



## Sea Fire Ready to Roam

The Dyer's took a three month shake down circumnavigation around Vancouver Island in the summer of 2004, tracking some 2200 miles, followed by another three weeks of coastal cruising up Johnstone Strait. Steve retires in June, and they will continue to tweak the boat, do some local cruising and then turn left at Juan de Fuca sometime in August, as ready as they'll ever be.

by Kathy Taylor

Sea Fire is the Dyer's first sailboat, and they are "absolutely in love with her". Sue and Steve Dyer saw a Waterline yacht at Boats Afloat in Seattle a few years ago and the image of the graceful beautifully fared steel hull captured their imaginations. They were new to sailing; they had owned ski boats before, had taken Power Squadron courses, and were recent sailing club members at Windworks in Shilshole. They were dreaming of going offshore in a few years and did not want an "interim boat". They were quite sure of what they wanted; they couldn't shake that first impression. They traveled to San Diego, San Francisco, Oakland, the East Coast and Florida looking for just the right boat. In 2003, just as they were about to do "another east coast swing" they found the 46' Waterline Cutter in their own backyard, Tacoma.

Sea Fire was designed and built by Ed Rutherford in Sidney in 2001, and when she was sold to the Dyers in 2003, there were only 40 hours on the Yanmar 88 HP Turbodiesel engine, and three on the generator. She had been commissioned as an offshore cruiser/racer, with a 68' mast, five feet taller than the usual design. She came equipped with a Spectra 12 volt, 17 gallon per hour Watermaker, a suite of Simrad instruments including CR40 Chartplotter and Radar, and 756 amp hours of battery. Even the name, Sea Fire suited them. Steve is a soon-to-be retired fireman.

Their first real date together was a three month shake down circumnavigation around Vancouver Island in the summer of 2004, buddy boating with Port Orchard sailors Don and Marie Irvin on Freezing Rain, a Hallberg Rassy 46. They tracked 2200 miles, with only a disappointing 50 miles covered under sail. "The wind was either against us or a gale; we had only one day where it blew out of the northwest!"

They timed their arrival in Nanaimo to coincide with the Vancouver-based Bluewater Cruising Association's Farewell to the Fleet Rendezvous in August, where they waved good bye to Freezing Rain and the rest of the fleet heading South.

With their friend from Waterline Yachts, John Norwood, on board, they headed back up Johnstone Strait for another three weeks of coastal cruising. Knight Inlet was their destination. It is the longest fjord on the British Columbia coast, almost 70 miles long, with a steep sheer shoreline, stony shoulders carved by glaciers, crested by mountains reaching up to 6000 feet.

As well as spectacular wilderness scenery, Knight Inlet is home to some of the largest grizzly bears in Canada. Sea Fire's crew spent a cool August morning watching massive bears scoop salmon out of the water before cruising up the inlet.

High up the fjord, the water was still, with no sea surge. Against the wall the depth sounder read 400 feet. Steve drifted off in the dinghy to record two beauties - Sea Fire and the magnificence of Knight Inlet.

Beauty isn't everything. To prepare themselves for the offshore experience, the Dyers joined Bluewater Cruising Association in 2003 and are veterans of almost every education course that has been offered since they joined. Part of the Fleet of 2005, they have spent the winter readying themselves and the boat for offshore.

To complement their sail inventory of a fully battened big roach mainsail and a 130% genoa, and a gennaker, they are having a trysail and a storm staysail made by Carol Hasse of Port Townsend. Carol is also beefing up that big main. Since Sea Fire's purchase, the Dyers have added a wind generator, dual chain windlass, forward looking sonar, a carbon fiber spinnaker pole, and added another 255 amp hours of battery capacity, for a total of 1020. They have recently improved their communication center, with rewiring of their ICOM 710 SSB and computer modem installation. So what does the future hold for Sea Fire? Steve retires in June, and they will continue to tweak the boat, do some local cruising and then turn left at Juan de Fuca sometime in August, as ready as they'll ever be. They've spent the time to prepare the boat and themselves, like a true partnership. Sue says that every day when she walks down the dock toward Sea Fire, she always thinks "how proud we are to own her." "I'm sure Sea Fire thinks the same.

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Kathy Taylor is the editor of Currents, the newsletter of the Bluewater Cruising Association. [bluewatercruising.org](http://bluewatercruising.org).

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