

Five Great Capes
© 2005 Evans Starzinger

by

Evans Starzinger & Beth Leonard

Hawk has put all the five great Southern capes in her wake during the past two years. During 2002/2003 we cruised by Capes Horn and Good Hope, and during 2004/2005, we cruised around Australia and New Zealand, in the process rounding Cape Leeuwin and the companion South West capes on Tasmania and Stewart Islands.

CAPE LEEUWIN

Named for the Dutch ship that discovered it, Leeuwin means “Lioness.” Despite its name, Leeuwin lacks the fearsome reputation of Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope, yet it lies almost a degree south of Hope. And like Hope, it is located not at the southernmost extent of the continent but at its most southwestern point, the place where sailing vessels fighting the westerly winds could finally ease sheets and turn northward. Cape Leeuwin turned out to be the most uncomfortable of the capes for us. But we only have ourselves to blame for that as we let others dictate our schedule instead of the sea.

October 5, 2003: I huddled under the hard dodger in the darkness, shivering with cold, my stomach roiling. Neither the three layers of thermal underwear nor the seasickness medications I had taken seemed to be making the slightest bit of difference. For the thousandth time that night, I felt *Hawk* rear up and then crash down, and heard the waterfall rush of water as it raced by me along the side deck before cascading off her stern. I told myself I had to get up and check our position, but I knew that only if I stayed absolutely still would I keep from being sick. I had to fight my way past my body’s protective instincts just to engage my muscles, and when I did I swung my legs off the cockpit seat and stood, swallowing repeatedly to control the nausea. The instruments over the companionway told me we still had five miles to go to the next waypoint, and the wind remained dead up our course at 18-22 knots true (up to 30 knots apparent), with a three-meter swell rolling in from the southern ocean and two-meter waves on top. I hauled myself up onto the cockpit seat and scanned the horizon in all directions. I saw only the heaving dark masses of water against the darker sky, and the flashes of white from the turning crests. I thought I just might make it back to my seat under the dodger without getting sick, but I was wrong.

As with all five of the southern capes we’ve rounded aboard *Hawk*, we were heading in what should have been the right direction – from west to east. But once the summer high pressure systems become established in the Australian bight, the prevailing winds along the southern coast of Australia switch from westerly to easterly. Local sailors and the Pilot Charts agreed we could round Leeuwin and cross the bight on westerly winds when the last of the winter fronts passed through in October or November, but by December the window would slam shut and we could expect almost nonstop easterlies. In early

October, we had arrived in Bunbury, a small port town halfway between Perth and Leeuwin, prepared to wait.

But this is the first time we've ever left somewhere with a mobile phone aboard and so remained in close contact with the friends we left behind. When the first caller expressed surprise that we were still in Bunbury, I told her we might be there for several weeks and said, "It is a Great Cape after all." But after having the same conversation half a dozen times, we began to feel pressured. The breaking point came when we got a forecast for four days of southeast winds of 8-12 knots and our friends Bob and Jacquie called. New cruisers who had left Fremantle aboard their 39-foot sloop, *Isalei-Rua*, the same time as we did, they were waiting at an anchorage a bit further south. "What do you think?" Bob asked.

"It's as good a forecast as you can expect without it being westerly." I knew that if it was westerly it would likely be blowing a gale, and I understood their reluctance to deal with heavy weather around Leeuwin on their first real passage. When Bob told us they were leaving, we decided to leave as well.

On the run across from Bunbury to Cape Naturaliste, the cape about 40 miles due north of Leeuwin, we had absolutely clear skies with a beautiful crescent moon and lots of stars, wind off the beam, and *Hawk* surging along at 8-9 knots. Twelve hours later we rounded our third Great Cape aboard *Hawk*. The white lighthouse stood on a long, narrow projection of rock set out in the midst of a minefield of small islands and submerged reefs – a single low, long finger pointing into the sea with the swell breaking spectacularly all around. Within an hour, the wind had come out of the southeast at 20-25 knots, and the swell was as bad as we've seen, big and confused with two clear wave trains running from southwest and southeast. Just to add to our dismay at the conditions, our windvane rudder chose that moment to snap off.

The next available shelter for *Hawk* lay at Albany, 175 miles to the southeast. If we'd been aboard *Silk*, the 37-foot ketch we circumnavigated in, we wouldn't even have tried to continue. We would have run back around Leeuwin to a safe anchorage. But it's both *Hawk's* blessing and her curse that she sails upwind far better than we do. Now that we had Leeuwin to port, the pressure we'd been feeling for almost a week made the decision for us. Besides, we reasoned, the forecast couldn't be completely wrong. The wind would drop – probably in an hour or so.

Twelve hours later, as *Hawk* slammed down with a force that shook her rigging, I couldn't believe we'd been so stupid. It would have been so much easier to wait for westerly winds. With a full racing crew we might have enjoyed this sailing, and *Hawk* was enjoying it, but we try to avoid these bruising upwind conditions when cruising. We were both feeling battered when we finally dropped the anchor under the sand dunes at Princess Royal Harbour off Albany. Two days later we had westerly winds.

SOUTHWEST CAPE, TASMANIA

Though several other explorers had sailed along the south coast of Tasmania before him, Cook is credited with naming both South and Southwest capes on the southern coast of what was then called Van Diemen's Land in 1777 on his third voyage. Located at 43 degrees South, Tasmania's Southwest cape lies in the Roaring Forties, well to the south of both Hope and Leeuwin. Looking at a map of Tasmania, the southwest corner of the country appears as clenched jaws under a hooked nose. Southwest Cape forms the chin; Port Davey lies inside the jaws. This loch-like inlet stretches some twenty miles inland into a UNESCO World Heritage Site that covers almost one-fifth of the island. We entered Port Davey after a nine-day Southern Ocean passage from Albany, the port we reached after rounding Cape Leeuwin, and left from there to round Southwest Cape.

October 29, 2003: We woke to a peaceful calm despite the 40-knot forecast and decided to see if we could make it around to the D'Entrecasteaux Channel on the south coast of Tasmania. If we found nasty conditions after leaving the sheltered waters of Port Davey, we'd just turn around and anchor in the bulletproof notch north of Schooner Cove near the entrance. We pulled in our stern line, upped anchor and left Horseshoe Inlet. We found calm conditions all the way down Bathurst Channel, and after debating headsail options decided to be conservative and raise the staysail genoa. Upon leaving the channel and coming out behind Breaksea Island, we were both struck by how calm it was compared to when we had entered. There was no white foam on the surface of the water, and the swell wasn't crashing into huge arcs against the rocks in Port Davey.

We had to make it around two big rock stacks called the Pyramids, and we were doing fine until a squall came roaring through shifting the wind by 30 degrees and gusting to 35 knots. I had stayed high enough that we managed to weather the rocks with several hundred yards to spare, but we got a better look than I liked at the surging sea and breaking water at their bases.

We worked our way out of Port Davey, staying under the shelter of the land as long as we could. When we rounded the last headland, we found ourselves sailing along a coastline as rugged and blasted as the area around Golfo de Penas in Chile. For more than a mile offshore, the seas had fragmented the land into low-lying reefs and shoals punctuated by pillars and pyramids of rock some hundred meters or more in height. Behind these, the headlands had been blasted back into organ pipes or polished into bare hummocks of rounded rock with barely a shred of vegetation. Southwest Cape, at the southwest corner of Tasmania, looked like a series of three pyramids, one behind the other, of gray, blasted rock shiny with the rain of the squall we had just weathered and surrounded by the tattered wisps of gray trailing off of their backsides.

The swell running off Southwest Cape was massive and very confused, coming from both the south and the west with other, smaller swells reflecting back off the headland itself. It has always amazed me how rough these "corners" get though it makes perfect sense when one thinks about refraction and reflection, not to mention the effect of sudden shoaling on the continental shelf. We saw a medium-sized trawler, probably fifty feet or so, trying to make its way around the cape in the opposite direction to us. Though we were less than a quarter mile from it, we could only see it about twenty percent of the

time as it bucked and jumped and ploughed into the big waves, weaving its way out toward us and then back in again, trying to find some smoother water.

Once we rounded the Cape, we turned due east, putting the wind on our stern. It now averaged 15 or 20 knots except in the squalls, which dead downwind made for a lot of slamming and banging of the mainsail in the three-meter swell. A huge cloudbank had begun to build to the south and west, the leading edge of a front forecast to come through that evening. We pushed hard to keep our speed up in order to beat the front into a secure anchorage and to arrive during daylight.

It took about three hours to cross the southern coast and reach South Cape, and another hour to pass Southeast Cape, the entrance to D'Entrecasteaux Channel. The clouds had continued to build and were now closing with us, and, in combination with the squalls, had cast the water and sky into tones of pewter and smoke. Looking ashore, there was still absolutely no evidence of human habitation, for the national park system of which Port Davey forms one part extends all the way along the coast we were sailing and includes Southeast Cape. Recherche Bay (pronounced Research by the locals), the first bay up the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, is also part of the park system.

The D'Entrecasteaux Channel wouldn't exist at all if it weren't for Bruny Island. The archipelago at the southwest corner of Tasmania is bracketed on its west side by Southeast Cape and on its east side by the Tasman Peninsula. In between lies Storm Bay, completely open to the Southern Ocean and over thirty kilometers wide. Bruny Island – actually two islands, North and South, connected by a drying bit of land – runs parallel to the main island north of Southeast Cape for over fifty kilometers, defining the west side of Storm Bay and creating a small channel between the island and the mainland. This is the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, and in conjunction with the large inlet created by the Huon River, offers a flat-water, fully protected alternative to the swell-tossed sea of Storm Bay.

Once we were past the reefs and shoals outside of Recherche Bay and had rounded the arm of land at the southern end of South Bruny Island, we left behind the battered headlands, crashing swell and heavily wooded foreshore in what seemed the blink of an eye and were transported to the rolling hills of Scotland with the higher peaks of the mountains behind receding in a blue haze. When we turned into Southport harbor where we intended to spend the night, white houses dotted the shoreline, interspersed between stands of trees that climbed the low hills. The late afternoon light shown golden on the beach as we entered the anchorage on the opposite shore of the harbor from the town, and the swell broke in curling white combers two or three feet high on the point under which we had taken shelter. The air seemed warmer and dryer, and we both started stripping layers off the minute the anchor was secure. I've rarely seen such a transition in land and climate in such a short distance. It seemed as if we'd come through a door, leaving the ravages of winter behind and entering the warmth and security of a woodfire warmed cottage.

SOUTHWEST CAPE, STEWART ISLAND

Stewart Island lies twenty miles south of New Zealand's South Island, a little south of 47 degrees South. Of the five Southern Capes, only Cape Horn reaches further south. It is separated from the mainland by the notorious Foveaux Straits where the gale-force westerly winds of the Southern Ocean encounter a current that can run up to four knots. Early explorers were unsure whether the island was connected to the mainland or not, and some confusion resulted as different explorers gave the same features different names. Cook first called the cape at the bottom of the island South Cape and concluded it was connected to the mainland, though he had earlier thought he'd seen a channel between it and the mainland. In 1808, William Stewart on the *Pegasus* surveyed most of the southern part of the island. He was probably the one who re-named the cape at the bottom of the island Southwest Cape. We sailed there on an overnight sail from Fiordland on the southwest coast of the South Island.

January 24th, 2005: We upped anchor at Pickersgill Harbour in Dusky Sound at 8:30 in the morning. Captain Cook spent a month with the *Resolution* tied to the shore in this cove in 1773. It was a very snug berth with a nice bush walk up to a hanging lake behind the cove. With a 125-mile run to Stewart, we hadn't want to leave first thing in the morning as we would probably then get in before daybreak. But we both expected a slow passage, the norm for this coast to date.

As we came out into the channel the sun broke through in long slanting fingers, contrasting with the darker clouds over the mountains at its head. It took us about two hours to work out the mouth of the harbor into the southwest swell and westerly winds. After that, we were able to sail at an easy 7 or 8 knots under the full main and working jib with the wind and the swell just forward of the beam. The wind wasn't that strong, and it soon began to die as had been forecast. We both thought we'd be motoring soon, but decided to put up the reacher to eke it out for as long as possible. Getting the reacher up was a bit of a challenge since neither of us had our sea legs and the swell was rolling in from the southwest at 2-3 meters. But once we got it hoisted and unfurled, *Hawk* stabilized and took off in the dying breeze. We were once again doing 8 knots or more in 8-10 knots of breeze, despite the large swell, and Beth was down in the galley making bread.

Both of us had anticipated that this would be the toughest bit of a tough coast, that we would probably have to do it in gale-force winds, and that we might have to fight the four knots currents that sweep around the end of Stewart Island. We would never have pictured ourselves sunning in the cockpit and shedding layers until we were down to tee-shirts and light pants, or me baking bread underway, or us galloping along under the reacher.

We could now see the coast from Dusky all the way down to Puseyger Point (pronounced pew-si-ker by the natives), the last "corner" of the west coast of the South Island that marks the beginning of Foveaux Strait. Since we've been listening to the forecasts, Puseyger and Foveaux have had gale force winds three days out of four, and storm force winds one day a week. Our course took us on a slant from Puseyger Point directly to the southwest corner of Stewart Island, well offshore of Foveaux Strait. We planned to pass

under Stewart and come up the east coast from the south, with our first stop at Port Pegasus. This would make the run to Oban on the northeast corner of the island downwind and sheltered. It also had the added benefit of taking us under Stewart Island's Southwest Cape – our fifth and last “Great Cape.”

Since Milford Sound, the northernmost of the fjords, the mountains along the coast had grown gradually less high, and the snow-capped peaks of the interior had retreated further and further inland, until in Dusky they could only be seen in perfect visibility some dozen miles or so beyond the lower mountains that backed Supper and Shark Cove at the head of the sound. Now we could see that the coastline between Dusky and Puseyger Point dropped down to a series of rounded headlands and ridges, then to hump-backed hills rising from a textured lowland of wide valleys, before running out to the point in a long, gradually flattening wedge of land which finally fell to sea level a half mile or so before actually meeting the sea.

The view alone as we sailed past Chalky and Preservation inlets would have been breathtaking, but on top of that everywhere we looked we could see seabirds. And most of what we saw were albatrosses. At any one time there might be a half dozen in sight, along with shearwaters and a few storm and blue petrels. The albatrosses were magnificent in their soaring glides, their pivots over the top of a swell and down into the trough behind, and the dainty way they settled to the water with their wings carved upward in an arc. In flight, their wings seem so incredibly long, especially when one approached the stern and we could see that the wingspan almost matched the width of the boat.

The wind had been steadily increasing, despite the forecast, and we decided we'd best switch back to the jib when it went over 14 knots. Even under the smaller sail, *Hawk* continued to charge along again tossing the swells aside gleefully, throwing little splashes of whitewater over the anchor every once in a while. By 9:30 in the evening the sun was dropping through a layer of clouds, which it had streaked with gold and pink highlights. The setting sun washed the albatrosses in pink and gold, and its long rays highlighted every wave.

An hour later we were closing with the islands and rocks scattered to the east and south of Stewart Island. A full moon had risen, which made it fairly easy to pick out the hazards, and we steered a wide course around them. By sheer luck, we had hit the tide exactly right, and were zooming along with three knots of current at close to 9 knots though the wind had dropped to 8 knots or so. As we rounded Southwest Cape our course turned dead downwind. The next five miles, until we got into the island's lee enough to escape the swell, were quite roly, but at least the current was still with us. We finally ran into smoother water and started looking for the landmarks that would lead us into Port Pegasus. It was one in the morning, with a bright full moon shining.

Port Pegasus consists of a large inlet filled with a dozen islands the largest of which divide it into two arms, North and South Arm. These each have half a dozen small coves with interesting anchorages. The only problem with our night landfall was the plethora

of little islands and littler rocks to be found not just in the various corners of these little coves but also right out in the middle of the inlet. We had decided to run into South Arm through Boat Passage to Evening Cove, this being the clearest of dangers and ending in a large, open bay with 8-10 meters of water, shallow enough for anchoring. With the radar, the GPS, and the full moon, finding and running down the narrow passage proved pretty straightforward. But after we rounded the islands in the middle of South Arm, Beth gave me the next course to steer and I pointed out to her that this would take us right into the side of a rock headland. We maneuvered our way around this obstacle and the island that followed, which the GPS also wanted us to go through, and found ourselves in 25 foot depths surrounded by mirror-calm silver water, low hills, and black islets. We dropped the anchor, made sure we were secure, and headed down below to climb into bed.

We woke the next morning a bit after 7:00 and went on deck to a scene that reminded us of Newfoundland or the Outer Hebrides. We were surrounded by low hills covered with a mixture of knee high scrub punctuated by odd mounds that jutted up unexpectedly and ended in great domes of granite rock. Most of these were less than 1,000 feet high, though some might have reached 2,000 feet or so. Not a breath stirred the water, and shore and sky were perfectly reflected. The beauty was dazzling. Our Kiwi friends spoke of the fjords with a mixture of awe and respect, but they spoke of Stewart Island with real affection. That morning we could see why.

Cape Horn

Well, you know by now that we made it around Cape Horn, speaking the naval station at 1330 local time on December 14th. And we had good weather, except for about six hours, long enough to feel as if we were really at Cape Horn and had worked hard to get there. And we were away from Puerto Williams for less than sixty hours, a record by the standards of our friends that have rounded. Some of them waited twice that long in Puerto Toro or Caleta Martial for a decent weather window. So you could assumed that we had an uneventful and very successful rounding, that we might have even dubbed it a “piece of cake.” Nothing could be further from the truth. However, the difficulties, with the single exception of the weather, came not from the sailing but from a variety of quite unexpected sources, and this story is one of being in the wrong place at the right time or perhaps the right place at the wrong time.

To put the story in perspective, I need to lay out the mechanics of the modern Cape Horn rounding. In order to go around the Horn (as opposed to “rounding the Horn” – sailing nonstop from 50 degrees South to 50 degrees South from one side of South America to the other), we had to have a “zarpe” (cruising permit) from the Armada (Chilean Navy) that specified exactly which channels we were allowed to navigate through and where we were allowed to stop. The route the Armada approves for yachts like *Hawk* involves sailing east down the Beagle to the end of Isla Navarino, the large island on which Puerto Williams is located, then stopping in Puerto Toro at the eastern end of the island to wait for weather before crossing the infamous Bahia Nassau. This shallow bay separates the Wollaston Islands, the eroded peaks of the otherwise submerged Andes range south of Navarino, from the rest of the archipelago of mountainous islands lying south of the South American mainland. Isla Hornos and its more famous headland, Cabo de Hornos, lies at the southernmost extreme of this island group.

From Puerto Toro, our zarpe specified that we would sail almost due south past the length of Isla Wollaston before turning into one of two channels leading to the smaller Isla Herschel where we

were permitted to anchor in the northernmost harbor on the east side of the island, Caleta Martial. Here we would wait for weather to make the thirty mile roundtrip south to Isla Hornos, around the island and back to Martial. Then we were to proceed back to the Beagle, with a stop at one of two anchorages among the islands at the mouth of the channel – Islas Lennox or Picton – or at Puerto Toro before continuing back to Puerto Williams. Most of these legs are about thirty miles, though the Bahia Nassau crossing from Puerto Toro to Caleta Martial is somewhat longer – about forty-five miles.

The entire Wollaston group is now a national park, and we would be in radio contact with the Armada throughout. Chilean naval ships cruise the area almost constantly and cruise and tour ships call at Cape Horn several times a week. All in all, not exactly the adventure it used to be in the days of the great Clipper ships. But having gotten this far – not once, but twice – we both felt compelled to do it, in large part because so many people already assumed we had gone around Cape Horn LAST year!

So, my story starts not with leaving Puerto Williams or preparing the boat, nor even with the Armada or the zarpe, but goes back several days before we did any of those things and begins with our batteries. Our batteries have been dying a slow death these last few months as we have been making our way down the channels. They were purchased six years ago and have been on active duty aboard the boat for four and a half. Most deep-cycle batteries have a five or six year life, so we knew they would need to be replaced in the next year or so. Evans tested them before we left Puerto Montt and they seemed fine, so we decided we would rather replace them in Australia where we knew we could properly dispose of the old batteries. But the last week or so of our passage south, they had been unable to crank the engine over after a day's sailing with the electric autopilot.

Evans spent much of the week after we arrived trying to “recondition” the batteries, but to no avail. Five or six hours of computer usage was enough to flatten the batteries completely. After that week, we knew we had to find some way to get new batteries before we set off on the Southern Ocean passage. So before we could begin thinking seriously about the Horn, we needed to find out IF we could get batteries delivered here to Puerto Williams, and, if so, make the necessary arrangements. Luckily, Tony and Suzanne on *So Long* had contact information for Gambi, a battery supply company in Puerto Montt, but it still took several days to organize. By Thursday the 12th of December, we had ordered a set of batteries and arranged shipping, including finding an address where the batteries could be sent here in Puerto Williams. The only thing that remained was to transfer funds to Gambi's account. Again we were in luck. The Banco de Chile – the only bank in Puerto Williams – just happened to be the bank where the company had its accounts.

So first thing Thursday morning we were in the Banco de Chile attempting to transfer money from Evans's credit card to Gambi's bank account. The teller had taken all of Evans's information and then spent the next half hour talking to Santiago trying to get an authorization number. He had just hung up and told us, “They will call me back in fifteen minutes,” when two young men entered the bank.

We had seen these two at the *Micalvi*, the half-sunken supply ship that serves as the Puerto Williams yacht club. They had arrived a few days before on two kayaks from Ushuaia, and we had heard they were trying to get permission to kayak around Cape Horn. We quickly fell into conversation with Giuseppe, the taller of the two and the one with some English. Giuseppe had spent a considerable amount of time kayaking in remote and dangerous areas including Greenland, Iceland, northern Canada and northern Europe. He was in his early twenties, tall and

gangly, still growing into his powerful body, with a shock of unkempt dark hair and soulful, brown eyes. Fabio was slighter of body and lighter of coloring, similar in build to Evans. He was about the same age as Giuseppe, but he spoke almost no English. Giuseppe told us that Fabio had done even more extensive and remote kayaking trips than himself and had hiked over the Greenland ice cap – a three-month excursion. Both of them were from Italy, and while Giuseppe spoke some English and some Spanish, Fabio spoke only Italian and French.

Despite their impressive resumes, I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to kayak around the Horn. At their campsite near the *Micalvi*, we had seen that they could land the kayaks almost anywhere, and we had been impressed with their professional tents and sleeping bags and the small solar panel that recharged the batteries in their handheld radio and GPS. Most of the trip would be sheltered – in the Beagle channel and in the Wollaston Islands – except for the twenty-plus miles of unavoidable open water crossing Bahia Nassau and, of course, the trip around Isla Hornos itself. Because it is so shallow, Bahia Nassau has a nasty reputation in the strong winds that so frequently blow across it. Short, steep, breaking waves quickly develop when the wind goes to gale- or storm-force, and after a wind shift the bay is known for very confused and dangerous seas. Given the difficulty of predicting the weather, kayaking across this seemed like a very serious undertaking. At the speed of kayaks in the open ocean, it would take these two some eight to ten hours to cross that treacherous body of water – plenty of time down here for a bit of unexpected bad weather to catch them out.

We continued to chat while we waited and I asked Giuseppe about how difficult it was to get permission from the Armada to kayak around the Horn. He was somewhat evasive and it was only then I realized they had flown into Ushuaia without knowing they would need permission from Chile to execute their plan. We got interrupted then when Fabio got to the head of the line and wasn't allowed to change his US\$50 because the minimum was \$100. Evans ended up changing \$100 with the teller and then changing their \$50 for them. Sometime during the course of the chatting, they found out we were planning to zarpe for the Horn soon. Giuseppe said, "The Armada wants us to have someone on radio watch when we cross Bahia Nassau. Would you be willing to do that?"

Evans said, "We still don't know exactly when we're going or when we'll reach Bahia Nassau, but if we're there the same time you are, we'd be happy to listen out for you and relay messages if you need it." Giuseppe took our boat name and Evans's name while we confusedly tried to compare schedules to see if we might be at Bahia Nassau at the same time, but just then the teller called us into another office and we said a rushed goodbye.

In the office, Evans had to talk to a representative from Citibank in New York City before we were finally able to complete our transaction. After another half hour, our hard-won deposit slip in hand, we went around to the phone office to fax a copy of the slip to Gambi so they would ship our batteries. But Gambi's fax machine was out of order and it was another hour before we had spoken to them on the phone and they had confirmed the transfer on the Internet and promised our batteries would go out on the ferry the following Monday the 16th. "They arrive to Punta Arenas on December 20th and maybe go to Puerto Williams on the 21st," they told us. Satisfied, we started back to the boat having spent the whole morning on the transfer of money.

"So, what do you think about getting our zarpe today?" Evans asked.

"Not today," I said. "I need to do some provisioning, and we need to see Juan to make sure he knows when to expect the batteries."

“Okay. How about tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” I agreed.

We had already been in the wrong place at the right time and we didn’t even know it.

On Friday morning we went in to the Port Captain’s office to arrange our zarpe for the Horn. The whole process took several hours, and in the middle of it we had to go back to the bank to pay for our time tied up to the *Micalvi*. When they handed over the stamped and signed zarpe, big black letters across the bottom said, “Viernes el 13 de Diciembre 2002” – Friday, the 13th of December, 2002. Until that moment it hadn’t occurred to me that we were clearing to leave port on a Friday – something ancient sea lore claims will bring bad luck on the voyage – and a Friday the 13th at that. I didn’t say anything to Evans – we’ve finessed the Friday thing before by anchoring out before really leaving (not that we’re the least bit superstitious) and I was quite certain we would be anchored in Puerto Toro that evening. But I did feel a bit uneasy...

After a few last minute errands including a quick visit to Juan to tell him about the arrangements with the batteries, we returned to *Hawk* and made the last few preparations for leaving. We had two French charter boats tied up outside of us, and the skipper of the one closest was not aboard but had promised to be back by noon. As it was, he was on the boat by 11:30, and with a whole contingent of hands on the *Micalvi* to help, we untied our docklines and then slipped out of the raft as the two boats outside of us were pulled in to the dock. Reinhardt and Marlene on the German boat *Adio* wished us a good trip and we said we’d see them again in a week or two. Then Evans took us out toward the Beagle Channel while I coiled lines and put away fenders.

We found light northwest winds in the Beagle, a promising start. A perfect Horn rounding would start with moderate northwest winds to take the boat eastward down the Beagle and then south across Bahia Nassua to the Wollastons. The wind would shift to moderate southwesterlies just as the boat passed under Isla Hornos and then blow southwest while the boat ran back to the north to reach the Beagle Channel. Boats can get back to the Beagle on almost any strength wind from a westerly quadrant, though it may be a close reach and quite uncomfortable in a moderate to strong northwest. But getting to the Wollastons against a strong southwest wind can be difficult or even impossible.

The fax from the night before had not been that promising – a deep low pressure system was supposed to go by to the south of us in the next twelve hours and it would probably bring strong southwest winds. The barometer had been dropping for almost eighteen hours, and was now below 990 millibars – hurricane low anywhere else in the world. But Evans had been talking to the charter boat captains, many of whom do this voyage not once but a dozen times in a season. They said the faxes didn’t show the short weather windows that could be used to get down to the Horn, and it was impossible to tell what it was doing in Bahia Nassau from Puerto Williams. Almost no matter what the fax said, the charter boats went to Puerto Toro, and if the wind was favorable they continued on to the Wollastons.

We were soon sailing down the Beagle under the jib alone, enjoying typical Beagle weather – bright sunshine with fast-moving, fluffy, white clouds and 15-20 knots of wind that came at one moment from the northwest and the next from the north, but remained favorable. It was a lovely day to be out and surprisingly warm. I had put on my thinnest thermal underwear and had splash gear over that and was still too warm as we made our way west through an area that had become familiar in every detail last year. After passing Isla Gable where Leigh and I spent so many

pleasurable hours birding, I said to Evans, “So, are you excited about going to the Horn? Does this feel like a big deal?”

“Not really,” he said. “I feel the same way as I did last year, that the real achievement was getting to the Beagle. But I also feel like we can’t NOT do it. I think this is the first time we’ve done something in our sailing careers not because we wanted to but because we felt we had to.”

I nodded. Having carefully studied the chart over the last few days, I was struck by how arbitrary the designation of Cape Horn as the bottom of South America seemed. Long before we started thinking about coming down here, I had pictured Cape Horn as a towering cape at the bottom of a massive continent, surrounded by crashing waves in splendid isolation, a fitting marker for the transition from one ocean to another. In fact, a number of small islands lie west of the Wollaston group and almost as far south as Isla Hornos, and the Diego Ramirez Islands lie some forty-five miles south and west of Cape Horn. Boats “rounding the Horn” usually pass to the north of these, the true southern tip of the drowned Andes. Yet I didn’t completely share Evans’s feelings. Though over the last few days I had found myself thinking that rounding this small island seemed not so much a milestone to be celebrated as a box to be checked, now I found myself feeling both excited and a little anxious about seeing firsthand the headland that has figured so prominently in so many sailing stories. It did feel like a big deal to me, all of the sudden. And I wasn’t sure I was ready for it.

After another few hours of typical channels weather with the wind gusting over thirty knots where it funneled out of the harbors to the north of us, we suddenly sailed into a calm area. We were still several miles west of the end of Isla Navarino, near the lighthouse on Isla Snipe, one of the Chilean naval stations we had to report to in the Beagle. We decided to furl the jib and motor around the corner to where we expected to find more wind. Evans went down to start the engine, but again our batteries proved too weak to turn the engine over. With both battery banks and the engine in neutral, the batteries just managed to grind the motor into life. When Evans came up from below he looked grim, and I knew he was weighing the risks of continuing with unreliable batteries.

As we came around the end of Isla Navarino, the wind filled in again from the northwest and we were able to roll out the jib and motor sail at 8 knots. We were a few miles from Puerto Toro and the decision was at hand. I looked at Evans. “What do you think?”

“I think we’ve got northwest wind and we should make the most of it,” he answered. “What do you think?”

“I think we should stop,” I told him. “You know that when the barometer starts to rise down here it generally blows like crazy out of the southwest. I don’t want to be out there when that happens, and the barometer can’t go much lower.”

“On the fax last night it looked as if we’d get west winds after the front went through, and not too strong at that,” Evans reminded me. “But if we get strong southwest winds, we can turn back and run in to Puerto Toro.” When this trip had still been an abstraction, we had talked of trying to do the whole thing nonstop. I had forgotten that discussion, but Evans hadn’t. “We agreed before we left that if we had favorable wind here we would continue. What’s the matter?”

“I’m scared,” I admitted. “I’m scared of this trip, scared of Cape Horn. And I’m worried about the barometer and I’m worried about our batteries.”

“The batteries will be all right so long as we don’t use the autopilot,” Evans said. “The engine started fine when we were leaving Puerto Williams this morning.”

I thought he was right, but I couldn’t leave it at that, not on a trip to Cape Horn. “I’ll feel better if you talk this through with me. What are we going to do if the batteries won’t start the engine while we’re down there?” I asked.

Evans’s answer mirrored my own thinking. “We can sail into Puerto Toro or into Caleta Martial and anchor – they’re both open with no dangers. We could probably re-charge the batteries with the wind generator, but if not we can sail off the anchor in either harbor – the prevailing westerly winds will carry us out of the harbor safely. We’re not going to do anything to put ourselves in harm’s way, even if that means sailing back to Puerto Williams on a favorable wind without having gone around the Horn.”

Evans’s answers all made logical sense, but they didn’t assuage the uneasy feeling I had. I couldn’t share with him my last reservation – I hadn’t intended to make this crossing on Friday the 13th. I now realized I had not yet mentally prepared myself for this trip, assuming I would have several days in Puerto Toro to reassure myself that *Hawk* and I were as ready as we could be for whatever we might have to deal with. But Evans was right – we had exactly the wind we would be looking for if we waited, and there wasn’t really anything I needed to do to prepare *Hawk*. She was ready, and so was Evans. “Okay,” I said finally. “But we turn around if the wind shifts, right?”

“Right,” Evans said.

With twelve miles still to go, just over halfway across the open waters of Bahia Nassau, the wind shifted. It did so almost instantaneously, with no warning, swinging from northwest to southwest in the space of several fitful gusts, each stronger than the last. In a matter of less than a minute we went from running to beating, from twelve knots of apparent wind to over thirty. By the time we had furled in half the jib and sheeted it in as tightly as we could, the waves rolling up behind us had been whipped into a confused mass of heaving water by the change in the wind direction and were already starting to crash aboard as *Hawk*’s bow ploughed down into the random holes being torn into the surface of the sea.

I had talked to dad just an hour or so earlier, when the Wollaston group stood out on the horizon as a cluster of serrated black teeth against a smoke gray sky backed by the blindingly bright glaciers and snow fields of the Cordillera Darwin. We had just been leaving the sheltered Paso Goree between Isla Navarino and Isla Lennox and heading out into the open waters of Bahia Nassau. I had told him we were on our way but would turn back if the wind shifted. An hour before that, at 1430, I had spoken to Puerto Toro and told them the same thing, giving an ETA at Caleta Martial of 2230 if we didn’t turn back.

But the wind had waited to shift until we were past the halfway point, more than doubling the psychological barrier to turning around. And *Hawk* didn’t seem to be having any problems motor sailing into the wind and waves. After our northbound voyage last year, we had plenty of experience powering into strong winds. With the furled jib and the engine, *Hawk* was hardly laboring, though the confused seas were making it wet on deck, throwing up big gouts of spray that sheeted across the hard dodger obliterating the view. Evans and I stood under the dodger, out of the spray, feeling *Hawk*’s motion as she dealt with the increasingly confused seas.

Evans went below to check the barometer, and when he came back he said, “It’s skipping up.” This happens when the pressure changes so fast that the line on our electronic barometer goes nearly vertical and the breaks into a series of slashes. Not a good sign. I didn’t suggest turning back, though the thought was certainly in my mind. I wanted Evans to make the decision.

I had started dinner fifteen minutes before the wind shift, and by the time it was ready I was well on my way to being seasick. The chicken parmesan turned out to be pretty horrible anyway – the chicken had spent far too long in the freezer in Puerto Williams and was dry and tough. Evans managed to get his down but I threw mine away after the first few bites left me gagging. I regretted tossing it over the side – I hadn’t had anything to eat since breakfast, and now I wondered when I might get to eat next. But my stomach was rebelling against the thought of food, so I really didn’t feel hungry.

Over the next hour, the wind continued to increase and we furling in more and more of the jib. The seas became even more confused and began catching us on the beam with solid smacks every few minutes. But we were still managing six knots toward our waypoint at the mouth of the channel leading to Caleta Martial, and the islands had grown larger and larger until now they covered the western horizon. The wind had increased to a steady 40 knots apparent, and the waves had grown much bigger but still remained steep. Every few minutes, *Hawk* would plunge her bow into two or three waves in a row, almost stopping our forward progress, before she would regain her momentum and the boat speed would climb back to five knots. Evans could see how worried I was, and to reassure me he said, “We’ll be in the lee of the islands in just a few more miles. We should get some protection there from both the waves and the wind.” I nodded but didn’t say anything. The only things I could think of to say sounded too much like ‘I told you so.’

It seemed to take forever to work our way in toward the islands. It reminded me of the previous year when we were trying to get into the Beagle Channel and every time we looked at the boat speed and our distance, we still had an hour to go. The distance decreased at a snail’s pace, and with it our boat speed. But we were both drawn by the promise of a protected lee and kept doggedly onward. To our dismay, the wind continued to increase, now blowing a steady 40-45 knots dead up our course. We were down to no more than five or six turns of the jib rolled out and sheeted in as flat and tight as we could sheet it – that and the motor were keeping us moving forward at 4-5 knots about 30 degrees off the wind most of the time. Several times we talked about alternate sail combinations. We had the trysail hanked on and ready to fly, but we both thought that would be too much sail area for so much wind. The staysail could not be sheeted as flat as we had the jib sheeted, and as it was our full-size staysail hanked to the stay, not our storm jib, it was significantly larger than the small amount of jib we had out. “The only sail we might be able to use is our ‘hurricane jib’,” Evans said. “And I don’t think it would do any better than the furled jib.” But the forces on the rig were tremendous, as became obvious whenever we pinched up too high and the sail started to luff. We could feel the rigging shaking all the way back in the cockpit.

When the apparent wind hit 50 knots in a gust, Evans yelled, “Welcome to Cape Horn weather!”

We were now in the lee of the island and did seem to have some protection from the waves, though just three or four miles offshore they were being blown up into five and six foot high coaming breakers that thudded into our bow several times a minute. Unfortunately, there didn’t seem to be any less wind in the lee of the land – if anything it seemed as if the low, canalized contours of the island focused and accelerated the wind, so it came in sudden great gusts that picked up the tops of the waves and sent them cartwheeling downwind behind us. The surface of

the water was churned into seething masses of dark blue covered with white runnels of spindrift; when a gust tore the top off a wave it left behind a long, green tear in the water's surface that quickly dissolved in white foam.

By then, we had finally closed enough with the islands to get a good look at the pass we were making for, and as I stared out across the torn water, I saw that the entire pass was covered with what looked like gray smoke. Evans and I had last seen that when we were running to Puerto Williams from Caleta Olla, and then it had signaled winds of fifty knots and more. I pointed it out to Evans. "It's windier up there," I said.

Twenty minutes later, we reached that wind line, the wind jumped up to a steady 50 knots and it became impossible to see anything at all. Evans was at the helm, and the blowing salt spray coated his glasses in seconds. "I can't see the instruments," he shouted. "Call wind angles for me." So I started shouting wind angles from under the edge of the hard dodger at the top of my lungs while he tried to steer the boat as close to the wind as possible. So long as the wind stayed below about 52 knots, we could make headway 35 or 40 degrees off the wind. But when the wind gusted up to 55 and above, we were blown sideways at 50 and 60 degrees to the wind, and the engine simply couldn't hold the bow up. About that time, the prop started to cavitate, freewheeling between the waves with a loud metallic clatter that sounded as if it were about to fall off the boat. Whenever that happened, Evans had to put the engine in neutral and then re-engage it, and in the meantime we were blown downwind sideways.

Several times I went below to check our position on the chart, check the barometer or add fuel to the day tank. I was dismayed to see all the books from my nav station thrown out of their shelves and scattered across the cabin sole. Everything else below seemed in reasonable condition. I studied the chart on one of these occasions, trying to find an alternative to beating our way into this narrow channel. South of Isla Freycinet, the island just off our starboard bow, I saw a much wider channel leading in to Isla Herschel and Caleta Martial. But like the channel we were trying to beat into, it ran from southwest to northeast, and I didn't know if it would be better or worse than where we were. When I went up on deck again, I asked Evans what he thought. "I don't know. The wind will be blowing straight up just like here, and I don't think we can make the angle to get into Martial from there."

Somewhere around this time when I was close enough to hear him Evans said quietly, "You were right." He didn't need to say what I had been right about. But his admission made me realize that I was getting close to the end of my reserves. The next time the prop cavitated I shouted to him over the roar of the wind, "This isn't working. We're not going to make it. We have to turn back."

Evans shouted, "Don't give up on me now! Just hold on. I want to try tacking up into the bay to the north of us and see if we can get out of the wind." That bay, I had noted when I went down below the last time, was called Bahia Scourfield. I thought it didn't sound promising.

But I gritted my teeth and said, "Okay." We tacked and got the jib sheeted in, but found the waves so much worse on this tack that we couldn't make headway more than 55 degrees to the wind. There was supposed to be another anchorage in the northwest corner of Bahia Scourfield, but almost as soon as we tacked we saw the gray smoke coming straight down out of the fjord where the anchorage lay. I didn't need to tell Evans we couldn't get up there. He worked his way as far up into the bay as he could with the wind blowing steadily at more than 50 knots, and then we were hit by a gust that laid our lee rail right in the water and seethed halfway up the

sidedeck while heeling us to more than forty degrees. The prop freewheeled again and as Evans put the engine in neutral I looked up at the wind instruments to see 60 knots apparent registered.

By now my teeth were chattering so hard I could hardly call the wind angles to Evans. In the excitement and adrenaline of the last few hours, I had forgotten that I was dressed for a sixty degree day in the Beagle. The temperature had dropped twenty degrees since the wind had come out of the south, and the flying spray had soaked my hair and my face. The wind chill was certainly below freezing and the cold felt bone deep and sapped whatever strength had been keeping me going. The fact that I'd had nothing to eat in over twelve hours didn't help. My voice quavered as tears pricked at my eyes.

"Don't give up on me yet," Evans yelled again. "Please. Give me one more tack." We tacked once more and were almost making the course, but the waves set us hobby horsing until we came to a standstill. Part of me that still cared was enthralled by Evans's blind tenacity, by the incredible stubborn streak he has shown so many times but that this time just couldn't overcome 50-60 knots of wind straight up our course. He just wouldn't give up. When the prop cavitated again, I said, "We're not going to make it. We have to turn back."

"Come on! We're okay! What is it that you're afraid of?" he yelled.

I yelled right back, putting all of the raw emotion I'd bottled up since the wind had shifted into my voice. "I'm afraid that we're doing serious damage to the engine with the prop cavitating. I'm afraid the furler might break and the rig might come down. I'm afraid one of us could get hypothermic. Even if we get to your waypoint, we still have four miles tacking up a narrow channel dead into this wind. We can't make it. We have to turn back."

It was as if a switch turned in Evans' brain and he saw what he was doing and that it would never work. "Okay!" he yelled as he turned the helm. "I'm turning around and we'll run off."

Within seconds the whole world became manageable. We furled in the last of the jib and put the engine in neutral, and then we were running quietly at almost six knots under bare poles with the wind on the quarter and the autopilot steering. The relief that flooded me felt warm as bathwater. I certainly wasn't looking forward to another four hours or so running in what were certain to be really nasty waves when we got out from under the lee of the island, but that seemed nothing compared to what we had just been through. The triumphant relief turned to bitter disappointment almost instantaneously when I realized that I would never be able to convince myself to make this trip again.

Evans had gone below, telling me to keep an eye on things. A few minutes later he came back up. "There's got to be a way not to give up our westing," he said, and I knew he hadn't stopped trying even now. "Do you think we could get the trysail up and heave to on it?" I looked at the wind instruments that still showed apparent winds in the high forties and tried to picture getting the sail up. But the truth was that I was done. I had nothing more to give. I just wanted to be safe and sheltered again. Evans answered his own question. "No, no – it's too much sail. Maybe the hurricane jib." He disappeared down below and I thought he was going to get our littlest jib. But a few minutes later he called up to me. "Can you come down here?"

I went down to find Evans at the nav station with one of our sailing guides open. "There are two anchorages at the north of Wollaston Island." He pointed to a large bay just under the northern tip of the island. "Caleta Middle looks like it could have severe rachas. But this one," his finger

moved to the next bay to the south, “is supposed to be good in any westerly winds. What do you think about trying to get to one or the other?”

Hope surged. If we could just get sheltered, we could let the wind blow itself out. We were here, after all, less than fifteen miles north of Cape Horn. I quickly read the descriptions in the guide. The southern anchorage looked much less exposed in these winds, and it was only about eight miles away. It was now 2130, but we had another hour before the sunset and another forty minutes after that before it would get dark. “Let’s try for Bahia Alsina,” I said.

Back in the cockpit, we turned toward the north tip of the island and found we could still sail bare poled 70 degrees off the wind, making good about five knots over the bottom. As we were blown north, the island came out to meet us in a couple of long peninsulas, and in the lee of these we finally found some relief from both the waves and the wind. But when we crossed the large bays in between, the wind again cut the water into gray smoke, and though we never saw sixty knots apparent again that night, we did see fifty a few more times.

As we approached Bahia Alsina, we both worried that the wind would be funneling out of it and we wouldn’t be able to beat our way in against it. We passed close under the headland on the southern side of the anchorage, trying to stay in its lee as long as possible. When we came out into the open water of the bay, we found the wind ruffling the surface in white bands that indicated gusts of twenty-five or thirty knots – nothing at all after the last few hours. But we also found ourselves motoring through a barrier of kelp some hundred yards across blocking the entrance. The guide had warned about this, and we knew there was no way around it. So Evans just powered through, heading for the areas where the kelp seemed thinnest. When we had made our way through that, the slow motor to the head of the three-mile deep bay seemed to take forever. I was now too cold to be aware of it, but exhaustion and reaction to the last few hours had set in. I could hardly find the energy to get the anchor untied and set up to run.

The further we went into the bay, the more the wind slackened until we found ourselves approaching a set of awesomely high cliffs rising straight out of the water on three sides. The bay was totally open to the east, and despite all the westerly wind that night a swell was working its way in, leaving *Hawk* rolling slightly as Evans shifted into neutral. At the head of the bay we trolled back and forth looking for the thirty foot depths the guide had promised, but the bottom seemed to be absolutely flat right to the cliffs, and sixty-five feet deep. Evans finally found a spot he liked and I dropped the anchor and let the chain run out, sending 250 feet over the side. When we came to rest, we could hear the wind howling in the cliffs above us, but *Hawk* got no more than the occasional gust, like a sneeze across the harbor. Other than those gusts, what little wind we had was actually out of the east – go figure...

Evans turned off the engine and came back on deck to make sure we were positioned so we couldn’t swing into anything. As I started back toward the cockpit, I heard a sudden low rumble that built and built until I could feel it in my chest. Truly frightened, I searched the high cliffs towering over us, certain we were about to see an avalanche of terrifying proportions. But then the sound died away, leaving me confused and anxious. “What was it?” I asked Evans as I reached the cockpit.

“I don’t know,” he answered. But then it started again and we both looked at each other wide-eyed. I scanned the walls surrounding us and just as I saw it Evans pointed it out. A twenty foot wide crack in the cliff face rose from below sea level to at least a hundred feet high, and the sound corresponded to the swell rising in front of it. The cave echoed and amplified the sound of

the water inside it, producing a rumble like thunder. We both felt better the moment we figured it out.

By the time we got down below it was 2330 and we were both exhausted, soaking wet and freezing cold. I was just about to strip out of my wet clothes when I remembered that we needed to call Wollaston Radio. I sat down at the nav desk and put in the call. "Wollaston Radio, Wollaston Radio, Wollaston Radio. Yate *Hawk, Hawk*." No answer. I waited for close to a minute, then reached to put the mike back and turn off the radio. Just then I heard, "Yate *Houck*, Wollaston Radio." We switched to Channel 14 and I identified us and told him we'd tried to go to Caleta Martial but hadn't been able to; that we were now anchored in Bahia Alsina. I was very tired and my Spanish wasn't up to much. He asked for the boat name, and I spelled it phonetically. Then he said something about a "llamada" and a "senal" but I couldn't follow him. He sounded concerned so I told him we were totally fine and that we would talk in the morning. Before he let me go, he wanted to know the color of our hull and the length of our boat, not things we are usually asked. The conversation seemed a bit odd, but I attributed that to the fact that we'd had to detour to an unapproved anchorage.

For the second time we had been in the right place at the wrong time, but we were not to know that for another ten hours or so.

We had left the motor running while I used the radio, still uncertain how bad the batteries actually were and whether or not they'd start the boat in the morning. After I finished, we stripped off our soaking wet clothes and put on some dry ones, then turned everything off on the boat at the circuit breakers to be sure we didn't use any power over night. Evans turned off the engine and we used flashlights to find our way into the forepeak bunk.

Only when I got into bed did I realize how thoroughly chilled I had become. Despite the two wool blankets, the down comforter and the two layers of clothes I'd put on, I couldn't stop shivering. I lay there listening to the wind in the cliffs high overhead, a low moan punctuated by an occasional banshee-like wail, and felt grateful to be in a safe anchorage and out of the maelstrom of flying water we had been in earlier. I reached up and touched *Hawk*'s mast, truly grateful for her strength and for her ability to take the incredible punishment we had inflicted on her. Before I fell into a fitful doze, I thought how glad I was that Evans had not, in the end, given up, that we were now safely anchored in the archipelago that included Isla Hornos.

Neither of us slept much Friday night. Evans got up several times to check the boat, and I tossed and turned trying to get warm then woke in the early hours of the morning feeling feverish and queasy. *Hawk* rolled gently in the swell coming into the anchorage which I decided was making me seasick. We had set our alarms for 0500, not wanting to spend any more time in an unauthorized anchorage than necessary. When we climbed out of bed on Saturday morning, we found a whole different world from the previous night. A pale gray, cloudless sky was brightening towards blue, and the sea visible out the mouth of the anchorage looked absolutely placid. There was no sound of wind in the cliffs – no sound of wind at all.

I felt very ill – my stomach was upset, my head hurt, I had an earache and a sore throat. I managed to get myself out of bed but I wasn't operating on more than half my normal energy level. I pattered around cleaning up the books on the cabin sole, re-stowing the fridge and making breakfast, but when Evans came down to eat I couldn't get myself to touch my cereal. The day before I had had mild diarrhea, and now I had a much more severe bout. Evans was concerned. "You're not eating?" I told him I didn't feel well. "You have to eat something. You

didn't eat all day yesterday." I knew he was right, but thought I would get sick if I tried. Still, I put milk on my cereal and went out into the cockpit where the roll felt less pronounced and the bright beauty of the morning cheered me. I was amazed at the anchorage – absolutely sheer cliffs of vertically-striated brown rock rising directly from the water to at least five hundred feet. Beyond the cliffs, we could just see the rim of stunted trees receding toward the top of the island.

While I ate slowly, Evans checked the boat thoroughly looking for any problems from our wild night. He came back to the cockpit carrying a thin blue line. "The messenger for the spinnaker halyard chafed through in the middle of all that last night," he told me, showing me the coiled blue nylon line flecked with white the thickness of twine but much tougher. "We are incredibly lucky it didn't get foul the propeller."

By the time I had gotten some food into my stomach and spent some time on deck, I was starting to recover. We decided to head for the approved anchorage south of us, Caleta Martial, and if the weather was right continue on around Isla Herschel and down to the Horn. Evans started the engine, which, to our relief, turned right over without the slightest hiccup. We put up the mainsail and motored out, but there was no wind at all and we continued under power toward the southern end of the island.

This was the first chance I had had to really look at these islands. With the exception of the harbor we had just left, most of the island was low and eroded, covered with wind carved canyons running out to flat, sea level valleys that already appeared to be slipping under the waves. A thin layer of dirt offered a livelihood to a few scrubby Antarctic beech trees and some wiry looking grass wherever the contours of the land created a small lee. These islands were not nearly as rugged and rocky as the area around Brecknock. It felt as if they had already lost the battle against wind and rain, the mighty ridges of rock had already been reduced to dust, and all that was left were not the peaks of the once mighty mountains, but their bases now turned into canting headlands and soon to be sea. Indeed, a fine black dust covered the boat, some of the island's remaining topsoil carried away by last night's winds.

Only in a few places, like the cliffs under which we had anchored the night before, was there any remnant of the solid rock that still formed the backbone of these islands. Again, unlike Brecknock where it felt as if the bones of the continent had been laid bare, here it felt as if those bones had already been ground to dust and all that remained was the occasional joint or knobby protrusion, too tough to have so far succumbed. If Brecknock feels to me like the uttermost part of the world, these islands felt as if they had gone beyond this world altogether and now existed in an afterworld, mere ghosts of what they had once been. As we motored down the side of Isla Wollaston, Evans said, "You can really believe there's nothing at all beyond these islands, that we have indeed reached the end of the continent." It was true. We could almost feel the open ocean south of the Horn and the cold wastes of Antarctica beyond.

After the tension and fear of the night before, I could hardly believe we were motoring along in a dead, flat calm with the temperature climbing and nothing wrong with the world. That was soon to change.

We passed the headlands that had sheltered us the night before and then motored across Bahia Scourfield, now placid and benign. We passed the area where we had spent at least two hours the night before tacking back and forth and entered the narrow channel down which the wind had howled and the water had smoked. It all seemed surreal to me, this total contrast between less than twelve hours ago and now, as we motored past large rafts of becalmed Giant Petrels and Black-browed albatrosses. The vistas in the utter clarity of the morning air were ever-changing

and strikingly beautiful – low rocks covered with mussels and kelp fronting the eroded brown hills of these dying islands.

“What do you think?” Evans asked.

“The wind’s pretty light,” I answered. “But I don’t think we could ask for a better day to see the Horn.” Evans popped down below and activated a new route in the GPS. This would take us around the top of Isla Herschel and into Bahia San Francisco on a southeast heading for Isla Hornos. Then we would pass under the famous island, close by Cape Horn, before turning back north through Paso al Mar del Sur which runs between Isla Deceit and Isla Herschel. At the top of Isla Herschel we would anchor in Caleta Martial. The whole circuit would be a bit over thirty miles, and we hoped we might actually be able to sail most of it.

We had enough wind to sail, a light breeze out of the northwest, and Evans suggested we roll out the jib and turn off the engine. “Before we do that,” I said, “I had better call Radio Wollaston and let them know we’re heading for the Horn.” Evans agreed, and I went below.

But my call, made at a little after 0800 that morning, was not answered by Radio Wollaston. “Yate *Hawk*, Yate *Hawk*, this is Chilean naval ship calling you, over.” A bit surprised, I switched and answered on 14 as they had asked me to do. When the ship came up, I said we intended to proceed to Cape Horn and asked if they had a weather forecast. There was a long pause on the other end, and then a voice in English. “We can give you the forecast later. But we must inspect your vessel. A satellite signal was received from your boat yesterday and we have been searching for you. We must be sure everything is okay before we let you proceed.”

I could hardly believe what I was hearing. We certainly hadn’t set off the EPIRB, but perhaps it had gone off accidentally somehow. Several thoughts occurred to me almost simultaneously. “We’ve triggered a search and rescue, something we never, ever wanted to do in our sailing career.” “Mom and dad will have been notified. They’ll be frantic.” “There’s no way our EPIRB went off.” “How can he be so sure it’s us? There are other boats in the area.”

After what must have been a long pause on my side, I finally said, “I don’t think it could possibly be us. But we are more than willing to let you inspect the boat. Where do you want to meet?”

“Please proceed to Caleta Martial and wait for us there.”

As I came out the companionway, I gave vent to the mixture of frustration, anger and disbelief that was overwhelming me. “FUCK!”

Evans looked up, surprised. “What’s the matter?”

“They’ve launched a search for us. We have to meet a navy boat in Caleta Martial so they can make sure we’re all right. I can’t believe it. The one thing we never wanted to happen when we were sailing, and it has happened and I don’t know how it happened.”

Evans was much more matter of fact than I was. “Well, if we have to, we have to.” He swung the wheel and began motoring back the way we had come along the top of Isla Herschel toward Caleta Martial.

We didn’t talk too much on the half hour motor back to the anchorage. There wasn’t much to say. I worried there might be someone out here who had really set off an EPIRB and was in

trouble while the Armada wasted time checking us out. Evans wondered aloud if they would fine us for an unnecessary search. But we didn't have anything solid to go on, so there wasn't much we could really do. As we rounded the top of Isla Herschel Evans said, "There's your naval ship." It was one of the (relatively) small gray cutters, about 150 feet in length with several guns on the foredeck. "Do we need to go in and anchor or did they just need to see us?"

"I don't know." I went back below and called the ship. They said they had to go down to Cape Horn and would be back in an hour. They asked us to anchor in Martial and wait for them. We rounded the headland into the anchorage to find another yacht already there – *Santa Maria*, one of the most competent of the Horn/Antarctica charter boats. The bay turned out to be a large horseshoe open to the east but surrounded on the other three sides by low hills and backed by a wide sand beach. We motored in until we had twenty feet of water and dropped the anchor. As soon as it was down, we both went below to check the EPIRB.

Our EPIRB is located just around the corner from the companionway, in the engine room. It is mounted on a block of wood and held in place by two bungee cords. Evans pulled it out of its bracket and we took a good look. The yellow tab on the top of the device had not been broken and scotch tape still held the red line that had to be pulled to activate the unit. It was dusty and looked as if it had been stored in a drawer in some house for a decade or so. There was no way this EPIRB had been activated.

The next thing I wanted to do was to call mom and dad to make sure they hadn't been notified that we were in trouble. I checked the time and realized it would be 6 AM in Syracuse. No problem – mom is always up at that time. And if they had received a call the night before, they would both be up and worrying. I got out the Iridium phone and called, and mom answered. But she couldn't hear me when I spoke to her. I heard her saying "hello" several times and then she hung up. I swore and dialed again. This time I got the answering machine. I kept trying every five or ten minutes, but only reached mom close to an hour after I had started. She sounded annoyed and confused even after she realized it was me. "Don't you know it's six in the morning?" I did, but I had completely forgotten it was a Saturday.

But after I explained things, her anger died away. No, they had not received any call about our whereabouts or been notified that our EPIRB had gone off. I told her a bit about what was going on and we hung up, but I was more mystified than ever. When an EPIRB goes off, the signal is communicated to a clearinghouse in the boat's country of origin. They confirm that the boat is in the area from which the signal originated before beginning any search and rescue activity. If mom and dad had not been notified, then the signal simply could not have been ours. I kept wondering whose signal it was and hoping someone wasn't out there waiting to be rescued. After the weather we had experienced the night before, it was easy to believe that a boat could have gotten into serious trouble.

While I was talking to mom, *Santa Maria* picked up her anchor and motored toward us. The skipper, Wolf, called out, "Everything okay?" We explained what was going on, and he was as mystified as we were. He wished us luck and motored away, and I said to Evans, "Why don't they think it's HIS EPIRB? I'm sure he has one." Evans just shrugged.

The naval vessel steamed back into the anchorage a bit over an hour later, at 0940. They motored up to within ten feet of our bow, and the captain came forward to talk to us. He reiterated what I had learned on the radio and little more – a signal had been received the day before; they were certain it was ours; two ships and two planes had been searching; they had to verify that our EPIRB had initiated the signal; they had looked for us in Bahia Alsina that morning but we had

already left. He asked if the EPIRB had hydrostatic or attitude sensor, which can trigger the EPIRB if it gets wet or is turned upside down. We told him ours only had a manual switch, which seemed to deflate him a bit. When I said, “We spoke to Puerto Toro at 1430 yesterday and Radio Wollaston at 2330. You must have known we were safe,” he replied, “We stopped the search when you called into Radio Wollaston.”

There was obviously nothing we could do to convince them except have them come aboard, which we told him again we were more than willing to do. In minutes, they had launched a large hard-bottomed inflatable and loaded eight men into it. They motored over to us, tied up alongside and came aboard. All of the men were cheerful and friendly, shaking hands and introducing themselves. While we took the obvious leader of the group down below to show him the EPIRB, several of the men stayed on deck, taking a good look at the rigging and the sails. I realized they were trying to find any sign of damage that might have caused us to panic and set off the EPIRB. But *Hawk* looked absolutely fit and ready to do anything – including round Cape Horn. I was very proud of her right then – proud that what we had been through the night before showed only in a tiny rip in the Sunbrella fabric on the jib cover.

Down below, we again took the EPIRB from its mount and handed it to the officer in charge. He studied the switch and then asked for the manual. Evans pulled out our notebook with all our manuals and flipped to it. Meanwhile, three more of the men had come below and were taking a good look fore and aft. Again, *Hawk* looked as if we’d been on a pleasant little daysail – nothing was out of place, everything neatly stowed. They saw the map over the Refleks heater and stood tracing the lines of our circumnavigation. They asked if we had done that trip on this boat, and we said that it had been on a smaller one. One of the men took out a digital camera and shot a picture of the map while another asked about our sailing plans from here. They were obviously impressed with our plan to sail to Australia and envious of the amount of time we had to do this. “Que vacances!” said one to another. “What a vacation!”

In the meantime, the officer had studied every aspect of the EPIRB switch and had paged through to the relevant sections in the manual. I saw him look at the part that described setting off the EPIRB and the features to prevent unnecessary searches, and then he flipped to the part that described the 406 MHz EPIRB signal procedures. I mentioned that I had called my family while the naval boat was at Cape Horn and they had not been notified of a search. “You CALLED?” he asked, amazed. Evans explained about the Iridium phone and said we would probably use that in an emergency rather than the EPIRB. “We can communicate much more on the phone.” By now, three of the men were looking at us dumbstruck, and a few fast jokes followed in Spanish that I couldn’t catch completely but seemed to have to do with the level of communication on *Hawk* versus the naval ship.

These eased the remaining tension completely. I suggested they take a photo of the EPIRB and the man with the camera said, “No, these aren’t for the navy, these are for me,” with a big grin. Evans suggested they take the EPIRB and manual back with them to Puerto Williams, but the officer said that wouldn’t be necessary. They said they were satisfied and would be getting back to their boat. As we shook hands, the man with the digital camera shook hands as well and said “Adios” to his companions, as if he was staying with us on *Hawk*. “Un otro tripulante?” he suggested with a grin – another crew member? – much to the delight of his comrades. As the dinghy pulled away, they shouted their goodbyes and good wishes, telling us to have a good trip around the Horn.

So it all ended on a good note, but I was left with the same feeling of unease. They clearly had received a satellite signal, and it hadn’t been from us. I wondered if we would ever know what

had happened. As the cutter headed for the mouth of the harbor Evans said, “We haven’t heard the last of this.” He thought we would have to deal with the Port Captain before this incident would be behind us.

But we heard again sooner than that. When he went down below to check the GPS, Evans heard the Chilean naval vessel calling us once again. He answered and the captain asked him if he had seen or heard of a German boat, spelling the name phonetically. We had never heard of the boat, and Evans told him that. The captain, Evans told me, had sounded almost apologetic during that last call. It seemed a strange ending to a strange incident.

After all that, passing under Cape Horn came as a total anticlimax. The day was perfect, though we would have wished for a bit more wind so we could have sailed part of the way. But the wind remained light and shifted with us as we navigated between the islands, staying right on our nose all the way around Isla Hornos into Paso al Mar del Sur and right back to the Caleta Martial. We had no more than about eight knots of wind the entire day, and once we entered Bahia Francisco we were in the true Southern Ocean swell, easily eight to ten feet high. That made things pretty roly and uncomfortable, not good when I was still feeling pretty ill. And it made it virtually impossible to sail – just too much swell in not enough wind.

But from the time we first glimpsed it when we rounded Isla Herschel and headed into Bahia San Francisco, Isla Hornos proved much more impressive than I had expected. When it first came into view, it appeared as a low, green wedge shape just to the south of two huge rock spires. Unlike almost all of our sailing in Chile, this area abounds in rocks and shoals lying just at the water’s surface or just below. Our course threaded its way past these dangerous areas rendered spectacularly visible by the huge swell which broke over anything less than ten meters in depth. We could see the rocks that lie a mile off the west side of Isla Hornos from some eight miles away, breaking in huge fountains of whitewater that must have been fifty feet high. This sense of movement and of danger heightened the tension and made it seem as if the whole sea seethed and crashed and rolled ashore right here, on this lonely island at the bottom of a continent.

As we closed with the two huge spires that extend out from the northwest corner of the island, they seemed to grow bigger and more impressive as the large rocks at their bases became visible frothing with breaking water. Our chart showed that these two spires are called Cathedral Rocks, and as we got closer I could see why. The water had carved what must once have been two pyramids of rock harder than the rest of the eroding island into something that almost exactly resembled the front façade of a cathedral – the more than twice human-high doors, the carved and angled lintels overhead, the soaring point at the top to which everything else receded. Both spires were well more than two hundred feet high, towering out of the sea like something mythic and eternal even as their scarred surfaces attested to their ultimate tragic fate. All around their bases, jagged rocks broke the surface of the water, and the blue sea on which we sailed tore itself into green and white shards among these rocks.

Evans had gone quite close in to them to let me get photos, and as I was shooting I realized we were getting even closer. I turned to see Evans trying to power back out and realized that the swell and the current were trying to set us in to the island. We were in no danger – it just took a broader angle and more power to edge away from land – but that brought home to me the challenge sailing vessels swept in to the island must have faced in days gone by. I wondered how many skeletal remains we were sailing over – wood and bone – and for how many sailors those rocks had been their last conscious image. I was glad when Evans eased us back out and around

the two rocks lying more than a mile offshore, rocks that have almost certainly been the death of other seamen at other times.

Isla Hornos is shaped roughly like an apostrophe with Cathedral Rocks off the top and Cape Horn off the bottom. Along the western side of the island in between is a rock-infested, shoal bay of seething whitewater without a place where a boat or even a person could hope to land without being dashed to pieces by the huge swell. Cabo de Hornos – Cape Horn – is visible from almost as far as Cathedral Rocks, the high end of the wedge. But only under the cliff that is Cape Horn does the headland begin to rival those twin spires. It rises almost sheer from the water, a steep cliff of loose scree and larger boulders, for a thousand feet before ending in a series of eroded gray tubes that resemble the pipes from a gigantic organ. The rest of the island rolls down from this point to sea level, in some places very gently and in some places more steeply, but nothing that rivals that straight down plunge to the beach of 1,400 feet.

The anchorage, such as it is, lies all the way around the other side of the island, midway up the arch of the apostrophe, under a small peninsula of land. The Armada post and the various statues commemorating the Horn have been built on this little peninsula, under the shadow of the Horn but not on it. As we rounded that peninsula and headed toward the anchorage, we could see the various buildings silhouetted against the organ pipes of the Cape Horn cliff, and it seemed appropriate somehow that visitors do not actually stand on the Cape itself but stand facing it, almost as if it were a relic and they were paying homage.

We did not try to stop in Caleta Leon, the anchorage on Isla Hornos. We'd both heard enough stories of the swell and the poor holding in seventy feet of water, of the need for one person to stay aboard and the trip ashore to be short, to feel we needed to set foot on the island. We also wanted to try to beat the forecast strong northerly winds into the anchorage. So we turned up Paso al Mar del Sur and headed for the Caleta Martial. As we entered the anchorage, we were joined by a small pod of Peale's dolphins, about six or eight individuals. Though we were motoring very slowly, they stayed right with us, swimming sideways under the water and staring up at us, then diving under the bow and surfacing on the other side. They reminded me of the Commerson's dolphins in their languid movements and their interest in the boat. They stayed with us all the way into the anchorage and for half an hour after we had the anchor down, weaving gracefully up and down on either side of the boat.

It started to blow just as we got the anchor down, big blasts of wind whooshing over the low hills in front of us. But the bottom was good sand and we had anchored in fifteen feet so we could put out ten to one scope, and neither of us was very worried even when the wind shifted suddenly to the southwest, as it had done the day before, and built quickly to 35 knots. I had put a turkey breast and some potatoes in the oven just after we passed the anchorage on Isla Hornos, and these were ready to be put on the table when the anchor was set and the sail flaked. We both ate ravenously – our first real meal since leaving Puerto Williams – but though it tasted wonderful it didn't do much for my energy level because it all passed right through me within two hours.

After dinner, we took a bottle of champagne out in the cockpit and toasted the Horn and *Hawk*. She and Neptune got most of the champagne – neither of us felt like drinking much. But it seemed right to commemorate this achievement, even if it resulted more from obligation than desire. This short but eventful voyage had, for me, rounded out and completed our Chilean experience, and formed a bookend to our arrival in the Beagle almost exactly a year before. This voyage would have been incomplete without it, and as the champagne tickled my throat I was very glad that we had undertaken this last small step and that Evans had not let us give up totally and run all the way back to the Beagle the night before.

We were up by 0600 Sunday morning after a fitful sleep listening to the wind gust across the anchorage. Evans wanted to get the morning weather fax at 0800 before we headed out across Bahia Nassau, so I made us scrambled eggs and toast while we waited. Again the food tasted good but didn't stay with me. The lack of sleep and the debilitating effects of the diarrhea were taking their toll, and I felt listless and lethargic. The fax showed settled weather and light westerly winds, and the day was almost as magnificent as the day before though the sky started to cloud up as we raised the anchor and then the mainsail.

We motored back out the channel we had tried so unsuccessfully to enter just thirty-six hours earlier, and as we reached the open waters of Bahia Nassau I called Radio Wollaston to let them know that we were leaving. Radio Wollaston came up and I gave him an ETA for Puerto Toro of 1600. "Bueno. Los kayakers italianos le esperan a Punta Guanaco," he told me. The kayakers were waiting for us at Punta Guanaco. Kayakers?

You do remember the kayakers, don't you? I had forgotten about them completely in the rush of events. There followed a long monologue from Radio Wollaston that included the words "zarpe" and "acompanar" and "Cabo de Hornos." I spent the next ten minutes making sure I understood exactly what Radio Wollaston was saying, and when I did I was not happy. It seems that in order to get permission to kayak around the Horn, Guiseppe and Fabio had taken some liberty with our agreement. They had told the Armada that we were accompanying them across Bahia Nassau, around the Horn and back again. Their zarpe included *Hawk* as their support boat, though nobody had said anything at all to us when we got OUR zarpe the very next day. Radio Wollaston told me we had to go back to Toro, have our zarpe modified so we could return to the Horn and then accompany the kayaks across Bahia Nassau. Guiseppe and Fabio were waiting at the southwestern-most point on Isla Navarino, Punta Guanaco, and had been told they could not proceed without us in company.

I told Radio Wollaston that we had not agreed to that – my Spanish again being pushed to the limit as I attempted to explain what we had agreed to do. Neither he nor I was happy. I finally ended the conversation by saying that we would talk to the kayakers and after that I would talk to him once again. What I couldn't tell him, because my Spanish wasn't up to the task, was how impossible it would be for a sailboat that averaged seven knots or more to accompany and stay in visual range of kayakers that averaged two or three. Not to mention the fact that they could put in just about anywhere but we were restricted to a single anchorage that doubled the distance across Bahia Nassau.

I went out on deck and said, "You're not going to believe this."

Evans rolled his eyes when I told him, but he was less surprised than I was. "If I'd thought about it, I would have realized that the only way the Armada would let those guys do this would be if they had a boat standing by," he said. "Most of the expeditions down here chartered a boat to support them. These guys didn't want to do that and we gave them an easy way out."

But Evans was not entertaining any thought of accompanying the kayaks. "When we get in radio range, I'll talk to them," he told me.

Our wind died altogether when we were less than five miles from the Wollaston group, leaving us motoring across the almost flat calm sea toward Isla Navarino. It would have been a perfect day for the kayakers to cross, and I was sure they were fuming as they waited for us to show up. But I

was fuming to – after all the rigmarole the day before with the Armada, the last thing I wanted was to again be the focus of attention. I had no doubt that Wollaston had already contacted Puerto Williams and that the airwaves were bristling with mentions of *Hawk* for the second time in two days.

Around 1030, when we were halfway across Bahia Nassau, I heard a broken call to Puerto Toro from the kayakers. I went below and turned to the channel to which they had switched. I could hear Toro perfectly, but I could only hear the kayakers if I turned down the squelch and then their signal was almost overwhelmed by the static. I heard Guiseppe say something about “veo vela” and “partemos” and gathered they could see our sail and were telling Puerto Toro that they were going to leave. Puerto Toro responded with, “No entiendo nada, no entiendo nada,” – I don’t understand anything – and read out the weather forecast. It was clear to me that Guiseppe and Fabio wanted to be on their way before the Armada figured out that we were not going to accompany them.

An hour after that, when we would be within radio range, Evans called them. Guiseppe answered. He said that they had departed from Punta Guanaco and were heading for the northernmost point on Isla Wollaston, and then he threw in a quick line thanking us for assisting them if they had any problems at Cape Horn. Evans said that we had not agreed to accompany them to the Horn and we were on our way back to Puerto Williams. We would check with them before we left Bahia Nassau, but after that they were on their own. Guiseppe responded with, “Switching back to 16.” Clearly, he did not want to discuss this. But we had made our point, and we were certain that both Puerto Toro and Radio Wollaston would have been able to hear it. Whether they understood or not was another question – the conversation had taken place in English and they wouldn’t have been able to hear Guiseppe’s responses at all.

After that, I called Radio Wollaston, told them the kayakers were on their way, and when he wished me good luck accompanying them, I told him again that we were returning to Puerto Williams. He gave up then, finally, repeated our ETA to Toro and wished us a good voyage.

Based on what Guiseppe had said, they should have been within two or three miles of the boat. We used the binoculars and searched the water, almost flat calm except for a swell that was no more than two or three feet high, and we couldn’t see anything. We knew their kayaks were bright yellow and red and should be easily visible. If we ever had a hope of seeing them it should have been in those conditions, at that distance. The fact that we never glimpsed either one demonstrates how incredibly difficult it is to pick out a kayak on the open water and how hard it would have been to keep them in visual range.

We reached Paso Goree and the entrance to the Beagle an hour after that, where we were greeted by a pod of Peale’s dolphins. Evans dutifully tried calling Guiseppe again. Neither of us was surprised when we got no response. Even if they were still in range, Guiseppe wasn’t about to open up communications. I was dreading talking to Puerto Toro, afraid they might order us in to the harbor or try to send us back out after the kayakers. I sat down below with the dictionary polishing complicated phrases explaining what had happened and how the kayakers had taken advantage of us. In retrospect, Evans and I were probably too gullible and should have accompanied them back to the Port Captain to see what they told him we had agreed to do. But the Port Captain should certainly have verified with us that we were supporting them on their voyage when we got our zarpe if that’s what he believed.

Evans's advice – "Don't say anything about the kayakers. Just say we're heading for Puerto Williams and give him an ETA." I did as Evans suggested, and to my relief Puerto Toro simply asked how many passengers we had aboard and then wished us a good voyage.

"We probably haven't heard the last of THAT incident either," Evans said when I returned to the cockpit. But I didn't care. We were back in the Beagle on a perfect day, the mountains were sparkling brilliantly in the sunshine, and the kayakers would just have to take care of themselves.

Well, that should have been the end of the story, but with this particular story you'll not be too surprised when I tell you that it was not. We passed Puerto Toro at 1600 and told them we were proceeding to Puerto Williams, ETA 2000. We had just entered the Beagle Channel proper and found two other sailboats there – one French and one American, both having just arrived from the trip down the Argentinean coast – when I suggested that I should do e-mail. We hadn't done e-mail since Thursday, and I had several responses I'd written on Friday morning thinking we would send them from Toro when we got in, but of course nothing had gone as planned. So now, while Evans kept watch and motored down the Beagle in a dead calm, I went below and wrote a few more messages. I had just finished and was getting ready to set up the Iridium phone when I heard Evans put the boat into neutral and then reverse. The noise when he put it in reverse confirmed that we had gotten kelp on the propeller, and from the crashing, grinding noises coming from aft, a lot of it.

I went up on deck as Evans put it in forward and then reverse again. Huge pieces of kelp were coming up from under the boat, three and four foot long ropes with big clumps of leaves. We backed up in a circle, and still more came off. When he finally thought he had got it all, Evans put the engine in forward, but the blades wouldn't bite. The prop just spun a big whorl in the water but gave us no drive at all. "I guess I have to dive," Evans said.

We've done it enough that this too was routine. I got out the snorkel gear and put a kettle of water to heat on the stove while Evans went below and got into his wet suit. He came on deck carrying his big commando knife, the one with a serrated edge that can be used like a saw. He slipped into the water, took a minute to get acclimated, inhaled three big breaths and dove. I stood on the sidedeck waiting for him to come back up and saw a big stalk of kelp come out from under the boat. He dove twice more, and then asked for a line to be tied to the stanchion so he could rest between dives. The next time he went down, a short piece of thin blue line with white flecks floated up. Remember the messenger line for our spinnaker halyard? It had gotten into the prop after all.

It took him almost twenty minutes to clear the prop, and he probably cut away two and a half feet of that line. When he came back aboard, he told me that the cutter had severed it, but that a large coil had wrapped around the shaft and one section had gotten wedged under one of the blades. This had been melted into a large lump by the action of the blade as it changed pitch. In a sense, we both felt better knowing we had gotten a line in the prop. It explained the horrible cavitation we'd experienced when we were trying to beat our way into the pass at Isla Wollaston. We were tremendously lucky that it hadn't been much worse, that the cutter functioned exactly as it was supposed to. The kelp had balled up around the line on the shaft and prop, and if it hadn't we probably wouldn't have found out the line was there for some time.

After a hot shower had warmed Evans again and we'd cleaned up the boat, I returned to e-mails adding a small paragraph in the one I sent you about Evans having to dive. Then we did e-mail. The first message back was from Gambi. You do remember Gambi, don't you? The company

sending us our batteries? They told us that they had packaged the batteries but could not send them without a Chilean tax number. The batteries were supposed to be shipped out of Puerto Montt the next day, Monday the 16th. If we couldn't get him a tax number by then, we would be delayed at least a week in receiving them.

Luckily, we are temporary residents in Chile, and Evans sent back by e-mail his ID number which is the same as the tax number. But it was Sunday, and we had no idea when they would receive the information or if they would accept it for their records. Now we definitely wanted to get back to Puerto Williams that night so we could call first thing in the morning, early enough that they could still get the batteries on the right ferry.

Of course the story doesn't end there – far too many loose ends. We got back to Puerto Williams at 2000, two and a half days after we left instead of the ten days to two weeks we had expected, and tied up alongside our German friends, Marlene and Reinhardt, on *Adio*. Before we even had all of our lines on, they asked us if we had heard about the German boat that was missing. “*Olle Hoop*,” Marlene said, pronouncing the second word something like ‘howpk.’

There followed a confused recitation of events on both sides which took quite some time to sort out – indeed we still haven't sorted out all of it. It seems that the German authorities had received a satellite distress signal sometime on Friday the 13th from an 11-meter, white, fiberglass German boat enroute to the Horn from Tahiti. The information was passed through the normal emergency channels and on the German SSB nets, so that Marlene and Reinhardt first heard about it on Saturday morning. They went to the Armada immediately and were told an EPIRB had been recovered in the vicinity of Canal Cockburn, a hundred miles west of Cape Horn, and that the Armada had been searching nonstop ever since and found nothing else.

The story gets worse. The following morning JC reported on the Patagonian Cruiser's Net that *Hawk* had been mentioned in a news item in the *Mercurio* (the major Santiago newspaper) by name – “Lost Yacht Found.” The story was also carried on television. The same story was reported in Germany, and, we later discovered, the family of the crew on the German boat was informed early Saturday morning that *Olle Hoop* had been found and all was well – based on our call to Radio Wollaston at 2330 Friday night. What a horrible thing to do to the family...

We have done a lot of asking around trying to find out what exactly happened, but no story matches any other and none of it makes much sense. As I said before, the captain of the naval boat claimed that they had had planes and ships out searching starting sometime after we talked to Puerto Toro and continuing for some hours until we talked to Wollaston – that means sometime between 1430 and 2330. He also said they stopped the search after they heard from us and presumably began again around the time they called Evans and asked him if he had heard of *Olle Hoop*. But the EPIRB went off over a hundred miles to the west of our position. In the meantime, if they really thought *Hawk* was the distressed vessel, we were on a rhumb line course between two known points no more than forty-five miles apart – if they had wanted to find us it should have been the work of an hour or two with one of their cutters, less with a plane. As Evans said, “I'd hate to have a real emergency down here if they couldn't find us on Friday.”

Even more to the point, we were never out of radio contact with either Puerto Toro or Radio Wollaston, but we never heard them calling our name though we frequently went below to make sure the radio chatter wasn't directed at us. On Sunday, on the other hand, we kept hearing them call something that sounded like, “Ellay-awp,” and several times I answered thinking they were trying to reach us. That turned out to be the best they could do with the German boat's name.

A few days ago we fell into conversation with a naval officer who was waiting for the bar on the *Micalvi* to open. Nelson was the officer on duty when the distress signal was reported by the Germans and when we talked to Radio Wollaston. He told us that the signal was received within an hour of our talking to Radio Wollaston, not long enough to launch any major search. He also admitted that they were so happy to hear from us and so quick to assume we were the yacht in trouble that they did not search overnight, and the search only began the next morning when they confirmed the EPIRB was not ours. He was the one that told us the Armada contacted the German authorities in the early hours of Saturday morning to tell them the yacht had been found. The horrible thing is that if the EPIRB did go off around 2300 on Friday, a search and rescue effort at that point might have recovered the crew, either from a disabled boat or a liferaft. I find myself alternately glad that I called Radio Wollaston so they didn't search unnecessarily for us and sorry that I called so they might have searched for the right boat in the right place instead of concentrating on the wrong boat in not quite the right place.

And yet, when Reinhardt went to the Armada on Saturday morning after hearing about the lost boat on the German net, he was told that they had recovered *Olle Hoop's* EPIRB a few miles off Canal Cockburn. This was at around 1000, just about the time the crew of the Chilean cutter had finished inspecting our EPIRB and were returning to their own boat, and just after we had been told the search had been called off. But finding the EPIRB means that they had been searching, either the day before or overnight, and that they were aware the boat was German. The original notice from Germany would have included all the specifics about the boat, including its size and hull color, neither of which matched *Hawk* and both of which Radio Wollaston asked me about on Friday night. How they could have confused a 15-meter, gray, American boat with an 11-meter, white, German boat or how they could have connected that recovered EPIRB to us and been certain enough to tell us it "had to be" ours is beyond me. It's almost as if two different groups were dealing with the emergency and were not communicating with one another at all.

Nothing more has been found of the German boat. The Armada called off the search two days ago.

And the kayakers? No one said anything more about them to us, but when *Adio* cleared for the Horn last Wednesday the 18th, three days after we spoke to them in Bahia Nassau, they were asked to keep an eye out for them and assist them if necessary. *Adio* returned on Sunday night, and told us they had heard and seen nothing until they talked to the Armada station on Cape Horn. They were told that the kayakers had made it around the Horn, spent a night on the island, and then started back across Bahia Nassau. The story isn't completely clear, but it seems as if they were either being escorted by a naval cutter or one was sent out when the weather deteriorated. In any case, it appears that the Armada had had enough of them and picked them up halfway to the Beagle, bringing them and their kayaks aboard over their protests. They were taken to Puerto Toro, cleared from there for Argentina and told to leave the country. Marlene asked the Port Captain about them yesterday, Monday the 23rd, and was told they were already in Ushuaia. I don't know whether or not they will claim that they kayaked around the Horn. I do know that they had video equipment and intended to try to sell the story. I'd be curious to see how we fit in...

And the batteries? There the jury is still out. We did contact Gambi on Monday morning, and they did make it onto the ferry to Punta Arenas. Whether or not they got on to the ferry from Punta Arenas to Puerto Williams remains to be seen. If they did, we should have them Thursday or Friday.

So, that's the story. Not at all what we expected when we left. Compared to all the excitement over other vessels, our own rounding was pretty uneventful. But you can be sure that in the future we'll be careful what we promise itinerant kayakers and we'll insist we're not the boat they're looking for if anyone so much as mentions words sounding vaguely like "distress" or "emergency signal" to us again.