

## SPORTS

## SAILING

# Ex-local helps 'Reinrags' sail to riches

■ Former region sailing family celebrates sailing victory on Pacific Ocean.

By BRIAN HEDGER

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Honolulu is a long way from the Cedar Lake Yacht Club.

At least, on a map. In Tom Garnier's mind, however, the yacht club is never more than a memory away.

"We always think about it," Garnier says of himself and his older brother, Al Garnier Jr. "That's where we first learned how to sail. And when you do something great like this, it just shows you how far life can take you sometimes."

The "great" thing Tom recently accomplished happened on the Pacific Ocean during the 44th Biennial Transpac "Blue Water" yacht race that starts in California and winds up in Honolulu.

The Garnier brothers no longer live in the region. Tom lives in Portland and is CEO of an industrial shredding manufacturer he founded. Al is chief operating officer for Metropolitan Stevedore in California. He lives in San Pedro, where Transpac '07 started.

Al was also the Commodore of the race this year, while Tom and his crew of six (five relatives and one close friend) won the overall title by sailing Tom's 41-foot yacht, *Reinrag2* to victory.

It took 10½ days of actual sailing to win, with a handicap-corrected time of six days, 13 hours, 31 minutes and 33 seconds — using a boat that's considered small for this type of race. Smaller boats in races

such as this are usually a big disadvantage. But Garnier's crew decided to gamble by heading south several hundred miles out of their way to catch a low-pressure cell off the coast of Mexico.

The cell had lighter air, which is what smaller yachts need to go fast. By sailing so far out of their way, the crew was chancing it — but it turned out to be a great decision. They realized they were in first place overall about two-thirds through the race, leaving their best third as the only thing between themselves and the winner's trophy.

"We knew that if we were in first at that point, we just had to not do anything stupid and we'd win," said Garnier, who lives in Oregon and moved to the West Coast after graduating from Indiana University. "The boat went pretty fast. We never went much slower than 11 or 12 knots."

At one point, they even had it up to 20 knots, which is really moving for a sailboat.

"Everybody sees these sailboats and thinks you're just bobbing along," Tom says. "In reality, the boat is actually surfing out there, and you can feel it when it catches a wave. It's like an Indy Car. It's very noisy at times."

It's also a bit tedious. The crew rotates shifts at the helm in a race this like, with two crew of three spending four hours at a time steering the boat round the clock. And with-in each four-hour shift, each three-person team rotates turns at the helm about once an hour — once every half hour in stressful conditions.

The Garniers learned to sail with their father, Al Garnier Sr., in the 1960s at the Cedar Lake

Yacht Club. Al Sr.'s first boat was called "Mr. Reinrag" which is just their last name spelled backward. A second boat he bought for his kids was named "Reinrags," which is the the root for Tom's current yacht.

"We do the sailing thing, quite honestly, because it helps keep the family together," says Tom, who always makes sure to have a family-based crew when he races the Transpac. "In a race like this, where you have to have so many helmsmen, it really helps that we're so close. People ask us how we do so well, and I just tell them that we got the fighting out of the way years ago."

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Shown after the 44th Biennial Transpac sailing race are (left to right): Barry Fukunaga, deputy director, Harbors State Department of Transportation; Kevin Garnier; Al Garnier; Tom Garnier; Lashawna Garnier; Darren Garnier; Joby Easton; Tom Garrett, Rear Commodore TPHYC.

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