

MISS CINDY

to windward in the small inshore waves and lighter winds, so in those conditions I needed to free-off to maintain speed. While sailing to windward in Force 2 to 4 winds in the Caribbean, *Miss Cindy* was well-behaved. In rougher stuff, the issue was her launching off waves. I was able to moderate that by reefing and slowing down. *Miss Cindy* has a fairly fine entry with a big buoyancy increase when waves reach the knuckle, and that seems to help dampen pitching.

There is a link to a movie of her going to windward in the Caribbean at: <http://turtleislands.net/tmc/atbeatwake.mov>

38: What were the biggest seas and strongest winds you encountered?

Tony: The strongest winds I saw were in a Papagayo off Nicaragua. Maybe 45 to 50 knots, but the strongest wind I sailed in was the Santa Ana a few days out of San Felipe, when it blew 35 to 40 knots with 7-foot seas. Some of the most challenging sailing was the upwind work to Cayman Brac, where I had a day of Force 6, with pretty steady seas of 10 to 12 feet. Then there was the reaching and downwind work on the southwest of

Cuba, when it was blowing 25 knots, and the 8- to 10-foot seas broke from time to time.

38: Is *Miss Cindy* a boat you'd recom-

"Miss Cindy" is my favorite of all the boats I've sailed."

mend to an average sailor?

Tony: I don't think the average sailor would want a pocket cruiser. Most would want either a higher performance day sailer or a more spacious cruiser. For those who want a pocket cruiser, and can watch the weight of what gets put in her, I'd say she's a very sweet boat without vices. *Miss Cindy* is my favorite of all the boats I've sailed.

38: What would you think if someone wanted to sail a sistership across the Pacific?

Tony: They would have to sail solo due to weight constraints. For a pocket cruiser-type person who equipped the boat with a watermaker, parachute anchor, self-steering vane, and who had practiced righting her in controlled conditions, and who had the requisite experience for such a trip, yes, I think she could do the job — with a good vane set up, I'm confident that she would average 100 miles a day when sailed conservatively.

38: Any plans for another boat or cruise?

Tony: My drawing board is like most marinas — full of lots of boats, most of which only dream of going somewhere. I don't see building anything for myself in the next year or two. Currently, I'm thinking about a six-month sojourn in the canals of Europe. I'd probably pick up something like an Albin 25 in Holland, then sell her once I made it down to the Med. As of right now, I don't have any other sailing adventures planned for *Miss Cindy*.

38: Thanks, Tony. We wish you best of luck with whatever comes next.



HEADED TO THE HA-HA?

Start Here.

Whether you're racing to Cabo or cruising to Cortez, start with Landfall for all the outfitting gear and expert advice you need to get home safely. Call or click for a free catalog or to sign up for our monthly Landfall Report e-mail. Shop online anytime.

 **Landfall.**
WHERE SAFE VOYAGES BEGIN

800-941-2219 | landfallnav.com



SAFETY | NAVIGATION | REFERENCE | WEAR

©2009 Landfall Navigation. All rights reserved.



McGinnis Insurance

Since 1972

Knowledge  Commitment
Reliability  Service



Large and small, we do them all!

Call us at: **800-486-4008**
mcginnisins@aol.com

License #0570469

MISS CINDY

Tony Bigras' one-year, 6,000-mile cruise from Vancouver to Florida — via Central America and Cuba — was unusual for several of reasons. For example, the 52-year-old built *Miss Cindy* in just 450 hours, at a total cost of \$8,500 for everything from sandpaper to electronics. He was able to take her from the boatyard to her launch in Baja atop an old station wagon. The cat's main anchor



Tony Bigras

only weighs 11 pounds, yet held the boat in up to 40 knots of wind. He was able to take her 95% of the way from the Pacific to the Caribbean — via Lake Nicaragua and the Rio San Juan — on her own bottom. Because she only displaces about 1,000 pounds, she hit a top speed of 15.8 knots on the way.

As you can undoubtedly deduce, Bigras' Turtle Island 16 micro cruiser is a bit smaller than the average cruising cat. *Miss Cindy* is just 16'3" long, and has a beam of only 8'5". The masts for her bi-plane lug rig are 17 feet tall, and she sets a total of 200 sq. ft. of sail. Able to carry a 500-pound payload, *Miss Cindy's* typical speed under sail was 3 to 7 knots. She's equipped with a 2-hp outboard for calms, which allows her to cruise at 4.25 knots at 15 mpg. The micro cat's hull was built of quarter-inch marine ply, stitched and glued, then sheathed with e-glass and epoxy. Her masts are hollow fir.

As you might expect, we had a few questions for the sailor from British Columbia who sailed offshore passages

'Miss Cindy' must have been a sight for road-weary drivers' eyes during the 16-ft cat's overland delivery from B.C. to Baja — piggybacked atop a one-shot, \$300 station wagon.



ALL PHOTOS TONY BIGRAS

spanning up to six days along the way:

Latitude 38: What kind of sailing experience do you have?

Tony: Quite a bit. I started in '71 at Sidney, B.C. on small monohulls, then sailed a Buccaneer 24 tri in the Gulf Islands and around Georgia Strait for about five years. I had an Australian Quick Cat 16 that I would race unofficially with the Sunday fleet all through the nasty winter weather. In fact, I sailed that cat after school every day for about a year. I then built custom glass boats for a few years, then worked as a rigger for three years in Victoria, during which time I would sail on customers' racer/cruisers.

Every boat I've owned since then has been of my own design and construction. I sailed *Osrām V*, a 23-ft cat, around Vancouver Island, going offshore for the run to Victoria. In '83, I sailed *Osrām VI*, a 31-ft trimaran, from Prince Rupert around the Queen Charlottes, with a solo offshore run from there to Victoria. Neither of those boats had engines.

When I sold *Osrām VI* in '84, I thought I had gotten boats out of my system. I didn't walk the docks, design boats, buy sailing magazines, go to boat shows or sail with friends. But in '93, my wife was taking a course at a local college, and one of her classmates was this 80-year-old guy who'd bought *Osrām V* from the guy I'd sold her to. My wife kept pestering me to meet him and show him how to sail the boat. After a couple of years went by without him croaking, I gave in to my wife's nagging. I took the guy — who turned out to be nice enough — out on his boat, and after 12 years of remission, caught the sailing bug again.

So in '97, I started building *Osrām VII*, a 50-ft x 27-ft aluminium cat. Seeing how my getting back into sailing was my wife's fault, she couldn't help but

be supportive — at least in the beginning. The support didn't last, however, and the big tin cat went in a divorce sale in '00. I have, however, gotten to sail on her several times since.

The year '01 was pretty big for me. As the divorce was finalized, I did a big IT contract, and thanks to lots of hard work, brought in quite a bit of money. I flew to Hawaii hoping to find a boat wanting crew headed east or south. I got on a Gemini 32 cat for a 21-day



passage to San Francisco. She wasn't the best cat for the open ocean, but I loved being out there.

In '04, I sailed a 40-ft keelboat from Victoria to San Francisco. After 36 rough hours in the beginning, it was a peachy sail the rest of the way. In '07, I took my 40-ft trawler cat *Osrām VII* 1,700 miles to the Queen Charlottes and back. And from May of last year until June of this year, I built *Miss Cindy* and sailed her 6,000 ocean miles. So I'm not new to sailing.

38: What inspired you to go micro?

Tony: I was looking for a quick-build, modest cost, easy-handling sailboat that I could take from the Pacific Ocean to Lake Nicaragua, and then down the Rio San Juan to the Caribbean Sea. I originally planned to sail her all the way down the coast from Victoria, but having lolly-gagged in Europe too long during the summer, I didn't complete *Miss Cindy* until September.

38: Is the 450 hours it took you to build the boat about what you expected?

Tony: If you include stitching up