



LIFT-OFF—A pair of Tundra swans take flight from Bonanza Channel June 29.

Photo by Nikolai Ivanoff

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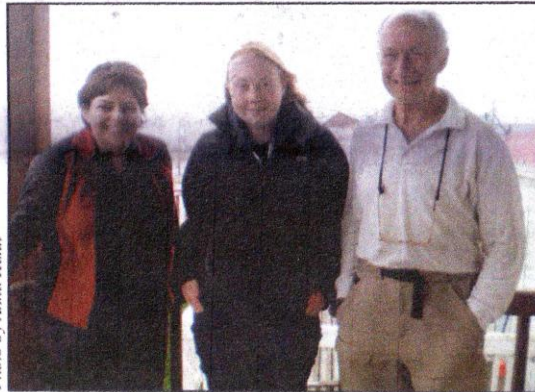


Photo by Anna Hahn

Northwest Passage sailors stop in Nome

By Anna Hahn

Pascal Lee was sitting in a Louisiana bar when he took the notebook of Alex Whitworth and drew a route through the arctic. Below that, he wrote a message: "Will you sail the northwest passage?"

The crew of the *Berrimilla II* stand together on the day they discover their journey will once again be delayed due to weather. Left to right are Kimbra Lindus, Corrie McQueen and Alex Whitworth.

In the year of 2005, Whitworth and Peter Crozier were sailing between southern New Zealand and Cape Horn and began to realize they were approximately 2,000 miles away from any other human being. This is when they began to think, about... well, space. They contacted NASA via e-mail, and from there they came in contact with astronauts Leroy Chiao and Salizhan Sharipov who were then very much out of this world on International Space Station Expedition 10.

From there, everything seemed to

take off. The two groups started to piece together the similarities between both parties. "Basically [we're both] in a tin can," Whitworth said. "We're all dealing with psychological and physiological problems."

Both parties were stranded for an extensive period of time, dealing with all sorts of issues from preparing meals to simply using the john, to having to get entirely suited up to even step outside, to being almost completely isolated from any

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other people.

That was Chiao's last space mission; he retired from NASA and became a professor at Louisiana State University.

About a month after the astronauts landed, Chiao, Whitworth and Crozier got together in Falmouth, England, meeting face-to-face for the first time.

Approximately a year later, Whitworth got a call from Chiao, inviting him and Crozier to speak at a seminar called "Risk and Exploration." There, Whitworth and Crozier presented a lecture about sailing and their experiences. Other guests at the seminar included Lee, Ken Kamler, Dale Andersen and many astronauts.

But it was at that bar in Louisiana, where Whitworth and Crozier were sharing their love of Guinness, when the idea of a trip through the Northwest Passage began to form. This is when Crozier drew the map, and the idea gripped them. They had decided then to sail up to the Arctic and witness the eclipse this Aug. 1.

Sadly, when the time came to leave, Crozier could not make the journey due to family matters.

Following this news, Whitworth went on the search for a crew of experienced sailors. He found Kimbra Lindus and Corrie McQueen. Whitworth first met McQueen on Christmas Day 2007. She heard about the trip and contacted him, expressing keen interest in the subject. Lindus, on the other hand, jokingly said she "was invited by special invitation from a Mr. Alex Whitworth." Lindus and McQueen had met once before at a Christmas lunch.

Whitworth and McQueen took off from Sidney, Australia, on April 10 and sailed non-stop (on Alex's good friend, his boat, the *Berrimilla II*) to Adak—a journey of approximately 6,000 miles. Staying only a few hours to fuel up, they soon headed over to Dutch Harbor to pick up Lindus.

Unfortunately, they got stuck in Dutch for nearly three weeks.

Nome was their next stop. They arrived on the Fourth of July, and stayed more than a week, waiting for the Northwest Passage's ice to break. Here, Whitworth again shared his love of Guinness, only this time with the local Nomeites.

Their plan was to take off on Monday, July 13. However, they are stranded in Nome due to weather conditions up north. The plan is to take off as soon as it's safe, and skip stopping at Point Barrow, if at all possible. From there, they will head straight through the Northwest Passage. A stop in Canada may be arranged, but no plans are firm at the moment. Following that, they hope to sail down past Greenland, and then on over to England where the *Berrimilla II* will most likely be docked for one year while time passes until the Fastnet yacht race comes around.



Photo by Anna Hahn

SAILING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE—Alex Whitworth, pictured, gave *The Nome Nugget* a tour of the *Berrimilla II*, his sailboat, which he has owned since 1993. Whitworth, Kimbra Lindus, and Corrie McQueen are planning to sail through the Northwest Passage this month.