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Island Hopping in B.C.'s Gulf Islands

I had been sailing solo through the Gulf Islands for the last few weeks and was now to meet up with two other wayfarers and cruise in company. Marg Dye had flown out from England for a three week holiday and was to come up from Victoria with fellow Wayfarers David Massy and Henry Niezen. Unfortunately Henry had to withdraw at the last minute because of a foot injury and was unable to come. Ganges Harbour on Saltspring Island had been chosen for a rendezvous on July 16th.

We were both approaching Ganges from different directions when I first sighted them about a mile away across the calm water. I began rowing like mad in a hopeless attempt to catch them while willing them to look in my direction. But catch them I couldn't. They had now accepted a tow and were speeding away in the opposite direction. I didn't have the same fortune finding someone obliging enough to tow me the two miles into Ganges, although I tried hard enough. I put on my best "Woe is me" expression and raised my thumb in best hitch hiking style, but in the end I had to row (mostly) and sail (leastly) into Ganges.

As I finally reached the public wharf in the late afternoon Margaret, who had been watching for another Wayfarer, saw my tan sails with the familiar 'W' on them. She was so surprised and excited that she dropped her glasses and one of the lenses popped out. The advantage of a small boat became apparent now as David directed me to a 16 1/2 foot long space between two large power yachts. The yacht astern had such a huge slab stern it looked like a fortress wall projecting into a moat. To look up to the bridge deck gave me a crick in the neck.

While I made my Wayfarer shipshape, I reminisced with David and was introduced to Marg, and Pat Arnold the other crew member.

That evening after dinner we toured Ganges and talked Wayfarers. Dave and I spent the night aboard our respective Wayfarers while Marg and Pat decided to go aboard a powerboat, which displayed a 'For Sale' sign. Marg thought she would like to spend some time aboard before deciding whether or not to buy. Pat and Marg found the powerboat not to their liking and in the early hours moved onto the dock.

The next day dawned clear and cold. Our destination was to be Montague Harbour, which Dave had visited several years previously and I had been to on my way down from the north. Montague Harbour is the site of the first marine park in B.C., established in 1972. It still remains the most popular in the Gulf Islands and is deserving of the popularity. Within the, park are fine shell beaches which, along with the surrounding area, were the habitat of Indians for about 3,000 years before the arrival of the Spanish explorer Galiano in 1792. There are also numerous mooring buoys, an access dock for dinghies, and several campsites for those who want to spend the night ashore.

So that morning after breakfast we divided 4 people into 2 boats - Dave with Margaret, Pat with me - and headed south out of Ganges. Tacking down Ganges Harbour past the chain of islands, islets, and rocks was slow in the light airs. Progress was retarded further by all the other pleasure craft leaving Ganges tossing us about in their wakes and spilling what wind we'd trapped in our sails.

When we reached Captain's Passage the wind had increased but the tide was against us and creating rip tides. To complicate things a ferry

was entering the pass from the other side. To further complicate things a split pin in the forestay fitting sheered through and the forestay came free. While I tried to replace the pin on the foredeck, Pat's expert helmsmanship came into play. He expertly guided us through the rip and wakes of other vessels, including the ferry's, to ensure that I got drenched.

David and Margaret had caught up to us by this time and we sailed across Trincomali Channel into Payne bay on Galiano Island. We now had a good 12 knot breeze behind us, a bright glittering blue sea beneath, and a cloudless blue sky above - perfect sailing weather.

We pulled up at one of the Montague Harbour beaches to have lunch and a look around. A passerby warned us off digging for clams because of contamination but Margaret was determined to dig one up to have a look at least, So Dave and Margaret went looking for clams while Pat and I got ready for our ascent up Mt. Galiano.

An exhilarating sail took us to the public float next to the ferry terminal about a mile away, from where we went in search of a route up the mountain. A local at the store gave us directions and we set off up the road, prepared to walk but thumbing nonetheless. Fortunately a passerby stopped and gave us a lift, as we were to find out that the return trip was to be over 8 miles. He himself was not an islander and was on his way to Silva Bay to replenish his depleted liquor supply. He didn't appear to be happy to be there and couldn't figure out what people did with themselves in a place like this way out the back of beyond. He dropped us at a crossroad and we went separate directions. We walked about a mile down the road until we found the track that took us through a tree farm to the summit of Mt. Galiano.

Though only 1100 feet high, the view was breathtaking. Directly below to the southeast was Active Pass, separating Galiano and Mayne Islands, and the main thoroughfare for B.C. ferries linking the islands with the mainland. To the south and west lay several other islands - Saturna, the Penders, Saltspring, Prevost, and Thetis. The marine traffic below seemed to be from another world. A light plane passed by at eye level. Bald eagles soared long the updraught from the cliffs below. Neither of us wanted to leave. We both could have stayed for hours.

The walk back to the boat left us exhausted but content. In our absence a large power yacht had made room for itself at the float by overlapping his bow with mine, pinning the bow between the dock on one side and the powerboat on the other. We finally worked free and set off through the pilings of the ferry dock, the wind still holding and giving us a flying broad reach across Montague Harbour in search of Margaret and David. As the sun began to set, the wind began to die and we ghosted along the beach north of Montague Harbour until we found them. We had dinner and watched a glorious sunset - the perfect end to a perfect day.

We all slept ashore that night and some of us paid for it. David had made camp amongst a nest of logs while the rest of us slept above the beach on an embankment. Margaret deliberately chose a spot where she could watch a family of kingfishers. During the night, high tide crept up silently to David's resting place and stealthily overwhelmed him. He was not made aware of his predicament until the water was half way up his sleeping bag. He shifted to higher ground and spent the remainder of the night in a waterbed.

Morning brought the warmth of the sun and a chance to dry out, savouring food and a hot drink. We rolled the boats back into the water, mine leaving its characteristic green trail from resting place to waterline. Today's destination was Sidney Spit Marine Park, about 15 miles to the southwest. David, unfortunately, had other commitments and would return to Victoria tomorrow. Today Margaret sailed with me and Pat went with David.

So, rowing through calm water and light airs we retraced yesterday's route back into Trincomali Channel. David and Pat led the way down channel between Prevost and Galiano Islands. Margaret kept a watch for eagles soaring on Mt. Galiano but the winds were not yet strong enough.

As we turned right into Swanson Channel we encountered the first of the contrary flood and this was to change our plans for the day. Margaret and I somehow managed to sneak past Portlock Point on Prevost Island into Swanson Channel where the tidal stream was weaker. David and Pat didn't. Margaret and I were a mile down Swansea Channel before we realized that they weren't going anywhere. So we backtracked to find out what was wrong. We found out. Neither boat could round Portlock Point now that the flood tide had increased. So we headed back up Trincomali Channel running close to Prevost Island to have a look for anything interesting. A rock ledge, which uncovered at low water, housed a seal colony basking in the sunshine. As we rounded the north end of Prevost Island we were beset by the same north-setting flood tide and couldn't get through Captain's Passage. We wouldn't be able to for a couple of hours so chose to wait it out in a bay on the north end of Prevost Island.

James Bay is a long indentation with small pastures and an orchard at its head. The island is privately owned and was until recently run as a farm. We lazed away those few hours relaxing in the sun and thinking of an alternative destination, as we couldn't reach Sidney Spit before dark. Princess Margaret Marine Park on Portland Island seemed suitable and as the tide began to turn we set out again.

This time we succeeded and tacked down Captain's Passage to our goal. The weather was deteriorating and by the time we reached our destination the light was failing. We unpacked, hauled the boats up the pebble beach, and lit a fire for dinner. That night Margaret found herself a sleeping spot away from the fire while David, Pat, and I slept around it. During the night it began to rain and there was a mad scramble to find shelter. I dove under the picnic table and the others settled under some large conifers.

Margaret had a go at me the next morning for taking her spot – she had been heading for the table when she saw me dive under. At least she tried to tell me off. Since her arrival in Canada she had been gradually losing her voice. It had now reached its worst and after getting wet last night she could hardly croak. So she couldn't speak and I couldn't understand. This left her with few alternatives so she would flap her arms in frustration and walk away smiling.

Fortified with a hot breakfast we drowned rats set off again, this time Margaret with David and Pat with me. We rowed away from the beach into the morning drizzle and shortly the rain stopped and a slight wind sprang up.

On our way towards John Passage the tide provided the main motive force, increasing as we approached the restricted pass. The wind disappeared as we entered and it was necessary to row to give some steerage way. The rocks at the south end of this pass make navigation interesting, especially with a strong tidal stream. Pat rowed while I steered around the rocks. An overfall on the leeward side took us for a ride across a whirlpool out into Sidney Channel.

The air had become suddenly chilly as we made our way to Sidney, being cold enough to see our breath. Pat and I rowed just to keep warm. At last we tied up at the government dock. The outer float was so exposed to wind, wave, and wash that we immediately sought space on the inner float. Here David tied his boat up, took his gear out, and put the cover on; prepared to leave it until he could trail it home.

We all went up to a hotel coffee shop to warm up, have some hot food, and decide what to do next. David and Pat were definitely heading back to Victoria but Margaret and I were undecided. After short deliberation we chose to continue cruising, preferring sailing in the rain to Victoria in the rain. We had 3 days before Margaret and I were due in Victoria – she for a book signing engagement and me for a dinghy display. Both were to be combined at the same function in Market Square. Sidney Spit Marine Park, 2 miles across Sidney Channel, seemed the logical place to start our cruise.

After seeing David and Pat away we did some shopping and then set off in the rain. Sidney Spit was to become one of our favourite anchorages, being unique among Gulf Island marine parks. Two large sand spits with fine beaches projecting northwards are separated by a shallow lagoon, which dries at low tide, providing a haven for waterfowl, particularly blue herons. The wooded portions of the park support a large deer herd and are also supposed to be the home of numerous peacocks, though we never saw any.

As we approached the island the rain eased and the sky cleared. Though only 2 miles from the sizeable town of Sidney, it's a different world here. The park remains quite natural despite generous facilities and increasing patronage. We both enjoyed Sidney Spit and returned to it frequently. This day there were few other people about as we strolled through the meadows and forests.

On returning to the boat we found the wind had changed direction and was now blowing briskly from the south. We decided to make camp on the outer spit instead of at the dock and campsite. So off we went across the half mile of sand flats under main only, revelling in the fresh breeze. Once there Margaret tried to pitch her tent on a dune but the wind wouldn't allow it – knocking it down repeatedly. Forced to move, she wedged it between a sheltering embankment and a large log stranded at the high tide mark. By this time the air was bracingly fresh and clear with no hint of the dreary damp cloak the day had worn earlier. A golden sun warmed us before settling behind the peaks of Vancouver Island with the wind ushering in the darkness.

During the summer, lower low water occurs at night in the Strait of Georgia. This often left me wondering where my Wayfarer would be in relation to the water in the morning, a bit of reckoning with the tide tables gave me a good idea, but on Sidney Island, with such extensive shallows, I could not get far enough off shore and still be attached to it with my 150 foot umbilical cord. I didn't like to swing at anchor as I found the boat's ranging about disconcerting. That night I

had a restful sleep, awakening just before dawn as I often did, to check the water depth. Peeking out of the back of the tent I had a very restrictive triangular view of my surroundings, confined to directly astern. I could see water under the boat and could feel that she was still afloat so I went back to sleep. By the time I woke again, the water was still behind the boat but no longer under it. A more inclusive view showed me that the boat had settled on a small 2-foot high plateau with a puddle of water directly behind it. The rest of the water was merrily retreating, not scheduled to return for some time. Marg and I quickly got the boat rollers out and set the boat off in pursuit of its natural element, catching up with it 100 feet down the beach.

In the chill dawn Margaret and I decided to head over to the picnic site for breakfast as Margaret was suffering from something suspiciously like tea withdrawal symptoms. The night before we ran out of matches before getting the stove lit to boil the billy. Marg was not going to miss her morning cuppa so we found ourselves cadging matches from fellow boaters for pre-breakfast entertainment, we had the requisite gallon of tea to fuel us through breakfast when we drank a second gallon, having perspired the first lot with the energy of making breakfast.

While we ate, the wind blew steadily from a useful quarter. By the time we were ready for it the wind had grown weary of our procrastination and gone elsewhere in search of more interested sailors. While the wind stole away, we were deep in discussion about where today's destination would be. We picked Beaumont Marine Park on South Pender Island, 11 miles to the northeast. It fronts onto Bedwell Harbour, which separates North and South Pender Islands.

Our first challenge of the day came in trying to get around Sidney Spit. The tide was ebbing at about 2 or 3 knots and set up tide rips and whirlpools as it tried to divide at the spit and go down either side of Sidney Island. After getting a lift from the back eddy we had to tow the boat around the spit. The water was so swift that I had trouble maintaining my balance and really struggled to get around the point. Once around, we encountered our second challenge of the day – trying to predict the tidal currents among the myriad islands we tried to get around or go between. The current perplexed us all the way – flowing north when we reasoned it should be going south, whirling around in circles seemingly at a whim, and creating rip tides where there was no cause.

Rounding Tom Point on Gooch Island, very strong tide rips slowed our progress as the last of the ebb petered out. Winds remained very light as we reached down toward Stuart Island in the American San Juan Islands, drawn by the whistling lighthouse at Turn Point. The tide finally turned to flood and gave us a boost toward Bedwell Harbour.

We drifted back into Canadian waters, rowing when we got impatient and Margaret thumbing whenever a small sailboat passed nearby. An American sailor finally succumbed to Margaret's charm and towed us to the Customs wharf at the settlement of South Pender, a 1/2 mile from our destination.

We wanted to stay here a few hours and have showers and a bite to eat but the place appealed to neither of us. The Customs Official didn't appreciate us tying up to his dock as we were not returning from the U.S. and didn't have to clear Customs. We also found that the showers

weren't working so we had no desire to prolong our stay and within a half hour of arriving we left.

We set sail for Beaumont Marine Park where we had a small pebble beach with picnic table, large fire pit, and other facilities, virtually to ourselves. This particular night a small group decided to have a party at the fire pit. I was only 50 feet away bedded down in my Wayfarer but wasn't bothered by the noise and was soon asleep. Margaret, on the other hand, had to shift her sleeping quarters in a futile attempt to get away from the din but was still awake when the party broke up about 0200.

The next morning we were up and away before 0600 in order to catch the first of the flood tide through Shark Cove, at the head of Bedwell Harbour. This 'cove' has a man-made canal about 500 feet long joining Bedwell Harbour on one side with Port Browning on the other. The canal is spanned by a bridge joining North and South Pender Islands and the main piers are only 40 feet apart. At its narrowest point the canal is only about 100 feet wide and the tidal stream through it can exceed 5 knots.

We rowed quietly up Bedwell Harbour in the early morning sun with an inquisitive seal for an escort. When we reached the canal, my genius for accurate tidal calculations was made evident. Instead of a gentle 1 knot flood tide to carry us leisurely through as calculated, we were faced with a 1 knot ebb pushing us back the way we came. We decided to have a go anyway. With Margaret steering and me rowing, we made steady progress to the narrowest and swiftest part of the canal without incident. At this point, however, a great rending crack announced the appearance of a large split in the left oar under the rowlock collar. A rather hasty examination showed the oar to still be in one piece and therefore useful – in this particular circumstance anyway. We inched our way into Shark Cove and beached to assess the situation in a less hurried manner, concluding that the oar was still serviceable if used sparingly.

While here, Margaret saw a large fish leap clear of the water in Port Browning, quickly followed by another, larger one. We saw the first fish to be a large salmon but couldn't agree on the identity of its pursuer. Marg took it to be a killer whale. I reckoned in a place named Shark Cove it couldn't possibly be anything but a shark.

We drifted down Port Browning, turning at its mouth into Plumper Sound. Two miles across the Sound lay Saturna Island with Brown Ridge rising abruptly to its culmination, Mt. Warburton Pike, at 1630 feet. Also prominent was Elliot Bluff, which was our destination. Margaret was still looking for her first bald eagle and the shore along this bluff seemed a promising haunt. We sailed close along the Saturna shore and spotted an eagle fishing. As we watched he returned to his nest perched in a tree overhanging the bluff. He had just caught his mid-morning snack. After sailing up to the cliff for a close look we turned along the bluff and spotted cormorants, puffins, and pigeon guillemots in their habitats carved out of the limestone by tidal action.

We continued around Payne Point into Lyall Harbour to stock up and make some phone calls. While sitting on the dock soaking up the sun we planned the rest of the day, choosing Irish Bay as our next stop. I'd tried to reach Irish Bay on a previous trip and had turned back

because of foul tide and unusual winds. This time I was determined to make it.

The breeze now sprang up so we set sail and headed the 2 miles to Samuel Island and Irish Bay. Once again wind and tide played havoc with our plans. The surrounding geography plays funny tricks with the wind and it always seems to be on the nose when you're heading for Irish Bay. The tide was also contrary again and kept setting us toward Minx Reef to the southeast. Unlike last time, however, we attained our goal. The beach we landed on had a trail leading inland which was adorned with a sign proclaiming: 'Beware: Dangerous Bull At Large'. This we took as an attempt to dissuade people from using the trail and that there was more bull in the sign than on the hoof. The trail petered out at the base of a wall of rock not far from the beach, which proved more of a deterrent than the sign had. We both preferred sailing to mountaineering on such a beautiful warm sunny day and returned to the water.

By the time we were out in Plumper Sound a large freighter was poking around Saturna Island. A freighter in Plumper Sound is an unusual sight and one about to anchor, as this one did, was most peculiar. We were headed in the other direction so I never did find out what was going on.

We headed west up the sound toward Navy Channel, which separated North Pender and Mayne Islands. A very lazy sail gave us time to brew some tea, have a snack, and take turns napping on the thwart. By the time we were in Navy Channel the tide had turned to flood and we anticipated an easy passage, the tide giving us a much needed push, the wind having died away. But another Gulf Island anomaly awaited us. Due to tidal movement around the islands, Navy Channel at maximum tide has water flowing from both ends and meeting in whirlpools, tide rips, and overfalls somewhere in the middle. The 'middle' was where we now were and progress was nil. We moved closer inshore to take advantage of back eddies in the small bays and gradually rowed into Swanson Channel, turning along the western shore of North Pender Island.

With no wind and contrary current we chose to stay in Port Washington for the night rather than move further along the coast to Otter Bay, our intended anchorage. The small wharf had just enough room for us but was very exposed, being subject to the wash from passing ferries, which set up a series of large waves with each of 30 daily passages. The wharf had an empty shed just begging to be made over into sleeping quarters, and we obliged. A very attractive country store stands at the head of the wharf where we browsed, bought stores, and looked through the excellent selection of paperbacks, finding one I had searched for in vain in Vancouver.

The next morning saw us up early as usual and on our way at 0600. Today's sail would be another leisurely one as we only had a 12 mile journey to Sidney. Margaret was to do a book signing in Victoria 2 days hence and I would display my Wayfarer at the same function.

For once we had a favourable tide and took full advantage of it. With just enough wind for steerage way, the tide bore us the 10 miles to Sidney Spit Marine Park in 3 hours. We weren't expected in Sidney until late afternoon, so spent a pleasant half day savouring the delights of Sidney Spit.

An enterprising man and a group of young thrill seekers tried to entice us to enjoy their brand of entertainment – dangling from a parachute a few hundred feet above the waves while being towed by a large, noisy powerboat. We declined, contending that we could see all we wanted to from sea level.

Late afternoon finally caught up with us and we could delay no longer. Reluctantly we left and an hour later found ourselves at Sidney's crowded wharf making arrangements for our journey into Victoria.

Victoria proved an enjoyable interlude, with the book signing and boat display going well. We also enjoyed the company and hospitality of fellow Wayfarers David Massy and Henry Niezen and their families.

After 2 days of shore life it felt good to be afloat once again, heading for our favourite destination, Sidney Spit. This time we had Henry with us. We enjoyed his enthusiasm for Wayfaring by giving him rowing practice the 2 miles over and the 2 miles back. The Spit was not as enjoyable this time, it being a Sunday. The water was littered with boats, which in turn were littered with people. The whole park was crowded with people. We only stayed a few hours and were glad to leave.

Rowing back to Sidney, I confirmed a suspicion of what might be a latent talent. While Margaret steered, Henry and I rowed, each to an oar, when I heard that now familiar splitting crack. No need to question it this time. I had demolished another oar. And the point was, it wasn't mine. David Massy had very kindly loaned me his oars and this was how I repaid his generosity. From then on I used oars sparingly and very cautiously.

In Sidney, we had a snack and said farewell to Henry. He too had loaned us something which proved indispensable – cushions to sit on while rowing or lounging on the thwart. That night Margaret slept under the only tree on the foreshore, within shouting distance of the very busy boat ramp but completely hidden from it.

The following morning our 2-day cruise to Victoria began. Margaret had an engagement with a yacht club to show a film and some slides, so we wanted to use the interval to sail down. Once again we had no definite destination, the only aim being to get closer to Victoria, 15 miles to the south. This time we sailed past Sidney Spit, choosing the James Island side of Sidney Channel.

James Island is owned by CIL and used to be the site of an explosives production plant. It still is used to store explosives and is not to be trespassed upon, which is a pity because the island has some of the finest beaches in the Gulf Islands.

We followed the shore for a few miles and then cut back across the channel to Sidney Island, pulling up on a deserted beach to brew the mid-morning tea. After a leisurely cuppa we decided to visit D'Arcy Island, another marine park just south of Sidney Island.

Separated by a mere 4 miles these 2 marine parks are entirely different in character, being almost extreme opposites. D'Arcy Island has none of the facilities adorning Sidney Spit. In fact, the only works of man evident here are the remains of a leper colony, which was

inhabited until early this century. We looked for the ruins but didn't find them, not being sure of their location.

The dense woodland which fronted the shore was teeming with wildlife. Numerous well-traveled paths disappeared into the undergrowth, the byways of countless users. A raccoon explored the beach with her kit. Seals reposed contentedly on sun-warmed rocks, and an otter poked its inquisitive snout above the calm sea. Margaret listened intently to the myriad birdcalls borne on the hot still air, trying to locate and identify their senders. I sat in the sun contemplating my long neglected log, trying to link the many unrecorded days into a coherent pattern. As I did, a movement caught my eye. Coming along the beach in my direction was a mink, intent on his own business and oblivious to me. He was a mere 10 feet away before he was aware of my presence, but once aware, he was gone.

That night Margaret intended to sleep at the entrance to a trail, hoping to see some wildlife. She got less sleep than she intended and more wildlife than she bargained for. By placing her sleeping bag across the track she had effectively set up a roadblock, which no animal would breach. They did, however, indignantly voice their disapproval. She upset so many that they were still carrying on the next morning. The only ones to welcome her intrusion were the mosquitoes.

In the morning we slipped away from D'Arcy Island bound for Chatham Island, a few miles southeast of Victoria. Chatham is one of a small group of islands perched off the southern most tip of Vancouver Island where the waters of Juan de Fuca Strait converge with those of Georgia Strait. Wind and water conditions here are usually more boisterous than further north. The wind funnels through Juan de Fuca Strait from the open Pacific and the sea can become confused as the tides surge back and forth between the Pacific and the inland sea of Georgia Strait and Puget Sound, weaving through this group of islands at up to 6 knots. This day the wind and sea were moderate, bringing us uneventfully to Chatham Island.

Chatham Island is an Indian Reserve and a local band occasionally graze sheep here which, combined with the low rainfall, gives the island a park like appearance, with beautiful arbutus trees and Garry oak providing a shady canopy.

Though physically a very pleasant place, Chatham had a peculiar mood, which became more disturbing as we lingered there. We had originally chosen Chatham Island as our night anchorage but as the day drew on, my desire to be somewhere else grew. I discussed this feeling with Margaret and discovered that she felt the same way. Both of us puzzled over it but found no reasonable explanation for these feelings. They were real enough though and sufficient to have us preparing to leave in short order.

We tried to find out more of the history of Chatham Island, hoping to shed some light on what we had experienced. But we found little information and nobody else who shared our feelings.

As we reached down Cadboro Bay approaching Victoria, a voice hailed us from a committee boat, out conducting evening dinghy races. We approached to find Henry inviting us for drinks at the Royal Victoria

Yacht Club. After enthusiastically accepting and getting directions on where to anchor we headed past the yacht club into a quiet corner of the bay where Henry's Wayfarer was moored. We had time for dinner before Henry came by and ate our tin of beans surrounded by civilization – having seen hardly a soul in the last few days. After a drink and a chat we returned to spend the night afloat, Margaret in Henry's boat and me in mine.

After another day of 'shore leave', we spent an enjoyable day sailing to Griffin Island, right next to Chatham Island. David Massy and Henry Niezen accompanied us and we lunched on a small shingle beach. The sail back was exhilarating. David and Henry kindly offered to put us up for the night, but we again chose to sleep aboard the two Wayfarers. I don't think they could understand our preferring such basic accommodation to more sumptuous lodgings. I hope neither was offended by our refusal of their hospitality but there is something special about sleeping aboard a floating boat which more than compensates for any minor discomforts.

The following morning I rose early and paddled over to pick up Marg. She was ready to go so we had tea and headed around Cadboro Point, sailing north toward the Gulf Islands again. This time we hoped to sail up the west coast of Saltspring Island to Vesuvius. At the rate we started out we'd be lucky to reach Sidney. Three hours of rowing and drifting found us only a few miles past Cadboro Point.

The weather was deteriorating with low grey cloud gradually shutting out the blue sky. We covered the 15-mile distance to Sidney very slowly with the only diversion being the passage of a shoal of harbour porpoises. Gracefully arching through the water they were past and gone very quickly emphasizing even more our slow progress. Margaret tried hitchhiking again but with no success.

When we finally reached Sidney we pulled in to do some shopping. Margaret had a final look around her favourite town and we were underway again. We headed through one of the narrow passes which separate a group of small islands to the north of Sidney, catching a favourable tide and shooting through as if going down a sluice. At the exit we had to pass very close to the ferry terminal at Swartz Bay, and we were well prepared to dash across when no ferry traffic was about. In Sidney we had picked up every conceivable sailing schedule and worked out the safest time to be there. Just as we began crossing the half-mile ferry right of way, the skies opened up and rain poured down, taking the wind away and soaking us thoroughly. We still managed to cross the gap safely.

Clouds were piling up now and distant thunder echoed through the mountains. Margaret became anxious as the thunderstorm developed. Every now and then she would ask a question like "How quickly can you reef?" or she would look about the boat to make sure that the hatches were secured. When I realized what was causing her uneasiness, I explained that thankfully thunderstorms here are tame affairs and are not often accompanied by strong winds; at least not in the protected Gulf Islands.

The wind had died now and the rain was more steady as we coasted north up Satellite Channel along the Saltspring shore. When the lightning began, Margaret was rowing and I was steering. The lightning was to

the south, the direction Margaret faced. Every few minutes Margaret's face would light up, she would point to the south and say, "Look at that!" Of course by the time I had, the lightning was gone. After several of these episodes, I changed places with Margaret so I could "look at that!" Then it was her turn.

We crept slowly north, having decided on Musgrave Landing as our stopover. This is the spot where Miles and Beryl Smeeton lived for several years between epic sea voyages. I was looking forward to anchoring in the same refuge where the famous "Tzu Hang" had been moored.

Just before reaching Musgrave Landing a kindly sailor took pity on us drowned rats and offered us a tow. With only another mile to go, we declined. When we got there we had a look at the tiny public float but could see no way to wedge ourselves in amongst the 2 boats already there (I said it was tiny). Withering glances from the occupant of one boat made us feel, unwelcome so we moved to a small bay just north of the float. A small apparently deserted beach greeted us and looked perfect, as we closed the shore a couple walked out from under the overhanging trees at the back of the beach. They cordially invited us ashore and introduced themselves as Betty and Tony Balding.

They had come over to Saltspring from Vancouver Island to their favourite spot, affectionately called "Our Beach". Being small boat enthusiasts and owners of a small 17-foot powerboat, their cruising philosophy was much like ours and we got along splendidly.

Just before welcoming us ashore, Tony and Betty had been discussing their plans for replacing their powerboat with a small sailboat. They had reached a decision to be patient and wait for the boat to find them, rather than actively searching for it. The boat they wanted didn't take long to find them. The Wayfarer appealed to them a great deal.

We talked at length with Betty and Tony, and when they had gone aboard their boat for the night, Margaret and I sat and talked a while longer, drying out before a fire. As we had been thoroughly soaked that day, Margaret suggested I put my wet jeans in front of the fire to dry overnight.

The following morning as I backed my Wayfarer into the beach, Tony, who had just come ashore himself, came over to tell me he was very annoyed with me. I couldn't understand why until he explained that he and Betty were up half the night trying to figure out how they could get a Wayfarer.

Another surprise awaited me as I made my way up the beach. Margaret greeted me with "I'm terribly sorry, I have some bad news for you." As I puzzled about what it could mean, Margaret bent down and rummaged through the shingle, retrieving two short lengths of denim cloth – the remains of my jeans. I burst out laughing as Margaret told me what had happened.

She had been wakened in the night, choking in a thick cloud of smoke. A spark from the fire had landed on my drying jeans and set them smouldering. Margaret threw gravel over the jeans and went back to

bed, certain that she had out the fire out. The morning light showed otherwise.

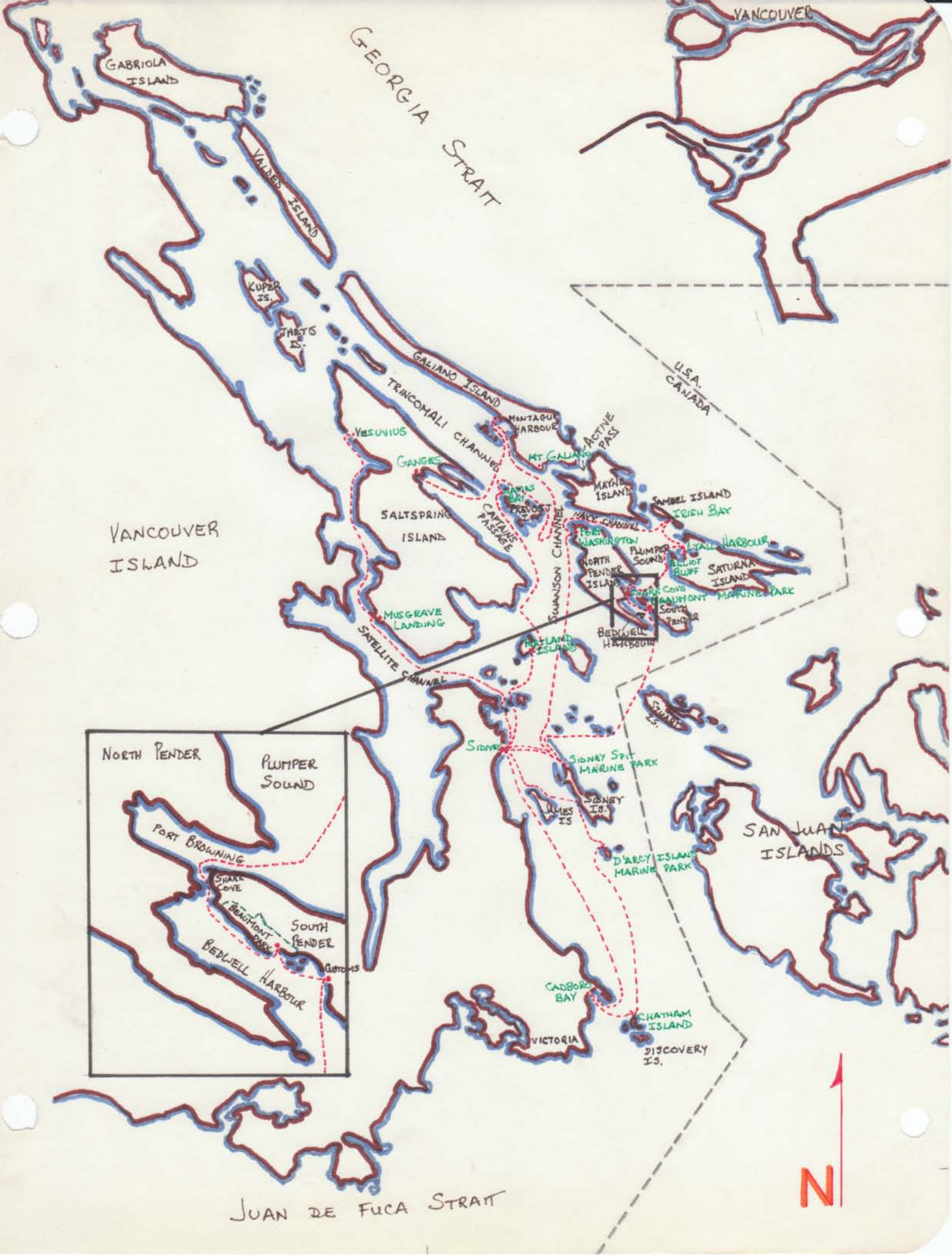
We had an enjoyable breakfast with Tony and Betty and then set off for Vesuvius, 8 miles away. This would be Margaret's last sailing day before heading back to England. Today would be another leisurely one, the only restriction being to catch the flood tide through Sansum Narrows.

Betty and Tony saw us off and took some photos of our departure. The wind was light and we had time to look for the farmhouse in which the Smeetons had lived.

When we got to Sansum Narrows the current had increased and we had a challenging time weaving through the large flotilla of pleasure boats fishing for elusive salmon. Sansum Narrows is quite spectacular, being only half a mile wide and surrounded by half a dozen mountain peaks rising sheer from the water to heights between one and two thousand feet. The Narrows also has a 90 bend to the left about, half way through where tide rips and whirlpools abound. The current had us through very quickly and approaching Vesuvius before the morning was out.

With time to spare we followed the indentations of Salt spring Island turning into Booth Bay to have a look. The wind was funneling across Saltspring through Booth Inlet, heading us. Neither of us wanted to spend our last sailing day short tacking so we bore away, broad reaching to Vesuvius Bay and landing on the sandy beach. In the early afternoon we hiked up to the neighbourhood pub to treat ourselves to a meal and a pint. We lazed away the afternoon on the pub verandah overlooking Stuart Channel toward Vancouver Island.

The following day we sorted out our war, tidied up the boat, and set her at anchor until I could return. David and Pat Massy very kindly came and picked us up to take us back to Victoria. After a farewell dinner Margaret and I returned to Vancouver, she to fly to England, me to organize another cruise. I was very lucky to have Margaret for a cruising companion and really enjoyed our cruising in the Gulf Islands.



VANCOUVER ISLAND

GEORGIA STRAIT

VANCOUVER

U.S. CANADA

NORTH PENDER

PUMPER SOUND

PORT BROWNING

SOUTH PENDER

BEDWELL HARBOUR

SAN JUAN ISLANDS

JUAN DE FUCA STRAIT

N

Open-boating dream fulfilled

**around
our shores**
pat dufour



16 JULY, 1982 · 19

When your husband takes you on your honeymoon sailing off the Cornish coast of Britain in December in an open 4.88-metre dinghy you get a fair indication of what lies ahead!

Margaret Dye recalls wearing her white silk wedding gloves under her woollen ones to help keep out the cold. "I cried . . . it was so cold," she said.

Frank and Margaret Dye's books *Ocean-Crossing Wayfarer* and *Open-Boat Cruising* are on the must list for those spartan types who spurn cabined keel boats to do their cruising in a Wayfarer, erecting boom tents nightly on their trek. While there are 7,000 Wayfarers around the world there are only three in the Greater Victoria area, including two owned by David Massy and Henry Niezen.

For two years the local types have been trying to inveigle the Dyes to visit Victoria and sample our cruising waters for themselves. This week, at least half of their wish was granted. Margaret arrived Monday to spend three weeks doing just that. Frank couldn't make it. He's in the charter canal boat business and this is the busiest time of the year.

One of the Dyes' most epic voyages was from Scotland to Norway and they're working on their second Wayfarer. Their first one, after sailing 40,000 nautical miles in 19 years, is now one of the exhibits at the Greenwich National Museum.

If you want a chance to see Margaret and get some tips on how to enjoy cruising in an open dinghy, she'll be at Ocean Books in Market Square from 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 24, for a session of autograph-signing of *Open-Boat Cruising*.

★ ★ ★



Bill Halkett photo

Dye in midst of pre-cruise check on local Wayfarer