

King Neptune  
Blue Water Society  
c/o Manhattan Yacht Club  
385 South End Avenue #7G  
New York, NY 10280

January 16, 2003

RE: Request for Induction

Dear King Neptune (VC PC),

I, Danielle Gallo, a member of the MYC for the last 10 years, request induction into the Blue Water Society upon completion of this summer's Newport-Bermuda Race starting on June 14, 2002. I was the official tactician aboard SV Stagger Lee, a custom 50' Beneteau owned by Michael Hochberg of Connecticut. His contact information is 617-721-5312. The race spans a minimum of 635 miles across the Gulf Stream to the beautiful island of Bermuda. We began the race on Friday the 14th and completed it Monday evening around 6:30pm. Below is a brief account of some of the highlights of the passage.

The crew of seven began the race on one rainy cold morning in Newport. I stood by our captain and coached him through the start. We were timid off the line but quickly caught up to other Swans in our class. We were surprised the Beneteau was performing so well, it must have been the extra weight added to the keel just weeks before so the boat would pass it's stability tests. As we drove past one boat after another with their crews all dressed in foulies hiking out on the rail we had a feeling of guilt. None of our team was hiking out, so in good measure the crew sat on the rail but in Stagger Lee style our cook/snacktician, Adam Goldberg, passed out the Godiva chocolates which made rail riding quite civilized. As the first day progressed and the excitement boiled down the crew split into the assigned two watches. First watch Jim Hedleston watch captain, Dallas Murphy navigator, and myself tactician; second watch Michael Hochberg captain, David Hochberg medical office/radio man, and Dan watch captain/mechanic; Floater Adam Goldberg cook. At the beginning of the race, the weather was rough and one of the crew was seasick unlike several other competitors that had more than half their crew ill on the rail. Stagger Lee sailed along on it's 20 degree heal through the night into the morning without any other hitches. We fondly referred to her as the floating condominium because of all her amenities. We had heat the first night, which made drying out below after a tough shift really nice.

Our first big mishap occurred after some disagreement on what sail to use. We finally put up the Steal your face (graphic) geniker. We had some difficulties and had to douse and relaunch. During that process a slight tear occurred in the tape along the foot. Unaware and not giving too much consideration to this we relaunched and within minutes just as crew got dialed in and settled, enjoying the new speed with this sail, a loud pop. The entire foot tore off and the outer sail tape was the only thing holding the sail together. It was a sad moment. Left without a sail that could give us any downwind power we plotted along for the gulf stream.

My watch was quickly know as the watch that was constantly adjusting everything to get maximum speed out of the boat. This was good for us and bad for the other watch trying to sleep below. The noise of adjusting the sails was sooo loud. and the discussion sometimes equally as boisterous. One night coming off watch Jim and I gave up 15 minutes of precious sleep time to watch the funniest part of "Meet the Parents" on DVD. A little bonus and distraction. The boat continued on it 20 degree heal. The bumps from waves and getting around was an acrobatic feat and quite the challenge for our cook.

Second mishap was being becalmed just before the gulf stream. We proceeded to sail/float in a circle for 12 hours while the rest of our competitors floated with the stream south. This cost us any kind of standing in the race. Once the wind picked up we did well daily but the damage was done. The only saving grace was Adam playing some guitar for entertainment.

The gulf stream was a great adventure. Driving over the tractor trailer size waves coming in all directions was difficult in the day and even more challenging at night. At one point Jim and I tethered ourselves onto the back of the boat, hung our feet off the transom to experience the 80 degree water. Not exactly racer fast but what an exciting ride, better than any amusement park and 100 times more beautiful.

Third Mishap was the jib sheet snapping. Another loud bang in the middle of the day followed by a quick fix. Our crew was really starting to work together well yet, Michael Hochberg was voluntarily on both shifts keeping an eye on us, the Trim Nazis, pushing the boat to the limit.

We had luck on our side or should I say God. One night as I drove with the main reefed we watched the lightning and bad weather come right along our side and go behind. Maybe it was the Tibetan pray flags that flew off the back of the boat waving the weather off. The sight was awesome. My favorite time was the 4-8am shift, as far as night shifts go. You go from seeing nothing but stars and a New Moon, to the world unfolding. It's so peaceful and vast.

So here we are, Bermuda comes into sight the crew is all up, tired and excited. We figure out our exact approach, the video camera comes out the music goes on and we drive toward the finish. We get serious for the actual finish and then celebration and exhaustion take over.

I hope you will accept my submission for induction into the Blue Water Society. I await your decision.

Sincerely,

  
Danielle Gallo