

Bon Voyage, Westward

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The M/V Westward disembarked from Boat Haven on Sunday morning, February 17, as two-dozen well-wishers bid the vessel and her lei-bedecked crew a safe voyage. Westward and her crew will spend a couple of months cruising down the coast to Mexico, then head west to the Marquesas and French Polynesia where they'll spend the summer. From there they'll decide where to go next.

The crew for the voyage includes owners Hugh Reilly as Captain and Teresa Reilly as Galley Chief, John Williams as Engineer, and Bill Marschner as Mate. Dan Dooling will be joining the boat along the way. Williams has been the vessel's engineer for six years and has been committed to ensuring the boat's readiness for the voyage.

Designed by the renowned naval architect L.E. "Ted" Geary of Seattle, Westward is no stranger to long ocean voyages. Built in 1924 by J.A. Martinolich in Dockton, Washington (on Vashon Island), as a charter boat for the Alaskan Coast Hunting and Cruising Company, Westward has taken many trips along the Inside Passage from Puget Sound to Alaska. In the 1940s, Westward entered wartime service as a patrol boat in California, returning to private ownership after the war. In 1967 she was sold and moved to Southern California. Her owners did an extensive restoration before voyaging throughout the Atlantic and Pacific, including a circumnavigation in the 1970s. In 1993, Westward was sold to her current owner, Hugh Reilly, who brought her up the coast from Mexico to the Pacific Northwest. On another trip, Reilly and Westward cruised 11,000 miles down the coast to Panama and back.

Westward joined Pacific Catalyst Expeditions in 1997 and spent 8 years in tandem with the M/V Catalyst taking passengers on adventure trips to Southeast Alaska. Her accommodations include four staterooms for guests, along with crew quarters. A wood-burning fireplace graces the main salon, and a well-equipped galley is set up for cooking for up to 11 guests. Her 18-foot 9-inch beam provides for a comfortable interior. During the summers, she made her home in Port Townsend.

The 86-foot long cruiser is heavily built, with a deep draft, full displacement, and inherent stability. Designed for Alaska waters and expedition cruising, the boat handles open water very well. During the past year-and-a-half, the vessel was extensively restored by, in Reilly's words, "a litany of Port Townsend craftspeople."

"There are so many people in Port Townsend who have been a part of Westward's care over the years. Their dedication and skills are the main reason I choose to keep Westward here," he explains. "Joni Blanchard (Leatherwood Finishing Company) is our Aesthetics Coordinator on the boat. Painting, varnishing, hull work, interior décor...she does just about everything and has been connected with Westward for more than 10 years. Shipwright Stan Delo and Neil Liden, who works on the boat's systems and helps with hullwork and painting, have also been devoted to Westward for the past decade."

As part of the recent bow reconstruction on the boat, a new stem and dozens of feet of new 2-1/4" thick planking were installed by the Port Townsend Shipwrights Co-op. The Co-op also rebuilt the fantail and the galley. Other work included repairs of the sponson, guard, and upper bulwarks. Ben Kahn and Joe Smith replaced all 26 portholes during the hull reconstruction.

Other local craftspeople who have worked on the boat include Barry Stephens, Brenda Stephens, Greg Fredrickson, Peter Chaffee, Grant Seran, Ufar Anderson, Moriah Dailer, Doug Roth, Greg Stupika, and Arren Day. With regards to the preservation of the 83-year-old vessel, Reilly likes to say, "It takes a village."

It is impressive to note that the 86-foot-long vessel is still powered by her original 110 horsepower, four-cylinder Atlas Imperial Diesel engine. The recently completed rebuild of the engine by Dan Grinstad has improved fuel consumption, giving the boat a conservative 3,000-mile cruising range at a speed of 8 knots. The main tanks carry 2,300 gallons of diesel, while auxiliary tanks on deck provide "insurance." The boat carries 2,000 gallons of water, as well as plenty of food, safety gear, and spare parts.

The boat's original design included a small mast that could carry steadying sails. Reilly decided to adjust the rig by putting in a new mizzen mast and foremast which will carry a couple of spinnakers. The sails were given a test run in the San Juan Islands and added a knot to the boat's speed. "It's also gives us something fun to fiddle with while we're underway," Reilly adds.

Just this month, Westward was accepted for listing in the Washington Heritage Register and a nomination has been submitted to the National Park Service for adding the vessel to the National Register of Historic Places. "The Pacific Northwest and Port Townsend will always be home," assures Reilly, when asked if Westward will be coming back this way.

