$oldsymbol{1}$ t's hard to believe that 15 years have passed since 36 sailboats set out from San Diego bound for Cabo San Lucas in the inaugural Baja Ha-Ha cruisers' rally. Despite the fact that two entries collided inexplicably during the first 24 hours, the fledgling event was a huge success,

R&R stops at Bahia Tortugas and Bahia Santa Maria. Since the beginning, the primary goal has simply been to get the fleet to the Cape safely, while having fun along the way. The Rally Committee's

Flashing back to the freewheelin' '60s, the 'Di's Dream' crew struts their stuff for emcees Mick

giving birth to a much-anticipated annual tradition that has since ushered thousands of sailors into the cruising lifestyle.

Today, the Ha-Ha is North America's largest cruising rally — and the second largest in the world, behind the transatlantic ARC Rally. This year's entry roster tied the all-time high of 182 boats (in '06). Of those, 141 started and 136 finished with a total of 537 crew on board.

Although the Ha-Ha has grown in both size and sophistication, its original "nothing serious" spirit remains, as does the three-leg format, with scheduled

Generally, the fishing was fantastic this year, although the size of the catch was more impressive on some boats than on others.



mantra has always been: "Every finisher is a winner!"

The average boat size has increased a bit since Ha-Ha numero uno, but nearly 20% of the fleet is still 36 feet or smaller. Then as now, it's not the size or value of the boat that's important, but that its owners finally summoned up the nerve to cast off the docklines and head south. Once underway, they all get to experience the same golden sunrises and the same magical nights beneath star-speckled skies. In fact, it could be argued that, while the challenge is greater on a small boat, so is the sense of accomplishment. This year, no crew was more proud of having sailed the entire route than a threesome of self-described "desert rats" from Elephant Butte, New Mexico, sailing aboard a 1979 Newport 30 named Desert Wind. Their perseverance and zeal for adventure earned them the event's highest honor: the Spirit of the Ha-Ha Award.

Since the beginning, colorful characters have been a constant, and the crew lists have always reflected a broad spectrum of backgrounds and occupations. This year was no different. In addition to the predictable — marine industry types, high tech dropouts, scientists, contractors, teachers and "recovering lawyers" — there was at least one private eye, aerospace engineer, massage therapist, gynecologist, psychiatrist, and ski lift technician, as well as an adult night club promoter, a retired submarine officer and a helo pilot who'd recently returned from

combat in Afghanistan.

Holly Scott's Cal 40 Mahalo was the only entry with an all-female crew - they actually held a bake sale to help finance the trip — but she was only one of 10

female skippers.

In addition to a whole passel of kids — 2-year-old Kiera MacLachlan of the Taswell 43 Lea Scotia being the youngest — there were at least a half dozen sailors in their 70s. Among them, the senior salt was 78-year-old Mel Hamp of the Catalina 42 Sea Angel — one of 11 similar boats which were granted the first 'one design' start in Ha-Ha history. For Mel and his newlywed bride, Donna, the Ha-Ha served as the beginning of an open-ended honeymoon.

While some boats and crews had previously done thousands of miles of blue-water sailing, including a few circumnavigations, you might say that others were baptized by

the Ha-Ha. For example, before heading south from Portland. Dave Hohman claims he'd never actually raised the sails of his Hardin Force 50, Luna-Sea. Previously she'd only been used as a "party barge"

on the Columbia River!

s the fleet gathered in San Diego prior to the October 27 start, many were happy to hear weather gurus predicting





mild wind and sea conditions for the 360-mile Leg One to Bahia Tortugas (Turtle Bay).

Not only did that forecast hold up, but overall, Ha-Ha XV sailing conditions may have been the best ever, especially since the breeze held through Leg Three, which is usually a yawner with extremely light

Another factor making Ha-Ha numero quince (15) particularly memorable was that both air and water temps were higher than normal, sooner than normal. After the first night most folks retired their foulies and heavy jackets to the bottom of their sea bags, where they remained for the rest of the cruise. We measured water temperatures near 80° at Turtle Bay - substantially warmer than normal - and 84° a day north of the Cape, at least 20 miles offshore.

The fishing also seemed to be better than ever. Within hours of the start even neophyte fishermen were hauling in dinner as if they actually knew what they were doing. By the end of the event



What would a sailor's party be without a few mermaids? Many crews got creative with their costumes this year.

fish stories were so prolific that some were hard to believe. Ha-Ha #1 veteran Dave Fiorito of the C&C 36 Shenanigans claims he and his crew caught every species of tuna there is — albacore, yellowfin, yellowtail, blue fin, you name it.

So, all things considered, you might say that Ha-Ha XV was breezier, warmer and, well, fishier than ever.

unday, October 26 — the day before the start of Leg One - was a very busy day. After the 11 a.m. skipper's briefing, Ha-Ha XV kicked off in typical fashion with a flamboyant pre-Halloween costume party. The mere idea of planning a barbecue lunch for 600 people is the sort of thing that would

Below: Seconds after the start, chutes were popping left and right. Inset, left: 'Escapade' hit normally cause us to cower under our desks. Thankfully, though, we could rely on the organizational expertise of our longtime party partners, the Cabrillo Isle Marina staff and team members from several Southern California West Marine stores. Thanks to them, our little shindig held at the West Marine parking lot on Rosecrans Boulevard — was a whopping success.

As always, the costume contest was the highlight. For a group of folks who must have had 'to do' lists a block long, the extravagance and originality of some of the costumes were truly impressive. In addition to boatloads of buccaneers and wenches, there were cave dwellers, Vikings, colonial aristocrats and mermaids, as well as a curious group from the Island Packet 37 Dragon's Toywhose faces were encircled by puffy flesh-colored fabric with flames painted on it. We eventually learned they were supposed

Even neophyte fishermen were hauling in dinner as if they actually knew what they were doing.

to be 'flaming assholes'. Go figure.

With the promise of all sorts of swag from the shelves of West Marine, the contest was emceed by the irrepressibly exuberant Missy Welch and her perennial straight man, West Marine store manager Mick Fritzsching. After the contest entrants were divided into a half-dozen categories, from the sultry to





stuff for the crowd while the DJ pumped out dance tunes. Great fun!

As we often say, the scene at the start of any Ha-Ha is always far more reminiscent of the great Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889 than of a 'serious' yacht race. The starting line between the committee boat, *Profligate*, and the Point Loma lighthouse was close to two miles long. As is typical, though, many skippers seemed to be more concerned with keeping a safe distance away from competitors than with pulling off a textbook start. But hey, it's a cruiser rally, not a buoy race.

There are always those, however, who subscribe to the notion that whenever two boats meet on the water, they are racing. Moments after the starting horn sounded, Greg Dorland's newly acquired Catana 52 Escapade slipped across the line with her enormous, bright-white asymmetrical chute drawing well. Less than a boat length behind her was Bruce Anderson's Alaska-based Perry 59 Free Range Chicken. These two well-sailed boats and several others would play a subtle game of cat and mouse throughout the 760-mile run to the Cape.

With flat seas and 10 to 12 knots of wind on the beam, Ha-Ha XV was off to an ideal start — enough breeze to get the fleet moving, but not enough to scare anyone back into their slip.

During much of Day One, a low bank of thick fog hung off the coast, inspiring some skippers to stay a bit inshore of the Turtle Bay rhumbline. Others, however, bet on finding stronger breeze farther offshore — a hunch that paid off big

After the fog dissipated near the

time.

When the wind went light on Leg One, the 'Bonkers' boys got out the water balloon launcher — the bombs were biodegradable, of course.



Coronado Islands, the sailing was sweet indeed, as the wind built into the high teens. Radio reports about all the fish being caught raised the excitement level, and many boats also spotted whales migrating south. "Six or seven of them came up and played beside us," recalls a crewman from the Niagara 35 *Girl on the Moon.* "One passed so close to us that when he blew, his snot almost landed on my watch partner!"

After sunset the breeze began clocking to the NW and went very light during the wee hours. Thankfully, though, the sea conditions were benign and, although there was absolutely no moon, there were a gazillion stars to steer by.

By dawn many boats were seeing less than five knots of true wind. The diehards hung in there throughout the

> day, attempting to get a little extra push by playing puffs against the gentle swells. Most, however, succumbed to the urge to power up their 'iron jibs.' This being a rally rather than a race, there was no guilt or loss of face for doing so. In fact, some entrants seemed to take pride in the number of engine hours they chalked up. Most notably, Dave Ferguson ran the 90-horse

Inset: 'Alegria' Anna shows off her supper. Spread: The Milskis' self-built cat 'Sea Level' was smokin' on her inaugural offshore run.

Ford Lehman diesel on his Puget 38 motorsailer *No Problem* the entire trip whether sailing or not. "I was hoping to earn the *Exxon Valdez* Award again for the most fossil fuels consumed, as I did in the 2000 Ha-Ha," he later confided.

Even in the light air, plenty of folks were still catching fish. Unfortunately, aboard the Catalina 470 *Di's Dream* Roger Frizzelle snagged one just as his spinnaker wrapped. "All I could do was

"Somewhere near Cedros Island there had to be 500 to 1,000 dolphins around us."

set the drag and run forward," he recalls. But he apparently set it too tight. "Within two seconds" of his leaving the cockpit, the force on the rod — which had been a prized Christmas present from his two sons — snapped it out of its holder and into the drink.

Dean Tompkins of the Irwin 37 *Harmony* had a happier tale to tell: "Somewhere near Cedros Island there had to be 500 to 1,000 dolphins around us — so many that they completely surrounded the boat for a half mile on all sides. They weren't swimming in one direction, but instead seemed to be using *Harmony* as





the nucleus of some great game.'

By midnight of Day Two, roughly 50 boats were already snug in the Turtle Bay anchorage. Skies were a bit unsettled that night. Some who were still out sailing saw a bit of drizzle along with lightning strikes. On their approach to the Turtle Bay entrance, Kirk and Sachi Miller saw distant strikes on both sides of the their Santa Cruz 50 Bay Wolf. Mother Nature's light show put them on edge, but did no damage. Sailing farther offshore, the father/son team aboard Eva, the smallest boat in the fleet, wasn't so lucky. Neither Michael Traum nor his father, Gerald, actually saw bolts of lightning, but they could hear thunderclaps and at one point the inside of a nearby cloud suddenly lit up like a beacon. Although they felt nothing, there were enough loose electrons

generated to fry all the electronics aboard their little Norsea 27 — even their cell phones.

Fundamentally, the dusty streets of Bahia Tortugas have changed little since the Ha-Ha fleet first called there 15 years ago. But there have been a few subtle changes lately: While there's still not a single bank, there are now at least two public Internet cafes which stay open well into the evening; several new eateries now give the landmark Vera Cruz Restaurant competition; two competing fuel

services now offer boat-to-boat deliveries of diesel (at roughly *half* of stateside prices); a new dinghy dock is in place; and a splendid new community plaza was completed just in time for the annual Day of the Dead festivities. Most impressive of all, though, is the fact that the formerly rutted road to the main highway is now paved! That 80-mile trip used to be a back-breaker.

Despite all these highfalutin' upgrades, however, the townspeople are as down-to-earth and genuinely friendly as ever. More than simply being tolerant of the Ha-Ha onslaught, many locals have told us there's great anticipation of the fleet's arrival each year. In addition to the substantial monetary input to the town's economy, the sheer novelty of the Ha-Ha armada filling the otherwise empty harbor is, for them, akin to the Wells Fargo wagon arriving at River City in the vintage musical *The Music Man*.

In addition to exploring the town, hiking the surrounding hills, making boat repairs and just chillin', there are always two fleet gatherings during the Turtle Bay layover: the first, a *fiesta* at the Vera Cruz Restaurant, and the second a potluck beach party on an uninhabited stretch of 'waterfront' a half-mile outside of town.

Located on the town's main drag, the Vera Cruz was hard to miss, especially since they inflated a 40-foot-high Corona bottle and painted "Welcome Baja Ha-Ha 2008" on the retaining wall out front.

While the young at heart busted moves on the disco's dance floor, most others were busy holding down chairs on the open-air terrace for hours while recapping their Leg One adventures with new friends over tacos and cold *cervezas*.

Even though the Ha-Ha is technically a rally, in a fleet this size you've always got someone to race against.





The crew of Washington-based 'Rainshadow III' was so excited to do the Ha-Ha they all got permanent commemorative tattoos!

Over the past decade and a half we've gotten to know the owners of the Vera Cruz so well — and we've brought so much business their way — that they practically think of us as family. But it was truly touching when Grandma Julia presented the Rally Committee with an amazing four-tier cake to celebrate our fifteenth anniversary together. Every fleet member in attendance got a piece, and all agreed it was muy delicioso!

The big beach party on our last day at T.B. is always big fun, but this year conditions could not have been better. With a light breeze blowing across the fine sand, air temps were in the mid 80s—ideal for boogie boarding, jogging, playing volleyball or just hangin' out.

The crew from the Vera Cruz showed up with an endless supply of beer and

sodas, and dozens of chefs laid out home-cookin' for the potluck, while several successful fishermen grilled up their recent catches to share with the fleet. The most desirable dish of the feast, however, was *Miela* skipper Bill Vaccaro's 'ahi rumaki' — 2-inch cubes of fresh ahi with pineapple wedges toothpicked to them, wrapped in bacon and barbecued. Damn, those were good!

As we walked the beach swapping tales about fish too smart to be landed and spinnaker wraps too gnarly to unravel, we learned that only four boats had sailed the

whole leg: Dan Swett's San Diego-based Hunter 41 *Deliverance*, Patsy Verhoeven's La Paz-based Gulfstar 50 *Talion*, Stan Hafenfeld's Newport 30 *Desert Wind*, and Sheri and Rich Crowe's 44-footer *Tabu*, which they built themselves to a Farr design. Having read that the finish line of this leg was infinite, running along a latitude line at the north end of Isla Natividad, the Crowes stayed way, way out where the wind never dropped below 9 knots. *Tabu* actually crossed the finish 130 miles offshore!

This was *Deliverance* crewman Tom Trebelhorn's fourth Ha-Ha: "We had about 12 hours of real light wind one night where we were basically just moving with the current. But our biggest problem was we had two powerboaters on board and they couldn't understand why we just wouldn't start the engine. We came real close to a mutiny!"

One thing that neophyte cruisers

tend to like about the Ha-Ha itinerary is that each of its three legs gets progressively shorter: the first is about 360 miles, the second roughly 240, and the third a mere 180. But with the sailing as sweet as it was on Legs Two and Three this year, many sailors — especially those on larger, more comfortable boats — almost wished the distances between layovers were longer!

Prior to the Leg Two start, however, the wind gods were apparently off duty.



The pre-dawn hours had been flat calm, and at 8 a.m. on November 1, the scheduled hour of the start, the breeze was still so light that the Rally Committee's Grand Poobah instituted a 'rolling start'. An option employed often during past Ha-Ha's, the idea is that every boat can

motor, without penalty, at five knots until a new start time is announced.

By 10 a.m. the breeze had come up from the NW — allowing the starting horn to make its official squawk — and continued to build slowly throughout the day into the 20s.

Top row, left to right: 'Miela' lovelies test the water; the party beach stretches for miles; a youthful entrepreneur profits from hauling trash; chef Bill grills up some 'ahi rumaki'; twilight bugle call. Middle row: the Poobah tests his frisbee prowess; sailing into the sunset; it was a big year for volleyball. Bottom row: Turtle Bay's new dinghy dock; 'La Palapa' girls, lookin' and feelin' good; cruiser kids make the rounds. All photos 'Latitude 38', except as noted.

While the stiffening breeze was welcomed by most sailors, it wrought havoc for others. Tom and Penny Dalgliesh's Seattle-based Islander Freeport 41 *Waverley* lost steerage that afternoon, but fortunately had an emergency tiller ready to rig. They elected to head inshore to nearby Asuncion Bay after a non-Ha-Ha boat that was anchored there offered to help with repairs. One of the three boats that accompanied *Waverley* was John Olson's Andromeda 48 *Eager Dreamer*, earning a credit in the 'cruiser karma



















A crewman practices celestial navigation aboard 'Vitesse'. It's not so easy when the wind cranks up into the 20s.

bank' that they would later redeem.

As the rest of the fleet boomed southward, staying farther offshore again proved to be the smart call. Some boats sailing 50 to 75 miles out would later report winds up to 28 knots during the late afternoon and evening. Aided by a push from moderate swells, some of the faster boats in the fleet, such as the Perry 59 Free Range Chicken, the Catana 52 cat Escapade, and Jim and Kent Milski's self-built Schionning 48 cat Sea Level reported top speeds in the 17- to 20-knot range.

With an eager crew pushing hard, the *Chicken* finished in just over 24 hours, averaging 10 knots. Although unconfirmable, this may have set an all-time record — if only the Rally Committee had kept better records over the years. Less than two hours later, just after noon, the big cats *Sea Level* and *Escapade* completed their long-distance horse race. After 240 miles, *Sea Level* crossed less than an a half hour ahead.

But the closest match-up came two hours later, when three wildly different boats gradually converged on the finish

'God rays' light up the dawn at Bahia Santa Maria. South of the border almost every sunrise and sunset was a stunner. line from different angles, but all on port jibe. (This time the finish line *was not* infinite.) Leading the charge was Tom Price's S.F.-based Beneteau 473 *Vitesse*: "Our hearts were pounding as we watched two huge spinnakers bearing down on us," recalls Tom.

The first was a huge fire-enginered symmetrical with a logo depicting a bull's head — Long Horn was
the former name of Lou Freeman's
San Diego-based Swan 51 Seabird,
which finished six minutes behind Vi-

Five minutes after that Rich and Sheri Crowe's *Tabu* sliced across the line — they'd sailed all the way up from Ecuador to join the fun. Both are professional mariners, but Sheri was designated the official captain this year. A veritable driving machine, she loves wheel time and reportedly hand-steered for about 75% of the trip.

While the first half of the fleet rested snugly in the Bahia Santa Maria anchorage that afternoon and evening, some of the smaller/slower boats were in for a pretty wild night, as the wind outside was still honkin'.

The threesome — whose average age was 69 — had vowed to sail the whole way.

Among them were at least two small boats whose 'inland-dwelling' crews were determined to sail the entire leg. "It took us three unsuccessful attempts before we finally got that spinnaker set," admits Dorman McShan of the Durango, Colorado-based Ranger 28 *The Marci Ann.* Sailing with his son Ben, 30, and old



buddy Don Aarvold, McShan's enthusiasm probably outweighed his experience. "We finally got her going after inflicting some damage to both the sail and ourselves." Good Samaritans aboard the Hunter 466 Follow You Follow Me later patched 22 small holes that had apparently been poked into The Marci Ann's chute during the learning process.

Before the Ha-Ha, Stan Hafenfeld of *Desert Wind* had never driven a spinnaker. But with a little help from crewmen Rich Strasia and William Guenther, who'd done some buoy racing on J/24s, Hafenfeld eventually got the hang of it. The threesome — whose average age was 69 — had vowed to sail the whole course. They flew the chute more often than not, hand-steering the entire trip. At one point Hafenfeld somehow pulled off a complete 360 with the chute up without wrapping it, after the sturdy 30-footer got rocked by a particularly large

quartering swell. Later, while barreling down a swell they estimate to have been at least 10 feet high, their GPS clocked an 11.5! Not bad for a boat with a 26-ft waterline.

A wealth of other anecdotes emerged later. Betty Adams, who inspired the naming of the O'Day 34 Flibbertigibbet, will never forget the pod of "phosphorescent dolphins" that danced around the hull late one night. Nor will David Fisher soon forget being awakened from a deep sleep when his Hunter 356 Sea Siren glanced off a whale on the approach to Bahia Santa Maria.





Salty Stan and his crew of New Mexico 'desert rats' trailered 'Desert Wind' 900 miles to the San Diego start.

During Leg Two many crews also shared the pleasure of watching Tom Perkins' immaculate 289-ft Maltese Falcon roar by. When the crew of the Cal 2-46 Flyin' Penguin hailed the gleaming megayacht on VHF to say hi, her captain generously offered to jibe the threemasted Dyna-Rig so they could get a closer look: "Get your camera ready!"

hanks to the passing of Hurricane Norbert a few weeks earlier, the rocky slopes above the anchorage were greener than ever, enticing dozens of sailors to stretch their sea legs with a hike to the top of the 1,200-foot ridge line. Others surfed or body surfed on gentle 3-foot waves, while still others walked for miles along the bay's seemingly endless skirt of fine white sand. A few unlucky sailors got unplanned lessons in dinghy

the 7 a.m. start of Leg Three was an ethereal sight — and there was breeze.

handling. Among them were Pat Pierce and his two husky crewmen - each of whom weighs more than 200 lbs. They learned the hard way that a 3 hp engine doesn't quite cut it when you're trying to time your beach exit through sets of shore breakers. When they flipped, each guy lost his wallet and cell phone.

Ha-Ha layovers give crews time to catch up on both sleep and repairs, and also to socialize with newfound friends. Dean and 'Toast' Conger hosted a watersports party and sleepover aboard their Lagoon 380 cat Don Quixote for a load of Ha-ha kids; Patsy Verhoeven hosted a wine party aboard Talion that was so popular it lowered the Gulfstar 50's waterline by six inches; Doug Smith hosted a jam session on his Marquesas 56 cat Amani, and Dietmar Petutschnig threw a Texas Hold'em poker party aboard his Lagoon 440 cat Carinthia that went until the wee hours. Crews from four different boats ended up splitting the \$500 pot.

The final day at Bahia Santa Maria is always reserved for a fiesta ashore atop a rocky bluff with a panoramic view of the anchorage. It's put on by a cadre of local fishermen and their wives who are the only residents of this 8-mile-long bay. The \$12-a-plate lunch of fisherman's stew, rice and beans was delicious, and the cold beer was, of course, refreshing. But the highlight of the mid-afternoon celebration was dancing to a kick-ass, four-piece rock 'n' roll band. Every year they make a 200-mile pilgrimage from La

ing desert, sand dunes and a 40-mile stretch of beach at low water in a truck loaded to capacity with a P.A. system, amps, guitars, an electric keyboard and a full drum set.

After ripping through a couple of familiar rock anthems, the band's longtime lead guitarist, Roberto, greeted the crowd and reminded them, with a gesture toward a Rubbermaid tub at his feet, that the band was paid only by tips. No sooner had they cranked up again, than a black labrador strode up and gave the rockers his silent critique by raising a hind leg and peeing right into the tip

Shirts-off sailing on the way to the Cape. Air temperatures could not have been more ideal for the trip south













box! Roberto and bassman Bennie just about split a gut laughing, but managed to get through the tune.

You've gotta love these guys. They may not have understood all the lyrics to the classics they covered — by Santana, The Beatles, Creedence, The Doors, Lynyrd Skynyrd and others — but they nailed the solos note-for-note as the Ha-Ha revelers danced away the afternoon.

It was ironic to think that back home the national election hysteria was in full force as the votes were tallied. Savvy Ha-Ha'ers had voted by absentee ballot, and were quite content to hear the results on the next morning's net.

 $oldsymbol{1}$ t's always a bit sad to say goodbye

to a refreshingly undeveloped place like Bahia Santa Maria — especially when you're heading to a bustling tourist mecca like Cabo San Lucas. Perhaps that's why only about a dozen boats were within a hundred yards of the starting line at the painfully early hour of 7 a.m. In typical Ha-Ha style, many crews apparently elected to roll over and snooze for an extra hour or two. "Huh? They're starting Leg Three now? Okay, whatever. Zzzzz..."

Of all the Leg Three starts in recent memory, though, it would have been a shame to miss this one. As crews rubbed the sleep out of their eyes, shafts of golden sunlight pierced a think blanket of clouds overhead, spotlighting one boat, then another. The wind machine cranked up early that day and the fleet was treated to a splendid ride south on a steady 10-knot breeze that built throughout the day. And it never completely shut off during the night. As a result, more boats than ever sailed the entire third leg, with a number of early finishers rounding the Cape during the pre-dawn hours.

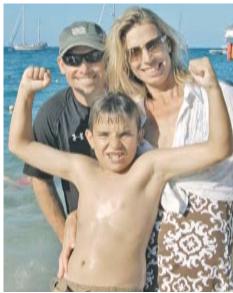
Despite the fact that the waters of southern Baja are very heavily fished by commercial and recreational fleets, many Ha-Ha fishermen were filling their freezers with fresh-caught filets all the way to the finish line off Cabo Falso. As Barritt Neal of the Kelly-Peterson 44 Serendipity found out, though, fishing at night can have unanticipated consequences. While gutting a freshly caught dorado











Clockwise from upper left: Bassman Bennie is a rhythm machine; celebrating life on election day, a million miles from the madness; 'La Palapa' smokes toward the Cape; kids just wanna have fun; boat rescuers Kris, Erik and Jennifer; boogieing at the Squid; Santa Maria fishermen's stew; "Conga line!"; Cap'n Tobin, 23, with Jamie — he last did the Ha-Ha at age 9, crewing for Mom and Dad.

on the aft deck, crewman Roy Hubecky accidentally skewered Neal's calf. No worries, though, they're still buddies.

Among other notable anecdotes from the leg, Cara Jones of the custom Hunter 50 *Jules' Jewel* was rudely slapped in the face by a flying fish, and Eva Wetzstein of the Hunter 45 *Babeeze* had one fly into bed with her through an open port shortly after she came off night watch.

Both the Taswell 43 *Lea Scotia* and the Irwin 52 *Hawkwind* discovered uninvited hitchhikers during Leg Three. After Trevor and Karisa MacLachlan noticed that a tenacious 2-foot-tall seabird had

taken roost in *Lea Scotia*'s cockpit in the darkness, splattering it profusely with droppings, they had a heck of a time persuading it to leave — even after spraying it with water and nudging it with a boat hook. Aboard *Hawkwind*, Elaine Dwyer and her crew took a different approach when a booby bird hopped aboard at Bahia Santa Maria. They adopted it as sort of a mascot, earning its trust by feeding it fresh ahi. It stayed aboard until they dropped the hook in the Cabo anchorage, then flew off to explore the town.

With enough steady breeze to keep spinnakers inflated, and air temps so warm you could wear only a T-shirt and shorts at 3 a.m., that final night of tropical sailing beneath the stars was an instant classic. At the front of the pack, Free Range Chicken was uncatchable, despite the best efforts of crews aboard Latitude's 63-ft cat Profligate and John Fradkin's Deerfoot 64, aptly named Deerfoot. These two boats crossed jibes for the final 12 hours of the race. But in a perfect illustration of Murphy's law of spinnaker flying, Deerfoot's chute spun itself into a horrible wrap five minutes before the finish line. They held onto their lead, though, crossing under main alone.

Next came the J/120 J/World, which was campaigned aggressively by sailing instructor Eugenie Russell and her

student crew, Paul Lauher and Anne Hadley. They hand-steered the entire course — and somehow found time to actually board the Kristen 46 Precious Metal during Leg One and steal their

Considering that Jim Milski's cat Sea Level was on her first offshore trip, she did an impressive job of keeping up the pressure on the fleet's speediest contenders, such as Escapade and Tabu — that is, until her big asymmetrical split a seam in the middle of the night, with the bulk of the cloth finding its way under the boat.

By morning, many crews were already

setting off to shop for souvenirs, search for a laundromat or perhaps wash down a plate of huevos rancheros with a celebratory margarita. But the desert rats aboard Desert Wind were still happily plodding along under spinnaker, roughly 30 miles north of the Cape. Suddenly, a whale spouted right next to them, then three more appeared — one did a full breach off the 30-footer's port bow. Unbelievably, a marlin jumped nearby, then a mahi, then dolphins of all sizes. No sooner did they realize they'd sailed into a feeding frenzy, than they saw fishing boats converging on their location. Turned out that same day was the start of a prestigious Cabo tuna tournament, with 60 boats in the hunt.

ithout the close cooperation of our longtime friends at Cabo Marina, the fleet's arrival at this bustling fishing port would be awkward, at best. But even though the marina caters primarily to globetrotting megayachts and highdollar sportsfishing yachts, Manager Enrique, Office Manager

Norma, Dockmaster Guty and their crew have always bent over backwards to make our stay as headache-free as pos-

New friends swapped tales, compared cruising plans, and made promises to meet up at distant anchorages.

sible.

This year was no exception. In fact, a new line of slips was rushed to completion so it would be available to the Ha-Ha

fleet. As a result, every boat that wanted a slip got one!

Although Cabo has always been a logical stopover for boats heading south, these days it's primarily known for two things: deep-sea fishing aboard day boats and hard partying. This being the case, most cruising sailors are ready to push on to La Paz, Mazatlan or Puerto Vallarta after two or three days.

Even though Cabo today is arguably over-Americanized, we'd be reluctant to dis it too severely, as it still has beautiful beaches and exceptional restaurants. And let's face it, it's a lot of fun to let

2008 Baja Ha-Ha XV Finishers

Timekeeper's Note: Amazingly, there (A '+' beside a finishing rank indicates special a

. NM

Sisiutl

Maggie Mae

Gulfstar 44

Hylas 44

Bob Bechler

Tait Smith

Portland, OR

San Francisco

	((A + beside a iiri	isning rank ind	icates special a				
AGAVE Division								
1	Intrepid	Hans Christian 40	Jack Denson	Long Beach				
2	Eva	Nor'Sea 27	Michael Traum	Cape Mendocino				
3	LunaSea II	Challenger 32	Bill Schaul	San Diego				
3	Panache	Hans Christian 33T	Jim Howard	San Diego				
3	Osprey	Pacific Seacraft 34	Donald Snyder	Astoria, OR				
3	Third Day	Pearson 365	Richard Boren	Avila Bay				
3	Beyond	Darwin 37	Michael Kary	San Francisco				
3	Drum	Tayana 37	Andrew Signol	Alameda				
3	About Time	Downeast 38	Jeff Smith	Huntington Beach				
3	Samantha	Nauticat 38	Scott Brear	San Francisco				
3	No Problem	Puget 38	Dave Ferguson	Ketchikan, AK				
3	Vindsang	Alajuela 38	Glenn Gelhar	Bellingham, WA				
3	Nepenthe	Shannon 38 PH	John Marshall	Marina del Rey				
3	Abrazo	Campos 39	Richard Baila	Bellingham, WA				
BURRITO Division								
1	Desert Wind	Newport 30 Mk II	Stan Hafenfeld	Elephant Butte, NM				
2	The Marci Ann	Ranger 28	Dorman McShan	Durango, CO				
3+	Wind River	Contessa 32	Paul Scott	Maple Bay, BC				
3+	Morning Light	Catalina 320	Robert Gunyon	Newport Beach				
3	Two Wishes	Catalina 30	Gail Fliesbach	San Diego				
3	Gypsy	Newport 30 Mk III	Justin Lyon	Santa Barbara				
3	Lap Dancer	Newport 33	Bob Black	Bodega Bay				
3	Scheherezade	Yamaha 33	Noah Peffer	Los Angeles				
3	Delphinia	Morgan 34	Robert Lieb	Long Beach				
3	Flibbertigibbet	O'Day 34	Betty Adams	Discovery Bay				
3	Sea Toy	O'Day 34	Dianne Maclean	Oxnard				
	EVICHE Div		0. 14	D 11 1 0D				
1	Odessa Mama	Whitby 42	Stan May	Portland, OR				
2	Marissa	Tayana 42 Vancouver	Linda Smieja	Portland, OR				
3 3	Waverley Moondance	Islander Freeport 41	Tom Dalgliesh	Seattle, WA				
3	Cast Away	Tayana V-42 Tayana 42	Doug Scott Charles Tedrow	Albuquerque, NM Coos Bay, OR				
3	Four Points	C & C Landfall 43	Brian McCluskey	San Diego				
3	Serenity	Hans Christian 43	Stan Pace	San Francisco				
3	Banyan	Mason 43	Jody Lemmon	Long Beach				
3	Sea Biscuit	Slocum 43	Steve Sommer	San Francisco				
		0.000 10	0.000 00					
DI	ESPARADO	Division						
1	Dragon's Toy	Island Packet 37	Tom Kohrs	Freeport				
2+	Hurulu	Islander 36	Nathan Beckord	Sausalito				
3+	Girl On The Moon	Niagara 35	Michael Medley	Whiskeytown				
3+	. 1 . 7	Cal 36	David Addleman	Monterey				
3+	Scouser	Beneteau 362	Steven Thomas	San Francisco				
3+	Cat's Meow	Catalina 36	Nancy DeMauro	Richmond				
3	Sea Siren	Hunter 356	David Fisher	Monterey				

tie e few their dies en en e division d							
were ties for third in every division! accomplishment, typically sailing an entire leg.)							
C	COII	ripiisriment, ty _i	pically salling an e	entire leg.)			
Ī	3	Shenanigans	C&C 35	Dave Fiorito	San Francisco		
	3	Rocinante	Islander 36	Dan Martone	Point Richmond		
	3	Harmony	Irwin 37	Dean Tompkins	Creston, BC		
	3	PanaSea	Catalina 380	Dean Laurin	Emeryville		
	3	Mamabird	Island Packet 380	Colin Honess	San Rafael		
	ENCHILADA Division						
	1	Allure	Kalic 40	Dennis Hilling	Seattle, WA		
	2	Mahalo	Cal 40	Holly Scott	Long Beach		
	3++	Sauvage	Wauguiez Centurion 40	Jim Eisenhart	Ventura		
		J/World	J/120	Eugenie Russell	San Francisco/PV		
		Mystical Crumpet	Passport 40	Alan Jackson	Berkeley		
		Grebe	Valiant 40	Richard Solomon	Santa Barbara		
	3+	Seeker	Caliber LRC40	Kevin McCabe	San Diego		
	3	Tumbleweed	Cal 39 Mk III	Ted Morgan	Seattle, WA		
	3	Citla	Cal 39 Mk III	Peter Mirrasoul	San Diego		
	3	Bugler	Passport 40	Donald Fife	Napa		
	3	Endless Summer	Stevens 40	Frank Starai	Alameda		
		RIJOLE Div					
	1	Deliverance	Hunter 41	Dan Swett	San Diego		
	2+	Bonkers	J/130	Keith Sedwick	San Francisco		
	3+	Wanderer	Jeanneau 43DS	Patrick Stewart	Ventura		
	3	Star Fire	Islander 41	Bill Carneal	Marina del Rey		
	3	Faith	Morgan 41	Sandy Smith	Portland, OR		
	3	Pierceteam	Hunter Passage 43	Patrick Pierce	Seattle, WA		
	3	Trumpeter	Irwin 43 Mk III	Thor Thorson	Harbor, OR		
	Gl	JACAMOL	E Division				
	1	Sea Escape	Catalina 42 Mk II	Joe H Cunningham	San Francisco		
	2	Thumbs Up	Catalina 42 Mk II	Ivan Orgee	Alameda		
	3	WindSong	Catalina 42	Edward Staples	Channel Islands		
	3	Andanzas	Catalina 42	Wally Nevins	Ventura		
	3	Sea Angel	Catalina 42	Mel Hamp	Napa		
	3	Stargazer	Catalina 42 Mk II	Jeffrey Embree	San Pedro		
	3	Kat Den Rie	Catalina 42 Mk II	Jay Watt	Alameda		
	3	Suebee	Catalina 42 Mk II	Scott Rader	Sausalito		
	3	Seaduction	Catalina 42 Mk II	Dan Lawler	Salt Lake City, UT		
	н	JEVOS RA	NCHEROS Di	vision			
	1	Nirvana	Irwin 44	Bob Davis	Shell Beach		
	2	La Palapa	Catalina /Morgan 440	Roger Hayward	King Harbor		
	3+	Alegria	Northwind 43 DS	Tom Egan	Redondo Beach		
	3+	Viva	Saga 43	Scott Harkey	Seattle, WA		
	3	Lea Scotia	Taswell 43	Trevor MacLachlan	Seattle, WA		
	3	Norsk Vind	Wauquiez 43PS	Jim Knutson	Lake Forest Pk, WA		
	3	Sonrisa	Cheoy Lee 44	Fred Neilson	Lopez Island, WA		
1	•	Ol-IH	0.16.1	D D II	D 11 1 0D		



your hair down in a wild-and-crazy party town after you've been out at sea for 10 days. Although it's not an 'officially sanctioned' Ha-Ha activity, the annual gathering of the fleet Thursday night at the notorious Squid Roe dance bar is always a hoot. Loud, raucous and dedicated it's the sort of

to relaxing inhibitions, it's the sort of place that's the most fun when you're with a group. When several hundred sailors showed up wearing salmon-colored shirts, it was obvious to all that the Baja Ha-Ha fleet had arrived yet again.

A final beach party was organized the next day at a beachfront spot called Mango Deck, which lies directly behind the cruiser anchorage. New friends swapped tales, compared cruising plans, and made promises to meet up at distant anchorages.

One story that was making the rounds concerned the Andromeda 48 Eager Dreamer. Remember? She was one of the boats that had earned a karma credit back on Leg Two. Fleet members had been looking for Dreamer's crew all day

Bel Marin Keys

Port Hardy, BC

Mud Island, TN

Newport Beach

Yakatat, AK

San Diego

Sausalito

San Pedro

Seattle, WA

Lake City, CO

Seattle, WA

Newport, OR

Valleio

Alameda

Seattle, WA

Anthem, AZ

San Diego

Emeryville

Richmond

Charleston, OR

Sequim, WA

Newport Beach

San Francisco

Gig Harbor, WA

Valleio

Blaine, WA

Thursday, as she'd begun to drag anchor and was threatening several other boats. At some point she set off the proximity alarm on a nearby boat. Cyril Vidergare, a voung crewman on a neighboring boat dove in and swam over to see if he could help. About that time female skipper Jennifer Towne and her 8-year-old son Erik of the Roberts 45 Ekotopia chanced by in their dinghy. They climbed aboard, found the engine key in the ignition, but eventually discovered that the windlass was broken. Crewman Kris Konawalik of Sirius Star arrived to lend a hand, and together they eventually raised the anchor and motored the 48-footer safely to the fuel dock with no harm done.

Another tale of woe with a happy ending concerned the Pearson 36 Third Day, whose skipper Richard Boren is making a DVD of this year's event. A couple of hours after returning from the beach party, Rich and his wife Lori discovered that their nearly new inflatable and outboard were missing. They assumed it was because one of

IGUANA Division Flyin' Penguin Cal 2-46 Harold Miller Ft. Clatsop, OR Litha Hallberg-Rassy 46 Steven Hannon 3 Precious Metal Kristen 46 Pamela Bendall 2 Follow You Follow Me Hunter 466 Allan Alexopulos Redwood City Wish Gulfstar 47 Sailmaster James Bruce, Jr. 3 3++ Thin Wolf Kelly Peterson 44 Luke Tornatzky Port Townsend, WA 3 Eager Dreamer Andromeda 48 John Olson Custom Peterson 45 George Stonecliffe Julia Max Portland, OR 3 Sky Hylas 49 Robert Strang 3+ Babeeze Hunter 45 Rene Amyot Edmonton, AB 3 Miela Moody 44 Bill Vaccaro Chico **LANGOSTINO Division** Serendipity Kelly Peterson 44 Barritt Neal San Diego 1 Tabu Farr 44 Sheri Crowe Timothy Lutman Bamboo Des Moines . WA 3 Passport 45 2++ Free Range Chicken Perry 59 Bruce Anderson 3 Alegria Hunter 460 Steve Sabree Pass Christian, MS 2++ Magic Cloud Swan 48 Joseph Keenan 3 Misjudged II Hunter 460 Patrick Magers Newport Beach 2++ Sirius Baltic 51 Gregory James Hallberg-Rassy 46 Sarita Valdon Landes Seattle 3 2++ Seabird Lou Freeman MD Swan 51 3++ Rainshadow III Liberty 55 **Brian Flanders JALAPENO Division** 3+ Bay Wolf Santa Cruz 50 Kirk Miller Vitesse Beneteau 473 Tom Price San Francisco Deerfoot John Fradkin 1 3+ Deerfoot 64 2 Di's Dream Catalina 470 Roger Frizzelle San Francisco Tayana 58 Jason Scott Reverence 3++ Jules' Jewel Hunter 50 Rich Corbett Michigan City, IN 3 Hawkwind Irwin 60 Kevin Dwyer 3+ Lilly Beneteau First 47.7 Steve Thosath Seattle, WA 3+ Avalon Wauguiez Centurion 50 Roger Wise Alameda **MARGARITA Division** Merry Lee Beneteau 473 Lewis Guiss Marina del Rey Schionning 48.6 cat Jim Milski Sea Level Calou 3 Jeanneau 47 Bruce Powell Tiburon 2++ Triumnh Cross 46 tri Tobin Woodley 3 Alluvium Jeanneau 47 Sam Darbous Seattle, WA 2++ Escapade Catana 52 cat Greg Dorland Sirius Star Jeanneau 52 Harold Lott Half Moon Bay 2++ Crystal Blue Persuasion SR-55 /SX cat Gary Burgin Roger Behuken Jolly Roger Bombay 44 Berkeley 3+ Amani Fountaine Pajot 56 cat Chris Connors 3+ Double Play!! Gemini 105Mc cat (33') Don Parker **KILO Division** 3+ Don Quixote Lagoon 380 cat Dean Conger Gulfstar 50 Talion Patsy Verhoeven La Paz. Mexico Tim Henning Victory Cat 40-ft Seawind 1160 cat 3+ 2 Luna-Sea Hardin Force 50 David Boyle Portland, OR 3+ Sun Baby Lagoon 41 cat Bill Houlihan 3++ Libertad Amel Maramu 46 Dennis Johns Santa Barbara 3+ **Endless Summer** F-41 cat Steve May

Anchorage, AK

Lake Oswego, OR

Seattle, WA

Chat De Mar

3

3 Carinthia

42-Ft cat

Lagoon 440 cat

Ha-Ha 2008 Sponsors:

50-ft FD-12

Liberty 458

Roberts 45 PH

John Olson

Jennifer Towne

Robert McLeod

3+ Daydreamer

3+ Ekotopia

3 Gaia

(Please support them, because without them there would be no Ha-Ha)

Almar Marinas (800) 307-ISLE; www.almar.com • Blue Water Insurance (800) 655-9224; (619) 226-6702; www.bluewaterins.com • Commanders' Weather (603) 882-6789; www.commandersweather.com • Downwind Marine (619) 224-2733; www.downwindmarine.com • Gerry Sea of Cortez Charts (520) 394-2393; www.gerrycruise.com • HF Radio On Board (510) 814-8888; www.hfradio.com • ICOM America Inc. www. icomamerica.com/marine • Katadyn Watermakers (800) 755-6701 or (763) 746-3500; www.katadyn.com • Latitude 38 magazine & 'Lectronic Latitude (415) 383-8200; www.latitude38.com • Marina de la Paz 011-52 (612) 125-2112; www.marinadelapaz.com • Marina El Cid 011-52 (669) 916-7799; www.marina-mazatlan.com • Marina Nueva Vallarta 011-52 (322) 297-7000; www.marinanuevovallarta.com • Marina Riviera Nayarit 011-52

(322) 779-9191; www.marinarivieranayarit.net • Mariner's General Insurance Group (800) 992-4443 or (949) 642-5174; www.marinersinsurance.com • Opequimar Marine Center 011-52 (322) 221-1800; www. opequimar.com • Paradise Village Marina 011-52 (322) 226-6728; www. paradisevillagegroup.com • Pier 32 Marina / Harbor Island West (800) 729-7547; www.harborislandwest.com • Quickline USA (714) 843-6964; www.quickline.us • Rigging Only (508) 992-0434; www.riggingonly.com • Scanmar International (888) 946-3826 or (510) 215-2010; www.selfsteer. com • Seven Seas Cruising Association (954) 771-5660; http://ssca. org • Spectra Watermakers (415) 526-2780; www.spectrawatermakers. com • Total Yacht Works 011-521 (669) 117-0911 • Travellers Mailbag (415) 332-2032; www.travellersmailbag.com • Vallarta Yacht Club / Festival Nautico 011-52 (322) 297-2222 • Ventura Harbor Boatyard (805) 654-1433; www.vhby.com • Waypoint (510) 769-1547; www.waypoints. com • West Marine (800) 538-0775; www.westmarine.com • Yachtfinders/Windseakers (619) 224-2349; www.yachtfinders.biz

Leo Brodeur

Dietmar Petutschnig Las Vegas

them had tied it off with a 'beer knot'. Although it was now dark, they spent the next four hours searching for it downwind with the help of the *Carinthia* crew. Exasperated, they finally gave up. But on the way back to *Third Day*, they found it safely tied to the stern of a Ha-Ha neighbor anchored two boats back. That crew had snagged it hours earlier as it drifted by.

he final activity of the Ha-Ha each year is the Awards Ceremony, generously hosted by the Cabo Marina staff in their back lot, with the event's Grand Poobah officiating in his tuxedo jacket and shorts. It's a Ha-Ha tradition that everyone gets a prize, so it takes a while to get through the entire fleet. To lighten up the process, gag prizes are awarded between each class: Super-mom Toast Conger of Don Quixote won the Chatoholic Award for her abundant air time on the VHF; remarkably, one of her daughters won the Extreme Snoring Award (a category normally dominated by burly men); the PierceTeam boys won the Dinghy Disas-



Newlyweds Ruben and Robbie cool off at Cabo. They were one of several couples celebrating Ha-Ha honeymoons.

ter Award; David Addleman and Heather Corsaro of the Cal 36 *Eupsychia* were a shoe-in for the Naked Sailing Award, and while there was an astounding number of big fish caught this year, ex-Alaska fisherman Thaddeous Blanchard won the special Master Baiter Award, as he'd hooked five marlin and boated two of them — the largest 10-feet long — aboard the Challenger 32 *Lunacy II*.

On the serious side, the crews of *Talion, Tabu, Desert Wind* and *Deliverance* were called up to be acknowledged as 'soul sailors' for sailing the entire course. As is the tradition, each one received a much-coveted lime-green Ha-Ha T-shirt.

Even for those who had to turn around and rush home again, Ha-Ha XV was a fabulous cruise. But for those with open-ended timetables it was, of course, only the beginning.

- latitude/andy

Readers — The Ha-Ha Rally Committee has gone into hibernation until May, when Ha-Ha XVI will be officially announced. But we can tell you that the dates for next year's rally will be October 25 through November 7.

See www.baja-haha.com for event details, Mexico cruising info and more. Online sign-ups will begin May 1.