

Except from Interview with Teno Griffith: on the Blue Water Marine Sailing School
New York, NY 20016

Teno: So, I remember my mom's brochure, which said Get Salty. And her whole thing was heavy weather sailing school. Because people would take sailing courses and buy a boat, and they'd be afraid to actually set sail on the ocean, or do voyages. Because what if they had bad weather, and they'd never had bad weather unless they happened to have bad weather at their sailing school. So she specialized in heavy weather sailing. And the reason we could do that was 'cause we had alenuihaha which was blowing stink 360 days a year. And, so aloha means sweet breath- ha means breath. Alenuihaha said twice means strong wind. And you Mauna Kea going up 14,000 ft catching snow. You have Haleakala on Maui going 13,000 some odd feet making snow there too. These two mountains reach to the top of the atmosphere, and the trade winds are blowing at 25 knots regular, out in the open. All the time, in Hawaii. Day after day after day. When they get to these two mountains, these two islands, all that force is concentrated into alenuihaha channel. And you have 30-45 knots all the time, 20 foot seas all the time. No one made regular crossings of that channel except the Young brothers' Togan (?) barge, and the Nellie Bly. And that was us, that was a 43 foot, beautiful, Alden ketch. Very tall tender wooden boat.

Stephanie: What do you mean by tender?

T: Tender being that she leans over easily. She's not stiff, she doesn't stand upright like a heavy boat. You know, made to lean easily. So not, a heavy weather boat, she was a light weather boat. So, we would pick people up. And I crewed, I don't know how many trips I did across that channel with mom, but we'd pick 'em up in Kona and we'd sail down to Kawaihae. In the middle of the night the wind changes, and it starts blowing heavy when it comes down the mountain. And – I remember – we'd spend the night in Kawaihae, and we'd have shoyu chicken. Because it was easy to make, and it was delicious, and we could prepare it the day before and just heat it up. And then the next morning, we'd sail out of Kawaihae, and it would be all nice and calm, and you can literally see the wind line. I mean there is an actual line. On one side of the line its calm, and like 12 or 13 knots. On the other side of the knot, its like 30 knots and blowing. And you can see – you edge up to it, and you know you're going to get annihilated – and then, and then you do. You just get plastered. But there's still no seas yet, because you're still in around the point. The wind gets you first, and then you get out in the seas and its gnarly out there. We had our trichel and our hander kerchief jib and we'd sail all day in this stuff. And everybody would be sick, but at least they had some food in their belly. And we'd get all the way across the channel and tuck into this little bay called La Parouse Bay, on Maui. It's just this tiny little hole in the wall, it's just like, no beaches just sheer cliffs just all the way around. And the wind would blow over the top of you, and you'd have a lot of surge from the swells, but you'd be anchored and you could sleep.

S: How long is the crossing?

T: It's well, from – the channel itself is only 60 miles. But from Kawaihae I think you'd add another 15-20 miles on to that. So it's a full days sail.

S: So how long did she teach heavy water sailing?

T: she taught heavy weather sailing on the Nellie Bly for quite a few years. And then it so happened that some Australians came up sailing up on the Goodewind. 53 foot steel. She was a

ketch, we converted her to a cutter. And Nancy put a partnership – a hui – together, and bought the Goodwind with Terry and a few other people.

S: And what happened to the Nellie Bly?

T: The Nellie Bly, she wasn't used as often as she was previously. And eventually my mom sold her to a very nice woodworking man named Hap Tallman, who lives in Hawi. Right next to the alenuihaha channel.

S: How old were you at that point when she had the heavy weather sailing school?

T: I was quite young, I was probably 9 or 10 I figure. I can't be exact on that.

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