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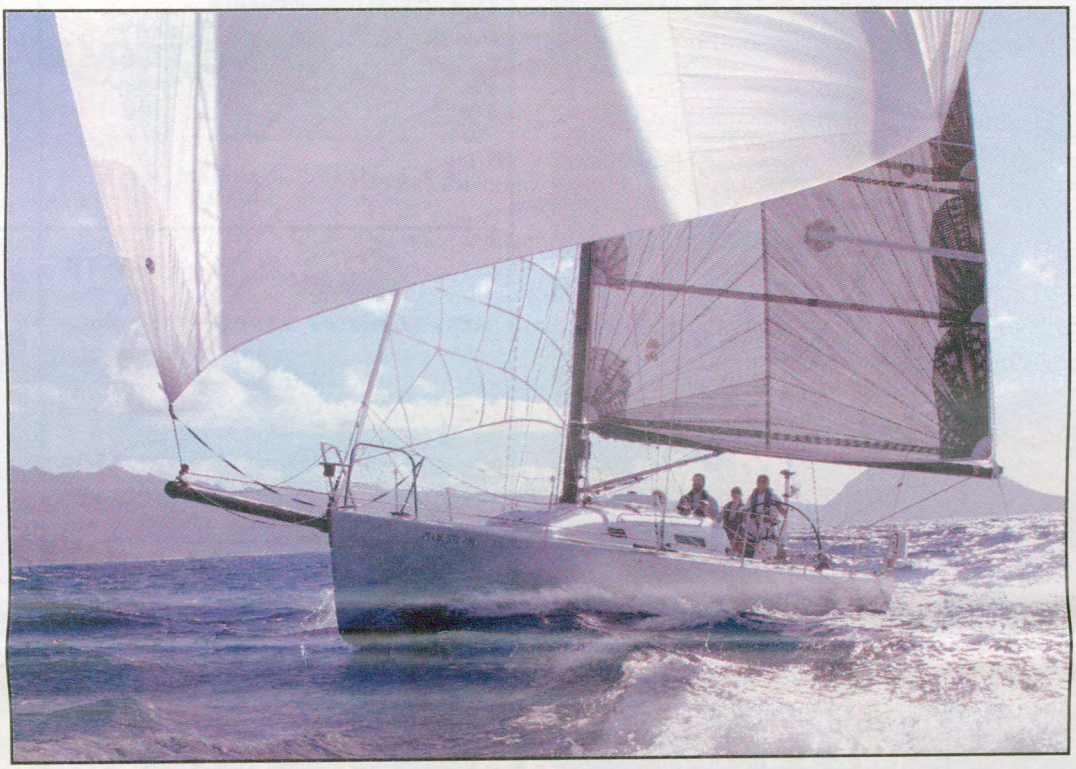
Portland's *Reinrag2* Makes Transpac Win a Family Affair

by Peter Marsh



"The first two times Portland sailor Tom Garnier's J/125 *Reinrag2* sailed the Transpacific Yacht Race from Los Angeles to Hawaii, his brother Al Garnier was on the boat enjoying the fun with the family. This year Al was elected the Transpacific Yacht Club's commodore, so instead of sailing he was on the docks at the Ala Wai Harbor greeting every boat that finishes the race. Hollywood couldn't have scripted a happier ending to the race when, on Sunday July 22 late at night, Al's duties included congratulating the overall winner: *Reinrag2*, skippered by his brother Tom.

"Al said before the race, 'My dream would be to present the big trophy to you,'" Tom Garnier recalled, "so I guess the gods must still be crazy." The 41-foot boat-that-could with five Garnier family members out of a crew of six upstaged all 73 starters big and small to win first place overall on corrected handicap time. *Reinrag2* was given pride of place at the head of dock, and at the awards ceremony, Al handed the Governor of Hawaii trophy to Tom.

The governor's trophy for overall winner stands alongside the Barn Door (fastest elapsed time by a monohull) as one of the Transpac's two most prized awards—even bigger, some of the small-boat owners would say, because they have no hope of outsailing the millionaires with their outsized designs and professional crews. But Reinrag2's daily mileage logs late in the 2,200-mile race: race surpassed those of almost all other boats except Pyewacket and Magnitude 80 twice its size. On July 18, they were the furthest south and logged 232 miles — second only for the day to the 80 footer's 237, putting them solidly into first place on corrected time.

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Photos by Geri Conser

The victorious crew of *Reinrag2* celebrating on the dock in Hawaii The Portland-based J-41 surfed away from the competition during this year's Transpac.

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The race features a staggered start that aims to give everyone the chance to first to finish first. The slowest boats start first On Jul 9, followed by the middle fleet three days later, and the fastest boats three days after them. Reinrag2 started July 12, and caught the breeze that blessed the middle starters. Its elapsed time was 10 days 11 hours 51 minutes 35 seconds, reduced by a handicap allowance 3:22:20:02 for a corrected time of 6:13:31:33, comfortably secure for first place even with the great majority of boats still at sea.

So how did the Reinraggers pull it off? With squirrelly conditions prevailing, early strategy was all over the map. Reinrag2 chose to go south. "Last time we had no wind," Tom Garnier explained. "This time we really had to find the wind. But we never dropped below 10 knots [in boat speed], and coming in through the channel to finish we hit 20 knots, surfing. This is just a big Laser [dinghy], and you have to put the biggest sail up!"

Despite his brother's dream, Tom had no illusions of winning overall. "Hell, no," he said. "We didn't pay attention to that stuff. We just wanted to sail our own race and accelerate to the finish. We pushed real hard the last third of the race, and then we could see it [the win] coming." The crew kept a blog going on their website (http://www.reinrag2.com/) Here's what they said about Day 10:

"Oh what a night (Oh, what a garden of delight). If you saw our progress on the standings this morning, you probably can guess we had a good day yesterday. We did. We also had a great night last night. Really words can't describe, but let me try. It was what we came for. The moon was out, we were headed straight for Diamond Head and we were surfing down 15 ft seas. About 20 - 25 knots winds and R^2 just dances. The boat starts off at 12 knots, picks up a wave and suddenly you're doing 15... then you come up on the wave in front, punch in with the spray going both ways and over the deck and you just keep going faster. 17knots? Sure... sometimes 20... feels like you've broken the sound barrier and speed no longer matters. After a while a lull comes or you bounce of a wave a little hard so you slow down.... Then you start all over again. You could spend millions to get a ride on a rocket, and not get the experience we had...

Five of the six crew were related: skipper Tom Garnier, Al's sons Kevin and Darren Garnier, Kevin's wife Lashawna, Tom and Al's nephew, Jared Lathrop, and Joby Easton, longtime friend and employee of Tom. "But we aren't amateurs, we've been sailing a while. We have five super helmsmen on board," Tom insisted. "Six," a crew member interjected. "He isn't counting himself." This isn't the first time *Reinrag2* has been at the front of the fleet, they were First in Class at the last two Transpacs and Cabo San Lucas races.

So, another Portland yacht has taken top prize on a Hawaii race, proving yet again that freshwater sailors from the Columbia River know a thing or two about saltwater sailing. And in case you are still wondering, Garnier spelled backwards is Reinrag, and the 2 means "squared," although we're not sure what that sigfnifies!

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