
SIGHTINGS

'generation x' does mexico

While most of their generation seems to prefer hanging out at the mall, watching the tube or zoning out in cyber-world, 24-year-old Ben Galland and 22-year-old Rebecca Wunderlich have been spending their time readying a 24-ft pocket cruiser for a trip to Mexico. Affable and energetic, the couple have decided that there's definitely more to life than channel surfing and cable TV.

Their current adventure started when Ben's father, Dick, offered the family sailboat on a "fix it and you can use it" basis. Although definitely outdoors types - both Ben and Rebecca have degrees in environmental studies - their experience wasn't exactly rooted in maritime tradition. Rebecca had never sailed before and Ben's experience was limited to a brief stint crewing on the classic schooner *Harvey Gamage* in the Caribbean in 1994. Still, the dynamic duo figured they had nothing to lose, and last fall, when their summer jobs ended, the offer was accepted.

For a trailerable pocket cruiser, the choice couldn't have been better. A well-known and respected design from the board of Sparkman & Stephens, *Kestrel* is a 24-ft Dolphin sloop (the O'Day version, built in 1965). The solid fiberglass hull with a keel-centerboard is perfect for gunkholing in Baja. Even better, *Kestrel* had already made one Mexico trip - 20 years earlier with Ben's father at the helm. That was the good news. The bad news was that the boat had sat unattended for years. Rain had warped bulkheads, chainplates were loose, sails were worn and the motor needed fixing. In the typical enthusiasm of youth - and the typical innocence of those unaware of how long it takes to bring a boat like *Kestrel* back to life - they figured they could have the boat cruise ready in a couple of weeks; three tops.



Five months later, as this was written, *Kestrel* was finally loaded on her trailer and ready to hit the road.

Sausalito-based marine technician and friend Mark Cenac had found them a place to work on the boat, and remained an invaluable source of guidance throughout the project. It wasn't long before the couple were up to their necks in sawdust, resin and paint, and bit by bit, *Kestrel* began to turn around. They repaired what they could, replaced what they had to (with good used equipment, when possible, including a 'new' set of good used sails) and added such amenities as a canvas dodger.

One item they had trouble finding at a bargain price was a dinghy. So they built one. Using simple do-it-yourself plans they found in a book at

the library, and a few sheets of plywood, in less than a week, the stout little Fat Lip was done. A short time later, *Kestrel* was also relaunched. Now all they needed to take care of was last minute details, not the least of which was learning to sail.

The 'great deluges' of late December and early January didn't help speed the process any. Tuning the rig, routing sheet leads and figuring out how it all made the boat go was often done in cold, windy, rainy conditions. Since the California portion of the trip would be overland, when they weren't sailing, they were overhauling the boat's trailer - new lights, new bearings, the works. All through the process, to 'accustom' themselves to the upcoming rigors of Mexican cruising, the duo spent many an evening carbo-loading on heavy doses of chips and salsa at a local waterfront restaurant.

Barring more storm delays, Ben and Rebecca will be sailing in the Sea of Cortez by the time you read this. They hope to cruise the area for at least four months, interspersing the sailing life with diving, rock climbing and surfing. Ben also hopes to use his skills as a fly-fishing guide to catch fish throughout the trip.

After the usual flurry of last-minute details, and good-byes to friends and family, Ben and Rebecca rolled out of Sausalito on Friday, January 19. Not sure whether the old sailor's superstition of never leaving on a Friday applied to overland situations, the duo decided, as their generation is wont to do, to just do it. As Ben says, "it was high time to get out of town, dude!"