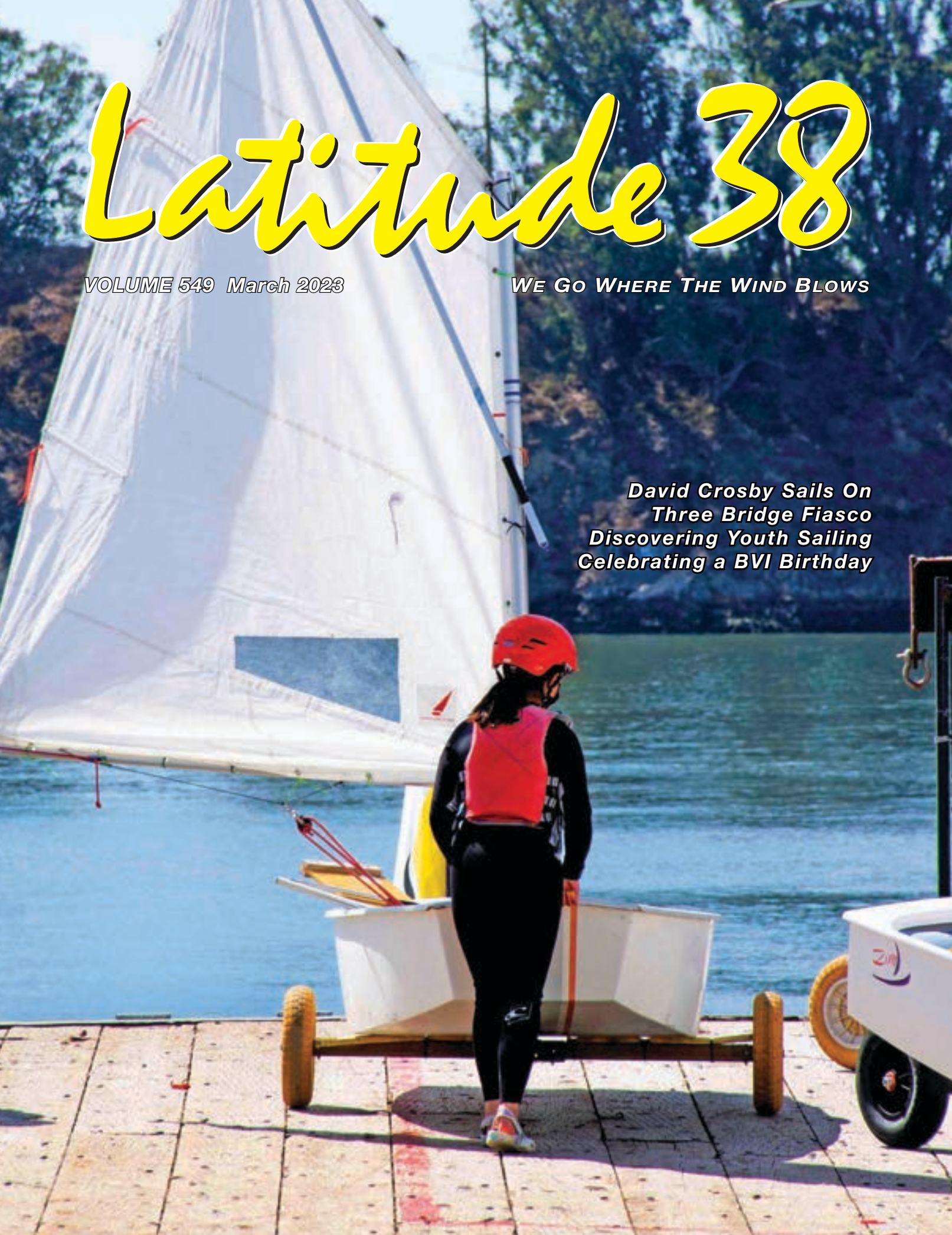


Latitude 38

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WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

*David Crosby Sails On
Three Bridge Fiasco
Discovering Youth Sailing
Celebrating a BVI Birthday*



the freedom of cruising without starlink

In my decades of reading *Latitude 38*, I've always appreciated the publisher's perspective on cruising, which, to me, seemed to embrace camaraderie, community and the benefits of simplicity. I remember stories he wrote about throwing electronics off of his Olson 30 *La Gamelle* and what I thought was a keep-it-simple approach aboard *Profligate*. But now, as espoused in the December 2022 Ha-Ha Wrap Up, it seems we need Starlink's 24/7 internet so we can clean a fish.

On the Ha-Ha in 1999, I caught my first fish since I was a kid. Having no idea what to do, I grabbed the VHF and called for assistance — which produced several lighthearted chuckles from the fleet. One skipper explained how to deal with my catch. I bought him a beer in Cabo, we became friends, and then we spent a lot of good times together that season. I wonder if the boat on the 2022 Ha-Ha became friends with the creators of the YouTube fish video.

The same Ha-Ha article lauded Starlink for allowing access to YouTube when repairing one's boat. For decades, people have solved problems at sea with parts at hand, using their heads and reference books, and relying on fellow cruisers. Nigel Calder's *Boatowners' Mechanical and Electrical Manual* has saved my butt several times. YouTube is not the oracle of boat life that so many think it is. There's great info out there, but there is also misleading and potentially harmful material. (Check out this Noonsite article about it by Googling: Noon-site Insights YouTube versus cruiser reality).

24/7 internet is fantastic for those who need to work, as well as those addicted to posting on Instagram, Facebook or TikTok. It is essential for those who seem to be out cruising, but spend nearly all their time shooting video and editing, blogging, Zooming, gathering followers, creating a brand, and hustling for more Patreon patrons. But all of this is chipping away at the core of the cruising community, keeping people below decks at anchor (perhaps watching other people's curated cruising on YouTube?), and removing people from the environment they have just sailed to. There seems to be less desire to engage with new cultures; we see cruisers walk through Marquesan villages without even a friendly kaoha to the locals. 24/7 internet encourages the use of Facebook groups for sharing cruising information — a practice that excludes those not on FB or who don't have high-bandwidth internet. Unlike email groups, this makes the sharing of potentially crucial information (safety issues, theft risk, missing boats) exclusive rather than inclusive. Mobile connectivity is even reducing the essential use of VHF as sailors leave their radio off, preferring to send a WhatsApp or Iridium GO! text within the anchorage.

I know there will be plenty of sailors who think I'm an old fogey living in the past ("Get off my lawn!") and telling people how to cruise. That's not the case at all. There are many ways to cruise, from Pardey minimalist to multi-million-dollar yachts. Yet after more than 20 years of cruising, some things have become clear. Those who keep it simple seem to have more fun, and those less connected electronically are more connected to the locals and the environment. If you leave an industrialized country after years of being connected 24/7 and believe that's what's necessary to live a fulfilling life, it's easy to justify staying in that life and practically impossible to see your way out of it. Luckily, I had an epiphany at the Islas Revillagigedo in 2019 and realized the detrimental effects of our societal addiction. (You can read about it here on my website: www.migrations.brucebalan.com.)

We don't eschew technology aboard *Migration*: We do appreciate being able to receive weather and send emails to our family via our HF radio or Iridium GO!. The electronic charts we use (and offer at TheChartLocker.com) help us navigate safely. But we limit our time online and feel it enhances life in countless ways.

In the January 2023 *Latitude*, Marga Pretorius of the KP44 *Dogfish*

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us sailing

learn from others, work through issues in program management, develop fundraising and recruitment skills, and generally fill up the knowledge fuel tank that's going to inspire and improve the sailing activities they operate back home.

Participants were able to hit the beach to try out a range of training boats from RS, Zim and Hobie for some actual sailing. Participants dug into the nitty-gritty details of race management, event management and insurance issues. The event aims to help nonprofit and for-profit sailing operations develop best practices for the success of



"Hoping Starlink will never invade this space," wrote Bruce Balan.

— continued

their programs, and for the broader success of sailing in general.

The next US Sailing Leadership Forum won't be held until 2025, with exact dates and a location yet to be announced.

In the meantime, if you're looking to raise the game in your program, you can attend the US Sailing National Sailing Programs Symposium, which will be held in Savannah, Georgia, in 2024. This event is aimed at growing the knowledge base around teaching and instructors for youth and community sailing programs.

— *latitude*

starlink free — continued

wrote that Starlink allows her to continue her surveying business even without a mobile signal. She also wrote, "But on the other hand, it felt as if something was lost — that wonderful isolation of cruising through remote anchorages cut off from the world has been pierced."

She's right.

Though Elon Musk has changed our view of the night sky for decades to come, no one forces us to follow blindly by imbibing whatever technology we are served. It is up to us to make conscious decisions on which route we sail. If you choose carefully and come to the conclusion that the 24/7-connected route is yours, sail on.

But please consider trying other possibilities before you set your course and buy Starlink. You may be surprised that forgoing the perceived freedom of constant connectivity leads to a freedom you never knew existed.

— *bruce balan*

