



Islander 36 NEWS

SUMMER 2026

VOL13 ISS 2

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ISLANDER 36 NEWS

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On the Cover

Richard Shoenhair of Windwalker, first monohull to round Harding Rock and winner of the Westpoint Regatta handicapped division aboard his Islander 36.



Islander 36 Association Mission Statement

“To promote ownership and use of the Islander 36 via a one design racing fleet, cruising group and to provide valuable resources for the Islander 36 owner.”

While we are an Islander 36 association, we welcome other Islander models and their owners.

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The Islander 36 was designed by Alan Gurney to be a fast racing boat with a good IOR rating as well as comfortable to sail and cruise. The boat has proven to be very well-suited to San Francisco Bay conditions. The mast is stepped on the keel with double spreaders and inboard chainplates to provide minimum sheeting angle. The deck plan offers unusually wide walkways which provide added safety and ease of sail handling. The T-shaped cockpit provides an efficient means of sail trimming and allows the helmsman an unimpeded view of the sails and foredeck. The extreme beam in relation to length combined with the deep draft and long waterline gives tremendous room below decks as well as stability and speed. The all teak interior is standard with a roomy galley, unique folding table, settees and chart table. The boat sleeps 6 comfortably. Many features are available to make the boat very comfortable for cruising. The Association promotes and sponsors both racing and cruising. We welcome inquiries and new boat owners. For information, contact any fleet officer.



Westpoint Regatta 2026

A relaxed run, familiar faces, and a well-earned win on the Bay

The 2026 Westpoint Regatta delivered exactly what sailors love most about midsummer racing on the Bay: steady breeze, good company, and a course that feels like a long exhale toward Redwood City. This year, Windwalker and Kapai took on the run south, though the fleet felt the absence of Dan and Luna Sea, who were sidelined by unforeseen circumstances.

Kapai, crewed by stalwarts Bryce and Reanne, settled into a smooth rhythm early. The trio enjoyed a clean start just astern of Windwalker, who appeared to be sailing deep with a crew of eight. With that horsepower,

Windwalker steadily stretched their lead and became the first monohull to round Harding Rock before disappearing entirely in a classic horizon job. The next glimpse of them came hours later at the San Mateo Bridge, motoring home rather than staying overnight at Westpoint.

Kapai arrived at Westpoint alongside a couple of boats in their division and eased into the evening with a well-earned dinner. Bryce and Reanne, having staged a car at the marina, headed home after the meal, leaving the Commodore to enjoy an early night aboard. Sunday morning brought a quiet departure at 7 a.m.,

and with the help of a friendly ebb, Kapai made it back to South Beach Harbor by 9:45. A calm, uncomplicated return, exactly the kind of morning that reminds you why you sail.

And of course, congratulations to Tom Shoenhair, who not only led Kapai down to Redwood City but also secured first place in their handicap division. A fitting finish to a relaxed, memorable weekend on the Bay.

Rick Egan
Kapai - 1978 Islander 36
San Carlos, CA



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Enjoying the fruits of our labours

Jubilee has seen many upgrades over the 6 years

As we entered into our sixth year owning Jubilee, we decided we weren't going to tackle any big pre-season projects that would delay our launch. It felt like a miracle that the abundance of winter snow melted away and we were able to get into the

water on the first weekend after the marina opened for the summer. Being the first of all our friends to launch was a refreshing change of pace!

We always consoled ourselves on our late launches by telling ourselves that

the cold, wet, spring weather was worth missing. While the temperatures were chilly, Jubilee's diesel cabin heater made the cabin warm and cozy whether it was after a brisk sail or crawling out of the v-berth in the morning. I guess most

boats don't have heaters like we do as the marina was very slow to fill up with boats. We had plenty of weeks to enjoy the solitary comfort of Jubilee and contemplate how the past 5 years of upgrades and projects had improved our enjoyment of her.

Launching in May rather than almost July gave us the opportunity to compete in two of our yacht clubs "offshore" races in mid-June. The Burke Shoal race was a lively affair with a stiff breeze and choppy seas for that reminded us that we need to make sure the cabin cushions and throw pillows are properly stowed beforehand! Cara missed that race, but the following weekend she helmed Jubilee for a race to Sawyer Bay that started off slow and light, but halfway through turned into an absolutely fantastic reach to the finish line. Her confidence in helming a race carried over to the Silver Islet race in mid-June which proved to be a completely mixed bag of lots of wind and little wind; clear skies, then thick fog, and then clear again. It was a Sunday race that ended in Thunder Bay, so we had made a weekend out of it, spending Saturday night in Sawyer Bay before making the short hop to Silver Islet for the start. As a result, we had both the dog and the dinghy with us, to the surprise of some of the other racers! But, like the other two races, we were the sole boat racing in the JAM (jib and main) division so despite the diverse and often frustrating conditions, once again we were assured a first place finish!

Racing Jubilee has emphasized how much the addition of an anemometer and multi-function displays (Christmas 2022 newsletter) has provided invaluable insight into how



the boat sails in varying conditions. It's very useful to see not just the current wind speed, but to also see how the speed and direction have been trending. That data has also improved our cruising by helping us decide when to reduce sail area as the wind picks up, or when we need to consider turning on the engine to ensure we make it to our destination!

Another pricey upgrade that was well worth the investment was the feathering propeller (Summer 2024 newsletter). After the first few years sailing with the fixed 3-blade, we began to dread light wind days as our boat speed would just crawl when the

wind dropped below 8 knots. Without a spinnaker, Jubilee still prefers 10 knots of breeze for downwind sailing, but upwind she skims along quite nicely now in 5 to 7 knots. We're able to delay turning on the motor when cruising and when we do, the properly sized prop gets us better performance and mileage.

We've been making steady improvements to the electrical system, including a new panel and rewiring the entire boat (Spring 2023) and adding solar panels (Spring 2025). As the lengths of our cruises has increased, those upgrades have worked quietly in the background to improve the experience, keeping a

FROM THE EDITOR

growing number of comforts and luxuries running – refrigerator, stereo, heater, Starlink, laptops, cell phones, movie projector, drone. While the solar panels helped with keeping the lead acid batteries charged, this season we finally replaced the house bank with

a much bigger lithium battery. It's installation is later in this newsletter that we are putting together on the eve of our 3-week summer cruise – we expect to report back in the Fall issue what a massive improvement that battery was!

The sewing machine we bought two years ago has been put to use for a few projects. The two existing cockpit cushions we made last summer have held up well and the new one we made for behind the helm has made it a favourite spot to lounge when the sun is blazing and the solar panels on the stern provide some shade. While we still haven't gotten to making a new dodger, we did put it to use this summer making a new bag for our LifeSling, also featured in this issue. We've been too busy sailing this summer but as the season winds down, we'll be patterning a dodger and sewing that together over the winter!

Our headliner replacement (Spring 2023) got extended into the head and v-berth this season. There's still a lot of custom trim to figure out, but both areas are now brightly lit with more of the same LED puck lights that we used in the salon. The head also got the shower curtain track reinstalled using some custom clips I designed and 3D printed as the old ones were long lost along with some track slides to hold a new shower curtain. All the water lines in boat had been replaced and the hot water heater reinstalled



so I just to had add a diverter to the faucet and a handheld shower head. Harry got to “enjoy” the inaugural test drive of the shower head after he found something very stinky to roll in during a trip ashore but we cleaned him in the cockpit. I had the honour of being the first to shower inside the boat and after years of tolerating the icy waters of Lake Superior to rinse off days of sweat, sunscreen and bug repellent, it is an amazing feeling to enjoy a hot shower aboard! It seems like such a trivial thing, but it's going to make our longer trips so much more pleasurable!

Painting Jubilee was the biggest launch delay for the past two years and while there was touch-ups that we could have done this spring, it was nice to hold off on those and just get sailing. While there's been a few dings and scuffs put into the paint, overall she still looks fantastic and was worth the effort. Hopefully the weather is cooperative next year and we can fix

some spots without delaying our launch.

As soon as this newsletter is finished, we'll be casting off from the dock for an adventurous 3 weeks cruising across the north shore of Lake Superior. It's a little bittersweet as we don't expect to have any of our friends with us this time but it's also the first time we don't have any particular destination that we are pushing to get to. Instead it's just going to be puttering our way along and enjoying favourite anchorages and discovering some we've passed by over the years. Our agenda is “wherever the wind takes us that is easy and fun” and while we are there, we will enjoy the comfortable floating home that 5 years of projects has given us! We're looking forward to sharing some of the adventure with you in the next issues.

David Wadson
Jubilee - 1978 Islander 36
Thunder Bay, ON



Show your Islander pride

Order a burgee today!

After selling out of our old stock of burgees which had been ordered years earlier, we drew up specifications and solicited bids from five different companies around the country with Prestige Flag (www.prestigeflag.com) chosen for the new burgees.

The result is two fantastic burgees made of high-quality UV-resistant nylon and thread. Rather than screen printed, the logo on the burgees is hand sewn using the appliquéd cut and stitch method for a clean, quality look. To make sure it looks great

no matter which way the wind is blowing, the i36 logo "reads right" on both sides of the burgee! A pair of brass grommets allow easy attachment to a spreader halyard. Your Islander will stand out from the crowd at your marina flying one of these gorgeous burgees!

The 18" burgees are \$36 but if you really want to impress, consider the 7-foot burgees for only \$72. Price include postage and we are barely breaking even at those prices.



Islander 36 *Burgee*

**ORDER
YOURS
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Opening day afloat

Three Islander 36s to welcome the Giants' 2026 season from the best seats on the water

It began, as many great nautical adventures do, with a simple email. Dan Throop of WindCatcher floated the idea to the fleet: why not sail into McCovey Cove for the first Giants day game of the 2026 season? Within hours, Kerry Scott confirmed that Cali would be there, and Bob DaPrato had enlisted Rob Blenderman of White Horses to help bring Bella Luna into the mix. A plan and a small flotilla was born.

By the time the sun rose over San Francisco Bay, the day felt charmed. Seventy-five degrees, and one by one, the three Islanders glided into the cove, dropping anchor among the unmistakable swarm of bright-red Netflix kayaks that have become a fixture of Giants home games.

The atmosphere was pure Opening Day magic: horns sounding, fans cheering from the water, and the

buzz of a new season crackling across the cove. Even for seasoned sailors, there's something special about watching baseball from the deck of an Islander 36 close enough to hear the roar of the stadium, far enough to feel like you're in your own private world.

The only thing missing was a Giants win. But among the raft-up of WindCatcher, Cali, and Bella Luna, spirits stayed high. Because for this



crew, the real victory was already in hand: sunshine, good company, and the unmistakable joy of three I-36s gathered together in one of the most iconic anchorages in America.

And in its own way, that's a perfect start to any season.





A Parisian night in a Sierra Storm

Islander 36 sailors brave wind, snow, and flooded roads to gather for Presidio Yacht Club's annual Paris Dinner

When the Sierras are getting hammered with 30-knot winds and feet of fresh snow, most sane people stay home. But Islander 36 sailors are not most people. Despite the weather's best attempts to keep everyone tucked indoors, a dozen hardy fleet members still made their way to the Presidio Yacht Club for its much-loved Paris Dinner.

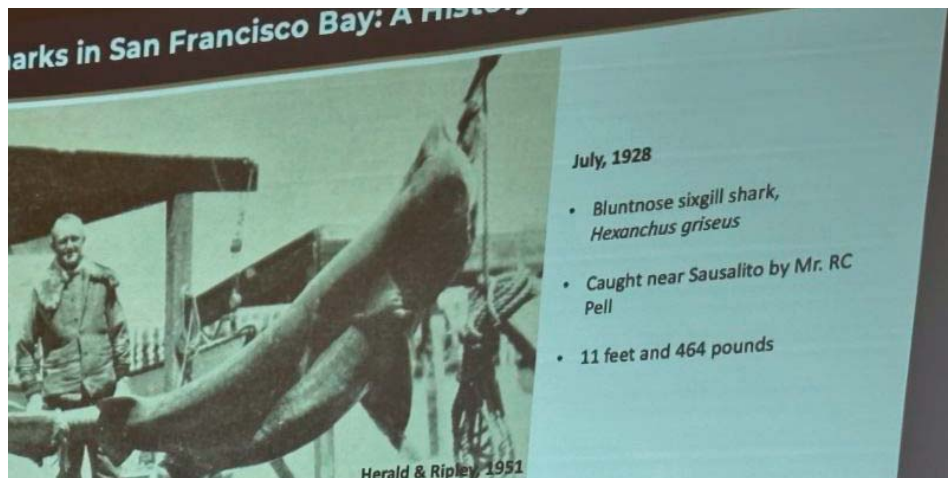
No one arrived by boat this year, conditions made sure of that and a few familiar faces couldn't quite beat the storm. Rich and Takae of Tacoma Blue and Jim Mullarkey, formerly of

Kindred Spirits, were forced to bow out. But Bella Luna, Kapai, Maggio, Vanishing Animal, White Horses, and Zenith were all proudly represented, their crews determined not to let a little atmospheric chaos spoil a good tradition.

Inside the warm glow of the Presidio YC clubhouse, the evening unfolded like a French postcard. The culinary team opened with generous hors d'oeuvres, paper thin prosciutto, creamy French brie, and enough nibbles to make guests forget the weather they'd battled to get there.

Then came Le Plat Principal: a golden, perfectly crisp Chicken Cordon Bleu draped in a velvety beurre blanc white wine reduction. The accompaniments were equally indulgent rich Potatoes au Gratin and a classic Green Bean Casserole, followed by a decadent Crème de Pots au Chocolat that silenced the room in the best possible way.

Just when the crowd thought the evening couldn't get any richer, Meghan Hoist, PhD, of the UC Davis Ocean Science Expedition Academy, took the floor. Her presentation on



the history of shark populations in San Francisco Bay was a revelation. Few knew that in 1928, an 11-foot, 464-pound bluntnose sixgill shark was landed near Sausalito. Or that a 1984 survey found Leopard sharks dominating the bay at 40%, followed by Brown smoothhounds at 23%, Dogfish at 18%, and Sevengills at 8%.

But the most astonishing chapter was the soupfin shark boom of the late 1930s and early '40s, when millions of pounds were harvested annually after being touted as a prime source of Vitamin A. Predictably and tragically overfishing decimated the population. By the 1948 survey, soupfin sharks made up just 1% of the bay's shark community.

As the rain continued to lash the windows and the wind howled outside, the sailors inside Presidio YC lingered over the last bites of dessert, grateful for warmth, good company, and a night that felt like a small triumph over winter itself.

For those who braved the storm, it was an evening to remember. And for that, thanks go to Bob DaPrato for rallying the Islander crew and to the Presidio Yacht Club for hosting a night that was, in every sense, a true treat.



Islander fans drop anchor for a Giants win!

Zenith and Windcatcher made a strong Islander showing at the Giants game on Saturday, April 25th. Zenith arrived early enough to snag a prime anchoring spot, and Windcatcher joined later, fresh off a race, giving our raft-up a good test of its ground tackle. Zenith even made it onto the TV broadcast more than once, thanks to Joanne's sign cheering on Jung Hoo Lee. Best of all, the Giants capped the day with a solid 6-2 win over the Miami Marlins.



Happy Hour
It's 5 o'clock
somewhere...

Jubilee sets sail early

A record fast launch, chilly water competitions, and a summer cocktail to match the mood

This year, Jubilee made her earliest launch yet. On Saturday, May 16, 2026 the second day the yacht club launched boats, we were slipping into the water. The weather wasn't exactly welcoming, and the wind wasn't doing us any favours, but the excitement of an early start outweighed any hesitation.

Normally, spring means boat projects, long to-do lists, and a race against the calendar to be ready for July 1 and Canada Day celebrations. But this season was different. With no major repairs or upgrades on the docket, we found ourselves free to enjoy the launch instead of scrambling toward it. That freedom sparked a friendly competition on our way over to the marina, Jubilee's home for the summer, guessing how cold the water would be. The river started at around 10°C, and with each drop in temperature we'd call out the

new number like it was a scoreboard. It eventually hit 5.4°C and James proudly claimed victory for guessing the lowest reading.

Despite the chilly start, being in early was absolutely worth it. We've already enjoyed two beautiful weekends at the Sleeping Giant, the iconic rock formation on the Sibley Peninsula that resembles a giant resting on its back. According to Ojibway legend, the figure is Nanabijou, the Spirit of Deep Sea Water, turned to stone after the location of a sacred silver mine was revealed. It's a place that never loses its magic, no matter how many times we sail past it. And when we're not out exploring, we've had plenty of peaceful days cruising around the harbour, soaking in the simple joy of being back on the water.

All of this brings us to our featured cocktail for the issue. After Dave received the email confirming our launch

date, he found a drink that felt perfectly fitting for the occasion: the Woo Woo.

The Woo Woo is a bright, refreshing drink with just a few ingredients, making it an easy addition to any summer afternoon on the boat. Traditionally, it's made with 3 ounces cranberry juice, 1/2 ounce peach schnapps, and 1 ounce vodka, served over ice with a lime wedge. It's simple, colourful, and undeniably summery.

Woo Woo Cocktail (Non-Alcoholic Version)

- Peach nectar or peach juice
- Cranberry juice
- Sparkling water
- Lime wedge

Combine the peach nectar and cranberry juice over ice, top with sparkling water, and garnish with a lime wedge. It's crisp, fruity, and perfect for warm days on the water. Enjoy the season...Jubilee certainly is.



Five Islanders, one fast weekend

A cool, quick great Vallejo Race delivers tight starts, family crews, champagne finishes, and a pair of clean sweeps

The Great Vallejo Race came roaring in cool and fast this year, and the Islander 36 fleet showed up in rare form, five boats on the starting line, a sight not seen in ages. Windwalker dominated the Spinnaker division both days, while Dan Throop on Windcatcher single-handed his way to matching victories in Non-Spinnaker. But the real story lived in the moments shared by Kapai, Luna Sea, and Bella Luna as

they raced, rafted, and reveled their way through the weekend.

For Kapai's skipper Rick Egan, the excitement began before the first horn. "Five boats on the line!" he said, still buzzing. His crew, wife Kathy, sons Blaine and Bryce, daughter-in-law Reanne, joined first-time racers Anthony and Joanne Taylor (plus their two canine tacticians) in celebrating a fleet

turnout that felt like old times.

The start was tight, with Kapai tucked just behind Windwalker and barely ahead of Windcatcher, until an unexpected surge of current at the windward mark forced Rick into his first-ever penalty turn. By the time the crew "took their medicine," Windcatcher and Luna Sea had slipped ahead and Windwalker was already a speck on the horizon.





Still, the beam reach to Vallejo was fast and fun, and the evening ashore was even better. Luna Sea greeted arrivals with its traditional champagne reception, and Bob DaPrato and his wife Maria surprised the fleet with a shoreside visit. After dinner, the Egans walked Blaine to the ferry before turning in early, while Bryce and Reanne capped the night with a fancy cocktail aboard Zenith.

Sunday brought the classic Vallejo Yacht Club breakfast and a friendly dockside catch-up with Rob and Ruby from nearby Benicia. The race home started cleanly, with Kapai slipping past Luna Sea as they exited Mare Island Strait. Rick gambled on the left side of the course for current relief, but San Pablo Bay had other ideas. "If there was an adverse current, Kapai found it," he joked. They finished last,

but spirits stayed high because weekends like this aren't measured in corrected time.

They're measured in family crews, surprise reunions, champagne on arrival, and the thrill of seeing five Islanders charging across the line together again.

For the full story, results and photos, visit islander36.org



Windward to summer

Tight finishes, and a fleet that showed exactly why the Sailstice Rally has become a highlight of the Islander 36 season

Wow what a day on the Bay. Five Islander 36s gathered beneath the Bay Bridge for the Summer Sailstice Rally, with a sixth spotted slipping through Raccoon Strait as if to bless the occasion. The wind gods were gentle, but mischievous: for the first time in the Rally's six year history, the fleet had to beat to windward to round Angel Island. Not just a token "long and short," but up to five honest tacks against a northerly breeze and a building flood that kept nudging boats east. South of the bridge, the start area sat in a soft haze of light air; north of it,

whitecaps and 15 knots of breeze snapped across the water right up until minutes before the horn. Half an hour later, the whitecaps vanished and the Islanders settled into a tactical climb around Angel Island's rugged shoulders.

The fleet stayed remarkably close, thanks to the thoughtful rating adjustments that have long made this event as fair as it is fun. Fixed props, tall rigs, single-handers, and non-racing helms all earned their allowances and the results showed it. The last three boats finished

within just 75 seconds of each other. Dan Throop single-handed Windcatcher to second place, while Karen on Luna Sea and Michael on Vanishing Animal each steered their boats under the non-racing-crew adjustment. Add in the "Fun Score" bonuses for contributing photos, and the leaderboard shifted again: Kapai climbed to second, Windcatcher slipped to third, and Zenith edged into fourth by a mere nine seconds.

After the finish, Kapai, Zenith, Windcatcher, and Luna Sea rafted

up in McCovey Cove for a sun-splashed celebration. Vanishing Animal, facing a long sail back to Brisbane and rising afternoon winds, headed south with a wave and well-wishes. It was another perfect Sailstice, sun, camaraderie, close racing, and a fleet that continues to show up for each other year after year.

From the Deck of Kapai

The day began with 12-15 knots of southwest breeze and a bright, easy summer sky. Kapai's crew, Bryce, Reanne, and a pair of canine tacticians aboard Zenith, motored to the start with sandwiches in hand. A short delay allowed Luna Sea to join the line, and the fleet set off toward Point Blunt. Kapai worked steadily upwind, overtaking Luna Sea and pressing toward Alcatraz to avoid an inbound freighter. But the wind softened, the angles shifted, and a few extra tacks were needed to slip into Raccoon Strait.

There, the fleet compressed. Vanishing Animal favored the left side and began chipping away at Kapai's lead "like the prisoner in Shawshank Redemption," Rick Egan joked. By Treasure Island, Vanishing Animal had surged ahead and finished with style. Kapai crossed second, with Windcatcher and the rest of the fleet close behind. The raft-up that followed was pure Sailstice joy.

From the Helm of Vanishing Animal

For Rick Van Mell, this year's Rally carried deeper meaning. Recovering from major surgery and undergoing chemotherapy, he wasn't sure he'd be able to race at all. But with neighbor Michael Pierantozzi at the helm, he decided to try. They started





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under jib alone in 15 knots of breeze, holding their own thanks to the tall rig and 135% headsail. When the wind eased, Rick hoisted the main slowly, deliberately, and with the instincts of a lifelong racer.

What followed was a masterclass in reading the Bay. Smart tacks, well-timed shifts, and a perfectly executed gybe put Vanishing Animal in the right place at the right moment. They found the wrap-around wind at Point Blunt first, accelerated, and never looked back. Michael grinned the entire way to the finish.

With a long, windy return to Brisbane ahead, they turned for home rather than join the raft-up. The breeze built to 25-30 knots near SFO, but they slipped into the channel safely and powered the final miles in.

A Rally to Remember

It was everything a Sailstice should be: sunshine, strategy, laughter, close finishes, and a fleet that continues to grow stronger through shared days on the water. Here's to many more years and many more Islanders joining the line.

For the full story, results and photos, visit islander36.org





Jubilee's JAM quest

Two races, big breeze, light air, and a crew discovering confidence and joy in the chase for the JAM inshore series title

This year, the mission was simple: take another run at the JAM fleet and make a real push for the 4-race inshore series. With that goal in mind, Jubilee committed to the full race lineup, ready to face whatever the season decided to throw at her.

The campaign opened with the Burke Shoal Race, where Dave took the helm and Cara stayed ashore to let James from Precarious (Tanzer

26) and his coworker Sam crew for the day. It turned into a classic offshore brawl: big 20+ knot breeze, steep chop, and a boat that returned to the dock looking like it had been spun through a washing machine. Even the bilge joined the drama, rising higher than anyone liked. But Jubilee stuck it out, sailed the 14 mile course in a quick 3 hours, and claimed first place, helped by being the only JAM entry, yes, but

also because they showed up on a day when many wouldn't. And despite the chaos, it was a spectacular day to be on the water.

Next came the Sawyer Bay Race, this time with just Dave and Cara aboard. Precarious was deep in wedding-prep mode with family arriving, the boat doubling as guest quarters, and a mother-of-the-groom staying



aboard, so James had his hands full. That left Jubilee to take on the next race of the JAM series as a duo.

Last year, Cara had helmed a double-handed Friday race with Rachel from Danu (Express 35), finishing despite some nerves in the gusts. This year, with newfound confidence and perhaps encouraged by the near-glassy conditions she decided to take the helm for the Sawyer Bay race. The morning began with Jubilee passing through the Blessing of the Fleet at Pier 3 - Royal Canadian Navy Pier, at Marina Park, a quiet ritual before the noon start.

Light air made for a gentle beginning, though Cara's timing at the line was less than ideal. Arriving too early, she had to gybe behind the fleet and restart, but stalled out in the faint wind, leaving Jubilee

roughly two minutes behind. But patience paid off and by the breakwall, they had reeled the fleet back in and passed a few boats. The wind filled, the tacks grew purposeful, and soon they were laying a clean line straight into Sawyer Bay.

What began as a bobber turned into one of the best sails of the year. No pounding, no chaos, no bilge water sloshing out - just smooth, steady progress. Jubilee finished first in the JAM division, again as the only entry, but the real thrill came from the overall results: sailing the same course as the spinnaker boats, she finished second overall. For a cruiser with cockpit cushions and an outboard hanging off the stern, it was a moment worth celebrating.

Jubilee doesn't yet carry a spinnaker, but after this season's

start, it's easy to imagine one in her future. Racing a comfortable cruiser may not look like the typical racer, but it's proving to be a whole lot of fun.

Next up is the Silver Islet race. Since it's a Sunday race that starts in Silver Islet and finishes back home in Thunder Bay, Jubilee will likely cruise out on Friday with the dinghy and Harry the sailing beagle aboard. Our PHRF rating won't get any adjustments for towing a dinghy but as we need to get home anyways, we might as well race! As the weather has warmed and more boats have gotten launched into the water, we might finally have a competitor or two in our division, but regardless we'll have a fun time!

Cara Croves
Jubilee - 1978 Islander 36
Thunder Bay, ON



Rebuilding an old bag

Amateur sewers replace a tattered LifeSling bag

This year we were launching Jubilee almost a month and a half earlier than we usually manage, so we once again told ourselves that we would get a bunch of projects done “at the dock.” We’ve said that enough times that now it’s a running gag whenever anyone tells us they are going to do stuff “at the dock” – we laugh and say “oh, you guys tell yourself that BS too!”

One of our grandiose ideas this summer was to make a new dodger to give us more protection in the cockpit - Lake Superior can be rough and cold so having something to keep a bit of the spray and wind at bay is something we’ve been wanting to put back on. We even got as far as purchasing some materials and reinstalling the old dodger frame, trimming it down in

the process. Unfortunately, things stalled out after that.

“Life got in the way” is a convenient excuse, but “life” was usually doing a mid-distance race or going for a weekend cruise, and not some other pressing responsibilities! The weekend weather has been suitable for going sailing rather than spending it indoors hunched over a sewing machine!

However, one sewing project that we had been thinking about, did get accomplished over just a few evenings. Anyone who owns a LifeSling has probably seen the effect that the sun’s harsh UV rays has on its vinyl bag. Years of exposure hanging on the rail steadily degrades them until they’re a tattered mess that in our case

was getting close to deploying itself overboard!

Amongst Sailrite’s numerous videos on their Youtube channel is instructions for making a fabric replacement bag. Luckily, when we bought the material for the dodger project, we purchased plenty extra for doing some other things, like this LifeSling bag! It’s not “Sunbrella,” which is a UV-resistant acrylic fabric, but rather a considerably cheaper polyester with a coated backing for water-resistance. We’re still amateurs at sewing our own boat canvas so we went with a more affordable option. We realize it theoretically won’t last as long as a premium outdoor fabric, but we also only have a sailing season that is only 5-months long and at a high latitude. While the cheaper polyester



would degrade quicker if it was in the tropics for the entire year, our bag will be inside for most of the year so we expect to get quite a few seasons out of it before we need to think about replacing it again.

The Sailrite video does a good job of showing how to make the bag, but it would have been nice to have written instructions and photos also as it got a little tedious to keep going back to the laptop to watch the next step a few times. We should have watched the video in its entirety before we started sewing as we were partway through sewing the parts when we realized that there was a continuity error in the video editing. The video description, which we hadn't read, explains where to skip ahead and back to do a couple steps in the proper order as

well as a size error in one of the panel dimensions in the video.

The coating on our fabric keeps the edges from unravelling so we could cut it with scissors instead of having to use a hot knife. As the video suggests, we did customize where we put the velcro straps that attach the bag to stern pulpit so it fits the spacing of the rails on our boat.

The fabric bags utilize the stiffener panels from the original lifelong bag to give it the same box-like shape. Some of them were held in with what remained of the original stitching so once we cut them out of the old bag, there was no turning back! We were either going to finish this project or we weren't going to have a LifeSling on the boat!

After a couple evenings of sewing, we had a completed bag that

passed the big test - would the sling and its 125-foot line actually fit into it! We used a vinyl mesh for the bottom panel of the bag so if any rain gets inside or if we ever have to use the LifeSling, moisture can drain out the bottom. Our strap locations worked perfect and attach the bag to our stern rail more easily than the original bag.

Like Jubilee's paint job, some imperfections in our stitching can be found if you look really closely but otherwise it looks fantastic hanging on the back of the boat. The black fabric we chose looks so much nicer than the white vinyl that always looks a little dirty even if it hasn't started rotting. We probably aren't going to get a dodger done this season, but we're glad we got this important piece of safety equipment looking ship shape!

More than triple the capacity with less weight and less space

The simplest option for expanding the house bank would be to simply add more batteries, but lead acid batteries are heavy, and there's not many places to easily put them on an Islander 36 once you've filled the space under the companionway. The bilge is often suggested, but ours is

pretty shallow – and wet – for storing batteries. The starboard lazarette could potentially be used, but it's an awkward shaped space to mount some heavy batteries, plus we keep other gear in there such as fenders and the barbecue. We've seen the icebox converted to a battery bank, but that certainly wouldn't be practical for us! The quarterberth is another option but unless you can get the batteries to fit underneath it, you're going to sacrifice its usability as a berth. Granted, haven't used ours for that, as it's more of a storage locker for the drink cooler, stand-up paddle board, drinking water, fishing rods, etc.

Regardless of where the batteries would go, I did know that we would never expand the house bank using more lead-acid batteries. A lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO₄) conversion was always going to be the direction we would go as they out-perform lead acid in almost every way. Longer life (10-15 years), greater usable capacity (80% to 100% of capacity versus 50%), less than half the weight, higher charging efficiency. While they can't be safely charged in sub-freezing temperatures, we also don't sail in that!

Knowing that we would eventually switch to LiFePO₄ batteries, I had made sure to purchase a solar charger that supported that. Unfortunately, neither our shore power charger nor our alternator can charge a lithium battery directly. Because the LiFePO₄ battery will want to draw as much current as possible, it would quickly burn out our engine's "dumb" 50-amp alternator. While we could upgrade



to a high-output alternator with an external regulator, that would be rather expensive and require converting our engine to a serpentine belt.

The simplest option is to use a DC-to-DC charger that uses the engine's starter battery (a regular lead acid battery) to charge the LiFePO₄ house battery. It keeps the draw on the alternator to a reasonable level (typically around 50% of their rated output) to avoid overheating it and melting its internal windings. Victron makes a few models of DC-to-DC chargers that would integrate nicely with our solar charger and battery monitor, but their newest model, the Orion XS, was the most appealing option, despite its higher cost than the older Orion-TR models. Aside from being smaller and more efficient, its output can be configured according to your alternator, up to 50A max. In our case, we limit it to 25 amps but if we ever upgraded to a higher-output alternator, we can just increase the output setting in the Orion XS.

The best resource we had for upgrading to LiFePO₄, was Marine How To, which has an excellent "Easy LiFePO₄ Conversion" article (<https://marinehowto.com/easy-lifepo4-conversion/>), that also explains how to properly fuse the lithium battery and which battery switch to use. The site owner also spends a lot of time testing and tearing down various brands of LiFePO₄ batteries. His current recommendation for a value-priced battery was the Wattcycle 314ah Mini. Besides from being recommended for its robust construction, it's pretty much the best value available for a battery of that capacity. I had been considering two Group 24 100AH batteries at about \$300-\$350 CDN each. When the 314AH finally came back into stock at the beginning of May, it was on sale for under \$700 CDN. I had been waiting a month for Wattcycle to accept new orders, so I jumped the day it was restocked and within a few days they were sold out again. Unfortunately, they must have underestimated the demand and by the end of the week I received an



email that delivery would not be until June and I could either get a \$20 discount for waiting or I could cancel the order for a full refund. I opted to wait and finally in early June it was shipped. By then, the price for new orders of that battery had increased by almost \$200 so good thing I hadn't cancelled the order!

The "hardest" part of installing the new LiFePO₄ was actually removing the old Group 24 batteries – there were the extra cables between the batteries to remove, the shore power charger wires had to be removed, and the Blue Sea charging relay that kept both the starter and house batteries charged from the alternator needed to be removed. The new battery is significantly narrower than the two Group 24s so I had to replace the shims that kept them in place. Installing the Orion XS just required running 3 wires for the battery and ground connections and then entering the proper settings via the Victron Connect smartphone app. I also needed to change to the proper Lithium battery profile in the solar charger and adjust the bank size in the battery monitor to reflect the massive 314ah capacity of the battery.

After doing some research, I found that I could program the Orion XS to a lower current setting so it would

also work with the 20amp shore power charger that is now connected to just the starter battery but with so much capacity available, I haven't been turning on the shore charger very much when the boat is at her slip in the marina – the solar panels are usually more than able to keep the house bank topped up while leaving the refrigerator running to keep the beer cold! Just the refrigeration running overnight would be draining about 20-30% out of the old batter bank but it's barely 5-10% of the new bank.

We've gotten out for quite numerous weekend trips so far this summer and it has been a joy to no longer be worrying about only turning on the Starlink if we really need it. Being just 2 or 3 day trips, I haven't given any thought to our power consumption other than curiosity as to how much we drain it when we leave the big power draws running for extended periods and angling the solar panels for more direct sun during the days. Getting this newsletter out is one of the last things we want to get done before we embark on our 3-week long summer vacation trip. Since we will probably be spending the entire time without from a shore power connection and intend to spend multiple days in most of the anchorages we visit, our power consumption will be more closely monitored, especially on cloudy days where the solar won't be passively recharging. I won't be worrying about deep discharges causing any damage to the battery as they would to a lead acid battery and unless we somehow have 4 or 5 days with no sun hitting the solar panels, we

certainly shouldn't be ever turning on the motor just to recharge!

I might spend a bit of vacation time digging into the only "issue" that I've noticed so far with this LiFePO₄ conversion – the battery percentage on the Victron battery monitor has been going out of sync with the battery's internal BMS, seemingly after it's been charging from the DC-to-DC charger. I barely consider it an "issue" as the internal BMS is showing a higher state of charge than the Victron – I'd be more concerned if the battery was less charged than what the monitor indicates. Right now I have very conservatively set the output current on Orion XS to 15 amps, which is less than suggested for a 50 amp alternator, as it will also work with our 20 amp shore power charger. I can easily increase that to at least 25 amps if we want more charging while motoring as we are hoping to spend more time sailing than running the engine on this trip!

The LiFePO₄ conversion has been on the radar ever since we acquired Jubilee, and finally this year it was practical and economical to finally take the plunge. It ranks high up with the feathering prop as one of the improvements to the boat that has made a significant improvement to our enjoyment of the boat. I expect that our 3-week trip will confirm that ditching the old, heavy batteries was the right thing to do! In the process, we'll be sharing lots of photo and video of our adventures!

David Wadson
Jubilee - 1978 Islander 36
Thunder Bay, ON

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2026 Islander Race and Cruise Schedules

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Bella Luna

Bella Luna in the sunbeam
during the 3 Bridge Fiasco
January 31, 2026