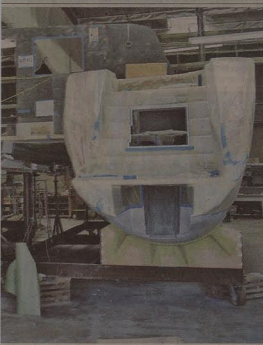


— cont'd

chilling Bay waters. Very few marinas have emergency ladders at the end of docks, so your best bet would probably be to head for the closest powerboat with a swim step on its transom, or a sailboat with either a sugar scoop clone to the water's surface, steps up a reverse transom, or a permanently mounted swim ladder.

Even if you feel that falling in at the dock is an 'it-could-never-happen-to-me' scenario, do us a favor and make an exit plan anyway. We really hate writing 'Eight Bells'.

— andy



cats — cont'd

the decade, they had about seven employees. During the '80s, they built a number of Wylie 38s and 39s, plus custom boats such as the Schumacher 52 *Swiftsure II*, and had about 20 employees. By the end of the '90s, they had about 35 employees. The last two boats they built at their original facility were the two *America One* boats for Paul Cayard's America's Cup effort on behalf of the St. Francis YC.

Once Westerly moved into a new 20,000-sq-ft facility in Santa Ana, business continued to pick up, and they built grand prix racing boats such as the TP52 *Rosebud* and her STP65 successor, as well as the R/P 65 *Stark Raving Mad*, and many others. Then there were custom cruising boats, such as Randy Repass's Wylie 65 *Convergence*, the Perry 59 *Free Range Chicken*, and the late Roy Disney's R/P 60 *Pyewacket*. They also did major refits on the legendary *Windward Passage* and Disney's *Max294 Pyewacket*.

"The secret to our longevity," the soft-spoken Bowser told us, "is that Stan and I were careful to never let the company grow too fast, and were always diversified." So in addition to more typical sailboats, they've also built powerboats, five water taxis for Catalina shoreboat service, and several large catamarans for the Hawaiian charter trade.

But the new 65-ft M&M catamarans currently under construction at Westerly are very high performance cats — nothing like the 'cattlemarans' for Hawaii. Built of the most technologically advanced materials, the Westerly cats are projected by M&M to be 15% faster than the Gunboat 62/66 cats, which M&M also designed. According to Bowser, Westerly is able to attract buyers from around the world — hull #1 is going to a Swiss, hull #2 is going to an owner from Hawaii — because they can beat the likes of Gunboats not only on performance, but also on price. He tells us that the Westerly 65, built in Southern California, sells for about \$3.4 million, significantly less than the South African-built Gunboat 62/66s which go for \$4.1 million. That despite much higher labor costs in California.

In an industry known for boatbuilders going bankrupt, how has Westerly managed to stay afloat — and even thrive — in the toughest of times? "High quality at a fair price," Bowser answers matter-of-factly. He also notes that all work on Westerly boats is done in-house rather than being outsourced, giving them complete control. Bowser says it's also helped that he and Lee have personally had to keep pace with the many technological advances in boatbuilding materials and techniques rather than relying on outside experts. Once again, it's been all about staying on top of and in control of their business.

One of the most interesting things about the Westerly 65 cats is that they are built in two parts. Not two hulls that are later joined by crossbeams, but rather entire half-boats split down the middle-fore and aft, then joined together. This is done because only half a cat will fit into the Westerly curing ovens at a time. It's only possible because of the incredible strength of modern materials. In one funny incident, we asked Bowser to point out where the mast step would be on one of the partially finished cats. He pointed to intersecting one-inch or so vertical panels. Looking in disbelief, we asked where the mast step would go two more times. "Those panels are stronger for their weight than steel," Bowser finally chuckled.

Yeah, things continue to change.

— richard

practicing what he preaches

H.L. Mencken once wrote, "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." Mencken obviously never met John Connolly, owner of Sausalito's Modern Sailing School & Club. Since joining the school as head instructor in the early '90s, Connolly has personally led 104 advanced coastal trips from the Bay to Monterey and back — that's nearly 16,000 nautical miles. And that doesn't even take into account the two round

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connolly — cont'd

trips to the South Pacific on his Islander 53 *Polaris*, the 147 overseas ocean passage-making charters, or the 200-plus classes on the Bay that he's taught. Mencken be damned — this teacher is don't it.

Connolly started sailing on Long Island Sound on an 18-ft Pennant at the age of eight, and was singlehanded the boat by the time he was 10. "Looking back on it, I wouldn't dream of chartering a boat to a 10-year-old," he laughed. "As a matter of fact, 25 is pushing the limit!" But things were different when Connolly was coming up, so he and a buddy would take that little boat out and try their hardest to give their parents heart attacks. "We loved to find heavy weather," he recalled. "The Coast Guard was sent to find us twice."

Despite a passion for sailing, John didn't sail professionally until he moved to California in the late '80s. Instead, he built a career as a rock show promoter. "I was one of Bill Graham's main competitors," he recalled with a smile. "But that was many, many years ago — a story for another day."

After getting out of rock and roll, Connolly began a business that dealt in English sports cars. "During that time, I became a full mechanic," he said. When

he sold the business and moved to the West Coast to be close to his family — his parents and siblings lived in the Bay Area — that skill set landed him his first job in the marine industry as a diesel mechanic.

Though he moved on to become a sailing instructor John says his aptitude for fixing things has been extremely valuable, especially on the overseas trips he started leading after buying Modern Sailing in '96. "I always bring a vast quantity of spare parts and tools, despite what the charter companies say," he noted. Unfortunately, such preparedness comes at a price. "We take them in checked bags, which cost us \$650 in extra baggage charges on the last trip to the Marquesas. It was outrageous!" But he considers that a small price for peace of mind, and says he'll continue the expensive practice.

In fact, preparedness is one of the most important things Connolly drills into his students' heads. "I tell them that when you're a skipper of a boat, you're in the risk management business. We've developed a whole series of emergency procedures, especially for the coastal trips because they have a much higher degree of difficulty due to bigger seas, fog and shipping." Part of his arsenal are methods to prevent hitting whales, and ways to slow or stop water ingress should the boat be holed, whether by whale or container.

And of course *Polaris* herself — aboard which Connolly lives — is meticulously outfitted for offshore work, from built-in preventers to five bilge pumps to a hardwired fog horn. "In the last 10 years, she's the only boat I've encountered on the West Coast — besides freighters — with proper automatic sound signals," John boasted.

In fact, Connolly's interest in safety prompted him to develop a device to recover unconscious overboard victims. The Lifescoop isn't practical for small boats, so Connolly — who holds a patent for the design — plans to market it to the commercial sector. He hopes success there will lead to a smaller version for recreational boaters.

Perhaps because of his obvious zeal for teaching, Connolly claims that, while many people have problems with crew, he doesn't. "Maybe

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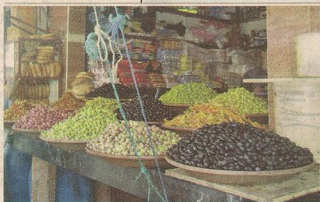
a rash of

As the world watched Abby Sunderland, 16, set out in light winds from Marina del Rey on January 23 on her quest to become the youngest solo circumnavigator, her rival for the title, Jessica Watson, was getting her ass kicked in the Southern Ocean. Ten days after her January 13th rounding of Cape Horn, the 16-year-old Aussie expected a gale to hit but what she experienced was far worse.

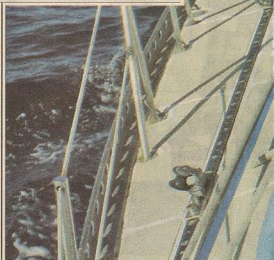
"None of the computers or forecasts picked up that it would reach the 65 knots that I recorded — before losing the wind



John Connolly.



What a sight — Spread, John Connolly (far right) teaches students how to take a noon sight. Above, spoils from Modern's latest overseas trip to Morocco, which Connolly counts as one of his all-time favorites.



records

instruments in a knockdown," Jess wrote in her blog. Before it was all over, her S&S 34 *Ella's Pink Lady* would suffer three more knockdowns, one completely inverting the boat. Jess was safely strapped in below, and the boat suffered surprisingly little damage.

Meanwhile, Abby's experience as this issue went to press has been the complete reverse. It seems her biggest struggle has been keeping her Open 40 *Wild Eyes* moving in frustratingly light winds.

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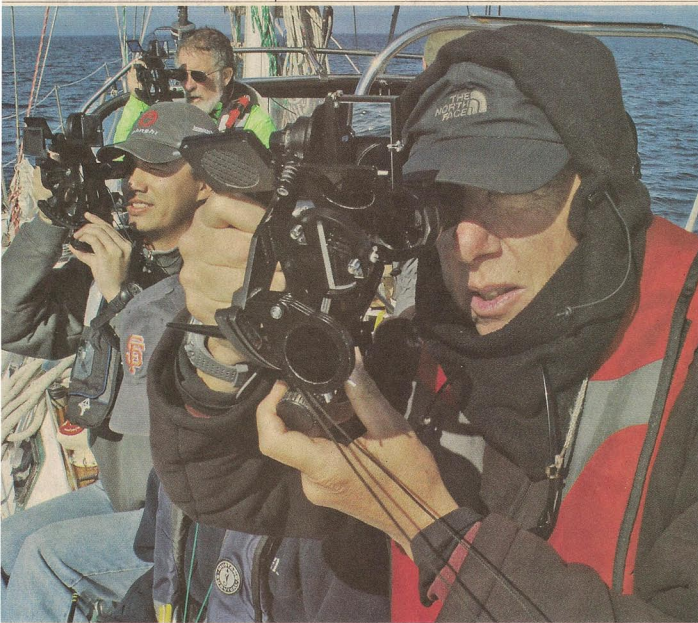
connolly — cont'd

one or two times in all these years has someone been really annoying on a personal level. It's so rare that it's almost never," he noted. But wouldn't he prefer to, every now and then, sail by himself or with just one friend? "We keep people busy so, frankly, I don't have to do a lot of work," he joked. "Honestly, teaching is less work. If it was just me and someone else, I'd be working much harder."

As for what keeps John inspired to continue traveling around the world after 19 years, he says it's just that. "There's the experiential aspect of sailing: the wind, the waves and all that. Then there's the adventure of going places — either to new places or visiting places again that I've enjoyed. That's what motivates me."

Take that, Mencken.

—ladonna



SPREAD: MOLLY WINKELMAN / MODERN SAILING. INSET: DOROTHY LLOYD