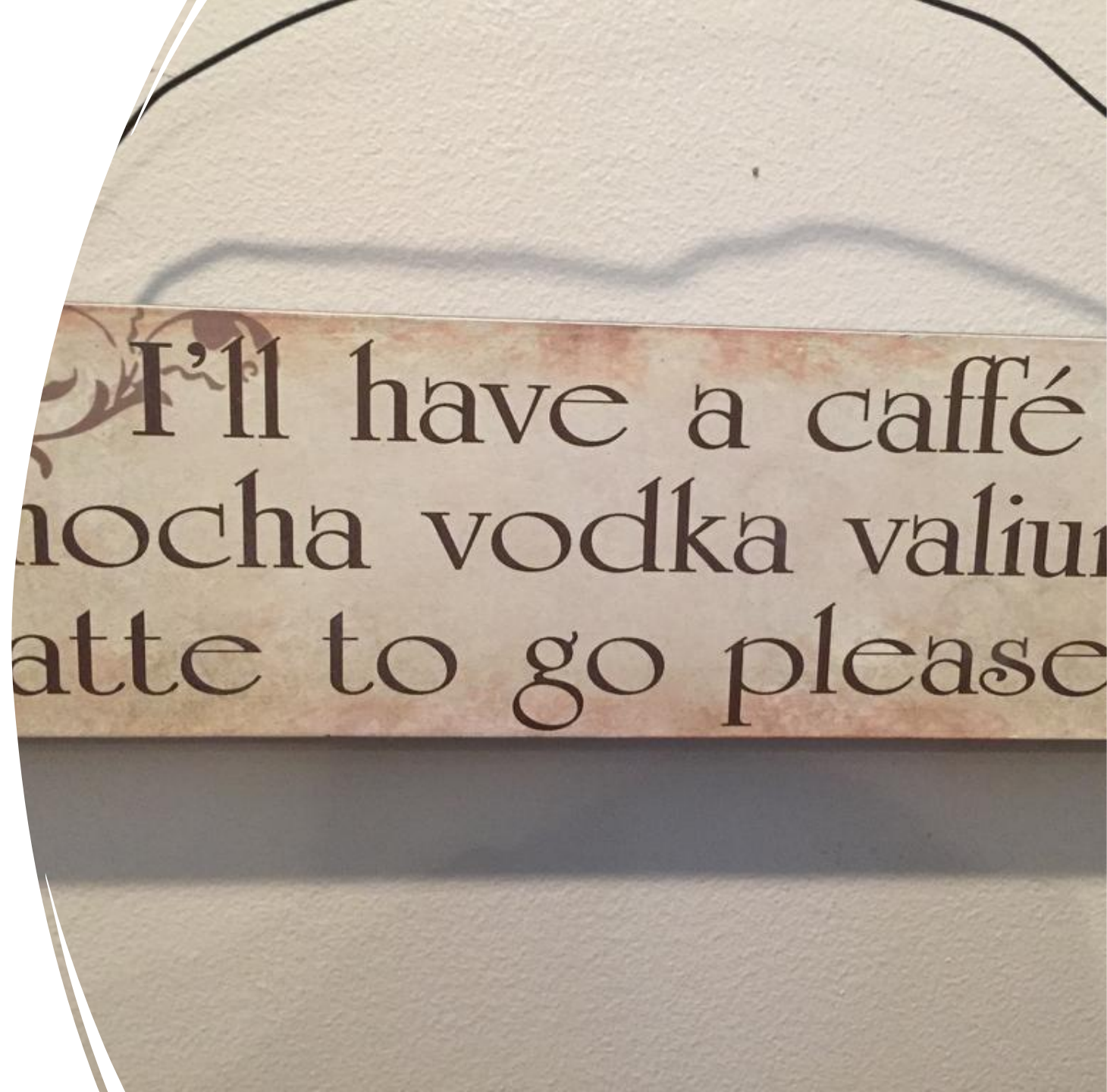


# Step 2

## Move to Canada

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- Work on boat in exotic location
- Bought spare parts
- Practice single-engine maneuvering every week





# Step 2

## Move to Canada

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- Moved the boat to Vancouver
- New electronics
- New Inverter
- New batteries
- Haul out



# Step 2

## Move to Canada

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- Bottom paint
- Zincs
- Keel cooler
- Finish electronics





# Step 3

## Go North Young Man

### April 2017

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- Magazine survey circa 2008
  - Top Cruising Destinations
    - PNW
    - Alaska
    - Sea of Cortez
    - Caribbean



# Step 3

## Alaska

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- Hired Captain Mike, \$400/day plus expenses
- 800 gallons diesel \$1.99/gal.
- “Supermarket sweep” at West Marine
- Departed Anacortes





# Step 3

## Alaska

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- 10 days to Ketchikan
- Docked at Doyon's Landing "Big Boat" marina



# Alaska Stops

- Ketchikan
- Wrangle
- Petersburg
- Baranof Warm Springs
- Juneau
- Skagway
- Glacier Bay
- Hoonah
- Sitka
- Baranof Warm Springs
- Angoon
- Tracy Arm
- And many anchorages in between





# Alaska Highlights Wilderness

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# Alaska Highlights Wilderness

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# Alaska Highlights Wildlife

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# Alaska Highlights

## Wildlife – Glacier Bay





# Alaska Highlights Fishing

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# Alaska Favorite Baranof Warm Springs Cove

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# Alaska Favorite Baranof Warm Springs Cove

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# Alaska Lowlights

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- Weather
- Weather
- Weather
- Too much to see
- Too far to travel
- Too little time





# Step 4

## Go South - Get Warm

### September 2017

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- Back to Anacortes to fuel and get crew
- Hired “Omni Bob” for weather routing
- Head for San Diego
  - Newport, Oregon
  - Monterey, California
  - Los Angeles - Home Port
  - San Diego for month of October



# Step 4

## Go South - Get Warm

### November 2017

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- Joined CUBAR
- Sam Landsman joined as crew
- Departed San Diego for La Paz



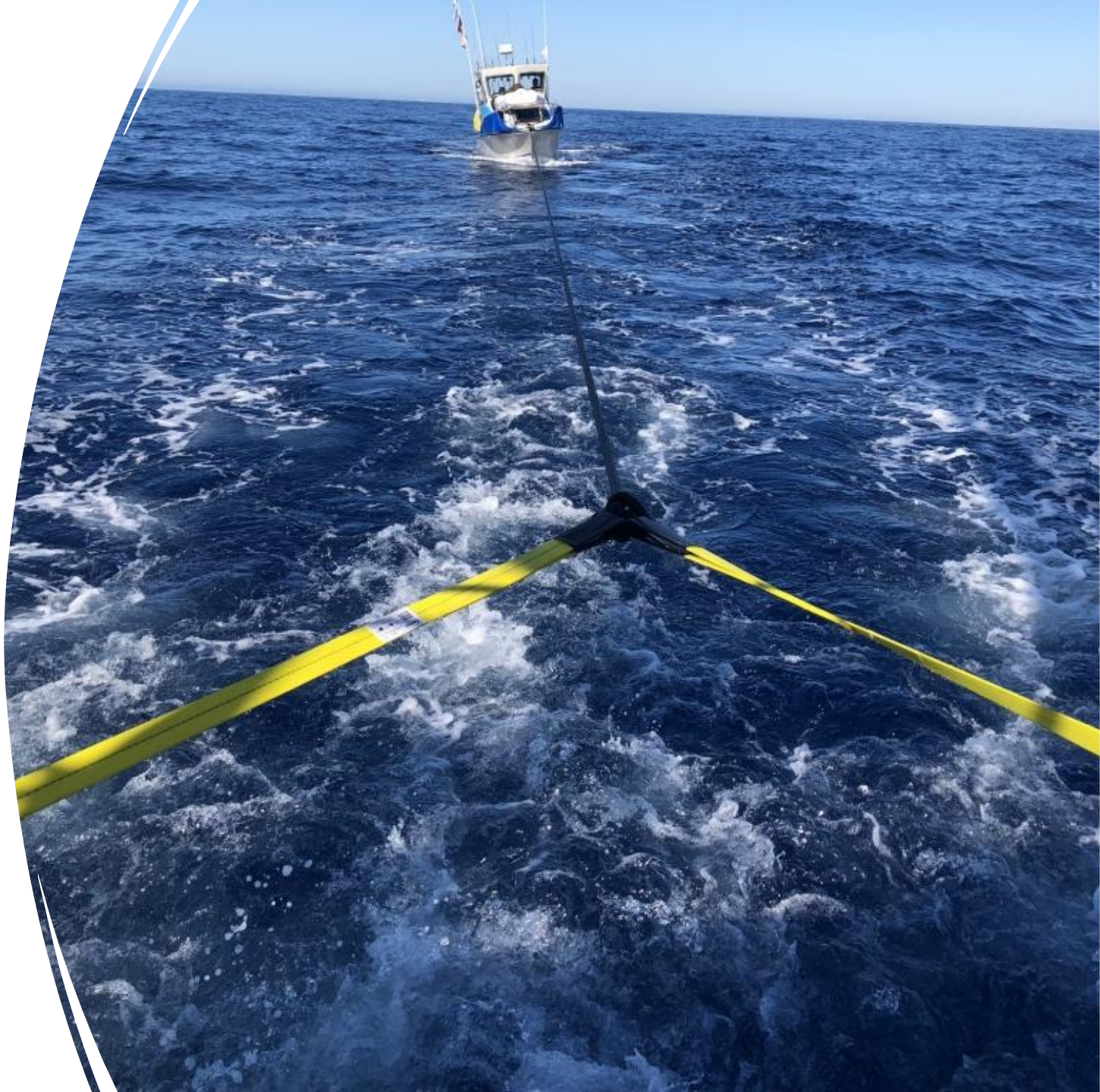


# Step 4

## Go South - Get Warm

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- 110 NM from Cabo San Lucas the Brown Eyed Girl reported failure of outdrive
- Lots of radio discussion among the CUBAR fleet
- Brown Eyes Girl agrees to accept a tow
- We turn back 2 hours.
- Secure a towline at 2200
- Arrive Cabo next day 1700







Step 4  
Go South - Get Warm



# Step 4

## Go South - Get Warm

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## Step 4 Go South - Get Warm

- Cruised Sea of Cortez North to Santa Rosalia by Super Bowl Sunday
- South along Mexico Pacific coast to Barra de Navidad
- Returned to La Paz May of 2018 for hurricane season





## Mexico Favorites

- Weather, weather, weather
- Warm water
- The People
- Food
- Costs
- The geography and wildlife





## Mexico Favorite Locations

- The Sea of Cortez
  - Culeta Partida, La Paz
  - The Islands of Loreto
- Isla Isabella
- La Cruz
- Tenacatita near Barra de Navidad
- Zihuantanejo





# Step 5

## To the Panama Canal

November 2018

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- Joined The Panama Posse in Barra de Navidad December, 2018
- El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica – January
- Panama – February and March
- Panama Canal Transit – March 27, 2019





# Route to Panama

- Favorites
  - Quepos, Costa Rica
  - El Salvador
  - Islands and coves of Panama coast
- Other
  - El Salvador
  - Nicaragua
  - Country Check In and Check Out
    - Mexico – 4 offices
    - Nicaragua – 4 Officers, \$120
    - Costa Rica – 3 offices, trip to airport, 2 days
    - Panama – 2 offices, 2 trips to Panama City, 3 days





# Panama Canal Transit

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- Historically significant
  - “Path Between The Seas” David McCullough
  - Panama Posse
  - Hired an Agent, arranged lines
  - Friends and family line handlers
  - Nice, long lake cruise



# Panama Canal Transit

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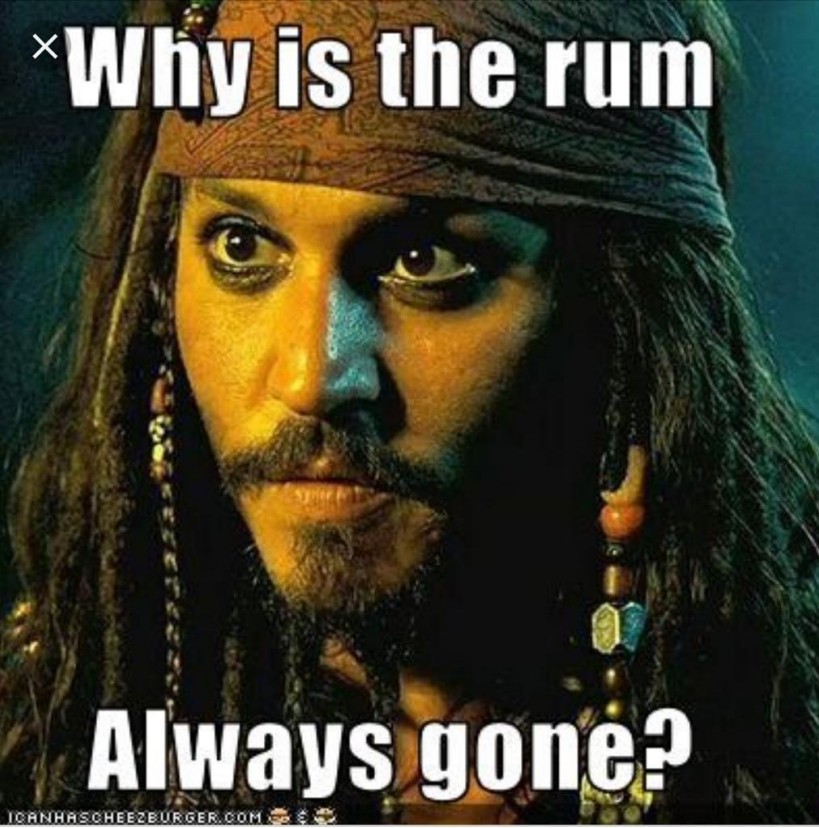
## Step 6

### Jamaica & Bahamas

### April 2019

- Short visit to San Blas Islands
- Decided against Southern Route
- Visit Bocas del Toro and wait for weather window
- Arrive Jamaica April 27





Step 6  
The Bahamas  
May, 2019

- Arrive Mathew Town May 2



# Step 6

## The Bahamas

### May, 2019



# Step 7

## ICW to Maine

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- Cruise Bahamas through June 2019
- New crew
- Transit to Cape Canaveral, Florida then start North in ICW





# May

## Florida – S. Carolina

- Port Canaveral, FL
- St. Simon's Island, GA
- Savannah, GA
- Beaufort, SC



# June

## S. Carolina – N. Carolina

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- Dismal Swamp
- Beaufort, SC
- Charleston, SC
- Georgetown, SC
- Beaufort, NC
- Oriental, NC
- Elizabeth City, NC





# June Norfolk – Washington D.C.

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- Norfolk, VA
- Deltaville, VA
- Breton Bay, VA
- Washington, DC



# July Annapolis – Rhode Island

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- Annapolis
- Cape May
- Atlantic City
- New York
- Port Washington
- Mystic
- Block Island





# July Annapolis – Rhode Island

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- Block Island
- Martha's Vineyard
- Nantucket Island
- Newport



# August Rhode Island – Maine and the End of the Big U

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- New Bedford
- Cohasset
- Rockport
- Mohegon Isle
- Camden
- Long Island
- Southwest Harbor
- Seal Harbor





# Florida to Maine Highlights

- United States History – On the waterfront
  - Native People
  - Settlers
  - American Revolution
  - Civil War
- Variety
  - Geography
  - People
  - Architecture
  - Food



# Florida to Maine

## Not so great

- Maine
  - Lobster trap floats
  - Fog

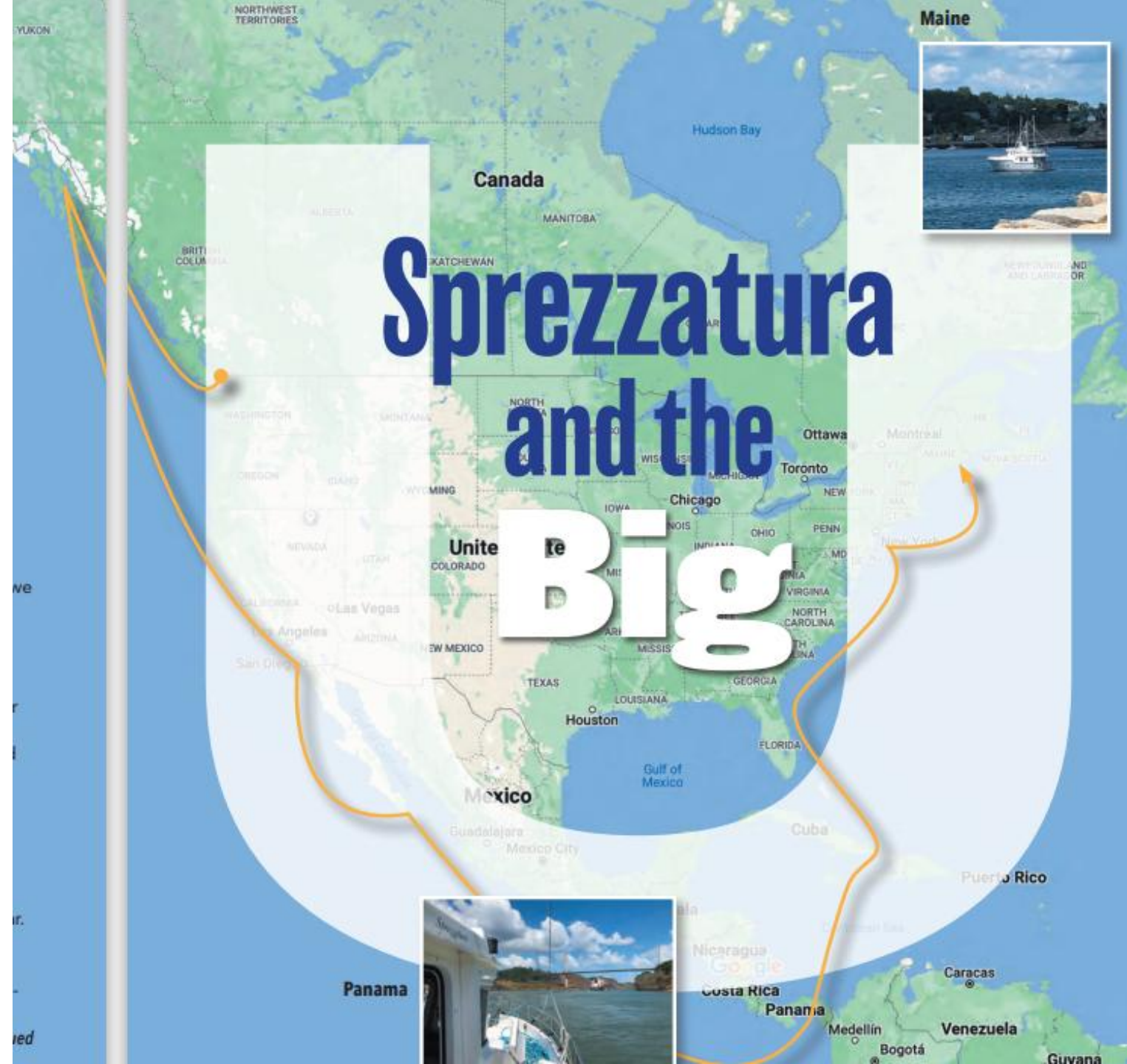




# THE BIG U

## The Numbers

- 2 Years 4 months.
  - May 2017 to September 2019
- 10 Countries
- 15 States
- 8,950 Nautical Miles
- 5,890 Gallons of diesel fuel (1.5MPG including lots of generator use)
- 19 Different Crew Members
  - Family (4), friends (3) and strangers (12)
- 4 Times Aground
- 1 Lobster trap snagged on swim step in Maine



# The Challenges

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- Batteries dead in Annapolis, MD. Holiday weekend.
- Fuel manifold tank cracked 30 miles from Grand Inagua Island, Bahamas.
  - Filled bilge with diesel fuel
  - Patched tank – no welder
  - New tank fabricated in Grand Cayman
  - Lost 7 days in run to Panama Canal







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## Lessons Learned

- Safety
  - No guns
  - Choose your neighborhood
  - Listen to other boaters and web sites
  - Worst Case Scenario – GO TURTLE
- Safety Aboard
  - Crew training
  - Portuguese Bridge Rule



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## Lessons Learned

- It's an Electric Boat
  - Batteries
  - Inverter/Charger
  - External regulator
  - Solar
  - Lithium Ion



## Lessons Learned

- Electronics
  - RADAR! (2x)
  - Auto pilot
  - Depth sounder
  - Chart plotter
  - Communications



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- SiriusXM
- Cell Phone booster
- Iridium Go
- PredictWind Offshore Weather
- Mexico Cell Service
- GoogleFi
- Starlink







## Lessons Learned

- Anchoring is always a unique problem, a 3D puzzle
  - Get a “modern” anchor
- Navigation
  - Plan a safe route
  - Zoom-in
  - Keep your head up, Look around, AND PAY ATTENTION!
- Guide Books – “It’s the GREATEST place!” and “You could die...”



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## Lessons Learned

- “Red Light – Green Light” Situations
  - Tides and currents
  - The Tejuantipe
  - Bar crossings – El Salvador
- Fishing – Experience matters. But, some simple solutions exist
- Most places have tractor parts and services
- Solo passages can be managed





## Lessons Learned

- Overnight passages
  - Watches
    - Settled on 6 hour shifts
    - Night Owl – Early Bird
  - Radar x 2
    - 3 miles and 12 miles
  - Food
    - Hard boiled eggs
    - Chili, stew, soup
    - Energy bars
    - Pre-made coffee
  - Rules
    - 1<sup>st</sup> Worry – Wake Me!
    - Never outside
- Solo cruising

# + Step 8

## Return to The Sea of Cortez

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- My favorite cruising area
- Not The Mediterranean
  - Too far away in many ways
  - Cruisers comments
  - Sell the boat, buy a boat
  - Charter in Croatia, Greece and Turkey







# Aftermath: The COVID Adventure

- January 8, 2020, Ft. Lauderdale: “A VERY BAD COLD”
- January 15 , cruised to Bahamas with N68 Floating Stones
- February 15, COVID 19 Shut-downs starting to emerge
- February 20, Depart Bahamas to make a run to the Panama Canal. Manifold tank cracks. Delays...
- February 27, Stop in Grand Cayman. Crew departs for England. Delays...
- March 13, New Crew arrives from Florida. Provisioned fuel and food for “The Worst Case Scenaio”
- March 14, Departed Grand Cayman for Bocas del Toro, Panama

# Aftermath: The Long Wait in Panama

- March 18, 2020, Arrive Bocas del Toro with SV EXIT
- March 19, Ordered to depart Panama by armed Navy boat in 10 minutes (Or?)
  - Allowed to stay for 14-day quarantine, anchored in front of the Navy dock. Not allowed to get off the boat (NO swimming).
- April 2, Cleared by Health Authorities. Crew leaves on a boat for Florida
- April 3, While obtaining Annual Cruising Permit, Panama announces ban on all boat (and car) movement and 24/7 Curfew. No alcohol sales.
- April 14, Allowed to leave Navy dock anchorage for fuel at Red Frog Marina
- April 15, Moved to Dolphin Cove. For 2 months. Alone.

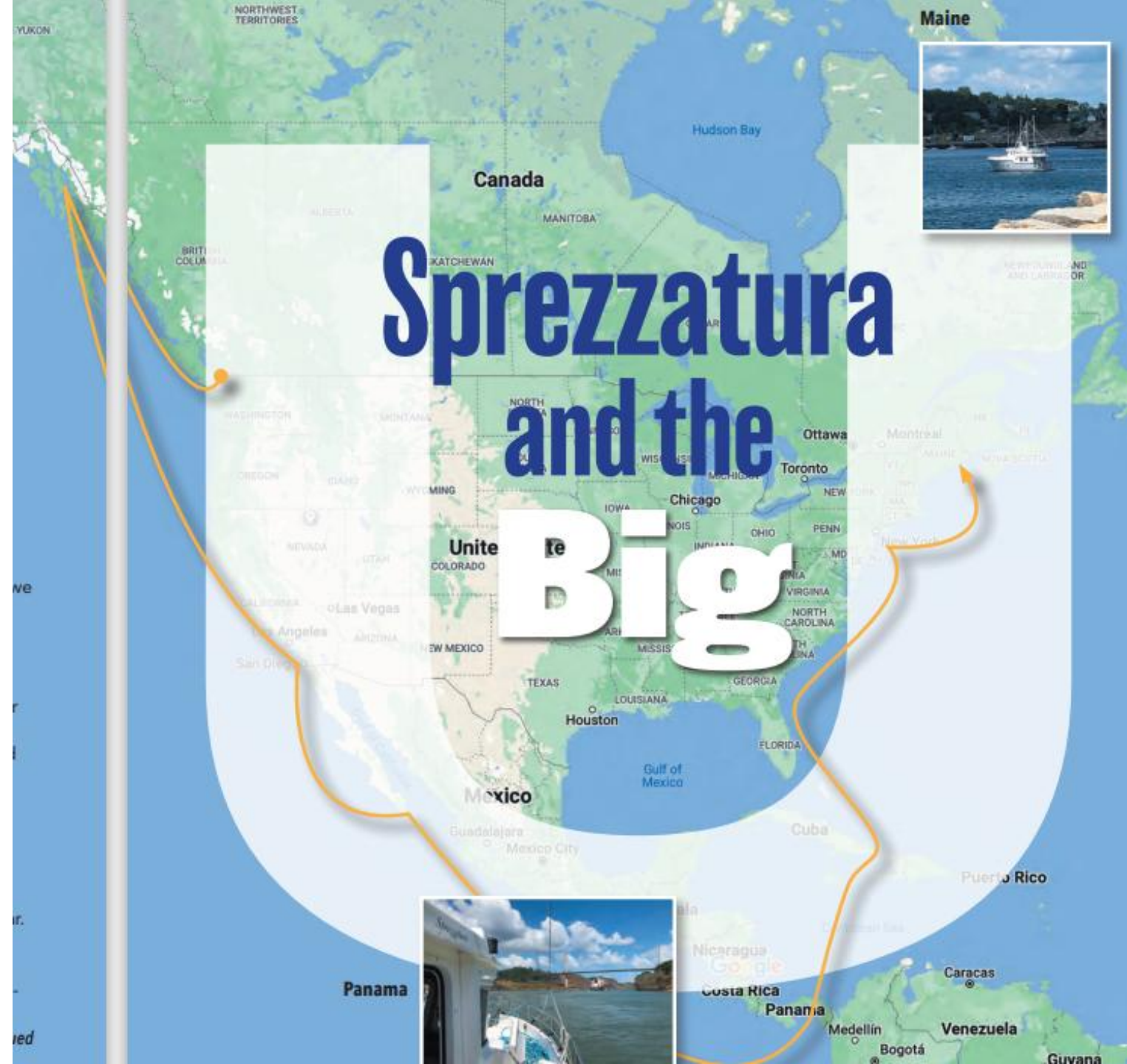


# Aftermath: The Long Wait in Panama is Over

- May 28, Worked a scheme to move from Bocas del Toro to Colon, Panama and Shelter Bay Marina
- Hauled out, shrink wrapped Sprezzatura for an indeterminant storage duration. “Plan for 1-2 years”
- Obtained a seat on a “Humanitarian Flight” through the US Embassy
- USA for 5 months
- October 12, Panama opens to foreign flights
- October 15, Flight to Panama City
- October 31, 2020 Panama Canal Transit
- September 30, 2021, Marina Puerto Escondido, Loreto, BCS, MX

# WHY GO??

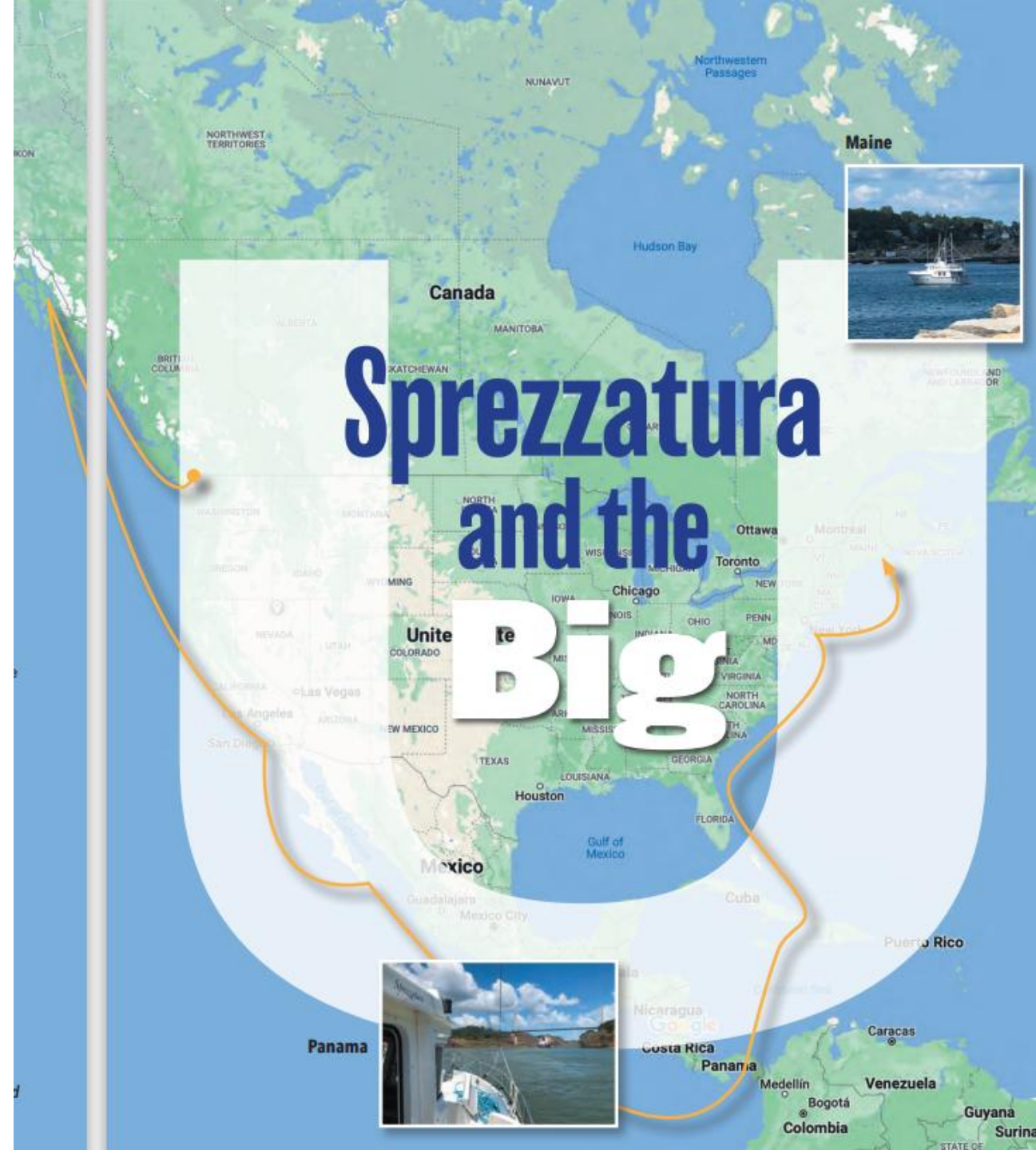
- Grand sense of exploration
- Stay as long as it's interesting and fun
- History
- Cruising community
- Geography, geology, wildlife, people, food
- Learning
- Scare yourself





# THE BIG U

The time spent  
boating is not  
deducted from  
your total  
lifespan...



# THE BIG U

Thank You  
For Attending,  
Safe Cruising,  
and  
See you out  
there

