

**TINKNOCKER TRIP  
LIGHTHOUSE POINT, FL TO CHANNEL ISLAND HARBOR, CA  
VIA PANAMA CANAL - 2002**



**TINKNOCKER**

The following is a recap of our trip through the Panama Canal on our newly acquired 60' Hatteras Enclosed Flybridge Sportfisher, TINKNOCKER, owned by Stan & Sandy Vath of Channel Islands, California.

The crewmembers / friends are:

Captain Stan Vath	Channel Islands Harbor, California
Larry Thompson	Channel Islands Harbor, California
Gary Semolich	Ventura Keys, California
Alan Landry	Ventura, California
Lorenzo Biedebach	San Quintin, Baja California

**10-25-02**

Departure – Lighthouse Point through Hillsboro Inlet at 7:00 pm. I had to wake the bridge operator up with my horns and he finally raised the single bascule bridge so we could proceed out to sea. We ran all night in 1-2 foot seas and arrived at Hilton Marina Key West (175nm) at 1:30 pm the next afternoon unknowingly just in time for the Fantasy Island Parade. What a show this was!! Anything you can think of was going on here. Fuel was \$1.58/gal.

**10-27-02**

We departed the Hilton Marina – Key West at 7:00 am en route for Isla Mujeres, Mexico, a little island off Cancun. Mexico. (343 nm). The seas were 3-5 feet with a following sea. The boat handled very well. We have been trolling and Alan caught a Dorado that fed the crew. No tuna yet. Alan also caught a Wahoo on 10-28-02 before we got to Isla Mujeres. Port clearance was OK. Fuel was \$1.78/gal USD.

**10-29-02**

We departed Isla Mujeres for Belize at 12:15 pm. Trolling was not productive. We arrived at San Pedro, Belize on 10-30-02 at 2:00 pm. The little town was real laid back and tranquil. Electricity was \$.40/KW. Diesel \$2.65/gal USD.

### 10-31-02

We hit a piece of wood that came off the docks on our departure to Belize City. We arrived at 10:30 pm at the Radisson Yacht Club. It was very surgey and the water was dirty. We had to move a few miles to Moho Caye to do the prop & rudder linkage repair. It was a private island/marina/yacht club with a little bar and restaurant. We had to go into Belize city for parts/supplies, etc. and it is a real hole. Our new watermaker was failing and the manufacturer finally flew in Hamish Macdonald, who detected our factory problem and fixed it. He was awesome and sponsored a windsailer. He brought his board/kite and put on a show for us. We tried to buy some duty free diesel (\$1.15/gal USD) but the two Belize officials could not agree on how to make it happen so we bought none.



**TINKNOCKER** at Moho Caye

### 11-03-02



**TINKNOCKER** at Fantasy Island Yacht Club Roatan Island, Honduras

We departed Belize for Roatan, Honduras at 12:30 pm. The weather was great the first day and then deteriorated the next. Our last travel

day to Roatan, Honduras was extremely rough. We stayed at Fantasy Island Marina between Johnny Carson's 130' yacht SERENGETI (right) and a 120' yacht REBECCA (Popeye's Chicken) from Louisiana. This is a real nice resort and it was empty. We rented a car and drove all over the island,



had lunch at the west end and picked up some electrical parts to wire

in the new dive compressor. We also found a welder to make a part for the helm chair, which had broken in rough seas. Lorenzo & I did a scuba dive and it was beautiful, but no game at all.

### 11-7-02

We departed Roatan for the Panama Canal at 7:30 am. The seas were 1-2 feet & 5 knots of wind. We picked up 3 Yellowfin Tuna on the troll which made for some great sushi and dinners. On 11-8-02 we caught 3 Kingfish (King Mackerel) in the 30-45 lb. Range and traded them along with soft drinks and \$15.00 to some Honduran divers for lobsters. These divers were in 2-man dugout canoes 50 miles offshore. There were about twelve of them and they must have been with a mothership as each canoe only had 4 scuba tanks, a regulator, mask and oars. No B/C, no weight belt, no water and they had no teeth. Some looked like they were 14 years old. On our final day of travel the weather went 6-8 foot at times and was less than desirable.



### 11-11-02

We arrived at Cristobal, Panama at 3:30 am and had to anchor until daylight before going to the Panama Canal Yacht Club to dock and meet our agent Pete Stevens. After getting squared away with him we got a cab and toured Colon. It is a real ghetto and very dangerous at night since the USA (Carter) gave up control of the Panama Canal District. 80% of the Panamanians wanted to keep the USA's presence, but it didn't matter. We then went to the Gatun Locks to physically observe and plan our trip through later that day. It was surreal watching these massive tankers, container ships, dry-bulk carriers, refrigerated cargo ships, vehicle carriers, commercial fishing vessels, etc. go through the locks. They are towed by "Mules" (small locomotives) attached to steel cables. Some ships were over 900 feet long and 100 feet wide. It started to downpour so we finished up our pictures and headed bay to PCYC with a quick stop at McDonald's for lunch. (It was about \$1.00 USD less than the States for a combo and they had at least one armed guard on staff.)



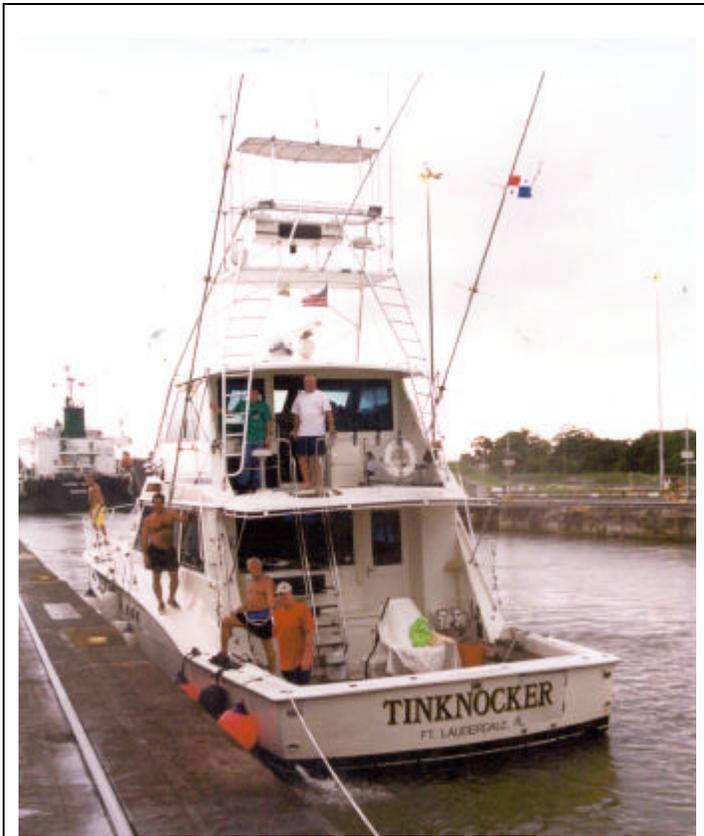
**TINKNOCKER** at Panama Canal Yacht Club



Observing the Gatun Locks



"mules"



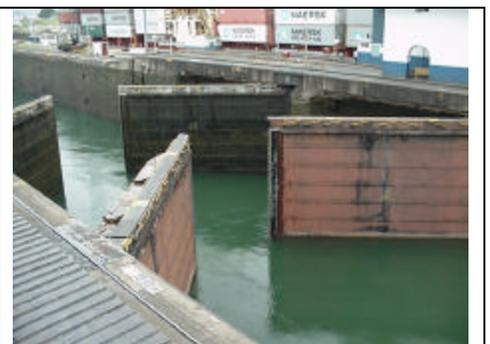
**TINKNOCKER** entering Gatun Locks – Panama Canal  
On Deck L to R: Alan Landry, Gary Semolich, Lorenzo Biedebach, Larry Thompson. On Flybridge L to R: Canal Pilot Ricky and Capt. Stan Vath.

We got back to the TINKNOCKER just in time to depart to a holding area where our pilot (which is mandatory) would be dropped off onto the boat for our transit through the Canal. He was almost on time and we got underway as soon as Ricky got on board about 3:00 pm. I asked him who our chamber mate was going to be and he pointed to a dry-bulk carrier coming in from outside named PARINDA NAREE from Monrovia, Africa. She was about 500 feet long and 85 feet wide. We had to let her pass, as she would be going in the locks first in the up-locking process (3 locks totaling 85 feet). We had to go side tie because we were transiting at night. A little less desirable than a center tie. However, we had new large (A-6 fenders) good lines, and a great crew so I was very confident going in we would not meet any situation we could not handle. The first lock at Gatun Locks was fairly easy with only a little twin-screw maneuvering to keep us straight with the wall so the crew could take up the slack in the lines as we up-locked and keep the fenders against the concrete wall of the lock. The second lock was a lot different as we were right over the 48" diameter pipes where the water is let in and the turbulence was unbelievable. It was all I could do to keep the boat straight as the turbulence pushed us off the wall in every which way, but the twin MTUs did their job as they belched out some black smoke when put to the test as they had been idling too long. The crew hung in there and kept the slack out of the lines and we finally

settled into the wall softly. The third lock at Gatun was a piece of cake. We then passed PARINDA NAREE when we entered Gatun Lake, the man-made freshwater lake 85 feet above sea level. We would be going into the lock first at Pedro Miguel Lock to start the down-locking process, about thirty-some miles across the lake.



Gary & Alan entering the Panama Canal. PARINDA NAREE is up ahead.



We crossed the lake at night (about 3 hours) and it was well marked with red and green channel lights as well as line markers for the center of the channel. I asked our pilot Ricky how the down-locking process would be and he assured me it would be simple. He was right and a great guy with a good sense of humor. After Pedro Miguel we proceeded to Mira Flores Locks (2) for the final descent into the Pacific Ocean. The last lock has a webcam and our wives and many friends were watching as we entered and down-locked our final link of the canal transit. We then proceeded out of the lock and headed out toward the Pacific Ocean. A Panama Canal boat picked up Ricky just outside the Balboa Yacht Club. We said our thanks for the great job he did and then proceeded to the Flamenco Yacht Club where we had dock reservations. We arrived at 11:00 pm, got the boat tied up and had a couple Captain & Cokes with our agent Pete Stevens (Delfino Agency) and hit the sack.

Side-Tie through the Canal



Lorenzo, Gary & Stan during haul out in Panama Flamenco Yacht Club

**11-12-02**

We got a couple cabs and went into Panama City for lunch and to buy some parts and tools. We did manage to find what we needed but it took all day. One wild goose chase after another and of course one of the cabs wouldn't start half the time.

**11-13-02**

The repaired prop finally got here so we made arrangements with the boatyard to use their 150-ton travel lift. It poured rain here every day and of course it was pouring when we hauled out and changed the props back. They said it rains 102 inches a year average. We topped off the fuel tanks in between rains. \$1.10/gal. USD.

**11-14-02**

We departed Flamenco Yacht Club at 11:00 am and headed for Coiba Island and the Hannibal Bank. We caught school size Yellowfin Tuna all we wanted on the way and finally arrived at 9:00 am.

**11-15-02**

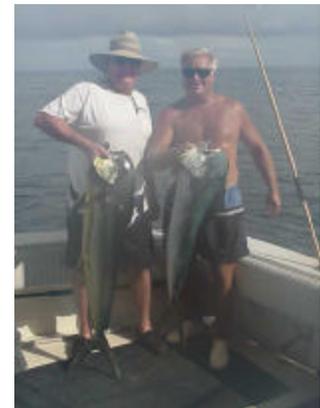
The 25-30 lb. Dorado were wide open and we kept a few to filet and vacupack along with the Yellowfin Tuna. We tried chunking Skipjack on the Bank and only caught more Dorado, which we released. We were boarded by the Panamanian Navy to check out our papers midday. Everything checked out so other than a few scratches and blue paint to rub out, we gave them some sodas and then we were off. We then trolled back to Jicaron Island to anchor and spend the night in the lee. This is an uninhabited jungle paradise with wild monkeys and lush vegetation. We snorkeled over to shore and did some beachcombing. The jungle could not be penetrated without a machete. The rivers had dumped silt into the anchorage from all the rain so the visibility was not too good.



Dorado caught at Hannibal Bank



**TINKNOCKER**  
anchored at Isla Jicaron



Dorado caught at Hannibal Bank

### 11-16-02

We departed Isla Jicaron about noon and headed 20 miles outside to look for larger Yellowfin Tuna. We caught more school size YFT and the standard grade of Dorado which we released. We stopped at Isla Montuosa to scuba dive on the way to Golfito, Costa Rica. The visibility was good and a beautiful dive, but no game in sight.

### 11-17-02

We arrived at the Banana Bay Marina – Golfito, Costa Rica at 6:00 am. We took a cab ride to town and did some grocery shopping. There is not too much to do here so we relaxed around the club and had the boat washed by some locals.

### 11-18-02

We left Golfito at 6:00 pm and headed for the new world class resort Los Suenos further up the Costa Rican coast. We had flat seas all night.

### 11-19-02

Arrived at Los Suenos at 6:00 pm, got our dock assignment and tied up. This marina has the finest docks, electrical, cable, TV, water hook ups you will ever see anywhere. There is a Marriott Hotel on the grounds that are really first class. We rented a car and went into the closest town, Jaco, which is a surfer hang out and a lot of beach bums from all over the world come here to exist and surf. We then headed 20 miles north where there is a good size river with huge crocodiles (up to 14 feet long) lounging around the banks. There is a bridge over the river, which made a nice viewing place. On the way back we stopped at a restaurant right on the bay and had their seafood combo, which was more than we could finish, so we shared it with a couple local dogs.



**TINKNOCKER** at  
Banana Bay Yacht Club, Costa Rica

### 11-20-02



**TINKNOCKER** at Barillas Yacht Club

El Salvador – Central America

L to R: Larry Thompson, Lorenzo Biedebach, Alan Landry,  
Gary Semolich, Stan Vath

a jungle and saw some wild monkeys. This is a very nice place and a few of the staff spoke some English. We fueled the boat and washed it down at the fuel dock in preparation for our next morning departure to Acapulco, Mexico.

We took on some fuel and headed for El Salvador. We arrived the next day at 1:30 pm and met our prearranged pilot at the mouth of the bay for the 10-mile ride to Barillas Yacht Club. This bay is similar to San Quintin, Baja California, but was a much deeper channel except one spot. We got a mooring, as their floating docks are not in yet. They do have a very nice facility with Port Captain, Customs & Immigration on site. By far the easiest and least expensive port clearance of the trip. The next morning we hired a guy named Luis to take us on tour of the countryside and three cities: San Miguel, Usulután & Jiquilasco. It appeared to be a poor country with armed guards everywhere. Even on the beer truck! Not too many smiles in this country. We stopped in Usulután and bought some bananas and a watermelon for a fresh fruit salad. On the way back to the Yacht Club we went through a



### **11-23-02**

We met the Port Captain on our boat at 6:30 am because he had to sign the “Zarpe” which is our clearance paper into Mexico. We were headed back out to sea by 7:00 am. The seas started out fairly flat so we went right on a straight course. But, the offshore winds picked up and we had to head back to within 2 miles of shore to reduce the fetch in the waves for a comfortable ride. The highlight of the day was when Lorenzo caught a 52 pound Wahoo after going 6 for 6 on skipjack. This was good for the freezer as we were down to just Yellowfin Tuna and Dorado.



### **11-24-02**

The second day of our 772 mile route to Acapulco was very nice traveling. We stayed about 2 miles offshore to maintain the nice seas as we headed into the dreaded Gulf of Tehuantepec.

### **11-25-02**

The final day of travel was nice as well except for several hours south of Salina Cruz when the wind and seas picked up. There was also heavy ship traffic outside the busy port.

### **11-26-02**

We arrived in Acapulco at 10:30 am and did the port clearance and immigration clearance at the Club de Yates. This was a nice facility and we also had the boat washed as we changed the oil and filters on all 4 engines. A local captain “Natcho Camacho” arranged for a pump, disposal and the 50 gallons of Texaco #40 (for a fee of course). We re-provisioned the galley with fresh veggies, fruit & a whole Thanksgiving turkey at Wal-Mart. Alan & Gary had to catch a flight home to take care of some business issues, etc. This was an anticipated possibility so I called my wife to have Dennis Thompson and Al Gregg fly in and meet us wherever they could.

### **11-27-02**

We departed early next morning and got to Zihuatanejo in 11 hours just in time to find out they were out of diesel fuel. They said it would come in the next day and fortunately it did. They also had a 20% surcharge, on top of the expensive diesel, to use the fuel dock. There are no docks here so we had to use a mooring. I went into town to do Port Clearance and Immigration and it was a “ghost town”. It was real quaint and laid back. Dozens and dozens of gift shops and restaurants and no tourists. No other American boat in the marina! They may have priced themselves out of the market.

### **11-28-02**

Onto Ixtapa, which is only an hour away. Here we met our wives and surprised them with a turkey in the oven. We spent 2 days here and were amazed at the lack of people here. This Marina is as nice as Los Suenos in Costa Rica. There are many high-rise hotels and fine restaurants here also, but no tourists.

### **11-30-02**

We had a nice run with our wives up to Manzanillo – Marina Las Hadas where “10” was filmed. It’s a beautiful place but again, no tourists. Dennis Thompson flew in to help out on the crew for the remainder of the trip, which was real fortunate.

### **12-01-02**

My wife Sandy & I took a cab way around to the port captain to do our clearances because Marina Las Hadas & them are having trouble getting along with each other. On our way back through Manzanillo we stopped and picked up some beer & groceries.

### **12-02-02**

We ate at the two restaurants at Las Hadas that were open and found the food to be OK, but expensive. This is a small marina and the only place we have had to do true med-mooring. The 50 amp plugs had 30 amp breakers. We could barely keep the electrical on the boat working. The water here is crystal clear.



**TINKNOCKER** leaving Las Hadas Marina

### **12-03-02**

We left Las Hadas Marina at 10:00 am and headed for the fuel dock on the other side of the bay. It's at the end of the huge commercial port, the largest in Mexico. Our trip up to Puerto Vallarta was brutal. 30 knots of wind right in our faces all the way.

### **12-04-02**

Arrived at Puerto Vallarta at 6:00 am headed to the marina and got a slip. We were sure glad to get in to protected waters and wait for our weather window to make the 300-mile crossing to Cabo San Lucas, Baja California. This is a real tourist friendly place and has a lot of services. I noticed a friend's yacht in the marina. The PRINCESS GLORIA, a 105-foot Delta Motoryacht from San Diego. Homer, a fellow I fish long-range with, own it but unfortunately had just flown home.

### **12-05-02**

We left Puerto Vallarta at 6:00 am and headed for Cabo. We fished "El Banco" and "Roca Corbetena" on the way but it was pretty lifeless. We did have one jigstrike that I think was a Wahoo, but it did not stick. The entire run to Cabo was smooth. We hit the weather window perfect.

### **12-06-02**

We got into Cabo at 2:00 pm, met our ship's agent, got fuel and a dock assignment from the marina. Al Gregg flew in here and joined the crew for the run up from Cabo. We also met up with some guys from home that were down here fishing an annual tournament. We had an Italian dinner at Romeo's & Juliet's by the marina and it was real good.

### **12-07-02**

We spent an extra day here waiting for the weather and resting some more. Our ship's agent brought back our clearance papers and really gouged me. The only time this trip (Typical Cabo mentality).

### **12-08-02**

We headed out to sea at 6:00 am for the run to Magdalena Bay. On the way we fished the Jaime Bank and Golden Gate Bank. Al picked off a couple nice Dorado on the troll and we let some smaller ones go.

### **12-09-02**

We got to the anchorage outside Mag Bay named Bahia Santa Maria at 2:00 am and anchored for the rest of the night. The next morning when I got up I noticed a wrecked boat on shore. Upon closer inspection it turned out to be the CHAMP, a long time San Diego charter boat that Sandy told me about a few days ago via sathphone. They hit the reef and were rolled into shore. The boat was in two pieces and appeared to be a total loss. We were fortunate enough to buy a 5-gallon bucket full of lobster from a panguero for \$30 as we left the anchorage this morning. Guess what was for dinner?



We are currently fishing the Thetis Bank and have landed a 67-pound Wahoo and caught and released a 160-pound Striped Marlin. The water is nice and we were hoping for some of the larger grade of Yellowfin Tuna as we move up the ridge, but they were not here. Striped Marlin are everywhere.



Dennis Thompson with the 5 gallon bucket of lobster he bought for \$30



Lorenzo & Stan with a 67 lb Wahoo caught on the Thetis Bank off the coast of Baja California, Mexico

### 12-10-02

We arrived at Turtle Bay at 8:00 am and anchored up. Diesel fuel here is \$2.80/gal. USD – the most expensive on the entire trip. Fortunately we have a good fuel capacity and did not need any. We rested a bit, had a nice breakfast prepared by Dennis and headed for Cedros Island to do some Yellowtail fishing. Unfortunately the seas were rough and we could not get to the good spots without taking a real beating so we headed for the lee side and anchored up right at dark at La Playita. During the anchoring process we passed over a long loose hawser that was tied off to a mooring. The crew saw it and let me know so I put the transmission in neutral just in time, but it still got stuck on our gear. After several unsuccessful attempts to free it I decided to get my dive gear on and investigate. On my first dive I could see a 1 ½" rope tag end off the mooring wrapped around the port prop. With the wind and current it was futile to unwrap it. I finally asked for a knife and cut the wild end free from the prop while not doing any harm to the mooring. We then anchored up and had 30 knot winds all night and gusts to 50 knots. I stayed on the bridge all night with the GPS on anchor alarm and one eye open. Our anchor never moved an inch.

### 12-11-02

We moved up Cedros Island to the north anchorage and anchored midmorning. We rested up and fished the reef there all day. That evening we had a big lobster dinner, watched a movie and got to bed early hoping the winds would subside as some weather sources predicted.

### 12-12-02

We left Cedros Island at 3:30 am and had little wind or swell the first 50 miles on our way to San Diego. As we progressed north the weather got better, if that was possible, and stayed that way all the way into San Diego Harbor. On the way between Jeronimo Island and San Quintin we trolled up huge unlimited Bonito on feathers. We released all of them. We tried some high spots around San Quintin that we frequent for Yellowtail, but none would be caught. As the sunset we traveled on toward San Diego and were amazed how nice the seas remained. No one on the trip could remember a nicer evening/night on the high seas.



## 12-13-02

We rolled into San Diego Harbor about 10:00 am. I had called the U.S. Customs department and they met us at the Harbor Police Dock in only 10 minutes. The customs officer Alberta was awesome. She asked for the proper paperwork/passports, etc. and I furnished them promptly out of the Voyager Paper file. She took about 10 minutes to complete the clearance and we were on our way. We went by Fisherman's Landing and talked to Captain Bill Cavanaugh, owner of the charter boat, PACIFIC QUEEN. We gave him a brief recap of the trip and were on our way to Channel Islands Harbor, our final destination. I considered a stop at Avalon, California for dinner, but with the nice weather holding and storms brewing up north, it was time to get home.

## 12-14-02

We arrived at Channel Islands Harbor at 2:00 am. 46 straight hours of perfect seas to finish the trip. 1-2 foot swells, 15-20 seconds apart and no wind. Unbelievable! I called the Harbor Patrol to get a dock until morning. We docked at the Whales Tale Restaurant so we did not have to negotiate the Channel Islands Boulevard bridge at night the first time. Our Tuna Tower, antennas and outriggers are over 30 feet tall, so it made sense to take a real good look at the situation in the daylight at low tide. We had breakfast at Sea Fresh restaurant in the harbor to kill some time and went back to the TINKNOCKER at 10:30 am. We headed for home and cleared the bridge by 4 ½ feet. When I rounded the corner of the channel to our house, I could see all our wives and many neighbors out on their decks to welcome us home. Sandy had a banner hanging off our balcony that said " WELCOME HOME TINKNOCKER – FLORIDA – PANAMA CANAL – OXNARD". I pulled into our new dock that was built while we were in transit and she fit perfect.



Welcome banner



Docking at home

In conclusions I have to say that this was a trip/adventure of a lifetime. 5000 miles, 61 days (including final preparation) and 541 hours traveling on the seas. I had a great crew which was made up of long time friends (no hired pros). We handled our mechanical issues, third world country issues and surprises as they came along one by one. It is amazing how well things stayed together and problems got resolved. This trip is not for the light-hearted. We all agreed that it made us appreciate our wives, families, home waters for diving & fishing and it was just great to be home!

