

RIDING OUT HURRICANE INIKI:

The summer of '92 went out with a bang in the northern hemisphere. Mid-September saw no fewer than three category five hurricanes plaster parts of Florida, Hawaii and Guam. A fourth, milder hurricane also hit Mexico. As reported in the last issue, boats in many marinas did not fare too well. But what about boats at sea?

This account landed on our desks soon after Chris Catterton and Ted Neher arrived back in Santa Cruz. They had left Kauai aboard the Cheoy-Lee 30 Kachina only five days before Hurricane Iniki ravaged the island with 160-knot winds. Here's what it was like on this most unusual delivery home.

We left Hanalei Bay on September 7, a Monday, about 9 a.m. We were going to leave a day earlier, but met up with some

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friends who convinced us to stay and party one more day.

We knew a tropical depression had formed way south, but thought the odds of it turning north were slim. Just to play it safe, though, we kept track of weatherfaxes for about three days before we left. They were offered by Jerry and Nancy Hughes on the Kristina 43 *Kahuna*. Our hearts went out to them when we got back to Santa Cruz and found out they had gone over to Nawiliwili where their beautiful boat suffered terribly.

We also planned on getting daily weather reports over the shortwave, and to

soon shot; as soon as we were offshore, the reception turned lousy. Maybe it was the weather.

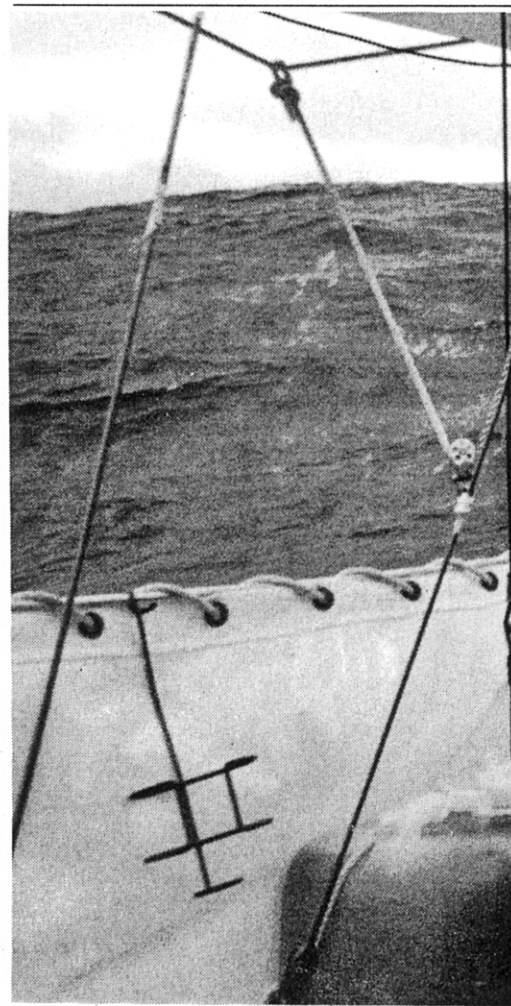
By Friday, September 11, the wind had begun to build. We loved it, taking turns surfing the boat down waves at 10 knots. We were having such a kick-butt time that instead of doing watches, we both stayed up all night for the wonderful sailing. Had we known what lay ahead, we would have conserved our energy.

By Saturday morning, it was pretty obvious we were dealing with more than just some squally weather. But we still had no idea it was Iniki. We were 600 miles northeast of Kauai — no hurricane had ever been up that far . . . had it?

We were having to steer more off the wind since it had increased to 40 knots, with gusts to 50. By 11 a.m., the waves were running about 30 feet and winds were up to 60 knots. By this time, of course, the autopilot was useless.

At noon, we were under bare poles and steered by looking aft. The waves came by us in trains of three — the first one 30 feet, the second 40 feet, and then a towering 50-

'Kachina' home again in Santa Cruz, little the worse for wear except for her window patch.



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By this time the winds had reached 75 knots, gusting we think over 100. (Although *Kachina* had no anemometer, windspeed figures were later verified by meteorologists working with Chris' father to track the yacht through the storm.) We learned later that the hurricane had passed within 150 miles of us.

By nightfall, we really needed sleep, so we lashed the rudder over and lay ahull. At one point, while resting in our berths, we heard a rumble like a train. The next thing we knew, Chris got launched across the boat, landing on top of Ted. It was a wave of obviously biblical proportions.

At this point, we were past scared. We were praying our asses off. Earlier in the day, we'd gotten the EPIRB and the emergency 'abandon ship' bag ready. Assuming the raft stayed lashed to the coachroof, we'd be ready to abandon if the boat started breaking up. Overall, though, we have to say we never considered the wind to be the problem. Our concern was with the size of the seas. If the

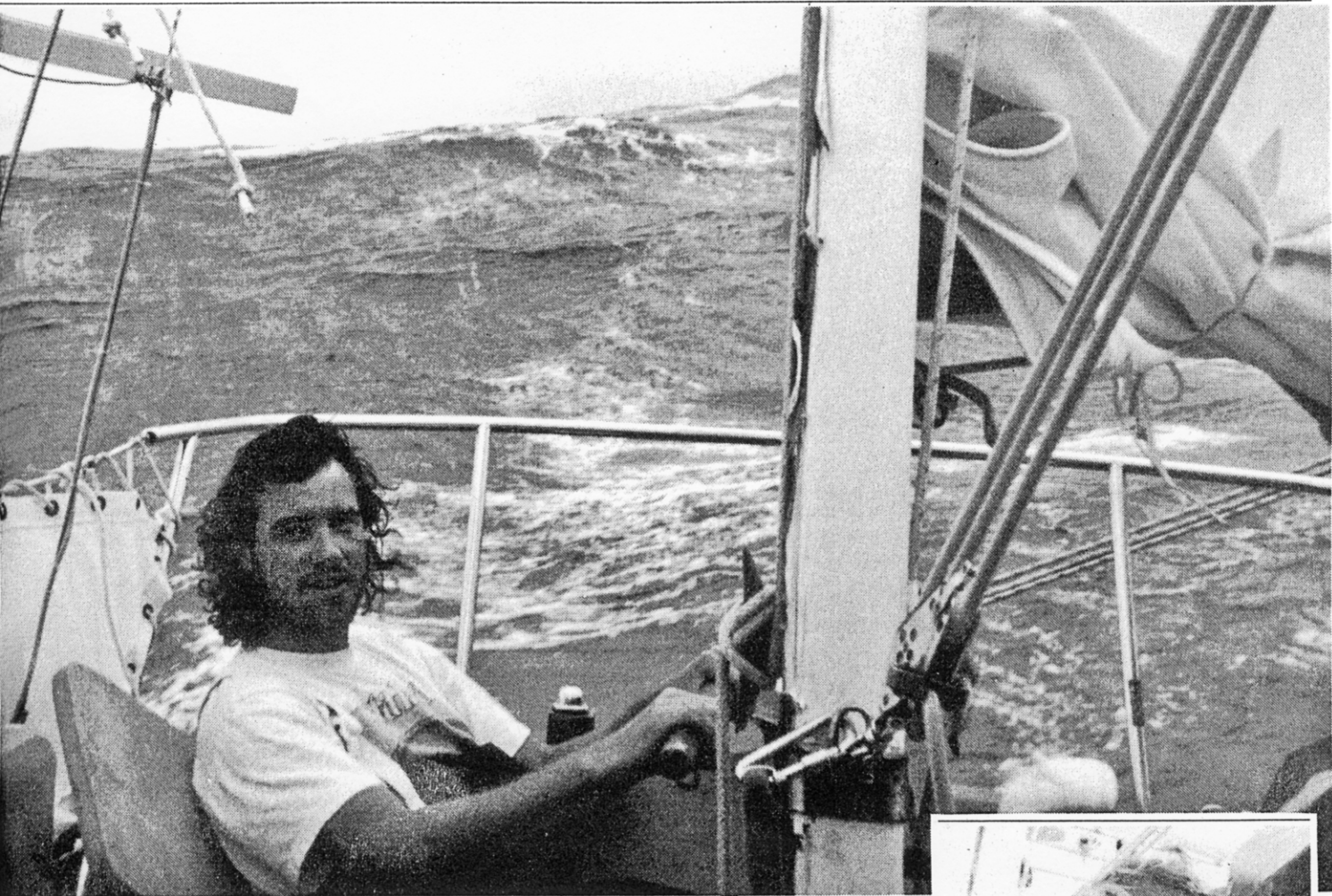


eavesdrop on the conversation between *Kahuna* and *Buenafe*, a boat that had left a day ahead of us. However, those plans were

footer. This happened every 20 minutes. Some of these would break and fill the cockpit, which drained r-e-a-l-l-y slow. Even

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY CHRIS CATTERTON

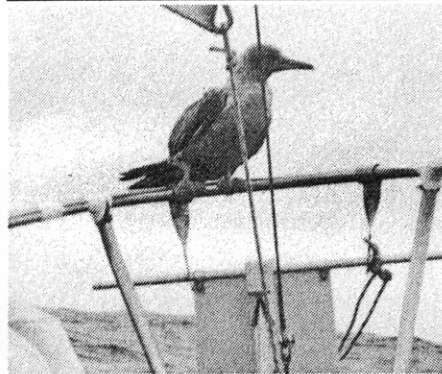
CHRIS AND TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY



Chris (above) and Ted (inset, right) just after daybreak on 'Iniki Saturday'. Below, this exhausted albatros spent all day Friday on the pulpit, making his getaway only hours before the hurricane hit. "Beware of tired pelagic seabirds," warns Catterton.

waves broke any harder, we're not sure any boat could have survived.

We weren't able to get a whole lot of rest.



At one point, a block of 'sharp' cheddar cheese took out one of the big glass windows. We patched it by stuffing a cockpit

cushion in the hole and bolting a floorboard over it. Another time, a locker under the galley broke open spilling some kind of concentrated cleaners. That filled the boat with toxic fumes which didn't help the situation much — we didn't dare 'unbatten' the hatches to air it out.

The peak wind and waves lasted 21 hours, most of which was spent just hanging on. After a while we became so tired we didn't care if we died — as long as we could sleep!

The rest of the trip was anticlimactical, to say the least. By noon on Sunday, it was sunny, beautiful — and absolutely flat calm. We had entered a high and motored for the next three days straight days with hardly a breath of wind.

The first we heard about any hurricane was from the tanker *Guanato*, which we saw on Friday, the 18th. We raised him on the VHF for some weather information and the first thing he asked was where we'd departed from. When we said, "Kauai", there was a long pause. Then he said, "How'd you like



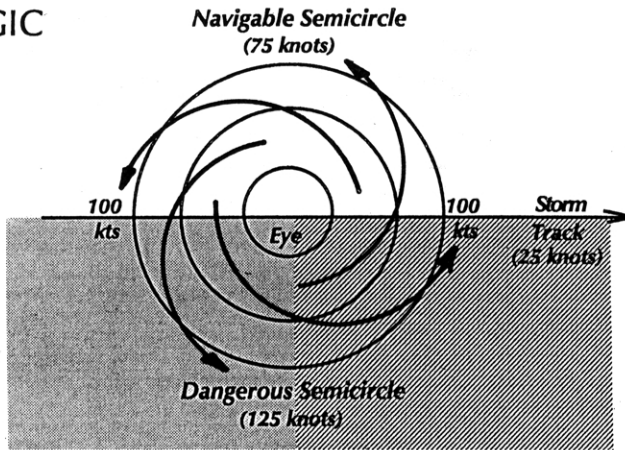
that hurricane?"

When we were off Davenport, Chris contacted his mother via VHF. She was elated to hear from us, of course. She called the rest of Chris' family and they met us for

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HURRICANE LOGIC

All hurricanes in the Northern Hemisphere rotate counter-clockwise. If you can't get away from one, you should at least try to position yourself in the 'navigable semicircle' for two reasons. 1) The hurricane's forward speed is subtracted from the wind velocity (it's added in the dangerous semi-circle), and 2) the wind will be blowing you away from, rather than into, the center of the storm. The worst place to be in a hurricane is the forward quadrant (shown here with stripes) of the dangerous semicircle.



a badly needed beer at the Crow's Nest in Santa Cruz after we got in. While we were there, Noah, the owner, arrived. He just glanced at *Kachina* from the parking lot before running upstairs to give us both big hugs.

Some things we learned that might help other sailors caught in similar circumstances:

* Overall, *Kachina* came through it great

for a 28-year-old glass boat — they really knew how to build them back then. Damage was minimal, but we did have problems getting water out of the boat. A couple of things I would change if *Kachina* were mine are those damn cockpit scuppers and a better bilge pump system. We had no way of dealing with the quantities of water we were being dealt. The manual pump in the cockpit and the small automatic pump in the bilge weren't enough. Luckily, there was a bigger

spare pump aboard that hadn't been installed yet, so we set it up using alligator clips directly on the battery posts to turn it off and on. That worked pretty good except we'd get shocked every time we turned it on.

Even with that extra capacity, if we'd taken a hit through one of the windows or a broken hatch board, we would never have been able to keep up with it.

* As far as deliveries go, check the boat for a good sail inventory. We could have used some storm sails. Secondly, make sure the vessel has the proper safety equipment — and know when to walk away from a job.

* In dealing with a hurricane, run as far and as fast as you can to get away from the damn thing. That's what we did by altering our course northeast, which put us in the northeast quadrant — the 'navigable semicircle'. (See illustration.)

* We've both done other deliveries, and Ted's been through conditions almost as bad during a 10-day period off Panama. But both of us agree — with *Iniki*, we feel we got our 'masters degree' in heavy weather sailing.

— martin burs