

PIPE DREAM 1993 by Dr. Scott Piper

Ed. note: Few J/40's have logged as many ocean miles as Scott Piper's PIPE DREAM. The following is an account of PIPE DREAM's voyages in 1993.

PIPE DREAM left her berth at Biscayne Bay Yacht Club on the twentieth of May. It was a black moonless night and there was a cool west wind from an approaching late season cold front. Scott Rice and I delivered the boat to Daytona for the upcoming Bermuda Race. At night we sailed rail down in the smooth water a few hundred yards from the Florida Beach. By dawn we were past Palm Beach and it was obvious that we were going too fast. It was not wise to chance the Ponce de Leon inlet at night. So we rolled up the jib and slowed our progress to time our arrival for six thirty a.m. the next day. The two of us had an easy delivery and we had breakfast at the Halifax River Yacht Club the next morning. By then the front was making life miserable for the unfortunate boats that made the same trip the day after us.

PIPE DREAM was loaded down with a ton of extra gear for the transatlantic crossing. Still we started first and led the fifteen boat fleet all the way to Bermuda. Tropical depression number one built up in the Gulf, and then passed us one hundred miles to the South. We had sustained winds of no more than twenty five knots but heavy fifteen foot confused seas made for a rocky ride. We were moving at nine knots and the steep confused sea broke over the fore deck almost continuously. There was more white water on the deck than I had ever seen before. All seven crew fared well except for the cook who succumbed to mal de mer.

Our lead continued to build and by the fifth day our position was only fifty miles from Bermuda with the second boat behind reporting her position 100 miles out. We could taste victory. Then in the space of a few hours we were becalmed. All night we watched the Gibb's Hill light wink at us while the Kevlar mainsail slapped itself to death. We did finish first, but the fleet sailed up to us and we finished well down in the standings. Still a Rolex watch for the first to finish isn't all bad.

Minimum racing damage was repaired without problem, and PIPE DREAM was ready for the transatlantic. A crowd watched her depart from the St. George's Dingy Club on Monday morning the 7th of June. A brisk breeze pinned the Mediterranean moored fleet to the dock. The departure was less than stellar due to a fouled anchor, but the crew of five sailed off to the Northeast in a freshening westerly breeze. During the first week of the crossing, there was a lot of wind, but mostly it was a downhill slide and she kept in contact by single side band radio through New Jersey. As they approached the Gulf stream from the south, a full gale developed and passed them by to the north. They had numerous squalls and sustained winds of up to fifty five knots. The reefed mainsail put additional strain on the mainsail mast slides and one by one they failed. The main was useless by the end of the second week but fortunately most of the work was downwind. Two weeks out she reported her position through a passing freighter and other than the fact that the single side band had failed, they had no problems. For the last week of the trip the winds went light, and they had to husband their dwindling fuel supply. The three quarter ounce chute bit the dust.

Then on Friday the 25th of June. they limped in to Caroway in the West Hebrides. Caroway was up a small fjord, and had a total of nine houses with a lot of sheep. My son Scotty said that if you had to imagine a small Scottish fishing village, this was it. The crossing was exactly eighteen days, and after a night on shore, they left to cross the Northern tip of Scotland. The Firth of Pentland is a narrow band of water between Scotland and the Shetland Islands. Tidal currents reach up to twelve knots in this narrow band of water which produces tidal falls. Obviously you traverse this only with the tide behind you and your heart in your mouth. Scotland was quite cold and the scenery was spectacular, but mist coming down from the still snow-covered mountains obstructed the view. To catch the tide right, they pulled into a small fjord with three thousand foot mountains on either side and waited for the tide to change. Going through the falls was a hairy experience.

After getting through the Firth of Pentland, they entered the Scottish town of Wick in order to rest and refuel before crossing the North Sea. They are bound for Kristiansan, Norway, which is a lovely town, and from there they will go down the narrow straits between Sweden and Denmark to Copenhagen.

The Nances and the Pipers will meet the boat in Copenhagen and relieve the delivery crew. We will then cruise into the Baltic and in a two week trip, touch Russian. Danish and Finnish ports and end up in Stockholm. Later in the first two weeks of August we will return to Stockholm to take the boat across Sweden, through the Gota Canal and then further south down to Poland and Germany. Then in September we will pick the boat up in the Kiel area and traverse the Kiel Canal which deposits us in the Elbe River. A short distance later. we will back into the North Sea and Cruise down the coast of Holland, Belgium@ Luxembourg and France. Then across the English Channel to Cowes. My Brother Tom will then return and race the boat from Cowes across the Channel in a Royal Ocean Racing Club Regatta. From there the boat will be delivered further south to the Canary Islands for the winter.