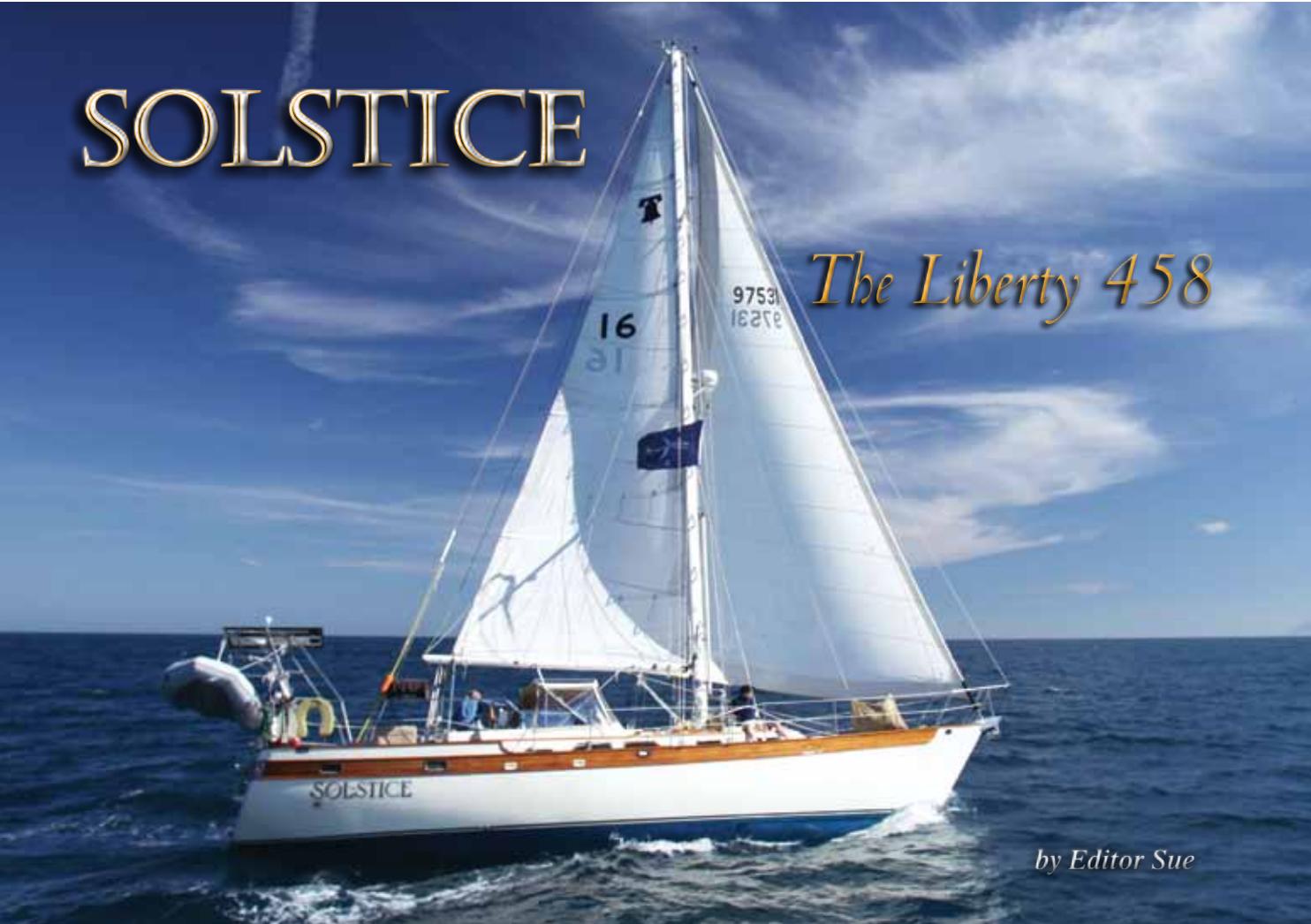


SOLSTICE

The Liberty 458



by Editor Sue

*I*t all started 13 years ago when Bill Babington and his dear friends John Stuhldreher and Jake Adams decided to take time off from their careers to have an adventure. They bought a Tayana 37 which they christened *Far Niente* and sailed from Redondo Beach, CA to Fiji and back. It was a life-changing experience.

Upon their return the three friends sold *Far Niente* and returned to the world of careers and commitments, but also with the determination to do it all again. In particular, Bill knew that he had just scratched the

surface of something significant. A new dream was born: to sail off and experience the entire world. So began the search for a cruising boat to help fulfill his dream of making a circumnavigation. That boat is a Liberty 458 named *Solstice*.

The Liberty 458s were built by Shin Fa Industry, one of Taiwan's oldest and most respected boat builders, during the 1980s. The hull is an extended version of the popular Peterson 44 with a greatly modified interior. Only 31 Liberty 458s were built,



along with a handful of 49s, making them quite rare and highly sought after as fast, strong, extremely seaworthy and comfortable cruising boats. The hull is hand-laminated 24 oz. woven roving alternated with 1.5 oz. mat, producing 13 layers at the rail, 15 layers at the turn of the bilge and 17 layers at the keel. The internal ballast is imbedded and fiberglassed into reinforced hull sections. The deck is single unit hand-laminated 24 oz. woven roving alternated with 1.5 oz. mat and balsa sandwich core construction.

Another reason the Liberty 458s are sought after is their spacious yet incredibly functional interior. Going below is achieved safely, even in rough seas, by simply walking down the four deep and wide steps (no climbing down backwards) with solid handrails on each side. The saloon has a settee to starboard which wraps around a large dining table or smaller cocktail table. A straight settee and end table is to port on *Solstice*, however an option found on other Liberties is two chairs with a table in between. The large and secure galley is aft of the saloon on starboard, so it's out of traffic but not isolated. Forward is the guest stateroom with a queen-size berth starboard and a desk to port. A private head is in the bow. The walk-through to the aft cabin (no crouching!) is on port and houses the large nav station and a work bench hull-side. Engine access and control panels are inboard. The aft cabin has a queen-size island berth with a vanity and sink mounted to the forward bulkhead and a private head with shower to starboard.

Probably the most impressive thing about the interior of the Liberty 458 is the amount of storage space. Lockers, drawers, cupboards and shelves have been built into every imaginable place; nothing has gone to waste. Second would be the overall ambiance thanks to the numerous ports and hatches which let in an amazing amount of light, and the beautiful polished teak cabinetry which would do an elegant, land-based home proud.

Solstice is hull #16 and since purchasing her in 2005 Bill has been busy getting her ready to circumnavigate. His extensive "to do" list has mostly been accomplished

including: mast and rig overhaul, new rigging, pulling shaft for inspection, transmission overhaul, rebuilding the generator, installing an EPIRB, new life raft, new bottom paint, replacing bad thru hulls (seven so far), dropping and inspecting the rudder, servicing the injectors, installing LED lights below and above deck, inspecting and servicing the SSB, sanding and overhauling the teak decks, installing a removable staysail stay, upgrading ground tackle, rebuilding the windlass, installing a watermaker, cleaning out fuel tanks, installing dual fuel filters, installing a new alternator, new batteries, adding a stainless arch made for solar panels, installing solar panels, new propane tanks, new propane solenoid, installing chart plotter/new radar, installing new stereo and speakers (Bill notes: boating is better with music), new refrigerator, replacing all engine hoses, installing spinnaker track, replacing all leaking and sun-damaged lexan ports, overhauling hydraulic steering, installing new bilge pumps/alarm (school bell style that can be heard over the engine), running new vent lines for water tanks, making and installing lee cloths, new dinghy/outboard, and install new VHF. Whew!

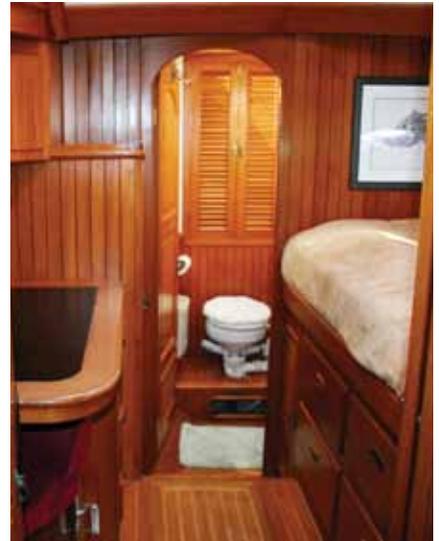
Bill's partial "dos" read like this: fix all leaks ("new ones keep popping up"), get new sails ("got a storm sail, still need extra jib"), varnish ("like the Golden Gate Bridge you have to start over once you're done"), install hand holds ("still need more"), and get spare parts for everything ("an impossible dream to achieve though I'm still dreaming").

The list of "didn't do but went anyway" includes: organize anchor locker, get new dock lines ("hopefully I'll be anchoring a lot"), organize/overhaul chart table chaos and clutter, get new fishing gear, get full awning, build fish cleaning station, plumb aft deck shower, and find and fix small oil leak in engine ("as Capt. Ron says, 'A diesel loves its oil like a sailor loves his rum.'").

The "getting ready" part is done and the "but went anyway" portion is already in progress. On this past April 15th, Bill and *Solstice* departed Redondo Beach

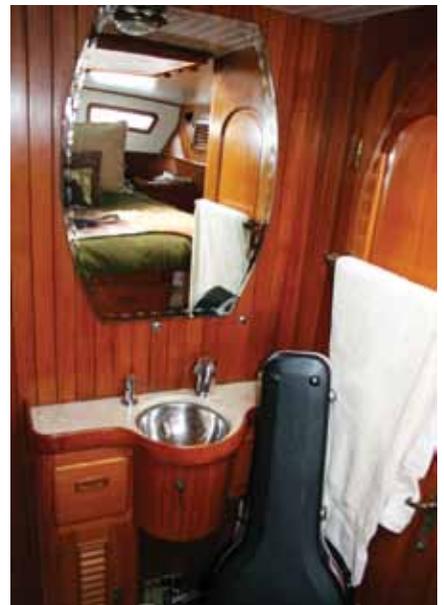
*Solstice nose to nose with sistership
Hokule'a at their around the world
bon voyage party.*





to experience the world. *Solstice* wasn't alone. The circumnavigation is a joint venture with her sistership, *Hokule'a*, which belongs to Bill's long-time friend and partner in *Far Niente*, Jake, and his wife Jackie. (*Hokule'a* was featured in the Nov. 2006 issue #78.) Together they sailed to Catalina Island for a two-day rest,

and then straight to La Paz for a final send-off, just as they had done when they left on *Far Niente* 13 years ago. Minus a significant other or his "dream crew" of bikini girls, Bill will have good friends joining him on various legs and at different destinations on his voyage. His crew for the passage to La Paz were good friends Tim and





John, the same John that was the third partner in *Far Niente*. John will be joining Bill on other passages as well. Another set of friends, Taylor and Tony, met Bill in Mexico for the crossing to the Marquesas.

On May 10th Bill, with his crew on *Solstice*, and Jake and Jackie aboard *Hokule'a*, checked out of Mexico in Cabo San Lucas and pointed their bows southwest. Their itinerary is fairly loose, but the basic plan is to spend two years cruising the South Pacific before venturing further west. Once they've finished exploring Indonesia and Malaysia they'll decide their course based on the pirate situation and the risks of sailing to the Suez Canal at that time. Although they'd like to cruise the Mediterranean, if the situation hasn't improved they will go around the Cape of Good Hope. They plan on completing their circumnavigations in five to seven years.

Besides sailing around the world, Bill, Jake and Jackie have another goal. They intend to immerse themselves in the cultures they visit, something Bill and Jake got a taste of on their first cruise when they spent time diving with the locals to harvest pearls in the Tuomotus. This time they intend to share their encounters with people from remote countries and tell their

stories. In particular, they want to see how remote island cultures are dealing with environmental issues, climate change and how their day-to-day customs are being forced to change. To do so they will capture the entire voyage on film and upload video updates to their website: www.island-earth.com. Ultimately, they hope to create a feature length documentary. This will be something entirely new for Jake, a civil engineer, and Jackie, an accountant. Bill however, has been a filmmaker and writer for over 22 years, so he will be right in his element doing the work he loves while fulfilling his dream.



UP-N-OUT

ULTIMATE MARINE LADDERS

DINGHY LADDER



100% #316
Stainless Steel



Will Not Kick Under

FREE Shipping

Anywhere in the Continental U. S.
Offer Good Through March 31, 2011



www.up-n-out.com

or call: (651) 433-5058

Dive from your boat!

- » Heavy Duty Marine Components
- » Lightweight and Portable
- » Floating and Deck Units
- » One or Two Divers



12VOLT
POWERED

SEA BREATHE
The Electric Snorkel

www.seabreathe.com Ph: 604.864.0978
Scu-Buoy Products Inc.



Just as May 23rd turned to the 24th, Bill, *Solstice*, and crew Tony and Taylor, crossed the equator along with Jake and Jackie on *Hokule'a*. On the morning of May 29th they sighted their first piece of land in 19 days and made landfall at Hiva Oa in the Marquesas that afternoon. The first leg of their circumnavigation is behind them and the goal of learning about and sharing other cultures begins. You can follow their adventures at www.island-earth.com. ⚓



SOLSTICE

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Length Overall: | 45'8" |
| Length on Waterline: | 40'4" |
| Beam: | 12'11" |
| Draft, Standard: | 6'4" |
| Draft, Shoal: | 5'10" |
| Displacement: | 30,500 lbs. |
| Ballast: | 11,000 lbs. |
| Tankage - Water, approx.: | 240 gallons |
| Tankage - Fuel, approx.: | 165 gallons |
| Sail Area (100%): | 1,059 sq. ft. |