

Flicka Friends

Spring 2003



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Cover Photo

s/v PUNKER DOODLE
Anchored in Bahia San Pedro
near San Carlos in the Sea of Cortez.
Photo by Lee Crockett

If you have a high quality photo of your Flicka and would like to see it on the cover, please let me know.
flickafriends@coslink.net

Return of the Flicka

The Flicka 20 has a long and admirable history as a capable pocket cruising yacht. Respect for this heritage inspired us to update the Flicka 20 and take advantage of modern materials to enhance its fitness for its mission as a pocket long range cruising yacht. The hull and deck will be lighter owing to the use of high strength to weight ratio materials, and Kevlar in strategic locations to increase puncture resistance.

Vinylester resin will be used in the skin laminate on the hull to provide resistance against osmotic blistering. NPG/ISO gel coats will be used for enduring beauty and greater solar and hydro protection. Equipment is provided by some of the best brands in the sailing industry: Yanmar, Harken, Bomar, LeFiell, Newmar, PYI.

Pacific Seacraft produced Flicka 20 hull numbers 432 and 433 in 1997 and 434 in January of 1998. Production will resume with Hull number 435 as Pacific Seacraft continues as the builder of the Flicka 20.

Introductory Base Prices

Hull #	Base Price
• 435	\$42,500 Reserved
• 436	\$44,500
• 437	\$46,500
• 438	\$47,500
• 439+	\$49,900

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will the quality of the Flicka be up to the same standard as previous production runs?

This is an appropriate question, especially given the substantially lower base price. The short answer is, Yes. The goal of Pocket Yachts is to reintroduce the Flicka using better materials and technologies available now than were not employed in previous production runs. Higher strength to

weight fiberglass materials require fewer laminate "passes". This saves labor and resin, which is the weakest link in the laminate. A stronger, lighter and less costly hull is achievable today. Gel Coats are far more resistant to solar damage and achieve a better finish. Engines have improved. Other equipment has improved as well.

Pacific Seacraft is once again the builder of the Flicka. Pacific Seacraft has continued to improve as a builder in the five years since the production halted on the Flicka. The boats Pacific Seacraft builds today are shining examples of that fact. The workmanship will be at a Pacific Seacraft standard. The Flicka is a Pacific Seacraft product. Quality is conformance to a standard. This becomes subjective when talking about the amount of wood on the deck and interior. Teak handrails and cap rail will be optional. The interior will likely have less wood than the previous models in order to achieve the \$49,900 base price. The styling is still being evaluated. The execution of the Flicka will be at the highest standards.

2. Can the Flicka be customized?

An extensive list of options is provided to allow each Flicka to include, as much as possible, the features each owner desires. The standard features and optional features will be changed from time to time based on customer feedback. However, customization of the optional features or standard features is not intended.

3. Does the Flicka come in an outboard model?

No. There are no plans to offer the Flicka without an inboard diesel engine.

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A Flicka Rally in Mexico?



s/v Punker Doodle in the snow — Mexico anyone?

Photo: Lee Crockett

By Tom Davison

Over the fall and winter, Lee Crockett traveled to Mexico to sail his Flicka s/v **PUNKER DOODLE**. Both trips were from the mainland in San Carlos Marina in Sonora, Mexico. Information about both of these trips will be published in this and the next issue of Flicka Friends.

A short time ago, Lee Crockett sent me an e-mail and wondered about holding a Flicka Rendezvous in Mexico. I thought that he was talking about San Carlos in Sonora, Mexico on the Sea of Cortez. The location was correct, but the approach route wasn't what I expected.

Since Lee has done the Baja Ha-Ha (an informal "race" from San Diego, California to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico) several times, he was thinking of the longer trip in the Pacific instead of the trailer/truck passage from Arizona. Lee is looking for another Flicka to join him for a trip down the Pacific Ocean

side of the Baja Peninsula. After rounding Cabo San Lucas, the destination would be San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico. The return passage would be via trailer and a highway passage into Arizona. We agreed that both might be possible.

While this is tentative and the date in San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico is December 5, 2003, and just a request for interested parties, the idea could have merit. If anyone wants to join Lee in the Pacific, they could buddy-boat south to Cabo and into the Gulf.

Either route, gathering in Mexico for a Flicka Rendezvous should provide an alternative to waiting for spring and the next boating season to arrive. For the Pacific Ocean Route, it will take some planning, but anyone who goes will have a trip to remember for some time. Others Flicka owners could meet them when they arrive in San Carlos in early December. For more information, watch the Flicka Home Page Rendezvous Section. More information will be posted as it becomes available.

About Flicka Friends

Flicka Friends is a newsletter written for the people who own, crew aboard or are interested in the Flicka, a 20 foot sailing vessel designed by Bruce P. Bingham.

Based on the Newport boats of Block Island Sound, this little ship has been built from various materials from the 1970's until 2002. This includes Flickas constructed from plans obtained directly from Bruce's California office. About 400 sets of plans were sold. According to Bruce Bingham, many Flickas can be found in New Zealand Australia and Sweden.

A number of hulls were built by Nor'star and some were completed by Westerly Marine. The manufacturer of the bulk of the class is Pacific Seacraft Corporation who built 434 hulls in California.

Flicka Friends is published four times a year, with issues in March, June, September and December. Articles, letters, comments and photos relating to the Flicka are welcomed and encouraged.

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Getting s/v PUNKER DOODLE

By Lee Crockett

After spending some time on the **Punker Doodle** in Seattle this summer, the plan was to tow the boat down to San Diego in the fall. I was then going to sail to La Paz, Mexico with my father in December.

Well, things change. First of all, the boat really wasn't ready to go cruising, particularly offshore. Secondly, it is roughly a three week trip and I was finding it difficult to schedule the time. Finally, San Diego to Cabo San Lucas (and on to La Paz) is a fabulous trip, however it can be very demanding, both on the boat and the crew.

So in September I towed the boat from Seattle to Missouri. Actually, it is now in a lake in Illinois just outside of St. Louis. The motivation for getting the boat here was that I could then do the many projects and upgrades on my list. I could also do some cool weather lake sailing. Instead of sailing to Mexico from San Diego, I will tow the boat down to San Carlos, just south of Tucson, this fall.

Like many sailors, I have very strong opinions on what does and does not need to be onboard a cruising boat. Cruising, in the **Punker Doodle** context, is not setting sail for three to five years. It is spending a week or two at a time in a wide variety of places ranging from Mexico's Sea of Cortez, to the Great Lakes, to the coast of Maine.

First, I replaced the head. It was the original I think, leaked through the pump housing, and it was easier to replace the whole thing than to try to rebuild or repair it. The batteries were five or six years old so they needed to go. The configuration when we bought the boat was a group 24, deep cycle "house" battery and a dedicated starting battery.

I opted to replace both with two



A view of PUNKER DOODLE's new fixed/rigid dodger from the bow.

Photo: Lee Crockett



A view of PUNKER DOODLE's transom with a Monitor Windvane, propane grill, and two solar panels.

Photo: Lee Crockett



Ready to Cruise



PUNKER DOODLE sporting two new solar panels and a rigid dodger.
Photo: Lee Crockett



The solar panels and windvane are stowed.
Photo: Lee Crockett

group 24, 12 volt deep cycle batteries. This arrangement provides a total of 150 amp hours at a full charge of which about 75 amp hours are available for use. While a total battery capacity of 150 amp hours is pretty skimpy for a cruising boat, space was one of the big issues.

If I had had the space, I would have installed two Trojan 6 volt batteries, linked together to provide 220 amp hours at 12 volts in a single bank. The second bank could have then been for a starting battery. The cockpit locker, however, would have held batteries and nothing else.

The **Punker Doodle** has a nine horsepower Yanmar diesel with a 35 amp alternator. That means, at best, the alternator will put 20 amps per hour back into the batteries.

Since the boat does not have a three stage smart regulator or any means of overriding the regulator's stepping down of the output, the reality is that the alternator will never recharge the batteries to an acceptable rate of 80% or 90% of their capacity. So to handle most of the battery charging I installed two 45 watt solar panels that were rated at 3.5 amps each. The panels are connected to a solar regulator that, in turn, is connected to each battery.

My prior experience with solar panels has been that they produce nowhere near their rated output, but I am figuring that they will crank out 5 amps for 6 hours or so while in Mexico, or 30 amps per day. When I take a voltage reading of the batteries at rest they both register 14 volts. Yea! I also bought a portable, 10 amp Guest battery charger, just in case.

Next on the list was ground tackle. The **Punker Doodle** came with an 11 pound Bruce and a small Danforth anchor. The primary anchor is now a 27 pound C.Q.R with 100 feet of ¼ inch high test chain and a couple of

(Continued on page 6)



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hundred feet of three strand nylon. I expect that in most anchorages we will be using only chain. I opted for the 27 pound anchor over the 20 pound because it was only an inch and a half wider and the same length. It fit right onto the anchor platform on the bowsprit.

The **Punker Doodle** came with a two-burner kerosene stove that didn't work. I did much evaluating and Internet searching and concluded that installing a propane stove, which is what I wanted to do, would entail a lot of time and money. The stove at \$400 is just scratching the surface. I figured by the time I bought the tank, regulator, hose, solenoid, tank enclosure, etc. I was at \$800 - \$1,000. Plus, I have not been able to find a direct, drop in replacement for the kerosene stove. The Force 10 is close, but not exact.

I had been using a propane camping stove that worked well, except it is awkward (also dangerous) because the burner is above the tank so the kettle or pot is a foot or so above the countertop. I removed the kerosene stove and built in, essentially drop in drawers to house the camp stove and lots of additional galley storage. It works great.

The stove is steady and I created much needed counter space and storage space below. In addition, the propane tanks, less than \$2.00 at Home Depot, are the same ones I use for the Magna grill (also a cruising essential).

The **Punker Doodle** did not have an automatic bilge pump which I found pretty worrisome. So I have added one along with the manual override switch. A very good investment. I also brought on board my EPIRB, another very good investment.

One of the big mental debates was over self-steering. I have a Monitor windvane from a former boat, but one of the advantages of a Flicka is that a \$300 tiller pilot will work just fine. I decided to install the Monitor since it is good to have non-electrical things on boats. Installation was much easier than I had envisioned. If I had not had the Monitor, however, I would not have bought one. I would have bought the auto pilot, probably still will.

The biggest mental debate was over the dodger. I feel that second to self-steering, a dodger is the most important piece of cruising equipment one can have. I still plan on taking the **Punker Doodle** offshore. Even the "protected" waters of the Sea of Cortez get pretty wild. The mental debate was: hard or soft. I have had both before.

I chose a hard dodger for a couple of reasons. First, I had a mental image of the style and thought the Flicka would lend itself well to this design.

Secondly, a hard dodger can take much more abuse than a canvas one. Thirdly, it was a lot less expensive since I provided the labor to build it.

Finally, I had a 10 foot Zodiac with a 6 hp outboard that I sold via the Internet. The combination was somewhat absurd for a Flicka. I have ordered a 6.5 foot Zodiac and two oars to use as the **Punker Doodle's** tender. I may also try using an electric trolling motor.

So, what did it cost? Not that much since I had much of the equipment already: Monitor windvane, solar panels, EPIRB, Magna grill, and I did all of the labor. But, if one were to buy all of the pieces new, it would cost just over \$7,000. Not bad considering that I had spent over \$12,000 getting my Pedrick 38 ready to cruise and that did not include a wind vane.



s/v PUNKER DOODLE in the Gulf of California.

Outfitting / Refitting Costs	
Head	\$150
Two Batteries	\$160
Battery charger	\$100
2 Solar panels	\$1,000
Solar regulator	\$100
Mounting hardware	\$50
27 lb anchor (\$400 if a C.Q.R.)	\$150
100' high test chain (Home Depot)	\$138
Stove, drawer conversion	\$50
Magna grill, hardware	\$200
Bilge pump, switch	\$60
406 EPIRB (manual activation)	\$230
Monitor wind vane	\$3,500
Tiller Pilot	\$300
Hard dodger	\$300
Little dinghy (\$3,000 if you made it)	\$700
Total	\$7,188



A Trial Run for s/v IRISH HURRICANE

By Hal DeVaney

Mark, a good-natured young sailor from Louisiana is about to embark on a sailing adventure he has been planning for a long time. Most of us armchair/dockside sailors can vicariously share this new chapter in his sailing adventures.

Mark works at the local West Marine store, where I have spent a fortune on stuff both necessary and unnecessary to feed the sailing addiction. Mark, always upbeat and helpful with advice at West Marine, is quitting to begin the full time cruising lifestyle. That is until he runs out of money! But what the heck, don't just dream about it. **GO NOW!!**

Mark, who lives aboard at Galveston Yacht Basin, recently bought his "dream" boat, a 1979 Pacific Seacraft Flicka, "**IRISH HURRICANE.**" Moving from a 27 foot Hunter required some downsizing. How can a little 20 foot pocket cruiser hold all the stuff he had accumulated over the years? But, not to worry, the Flicka is a BIG Little boat and you will be amazed at the amount of gear it will handle!

While his Hunter 27 **Poco Loco** served Mark well for a number of years, and is a great bay and coastal cruiser, it just isn't going to cut it in the big stuff offshore! **IRISH HURRICANE**, on the other hand had a proven off shore record and came equipped with solar panel, wind generator, and a complete inventory of sails. She was ready to go!

Popular wisdom suggests that the costs involved in obtaining and equipping a safe, comfortable ocean crossing cruiser you would have to shell out a ton of money! Wrong, when it's a Flicka your looking at! She is a pretty boat with a 3 foot 3 inch draft that will go anywhere and she is light enough to be pushed off by hand if she goes aground, and her sails are so small that handling her is a dream. Best of all you don't have to save for twenty years to own "her"..... Mark took our advice about a shake-down sail before leaving for Louisiana!



First trip on his new 79 Flicka Irish Hurricane, Mark sports a big s...eating grin!

Mark about his Flicka s/y IRISH HURRICANE.
Photo by Hal DeVaney.



Irish Hurricane Shake down sail

Sunset along the side of s/y CARAWAY.
Photo by Hal DeVaney



Flicka Profile:

By Bill Strop

Start with something special. Improve it intelligently. Maintain it fastidiously. It will serve you well and love you back. **"Baby Grand"** Pacific Seacraft Flicka 20 (PCS 200791278) left the mold in December 1978 – was sold as a 1979 "Sailaway Kit" – ready to sail but as specified without an interior.

She was purchased by Margery Durand of Willimantic, Connecticut and had her interior fully insulated and finished in light American Ash by a Block Island Marine Finish Carpenter/Cabinetmaker. Stowage was enhanced through eschewing the standard "Tabbed-in" space stealing molded in interior fiberglass Hull Liner. Employing Ash panels, frames, shelves and fiddles promoted a light, airy interior.

Replacement of plastic port lights with silicone bronze ports added traditional touches with serious strength. All cabinetry was "glassed in" stoutly, bronze screwed and bronze through bolted. The interior coachroof was insulated as well and covered with tongue in groove ash as well as handcrafted ash grab rails bilaterally. Pre-launch it was decided she would have no through hulls. Still has none -- a tribute to insistence on hull integrity.

Bilge and sink drainage is accomplished by a "Y" valve in the starboard locker activated by a Whale gusher cockpit mounted hand pump. Cockpit twin bronze stopper balled drains are double clamped to stout 1 ½" commercial truck hosing terminating at double clamped "flappered" silicone bronze through hulls strongly bedded in 3M 5200 polyurethane outside and Sikaflex 231 marine bedding inside. Thus prepared, she was first launched in 1982, though her owner presaged her by attending the Pacific Seacraft Block Island



Bill Strop next to s/v BABY GRAND, PSC Flicka # 79.
All Photos: Bill Strop



s/v BABY GRAND at the docks.

Rendezvous in 1981. At launch she was cradled on her new custom built 1982 Target Trailer. The subsequent details of Ms. Durand's ownership are currently unavailable. However, her early erudition and "Bristol" insight produced, at that juncture, a uniquely fit out nearly unsinkable Flicka specimen.

"Baby Grand" gained her name identity after Michael Banghart of

Austin, Texas (who had outfitted her for ocean passage – even added an EPIRB) passed her to Robert Ralph of Liberty, Missouri in 1987.

He upgraded her to include a truly usable 4 step stainless stern mounted swim ladder, replaced all the standing rigging, bought all lines and halyards aft, added a Bruce Bingham designed mast erector – "Pivot Bridle Attachment." He also converted all



s/v BABY GRAND



In the cabin of s/y BABY GRAND.



In the cockpit of s/y BABY GRAND.

winches to self-tailing Barent 17's.

I first saw "Baby Grand", near as I can recall, at Spring Launch at "Paradise Point" Smithville, Missouri. The year was 1988 and she was then owned by Robert's dad, Norman Ralph.

I finally was able to buy her in 1994. It was time to add systems which did not threaten through hull integrity,

including a Stowe taffrail log with tracting transducer and a Humminbird depth sounder with rudder pintle mounted transducer. Then I addressed the ground tackle adding a 20# C.Q.R and a bronze 8# picnic anchor and cleats. "Baby" came with bronze bow and stern skenes – why not upgrade to the huge bronze Staghorn beauties

Pacific Seacraft specifies for their 37 footer and add a pair amidships and a hefty bronze foredeck bollard thru bolted to a massive stainless back plate. Traditional marine outfitters had just the ticket. A Nicro day and night solar powered exhaust vent and a Hella turbo fan enhanced livability and a 10.3 watt Uni-Solar flexible solar panel affixed to a teak cabin top rack gave the battery bank a boost.

Teak coamings and hinged teak cockpit floorboards added a nice touch – as did a teak cockpit locker, new teak hatch-boards, teak rimmed hatchboard screens. A bronze port in the lower hatchboard promoted thru ventilation and permitted a quick peek into the cockpit. And how about those beveled glass privacy port light inserts?

Her North Sail suit – still stiff and taut – gave way to my dream set. Sobstad full roach full battened main with three reef points and Harken Battslides were custom measured and sewn in Bainbridge cloth and a companion Sobstad 130 panel cut in the same cloth added upwind "punch". Why not a Wichard bottle screw backstay adjuster to "dial her in?" Done.

In 2001 she received a custom linear polyurethane hull repaint in diamond black. Stunning contrast to her gold feature stripe and gold filigree. She has been a Cetol boat throughout my ownership, and happily so. Bottom paint has been tended to regularly with Irgarol anti-slime ablative paint recently applied. Many thoughtful touches have been added through the years as ideas and needs surfaced. The pictures depict these.

"Baby" is a classy, snug, safe and sprightly vessel as befits my last boat. Health considerations force me to finally part with her. I am no longer able to invest in her the loving care she rightly deserves. She has a tradition – well and richly earned. She seeks a new master.



A Boat Cover

*By Eric Jungemann
(s/v "Hotspur" # 386)*

Since I have a Flicka (**HOTSPUR**) with varnished exterior teak, and I like to keep maintenance time to a minimum, I decided to have a full cover made for the boat. Many Flickas have full boat covers but I haven't seen an article laying out the practical considerations and the results you can achieve.

This particular cover was made by Margaret Fago at Hogin Sails in Alameda. She is very experienced and carefully gathered the requirements from me and numerous measurements from the boat. Like any canvas project, there is a give and take between the boat owner and the cover maker. She achieved pretty spectacular results in a boat that is fairly complicated (there are no flat surfaces on a Flicka !)

My requirements for the cover included:

This would be a full boat cover that overlapped the deck and included covering the teak rub rails, bowsprit and rudder.

The ability to have the cover in place with the mast up (typically in the water) or the mast down (typically on the trailer). This necessitated a design with the cover mostly hugging the deck vs. a "tent" approach that you see on boats that are only kept in the water or stored on the hard with the mast up. Tent covers use the mast and boom to hold them up. I didn't want to mandate that the boat would be stored with the mast up if the cover was to be in use. It was NOT a requirement to be able to trailer with the cover on. There is no good way to reconcile a cover that will handle 60 MPH on the trailer and also drape correctly while in the water or



On the side view, you can (barely) see the split of the cover into fore and aft sections at the mast.

Photo: Eric Jungemann



The cover as viewed from the bow of the boat. Note how the cover goes around all hardware with flaps. Only metal is exposed.

Photo by: Eric Jungemann



for s/v HOTSPUR



The cover encloses the cockpit and protects all of the wood on the stern as well.
Photo: Eric Jungemann

stationary on the trailer. This is different than high wind speed when the boat is in the slip. A trailered boat has the towing vehicle slipstream to deal with and wind that tends to get underneath the cover and lift it up and can really damage the gelcoat and teak. I didn't want any snaps or modifications to the boat itself as a result of the cover. You commonly see these in smaller canvas covers for toe rails or companionways. For this reason, small sandbags with a synthetic sand were used to weigh the cover down vs. snaps or ties.

I was willing to trade off some time to put the cover on and off the boat but didn't want the cover to weigh too much and be difficult to handle. For this reason, the cover is in two pieces (fore and aft), splitting at the mast. This is another case when the Flicka's size pays off. Large full boat covers are frequently more trouble than they are worth. The cover needed to accommodate the dodger. The dodger actually came after the cover but the cover was modified to fit the dodger. In this case, the dodger could be on the boat in an upright position, on the boat in a folded position, or stored below. This was accommodated by having a hole in the cover that fit around the dodger when it was in the up position. When folded or stored below, a small cover goes over that hole.

The whole thing needed to be durable and easy to maintain. For this reason, the cover was done in a heavy duty yacht acrylic using heavy duty twist fasteners. To help with ventilation, there are four ventilation scoops. What you don't see is about a half dozen small sandbags in their inside pockets along the bottom hem of the cover on each side. These help keep the cover in place in high winds. This cover has done just fine in 60+ knot winds. It is very secure.



The dodger actually came after the cover but the cover was modified to fit the dodger.
Photo: Eric Jungemann



PUNKER DOODLE Goes South

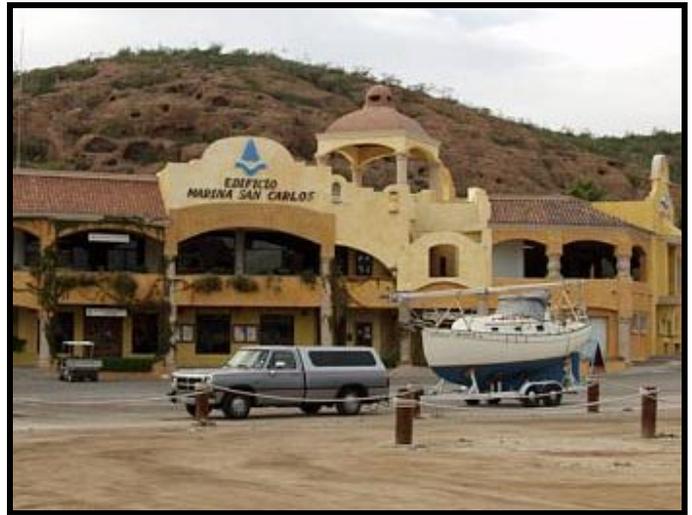
By Lee Crockett

After spending two months in a small lake in the Midwest getting the Punker Doodle "cruise ready," it was time to head south to Mexico. I had the boat hauled out on Tuesday, December 10; just in time since the cockpit was completely full of snow. After having some welding done on the trailer to reposition four of the ten support pads, I set off for Tucson, Arizona on Saturday, December 14. The trip to Tucson was very, very long, however I arrived on Sunday night, December 15. The trip was uneventful except for a couple of hours in a Home Depot parking lot in Las Cruces, New Mexico to replace a couple of pads on the trailer that had cracked.

I actually slept in on Monday morning and didn't get out of Tucson until around 8:00 am heading south on I-19 to Nogales, Arizona, the border, and the great unknown. I had done lots of reading about crossing the border, importing a truck, boat, and trailer into Mexico, driving in Mexico, and what to expect from the bureaucracy (many thanks to Tom Davison for the source material). Because I have cruised in Mexico before in a larger boat, I had no hard and fast timetable. I have learned that you take things as they come.

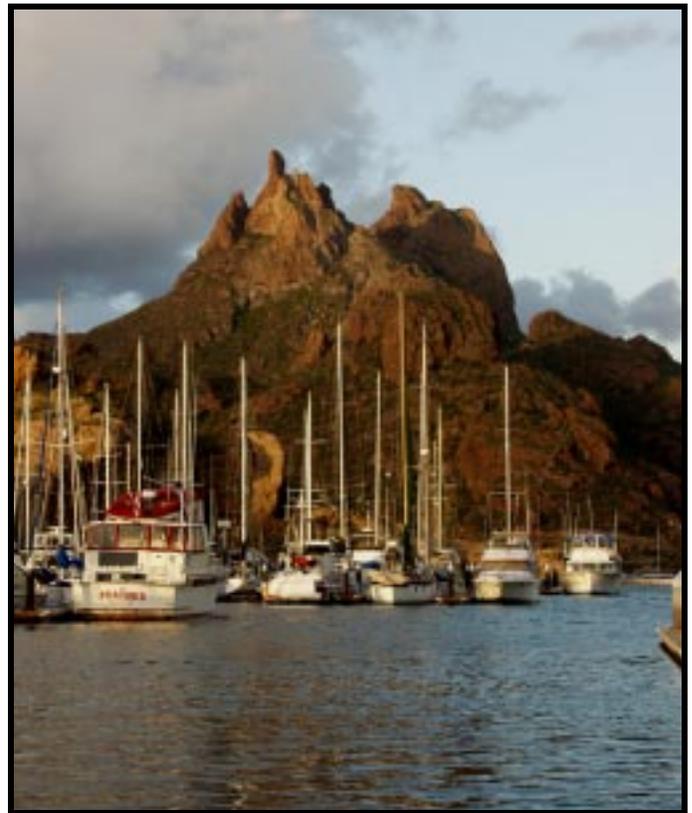
The first step is to get across the border. This is easiest done at the 4 kilometer exit off I-19. This is also the truck route. After a final provisioning stop at Safeway and a topping off of the gas tank I headed for the border crossing. I had expected lines, waits, officials, and some degree of frustration, however, I was unprepared for the reality of what happened. Nothing! I drove right over the border and only had to slow down to go over the first of many "world class" topas (speed bumps). Speed bumps in Mexico are a rude awakening to Americans (and probably Canadians too). Generally, you need to come to a complete stop before going over them. No kidding! Much of the fun is dragging a dual axle trailer over them because as the forward wheels start to descend after crossing the bump, the rear wheels are just starting to ascend. This tends to cause an almost violent motion at just about any speed.

Once over the border you can turn right to the center of Nogales (the free road) or left to the toll road to Santa Ana and points south. That's a no brainer while towing 7,000 pounds. The beauty of the Mexican toll roads is that no one uses them. Yes, you must pay to use them (which is why the locals don't) but it is well worth the relatively minor expense. Nogales to San Carlos costs around \$20 in tolls. To put that into perspective Joplin, Missouri to Oklahoma City cost \$16.50 and both are roughly the same distance. The first sec-



The end of the road in San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico:
s/y PUNKER DOODLE is 2,300 miles from home.

Photo by Lee Crockett.



San Carlos Harbor, Sonora, Mexico.

Photo: Lee Crockett



For the Winter



San Carlos Harbor and s/v PUNKER DOODLE.

Photo: Lee Crockett

tion of toll road is the most expensive relative to the distance traveled. It cost around \$4.30 to go about 10 kilometers. This was money well spent since it completely avoids Nogales. The toll booths are staffed by two people per booth and take either pesos or dollars. If you pay in dollars the exchange rate is actually better than the money exchanges around the border.

The second major event in towing the Punker Doodle to Mexico is crossing the K21 checkpoint. At K21, which means kilometer 21, even though it is around the 259 kilometer marker, you must acquire your Mexican tourist visa, auto insurance, if you don't have it already, and import permits for your truck, boat, and trailer. It is an incredibly easy and straight forward process despite some of the accounts I had read prior to departure. The key is being prepared PRIOR to arriving. What you need are originals and photocopies of your passport, registrations and titles to the boat, trailer, and truck.



Approaching San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico.

Photo: Lee Crockett

The first step is to get your visa, which is pretty hard to miss since once you park in the large lot, you are funneled into the Immigration office first. Then you photocopy the visa and head to the customs office which is right next door. I opted for the Sonora Only import permit since I do not plan on driving anywhere else in Mexico. The Sonora Only Permit office had no one waiting and the permit is free. The Federal permit office, which allows one to drive throughout all of Mexico, had 50 or 60 people in line. Again, an easy decision to make.

In both Immigration and Customs the officials were polite and efficient. They also spoke perfect, if not slightly accented English. Then I went back to the truck and very slowly drove through the checkpoint (big topas!). An official checked my visa and temporary import permits, compared the VIN numbers against those on the truck, trailer, and boat and I was almost on my way. I think, since it was a slow day and he didn't have anything better to do he wanted to inspect the boat. So up we went. He didn't actually go down below though; I think he just wanted to see inside. The whole process took 45 minutes. I had read that in some cases it can take all day, so I was pleasantly surprised.

Then off I went on Mexico's 15 toll road. The toll road is very similar to the U.S.'s interstate highways except for a couple of things. Most of the road is 4 lane divided highway but not all of it. Generally, there are no shoulders or pull offs and it is not a limited access highway with on and off ramps.

(Continued on page 14)



PUNKER DOODLE in Mexico



The entrance into San Carlos Harbor.



Sailing near San Carlos in the Gulf of California.



Lee's new rigid dodger on s/v PUNKER DOODLE.

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Instead of going around the few cities and towns they intersect, they go right through the center of them. The speed limits, therefore, range from 20 to 110 kilometers/hours. I thought the road surfaces were similar to our Interstates and there were only a couple of really rough patches that ran for a couple of kilometers like in the United States.

So all in all, the driving was relatively easy between the towns. Going through the cities and towns was another story. The first town I encountered was Santa Ana, which has a population of about 19,000. It was in Santa Ana that I realized that there are two sets of tolls on the toll road, the official one you pay at the booth and the unofficial ones. The unofficial ones are set up at just about every topas (speed bump) where some enterprising kids and adults collect money for every charitable cause imaginable (like what the firemen or Lions do in your towns periodically). This happens, however, at every topas and in the cities like Hermosillo, at every stoplight.

So entering a town like Santa Ana one needs to slow down dramatically, like from 70 mph to 20 mph, and then to almost a complete stop before the first topas. Santa Ana is pretty hard to get lost in, however Hermosillo is another story because it is a full fledged city of about 500,000. Hermosillo is the capital of Sonora, Mexico. Hermosillo is complete with narrow one way streets and both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The 15 toll road runs right through the center of town and the signs marking turns are often small and hard to see.

Getting into the center of town was relatively easy. I immediately developed a strategy for getting back out of town on the other side. Buses and RV's. I identified one of the many cross country busses, like Greyhounds, and two RV's that looked like they knew where they were going (all going the same direction), and tried my best to follow them. The route was marked but I drove down several streets that I couldn't imagine were part of the toll road south. I ended up losing all three since I was driving very slowly in several parts.

The trip through Hermosillo was a little nerve racking since it is a very congested city with lots of traffic. But I came out on the south side no worse for wear after paying a couple of pesos in unofficial tolls, having my windshield washed twice by kids on the street corner, and supporting a couple of kids' juggling act (juggling oranges in the middle of the road). The rest of the trip to San Carlos, about 130 km from Hermosillo, was fast and easy. I arrived in San Carlos at about 4:30 in the afternoon and spent my first night in Mexico sleeping on the **Punker Doodle** in the Marina San Carlos parking lot.

