

Chapter 2 – Shipping the Boat

Deciding how we would get the boat from Florida to Washington was a major source of concern to us throughout the buying process. We have had a number of emails from folks asking about the process so we will try to clarify what we did and why.

The first question that comes to everyone's mind is why didn't we bring the boat up ourselves – after all it is an ocean capable vessel. Simple answer, the boat may have been capable but we weren't. We have many years of experience of piloting small boats in protected waters but know very well that we lack a lot of vital experience. We felt that in order to bring the boat through the Panama Canal and up the west coast of North America we would need to spend at least 1 to 2 months sailing in the waters of Florida and the Caribbean first. We would only begin that voyage after about a month of going through every system on the boat until we knew it inside and out and were confident that all systems were working correctly. Finally, we both have jobs and could not have gotten the time off. Everything considered, we never had serious thoughts about bringing it up ourselves.

We have also been asked about hiring a captain and crew. We never really looked into that option. I guess we just felt the logistics would be too much to handle as we would need to make sure the boat was safe and ready to the captain's satisfaction, pay the captain and crew to get to and from the boat, pay for all food and time on the boat, and finally pay operating expenses including fuel and Panama Canal fees.

We did look into bringing her overland. We found a shipping company who reported that they had taken an N46 by truck before but it was not easy. As she sits now Salish Aire has about 32 feet above the water and 5 feet below the water. In order to get her overland a lot of her appendages, antennas, and the exhaust pipe would all have to be removed and stowed. She is also 15.5 ft wide. We were told we would have to get her to a port in Texas or someplace considerably north of her Florida berth in order to get her started on a route that could handle this size load. The estimate once we got her ready and to the shipping port was about \$50,000. Since the hassle involved was huge and the costs at least \$10,000 above the cost of over water shipping, this option was ruled out.

We looked into 3 shipping companies that shipped on freighters. We had a bit of trepidation with this option as in the not too distant past one of the companies had gotten behind on their bills. When a freighter full of yachts reached its destination port the yacht owners were appalled to learn their vessels had been seized under maritime law and they had to pay huge amounts of money to get their boats released.

Two of the companies, Raven Offshore Yacht Shipping <http://shipraven.com/> and Sevenstar Yacht Transport <http://www.sevenstar-yacht-transport.com/> were well known to our broker and had excellent reputations. Both of their bids were very close to each other. The third company's bid was considerably lower but we came to believe that they had grown from the ashes of the company whose customers had their boats seized. There are times to go with price and times to go with reputation. In this case we chose to go with reputation.

Raven ended up with our contract for 2 reasons. Reason one was they are home ported in the Salish Sea and we always like to support local businesses when we can. Reason two was they had a boat sailing within a very short time of the closing of our sale and would guarantee us a spot on it. We thought it was interesting that Sevenstar had a ship sailing about the same time but would only offer us space

available. (We later came to understand that Sevenstar had leased any space on the same ship chartered by Raven that was left over.) Our cost with Raven came in at about \$53000 including insurance.

Part of our purchase challenge had been getting insurance lined up for the boat. We were fortunate that the company who holds our policy did not require us to have formal training on Salish Aire (apparently our current sailing resume was sufficient) but they did limit the time the boat could be in Florida due to the coming hurricane season. We quickly confirmed with them that they would extend our Florida limit as long as the freighter left on schedule.

The next challenge was getting the boat from its home berth to the seaport of Port Everglades. Raven seemed to believe (again the assumption that Nordhavn owners are rolling in money) that getting time off and paying to zip down to Florida was not a big deal. We worked with the well-respected broker who had listed the boat to get the boat prepped for travel, fueled and a captain set up on short notice.

The boat needed to be ship side at a very specific time as they are loaded in a specific order. We had relaxed and gone camping only to get called by the captain that he thought his job ended when the boat was in the area of the freighter. He would be happy to move it but we had to make sure the marina was paid and that he would get a big bonus for his trouble of working on short notice. This is where Raven stepped in and assured us that they would make sure everything was taken care of and in fact sent us a text message photo of Sea Meadow being lifted aboard the freighter and into a hold below deck.

Having never been on a freighter I was pretty impressed by the photo of the hold with 2 yachts fitting easily in it. The lashings that held the boat were well pictured and looked very secure. I didn't know if being in the hold was the best thing (imagining lots of rust and dust) but at least she would be protected from the ravages of the sea.

We were very excited to monitor her travels both by commercial AIS tracking web sites (example: <http://www.marinetraffic.com/>) and web cams along the way including when she left Port Everglades, when she transited the Panama Canal and when she unloaded in Victoria, BC, Canada.

Our expectation was that Salish Aire would arrive in the Salish Sea port of Victoria about a week prior to our long planned (and paid for) trip to Central America to see our "adopted Mayan daughter" graduate with her bachelor's degree in nursing. The freighter captain kept her to a very tight schedule and Raven made sure we had frequent updates so we would be ready at ship side when our boat was unloaded. The only hint of trouble was an email commenting that there was concern about winds along the northern California coast.

We were in constant contact with our broker and a local Nordhavn owner who had offered to help us move the boat from Victoria to Everett.

When we mention the June storm along the coast we hear lots of stories about how bad it was. A number of boats headed into harbor. The freighter with Salish Aire was very lightly loaded with her water line high in the air. She dropped from her base speed of about 13 knots to 2 – 4 knots for days. Finally she was north of the storm and started drifting south! (We later learned she had engine trouble for a short time.)

During the storm delay we changed plans at least once a day with our boat delivery team as we had read in the shipping contract that if we held up the unloading process the financial penalties would be severe.

Finally we watched her pass the breakwater camera coming into Victoria harbour. The problem was we were out of time, she was scheduled to be lifted out of her hold the same day we were to be on a plane to Belize. We called Raven and asked for suggestions – they said “no problem” and promised to tie her up in Victoria for us if we would arrange payment with the Victoria Harbour Authority.

On returning from Belize we arrived in Portland late at night with our grandson and slept at our son’s house. We drove to Everett bright and early the next morning, changed clothes and grabbed our pre-packed bags with boat papers, life jackets, backup navigation equipment, and a change of clothing. Clarice’s parents drove us to the ferry terminal south of Vancouver. Raven folks met us on Vancouver Island and drove us to the boat in Victoria (where we had the nice surprise of learning they had even made sure she had been washed prior to our arrival).

I stepped on Salish Aire and looked at Clarice and tears running down my cheeks announced that after months and months of effort, we were finally on our boat/home to stay.

Don Kohlmann, our broker, had flown up to Victoria to help us with getting her home to Everett. We needed sleep badly but decided to start the main engine just to make sure we knew how everything worked since we wanted to leave bright and early the next morning. The engine started right off and then quit. We figured out that the complicated fuel valving system had been mis-set and the return fuel was going into a different tank than the pickup was coming from so the engine had run dry. Clarice and Don bled the engine (Clarice had done a lot of reading and learned that diesel engine owners MUST know how to bleed their engines when they run dry – she was pretty fixated on learning the skill early. Little did she know....) By 10 PM we decided we were satisfied we could make the trip in safety and went to bed.

About 4:30 AM I woke up and started going back over in my mind what I knew about the fuel system from having reviewed diagrams the previous owner had posted on-line and from what I had seen the evening before. I was sure I knew how to get the fuel back from port to starboard and could thus trim the boat. By 6 AM I had the boat on the level and felt very proud of myself. We were on our way out of Victoria by 7:30 AM on our way across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to make our entry back into the United States in Port Angeles, Washington. 3 miles out into the Strait the main engine quit. I started the wing (backup) engine and kept the boat moving while Don and Clarice went below to troubleshoot. Then the wing engine quit. It didn’t take Don long to recognize that we were pulling fuel from the tank I had emptied when I trimmed the boat. Since both of our engines pull from the same manifold they were both sucking air – again. Don reset the valves correctly and Clarice demonstrated her newly learned skill in engine bleeding and off we went across the glass-smooth water.

We had worried for some time about bringing the boat back into the USA. Bringing a boat from Canada that was taken there on its own bottom is not a big deal but Salish Aire had entered Canada as cargo aboard a freighter. We had our ownership papers in order. We had properly used a customs broker both when the boat was loaded and in Canada when it was unloaded. Clarice called customs when we were about an hour out to let them know of our planned arrival and they asked if we had the import papers assuming that we had purchased the boat in Canada. She explained the situation and they indicated they would be available on our arrival. When we docked at the customs dock in Port Angeles the customs officer informed us that now that we are big boat owners we get to pay a yearly fee to re-

enter the USA. Other than that he was as pleasant as he could be as he reviewed our documentation. 20 minutes later he welcomed us back into the United States and gave us our clearance number. We added some fuel and headed south towards home.

The rest of the trip to Everett went without a hitch. Even the currents cooperated most of the way. We had a "3 mountain day" (when you can see 3 major peaks at once in the Seattle area) as we travelled south. Don taught us a bit about reading the currents so we could get the best possible speed from the boat. We arrived in our assigned slip in Everett by early evening to a greeting party of a number of boating friends who attended to our lines as I backed her (nicely, if I say so myself considering it was only my third landing (with Don providing tutoring along the way)) into our home site on the water.