

Sarah Jean II

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RE: Reference for John Neal and Mahina Expeditions

To Prospective Boat Consultation Clients:

I am pleased to provide a reference for John Neal's cruising boat consultation service. My wife and I used John's services to help select our new performance bluewater cruising boat, a Saga 43 we have named Sarah Jean II. We just took delivery of our new boat and sailed her from Seattle to Vancouver. We are thrilled with all aspects of the boat. We likely would not have known about or considered this boat manufacturer or particular design without John's involvement. This is the real value of his service.

We became aware of Mahina Expeditions from friends who plan to sail over the horizon in the next few years and had attended one of John and Amanda's seminars. They had good things to say and shared with us some of the course material including a list of boats considered suitable for offshore cruising. This led to my browsing the Mahina Expeditions web site where I learned about the consultation service.

From first contact I found John to be very responsive and easy to communicate with. I posed many questions on bluewater boat design on topics such as keels, rudders, transoms and mainsail reefing systems. All questions were answered clearly or I was referred to information on the Mahina site where the info was already posted.

We completed an information gathering form that would give John an idea on the type of boat we might be looking for. This was done by ranking a variety of key selection criteria. We sent this form off and within a few days John got back to us with a short list of boats that might meet our requirements. He suggested we do some research and get back to him.

John also suggested we make contact with a broker in Seattle who he thought could help us with our research and finding the right boat. This recommended broker turned out to be the most helpful of the many we met. We eventually bought our boat through this contact. He did a great job for us and was a very good recommendation.

After getting John's short list of suitable boats we did quite a bit of research on the Internet and then went to Seattle where we viewed those on the short list, along with many others. The Saga 43 stood out amongst all these boats as most meeting our needs in terms of performance, layout, size and budget.

After homing in on this boat John was able to give some further advice on the fair market value of the boat so we felt comfortable moving forward with an offer. When John returned to the Seattle area he took some time to go the marina and have a look at the boat. This was during our negotiations. He confirmed our opinion that the boat was in good shape and would be ideally suited for us. This was reassuring as we got closer to completing the deal.

Once the deal was made John made recommendations on a surveyor who was experienced assessing bluewater sail boats. We hired him for the survey and I spent the day with him going through every inch of the boat. The survey was thorough indeed! While he found nothing major wrong with the boat surveyor found many small but important things that required repair. These became part of the closing negotiations.. This surveyor was another good recommendation from John.

We have just enjoyed our first weekend of sailing our new boat. So far she is everything we hoped for. We're looking forward to a few years of coastal sailing and then heading across some ocean for further adventures. We have a lot of confidence in the performance, safety and strength of our new boat based on our research, the survey and our own time on the boat to date. We also have confidence in the boat because John has recommended it and we trust his opinion. Our bluewater sailing dreams now seem a little closer to reality.

In summary, John was very instrumental in bringing us to this point. He helped us to understand key issues in cruising boat selection, guided us to boats that might meet our needs, introduced us to some very helpful people and even personally assessed the boat we were considering. Throughout the experience, he was always very professional and very supportive. He seemed to share in the excitement of what we were doing. He is a very positive guy. As a result the whole boat buying experience was very positive!

I would highly recommend John and his consulting service to anyone who is shopping for an offshore cruising boat. It certainly worked for us!

Please feel free to contact Beth or I if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Norm Cooper', with a stylized, cursive script.

Norm Cooper

Sarah Jean II

Coming Home Trip
Seattle to Point Roberts - Jan 11-13, 2008



The official renaming ceremony complete with libations for Neptune and crew before we head off on our journey north.



Under the bridges and through the locks for the first time at night in a new boat. And so the adventures begin!



Winter sailing on Saturday with big winds and no rain. Sarah Jean showed us her stuff, easily hitting 9 kts with a reefed main. Wow!



Arriving in La Connor. More bridges and power lines. How tall was that mast again?



Sunday was warm and sunny. We were treated to an awesome view of Mt Baker!



Sarah Jean and the crew relaxing at the dock at Point Roberts after a great first trip! Can't wait for the next one!