

Sent: Sun, May 23, 2010 9:07 pm

Subject: "Anna"

In my last "Anna" travel update we had left Tauranga , New Zealand headed for Tonga. , Well all has not gone according to our well-laid plans to be in the tropics with warm waters, sandy beaches and palm trees.

We left in calm seas so we motored for two days and then the winds picked up on our nose, so we beat in to a head wind with the main sheet and the staysail up for most of the afternoon. The wind kept building and the barometer kept falling so we reefed the main after about thirty minutes the reef line at the back of the sail broke so we shortened the sail and put in the second reef and it chaffed in two, so we went to the third reef and put a preventor on it and rolled the jib in to the second reef mark. as the winds kept building to over thirty knots.

We beat into a thirty-knot wind driving though some big waves, one of the waves tore the track loose on the trampoline and it was hanging down in the water so we rolled in the head sail by this time the winds had built to thirty five so we hove to so we could have a comfortable night.

The next day we saw some really bad weather up to forty-eight knot winds with mountainous waves, this lasted for two days and two nights.

That's a force 10 gale according to the Beaufort Scale, which describes a force ten as " very high winds, overhanging crests and the sea white with foam, and very poor visibility". It was all of that and more.

After the second day we where still having lots of squalls and one of the huge waves slammed against the rudders and knocked the cables off the rudder quadrants, so we are out there in consistent 45 knot winds with no steering.

It was hard to estimate the height of these waves, most of the time we rode over them with out any trouble, except for the odd rouge wave that crashed over the whole boat, which made us worry a little about how long our big Plexiglas windows where going to hold.

Luckily we had made some makeshift repairs on the trampoline and got it where we could stand on it, we put on our harnesses and clipped ourselves securely to a lifeline; our only option now is to deploy the sea anchor.

A sea anchor is a large parachute on a 300ft rode, that will hold your bow into the enormous waves, as we deployed the sea anchor the rode caught on the stanchions and tore three of them off. We spent a fairly comfortable night swinging on the sea anchor.

We tried to get the rudders under control with our emergency tillers and they where slamming so violently that we broke one of the tillers in two and did a lot of damage to the auto pilot hydraulics. I was afraid that one of the rudders would knock a hole in the back of the boat and then we would be in real trouble.

The seas calmed down enough the next day, so we went to work trying to repair the damages after a few hours we had it back together and we thought it would hold until we got back to Auckland and repaired it properly.

We are expecting another 30 plus knot storm from the north by tonight so we head back as soon as we pull in the sea anchor.

Luckily this rainy storm was on our stern so we rode the high winds and waves all the way into Auckland .

We are tied up in "The Viaduct" the main harbor underneath the space needle in downtown Auckland .

We will sit out on the disco deck tonight and tell salty tales about how we survived the storm, and I'm sure the more we drink; the storm stories will get bigger.  
Just another challenging adventure on the high seas.

=