

JESTER CHALLENGE 2010

Started 1300 BST Sunday 23 May

Plymouth
to
Newport, Rhode Island

FINAL SITREP

NUMBER THIRTY FIVE

30th July 2010

ARRIVALS

FIRST to arrive - 33 days
26 June 0200 (approx) EST.

Igor Zaretskiy

The Grand

RUS 194

7 June 1200 BST: 48° 0'N; 32° 50'W

8 June 1200 BST: 45° 21'N; 34° 30'W

13 June: 46° 04'N; 46° 39'W

16 June 1800 BST: 44° 14'; 50° 58'W

20 June: 42° 19'N; 59° 19'W. Message relayed via Liuba - Igor is on track to finish with a little more than 500 miles.

21 June 1200 BST: 42° 18'N; 62° 4'W. From Liuba: Igor has for an hour been accompanied by a pod of dolphins. Beautiful! He is already thinking about the finish, mentally composing the menu of the first shore dinner (or breakfast).

23 June 41° 19'N; 66° 19'W. From Liuba - Igor and Michael have also reported good weather and the absence of any accidents. Their daily mileage is roughly the same - 90 nm - Igor with the finish line just a little more than 300 nm

26 June 0200 (approx) EST. Crossed the finish line. Message from George: This morning, Rory McDougall in *Cooking Fat* and Igor Zaretskiy in *The Grand* arrived in Newport in early morning. Igor was first across the line, followed by Igor approximately by one hour.

5 July: Following report received via Liuba: Just a little digest about his adventures... In Igors own words - First three days weather was good. And at other times the wind is strong storm, it was hard, but I had no fear. It was very cold at night, the temperature inside of the cabin was 7C, with a wind of force 8. Week two did not meet any dry-cargo ships, saw on a radar only one ship. Dolphins accompanied me, but I was afraid of a meeting with a whale...There was no time to miss anything especially. Certainly, when you go on deck to do something, with the strongly whistling wind and inside you feel rather uncomfortable, as we Russians would say "our trousers are full of adrenaline!". Certainly, it is better to lay on a sofa and to stroke a favourite cat....The boat is excellent, she has had no serious problems... (*some problem with "carabiners"?? and Genoa ?? that your non-yachting translators do not understand!*) I have therefore enough time to sleep.... It was then necessary to go down south about 30 miles to go around Nantucket, there were very twisting waterways between banks and shoals. If the winds were strong then - it would not be sweet sailing. Saw rocks at the left and on the right, so went between them. And there, certainly, you cannot have a sleep and all that time I knew that Rory was nearby.....I have understood that it is necessary to read very well the Weather Fax. The difference between this experience and our habit of local clean weather races with features we know about and here is that it is necessary to calculate using the information on some days in advance. On the way ate buckwheat kasha, rice, fried small pancakes and ate them with condensed milk...Have arrived in Newport: "Commander" [Commodore?] is on the boat with beer and cigarettes, I am very touched..... but cigarettes here are very dear! Everything hurts:

bruises everywhere, back, hands, legs..... Now every evening somebody invites me to a bar to drink gin, everyone is very kind. From New York there came some compatriots- Ukrainians to congratulate and chat, thank you it was good to talk again in Russian. It is now a busy time cleaning of the boat as inside there is mould because of the storage of food for the return.... The visa I have is until July 12th. I wish to wait until some children, will come, probably, and then get under-way back to Plymouth, stay for 2-3 days in England to meet with Ewan and all and to receive.... "A green tie " (Roger has prompted about it!). Let's go via the Azores! I wish to thank all organisers of the Jester challenge ... And especially my sponsor, surprising, modest, Oleg Jakovlev President of the International Youth Center. He came to visit me in Russia when I was only thinking about refurbishing this yacht he asked, ".... have you broken it all? "-" yes" I said "this is a dream of an idiot, to be involved in the Jester Challenge, it is the 50th anniversary "-" I shall financially support you..... " so he gave the money and then came to visit me before the start in Plymouth". He helps children a lot, he is very modest. I shall go sailing to Greece with him and a group of 5-6 (10-12 years) children from his center.

AFTERNOTE

12 July: Igor with a friend sailed today for Plymouth. We wish them both God-speed. Message from Liuba: Today at 18.00 (Moscow time) the winner of the race Igor Zaretsky and his assistant Nicholas Ilitchev sailed out of Newport on the yacht "Grand" in the return journey. They are going on their way back home, visiting the Azores, and then Plymouth, where they will be waiting for friends from the organization "Russian Touch". We will report their location upon receipt of information.

SECOND to arrive - 33 days

26 June 0330 (approx) EST.

Rory McDougall

Cooking Fat

28 May 1312 BST: 47°17'N; 17° 8'W. Good winds and lots of hand steering. I have averaged about 135 miles a day over the last 3 days

29 May 1311 BST: 46° 17'N; 18° 02'W. Wind SW 20-25 knots bang on the nose

30 May 1257 BST: 44° 34'N; 17° 58'W

31 May: In good spirits. Blowing about Force 5, and still heading South, sailing at about 6 knots, with nice northerly blowing. Hove to for several hours to catch up on sleep, but woke to a bumping noise under the boat. Went outside to check it out, and at first, thought it was a shark.....it was about 5ft in length and dark blue/black. It finally surfaced...and it was the biggest turtle he has ever seen!! Turtle was eating the barnacles off the boat's side. As Rory sailed away, the turtle rolled over on it's back and waved!! (but remember, he has been at seaalone.....for a week now.....so....;) Anyway he has nicknamed the turtle "Crush" (Re: "Finding Nemo" for those without kids!!) Also recharged the battery, and managed to catch three cups of water off the main, in a light drizzle!! This was just an experiment, in case Rory takes longer to reach Newport and needs to ration water

1 June 1250 BST: 43° 26'N; 21° 01'W

3 June: he went through another big gale/storm, and rather than just hammer on into it, he decided to lay a-hull, so only sailed about 45 miles. He has had some concerns with the back beam and movement. The mainsheet traveller is attached to the back beam, and so therefore takes the full weight of the main, when under sail. In order to take some of this pressure off the beam, Rory has tied some lashings from the back beam, to the middle beam, thus so far, keeping the back beam much more stable. Harry (wind-vane) has also had some adjustments made to him..... Rory took the drill to him! Every main component on Harry now has a lifeline attached:) Rory was worried about losing Harry, or parts of Harry, during the storms they have been encountering, and wanted to ensure that Harry remained on board at all times! Weather much nicer this morning, Force 3-4 all day, sailing along at about 6 knots, heading west under full sail. Spray but.....no big waves!! Hurray. Big relief, cos Rory also mentioned he came very close to a big ship last night in the midst of the storm. And of course.....his VHF radio wasn't charged so he couldn't hail them and let them know he was about. He said it was probably half a mile away.....but when the ship involved is half a mile LONG.....that is a little too close. He saw his first shark of the trip today.....only about 4ft long, but spotted just as he had hung the charger over the stern!! Also lots of Portuguese Man O War.

6 June 1111 BST: 39° 15'N; 28° 00'W. Rough day again yesterday (Saturday) Had problems with lots of jellyfish getting stuck in the nets but on the flip side, big pod of dolphins swimming &

playing alongside Cookie, as we bash along. Also spotted Silver Bear, (36ft Najad), a yacht from Plymouth, and had a quick chat over the VHF with the skipper Ray, and got a weather update. Calmed down Saturday evening so managed to have a big cook-up, before laying a-hull and catching up on some really good sleep. Unfortunately I suffered another equipment failure.....the can opener broke!! The first dry morning aboard Cookie today since leaving Plymouth. A rare event on such a small boat, but a welcome respite from being damp all the time. Managed to air out and finally dry out. Sailed past the island of Santa Cruz Da Graciosa this morning, I could see it about 20 miles away in the distance. Back into crazy seas, which are running through the Azores. Have now tacked away, and heading northwest as I was getting pushed too far south by the currents. Hoping for the high pressure

7 June 1317 BST: SPOT 39.14896N; 30.08061W

8 June 1325 BST: SPOT 38.70641N; 32.13937W Took the sails down for 3 hours yesterday and checked Cookie over. The starboard forward bow is leaking, so pumped this dry. Fixed a hatch hinge and stuck some more foam tape down to seal hatch tighter. Also fixed the net, where it had chafed through. Last night & today I have had to pump the port bow out too. The water is coming in through the forestay stems and hatches. I feel a lot happier having spent some time checking Cookie over. Overall she is a little smasher!! Lots of dolphins zipping alongside as we sail through the Azores. Unfortunately also lots of Portuguese Man O War too..... bow dipped through a wave this morning and dumped a big one on the net. Didn't enjoy trying to get it off the boat again!. Last night was the first steady night sailing I have had since the start. 20-25 knots, no sail changes or adjustments need. Stayed in my drysuit until about 3am and then managed to get into my nice warm sleeping bag (which is a rarity) and stayed there until 7am!! Luxury! Used up all my fresh fruit and vegetables...just have potatoes, onion & cabbage left. Ate two chocolate bars today....which are only aboard cos my wonderful wife put them there (NB from wife....who goes sailing across the Atlantic....to windward....with no chocolate!!!!) Big thanks to my sister-in-law Rachel, who very kindly gave me some foam pads before I left.....they are saving my poor backside, which is getting beaten black & blue!! Only managed 70 miles yesterday, but today there are some nice northwest winds blowing, so clocked 110 miles today. And if my weatherman, Mista Paul, has got it right, than I am heading into a high pressure moving NE ...with northerlies than easterlies.....yeehaw!!

10 June 1304 BST: SPOT 39.10603N; 36.8926W.. Well not much to report this evening as Rory decided to take the day off for good behaviour!! (guess we have to take his word for it.....). He is finally out of his drysuit & boots, and beginning to dry out and 'unwrinkle'. Down to t-shirt and Musto trousers, and bare feet) He is convinced the same dolphins are following him, they race alongside for 10-15 minutes, swim off, only to return several hours later. Few more jobs done on the boat today. "Harry" (the windvane) has several more screws holding him safely aboard. Dodger sprayhoods needed a few extra stitches to stop water getting in, and some additional stuffing added to the cushions....cos Rory has a sore backside!!! (It's all that sitting around he does!!!) Celebrations tonight...when we spoke, he was eight miles from the "half way" point! (Yippee guys.....well done!) So he will be celebrating with a bottle of beer (which his brother in law, Phil, bought for him in the pub before he left.....which is another cause to celebrate....but that's another story!! :) And the KP nuts are coming out, followed by a sumptuous meal of rice & beans, that he cooked up last night. They have had two nice days of high pressure, sailing 135 miles yesterday, and 95 miles today. So I guess we will let him have a day off.....but back to work tomorrow!!

12 June: "Best day's run of the trip, so far, on Saturday..168 miles!! (Whoop whoop Rory & Cookie.....go.....go.....go.) The winds were up, but nice calm seas, so put a reef in the main and set "Harry" to work! Rory decided he would treat himself to a new set of dry clean clothes and then snuggled down in his sleeping bag. Felt great to be in clean, dry clothes but....was short lived!! Huge wave crashed over the dodger...straight in over his sleeping head, pillow and dry fleece. Grrrrrrrrrrrr.....have been grumpy for the rest of the day. He managed to finally fix the leak, where the compass is bolted on, which had been dripping on everything down below, but the boat is still very wet below with condensation raining down. So the first five minutes down below, he just sits and waits for the water to stop running off him, before he can attempt any task.....such a chart plotting etc. No ships spotted for the last few days, but lots of dolphins still swimming alongside. Also two more turtles spotted, one teenie tiny one drifted underneath the nets, and then a larger one, about 2 ft with white & brown markings. Another low pressure heading their way, and when we spoke Saturday evening (8pm BST) Rory said the seas were beginning to build and the sky was full of low cumulus clouds. Maybe time to batten down the hatches? I guess time will tell.

13 June 1342 BST: SPOT 39.14708N; 45.67401W

16 June: 16 June Sometime I find this blog really hard to write. People often ask how do I cope when Rory goes to sea, and the honest answer is.....I carry on like it is any other day. And then every once in awhile, on days like today, I will have a quiet moment of concern. It has been a tough 36 hours out there. Sunday morning the sunrise was ablaze, and as the old saying goes.."red sky at morning, sailor's warning". And sure enough, shortly after sunrise, the front started moving in rapidly, with the skies growing darker & darker by the minute and unlike anything Rory has seen before. He triple-reefed the main and put the storm jib up (which has had very little use over the last 15 years!!) and Cookie jogged along steadily. By mid afternoon the wind was blowing 40-45 knots, so he put the sea anchor out, which instantly helped in the big seas. Bang on 9 pm the rain started and the winds eased, but the waves were very everywhere. Rory decided to hove-to, and hunkered down for the night and just rest up. Around 5 am and the wind started picking up again, and it has been howling all day When we spoke at 7.30 pm this evening (Weds) it was still blowing 25-30 knots, and Cookie was taking some big hits. But...she is as brave as ever and was jogging along with a very small sail area, at 3 knots.....with Rory safely down below. I am exhausted just sat at home listening to him!!! Yesterday's 24 hr run was 110 miles and today, under sea anchor, 30 miles.

17 June 1300 BST: SPOT position 38.35499N 51.64261W

19 June 1324 BST: 38.99207N; 56.964W. Good Evening Folks, well apologies for being a day late.....I took a day off....but don't tell the Captain! Had a brief chat with Rory last night, but very bad connection on the sat phone. He said that Thursday's evening he kept the main triple-reefed & the storm jib up, and Cookie took some big, big hits that night.....but every time she got hit, she just popped straight back up and kept on bobbing along. When he woke up Friday morning, they were becalmed!! So big breakfast and then he took the opportunity to check Cookie over, ..re-lashed the nets, checked the rigging, pumped out the bows etc, and over all, she is in great shape...which is a big relief because they really have been banging to windward. He said the seas around them were very churned up, lots of seaweed floating around. Also lots of wildlife, pilot whales, dolphins and he even spotted a baby shark. 6 pm Friday evening and the winds were back up to 20-25 knots, and the seas a lot clearer, he also reckons he has about a knot of current pushing them along. The neck seal on his drysuit split today, he tried some dinghy glue he's got on board.....but just ended up fuming out the very small area down below, as well as spacing himself out!! He now has "100 mile" checkpoints marked on his chart, and they have about 900 miles to go!! Yahoooooo. Next up.....the Gulf Stream!

20 June 1347 BST: 38.99469N; 58.49192W. Happy Father's Day to all the dad's competing in the Jester Challenge! Rory has had a nice easy day today, with Cookie scooting along in very little breeze. He spent the morning baking some bread and also decided to treat himself to a sea bath on the back net,after 28 days at sea!! The result is he now has fluffy hair (as opposed to the salt encrusted nest) and is kitted out in his last set of clean clothes. (Turns out he didn't take enough boxers with him.....so also had to do some laundry!!!) He's finished the last of the three books he took with him (this nearly impresses me more than the Challenge itself.....he doesn't normally sit still long enough to read a book.....or.....he falls asleep with the book in his hand.....thus average reading time per book is at least a month!!) And finally, he enjoyed his Father's Day treats that Josh & Sophie had sneaked aboard before he left Plymouth. A big bar of Mint Aero, and cards they had made for him. It is a limited update tonight at the kids both had a good chat with him this evening, Josh especially giving him all the updates on the World Cup Football results!! Happy family all round.

21 June 1228 BST: 39° 31'N; 61° 17'W

22 June 1338 BST: SPOT 40.0353N; 63.45386W. Wow...here is Rory's latest position. Go Cookie go!! Rory said yesterday was an awful day of "boiling seas". Huge ground swell from the South, and then just ploughing into big, big waves. Very yucky seas. Then around 3 pm BST, wind shifted to NNW, so put up big sail "Manuel" (Manuel is the monster jib...what can I say.....Rory has spent an awful lot of time aboard Cookie alone, so I guess "Manuel" & "Harry" became good friends to Rory over the years as they did a lot of the "work" for him!! :) He has finished reading all the books he had on board, and also has worked his way through all the food packet labels & tins, so continues to do lots of small jobs around the boat, to keep occupied. He was busy fixing some more holes in the net this morning, with the winds blowing about 20-25 knots, when a huge wave dumped all over the boat. Nothing unusually about this, except Rory had he head down.....and no longer has a neck seal on his dry suit.....so he got completely soaked....to the point where there was a large amount of water sloshing around

inside the suit!!!! (it's ok....you can laugh...I did!) This afternoon, flat calm again, sailed into another high pressure, so back to baking bread, and sieving water through tea towels, due to weird sediment, that has appeared in Rory's water bottles. Yesterday they ticked off another 142 miles, and today (early hours) they cleared the Gulf Stream, and clocked another 114 miles. Not bad for a little boat! 400 miles to go.....

23 June 1200 BST: 40° 10'N; 65° 31'

24 June 1325 BST: SPOT 40.63655N; 67.93347W. OK just got *The Grand* & Igor Zaretskiy position, as of 23 June 2010 ...it is sooo close! At this point, I really don't know who will cross the line first, and although it is a Challenge, not a race ...ahh what the heck...we're cheering them on!!

26 June 0904 BST. Crossed the finish line. At long last!! Wow, is it good to be here. Of course there is a huge list of thank yous to shout out. Biggest of all is to my wife Michelle, who was always at the end of the satphone to give me an emotional boost when I was low and to decipher my quick garbled news updates and turn them into something worth reading on the blog - fantastic job Michelle - love you! Big thank you to all who sent messages of support and of course to all who have donated to the Chichester Trust. The finish was all I ever dreamed of. Michelle kept me updated how close it was between *The Grand* and *Cookie* on our converging courses. I never regarded the Jester as a race but rather my personal goal to arrive in Newport safely and in the best time for *Cookie* and I. However I did get hooked a little and after getting good sleep the 23rd, I pushed hard the last few miles and didn't sleep the last 2 days. I did reflect on all the legendary OSTAR sailors that have sailed the same waters into Newport before me and felt so proud of *Cookie* to be sailing in their wake. The last night I arrived was a gorgeous clear sky with full moon and gentle SW breeze making me feel extra lucky to be finishing the Jester after the sad news of Andy and *Amadeus* and of course all the other skippers that had to retire for difficult reasons. I pay tribute to you all and hope one day you get to cross your finish line. Crossing the finish off Castle Hill at 0904BST on the 26th June 2010 was amazing. I had just pushed the Spot Tracker button to alert all the followers when Michelle called me on the phone as I crossed the line, so she really was with me as I finished - perfect. Got a bit tricky trying to talk and gybe at the same time when the jib sheet wrapped round the tiller!!! But we made it. As I approached the harbour, the Newport Yacht Club sent out a launch to escort me in and my good friends Paul and Dave were aboard to take photos and complete the welcome - fantastic. Also great friends Frank & Meredith from catamaran 'Out of Practice' were out in their RIB to give a hoop and holler. *Cookie* and I really did receive our OSTAR-style Newport welcome!!!! I sincerely congratulate Igor and *The Grand* on their 1st place. For Igor to be the 1st Russian to win a singlehanded event is so fitting and therefore is perfect he pipped me to the post. I am just so proud of *Cookie* and her simplicity to have given a 25ft racing monohull a run for her money!!!! Finally I would like to say a big thank you to Norm Bailey and George Pike of the Newport Yacht Club for their very special welcome and their warm hospitality. They are making every effort to help us little guys out and make us feel at home in the 'sailing capital' of the USA. For now, *Cookie* is resting on a mooring while I spend time with Michelle, catch up on sleep, eat lots of good food and heal the sores on me bum! I'll be getting a few repairs done on *Cookie* and then should be taking off to head back for English shores 2nd week of July. Still looking for crew.....!!

AFTERNOTE

10 July. *Cookie* sailed for England. Although no longer a JC responsibility (till JAC 2012?) we wish Rory God speed and will continue to 'keep an eye'.

THIRD to arrive - 34 days

18:31:59 BST on Sunday, 27 June 2010.

Roger Fitzgerald

Ella Trout III

GBR705M

24 May: 49° 48'N; 6°12'W.

28 May 1100 BST: 49° 12' N; 18° 24' W

29 May: skipper reported poorly

31 May: On a course of antibiotics. Managing to eat, drink. Hopefully the drugs will have an impact. Weather has been lively with strong winds and big seas. Making good progress but now reduced sail considerably. Intention to head south for a day or two, further from the centre of the current low pressure system – and further away from the next system which is heading in. I give you the first 9 days in bullet points:

1. Super start day, I really enjoyed it, the children shouting your going the wrong way, The tussle with John And Fluffy on the start line and 30 hours of

spinnaker sailing

2. Found a stowaway on board in the form of a particularly virulent cold germ which laid me low Monday night and all day Tuesday with everything tied down boat thundered on through the night looking after her self, she took some hammering as I should have reduced sail further but was not fit.
 3. In my pit all day wind eased in the evening running preventer on main jib boomed out. Midnight AIS warning "dangerous Target" rush on deck fishing boat heading straight for me less than 800 yds, closing speed 18 knots rush below for VHF too late we are now so close I was debating where we would strike. With all the sail pinned down if I altered course the boat would stop and I'd be dead in the water. So I elected to keep my speed 6 knots and rely on a last minute manoeuvre. At 50 yards he did an emergency starboard 90 degree turn and went round me I called but got no reply!!
 4. Recuperating, or so I thought but well behind with food and sleep in relatively manageable weather. Hawk, yes hawk type bird spent 2 hours trying to land in my rigging.
 5. Becalmed sails down sleeping still not improving, started antibiotics
 6. weather strong but manageable, extremely lethargic, struggling to eat, no appetite, but get sick if I don't eat.
 7. Very heavy night regular 30 kts wind. Fully reefed, postage stamp jib Ella Trout had to tough it out and look after both of us. Changed anti biotic.
 8. Lovely sunny day, short spell of 5 otherwise regular 7 still deteriorating. Now dangerously lethargic, considered retiring and set off south. After a few hours it was such a lousy heading carrying me SE, I thought sod it and turned west.
 9. Anti biotic seem to have kick in now feeling better and have an appetite again. Chest and nose still heavily congested now taking part in the event again. better but not good.
- 3 June 1100 BST: 49° 12'N; 31° 36'W. Winch handle lost overboard – 2 remaining
- 4 June: Chart plotter spontaneously rebooted, 7 times in 10 days – worrying. Went to turn off motor and autohelm blew fuse. All electronics went dead briefly. Autohelm now dead. Started using first water bottle today.
- 6 June: Force 8 winds 38 knots gusting greater than 40 knots. Spent most of night in bed – safest place. Thrown across the cabin once (ouch!) Gale lasted 15 hours before winds started to subside to force 7. Gale damage: Rope pockets full of water and no drain holes. Two torches drowned, one saved. Both spray dodgers torn away at bottom. Spray hood two studs pulled out of deck.
- 7 June: messages received indicating a parted jib halyard. Using the spinnaker halyard. At 09.00 we (Roger's family) received a call to say he had encountered his next "emergency". His jib halyard had broken. After a lengthy discussion, pouring over detailed Atlantic weather charts and lots of 'googling' we decided he would attempt to climb the mast to replace and re-thread the halyard. He had about a 5 hour window when the winds were light enough (10-12knots) for him to attempt the climb. He would keep the mainsail up so ET3 would keep sailing making her much more stable in the water. At 12.30 he called to say all was ready and I took a note of his position (as above), course (205 SW ish) and speed 2.5knots. I nagged him re: harnesses, helmet etc. I then paced round the house (coastguard number in hand!) for the next few hours waiting for the phone to ring. At 15.00 I had just set off to take my daughter to her ballet show dress rehearsal when he called. He was so knackered he was barely coherent but I gathered he had managed the climb and was safely back on deck, two and a half hours in total. Unfortunately he had been unable to replace the halyard as his fingers were too large to thread it. He was tired, hungry and very low. I promised I would do some more research and sent him to bed! Next instalment to follow.....
- 7 June 1609 BST: 46° 11'N; 37°13'W. More gale damage. Water in 12V/240V inverter, can't charge computer, big communication problem. Have to bail everyday but couldn't keep up with it during the storm. Still hard grind to windward. No respite. Like riding a bucking bronco when winds force 6 and above. Safest place is in bunk. For sailors amongst you "I am playing wind shifts as the lows go through". Since calm on day 13 have had continuous strong winds and

rough seas against me. Have "head resting moments" where have to stop and rest head on whatever is to hand. Good news – I think the stowaway (cold germ) is weakening and have less nasal congestion (Dad used an earthier phrase) but still got a lousy cough.

- 8 June 1609 GMT: 44° 17'N; 38°07'W. Current conditions 14-15 knots south westerly. Quite pleasant compared to recent days. Mist and gloom all night. Big ship lurking somewhere, AIS detecting but not showing on plotter. Turned radar on and found her. One mile off stern and eventually passing me by about a mile. Started shaking out the reefs in early hours. Wind progressively decreasing to force 3-4 12-15knots. Heading south to avoid next low pressure system. Much better day – washed feet, changed underwear, washed up, changed damp jumper for dry one. "No head resting today"
- 9 June 1200 BST: 43° 02'N; 38° 51'W Very dark night, little wind, though got down to 43N as planned ... not sure good move, time will tell. (Note: Since computer not available, having to rely on amateur weather forecasters and novice route strategists, worrying!!) (Note: Note added by Dublin Comcen, aka amateur weather forecasters and novice route strategists.....) I could hear birds all around me as I struggled to keep the boat on the wind in fickle conditions. I couldn't see a thing, neither my sails nor the birds, it was so dark. I shone the torch into the sky and as I did so all the birds went silent. One bright spot though. A little petrel landed in the cockpit, obviously very dazed but no apparent injury. It had tiny webbed feet and was as light as a feather. When it had recovered I flew it into the black and it was gone. After a long and difficult night, feeling very jaded, I packed up and went to bed. By morning we had drifted 5 miles to the south east but a gradually building wind from the south delivered many hours of sunshine and fast westerly sailing (7kts). Perhaps going south was a good idea after all!
- 10 June: 43° 05'N; 41° 28'W. Report dictated over satphone: The chart plotter re-booted three times during the night and once yesterday, a total of 10 times this trip (Dublin Comcen: obviously the skipper's sums have gone a bit awry - it was 7 times up until yesterday's report. 7 plus 4 usually equals 11 !!!!). A bit worrying.....24 to 28 knots of wind most of the night, put 2 reefs in at 2100 and the 3rd reef went in at 0200. At 1000 this morning the wind dropped from 22 to 6 knots in the space of 5 minutes (exactly as forecasted by the amateur weather folks we do get some things right!). Shook out 3 reefs all in one go, very strange, never done that before in 30 plus years of yacht sailing. Drifted about all morning in the pouring rain (is he hiding somewhere in Dublin?), refilled 3 water bottles with rainwater. Weather gradually cleared to give a fine evening, currently pootling along at 2 to 3 knots. Checked the towed generator during the calm period only to discover that the coupling and shackle was nearly worn through. Good job ... I would have lost the lot into the deep and been very limited in ways to keep the boat batteries charged. I have been trying to put the "windmill" together while it remains calm. I'll probably have to drop the generator mast to assemble it. (Note from Dublin Comcen: for those of you who saw Roger off at Plymouth, you may have notice a couple of poles, one sticking up at each corner at the back, one supports the radar (very fat plate on a stick), the other houses the wind power generator - that's the generator mast). Skipper feeling fine, just woken up from a long and very deep sleep. Being accompanied (Dublin Comcen: or perhaps stalked) by a Petrel - which is flying about at great speed very close to the water, rising and falling with the swell. Dublin Comcen: We then had a discussion about the weather overnight and tomorrow. ET3 is in for a smoothish night, 6 to 8 knots of wind, then it all goes pretty quiet tomorrow. Skipper is intending to check out bits on the boat and do maintenance" tomorrow.
- 11 June: Overnight no wind, we drifted 12 miles north and then 12 miles back south again from where we started. Bright sunny morning, still slopping around in the waves with no wind. Changed all my clothes, in fact wore only hat and sandals whilst it was sunny, (quote) "that was very pleasant, indeed it was magnificent" (unquote) (... but perhaps too much information for our sensitive readers!). Bailed out 18 inches of water discovered in water tank hold (in the forepeak). Finished off changing the water powered generator for the windmill and mounted it on its 8 foot mast. Tricky operation in the slop! Got into my "big food box" for the first time, everything inside was fine, replenished stores. Worked hard all day. I made a resolution to myself. When the stowaway is finally gone, now just a hacking cough, I promise myself a shave. Currently heading southwest on a free reach, 5 knots of wind from the southeast.
- 12 June: Minor broach during the night, boomed out jib got in a tangle. Eventually got jib safely furled and three reefs taken in the main. It was very difficult to sort it out in the dark with no moon. Wind veered from East to South overnight, force 6-7. 28 knots for most of the day. It seems to have dropped to force 6 this evening. Water leaking through the chart table window. It

- seems to have killed the battery meter and fuel tank meter. Storm jib halyard chaffed through against one of the spreaders. Hard beat against the wind all day but heading west quite well.
- 13 June 41° 31'N; 46° 56'W. Just before dark I noticed that the storm jib halyard that had chaffed through earlier was tangled with the topping lift. Worry turned to opportunity! If I went to the foot of the mast and released the topping lift I may be able to retrieve the halyard. It was quite rough, force 5 gusting 6 and I had one hour before dark. I went for it! Success.... As it went completely dark I was just tying off and making everything secure (01:00 BST). Now very hungry and no meal prepared. A Brian and Jackie self cooking meal was exactly what I needed. One hour later we were hit by a heavy squall, you can't see them coming in the dark. It was the first of three. All three reefs had to be put back in again. The trouble is we don't need three reefs in between the squalls. A very busy night! At first light (08:30 BST) I started to shake out the reefs and had full rig by midday. The wind veered to the NW and it got much colder, two extra sweaters now. We are on a beam reach to Newport and have been for 8 hours. Cold, misty, raining but going at a good speed in the right direction. Made a big tuna hash which should last 4 meals.
- 15 June 40° 12'N; 51° 19'W. Today was the hardest day so far after yesterday's lovely day. The wind and rain steadily increased until, by 5 am, it was blowing a full gale. We then had 11 hours of winds in the 35-38 knot region and a 4 hour spell in the middle with winds in the mid 40 knots. I recorded one gust at over 50 knots. At over 40 knots of wind, I learned that ET3, fully reefed and with virtually no jib is carrying too much sail. Those middle four hours were very harrowing but we coped. I have got to think of how to get all the main off and the storm jib on if over 40 knots is forecast again. At 16:00 the wind dropped to Force 5 which we have had ever since, plus a very rough sea. I got little to eat and no sleep. Now trying to catch up in a very uncomfortable motion. As I write there is a straight line across the sky, horizon to horizon, with cloud on one side and clear blue on the other. Still got 20 knots of wind.
- 16 June 38° 32'N; 52° 00'W. Decided to head south away from the lows to south of the Gulf Stream where the winds are predominantly from the south and southwest ... according to the routing charts, this would give free-er sailing (less beating), that's the theory anyway. Too many storms like yesterday and something important might break. Sailed SSW in 20 to 25 knots of wind all day in bright sun and a very lumpy sea. In fact the waves are much bigger that you would expect from a force 4 to 5. As the stowaway has more or less walked the plank now, I am waiting for a calmer spell to have a shave.
- 17 June 37° 45'N; 52° 12'W. I had a very frustrating night, tacking backwards and forwards. Regardless of which tack I was on I made no headway west. By the morning I had gone 16 miles south and 8 mile east! I can only assume it was either the Gulf Stream or a combination of the Gulf Stream and beating into the wind meant i made no miles to windward. Gradually through the morning the wind swung round to the south and now it is a fine sailing day. I'm rolling along on a broad reach and heading direct to Newport. GOING WEST AT LAST.
- 18 June 38° 27'N; 15° 41'W. Fingers crossed I am back on line. We've had a couple of sunny days and it seems to have dried out my inverter (12 to 240 volts) and I can now charge my computer and various other devices. Damage we suffered during the gale on day the 15th June. Two wire strands parted on the port lower shroud and one on the starboard lower shroud. I had a very worrying night following this discovery and the next day Elaine and Paul made urgent calls for help and advice. Eric and George were particularly helpful along with advice from professional riggers. As a result I am sailing conservatively, avoiding slams and shocks as much as possible and have fitted a brace to the mast on the port side, that's the tack I am on at the moment. I shall rig a brace on the starboard side as well and hopefully nurse her home. About 800 miles to go. Got to go and do some baling now, I think the water is getting in around the mast step.
- 19 June 38° 41'N; 57° 13'W. Its been a beautiful sailing day, sunshine and blue skies, trickling along westwards at about 4 knots but being dragged north by the Gulf Stream. Spent a couple of hours on deck changing the rig (adding "support" for the damaged shrouds). Not had much time to cook today so now I'm going to have a Brian meal!
- 20 June 2157 39° 03'N; 58° 32'W. The weather is really much more pleasant down here even if the wind was fickle all day, (managed to get a few jobs done though, gave the galley a good bottoming) fading to nothing by evening. This made ET quite demanding thro the night and day. I had expected the calm spell on Sunday but it arrived early, a few hours before dark. I planned to check the tension of the rigging and the bend the mast and I reckoned I had just enough time to do this before dark. On examination of the port shroud I found to my dismay 3 more strands had parted. Nevertheless acting on advice I had received I tightened all the

shrouds to make the mast very tight and the pre-bend in the mast remained within the manufacturers guide lines. I then rigged two 4:1 mast supports on the port side so that they did not push on the shroud when tightened, which the first one did and may have contributed to the additional wire failures. It was just dark when I finished and a beautiful night with a half moon. We had drifted a few miles north while I was doing this but I set her going west anyway.

21 June 1200 BST: 38° 58'N; 59° 49'W. I set the alarm and wearily lay down for a short sleep. Shortly after I went to sleep the chart plotter spontaneously rebooted itself (11th time!) and turned off the alarm and turned the radar on. I awoke 6 hrs later (not 90 mins later, my circadian cycle time) in complete darkness, all systems down, I reasoned it must be flat batteries as we have had light winds insufficient to drive the wind generator so I started the engine, systems restored. The damned plotter with no alarm the Radar scanner had been on for nearly 6 hours, ran the engine for 4 hrs, and then the wind filled in sufficient to drive the wind generator. I have now disconnected the radar. Also in that 6 hours I was driven further north and am in the Gulf Stream currently doing 4kts through the water but less than 2 over the ground. I spoke to Rory on *Cooking Fat* at midday and learnt that while I was drifting north he had sailed ahead west and had little effect from the Gulf Stream. It was a beautiful sailing day with wind and sun and I have spent the whole time trying to break free of the Gulf Stream. You can see from the position above at 2200 hrs I've not travelled far. Things that are different about the Gulf Stream, apart from the fact that it is going in the wrong direction:

- There are no birds, the Albatrosses, frigates and petrels have all disappeared
- There is lots of seaweed floating by
- Its very warm
- The vast blue sea and sky
- And the dolphins came to play off the bow today

22 June: The day started as yesterday finished sun, blue sea and sky, but quickly deteriorated to warm grey. Gradually the sea got rougher and confused and I had to slow ET down to stop slamming and protect the rig, travelling at half to two thirds her natural speed less the one and a half kts the Gulf stream is pushing me back. VERY FRUSTRATING. Now reaching the point of when to cross the Gulf Stream. Spoke to a rigger in Lymington today who suggested using a winch keep tension on the rigging. Not many spare winches on this boat but I managed to reorganise my clutches to hold the rope once tensioned. Still going fingers crossed. How many miles have I done? The log says 2845 miles over the ground. The trip says 3205 through the water. This was at 2300 hrs on 21 June 2010. About another 550 to go. Just got to hold it together.

22 June - later: Its been a beautiful sailing day with plenty of sunshine. *Ella Trout 3* has been going very well, these conditions suit her. No more damage to port shrouds as the pressure has been on the starboard side today. Broke out of the Gulf Stream at last. Approximately 440 miles to go.

23 June 1200 BST: 40° 12'N; 63° 43'W. Very mixed fortunes today. It started badly, in the first 4 hours of darkness we had two thunder storms which kept me very busy. Between the storms the wind was light so full rig, in the thunder storms heavy squalls would come in totally unseen in the darkness and hit us with gusts of force 5 or 6 which meant frantically rolling in the jib and reefing down 2 or 3 reefs, only for it to be all let out again. After 4 hours of this I was pretty weary and unintentionally fell asleep and awoke 4 hours later with ET heading NE with no jib in a force 2. Many curses! After that the wind got up, the sun came out and we had beautiful sailing at good speed in the right direction. The only interruption was a large ship which my AIS said was on a collision course. I called him on VHF channel 16 and by mmsi number but got no reply. In the end I had to tack to avoid him as he sailed serenely by. Used my last parsnip today, still in v good condition unlike the carrots which I finished a couple of days ago which were very black, but OK under the surface. The last of my cabbage is still going, one or two meals more.Sleep much better organised although the wind was backing through out the night going from SW to E a good working breeze giving good speed. Unfortunately by dawn it had dropped coming aft of the stern port quarter. In this direction the wind pilot can't cope so spent most of day on the helm to keep her going, which made it a long hard day. It was a lovely sunny day though and I got a bit sun burnt so it wasn't all bad. The birds are back, since leaving the Gulf Stream area I've seen both albatrosses and petrels

24 June 1313 BST: 40° 47'N; 65° 57'W. Well, I thought I had seen a big thunder storm the other night, Last night we had a big Daddy of a thunder storm. Why do they always come at night? It started with what I would now call a normal storm with rain and sudden squalls. Then Big Daddy came in; He started with steady heavy rain, no real sign of a storm and so I stripped off

and got the soap and shampoo expecting a pleasant shower, then He came wham force 6/7 winds, torrential rain, it was so heavy it made a waterfall off the mainsail. there was I; soap in my eyes from the shampoo, slippery with soap, nothing on, pitch black, thunder and lightening banging and flashing all round trying to get the sail off before any damage was done. AND the rain was really stinging on my bare parts!! If I wasn't well washed I was certainly well rinsed. Dawn brought heavy soaking mist and no wind. As the sun rose so did the mist and the wind a little we are now flopping along at about 2Kts in the waves left behind by Big Daddy. At the time of writing it is just midday, got to hold it together for another 260 miles.

26 June Personal message to Igor in *The Grand* and Rory in *Cooking Fat*: Very many congratulations to you both on a successful crossing, skilfully done and well executed from Roger and Ella Trout.

It was one of the most beautiful nights I think I have experienced, the moon was full the sea completely calm and it was warm again and not a breath of wind. I took the sails down for an hour and had a sleep. when I awoke a warm zephyr of wind was just arriving. Soon with this light warm wind we were careening along at 4kts on this moonlit lake like smooth sea it was absolutely beautiful, we were bathed in moon beams. My words are not adequate to describe it. I even gave up the chance to sleep to enjoy it. We kept this steady, not spectacular speed all night and most of the following beautiful day. For all that It has seemed extremely slow not running at normal hull speed and crossing the Nantucket Shoals, as well with its huge tidal stream first pushing us North/north east and then South/southwest every six hours I felt we were getting nowhere. In actual fact we haven't done too bad. Nevertheless the overriding feeling today is I just want to get there, we're so close when you look at the Atlantic as a whole but its still just out of reach. In these light conditions it is difficult to know when the wind generator is rotating fast enough to generate 12 volts and with no battery meter the batteries have gone flat a couple of times before I have put the engine on to charge them. Currently I have the battery locker open and I have to test the batteries regularly with my AVO meter (glad I brought it) to get some idea of their state. Should get there tomorrow, Sunday, unless the wind dies on us completely. I think the mast is safe in these conditions!

27 June Message from Elaine: Dear Eric and Ewen. We've just had official confirmation from Dad that he has arrived in Newport. His finishing time was: 17:31:59 UTC on Sunday, 27 June 2010. He said he had received a fantastic welcome from everyone in Newport. I'd just like to thank both of you for all your organisation and support. It was great to know you were always there if we had any difficult questions. We fly out to Boston with the family on Tuesday and are looking forward to meeting and congratulating the other Jesters challengers there. For all those Jesters still sailing we wish them fair winds and a safe journey. Regards, Elaine (and Paul) aka - the Dublin Comcen, which is now officially closed until May 2012!

28 June. Message from Norm Bailey. I am happy to report that Roger Fitzgerald onboard *Ella Trout* finished today at 1500 hrs DST (eastern). He is the third Jester to finish. Just prior to reaching Castle Hill Light his boat sustained a bit of damage going a ground on Brenton Reef. It was quite foggy as he made his way into the entrance of Narragansett Bay and the finish. His plotter went blank during a chart search internal to the plotter. Roger was frantically looking for a paper chart long enough for *Ella Trout* to drift toward, and strike the reef. At present there is a crack in the cabin sole and the sink base is separated where it joins the cabin sole. The boat is safely tied up at the NYC. Roger was not injured. The boat does not appear to be taking on water. However, I will recommend to him to have a diver check the bottom ASAP. After we sorted out securing *Ella Trout* in a slip, I had the honor of presenting on behalf of Mayor Jeanne-Marie Napolitano, a City of Newport Sailing Medallion to Igor, Rory and Roger recognizing their tremendous achievement. I will forward the pictures taken by Marine Photographer, Billy Black once they are downloaded

Later message from Roger dated Sunday 27th June 2010: We had just about cleared the Nantucket at the slow steady pace of yesterday and as midnight passed the wind stopped dead on the edge of a prohibited area, Normans Land and the tide drifted us towards the prohibited shore. I had to stay on watch all night several times only half a mile off this rocky shore. A frustrating start to the last day. By dawn an easterly had filled in, only force 1 but at least steady in one direction, enough for me to risk a little sleep. What I thought was morning mist did not lift and we had fog all day. The nearer we got to Newport the more we heard large engines passing by unseen. The wind went round to the west and I had to beat to the No 2 buoy at the start of the channel into Newport. About half a mile from the buoy the chart plotter lost its position and my little boat disappeared off the chart and the recorded track just stopped. There are two Gps aerals in the system from which the plotter can get its position and the radio was still

showing the lat/long position so at least one was working. With visibility about 150 yards I was suddenly lost and had to quickly try to navigate in the old fashioned way. I hurriedly got out the local chart and marked our position and shortly after found No. 2 buoy. The course to next buoy, No. 4 was more or less due north and with a westerly wind I could sail freely and set course in that direction. While I continued to frantically sort out the plotter to keep track of my position unbeknown to me there was a strong east going tide pushing me off course, so much so I never saw No 4 buoy and I hit the rock it was guarding. It was an almighty crash, standing in the companion way I was thrown forward hit my head on the instruments and losing a lens out of my glasses. After the initial shock, with one eye in focus, I got the engine going, while she continued to bang and crunch on this rock. From the surface of the sea I judged where the rock was and managed to drive her off with sail and motor power. She was still afloat with no apparent serious leak although I knew damage must have been done. Infuriatingly I notice the chart plotter was now showing my position with my recorded track starting again from the rock. At this point I was totally drained, badly shaken AND absolutely furious with the plotter letting me down at such a critical moment. Then out of the fog came Billy Black in his RIB, like a rescuing angel. He had come looking for me, and when acquainted with situation, guided me in all the way to Newport harbour feeding me instructions from Newport Yacht Club about berthing for which I was very grateful. As we approached the Harbour Master took over leading me in, sounding his siren every few minutes to draw attention to the little flotilla that was now escorting me. Many willing hands guided me along side, welcoming me, congratulating me in every hospitable way. It was a fantastic welcome and all my troubles were forgotten.. (Look; in this one paragraph I've gone from from being totally deflated to happiness and elation, the highs and lows of this trip amaze me) BUT; I could not step off the boat and nobody could come on the boat until customs had been cleared. What a palaver, the Yacht Club had notified them of my arrival. But no; - I had to notify them myself. Norm Bailey, Commodore of The Newport Yacht Club, (who has been fantastic throughout and continues to give generous support) provided the phone and we awaited the arrival of the Customs Officer. He was charming and once cleared an hour or more later the presentations could begin. I actually arrived at Newport Yacht Club about 2.30 in the afternoon and knowing I was close, everybody had been waiting for my arrival so that Igor, Rory and I could be presented with the town medal, a magnificent piece and we could all drink champagne and celebrate what I was beginning to realise was a fantastic achievement. It was a very happy affair that lasted the rest of the day, by which time I was totally beaten and took the offer of bed where Theresa was staying.

FOURTH to arrive - 41 days

07.45.30 BST on Sunday 4th July

Tony Head

Triple Venture

6565Y

28 May: 46° 25'N 15° 01'W. Wind SSW 25-30 knots. Bar 1011. Drifting 340° 1 knot. Hove to for supper and rest. "Plan is to stick to the 'girlie' southern route, passing just north of the Azores; must resist the temptation to drop in for a beer as I pass."

30 May 2000 BST: 43°39'N; 14° 25'W Co 180 speed 6 wind WSW F4 Claggy and humid, visibility about 1/2 mile Baro 1025 Air temp 19 deg C, sea temp 16 deg C. Hoping to pick up NE breeze soon and then start heading west, passing round to the south of a high developing off the coast of Portugal. Then passing south of the Azores following latitude 35-38N across to the States; not the quickest route but warmer and quieter (I hope) than the northern route.

1 June 2000 BST: 41°14'N; 15° 41'W Co 225 Speed 4 Wind SE F2-3 Baro 1020 Long swell from NW Sea Temp 18 deg C. 7/8 thin cloud. Sunny intervals. Weak front can be seen approaching from the west. Warm fine and enjoyable. Heading SW to pass south of the Azores. Saw a pair of shearwaters today and a whale's dorsal fin; exact species, bird and cetacean not identified. No ships. Sausages and mash tonight, accompanied by first phase of Wagner's Ring Cycle on the gramophone.

2 June 2000 BST: 40° 35'N; 17° 15'W. Course 250. Speed 4/5. Wind SSW F2-3. Sea slight, some swell from the NW. Has been very warm sunny day with blue skies and sea but presently approaching what must be the remains of a front; looks benign though. Bar 1017. Hard day keeping TV moving in light airs. During forenoon 3 spinnaker hoists, 2 wraps, 4 x 90 degree wind shifts 2 x 180 wind shifts. 2 dead calms when I took all sails down to reduce wear and tear. That sort of a morning! Wind has settled down this afternoon and evening to steadier

SSW F2-3 and making better progress at 3-5 kts in calm water. But actually lovely sailing in lovely weather. And a moon lit night in prospect. Still intending to pass south of the Azores if winds will allow. Glad to be heading west at last to start chipping away at the 2400 miles to go (plus some) to Newport. But at least I have generally favourable currents from now on and can cross the Gulf Stream at right angles whereas the "roughy toughies" taking northern routes have cold clammy conditions with counter currents to battle against in the closing stages. Seen nothing today except sea and sky. This area seems a bit of a black hole for shipping and wild life! No contrails either. Seem to remember this area is also a NATO long range naval missile firing range, but nothing seen whizzing overhead. Boat still in good order with no significant defects. "Mr Vane in Vain" working well in these light airs. but needed some "3-1" oil to cure a squeak. Consumption of drinking water has increased considerably today with much warmer weather and exertions on deck. Failed to make SSB HF contact with AQUARELLE on the north Spanish coast for some reason. Perhaps having land in the radio path now is making the difference. Trying again tomorrow on a selection of frequencies to a pre-arranged sched. 22 megs has been best for the last few days. Endured my 7th hour of Wagner "easy listening" during the day so deserve an Iron Cross. Stravinsky tonight on the sound box during diner.

3 June 2000 BST: 39° 27'N; 18° 55'W. Course 225. Speed 5. Wind WNW F3-4. Moderate sea and swell. Bar 1021. Sea Temp 19 °C. Air temp 24° C .1/8 cloud. Lovely sunny warm day. Good sailing last 24 hours in boisterous conditions, just easing off a bit now as evening approaches. 2 fronts came over during the night. The first was a mild affair but produced a useful increase in wind speed after days in near flat calm. Then fantastic clear starry sky and phosphorescence in the sea especially from my towed water turbine generator. Moon rise about 0100 BST added to the pleasure of this night sail. Second front at about 0600 this morning was amazing. As far as I could see (about 40 miles in each direction along the front) it was dead straight as if an artist had drawn a line in the sky with a ruler and shaded in my side grey/black and the other side bright blue. This cold front produced the usual 50 degree veer in the wind and it took an unpleasant hour or so for the wave pattern to settle down to the new wind direction. This new wind has been WNW F5/6 all day so very difficult to make much westing. So opted as always to head SW intending to pass south of the Azores. Butter (actually margarine) beginning to soften so must turn right soon. Boat going well. 4 rolls and 2 slabs most of the day in 15-18 kts apparent, giving 5.5 knots most of the time. Just unrolled the genoa and shaken one reef as wind is easing. Saw two ships, both revealed by SeaMe well in advance. The first seen at night had 2 steaming lights so presumably was over 50 m but no AIS was detected. The second vessel was seen in daylight and was a big tanker heading north east; again no AIS was received. Is it my AIS receiver or don't ships bother to transmit out here? Spaghetti Bolognese tonight, probably in the cockpit in the setting sun.

4 June 2000 BST: 38° 32'; 20° 11'W. Course 230. Speed 4. Wind NW F1/2. Bar 1027. Sea temp 21° C. Air temp 25° C. 5/8 thin cloud cover. No waves but long 5 m swell from NW. Been a lovely sunny day. Splendid sail over night at 5-6 knots with a beautiful clear starlit sky and pale green phosphorescence in the bow wave and towed water turbine. But by mid morning the wind had gone light and for the rest of the day I have been jiggling along at about 3 kts, courses various but generally pointing west. Opportunity taken for a thorough inspection of all deck fittings and the mast and standing rigging; no problems found. Also a much needed spring clean of the galley. Fresh foods are lasting well except for some carrots which have quickly gone off, but the heat is not helping. The last of the tomatoes and lettuce are in reasonable order. Apples and clementines also fine. The extra long life sliced bread will be OK for another day or two (tastes just as average now as the day it was bought!) then I will have to start baking (or rather finishing off) the part baked long life baguettes and rolls I have onboard. One day I must learn to bake bread properly but it consumes a lot of gas. Millions of goose barnacles floating in this part of the Atlantic. Consisting of a cream coloured floating sphere the consistency of "oasis" flower arranging foam, and about 50-75 mm in diameter, with about 10-20 goose barnacles attached in a little community. These little creatures have delicate feelers which reach out in the water presumably to reach for food in the water. Scooped up one community in the washing up bowl to have a closer look. Strange how these delicate creatures can survive the battering they must get in a gale. I have no news of other Jester entrants but the synoptic charts I have got and the big swell from the NW suggests there is plenty of harder sailing to be had "up north". Which is worse? light airs down here or battling with strong westerlies up there? I ponder this question as I sip my slightly warm but nevertheless delicious Sancerre (no fridge) this evening in the cockpit! No ships, one contrail, one unidentified sea

bird. Several satellites seen during the night including one quite bright one which I presume was the joint nation space laboratory. Plan is to keep struggling on in these light airs passing south of the Azores. The 3 day prognosis chart suggests I will pick up some favourable winds then so I have my fingers crossed for faster progress shortly.

5 June 2000 BST: 37°40' N; 20° 32' W. Course 200. Speed 5. Wind SW 3. Bar 1028. Slight sea with 4 m swell from NW. Sea temp 20 ° C. Air temp 25 ° C. Lovely sunny day. Still heading south waiting for the veer to allow me to head west around the bottom of the Azores. Both RN Northwood and GFS GRIB are confident of a high developing over the Azores and giving me easterly winds very soon. The high bar of 1028 supports all of this. I hope so otherwise if I continue much further south, next stop could be Brazil. Last night was tedious. Absolutely no wind from 0100 so dropped the sails and turned in for the night. At about 0600 the wind started to fill in and soon became a very pleasant SW F3 and it has been like that all day. Lovely sailing at 4-5 knots on a sparkling blue sea, full sail and dry decks, but I wish there was more of a westerly component in the course. Quite a few dolphins during the day but they quickly became bored with my slow speed and went off to do better things. Sighted the superstructure on one ship to the north of me heading east but no radar detected on SeaMe or AIS received. Overflown at low altitude (about 500 ft) by three US F16s flying in formation heading west, presumably to the US base on Terceira in the Azores. Boat going well and I feel fit and well; nothing like a bit of warm sunshine and dolphins to lift the spirits. I have been asked what self steering gear is onboard. My main outfit is a home-made wind vane servo steering gear which I built about 5 years ago and is well proven coping with spinnakers in very light condition and crashing to windward in 30 kts. The gear needs a bit of "tweaking" and adjustment of the various linkages etc for each particular course and wind conditions, but once set is a reliable and faithful helmsman, needing no beer or flattery to keep him going in all weathers. I made two of most components so I have lots of spares including 3 vanes and two servo blades. In addition I have four Autohelm 2000 electric units. These are the type that have a separate compass/control box from the power ram. This means I can use any of the 4 rams with any of the 4 compass unit, giving me plenty of spares. In practice this gear works very well in the boat and is more convenient than the wind vane gear in close quarters with other yachts etc but of course does take quite a lot of electrical power. All purchased off eBay and at boat jumbles over the years! If all else fails, I can get the boat to steer herself on the wind. My plastic waste storage container (an old flare box with a big watertight screw cap) is proving successful at dealing with stowing gash plastic until I can land it ashore, but it was noticed beginning to bulge this morning. Rushing it to the cockpit I released the pressure accompanied by pretty horrible smells. Something inside was brewing in the heat. So I had to fill the thing with sea water to cool it off and later drained it so that it could resume its intended role. About time now for a sundowner, a glass of Chilean red Carmenere tonight. Supper tonight is lamb hot pot!

6 June 2000 BST: 36° 19' N; 21° 48' W. Course 245. Speed 6 knots Wind WNW F4 1-2 m waves, long NW swell. 1/8 cloud. Bar 1029. Sea temp 21° C. Air temp 27° C. Superb sunny day and great sailing. The fervently prayed for veer came at 0415 this morning and since then I have been steering WSW to pass south of the Azores. Lovely sailing at just about hull speed in 12 kts actual wind. Wind just right: strong enough to move the boat yet not kick up a sea. Very comfortable. Expecting a further veer in next 12 hours to give NE F3-4 winds, which hopefully will carry me well beyond the Azores. Plan then is to sail along the 35N latitude until about 60W then head up to Newport, crossing the Gulf Stream at about right angles. But that is a long way off yet with 2,300 miles to go! Quite a few ships today. Seems to be a minor shipping route with empty tankers coming back from the States, heading for the Mediterranean. I have received various position reports from home indicating that Jester Challengers are scattered all over the Atlantic following a variety of routes from straight along the great circle, midway routes and my southern route. Fascinating to see which work out best.

7 June 2000 BST: 35° 23' N; 23° 55' W. Course 260. Speed 5.5 knots. Wind NNW F4/5. Bar 1028. Sea temp 21° C. 1/8 cloud. Sunny and warm. Overnight was cloudy with a few very light showers. But good sailing in F4 breeze and no waves. Wind fell light during the day but was able to keep going west at 5 kts. Sun came during afternoon so back to sparkling blue seas and sky. Has just freshened now to a solid NNW F4, almost N and 5. Have turned west at last and making reasonable speed for my little Twister yacht. Target is an average of 100 MPD (4.2kts) All depends now on what happens to the Azores high. I have no chance of matching Trevor Leek's crossing time in a Twister of 32 days 17 hours in 1992, so my target is to get to Newport in under 40 days which is the RWYC's time limit for its OSTARs. But it will be

touch and go. Several ships overnight. One came fairly close but when I called him up on VHF he assured me he had seen me and was keeping clear. In the event he passed about 1/2 mile away. During this period I changed to my electric autopilot No 1, so that I was more quickly manoeuvrable. It worked well whilst the ship was close but there was hint it wasn't working well shortly afterwards. I have checked it during the day and it seems OK but I have relegated it to 4th place among my choice of 4 electric pilots. Many "By-the-wind-sailors" in this area. Not sure what sort of creature they are but they are a wonderful iridescent blue, and have a flat oval "body" about 100 mm across, which floats on the sea's surface, and also a semicircular membrane "sail" sticking up across the back. With this sail they follow the Atlantic winds and currents. Some end up on Cornish and Devon beaches but sadly are so mangled that it is difficult to appreciate how they float. Now I am sailing at faster speeds the towed water turbine generator is charging at a steady 3-4 amps. Which at times is too much. As this device does not have a regulator, I am having to switch on electrical equipment to absorb the power and avoid over-charging the batteries. Had a very good SSB contact with Richard Bowman in AQUARELLE; used 22.239 megs at 0800 BST and almost telephone quality was the result. Not bad for over 900 miles away. Bach unaccompanied cello works on the sound box tonight during supper of steak and kidney pie. With a glass of red of course. My son describes TRIPLE VENTURE when it comes to her inexhaustible stock of booze as a cross between the Tardis and Oddbins!

8 June 2000 BST: 34° 38'N; 26°18'W Course 250. Speed 5. Wind NNW F5. Moderately rough sea. NW swell. 6/8 cloud. Sea temp 21°C. Mildly boisterous night. No stars so very black. One of those nights when you could not discern the sea horizon against the black cloud; always eerie sailing into the unknown. But sailing fast in the right direction. Wind gradually built up during day and has settled at 15-20 kts from NNW. 8 rolls in the genoa and two reefs in the main sailing at a steady 5 knots making. Ground to the west at last. No ships, just a few sea birds. Occasional outbursts of Portuguese from the VHF, probably from the Azores to the north of me. Boat going well keeping up a steady 6 kts most of today. I'm sailing at about 70 degrees apparent wind so the motion is as comfortable as you could expect in a 28ft boat in these conditions! Had to put on foul weather gear for the first time in 10 days to put in the reefs in the mainsail; very hot in this gear. Dry and comfortable in the cabin. Intention is to continue on this course and concentrate on speed for the next few days, or as long as the wind permits.

9 June 1104 BST: 34° 13'N; 27° 53'W. Course 270. Speed 5. Bar 1021. Sea temp 21°C. Humid and warm. Mainly overcast with occasional glimpses of weak sun. Wind has veered to NE F3. Sea and swell gradually reducing and settling to a more even pattern. Broad reaching with full main and genoa at 4-6 kts. Too roly for a spinnaker at the moment. Will consider setting a spinnaker or a trade wind rig tomorrow. Boisterous overnight in F5 winds with a bigish sea. 4 or 5 occasions when I had to reef or un-reef to keep things under control yet as fast as reasonably possible. Overcast black night. Made good progress at 5-6 knots heading west though. Overcast but warm during the day with the wind gradually easing and veering. No ships today, just sea, overcast sky and a few sea birds. I have 2280 miles to go following my southern route. If I am to complete the Jester Challenge within 40 days (24 left to go) then I must achieve a daily run of at least 96 miles from now on, so all my efforts are directed to keeping the boat tracking as fast as possible. There is more sail trimming going on down here than in the Plymouth Regatta! Had a clear out of my fresh vegetable locker. All the carrots were going off as was one red cabbage, so were ditched. In contrast, the onions, white cabbage, spuds, the last of the tomatoes and an iceberg lettuce are all doing well. Plenty of apples left but only one Clementine to go. Hungry now, so looking forward to sausages and mash with lots of fried onions! Also a glass of Portuguese Terra Franco from a bottle found in the bilge left over from the last time we were in the Azores. So cheers and best wishes to you all from here in the Atlantic.

10 June 2000 BST: 34° 17'N; 30° 31'W. Course 285 speed 5. Wind ENE F2/3 waves 1-2 m, long NW swell. Bar 1023. Sea temp 21°C. Warm, muggy day mainly overcast but some sunny intervals. Most of day spent keeping the boat moving in light winds from the NE veering slightly ENE, trying to beat the target of 96 mpd to get to Newport within 40 days. Speeds today have varied between 3-6 kts, but hopeful overall should make 100 miles. Mainly running or very broad reaching. Tried the spinnaker but soon got a wrap in the swell, so reverted to white sails. Presently have the genoa boomed out goose winged, and going well though rolling at times. Sighted one ship at 0500 this morning heading north across my bow; displaying 2 steaming lights and quite big, but no radar or AIS detected. He was well clear and not a problem. Lots more seabirds today; mainly shearwaters. Party time at 1020 this morning; my

Brookes and Gatehouse instruments told me I had only 2000 miles to go (by great circle). My southern route is slightly longer of course. Celebrated with a chocolate brazil with my mid morning coffee. Had a wonderful shower in the cockpit during a short downpour this afternoon. Fairly warm rain but a bit breezy around the nether regions. Felt odd showering wearing a lifejacket/harness ensemble, but with soap all over the cockpit I was not going to risk slipping overboard. Much refreshed and sweeter smelling now; at least I think so. So overall a good day with morale boosted by making some progress at last towards NRI, and by a shower.

11 June 2000 BST: 34° 32'N; 32° 13'W. Wind NE2-3, slight sea and swell. 6/8 cloud cover. Bar 1029 Very warm muggy day. Daily run 1200-1200 91 miles. 1880 miles to go, direct by great circle. Intention remains to head west on this latitude until about 60/65W then head up to Newport RI. Put spinnaker up at midnight and have been struggling all day to make progress west in light NE/E winds and a sloppy swell. Mostly at 3-4 knots with occasional bursts of 5. Gybed the thing about 6 times during the day. Only one mild wrap which was easily sorted. Daily run of 91 miles is not too bad in the circumstances. Wind has just freshened very slightly as evening approaches so have reverted to white sails overnight, with the genoa boomed out. I have been using an electric autopilot today as Mr Vane in Vain is too fiddly to reset with every minor change of course, and there have been lots of these today. As a result of using the electric autopilot and the slow speeds which prevent my towed water turbine generator from giving full output, I had to run the engine today for an hour's battery charging, the first run for about a week. Discovered one "stubby" bottle of beer has leaked in the bilge; smells like a brewery down there. Must remember to wash through. I think the "crown" cap must have had a knock at some stage, causing the leak. A tragic waste .. As I only started with 40 bottles, one a day, this gives me extra incentive to get to Newport in under 40 days! Lots of shooting stars last night, flashing through from east to west. Came across one ship which came close at 0800 this morning just as a dark cloud came over too. At least this one was operating radar which activated my SeaMe and was transmitting AIS data. But as a result I missed my morning SSB radio sched with *aquarelle*. We will have another go at 2230 this evening. That's it for today. I'm more tired tonight than usual due to all the spinnaker work, so looking forward to some sleep, albeit in 20 minute snatches which has been my norm for the last 18 days, but my body is well used to it.

13 June 2000 BST: 34° 08'N; 36° 35'W. Course 270 sog 5.6kts. Wind SSE veering S4/5. 2-3m waves. Bar 1027, sea temp 22°C. Very warm day with hazy sun through 6/8 cloud. 1 reef in the main and full genoa. 111 miles run in last 24 hours. A splendid day sailing fast and comfortably in warm blue seas. All night and most of day on a very broad reach with the genoa boomed out. But wind has just veered slightly and now on a finer reach so have taken down the pole and put a reef in the main to keep the boat upright. She is always faster that way and I suspect the wind will freshen anyway overnight. Passing 35W is a psychological point in any Atlantic crossing; Atlantic chart 4011 is folded along this meridian so on a small chart table has to be turned over to reveal the USA! Also one moves from Metarea 1 and European Search and Rescue Regions to Metarea 4 and into the USA Search and Rescue Region, so I am now in the tender care of our American friends. Intention is to continue heading west. Waiting for next weatherfax from Boston to assess what the depression 400m to the NW of me will do. It is heading for the group of Jesters up at 45°N 35°W and is likely to give F7/8 winds for them.. I anticipate the S wind I have at the moment will continue to veer to give me some time on the wind then hopefully a new high will move in from Cape Hatteras behind the depression to give me easterly winds again. Fingers crossed on this one. By great circle I have 1690 miles to go but by following my chosen route there are about 1790 MTG. Very much touch and go whether I can achieve my target of under 40 days but we are trying hard and enjoying it greatly. Minor breakage to report; when stowing my spinnaker pole I caught the downhaul around a dorade ventilator and pulled off the air scoop. Fortunately the screws gave before the device itself so repairs will be easy in Newport. The ventilator has its storm bung in it any way so the incident does compromise water tight integrity. Good SSB contact last night with Cargreen yacht *AQUARELLE* at a range of 1500 miles on 12megs. This frequency seems to suit the dusk radio path. The reason I mention these contacts is because I enjoy the chat with Richard Bowman (he is presently exploring the north Spanish coast) and because SSB radio could be a fall back if my Iridium satellite phone becomes US. Not sure how much longer we can hold contact as I move further to the west. Chicken in white wine tonight with, you have guessed it, a glass of white wine. No more beer bottle leaks to report thankfully. Ship's time is now Z-1.

- 16 June 2000 BST: 34° 58'N; 43° 34'W. COG 300. SOG 4.5kts, Wind SSW, 6. 3-5m waves. Bar 1014 7/8 cloud with sunny spells (not many) Sea temp 22°C Noon to noon run 112 miles. Rough old night and day with F6 winds from the SSW, lots of rain and scudding cloud. Kept going well reefed down at a comfortable 4.5 kts (well as comfortable as a 28 ft boat can be!). 3-5m waves running. Not able to lay my desired course of west, so steering best 300T. At least this course takes me up the GC course to Newport so my "miles to go" meter" is winding down steadily on the Brookes and Gatehouse displays. But will keep heading west whenever the opportunity presents. Next noon to noon likely to be not so good as the last few days, but hopeful will be at least 100. Very, very sorry to hear of the loss of *Amadeus* in 40-50 kt winds about 400m N of me. Understand yacht was dismasted and holed but at least Andy has been safely picked up by a MV and is on his way to Antwerp. First yacht we have lost in three Jester events. Just one ship today, operating radar and AIS. Not much else seen other than waves and rain! Boat keeping dry down below, but decks and coachroof have been well rinsed today. Discovered I have a fitted dishwasher; it is called the cockpit. Leave the dirty dishes and pans overnight on the cockpit sole, arrange for some rough weather and by morning every thing has been washed. Just be careful teaspoons do not get washed down the cockpit drains. Good SSB contact with Richard Bowman in *Aquarelle* on 16megs at 1600 miles range last night at dusk. Hope the RNSA single handers at L'Abervrach are having better weather. Hey ho - 1360 miles to go.
- 17 June 2000 BST: 34° 37'N; 45° 34'W. COG 270. SOG 4 kts Wind variable mainly NE F1-2 Long 5-8m swell, slight waves. Blue sky with some high cirrus. Bar 1026 so right under a "high". Noon to noon run 95 miles. 1277 MTG by great circle. About 1400 MTG by my planned southerly route. Lovely day but very little wind, a hazard of taking a southerly route. I emerged from yesterday's cold front at about 2200 BST yesterday evening, and tacked on the veer to west again with the intention of sailing along the bottom of the high which is now developing here. Hopefully I will get favourable NE winds. Good wind overnight from NW gradually veering N and reducing. Now variable mainly NE F1-2. Spent most of today coaxing the boat along, sometimes losing way, sometimes at 5kts but generally heading west. Able to do some deck gear maintenance so there is a whiff of WD40 about everything this afternoon (my "ship's time" is now Z-2, three hours behind UK) Also took the opportunity of a period of lost way to recover my towed water turbine generator for a check. These devices are great bits of kit for pumping in the amps when sailing but recovery of the turbine and its 15m of tightly twisted rope is a nightmare, and a pantomime! Actually the exercise was worth while as I found some light green polypropylene line wrapped around the turbine, which explained its slight loss of performance. Pretty certain I have a favourable current of about 1/2 kt with me. Speed over the ground (SOG) from the GPS is consistently that amount faster than my carefully calibrated B&G log, whereas for most of the trip it has been the other way around ie SOG less than log. At breakfast had a pod of dolphins for company. Sailing at 6 kts then so they stayed for about 20 minutes; an uplifting experience whilst I ate my cornflakes and boiled egg in the cockpit! Bit late with this SITREP as I was speaking with the OOW of the MV *Sealand Performance* bound for the USA. He was not operating radar but AIS came through load and clear. Excellent weatherfax information coming in from Boston; good clear surface pressure charts with lots of useful wind arrows added by the forecaster. Clearly the Jesters up at 40N 50W have had a tough time in the current depression marching NE. Hope *Ella Trout* is OK. Roger Fitzgerald must have been within 50m of *Amadeus*, lost yesterday in 40/50 kt Winds. I note winds are fairly brisk back in the English Channel too. Heard from John Gozzard (*Pippin*, Jester Azores Challenge 2008) that he is holed up in L'Abervrach at the moment. Tuna pasta tonight with a small glass of Muscadet, bottle bought in Morlaix last year. Unfortunately the sea temperature of 23C does not allow me to cool it to the temperature Eric Andlauer would approve, but I will enjoy it nevertheless. Good SSB contact with Richard Bowman on 16 megas last night, but kept short as I was emerging from the cold front at that time and had just tacked. Best wishes to everyone'
- 18 June: 34° 27'N; 46° 23'W
- 19 June 2000 BST 34°49'N; 49° 54'W. Having temporary problems with my email, so very much abbreviated SITREP for today and yesterday. Lovely sailing, plodding steadily west at 4.5 kts in warm muggy conditions. Having a great time except for blasted laptop! Backlog of full SITREPs follow tomorrow when I have transferred everything to my reserve laptop! Very, very sorry to hear of *Vaquero's* retirement but Duncan is doing the sensible thing in view of his mast problem.
- 21 June 0511 BST: 35° 08'N; 52° 14'W

- 22 June 2000 BST: 35° 57'N; 55° 16'W COG 300 SOG 5.5 Wind WSW 4/5 Moderate sea. Bar 1022 Clear blue sky. Sea temp 23°C, Very warm. Last noon to noon 98 miles. 820 MTG by GC. Wind veered and headed me during night from a west course to 320 then back to 300. Now not able to lay course to my planned turning point at 35N 65W (north of Bermuda), so tactic for the moment is to sail close on wind, heading up the great circle to Newport, just over 800 MTG. Will keep west of this route whenever wind allows. Boston weatherfax is predicting the wind will shift to the SE in about 36 hours so my chance may come then to resume heading west. Presently sailing fairly fast in F4/5 but slightly bumpy at times. Have reefed down to reduce speed and the strain on the boat and standing rigging. Glorious weather but I understand it is also hot and sunny in UK. Soon I will have to chose where to cross the Guf Stream; get it right wrong and I could have 25-40 miles a day against me! Get it right and I could have a similar lift. One ship today, the MSC MYKONOS, passed about 2 miles away heading for English Channel. Picked up on AIS but not SeaMe. With binoculars I could see 2 radar scanners rotating, so presumably they were not transmitting. I was too busy with putting in a reef at the time to call up the ship and check. Visibility was excellent at the time. SSB radio contact has petered out with AQUARELLE; 2300 miles away seems just too far for the frequencies we have tried. Unfortunately I forgot to load up my HF propagation prediction programme on the boat's laptop so have run out of ideas for frequencies to try. However I am picking up Bermuda Navtex now at a range of about 500miles. ELLA TROUT must be close to Newport now and the Wharram catamaran COOKING FAT must be near too. Best wishes from this bit of the Atlantic.
- 23 June 2000 BST: 36° 51'N; 56° 41'W. COG 290. SOG 3 kts. Wind SSW 2. Bar 1017. Very heavy rain and thunder most of day, now clearing to an overcast (stratus) sky. Last 24 hours run 110 miles. Not the best day of this trip. Overnight fair progress was made close on the wind heading up the GC route, but at 0600 it became obvious that we had entered a 2 kt current heading NE. The strength of this current surprised me but it was definitely about 2 kts!, as worked out by my Brookes and Gatehouse instrumentation and by my back-of-an-envelope vector triangles! In the light winds I could either make good north, taking me up to Newfoundland, or south taking me away from Newport and towards Bermuda. I chose to go south and eventually we seemed to be out of the strong current into a more gentle 0.5kt NE current. Then very heavy rain enveloped us. I took the opportunity for another cockpit shower, but this was cut short by flashes of lightning and thunder all around. This rain persisted most of the day but has just cleared and we are struggling now in a very gentle SSW wind to make progress between west and the GC course of 295T. Speed is about 3 kts. So it seems this last leg is going to be a struggle. The Boston weather faxes suggest light SW winds will persist for the next day or two so it looks like progress is going to be slow. Many OSTAR competitors say this last leg is the most frustrating. But spirits remain high onboard, though I have to confess to not enjoying the thunder and lightning. I was very conscious that my aluminium mast was the only thing sticking out of the sea for miles around, just calling for a lightning strike. There is so little one can do in the circumstances except keep ones fingers crossed. Fortunately the lightning appeared to be sheet lightning within the clouds, rather than strikes into the sea. Steak and kidney pud tonight with some Elgar and Delius on the sound box. Probably will have to be up much of the night keeping the boat moving in these light airs.
- 24 June 2000 BST: 37° 36'N; 58° 59'W. COG 285. SOG 4.5. Wind SSW F6. Rough sea. Blue sky. Bar 1015. Sea temp 23°C. 617MTG. Daily run 102 m. After the frustrations yesterday, wind filled in at a nice SSW F3/4 in the evening and we were on our way again. Fast overnight, sailing steadily at 6 kts comfortably holding COG 285 in a SSW F4 wind compared to GC course required of 296, so some in hand for later. More recently the wind and sea have got up to F6 so have had to reef down and slow down so as not to strain the boat (and me!). Comfortable enough now jogging along at 4.5 kts. Forgive brevity of this SITREP today but the rough conditions are not conducive to accurate typing! But all well making good progress towards Newport which is now 617m away.
- 25 June 2000 BST: 38° 06'N; 60° 27'W. Hove-to. Fore-reaching, COG 330. SOG 2.0 Wind SSW 6/7. Rough seas, 3-4m waves. Bar 1012. Sea temp 24°C .7/8 cloud. last 24 hour run 105 miles (including 4 hours hove-to). 541 MTG. Good progress overnight sailing at 5-6 knots at COG 285 with Newport 296 by great circle. But gradually the winds increased to 25 kts true with seas to match so by breakfast this morning the boat was banging and crashing into the seas despite every combination of course, reefs and speed I tried. Eventually something was going to break so I hove-to at 0800. Blissful tranquillity, relatively anyway. I remained hove-to most of the day but it seemed to ease a bit at 1700 so had another go at sailing. But again the shock

loads on the boat (not to mention me) were too high so I hove-to again at 1900. Unfortunately the weather charts do not show any early change so I anticipate having to sit this out for a while now. These last 541 miles are not proving easy! However sprits remain high and I have several good books to read whilst I am lashed in my bunk waiting for a break in the weather. My best estimate is that I am in an area of current heading NE at about 3/4 kt. Not particularly helpful to progress either! No defects to report on the boat. Had to run the engine this afternoon to charge the batteries for the first time for ages. The towed water generator usually does the job but of course does not keep the batteries topped up when hove-to. Have seen no ships but it is noticeable that there are more seabirds; probably because of the relative proximity of land.

- 26 June 2000 BST: 38° 49'N; 61° 26'W. COG 350. SOG 2-3. Wind NW ½. In Gulf Stream (temp 27°C) running NE at 2 kts. 1/8 cloud. Hot and sunny. Slight sea. Last 24 hours run (mostly hove-to) 53 miles. After spending most of yesterday hove-to, wind and seas finally eased enough at 2300 last night to get underway again heading 290 in F4/5 winds. Then last night became about the most terrifying night I have ever spent at sea. Under a huge mass of cumulonimbus with continuous sheet lightning. Went on for hours immediately overhead. How we survived without a strike I do not know. Fortunately the clouds seemed more intent on dissipating their electrical energy within the clouds rather than striking the ground. During the morning winds died right away and now I am in light airs, but hoping for a veer to the NE soon if my Boston weather chart is to be believed. Now in part of the Gulf Stream which is sweeping me NE at 2 kts. In light airs I am not making much progress, so it is a bit frustrating all round! But there are only 482 miles to go so spirits are high.
- 27 June 2000 BST: 39° 45'N; 62° 36'W. COG 290. SOG 5.9. Wind SSW F4 and rising. Sea slight but building. Bar 1014. Sea temp 25°C. Beautiful day but cloud approaching from SW heralding the blow expected for tomorrow. Last 24 hours run 53 miles (this is what the Gulf Stream does to otherwise 100 miles through the water!). 410 MTG. Difficult night hand steering for much of the time to keep the boat moving in first a NW then a SW F1 breeze and with the Gulf Stream (temp 27°C) running at 2.5 kts in places. Generally I was able to make good about 320 spd 3. Whenever I stopped, the GPS soon told me I was heading backwards NE at 2-3 kts! The only consolation was it was a beautiful full-moon lit night and warm in the cockpit. At breakfast the wind settled at a steady SSW F2 and has gradually built up during the day so that we are now sailing at good speed with one reef and a handful of rolls, and are almost through the GS. But it will not last. A SW blow up to 30kts is forecast for tomorrow, decreasing tomorrow evening and going NW. So I anticipate spending much of tomorrow hove-to, probably going backwards over ground I have just gained today! But it will give me a chance to get on with reading my book, whilst strapped in my bunk. Have heard lots of ships' radars chirping away on the SeaMe but not actually seen any ships. I think these are in the shipping lane to the north of me, on the GC route from Europe to places in the USA such as Boston and New York. Receiving NAVTEX weather and MSI now from Boston and Fundy (Canada) so land is definitely getting closer. I seem to have got through the worst of the Gulf Stream now, as I reach 40°N; my B & G and back of the envelope vector triangles suggest there is no more than about 1/4 kt at the moment. Thank goodness, it was almost 3 kts at one stage! It was just like sailing in Brittany at spring tides without the consolation of knowing the tidal stream will go slack and turn every 6 hours! Plan now is to keep going on present direct course for as long as the rising wind will allow, ride out the blow and then follow the 1000 m contour round to Newport on the NW wind that will follow the blow. Just hope it goes back to SW for the last leg up to Block Island. With 410 MTG there is still a long way to go and in difficult conditions. Baked bread (well, ready made part-baked baguettes!) today which turned out very well but awfully hot in the cabin. One good bit of news is that I found 2 more "stubby" bottles of beer tucked away in a locker. With luck now I have enough left for one a day all the way through to Newport. Delighted to hear *The Grand* and *Cooking Fat* have arrived safely and that *Ella Trout* is not too far away from the finish too. Best wishes to every one.
- 28 June 2000 BST 40° 27'N; 64° 35'W. Sorry this SITREP has been delayed. Too busy last night and my fingers were too wet to make the touch sensitive pad on the laptop work. Hope my regular readers were not too disappointed! Just heaved-to in big seas under storm jib and trysail in 25-30kts wind from SW. Fore reaching at about COG 300, speed 1kt. Sea temp 24°C. Bar 1007. 318 MTG by GC. Day started splendidly with a lovely fast sail on a clam sea in moon light, with no evidence found of the Gulf Stream setting me back. Passed through various areas of green coloured sea, temp 16C, and back into blue sea temp 26C. The infamous poor visibility of this area beginning to show. Wind steadily built during the day and I had to reef and roll

down until eventually I had to change to the storm jib (on a removable inner forestay) and to the trysail (which has its own track on the mast and kept rigged ready to go at the base of the mast). This kept me going for a few more hours in the right direction. This evening the wind and sea continued rising and the boat no longer was sailing without banging and crashing around so I hove-to at about 1900BST which is the primary reason there was no SITREP. Very hot working in full foul weather gear again in air temps of 30C and high humidity. During the morning felt unwell (headache, and general light headedness), but realised it was simply dehydration. The inside of my oilies were as wet as outside despite being Gortex. A programme of re-hydrating, drinking, it seemed, about a gallon of water had me right as rain in an hour or two.

29 June 2000 BST: 41° 02'N; 65° 31'W. COG 310. SOG 5 Wind SW 10kts but dying. Sea state was rough now dropping fast. In green sea, temp 16C. Muggy haze, visibility about 1-2 m. Weak sun overhead. Bar 1008. Noon to noon 60 miles (including time hove-to). 265MTG by GC. Fairly comfortable night hove-to. Wind remained at 25-30 kts all night but with a long sea and only a few breakers. Boat kept at a nice 60 degrees to the seas and actually was fore-reaching nicely at about 1kt towards Newport, leaving a good slick to subdue any breaking waves approaching me beam-on. Did spag bol with a small glass of an excellent Chilean red; but standards are dropping however, as I resorted to eating it in slovenly fashion from the saucepan whilst strapped in my bunk! Good night's rest though..Pan left out in the cockpit "dishwasher" and was clean by the morning. One wave which broke over the boat during the night left lots of seaweed draped over the mainsheet, wine vane gear, guard wires and tiller. It looked like the Hanging Gardens of Babylon in the morning. Wind moderated at about 1100 BST this morning (about 0600 local time), so dropped the storm jib, and got under way with the trysail and rolled genoa. Good progress made but cannot lay a course for Newport, I am only making good about 310. Gradually unrolled the genoa, and the job after this email is to drop the trysail and change back to the mainsail. Plan is to keep going on this tack until the 1000 m contour then consider tacking to get around George's Bank which is ahead of me. Seems strange now to be approaching shallow water, with the dangers of bumping into things! Heard a few claps of thunder during the day as some cloud went overhead which did nothing for my heart rate, but it was distant, quickly past and not a danger. Plenty of seabirds now, they must have good navigational facilities to cope with the poor visibility which is a feature of this part of the world. No ships or SeaMe/AIS contacts today but I anticipate some tonight as I approach the shipping lane from Europe to the USA which runs along the SE edge of George's Bank. Delighted to hear from John Gozzard that the Royal Naval Sailing Association single handed race to L'Aberwrach was a great success, no doubt boosting profits for the French bar owners ashore. Although only 265 miles to go, it is likely to be all windward work so I have quite a few more days sailing ahead of me. I won't meet my target of 40 days now unfortunately but I have a chance of getting there for USA independence day which should be fun..

1 July 2000 BST: 39° 59'N; 68° 24'W. COG 220. SOG5.5 on starboard tack. Wind W F4/5. Sea getting a bit rough. Clear blue sky. Back in sea temp 20°C. Bar 1017. Last 24 hours run 72 miles. MTG160. Kept plugging on in very light winds and fairly strong tides overnight but wind has recently filled in from the west and is now a healthy W F4/5. Wind due to go to the NW soon and to SW on Saturday. Probably it was a mistake for me to get into the shallower water off the Georges Bank as the tides were stronger there and in light winds that held me back. Should have stuck to my original plan of keeping along the 1000m contour and making my westing there. But the winds might have been even lighter there; who knows? Anyway I am back in deep water now which is much warmer thank goodness (it got down to 12°C on the bank!) and I am tacking along to the south of the Ambrose to Nantucket Traffic Separation Scheme, trying to lee-bow the tide as best I can.. I will chose my moment to cross this TSS tomorrow some time. Although Newport is now only 160 miles away it is all to windward so there is still plenty of challenge left in this bit of the Atlantic for a small boat such as *Triple Venture*! All well onboard with one minor irritation; the memory battery on the weatherfax machine has expired which means every time I switch the thing on I have to re-enter the frequencies I want to use. Simple enough to fix once I get there! Lots of dolphin activity around the boat including a tightly packed group of about 40 which kept in very close formation for an hour or so. No matter how bad the weather or lack of progress, dolphins always lift the spirits! Lots of jelly fish too. Could not clear email last night due, I think, to a problem at Iridium. But I re-tried just now and all yesterday's mail all went off just fine. I think this was a similar problem to the one I had a while back on this trip, cured I thought by

changing to my reserve laptop. Probably if I try that laptop again it will work OK. More ships today's including a USN frigate, destroyer and supply ship, heading probably for the naval base in the Narragansett Bay near Newport. Also excellent visibility which is so unusual here. The problem for the last two days has been too much wind, whereas, you've guessed it, the problem today is too little! Overnight I made good speed with a SW F4/5 wind but this died this morning to be replaced with a very gentle NW zephyr, but even that has just died leaving me becalmed and wallowing on a gentle swell.. NW wind is forecast for tomorrow and hopefully I do not have to wait too long for this to fill in. I have been trying to work my way along the SE edge of Georges Bank most of the day. Remarkably for this area the visibility is actually quite good, which is useful as there are more ships around now joining the Traffic Separation Systems on the way to New York and Boston. I have to cross these TSS at the point where the Boston and New York routes join off the Nantucket Shoals in a sort of huge marine round about. But the traffic density overall is much less than the English Channel. Passed by 4 ships today all detected on my SeaMe and AIS. One of them was the *Norwegian Epic*, a huge block of floating apartments that passes for a cruise liner these days! As I crossed into the shallow waters of the Georges Bank the water temperature plummeted from 25°C to 12°C in just a few miles, which required a rapid change from shorts and polo shirt to trousers and woollies and full foul weather gear in the cockpit. It feels just like spring or autumn sailing in the UK at the moment and a bit of a shock to the system after being used to almost tropical temperatures for the last few weeks. The water here is duck-pond green which I think means the water has plenty of plankton etc and is a rich food source for fish and cetaceans. Saw lots of shearwaters gliding on the swell, and also was visited several times by dolphins. There are lots of whales in this area but none seen yet. So all a bit frustrating at the moment, but spirits remain high, and there are only 182 miles to go. At least the colder sea temperature means my last few remaining beers are that much cooler!

2nd July 2000 BST: 39° 49'N; 69° 35'W. COG 290. SOG 5kts. Wind NNW F3 and reducing. Moderate sea, going down. Sea temp 21°C. Lovely sunny day with 1/8 cloud. Last 24 hour run 68m including hove-to. 127MTG. Soon after last night's email was sent the wind got up to NW 25-30 kts true with a steep confused sea with it. I crashed and banged on for a while but soon was making very little progress to windward so did the seamanlike thing; hove-to, had supper and turned in. It blew hard all night but at about 1100 the wind veered from NW to NNW and moderated enough to get underway and I have been heading 295 most of the day with reefs and rolls coming out as the wind gradually decreased. It is due to go light tonight and fill in from the SW late tomorrow. With luck that should carry me on to Newport. Hope so because it is getting frustrating; so near yet so far! Saw about 4 ships overnight heading for the Boston TSS, all detected on SeaMe and AIS. Baked a baguette for lunch today and made a white cabbage and onion salad in mayonnaise. Almost at the end of my fresh vegetables now. Chicken in white wine, with rice tonight. Plan tonight is to keep on the wind making about 290 and see what turns up when the wind goes light. Inshore forecasts predict light NE winds so perhaps these will carry offshore which would be very useful in allowing me to lay the course directly for Newport. haven't been able to lay the course directly now for over 5 days.

3 July 2000 BST: 40° 47'N; 70° 44'W. COG 325. SOG 4. Wind WSW 2 gradually backing SW. Calm sea. Sea temp 21°C Bar 1019 Lovely sunny day with just a few high cirrus clouds. Last 24 hour's run 85 miles. 49 MTG. Gentle westerly breezes allowed me to potter along at 3-4 kts over night and during the day, making steady progress towards Newport which is now 49 miles away. Tangled up with the obligatory fishing vessels as I crossed the American continental shelf in the early hours. 3 boats weaving around following the fish and steering erratic courses which made it difficult for me, doing only 3 kts at the time, to keep clear. Sad signs of "civilisation" too; floating plastic bottles, that sort of thing. A fast sports fisherman boat went past about 200 m away at 20 kts a couple of hours ago, but despite waving I got no response, just a stony stare from the wheelhouse! Have hoisted my USA courtesy ensign and flag Q. Crossing the Ambrose/Nantucket traffic separation zone was no problem; no ships in the lanes at the time. Just like Plymouth here in several regards. There is a USN warship forlornly chivvying away leisure and fishing vessels from an exercise area (working on a Saturday though), there has been a mystery unsubstantiated Mayday call on channel 9, kids messing around on channel 16, a boat that has broken down with no electrical power and doesn't know where he is because his GPS was powered from the vessel's electric system and he doesn't have any paper charts onboard.. And so on. At one stage the coastguard did lose patience with a boat who wanted directions to a particular cove in Nantucket where he was late for a barbecue! Trying to tidy up the boat a bit, do some dhobying and clean the galley in

anticipation of arriving. Have dug out passport and visa etc ready for inspection. Also some marginally respectable clothes. I plan to have a good scrub down in the cockpit shortly but suspect only an industrial pressure washer will get me clean after 42 days at sea. Had my last bottle of beer with lunch RIP. Mozart and Piazzola on the gramophone this afternoon. So nearly there, the adventure is coming to an end. My priorities on arrival will be to clear Homeland Security, a beer, a shower, another beer, something to eat, and un-interrupted sleep!

4 July: Dear All, Pleased to report *Triple Venture* completed the Jester Challenge 2010 at 06.45.30s UTC (time underway 41d 6h 14m 30s), today 4 July. The whole of the United States of America is celebrating.

Later: Wind freshened during the final approach to Newport overnight 3/4 July so took down the main and rolled and unrolled the genoa to control speed whilst I positively located Brenton Reef buoy and the approaches to Newport. The night approach was slightly confusing as the finish line Castle Hill light is an iso-phase red light and I could see at least 3 red lights approximately iso-phase from 5 miles offshore. A more careful check of the chart showed that the Castle Hill light was not visible from offshore, the lights I had seen were red obstruction lights on aials etc. So I relaxed and good old fashioned fixes put on the chart in old fashioned pencil showed we were on track. I was anxious not to hit the same rocks as *Ella Trout*! Completed the Challenge at 0145 local time 4 July, and sailed on into Newport Harbour. A solid mass of yachts on moorings faced me and I couldn't find the fairway through to the Newport Yacht Club in the dark. Having nearly bumped into a very expensive looking US yacht on a mooring I decided to anchor and wait for first light. By the time I had tidied up the yacht etc dawn was breaking so I weighed and motored up to the NYC at about 0545 local to be greeted by NYC Commodore Norman Bailey, the other Jester challengers, and an ice cold beer was thrust in my hand. Chris Arscott had tipped off Norman of my impending arrival. Home security customs check took place about 1/2 hour after arrival and I was cleared into the USA by a courteous young woman customs officer (with a sense of humour too!) and I was free to have that much needed shower in the clubhouse. Spent the day helping USA celebrate 4 July. Excellent "brunch" in the Club with a splendid firework display in the evening. The NYC has looked after us splendidly, members and staff have gone out of their way to make us welcome and help us with our many queries. Lots of offers to run us out to shops etc. The NYC allocated me a marina berth, but more recently I have moved onto a mooring as the marina charges are high (100GBP per day after 2 days for my little boat!) It is very, very hot here 35C. Apparently the hottest for many years. With very little breeze, not even a sea breeze, to help. Have met up with various friends from my time at the USN Naval War College here many years ago. Newport was very different then with just a few yachts on moorings in the harbour, not the crowded place it is today. The naval base is very much run-down these days and not to be compared with the bustling place I knew 30 years ago. My plan now is to prepare the boat for the return trip, then relax for a few days and explore the area. Probably set sail about 14 July.

AFTERNOTE

Departed Newport 17 July 0900 local time. Sad to leave Newport. Heading for the Azores. Plan is to sail along latitude 40N. All good things have to come to an end. After 2 fantastic weeks at Newport, it was time to set off home, as the risk of hurricanes was increasing and home pressures were mounting. So with a sad heart I announced I would depart on Saturday 17 July at 0900 to give me a deadline to work to. The evening before, Commodore Norman Bailey of the NYC made a presentation of the Newport medal to John Apps at a lovely ceremony in the Clubhouse. In return, the Jester Challengers gave the club, and Norman and George Pike, Dartington glass candle holders in appreciation for the tremendous welcome the NYC had given us. I explained that the plan had been for Trevor Leek in *Jester* to present these items, but sadly time ran out for Trevor and he had had to turn back to the UK. Then followed a little supper party onboard *Triple Venture* for the remaining Jesters, at which much notes were swapped. Saturday morning and I slipped the mooring to berth in the NYC marina to top up with water and say goodbye. As I berthed, our last Jester, the Russian Alexei Fedoruk in his home built yacht *Fason* arrived to much celebration. He started from Plymouth a week after the rest of us as he had been frozen-in St Petersburg and storm bound in the Kiel canal on the way to the event. Norman and Dianne, George and Mary Beth, Club steward Rudy and Hilde of course, together with Jesters John Apps, Roger Fitzgerald, and Denis Gorman gave me a tremendous send-off. I was very touched by all the kindness and good wishes of everyone. The Newport Yacht Club has been absolutely outstanding and so generous in looking after us little Jesters, and it is very difficult to adequately express my gratitude. Whether it was Commodore Norman meeting me on arrival

at 0530 in the morning to thrust a cold beer thrust in my hand, or George Pike driving me to the shops and to get my radar repaired, or all the members who made us feel so welcome, or the staff who invariably were so cheerful and helpful throughout, or Hilde driving us out to our boats in the club launch, I will always remember the Newport Yacht Club with the greatest affection. Then I slowly motored out of Newport harbour (sorry, harbor!) escorted by wonderful Hilde in *Patience* the club launch. Suddenly I was on my own with a lump in my throat, and on my way. Well not completely alone because Dutchman Cees Groot in his yacht *Reliance* also is heading for the Azores. We sailed in company most of the day until Cees gradually pulled away from me and disappeared in the haze. Good progress has been made yesterday and overnight in favourable SW winds of about 10-15 knots, slight sea and swell, and I am now coming off the American continental shelf into deep water. I hope to pick up some Gulf Stream shortly to help me on my way. My plan is to generally sail along latitude 40N until I find the Azores! So good wishes to everyone from this bit of the Atlantic. I am fit and well and *Triple Venture* is going well.

FIFTH to arrive - 41 days
4th July at 2145 BST

Thomas Jucker

Marta

28 May: 49° 41'N; 18° 17'W. Everything is OK.
 29 May 1200 BST: 50° 20'N; 20° 12'W
 31 May 1255 BST: Wind is blowing hard. The boat is hove to. The drogues are out. Thomas told his wife that wind was F8 but it might be a little more. Everything is OK (and shaking) on board
 1 June 1300 BST: 51° 9'N; 22° 56'W
 2 June 2003 BST: Now heading south to avoid a new low pressure system. Lost a lot of headway because of storm but is now on his way again. Everything OK on board.
 3 June 1226 BST: 48° 58'N; 24° 22'W
 5 June 1200 BST: 45° 42'N; 23° 00'W
 9 June 1200 BST: 40° 56'N; 26° 19'W
 13 June: 39° 24'N; 33° 02'W
 17 June 1200: 38° 49'N; 41° 17'W
 19 June 1200 BST: 37° 12'N; 43° 56'W
 23 June 1200 BST: 39° 16'N; 52° 01'W
 27 June 2332 BST: 40° 31'N; 59° 51'W
 30 June 0651 BST: 41° 43'N; 64° 11'W
 2 July 1100 BST: 40° 18'N; 66° 47'W
 4 July: arrived. Arrival times will be reported once Thomas has cleared customs.
 5 July: Message from Thomas: The sailing yacht *Marta* crossed the finish line of the Jester Challenge in Newport RI on Sunday, 4th of July 2010 at 21:45 BST. I will deliver the bottle of gin tomorrow to Norm Bailey of the Newport Yacht Club.

SIXTH to arrive - 43 days
6th July at 1800 local

Michail Soldatov

Gerda

3168

7 June 1200 BST: 43° 19'N; 25° 9'W
 13 June: 42° 00'N; 36° 25'W
 16 June 1800 BST: 42° 20'N; 41° 00'W
 20 June: 41° 19'N; 44° 20'W. Message relayed via Liuba - Michael hit a "snag" (floating log) 1 metre in diameter, 30 metres long, which was impossible to see ahead. Well, it drifted parallel to its course and the blow landed on a tangent, otherwise the log might have caused serious damage to the hull.
 21 June 1932 BST: 41° 19'N; 46° 00'W. From Liuba: Mikhail is in a "resort" in Greece! The sun, light breeze and the waves put him almost there.
 23 June: 42° 20'N; 50° 19'W
 27 June 1200 BST: 42° 06'N; 57° 40'W
 29 June 1200 BST: 41° 48'N; 59° 02'W
 30 June 1200 BST: 42° 28'N; 60° 20'W

- 5 July. Following received via Liuba: A phone conversation with Natasha, wife of Michael Soldatov took place. Only once in three weeks has communication with his home been possible, it was difficult. His mood is good, not up to making meals, only has time to deal with the sails. There was a storm for two days. A shark, the same size as the boat floated past - so the bathing problem was not solved. He is community singing with dolphins (*translators note - the Russian word describes him exchanging whistles with them, so they were singing together!*). Hopes to approach the finish on Tuesday.
- 5 July 1200 BST: 41° 14'N; 69° 16'W
- 6 July: From Norm: Michail Soldatov on board *Gerda* arrived at the Newport Yacht Club at 1800 hrs local today. Both Michail and *Gerda* were in fine shape. He was given an ice cold beer when he stepped onto our dock. His fellow Jesters, Igor, Tony, and Thomas were there to greet him. The club steward and myself were present as well. We await the next Jester. Kind Regards, Norm.
- 7 July: From Liuba: Natasha asked him how was it to land in Newport? "Wonderful but I cannot stand up I was only able to crawl on my hands and knees! " Quickly wanted a shower, looked in the mirror and could not recognise himself - a box of skin and bones, looked like a very, very old man. Back to the boat and he heard a shout of " chicken, chicken!" from a neighbouring yacht, he is thinking " oh no I must look like a pullet!" Soon realised they wanted to bring him chicken as they could see his condition.... very kind. He did not expect the crossing to be so hard.

SEVENTH to arrive - 46 days
Morning of 9th July

Denis Gorman

Lizzie-G

- 9 June 1115 BST: Telephone call to ES-T to say he is in Terceira, Azores, with electrical and rigging problems but intends pushing on as soon as he is ready. ES-T telephoned Denis this evening; some water damage to electrics and electronics and storm damage to sails (genoa?) and rigging. Intends two extensive days of repairs then setting off via the southern route. He was worried that stopping was not 'allowed' - but reassured that he could stop as often as he liked and take as long as he liked!
- 10 June 1555 BST: Signal from Denis to ES-T: I worked on my electrics till very late last night and ... I believe, eventually found a solution. I left them on all night and have checked them regularly throughout the day, they look good to go! Also, I have worked on all the rigging problems and have only the tear in the headsail to fix, that will be done this afternoon. So, my intention is to restart at first light tomorrow. If you do get to speak to Bill Churchouse please pass on my regards and tell him that Richard and Amanda phoned me up and were concerned and asking after him too. Of course my best wishes too to all my fellow competitors... hopefully I shall see some of them in Newport ..Fairly Soon!
- 12 June: Message to Paul Feasey: "Hi Paul it was great to hear your message. I'm cracking on to Newport now. Set off late due to the hospitality of my neighbours and my own lack of discipline!"
- 17 June: message received by Ian Wingrove and passed to ES-T states....Took a call from Captain Roy Copper from the *Kerry Leigh 3* (177ft Motor sailor) They had picked up a call from Den saying he was hove too with sea anchor down riding out the low pressure weather, sea state rough, winds gusting 40 knots!! But he is fine! I have spoken to the skipper on watch this morning on *Kerry Leigh* who has explained that the low pressure is fading out and they should be in for some good weather. Dens position is 38° N ...not far behind *Glavya*.. about 450 miles past the Azores.
- 9 July: message from George: Denis Gorman and Lizzie G arrived in Newport a few minutes ago. Later: Ewen, As reported earlier Denis arrived at our docks this morning in fine shape. We of course gave him a very cold beer to enjoy. He cleared customs in short order and took a shower. Awards will be made to the last four in the lounge this afternoon. Kind Regards, Norm

EIGHTH to arrive - 48 days
Morning of 11th July

John Apps

Glavya

7486Y

28 May 1202 BST: 47° 43'; 14° 57'W

30 May 1305 BST: 46° 00'N; 13° 39'W
 1 June 1302 BST: 45° 9'N; 15° 9'W
 4 June 1011 BST: 45° 0'N; 20° 23'W
 5 June 1302: 45° 35'N; 22° 00'W
 7 June 1203 BST: 45° 0'N 22° 4'W
 9 June 1153 BST: 42° 32'N; 25° 14'W
 11 June 1151 BST: 41° 50'N; 28° 25'W
 13 June: 42° 00'N; 36° 25'W
 17 June 1202 BST: 41° 01'N; 36° 16'W
 19 June 1202 BST: 39° 58'N; 39° 14'W
 20 June 38° 49'N; 40° 49'W
 21 June 1152 BST: 39° 39'N; 42° 16'W
 22 June 1012 BST: 39° 41'N; 44° 35'W
 23 June 1200 BST: 39° 00'N; 46° 31'W
 27 June 1200 BST: 40° 35'N; 52° 15'W
 29 June 1202 BST: 40° 02'N; 53° 44'W
 2 July 1202 BST: 40° 22'N; 55° 57'W
 5 July 1202 BST: 39° 51'N; 61° 57'W
 7 July 1200 BST: 39° 17'N; 64° 15'W
 8 July 1202 BST: 39° 32'N; 65° 17'W
 9 July 1202 BST: 39° 53'N; 67° 24'W
 11 June 1202 BST: 41° 16'N; 71° 12'W

11 June: Messages received from Norm and George: John Apps, s/v *Glavya* arrived this afternoon. It was a beautiful afternoon, light southerly breeze, and near clear skies. On hand were Tony, Roger, Denis plus many of the NYC members and myself (Norm). As tradition dictates John was presented with multiple ice cold Sam Adams. John waited in NYC Lounge until the US Customs arrived. He cleared customs, showered and the last I saw of him he was on his way to enjoy a dinner with some of the other Jesters. John's boat looked good with an Australian Ensign on the backstay.

AFTERNOTE It was great to see that sometime on Friday night that Alexei had arrived. We all had a chilly last night on *Lizzie-G* and heard all Alexei's troubles getting out of Russia and across the Baltic and the North Sea. I'm particularly pleased that I am no longer officially LAST. Now the proud holder of 8th place.

From George: John had a busy two days. Monday, he received the Newport Medal from Mayor Jean Marie Napolitano for his finish in 2007. (His was mailed to him and he never got it). Tuesday 20 July he left for home.

NINTH to arrive - 56 days **Morning of 17th July**

Alexei Fedoruk

Fason

RUS 808

28 May: arrived Plymouth. Currently (29 May) safe and sound in QAB (he had two ladies on board!) and is due to sail on Sunday 30 May at about midday to catch the tide. In good heart and looking forward to catching up with everyone
 30 May 1200 BST (approx): Sailed from Plymouth
 2 June 1610 BST: 49° 32'N; 10° 02'W. Reported by telephone that all is very well. Wind SE 10 knots
 4 June 1006 BST: 50° 57'N; 15° 04'W. Reported by telephone that is very well. Wind SSW 16 knots. Wind SSW 16 knots. Bar 1008 rising slowly.
 6 June 1000 BST: 51° 53'N; 20° 37'W. Reported by telephone that all is very well. Wind SSE 12 knots. Bar 1006 falling slowly. Cloudy
 7 June 1200 BST: 50° 27'N; 23° 15'W
 8 June 1200 BST: 49° 4'N; 25° 23'W
 11 June 1000 BST: by telephone to ES-T 47° 51'N; 29° 10'W. Wind SSW 18 - 20 knots. Vis good. 3' seas. Lovely day - thoroughly enjoying the sail.
 13 June: 46° 52'N; 33° 20'W
 16 June 1800: 46° 13'N; 37° 35'W
 20 June: 45° 19'N; 38° 19'W. Message relayed via Liuba - Alexei, for five days, the counter force of the storm 9 throwing him to the east. Today he is again struggling with the force 8 storm.

22 June 1020 BST: 45° 05'N; 39° 10'W. Telephone conversation with ES-T - Very good conditions. Heading west with wind SW at 10 kts. All OK.

23 June 44° 19'N; 41° 19'W. From Liuba - Alex reports that the storm subsided and he finally has calm weather. Today, he moved to the west by 40 nm.

26 June 1200 BST: 44° 33'N; 46° 26'W

29 June 1200 BST: 44° 14'N; 50° 37'W

30 June 1200 BST: 44° 00'N; 52° 20'W

1 July: reported to ES-T by telephone that all was well. Reception was too poor to hear position.

5 July 1200 BST: 43° 56'N; 50° 6'W

6 July 1200 BST: 43° 25'N; 60° 15'W

8 July 1200 BST: 43° 11'N; 61° 16'W

11 July 1300 BST: telephone call from 40° 40'N; 67° 08'W. All OK. The line was poor so the latitude could not be verified but the longitude came across 'loud and clear'.

12 July: Message from Liuba: For Alexei today the sea was calm, which has slightly delayed his movement. But even that was enough so he could enter the 200-mile economic zone of America. Only a short way to the finish now. A southern cyclone, caused strong winds in recent days, so today Alexei put storm sails. Afternoon gusts reached 30 knots. However difficult the weather it did not deter him to travel almost 80 MM. In the next few days the forecast is not promising extreme.

13 July 1200 BST: 42° 8'N; 69° 45'W

17 July: 1145 BST. Message from Liuba: DAY 56 ALEXEI has arrived at Newport at 09.00 Russian time! Congratulations!!!! YPA!!!! МОЛОДЕЦ!!!! With best wishes, Liuba. [Don't forget Alexei sailed late from Plymouth so his elapsed time is rather less - say 47/48 days.]

AFTERNOTE Due to sail back to Russia leaving on 24 July.

RETIREMENTS

Roger Taylor

Mingming

Heading for Baffin Island?

Message received via Belinda on 21 July: However if conditions are right I may very well divert to make my landfall at Cape Dyer, Baffin Island instead, thereby getting into the Arctic Circle to the west of Greenland, via the Davis Strait, and mirroring last year's voyage into the east Greenland ice and the Denmark Strait. As that route is all clear of the hurricane zone it would allow me to make a complete round trip, probably of about 80 days' duration, in one season. As ever, everything will depend on the conditions that prevail once I'm at sea!

27 July: Message from Brenda: Roger called me at 17:09 this evening, being just in reach of a mobile signal off the Scilly Isles. The following is the gist of the message I received:- He was caught in a storm and capsized on day 35 of his voyage at 0015 hours on 26 June, 130 miles west of Cape Desolation (is that a real name?), on the West Greenland coast. He was thrown from his bunk, onto his chart table and broke a rib. He was disappointed to have got so near, only to turn back and make his way home as it would be unwise to continue with his broken rib. He anticipates landing at Plymouth on Thursday morning, and may be home back in London

30 July: Message received from Roger by ES-T: Mingming arrived QAB 0830H Thursday 29th July. As Brenda has already reported, *Mingming* was knocked down in very heavy weather in the Davis Strait. As I ended up with a busted rib I decided it would be prudent not to do the last 350 miles to the Arctic Circle. The outward leg was done mostly in 55N to 57N, covering 1995 miles in 34 days. The return leg was mainly along 50N, covering 2090 miles in just under 33 days. Total voyage therefore 4085 miles in 67 days. The knockdown was caused by a rogue wave that hit us from the wrong side, gybing us and putting me on the uphill side of *Mingming*, before putting her on her beam ends and very neatly flipping me off my bunk. The broken rib was quite manageable – mostly just discomfort as long as I didn't sneeze or cough. I think it's now almost healed but will have an X-ray later today. Glad to see that everybody is

accounted for. Terribly bad luck for Andy, but at least he survived! I might be wrong, but I suspect you may have got 4 out of 4 for the Plymouth Gin!

Tim McCloy

China Blue

3

22 June: Following is an abbreviation of a message received by Tim's sister Jacqueline - Have just had this email from Tim in Terceira. He took a battering and was becalmed by turns, driven up north to visit the whales. He hurt his back, is now recovering, and minor damage to CB repaired. He is planning to head off west again after provisioning.

17 July: *China Blue* and Tim arrived Canaries today. *All well. Will go by trade wind in season. Not defeated. Regards to all.* [I've marked Tim as a retiree for the moment as - like John Apps in 2006/7 - he could take another 400 days to reach Newport!]

Trevor Leek

Jester

27

8 July Message from Sandra: I want you to know that Trevor and Jester are on their way home. He kept trying to go north in the hope of picking up better winds but has been continually battered by bad weather and made such slow progress that he would have been unable to arrive in Newport and get home again the time that he had allowed himself to be away. It was also unlikely that the 40-50 days supply of water taken would have lasted the 60-70 that the journey seemed likely to take. As you can imagine, he is hugely disappointed but of course it was the right decision. He is currently becalmed between Lands End and The Scillies but hopes to get back to Plymouth sometime over the weekend. I will go down to meet him. He will call you as soon as he can but unfortunately his mobile phone has a battery charging problem and keeps cutting out so he is using it as little as possible and may need to wait until I can give him mine. The skippers contributed to some gifts for our helpers in Newport so I will UPS them to Newport today. I can send the Plymouth Gin out to them separately later.....

Have just spoken to Trevor and he reminded me that he lost about 30 litres (15 days) of water in split containers. He had originally taken about 70 days of water.

However after 30 days (300 miles NE of The Flemish Cap) and not even half way it looked as if the crossing would take up to 70 days. Definitely thinks that he took the wrong route and should have gone south. He will speak to you as soon as he can.....

Below is my email to Tony Head which I think pretty much sums it up. I have also added Tony's reply showing what the Jester Challengers are all about, you may think that it makes a good addition to the SITREPAll being well Trevor should arrive in Plymouth tomorrow morning and he may go into QAB for a few weeks. I will try to get down tomorrow by train and I am looking into getting a one way car hire to bring us home. If you are around perhaps give him ring I'm sure that he would like to meet for a chat and a cold beer.

I have also sent the Dartington candle lamps out to Newport today and Tony will arrange for them to be given to The Pikes, Norm and Robin on Monday when they arrive.

We will enjoy the Plymouth Gin...thanks (As four bottles have arrived in Newport for our noble supporters in the Newport Yacht Club I suggested that Trevor and Sandra enjoy the 'spare' bottle!) Lots of love Sandra.....

Hello Tony, I just wanted to let you know that Trevor and *Jester* are on their way home. In hindsight he should have taken the southern route, but he kept trying to go North in the hope of picking up better winds (as he has done on 2 previous occasions) and has been continually battered by bad weather. He made such slow progress that after 30 days he was just 300 miles NE of the Flemish Cap and having lost about 30 litres of his water in split containers, he made the decision to turn back. As you can imagine, he is hugely disappointed but of course it was the right decision....

Reply from Tony Head: All of us here, *Jester Challengers* and the NYC, are so sorry to hear that *Jester* has had to turn back and share Trevor's extreme disappointment. Especially after all the tremendous effort he has put into getting the event underway, preparing *Jester* for the challenge, and encouraging all of us to enter. But Trevor's decision to turn back is, of course, absolutely right and seamanlike, in the best traditions of the *Jester Challenge*. We all wish Trevor a safe and comfortable passage back to UK.

Mike's ashes By ES-T: Before he sailed Trevor asked Mike Richey's family if they would like some of his ashes scattered over the spot where *Jester* was lost. They thought this was a lovely idea and so they were placed on board *Jester* the day before she sailed. Mike's ashes were eventually scattered as close to the position as Trevor could get before, reluctantly

turning for home as he and Sandra describe above. Thus the most important duty *Jester* and Trevor have ever had to perform in relation to the *Jester Challenge* has been successfully carried out. **RIP**

13 July: Sandra reported that *Jester* is safe in QAB and Mike safe at home (by train) but – understandably ‘still glum about not finishing’.

Guy Waites

Red Admiral

CO256

26 May 1420 BST: sailed from Plymouth

29 May 1926 BST: 49° 57'N; 11° 12'W

30 May 0748 BST: 48° 07'N; 11° 47'W

30 May 1826 BST: 47° 39'N; 11° 14.8'W

31 May 1821 BST: 48° 16'N; 13° 34'W

1 June 1839 BST: 47° 57'N; 15° 14'W

4 June 0723 BST: 47° 21'N; 20° 41'W

5 June 1050 BST: 46° 14'N; 21° 00'W

6 June 0733 BST: 46° 54'N; 22° 06'W

6 June: SPOT message with no position read *I'm not in Immediate danger but I have a problem that's slowing me down!* As a precaution the family contacted Falmouth Coast Guard. ES-T and Eric informed and asked by CG for position of any others in the area.

7 June 0720: SPOT message read 46.85813N; 22.78316 W. *I'm OK, just letting you know where I am!* We assume all is now well again and Falmouth CG has been informed..

8 June 1216 BST: 46° 41'N; 21° 14'W

10 June 0711 BST: SPOT 46.57997N; 17.83169W

10 June 1849 BST: SPOT 46.52392N; 17.14794W

13 June: 46° 43'N; 14° 13'W

17 June 0648 BST: SPOT 48.46044N; 7.51782W

18 June 0545 BST: SPOT 48.82562N; 5.89247W

Clearly heading homewards but not yet officially retired.

19 June 1419 BST: SPOT 50.24327N; 3.75934W

20 June: message received from Heather Waites via Eric: Bonjour Eric, Guy and *Red Admiral* arrived safely in Salcombe yesterday with a broken bulkhead necessitating their limping home. That's all the information I have at the moment, but it's enough for family and friends to know that Guy is safe and well. We are all full of admiration for his courage and that of all the Challengers. My best wishes for safe and successful sailing to all the remaining Challengers and to those retirees still returning home.

Chris Garbett

Jasabe

11 June: Believed to have put back to England

19 June: unconfirmed report on Ocean Race Track states: I've just found out that Chris has turned back after sustaining irreparable damage to his self steering gear after going through a storm - he now has to steer by hand all the way back - gonna be very tired when he arrives back in Falmouth!

Duncan Lougee

Vaquero

5509Y

27 May 1216 BST: 49° 00'N; 14° 14'W. Best day's run of 131 miles, wind's gone light again. Saw a couple of dolphins briefly this morning

28 May: 48° 42' N; 15° 23'W

30 May 1420 BST: 49° 18'N; 17° 0.'W

1 June 1300 BST: 49° 41'N; 21° 07' W After a quiet night tootling along with only a faint breeze, it's now blowing SW6-7, rough and wet. Very difficult to type this! The wind is steadfastly blowing from the south west, light or strong, but always southwest. I could do with a bit of NW or SE to get back down south, but I don't want to tack at the moment and find myself going backwards. Close windedness is a bit academic with a big sea running, it's impossible to point the boat high, you have to crack off and keep the power on to get through the waves. I expect it will go round at some point. Besides which I'm getting bored with port tack!

2 June 1300 BST: 49 16.7N; 24 45' W The breeze finally backed into the SE, now S, so I've started to make better progress. There's promise of north-westerlies which, if they materialise, will be perfect. The relentless bashing to windward was starting to

tick me off, so life is a little less violent at the moment and much more enjoyable. There was a low point the other evening when a very large wave almost knocked us down and several barrow loads of seawater went below, mostly on the chart table, the rest down my neck. The language would've made a docker blush! Everything still seems to work, me included, we're just a little damper. Not many problems other than the wind speed, which blew off, a tricolour which doesn't and a solar panel with terminal rust - I took it off and stowed it away as the boat was turning red with the rust streaks. So, so far so good.

5 June 1300 BST: 46° 55'N; 26° 36'W. Becalmed last night, so very slow progress. Lovely sunny day today but very little wind, just creeping along a 3 - 4 knots and slowly being headed. I don't mind getting a bit of south in at this stage so that I am between two rhumb lines - one to my icegate at 40N 50W and the other my waypoint before my final approach at 40N 70W. Anywhere between the two is good so that I can tack between the rhumb lines as appropriate. Could do with some more wind, but it's coming. I shall complain tomorrow that there is too much! I am struggling to get past 30W, so that'll be a good milestone to have finally passed. Gosh, it's a long way!

7 June 1321 BST: 45° 12'N; 27° 5'W

9 June 1300 BST: 45° 09'N; 30° 44'W. The 30W line of longitude seems to have been a hard one to get past. But the wind has veered into the NW, so we've raced past it with ease and are busy heading for the next landmark (seamark?) which is 36W. That is when I can turn the chart over and will have the USA before me on the chart table. Not quite halfway, which is 37.5W, and nowhere near the point of no return which is when the USA will be closer than the Azores. The warm sunny climes of these lovely islands lay three days sail to the south, a siren beckoning on the horizon with promise of sunshine (it's foggy here at the moment), cold beer, calm seas and a lavatory that doesn't offer a roller coaster ride every visit. Get thee behind me temptation....I celebrated crossing 30W with a good breakfast of scrambled egg on toast so I shall have to plan something for 36W. I have a parcel aboard marked 'For Halfway' so that bit's catered for. The big sea that's been running the last few days has gone down a bit, and I've cracked the sheets a bit, so the motion aboard is a little easier. Judging by the barometer steadily rising, I'm about to sail into the Azores high and probably a calm, but at least I shall be able to dry things out. The fog is making everything very clammy, but I suppose it's good practice for later on nearer the States where fog is more prevalent.

10 June 1300 BST: 44° 54'N; 31° 59'W. Becalmed again. Third time this trip and just when I was making better progress. Never mind, it's a good opportunity to have a bit of a muck out and dry the boat out. Last night when the wind died, a thick fog rolled in, so I dropped the sails and retired to my bunk for a good night's sleep. It has now burned off but it made everything feel horribly cold and clammy. Looking at the grib files, I don't think the breeze will fill until tonight or tomorrow, so this might be the moment to make some fresh bread. I'm trying to eat more. Whilst not having suffered from sea sickness, the motion of the boat, violent at times, seems to curb my appetite and I eat very little compared to when ashore. Whilst a modest reduction in normal shore based calories is probably a good thing, I noticed that I was getting very tired and feeling weak. I would guess that this is due to lack of fuel, and it will be interesting to see if it makes a difference eating more.

11 June 1324 BST: 44° 38'N; 33° 33'W

13 June: 44° 01'N; 38° 22'W

17 June 1943: This is to let you know that I am diverting to Horta, The Azores. The bolt through the mast holding the triangular plates for the lower shrouds appears to have dropped slightly, which first became apparent when the lowers slackened off, allowing the mast to pump excessively. Having tightened them up, this didn't seem to cure the problem, so after a quick inspection up the mast this morning, I think it would be foolhardy to keep going. I will be able to inspect more carefully from the peace of a marina berth there and then decide on the next course of action. Assuming the problem is repairable, I will have to restart the Jester Challenge too late for me to complete the course and return home in time for work commitments. So I am formally withdrawing from the Challenge this year. I have a good network of family and friends in regular contact, so I will keep them posted on a daily basis of my progress/problems. And may I thank you for all your help and organisation of the Jester Challenge - despite only

reaching as far as 42W (and some horrible weather), it's been fun from beginning to end, it's just a pity I shall miss that first cold beer with all the others in Newport. Best regards Duncan

18 June: I managed to get up the mast yesterday to look at the lower shroud attachment point (not a fun experience in the swell!) and it seems that the bolt holding the shroud plates has moved downwards - more on the starboard side than the other because it is no longer at right angles to the mast wall. Whether it has moved in the mast or bent out of shape is impossible to tell without taking it apart and making a further inspection, and it is also impossible to say whether it has been like that for a long time or just recently happened. The slackness in the lowers would indicate the latter. In heavy weather to windward, the mast was pumping excessively, at times inverting slightly on the reverse cycle, with the forward lowers alternatively loosening completely slack and then snapping tight again. Despite having retensioned them, they are still excessively slack in even a moderate breeze as the mast moves. The mast foot sits in a stainless steel fabricated shoe, essentially a plate with an upstand welded to it, and I now see that the welding between plate and upstand is cracked loose on both sides, probably caused by the excessive movement. So I have decided to retire and make for the Azores so that I can examine it all a bit more thoroughly whilst in a marina berth and decide on the best course of action. Hopefully if I avoid any excessive beating to windward it should all hold together, and generally the course for home should be mostly downwind. I should be there in about five or six days. Which is all rather disappointing to say the least, having got so far across towards Newport. But thank you all for your magnificent support which has been absolutely fantastic and much appreciated. I'll keep posting my progress every day so you can see what's happening.

20 June 1300 BST: 40°28'N; 35° 44'W. Wind's gone round to the NE and died away to a Force 3, so slow going, and although the sea has gone down, as we're going downwind the boat's rolling uncomfortably. As we are now sailing into the middle of the Azores high, I expect the wind will become lighter and variable. It would be nice to have some sun, but the day dawned with light rain and although that's stopped it's still overcast and rather grey.

21st June 1300 BST: 40° 46'N; 33° 25'W. Only 255 miles to go to Horta, probably about two days although the wind is now dying as I move under the Azores high. Once I get within 100 miles I will be able to use the engine if it goes completely calm, that being the range of the fuel tank. I am sailing dead downwind with twin headsails boomed out, trade wind fashion, and although the spinnaker would be a little faster. There is still quite a swell and it makes it difficult to stop the spinnaker collapsing and getting into a muddle as the boat rolls. I have now completed 29 days at sea and have just finished the last apple. There are still a few oranges left but they have a slightly fermented overripe flavour, although the spuds and onions are still in good condition. The onions are trying hard to grow but taste none the worse for that. And I ate the last two eggs for breakfast - it was supposed to be scrambled egg on toast but the bread was mouldy. I shall make another loaf later today. And the attraction of the selection of tinned food is fast waning, right now I really fancy steak and chips with a nice green salad. But there's no steak, the salad was finished about 4 weeks ago and the deep fat fryer keeps blowing fuses - they just don't make these kitchen appliances the way they used to, one sniff of salt air and they give up the ghost.

AFTERNOTE dated 18 July. I am pleased to report that Vaquero returned safely to Plymouth first thing this morning, Sunday 18th July with the rig intact. I'm in Mayflower for a couple of days and my plan is to cruise back to the East Coast with crew over the next week or so and the boat will come out for repairs as soon as I get back. Just thought you'd like to know. I shall be back in 2014, or earlier if circumstances permit, to finish what I started and failed to complete this year. Despite not having finished the Challenge I have still completed some 4500 miles of singlehanded ocean sailing and despite some trials and tribulations, it has been fun from start to finish. And bye the bye, it would seem to me that this year the Jester Challenge has matured into a permanent event on the sailing calendar, something of which you should be justly proud. And I reckon Col Hasler would be tickled pink as well.

Andy Lane**Amadeus**

27 May 0110 BST: 49° 28'N; 15° 27'W

30 May 1111 BST: 49° 00'N; 21° 55'W

1/2 ? June 1200 BST: 48° 34'N; 25° 37'W

4 June 1048 BST: 46° 3'N; 30° 47'W

5 June 1110 BST: 45° 41'N; 32° 59'W

9 June 1210 BST: 41° 16'N; 35° 49'W

11 June 1049 BST: 40° 45'N; 42° 5'W

14 June: 40° 21'N; 49° 00'W

15 June 2258 BST : telephone message from Andy to ES-T. *Sorry to phone in the middle of the night but I have had a bit of a problem on board in a bit of a storm this morning. The mast came down and made a hole in the hull and the ship is sinking and has probably sunk by now at a little bit north of 40°N; 51°W. Just been picked up by US ship MV Courage and heading for Antwerp. We had very rough weather most of the way. When the accident happened I had four reefs in the main and a reefed storm jib, and we were going very steadily but that wasn't good enough. But I'm really sorry that I am out of the Challenge especially as we had been going 'great guns' till that moment.*

ES-T: I have booked Andy in for the JAC 2012!

AFTERNOTE

21 June. Message from Roger, Andy's brother (also a Royal Marine): Andy will arrive in Antwerp, courtesy of MV *Courage*, tonight and then take the train down to Toulouse. My understanding is that he was originally dismasted about half-way up in a Force 10, and then lost the remainder of the mast, which caused the holing of Amadeus. About 1000 nm offshore, it took USCG just 7 hours to get MV *Courage* to pick him up – a fantastic response. The alert was given from Andy's SPOT satellite beacon which we had been following. This has a 911 facility for sending messages in emergency, and provides a fix. We got 5 hits, but then lost the signal. By that time, he had also activated his EPIRB, and this also gave a fix which corresponded with the SPOT beacon's fix, so that made it easier to vector Courage onto him – nevertheless, I look forward to learning how a big car carrier was able to find and rescue him in such poor conditions. Am sure Andy will be in touch to get a fuller debrief – we look forward to that too.

Message received recently from Andy: Dear Ewen, I hope you got my message on your answer machine (I did – ES-T) that I sent from M/V Courage after I was dismasted and holed at about 40°N 051°W and had to abandon my ship. I am gutted since things were going so well and unbeknown to me, I was one of the lead boats at the time. I will copy a description of my race that I sent out to my family, hope you enjoy it. I will make an effort to come over to UK in January if there is to be a dinner and will also be at le Pointe de Grave in April. I am thrilled to have attempted the JC, but disappointed in the outcome. I am of course safe and sound and having arrived early Tuesday morning in Antwerp, I managed to get a series of trains to get home, to a very relieved Jilly. Poor thing, she had had a bad time this last week but was very grateful for the kind words of encouragement and support. Just to fill in a little as to what happened : for a start, it was maybe the best experience of my life and every day I probably produced a gallon of adrenaline. The conditions were exceptionally variable and stronger winds throughout than is normal for that time of year. The start was great, and I was probably the first over the line at Plymouth and was one of the first around the windward marker. Virtually all the others clustered around *Black Velvet*, the committee boat whilst I hid behind the breakwater, the windward end of the line and so didn't need to tack. So a fast first afternoon, then almost becalmed off the Lizard the first night. Then I allowed myself to be swept north of the Scillies during very a very calm day, then suddenly, just off the north tip of the islands, the fog came down within seconds and the wind was up to F7. Here we go, so from now, this is for real. And from then on it was a really boisterous crossing. Every day I had to do "several" sail changes and only on 2 or 3 days could I sit in the cockpit without my oilskins because of the constant spray. So in fact I spent more time below than I would have liked. But the noise and motion was excessive and at times worrying, however I developed such confidence in my ability to judge the best sail combination and the ability of the wind vane self steering, once set to keep me on a good course, then I was soon very relaxed and able to sleep quite often my 1 hour siestas, almost always at night. I saw *Martha* and *The Grand* of the Lizard on the first Sunday, *Martha* 2 days later then after that it was about one cargo ship every 2 or 3 days. My radar detector buzzed when they were about 5 miles off and I usually called them up on the VHF for a chat and ask about the weather and they were generally

excellent. At about 0200 on my birthday, I called up a Japanese ship who said that I had better go faster because there was a storm coming - if only !!! What a great birthday present. Anyway, that day was very rough but I did open my cards and kind messages and had very good thoughts. The following week got windier and windier although on 3 occasions during the crossing the NE wind stopped abruptly, died completely for 6 hours then started equally suddenly from the SW. But of course the waves only died a bit and to avoid severe damage to the sails which clacked from side to side, I had to drop them quickly and we just wallowed. However, if the sun was out I was able to dry my kit and get some air into the cabin. In fact I got very wet and in the end my foul weather gear was so salt encrusted that it absorbed any moisture. So when ever I put it on it was wet inside. The cabin got quite wet as it was difficult to have enough air to breath (one day when we were fully battened down I couldn't get the gas lighter to work until I realise we were short of O₂) so compromises were made and I exchanged CO₂ for H₂O !! And then on the night of the 14th it was blowing F7 and 8 and with 4 reefs in the main and the storm jib reefed, we were banging along at 4 kts, so a good 100 miles nearer Newport every day. Uncomfortable but OK. Then in the morning I scrambled up top to activate the spot and stayed there for an hour watching the weather. I debated taking all sail down but decided to hold on for a bit. I went below to write up the log when I heard the mast break in two just above the spreaders. Then the foot of the mast was wrenched off its mounting and came through the deck just above the cooker. Then it went over the side and the movement was terrific. I then put on my survival suite and life jacket and tried to work out how to save what I could to make a jury rig. I just couldn't keep my feet so I spent half an hour setting up the sea anchor which I deployed in earnest for the first time. I made a bridle off the stern and it stopped me surfing down the waves. It worked so well that I just wished that if only I had deployed it a few hours earlier..... However during that time one of the spreaders had obviously been slamming into the starboard side of the hull creating a leak at about waterline. SO in the next few minutes I had to decide. Everything had to go. So with bolt cutters I cut through the stays (the new ones I fitted in Plymouth) and my knife all the ropes till it was free. At that point I reckoned it would cost me just as much to try and save *Amadeus* by sailing under jury rig to Newport, trying to get suitable mast, rigging, sails etc. I would have been too late to sail back this summer, so then what ? And I had already seen quotes for shipping boats back to Southampton, again out of the question. So I set off my SPOT 911 call and my EPIRB both of which worked wonderfully. The US Coast Guards were wonderful and thanks to Heather who kept Jilly and Ruth in the picture. One and a half hours later, the M/V *Courage* an American car transporter of 200 metres long received the message and came 70 miles to their north to my position. When I saw them I called on my spare hand held VHF and guided them to me They were less than half a mile off, they just couldn't see my white hull, with no mast or radar reflector. I told them I was on their starboard beam but still nothing and they started going past my position. Finally I lit a hand flare which immediately gave them a visual. So with great skill Captain Mike Davidson turned the ship up wind of me and with the bow thrusters drifted down on to me. Eventually once alongside with about a 4 metre swell, I tied on 3 small bags of kit and eventually I arrived level with the pilot ladder and luckily at the top of a wave I was able to grab it and as *Amadeus* fell below, I was able to climb up to safety (by far the most dangerous few seconds of the whole trip). She did get tangled up aft but eventually let to sink. I left the hatches open and opened on of the stopcocks so that she didn't become a risk to shipping. Incidentally, all this happened 52 miles north of where the Titanic went down. So she will be in good company. I was so well looked after on board, given the pilot's cabin, did watches on the bridge, helped in the galley, enjoyed the company of the 22 crew and having nearly eaten them out of house and home, a week later we arrived in Antwerp. Having been let down by my French insurer only a week before leaving, I was unable to get more than a third party cover for singlehanded offshore work without paying a ridiculous premium. So sadly that is that for now and I will have to rethink. Although I regret not having fitted a new mast etc etc, it was a brilliant experience and I am thrilled to have dared, satisfied with the performance, just disappointed at the loss. Jilly and I are going to take a week off and camp by the beach in Les Landes and see the Atlantic from a different angle, a body board at best !! We need that so badly.

PS: (in a later signal): I really was hoping to be drinking out of the same bottle of Champagne with the first 3 to arrive. I am totally gutted with the loss of *Amadeus* but relieved not to have been injured during that difficult hour. Yes, by all means, please include my own account in your next sitrep. We all have so many lessons to learn from each other. Jilly and I have taken a week off and are camping at Mimizan on the Landes coast. What a different view of the same

ocean I had got used to!! Now then, is it a round of Port or a new boat for JC 12 ? Sadly I was only able to get third party cover for my boat so finances and time will be difficult. I wonder if there were some potential challengers who have decided it was too much and would be prepared to part with their boat ? I will have to do some severe thinking. Best regards and so sorry not to be at the fête in Newport.

Nigel Stillman

Grettal

18 June 1359 BST: telephone message to ES-T. Having reached one third of the way across in light winds it was clear that I would not make the return journey till November so have put back to England and am safe and well.

Gus Davidson

Just Right

GG52

27 May: Noon run of 100 miles. Yippee. 82 miles in 18 hrs but then came the calm after midnight. Frustrating morning from 0600 when I awoke to find the boat doing 1.5 kn

29 May 1319 BST: well to the west of the centre of the Bay of Biscay. Wind SW F6, 3 reefs then becalmed until 0800 then wind quickly developed into Force 4. Now beating on port tack with 1 reef in main for comfort. Headwinds forecast

1 June: Just north of course and bowling along since 0200 toward the halfway mark to the Azores. Just had shower in the drizzle, meal next then some sleep

2 June 1316 BST: 44° 44'N; 15° 18'W

4 June: 42° 10'N; 18° 15'W

5 June 1311 BST: 41° 21'N; 20° 22'W. Motoring for 2nd day through calm, fuel will hold until I get fair wind tomorrow to sail to Horta - as is permissible by the 'non-rules!'.

8 June 1212 BST: 38 19'N; 24° 49'W

9 June by signal: retired to Ponta Delgado once I determined a few days back that there was no way I could make Newport within my max period due to the ongoing headwinds. I decided to at least record completing the Azores Jester distance before sailing back to the UK to continue to drive the Macmillan campaign until November as planned.

23 June: see Ocean Race Track for Gus's interesting logs of his whole adventure.

David Graham

Astro

4532T

27 May: entered Plymouth from 'some distance west of the Scillies'.

30 May: reluctantly retired due to gear failure, otherwise all is well. "God speed to the remaining competitors"

John Margeson

Fluffy

29 May 1109 BST: 49° 4'N; 22° 55' W at

30 May 0845 BST: terrible gale for 18 hours. No damage except destroyed headsail. I have a smaller one; am not in danger

30 May 1350 BST: text received by Isabel stating that John was returning due to 'bad gale last night, shredded jib, chafed lines, roller reefing bust, electrical problems, autopilot bust, everything including bedding wet, not eating but will be ok'

1 June: 500 nm from the Scillies and making steady progress eastwards.

10 June. Message received by ES-T: you told me very seriously to "look after myself" which was good advice and well needed. In retrospect I was too aggressive. It seems that on day 7 it is generally acknowledged I hit a f9 dead on the nose, the Swiss entrant confirms this, the ugrib weather files show 40 kts plus and my judgement is certainly more than an 8. To get to this point I had 72 hrs of f6 hard on the wind, Fluffy can cope with this, though normal life ceases to exist, no such thing as cooking or meals just swigging from water bottles and sucking cold custard out of cartons. the only safeish place is in the bunk, toilet requirements being the most difficult thing. I pushed into the gale at 4 kts until it became severe then rolled jib and with 3 reefed main forereached at 2.5 kts originally towards Spain but then I turned her round towards Greenland; I was determined not to lose ground. As the gale grew the boat was permanently at 30 deg heel and every minute or so went to 60 plus degrees, being very light there was a huge amount of movement. I was extremely concerned she was going to go over. for 18 hrs I clung onto and clipped onto the internal rigging rods. in the middle of all this the roller reef line chafed through and the jib shredded itself. I put on what I thought was a wonderful insulated survival suit and with huge fear and trepidation went on foredeck to sort it out. thankfully I returned safely and exhausted to cabin feeling very heavy and exhausted. believing in the quality of the suit I kept it on for hours. I got colder and colder till i realised the heaviness was

due to 2 gallon of water absorbed by the "insulation" of the suit and instead of keeping me warm I was trying to heat the water. I ripped it off and having no dry clothes or bedding found it much "warmer" naked. the shivering started and went on for 12 hrs a day for 3 days, the other 12 hrs were just incredibly cold. I am very aware of hypothermia and its dangers. when the gale had decreased to a F6 I noted all the damage to Fluffy and my own perilous and uncertain state of health I decided trying to get home was the safest option. Obviously now I sit in a warm and comfortable lounge it is easy to be self critical, but I am thankful to be alive, still have a boat and not to have inconvenienced anyone. I wish all the rest a safe passage.

Bill Churchouse

Belgean

141

26 May: fell overboard off the Scillies - self recovered without assistance

28 May: retired to Penzance

Scott Turner

Altamira

28 May: retired to Plymouth with severely damaged steering gear

Chris Jackson

Sixpence

6

28 May 1345 BST. Turned back from position 50° 15' N; 17° 24' W. Letting you know that very sadly I have had to pull out of the Challenge, but arrived safely back in Fowey at 0245 on Wednesday without the use of the engine. Now that the engineers have had a good look it appears water was drawn into the cylinders which is pretty fatal for a diesel. So without means of charging the batteries and with only a small PV panel for top up it seemed irresponsible to plug on without lights or electrics. Would be happy to write up the experience and circulate. Finally a big thank you to all those who have brought this great and unique event together!

Alan Rees

Argus

587E

23 May: retired to Plymouth - reason unknown

AFTERNOTE 29th July: reported to be half way across the Bay of Biscay heading for the Azores and possibly hoping to continue to Newport in the new season. Status remains 'retired' as he could take another year!