Donna Lange Crosses the Equator

On March 9th, exactly a month after sailing into the South Atlantic, Donna crossed the Equator and is now in the Northern Hemisphere.

winds	ESE 10kn
seas	4ft
speed	4+knots
COG	000°
temp	86°F
bar	1005 and rising
point of sail	beam reach
sails	full with genny
miles to go	3396nm to Rhode Island

"*I crossed the Equator in hazy clouded skies and light winds, as expected for the ITCZ (Inter-tropical Convergence Zone.) It was interesting and wild to see how the orientation of the world seemed to change! The 'Man in the Moon's face changed! And the days got longer all of a sudden*."

Sailing-wise, it brought Donna into an area of confused seas, clouds and squalls. Fortunately the ITCZ is a narrow band at this time of year and there isn't enough energy in the clouds to create very strong gusts, so she doesn't have to constantly go on deck to reef. With one reef in the main *Inspired Insanity* can absorb the 10kn gusts without trouble. With a 32ft steel pole reaching into the sky though, her main concern is lightening in the squalls, it's "*a North Atlantic phenomena that gives me the chills! I ran an extra ground wire off the rigging directly to the water to help to channel any electricity that does manage to catch us*."

Her progress will appear to slow down now as she heads equally west and north. Instead of climbing 2° of latitude a day, it'll now be more like 1°, "*I think it's going to be a trying trip from here home. With the recent decision to go west of Bermuda, I have re-calculated my arrival date and set new waypoints. The changes have added less than 100nm to the route and will give me a better chance of arriving in Rhode Island on 21 April*."

During the week before crossing the Equator and for a couple of days afterwards, Donna basked in beautiful weather conditions 86° F, Bar 1004. "*Luckily for me there is an ocean of water with which to cool my warm body as the hazy days are humid, but the breeze still refreshing. I have been waiting so long and sailed so many 10's of thousands of miles in search of these gentle trade winds but it has been worth every moment of this incredible challenge to now enjoy this privilege.* "

But these idyllic conditions didn't last and three days after crossing the Equator she was crashing into headwinds in choppy seas. "I am crunching through headwinds and cloud fronts as I type away. It's such an intrusion into my soft, cushy trade wind world - to be assaulted by G-forces, unable to stand without holding on and as the lee board is up I have nowhere to sit except on a pelican box on the floor. Of course I have sailed more than 50% of the trip like this, but was spoilt these last 10 days."

The Cape Horn Steering Vane that Donna fitted to *Inspired Insanity* has really made her solo circumnavigation possible and she can't speak highly enough about it - "*a sleek piece of equipment that has handled every moment of my sailing over the 30,000 miles so far. Yves Gelinas, living in Canada, designed and made the steering vane for his own circumnavigation in an Alden 30 in the 1980's. He sailed round the world from France, stopping en route in New Zealand after he was dismasted and finally ended up in Quebec. The vane worked so well that he and his nephew, Eric Sicotte, started producing them for sale*."

Donna recently received an email from Ken Barnes' family spurring her onwards. "*My very best to Ken as he moves forward in the ventures before him and my deepest thanks to his family as they have extended such amazing encouragement to me*." Ken has an incredible following of wonderful people, many of whom are now watching Donna's progress on *Inspired Insanity*. During Ken's rescue Donna's website received 23,000 hits in one day! She still has a regular following, with a daily average of 10,000 hits. Her site is voluntarily masterminded by good friend, Neil Van Gundy, who based in the middle of the USA far from the sea!

Remember you can follow Donna's progress on her site www.donnalange.com - experience life aboard *Inspired Insanity* through her own words posted daily to her log, enjoy a selection of photos, discover what inspired this incredible voyage and track her progress on a world map.

By Jane Pares, New Zealand and Will Barbeau, Rhode Island, USA