

The Adventures of s/v Zero Tolerance, Marshall King

Date: Sat, 10 Dec 2011

By receiving this you know S/V Zero Tolerance, Skipper, and Crew are alive and well. We left Vallejo several days ago, and anchored for the night in Clipper Cove at Treasure Island. In the morning, we weighed anchor and sailed to Half Moon Bay. The mapping in the GPS gave out soon after we left SF Bay which prompted the stop at Half Moon. Without the marine mapping, we had to guess what the channel markers were telling us. Obviously, we missed seeing one of the markers and motored right over a shallow reef. At one point, we only had one inch of water between the keel and a very rocky bottom. There are no stores near Half Moon Bay that could help us in any way. Next morning, we left for Monterey where there is a West Marine store within walking distance. We made good use of the Jib but kept the motor on, the combination giving us hull-speed. About midafternoon, we ran over a large patch of seagrass which got caught in the prop and immediately dropped engine RPM. We stopped the motor, evaluated the situation. We decided to re-start the motor and carefully engage the transmission. Everything seemed OK except for a very slight different vibration from the engine. Could our prop shaft be bent? Could the prop be damaged? We weren't even sure what the patch of stringy stuff was and suspected it to be a net of some sort. Anyway, we were still able to move efficiently so continued on. We stayed in Monterey for two nights. West Marine sold us a new Garmin GPSmap76Cx and I was able to talk the guy out of the chip with the mapping for California as well. The last evening there, I dove the boat to discover the prop fouled with seagrass and even some stuck between the rudder and hull. It was easily removed. In addition, the hull was now very clean. I can't recommend hull cleaning by running over seagrass, but it sure worked. The crew decided it was time to put up both sails after leaving Monterey. We did this but lost valuable time gybing. After three hours or so, we hadn't gained much distance and the wind began to die. Then, we made a very brave decision to try to make it all the way to Santa Barbara non-stop. It was mid-day. Could Zero Tolerance go 250+ miles on a single fuel load? Did we have the skills to make it around Point Conception in the early hours of the morning after being up all night? Could we get some purchase out of the wind to help us? Obviously, we did make it. The wind ended up not being any help as it was traveling down the coast at less than 7 knots through out the day. Luckily, the swells were traveling almost the same direction and they gave us an extra 1/2 knot push. A few miles before Point Conception, we motored through a large oil slick. Being super eco-friendly, my Crew convinced me to contact the USCG and report the dark brown slick which had patches of black crude some several feet in diameter. Just after the "Point," we stowed our foul-weather gear and the crew emerged wearing shorts and tank tops. I suspect they wanted a free USCG inspection which didn't happen. We continued to motor on and discovered several more slicks (without the black crude patches) along the way. It is truly a shame what we are doing to our environment as a result of our hunger for oil. I'll bet many people would reconsider their habits if they saw all the dead sea-life that I did between Point Conception and Santa Barbara. Anyway, 7.5 miles from Santa Barbara (while in a large oil slick by the way) the engine sounded suddenly different. I immediately discovered no water exiting the stern which is needed to cool the engine. We shut the engine down, and threw up the jib. Winds were a very calm 3-4 knots. I went below and checked the raw water strainer for the engine; it felt oily but was not clogged. I thought the oil had dissolved the impeller. Immediately, I called BoatUS and asked for a tow. They said it was going to be 2.5 hours before they could arrive. There was no way I was going to try to enter a strange marina after dark under sail. My thoughts were we could continue to sail toward Santa Barbara and possibly find an anchorage if all else failed. Since there wasn't much else to do, crew was handling the boat nicely, I went below to get a head start on replacing the impeller. That's when I discovered the real problem...a broken fanbelt lay in the bilge. I rushed to tell the crew to continue on our present course and try to keep the boat as smooth as possible. After locating my spare belt, I set to work. The

generator had to be removed first. The new impeller belt was put on and adjusted, then generator back on and its belt adjusted...all in about 10 minutes. I topped off the engine oil, transmission oil was fine. Still had 1/4 tank of fuel because we added 5-gallons 20 miles back. I told the crew the oil levels were fine, we had 1/4 tank diesel, let's START THE ENGINE, roll up the jib, and get underway. We started the engine but no water came out the back. What was going on? Was it a double failure? The engine was immediately shut off. Then I realized the water had drained from the engine when I checked the strainer. We restarted the engine and all held breaths during the 1/2 minute it took for water to start to appear in the exhaust. The crew then took down the jib. BoatUS was called to cancel the tow and we were on our way. We had been underway for 36 hours, 243 miles, before pulling up to the dock in Santa Barbara.

Date: Sat, 17 Dec 2011

A few days ago, we left Ventura for Santa Catalina Island in the hopes of anchoring for the night; but mostly to bypass LA. Although there were some swells, the winds were mostly light and we made good progress. Since I thought the bottom would most likely be rocky, I got ready the Delta anchor and 100' of rode. We first pulled into Fourth of July Cove and found it full of mooring buoys. Cherry Cove was also full of buoys but one boat was there and the Captain instructed us on how the system worked. So, we took a mooring but it was too bumpy. We left for Fourth of July Cove and found it just slightly better. Sometime around 2 AM the seas finally calmed. The next morning, we got up and checked the usual weather sites. The predictions were for 2-3' swells coming from two directions and winds up to 10 knots. We left bound for Oceanside Harbor before 10 AM. Within an hour, the seas began to pick up as well as the wind. Then, we heard the really bad news; Santa Anna winds had been predicted with gusts up to 45mph. We decided to play it safe and stick to motoring our way along. The next hour or more we experienced seas greater than 10' and winds up to 35 knots. We also began seeing patches of kelp which we tried to avoid. Zero Tolerance was pounding along able to make just slightly more than 6 knots. We changed our course so we were 30-degrees off the swells instead of sideways to them. Zero Tolerance was on the crest of a 10' white-tipped swell/wave when I saw the large patch of kelp. We belly-flopped or keel-planted right in the middle of it. Sure enough, I felt the prop become entangled and the engine RPMs instantly drop. I throttled down and shifted into neutral in the hopes the folding prop would close and allow the kelp to drift free. We were not so lucky. I tried alternating forward and reverse several times but was unable to shake the kelp's grip on the prop. We decided to motor for awhile at reduced RPM to see what would happen. Some of the kelp broke, but we were unable to obtain our usual speed. Luckily, the winds and seas began to die down a bit. We decided that the prop would have to be cleared. So, in 2500' of water, 6' swells, and around 15 knots of wind I put on a 3-mil wetsuit, dive mask, and fins; tied myself off to the stern of the boat; lowered the swim ladder; and entered the water. The engine was at idle but the transmission was kept in neutral. I had Alyssa pull me to the port side of the boat and we agreed a tug on the line meant to pull me to the surface. I caught my breath and down under the boat I went. The prop was fouled by a single piece of sea-grass about four feet long. It was wrapped several times around the shaft between the strut and prop making it impossible to free it in either direction. In forward, it would have kept the Gori prop from opening fully which explained our reduced speed. I was able to easily pull it free and didn't have to use a knife which was a great relief. The total time I was under the boat was around five seconds. I pulled the line and Alyssa brought me to the surface. Within a minute I was back aboard. Rose put Zero Tolerance in forward and we were able to make more than 7 knots while I went below and changed back into regular clothes with foul-weather gear on top. By the time we were lined up ready to enter Oceanside Harbor, the seas were almost flat and the winds less than 5 knots. We were able to make some use from the winds that day which reduced our diesel consumption. The next morning, we left for San Diego. We were only able to make minimal use of the winds. Large patches of kelp seemed to

be everywhere. We tried to stay in water deeper than 100' and that helped. It was just after 5 PM when we finally tied up to the Customs Dock; delayed over an hour due to dodging kelp and a few crab-pots. We'll be here for a few days while we ready the boat and make sure everything is in order before we enter Mexican waters.

PS Yes we wear PFDs and yes we teather in as well.

Date: Wed, 21 Dec 2011

I went to the Mexican Consulate yesterday, which really wasn't much of a help. It looks like there isn't any paperwork I can do until I arrive at the first immigration port in Mexico. Tomorrow, Thursday the 22nd, we'll leave as early as I can get my crew moving (likely 10:00). We have 50 miles to go to get to the next port. Winds are predicted to be from the north so we should be able to sail the vast majority of the way without any difficulty. Likely, we'll stay there at anchor for a day or two because the port/anchorage after that is just over 100 miles (a full day). So far so good, we haven't had any equipment failures or breakages. The new jib has been working out GREAT! We have a good GPS with marine mapping and a back-up if that fails. Diesel and food are reported to being less expensive and the weather is supposed to get warmer the farther south we go. We plan to continue to port/anchorage hop our way south because it's worked out so well so far. Anyway, it's likely we won't be able to contact until after the new year. By then, we'll be in La Paz or mainland Mexico.

Date: Fri, 23 Dec 2011

Well, we made it to Mexico; arriving around midnight in Ensenada. We crossed into Mexican waters at 1300hrs on 22 Dec 2011. Today has been spent clearing customs and recovering from last night. Here is what happened... As always, I carefully checked the weather for our intended days sail. NOAA, Sailflow, and Passageweather all predicted winds from the north being 10kn or less, and seas 2-3ft. We left San Diego hoping to get enough wind to save fuel. At 5 miles out, the winds were light and we put up full sail. However, the winds were coming directly from shore instead of from the north, which put us on a tack. Since ZT is faster tacking, we began to make good time and were traveling 8+knots which is over our hull speed. This worked for several hours. I was carefully watching the wind speed which was increasing. We heard the USCG announce Santa Anna winds for the LA and Channel Island areas. Since we were well south of that, I wasn't overly concerned and we pressed on. When the winds increased to almost 20kn, we reefed the Main. At 20kn, we began reefing in the Jib. It wasn't long before the winds had increased to 22kn and we rolled the Jib in completely. The seas began to pick up to around 4' and increased. At 25+kn sustained, with gusts near 30kn, I decided to bring the Main down completely and motor into Ensenada. It was getting dark, around 5:30pm, and we had just over 20 miles to go. The winds increased to 30kn sustained with stronger gusts. The seas were breaking, very close together, and 12' in the least. I've had Zero Tolerance in 14' seas before. This time, it was waves...true waves and they were breaking. The kind of waves that can roll a boat if it gets sideways to them. Guess what, our intended course put us directly abeam to them. We had no choice but to change our course, waves 60-degrees to our port side. Spray was completely covering the boat and the decks were awash. The engine began to sputter and loose RPM. I listened carefully and determined the prop was not fouled this time. Rose was down below and Alyssa was at the helm. The engine then died. I took the helm and was able to re-start it but it soon began to sputter again. I knew we had to have at least 3/8 of a tank of diesel left. I had Alyssa re-take the helm and shut off the engine while I went below to try to sort things out. The engine and transmission had plenty of oil. Nothing seemed overly hot. I looked at the fuel gauge and sure enough, it read 3/8 of a tank. But, the boat was rocking so violently the gauge was fluctuating between over 1/2 tank and empty. Since I was able to re-start the

engine and run it at full RPM I doubted the fuel filters were clogged. My conclusion was the engine was sucking air into the fuel lines as the diesel sloshed around. I had one 5gal can of diesel which I brought on deck. Alyssa started the engine and we changed course to motor with the swells while I added the 5gal through the deck fill. We now had 1/2 tank of diesel or more. Our calculations told us 5gal of diesel should enable us to travel over 20 miles. There were 15gal of fuel with the tank 1/2 full...plenty to get us to Ensenada. Things went well for the next hour or more. What I mean by well is that the engine was running nicely. The seas were still 12' or more, breaking waves very close together, and the winds were still howling 30+kn. Then, the seas began to either pick up a bit or get even closer together. The engine began to sputter again. I had no more diesel to add to the tank so that trick was used up. The sky was completely dark. We saw a cruiseship ahead which looked like it had left some sort of port. Rose was still down below. Alyssa decided it would be wise to try to contact someone to see if it was a port of some kind and could we use it. I agreed. Nobody answered the radio call at first. We tried again. After the third radio call, the US Coast Guard in San Diego answered. They knew of no port closer to us than Ensenada. The USCG did an excellent job helping us realize we were just in really bad seas and not in need of any form of assistance. But really, we radioed in the hopes a port was closer than 20 miles away, and not to be rescued. Besides, any attempt of rescue would take many hours to materialize. We assured them we were all wearing lifejackets (even Rose in the cabin had one on) and tethered in or in the cabin, and gave them a good description of Zero Tolerance and an assessment of our situation. If the engine completely died and could not be re-started I would have: 1)Put up as little Jib as possible and sailed downwind with the seas 2)Run warps or some other drag device and run with the seas 3)Used an old Jib to fashion a seaanchor. All of these were going through my mind and what each option would entail. I could not afford to allow Zero Tolerance to end up abeam to the weather in breaking waves larger than her beam. The good news was she was not sinking, not even taking on water. All systems were working great except the engine, and it was able to be re-started and ran well again after 30-seconds (an eternity in that situation). However, every few minutes it would begin sputtering. Most of the time that's all that would happen. Several times, it died completely and I thought I was going to have to try to bleed air from the lines and if that didn't work go with less desirable options. Nobody was panicking. We remained level-headed and were thinking things through; formulating a plan and back-up plan for each problem. The USCG asked us to radio them every 30 minutes with our GPS position, speed, and heading. I usually also gave them my estimation of the wave heights and winds. It was extremely comforting to be able to make contact with someone and I didn't feel so alone. There really wasn't much else that could be done except for us to press on motoring toward Ensenada. After an hour, we were closer to land. The winds continued to howl but the waves weren't quite as high. The cockpit continued to be sprayed, but less frequently. The engine was purring right along and quit sputtering. We made our USCG calls every 30 minutes and things were looking like we'd make it safely to port in a few hours. Alyssa had been drenched and all she was wearing soaked. She went below to try to prevent further hypothermia. Rose, who had come to the cockpit soon after our first USCG contact, helped read the GPS and get us on a more direct course toward Ensenada. I stayed at the helm and did my best to steer a course that didn't have us pounding on every wave. Another hour and we were in Ensenada Bay looking for the navigation lights for the harbor. The winds had only calmed down to 25+kn but the waves were down to 4' or less. We were unable to reach the USCG by radio but I continued to transmit "in the blind" hoping they could hear me and understand things were much calmer and we were assured of making it safely into port. I should also mention a second reason for us to have contacted the USCG. About 30 minutes before our first radio call, I noticed a small powerboat off our stern and heading our way. Just after we made our initial radio calls it overtook us; came within a few hundred feet, crossed our path, and headed toward what we thought might be a port. It seemed to continue to tail us for almost two hours. Could our radio calls with the USCG averted some form of piracy? Was it listening in and would have tried to give us assistance? I'll never know. What I do know is that being able to make contact with the US Coast

Guard was indeed comforting. Anyway, we made it to Ensenada. Crew got their wish to have Christmas in Mexico.

PS If you know anyone else who wants to receive "ZT Adventures," send me their e-mail address.

Date: Mon 12/26/11

It's the 26th of December and I've planned the sailing schedule to get us to the bottom of Baja California, leaving first thing tomorrow morning. Although there are several little anchorages along the way, we've decided to try to take the Baja Ha-Ha route which is to stop in Turtle and Mag bays only. Once we're past Turtle Bay, there aren't any more chances for Santa Ana winds, only storms and neither have been predicted for the next week or more. The schedule will be rough with 250+ miles of straight sailing each leg. I'll let you do the calculations of how long it'll take each leg...in 7kn winds we can go 4-5knots, 10kn = 6-7knots, 15kn = hull speed of 7.5 knots or better, by 20kn we'll be reefing and trying to reduce sail and the seas will begin to get big which would slow us down. Obviously, the direction of the winds will determine which direction we can point Zero Tolerance. By tacking or gybing (if we need to), we'll be able to get on our intended course. Since the winds are predicted to be coming directly down the coast, we should have them coming over our stern, have an easier ride, but have to gybe occasionally to stay on course. I know now to be cautious if they're coming directly from shore (possible Santa Anas starting up). So, before leaving the United States I looked at several sites and what they suggested I bring along. I even talked to a few people. One guy had a complete engine, in pieces, stowed aboard his boat. If I was going to believe all the stores and websites, there is only one conclusion I could come to: All Mexicans in Mexico are naked standing in a barren field. This explains why so many of them want to enter the USA. You see, there must not be any stores south of the border (according to the stores north of said border). No stores at all. You'd better fill your boat with every kind of imaginable gadget and supply you can think of...you'll never be able to get it in Mexico. I know why you never hear from the huddled naked masses in Mexico either: There is no mail service south of the border either. The stores and sites want you to believe that if you don't buy it from them NOW, there's no way you can have it mailed or sent anywhere in Mexico. The other conclusion I've come to is that I really need to have a Mexican boat. Why? According to the American stores and websites, there are no boatyards in Mexico nor places that sell boat hardware. The only way that could be true is if the Mexican boats never needed any maintenance. Now, that IS the boat that every boater dreams about. Don't bother rushing down here to see the masses of naked people standing in fields, nor the totally maintenance free yachts. Neither exist. I know it would surprise the American boating industry that Mexicans do actually even have access to the internet. Your proof in that is this very e-mail you've been reading that first traveled the airwaves via WiFi from a computer aboard S/V Zero Tolerance...in Mexico of course.

PS No, I didn't believe all the hype before I left the USA. I knew there'd be stores and mail services. The videos of the Mexicans crossing the Rio Grande all show them clothed don't they...

Date: Thu 1/05/12

Wow! So much has happened since I got the chance to get on the internet and e-mail. We made it to Cabo San Lucas last night. I'll send out another edition of ZT Adventures when I get the chance.

Date: Tue 1/10/12

ZT in Puerto Vallarta on 8 Jan 2012. Well, really we stopped in a town just before Puerto Vallarta,

some 12 miles north, but still in Bahia de Banderas. What an adventure so far. Below are the waypoints just outside of ports and anchorages:

POSITION	NAME	SAFE	ANCH	SERVICES	DISTANCE	To
NEXT	Ensenada	76	N30	55.925	W116	17.273
	Colnett	Supposedly	None	44	N30	35.898
	W115	42.816				
	El Socorro	Not really	None	160	N28	05.097
	W115	18.077				
	Isla Cedros	Supposedly	Questionable	38	N27	40.528
	W114	52.442				
	Turtle Bay	Yes	Yes	108	N26	46.392
	W113	26.219				
	Bahia de Ballena	Yes				
	Not likely	181	N24	32.931	W111	52.673
	Magdalena Bay	Yes	YES	171	N22	53.204
	W109	52.991				
	Cabo San Lucas	Yes	YES			

Our stops from Ensenada were Turtle Bay, Magdalena Bay, Cabo San Lucas, and finally here. The distance from Cabo San Lucas was 338 miles which we did without the possibility of stopping. In Ensenada, Rose informed me of her need to get to Puerto Vallarta before the 10th. I talked to Jonathan, the American interpreter in Ensenada, and he told me it was possible but really a long shot. Rose, Alyssa, and I decided we'd give it a try but we'd have to follow the Baja Ha-ha route...stopping only in Turtle and Magdalena Bays. It was a bold move and a predicted grueling schedule to follow. So, what was a typical day at sea like? The winds were actually incredibly light and the seas not greater than 4' and far apart (ie big rollers). We always started out with full fuel and water loads. Getting the crew up and moving early in the morning the day leaving port or anchorage was next to impossible. Sleeping had to be done in shifts while underway with no more than four hours at a time. Cooking was done when we thought the seas would be calmer. Each day (several times per day), we had dolphin or porpoise friends swimming alongside us and off the bow. The most counted at one time was 22 by Rose on the run between Magdalena Bay and Cabo. She reported there were so many of them they had to take turns riding the bow-wake. Quite a few times they'd jump from the water, but more often they were content to swim alongside and off the bow. For them, 7-knots must have been a light jog; but 7-knots for us was a fast sail or average motoring speed. I was always concerned one might get hurt by the prop, but they were obviously much smarter than to let that happen. When under sail, they were always a joy to see. Night sailing/motoring is actually very different than you might think. Your perceptions of distances play tricks on you. You're hyper-alert to any new sound or a change in the current rhythm or pitch of sounds. The first few nights were almost moonless and very dark. Your imagination begins to run into overdrive. Things that you hardly take notice of during the day can scare the heck out of you at night...like dolphins surfacing next to the cockpit or birds flying around. So, the trip from Ensenada to Turtle bay was about 300 miles. We found we could travel a bit more than 150 miles in 24-hours so we were underway for around two days. We did get some use out of the sails which was good. We tried to time things so we'd have daylight during the run between Cedros Island and shore. Unfortunately we were early. As there was almost no moon, one person had to stay at the bow; watching with a flashlight for crabpots and kelp which seemed to be everywhere. There was only a fuel dock in Turtle bay but the anchorage was very nice with a firm sand bottom which gave good holding. Immediately after the hook was down, I inflated the dinghy and the Crew went ashore. Anchored next to us was S/V Escape, whom we'd met at the docks in San Diego while they were preparing for their journey to Nicaragua. Greg is Escape's Captain and he found Paul (from the UK) to crew for him over the internet. They'd arrived early in the morning of the day we anchored. I don't quite know how my Crew does it, but they have a knack of being able to find friends at every port and anchorage. This has been somewhat troublesome as well as a blessing in disguise. In Turtle Bay they were befriended by some of the local fishermen and all of us invited to a Quincenara which is a big party celebrating a girl's change into womanhood (age 15). It seemed as if everyone in the town was there and we had a good time. In the morning, I got up, deflated and stowed the dinghy, and we got underway again. We filled the diesel tank, likely at a reduced price due to the crew's friendship. Our next leg ended up being just over 300 miles. We encountered some patches of fog along the way but didn't think much of it. As we approached the entrance to Magdalena Bay, it looked like clouds were spilling over the tops of the mountains. I heard a radio call from the port captain that some freighter would have to wait two hours to enter due to fog. We were a few hours from entering so I guess we planned our arrival well. Once inside the bay, we didn't really have much

of a clue as to where to go. We got on the radio and S/V Escape told us our best bet was “Man ‘O War Cove” so we went there. There weren’t any docks and the village looked very small. I inflated the dinghy and the girls went ashore. After a couple of hours, they returned and said they were uncomfortable being in town. Pangas (small fishing boats) had been motoring right over our anchor line the entire time and I was afraid one would misjudge, cut the rhode, and we’d lose our anchor. I visited a nearby anchored boat; S/V Goldenheart with Lee and Cynthia aboard. They said they were about to leave for San Carlos after not being able to find a mechanic in the town. I talked to my crew and we agreed San Carlos would be a better place for us. What you need to know about the trip to San Carlos is the route you must take...it’s a big “Z” with very shallow water outside of the ½ to 1 mile wide channel. Since the locals use pangas that draft less than a foot when planing, they are no help as they always cut across the “Z.” The first right (hard to starboard) you have to make is a turn of around 130-degrees. Alyssa was at the helm and became confused when we saw two markers of the same color at 90-degrees to starboard. She pointed ZT toward them but the depth started to get really shallow. Rose called the port captain on the radio but he was no help. In addition, we were next to a white-lighted buoy (which we later discovered was the marking for a fishing net. Luck was on our side and we didn’t get tangled in the net nor run aground. Oh, should I mention we were doing this in the middle of the night. I went below, looked at the charts carefully and discovered where the channel was. When it came to the next turn, another 130-degrees to port, we were ready and knew what to look for. We made it to the anchorage and dropped our danforth with 100’ of nylon line. We pulled the anchor within minutes when we drifted over shallow water, re-anchoring so we’d have depth under us with tidal changes. The next morning we woke to fog. Being from San Francisco Bay, I’ve seen my share of fog. San Francisco has nothing on Magdalena Bay. This stuff was so thick you had trouble seeing the bow from the cockpit. We could only guess where the beach was and had no idea if S/V Goldenheart was still there. As it turns out, the fog was typical and it lifted soon after noon. I took the dinghy off the foredeck and Alyssa and I went ashore looking for food and the possibility of diesel. We found the town and next to the town square was the supermarket. Also, there’s an ATM there. The one gas station only sells gasoline. We took the food back to the boat. The next dinghy ride was late in the afternoon to look for diesel. We discovered there was only one place to get from the beach to the road which was near an orange house. Alyssa and I split while I looked for diesel and she managed getting the dinghy to the place where a path leads to the roads. I found the Pemex distributor’s office but it was closed. On my way back to the dinghy, I noticed a Mexican Soldier with an M-16. He seemed to be looking at me carrying two empty diesel cans. Not wanting to get into trouble, I walked over to him and asked where I could get diesel. He understood and pointed to the Pemex office. I tried to tell him they were closed. He then pointed toward the gas station and I tried to tell him they didn’t sell diesel. The next thing I knew I was surrounded by six Mexican Soldiers, each one relaying to the next my plight of needing diesel for my sailboat. One of them agreed to sell me the spare diesel for their Humvee which I gladly took and paid handsomely for (about \$4.00/gal). I was happy, they had beer money, and I took off down the road. They looked confused at my direction of travel. I think they understood when I told them, “Me barquito esta aqui” (trying to relay my small boat is over this way). I found Alyssa on the side of the road talking to a man. It turns out he was the town doctor and invited her to a party that evening. We got the diesel into the dinghy and back to the boat. Then, Rose and Alyssa went back to shore to find the party (typical of crew). At around midnight, I awoke to the GPS anchor alarm. I also noticed the battery was extremely low because the crew had left the propane solenoid switch on. I started ZT’s engine and put all switches in order. It was almost too foggy to get a good visual fix to ensure we hadn’t drug anchor. After 45 minutes, the batteries were charged enough and I was almost ready to shut down the engine when I heard the sound of a taught line slap the side of the boat. Also, I thought the boat was listing slightly. I shut down the engine and checked the anchor line. It was bar-tight and running down the port side. The engine had been in neutral. Could the prop have been turning just enough to get fouled in the anchor line? I had no choice but to put on my wetsuit

and check things

out. The foredeck light had been on and six or more pelicans were in the water off the bow eating fish. Although I had fears of what might be in the water (and did it eat divers) I swam to the port side of ZT, abeam of the prop. I barely got my head underwater when I saw the anchor line going from the bow, across the aft edge of the keel and off at an angle. Now that I knew what the problem was, how was I going to fix it? I was the only one aboard and didn't fancy having to re-anchor. One solution would have been to tie a buoy to the end of the rhode and un-cleat it. The boat would then be adrift after the buoy had been drug under the boat and around the keel. The rhode could easily be retrieved by motoring the boat up to it. Since I'd seen that the rhode was nowhere near the prop, I decided to put the boat in reverse with a quick, short, burst of thrust. I did this, then ran to the bow. The rhode was slack and after pulling on it, the boat swung 180-degrees. I went back to the helm and put ZT back into reverse. When the rhode was taught and running straight off the bow, I gave her full power to ensure the anchor was well set and would hold. After an hour or so, the anchor alarm went off again and I felt the same slight list as before. Sure enough, the anchor line was again taught against the port side. I considered my options and decided to try the quick, short, burst of thrust in reverse again. I carefully put ZT in reverse at idle first because I didn't know exactly where the rhode was this time...no problems. Now the burst in reverse, ZT began to move, quick back to idle and gears in neutral, ZT still drifting backwards. Run to the bow, anchor rhode loose, and pulling on it swung the boat about 200-degrees. Once having your rhode wrapped around your keel is bad. This had happened to me twice in an hour. I couldn't sleep until I was sure it wasn't going to happen a third time. I considered changing to a chain rhode, but steel chain against a lead keel just didn't sound good. Then, I remembered a special sail I had made for ZT just before I left San Francisco. I took out some spare line and rigged the anchor sail. It went up without any problems. I stayed on deck and waited to see if the sail was going to work at keeping the rhode from being tangled in the keel. IT WORKED! The wind was just strong enough and the sail just big enough the rhode was kept on one side and didn't cross under ZT. I was putting things away when I heard the sound of rowing. It was the girls returning from the party. They said the dinghy motor had died and decided to row back to the boat instead of trying to restart it. How they found ZT in all that fog was a miracle. In the morning, I put the 5-gal of diesel into ZT's main tank, which filled it. Rose and I took the dinghy to shore, landing on a boat ramp next to the fuel dock. We talked to the port security guards who told us the only place in town to get diesel was from the port and they agreed to contact the Pemex guy for us. We were able to obtain 10-gal for our emergency jerry-cans. The next problem was getting water. The port captain said we could raft up to a 100+ft fishing boat which was tied to the dock (dock was on pilings) and a hose would be extended to us. We went back to ZT, deflated and stowed the dinghy and put things up for the upcoming trip to Cabo. Rose and Alyssa helped interpret what the diesel mechanic had found aboard S/V Golenheart for Lee. Luckily, it sounded like things weren't as bad as Lee had first thought. Side note: If you're looking for a diesel mechanic in San Carlos, ask for Guido...all three of them are named Guido by the way. We weighed anchor and motored over to the fishing boat. After rafting up, we were told there was a break in one of the pipes and we couldn't get water. I sent Alyssa and Rose to the supermarket in hopes of getting some water from there. They returned in about an hour with seven, 5-gal plastic bottles of water. Somehow, they'd come across the distributor for drinking water for the area and were able to tour the plant. Anyway, we had more water than we needed and the tanks were completely full when we left. I predicted the run to Cabo San Lucas would be uneventful and we'd be able to do it in less than a day and a half. We put up the jib for awhile but the winds were on the light side so took it down after an hour or so. We were almost halfway to Cabo when we heard a static-filled transmission from S/V Escape. It sounded like they were saying they were out of diesel and adrift due to lack of wind. Since we didn't know where they were, and they didn't respond back, we continued to motor on toward Cabo. About 15-20 miles later, we heard Escape again. This time, they responded back to say they were trying to sail to Cabo San Lucas, were out of diesel, and about 20 miles from their destination. We

asked for their GPS location and found them to be 50 miles from us and between us and Cabo. We agreed to make radio contact every two hours and we'd get 5-gal of diesel to them. For the next 7 hours, we continued to get closer to them at a steady speed of 7-knots. On the second contact, I asked about electrical power, water, and food. They'd been adrift for two days and continually getting closer to shore. Greg said they ran out of fuel because their autopilot wasn't working well and their compass broke, putting them in a position where they were going around in circles. It's not as easy to find a 36' sailboat as you might think. We were farther out to sea than they were and had trouble differentiating them from the rocks and other things we were seeing on shore. Escape was able to spot us from quite a distance away and they helped point us toward their location. For some reason, ZT's crew thought handing off the diesel was going to be easy. I knew better. Escape had drifted close to shore. So close in fact, that their anchor was actually keeping them from bashing onto the rocks. They were abeam the 4ft swells and rocking badly. Having an anchor rhode in the water complicated matters. Greg thought I should hand off the diesel from the bow of Zero Tolerance. This would have meant I'd have to stop ZT within a foot of Escape and avoid drifting into her, a very risky maneuver. What I thought would be safer was to motor alongside Escape and hand off a line tied to the diesel can. If they grabbed the line, the can would be snatched from ZT's deck. We'd have to have the boats within a foot of each other and ZT on the leeward side to avoid the chance of getting tangled in their anchor rhode. Again, this was a very dangerous and bold maneuver. ZT's shrouds (rods that support the mast on the port and starboard sides) are about a foot inboard...Escape's are on the edges. This gave about a foot of clearance between critical pieces of hardware if the boats were both level. With both boats rocking, the shrouds could have been tangled or struck one another...dismasting one or both vessels. To add some cushion, both of us put out fenders (boat bumpers). Unfortunately, I put ours lower than I should have. When ZT was next to Escape, the two boats made contact. The impact was vertical instead of horizontal but it was still an impact. ZT lost some gelcoat as Escape's rub-rail came down on her deck-to-hull edge. But, the diesel was handed off and no other damage was done. Greg and Paul both smoke and had been without cigarettes for two days. I put a spare pack in a ziplock bag along with two cigars and asked Rose to throw it into their cockpit as we made another pass. Rose missed and the packet bounced off Escape's hull into the water. In a flash, Paul went over the side, retrieved the packet, and climbed back aboard Escape. We motored slowly away at 4 knots for the next 30 minutes until we thought we saw Escape start to move. They didn't answer radio calls and I assumed they were working hard bleeding air from the fuel lines so their diesel would start. We beat them to Cabo although they cut close to shore the entire way. We stayed at the marina in Cabo San Lucas for two nights. During that time we planned our next run. At first, I thought of going to Mazatlan, about 220 miles away. Rose and Alyssa wanted to go straight to Puerto Vallarta, some 338 miles. I looked carefully at the weather and it looked like we had a great window. But, 338 miles, over 48 hours...could ZT have the fuel load to safely travel that far? Was the wind going to be on our side? I couldn't get a good prediction on how high the seas were going to be but the winds looked to be less than 10 knots. Could we do it? We left the safety of the dock, took on all the fuel the main tank could hold plus we had 10 gallons in the jerry-cans. We filled up on water and even emptied the holding tank. At about 3 PM we set off. The winds were incredibly light and no use to us. The seas were around one foot and very far apart. We motored the entire way at 7 knots. I'd have loved to put up the sails but didn't want to drop our speed down to 2-3 knots for an extended period of time. There are three islands about 100 miles from Bahia de Banderas which we could have used only in a true emergency. I was told not to get any closer than 20 miles from them. On one of them is the Mexican Federal Prison. So, unless you want to become an inmate of said prison, I'd advise staying clear of the island which is what we did. Oh, on this run we saw whales and sea turtles along with many of our dolphin friends. It wasn't until we entered Bahia de Banderas that we actually got enough wind to put up the sails. The crew looked to the shore we were passing off our port side and thought they saw masts. I kept telling them Puerto Vallarta was still a ways away and off the bow. They broke out binoculars and sure enough masts could be seen. So, we changed course toward the

masts. Sure enough, there were boats at the bases

of the masts and where the masts were located close together was a marina. We pulled up to the fuel dock and they directed us to a slip close to the marina office. We traveled somewhere near 330 miles in 50 hours, and still had one 5-gal jerry-can of diesel plus $\frac{1}{4}$ in the main tank. I now estimate Zero Tolerance's fuel range to be 400 miles. But, this doesn't compensate for larger seas where she might rock enough to cause air to be sucked into the fuel lines. I'm likely to stay here for two weeks while I carefully look the boat over and prepare for the next part of the journey. Rose and Alyssa plan on leaving Zero Tolerance at this port so I'll also be looking for new crew.

Date: Thu 1/12/12

ZT and possible BC find... ZT is still just north of Puerto Vallarta. I think I found crew and will probably leave in a week or less. So, what's a BC? Over a year ago, a really nice guy was living on his sailboat, S/V Tacheon, a few boats away from me. He went to the animal shelter and was adopted by a small, very loving cat named "BC." The story I heard was that BC had been living in a tiny cage at the shelter for almost a year and hadn't found a person to adopt in all that time. Rumor was she was scheduled to be transferred to a shelter that would likely put her down. BC (Boat Cat or Black Cat) craved human attention. When Mark, her human, was away at work, she'd venture off her boat looking for anybody to pet her or a leg to rub against. If I was home (more often than not), she'd come over and visit me. Many times, she'd lay down on the floor or on a quarterberth and fall asleep purring. I'd try to be as quiet as possible and this frequently meant I too would nap. At first, I was giving BC a cat treat or two. One day, Mark told me BC was having digestion issues and I'd have to stop the treats. I thought BC might stop coming over if the treats stopped, but that wasn't the case. In fact, it seemed she visited more often after the treats ended. Perhaps cat treats are really not as appetizing as advertised and BC was just being polite when she took them. Just before the Baja Ha-ha of 2010, Mark retired and took off sailing Tacheon south. Somewhere just before Cabo San Lucas, Tacheon ended up too close to shore. Mark had been singlehanding and was woken to the sound of surf on the beach. He was unable to get Tacheon into deeper water and lost the boat. The Baja Ha-ha people, along with many Mexicans, helped Mark recover many of his possessions from Tacheon; but there was no way to remove the boat from the beach even with the Mexican Navy's help. I've always wondered what happened to BC. Did Mark take her with him on his sailing adventures? Was she aboard Tacheon the fateful day she went ashore? Did BC survive the beaching? I've heard Mark was outfitting this third boat to try again the cruising/sailing lifestyle. My last day in Cabo San Lucas, I was doing some last minute shopping. I was walking past the boatyard and, for some reason, stopped next to a street hotdog vender to gather my thoughts. There was an elderly Mexican gentleman sitting on the curb eating a hotdog. Next to him was a black cat patiently waiting for him to possibly give her a bite (ie begging). I reached down and the cat immediately rubbed her head against my hand and began to purr. It was almost as if she recognized me. She had the same fur type and color as BC. Her right ear was notched; which is typically done in the US to mark a cat that's been spayed or neutered in a shelter. This was consistent with BC's background. It was obvious this black cat had been living on the street for quite some time but still craved human affection. Was the cat I was petting BC? There was a good chance she actually was. If one of the Baja Ha-ha boats took BC aboard, and she ran off as soon as they hit the next port, BC would then be living on the streets next to the marina in Cabo. If I'd been sure the black cat really was BC, I'd have taken her aboard Zero Tolerance and gotten word back to Mark she was safe. Unfortunately, I could not be sure. Then it occurred to me: Isn't living free on the street much better than living in a cage? If it was BC, she'd survived for over a year and didn't look like she was starving. Maybe living on the streets in Cabo is even better for a cat than living a life on 36-feet of fiberglass that's always moving.

Date: Tue 1/17/12

Currently in La Cruz. I arrived here on the 8th. Alyssa and Rose decided, as was their plan, to hop off Zero Tolerance here. After a few days of looking for new crew, I ran across Mickey who first contacted me when I was looking for crew leaving San Francisco. He's agreed to go as far as Panama and brings to ZT much sailing experience. We had hopes of leaving here today, but it looks like there's a bit more wind coming down the Sea of Cortez today than I'd like...and we got a bit of a late start...and the boat with all her systems are still new to Mickey. So, we've decided to take it easy today and do everything needed to prep ZT for an early morning departure tomorrow. Our first stop will be Manzanillo which is just over 170nm away, should take us around 28hrs worth of sailing.