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Story And Photography By BILL JACOBS



**H**ave you ever considered becoming a yacht broker, dealer, or salesperson, or someone else directly connected to the business of the boats you love so much?

Boat shows, sea trials, manufacturer open houses, traveling around the country introducing buyers to boats—it all sounds so glamorous. And then there are the yachts themselves, in an infinite variety of sizes, shapes, speeds, and prices, all geared to someone’s fantasies of living aboard, free from the realities of everyday life. It does sound like a dream job.

Many parts of the business live up to what you might imagine, but there are downsides. One of the most challenging aspects is probably the process of importing, receiving, delivering, commissioning, and turning over a brand new yacht built overseas to an expectant owner after months of waiting.

I recently had the opportunity to experience this “underside” of the yacht business at the invitation of John and Betsie Tegtmeier, owners of Krogen Express Yachts. A new boat was to arrive soon

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Opposite page: Bob Loudon and John Tegtmeier of Krogen Express Yachts discuss delays with the Nordhavn crew as we wait to board the yacht-delivery ship. Above: Our supplies were dropped off quite a distance from the gangplank, and we had to carry everything almost the entire length of the ship.

# Ship Comes In...

## THE WORK BEGINS



The Krogen Express Yachts team, from left: Bob Loudon and owners John and Betsie Tegtmeyer.

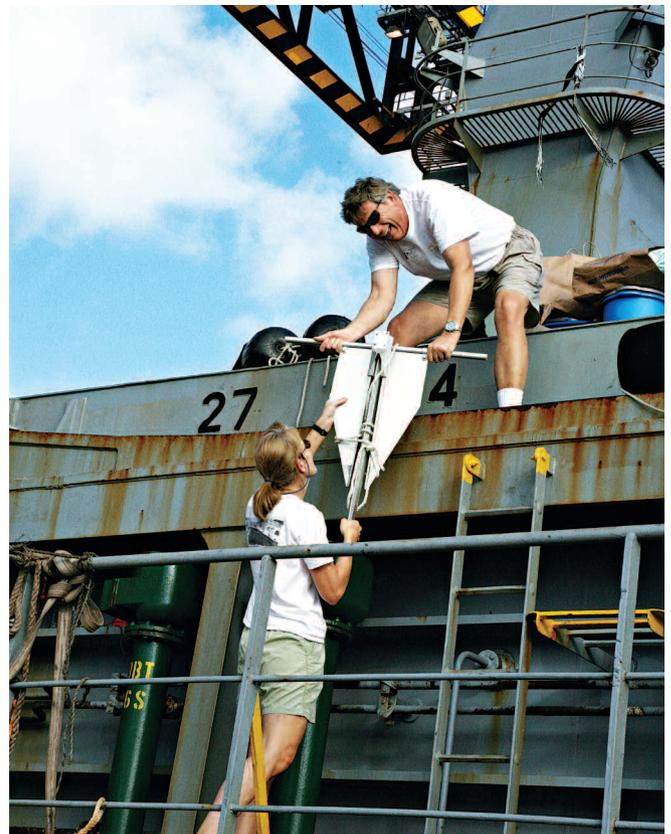
from Taiwan, and we arranged to make me part of the delivery crew. Before leading you through the fascinating but difficult and potentially dangerous process, I'll say a few words about the Tegtmeyers to set the stage.

John and Betsie were introduced to the cruising lifestyle through good friends, owners of a Grand Banks 36. After a few outings, they were convinced that a GB would be the right boat for them. However, while cruising in the Bahamas with their friends, they laid eyes on their first Krogen, a 39-footer, at anchor nearby. After a few circumnavigations in their dinghy, they were invited aboard. "It was like going from an apartment into a full-size house," recalled Betsie.

At Trawler Fest in Solomons, Maryland, in 1997, the Tegtmeyers purchased a used Krogen 42 from Calvert Marine. Thus began their relationship with the Krogen family of boaters, builders, and friends. In 2000, John began having discussions with Kurt Krogen about the Krogen Express 49. At the time, Kurt was a partner in Kadey-Krogen Yachts as well as Krogen Express, and while the Krogen Express 49 was designed by Jim Krogen, it was a fundamentally different yacht than his full-displacement Kadey-Krogen designs. The Krogen Express was styled like a 1920s commuter boat, and its slim, efficient hull allowed cruising speeds up to 18 knots. Production had begun in 1996, and a total of 16 boats were built. With the Krogen Express line standing on its own, Krogen Express Yachts was ready to be sold to someone who could properly develop and market the boat.

John had recently retired from a high-energy entrepreneurial career and thought that owning a boat company might be the ideal way to channel his business energy into something that he and Betsie enjoy. So on Sept. 13, 2001, two days after 9/11, they closed the deal, signifying John's optimism and confidence in the American way of life. During the next year, they worked with Kurt Krogen to redesign and retool the molds. Hull number 1 of the Krogen Express 52 splashed in Baltimore in June 2003. Since then, 10 of the boats have been delivered, and hulls 11 and 12 are currently in production. In 2004, Bob Loudon joined John and Betsie in the business as director of sales and yacht services.

It was Bob whom I met first, the evening before we



Betsie hands John the anchor we would use on the new Krogen Express for the delivery trip. While not easy, lifting the anchor was nothing compared to hoisting the chain rode.

were to drive down to Ft. Lauderdale to pick up the boat. We stayed that night on a 52 berthed in Ft. Pierce. This was hull number 9, recently arrived for the boat show season. Spending the evening aboard gave me a chance to check out a new 52 that was ready for delivery, and it heightened my expectations as to what I would see when I stepped aboard hull number 10 the following morning.



Left: Walking down steel girders through an obstruction-littered path is dangerous. I was surprised we were even allowed on the deck of the ship. Top right: The ravages of salt and wind on steel are apparent as a welder cuts the ship cradle from the deck. Above right: The hull of the Krogen Express looks like a caged animal caught behind the framework of the ship's superstructure.

## THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The following morning we left the boat shortly after 5 a.m. and drove to the yard of American Custom Yacht, located right off of I-95, about 8 miles west of downtown Stuart, on the Okeechobee Waterway. ACY would provide final commissioning services for the boat we would be picking up. John and Betsie had driven down from Vero Beach in their van, and we would all ride down together to Ft. Lauderdale. It was now 6 a.m. on Tuesday morning. We hoped to return 12 hours later with the boat.

We packed all of our duffels, camera gear, safety equipment, anchor, chain, makeshift electronics, and a small supply of food and drink into the van. There was no empty space to be found by the time we carefully slid shut the rear doors—sort of like reclosing a sardine can. We hit the road in total darkness and building rush hour traffic, heading south toward Port Everglades. John had been advised by the port authorities to be at the gate no later than 8 a.m.

*M/V Pac Adara* had arrived 36 hours earlier, after a five-week transit from Kaohsiung, Taiwan, through the Panama Canal and across the Gulf of Mexico. We had originally been told that the boat would be off-loaded first thing Tuesday morning, and we were cautiously optimistic that we would be under way by 10 a.m.

It was a good thing we arrived at the security

checkpoint with 20 minutes to spare, because it took that much time for the woman in the security booth to inspect our driver's licenses and match them up with the dossier of information on each of us that had been sent by email days before. After a slow, painstaking process, we finally were handed our port passes. Meanwhile, a line of smoking 18-wheelers lurked behind us, their drivers no doubt discussing our Dodge in derogatory terms on their CBs.

We pulled up to the next checkpoint, about a half mile into the port complex, and unloaded every piece of gear that we had crammed into the van. We were in the company of half a dozen other delivery crews, each with its own pile of gear. I was particularly impressed with two fellows from Nordhavn. Sticking out from their pile were several serious ocean fishing rods, which they told me they would use on their trip up the Gulf Stream. These guys had been here before.

I began to wonder why all our gear was on the blacktop, since the ship was nowhere in sight. John explained that we were about to endure one of the more frustrating parts of the receiving process. We were waiting for Salvatore, whose job was to transport all of us and all of our gear the remaining quarter mile to Pier 30, where the delivery ship was docked. Salvatore finally arrived, all smiles, stopping his tiny Toyota Corolla sedan at least 100 feet away from the piles of gear we were all



guarding. John politely suggested that he move his car a bit closer. It took another hour and many, many trips of the Corolla to transport everyone the final quarter mile. After each crew had wedged its equipment into the car, Salvatore would drive away slowly with boat stuff hanging out the trunk, the lid bouncing merrily, and the back doors wide open, unable to be closed. Each crew trudged behind, ready to pick up whatever fell out. I wondered why Salvatore had not been issued a full-size van for this task, which he probably carried out every day.

Though it was still early, the blacktop surface had started to broil. It was going to be a long, hot morning. As we approached the ship, we saw the boats lined up on deck like toys. The sheer scale of the port, the cranes, and the ship loaded with yachts conspired to reduce the humans who were scurrying about to the size of ants.

### A LONG WAY UP

We began the next step: moving our gear from the blacktop, where Salvatore had dropped it, up the gangplank to the main deck of the ship, and then to the upper level where the yachts were lined up. Each item had to be hoisted by hand to the top deck. This was a real job, especially when it came to the 20-gallon bucket filled with anchor chain. It is difficult to convey the complexity and danger of the on-deck environment. *M/V Pac Adara* is no teak-decked cruise ship; she's more like a factory, with pipes, hoses, rust-streaked bulkheads, turnbuckles, cleats, and sharp corners waiting to do a number on inexperienced passersby.

The ship's ladders consisted of narrow, rod-shaped bars welded to the hull completely vertically, which made climbing them a real challenge. The upper deck was segmented into oddly shaped sections of varying elevation, requiring either a long step or a leap to move along. The boats themselves were an additional obstacle to movement. At times, we had to bend, duck, or crawl to traverse the labyrinth of cradles, cables, and rudders, which were definitely not arranged with the pedestrian in mind. It was clear that access to this area was limited to professionals.

The Krogen Express 52 stood at the very bow of the ship, and it was a long, tortuous route with our gear. We finally had everything assembled at the boat by 9:30 a.m., and we set up an extension ladder so we could climb aboard. The steel cradle in which the yacht rested had been welded to the deck of the ship in all four corners, and the boat was tied to the ship with steel cables that looped around the deck cleats. A crew of welders was using acetylene torches to cut the cables and detach the cradles from the ship's deck. Sparks flew in all directions, which also made moving around difficult.

The boat was covered with a reinforced plastic tarp held in place by a net. With the boat being at the bow of the ship, I was amazed the tarp was intact. I could guess that it had taken some wind during the five-week crossing, but it had been well secured. That meant it took a lot of cutting, pulling, and untying to remove it.

Bob, the first one aboard, began to loosen the many parts and components that had been secured on the deck and inside the boat. John, Betsie, and I struggled with the tarp, cutting it into manageable sections and dragging it piece by piece onto the aft deck. We would have to bundle it up and secure it for our trip to the boatyard, as regulations called for its proper removal from the ship.

On many of the boats the Tegtmeiers have received, one of the first shipboard jobs is cutting a hole through the hull and installing the depth sounder transponder. Bob was unhappy because up until two days ago, a well-respected electronics manufacturer had promised him the needed part. The piece hadn't shown up, so it would have to be installed later, meaning we would be without a depth sounder for our trip back to Stuart. "We were going to feature an entire new package of electronics on the boat at the Miami show," Bob said. "But I don't think we will be using their equipment."

Bob jury-rigged a temporary electronics system for the trip north. He hooked up his laptop, which contained Maptech electronic charts, to his cell phone and a small antenna held with suction cups to a hatch in the cabin top. It had all the looks of a Rube Goldberg contraption, but it would prove invaluable on the delivery north.

All deck surfaces were covered with bubble-wrap sheets that had been neatly secured with tape, and all cabin lights and ports had been covered with gray sticky-back polyethylene sheets. We spent time removing these materials so that we would have better footing and visibility. As I photographed all of this activity and gazed around at the general disarray, I was glad I had seen the finished product the night before. It gave me a great deal of appreciation for two little words found on the yacht invoice: "dealer preparation." Those two words represent a great deal of work.

As we made progress aboard the boat, members of the deck crew, which consisted of uniformed ship's crewmen, stevedores from the port, welders, riggers, and supervisors, were working their way toward our boat. I watched as other boats were lifted and placed in the water by an immense gantry crane that must have been at least 200 feet high. The crane moved slowly along tracks in the dock's surface until it was lined up with the next boat to be launched. The operation was orchestrated by Adril, the port-unloading supervisor, who stood on the deck of the ship. He communicated



by radio with the crane operator, working from the crane cab high above, and bellowed orders to the deck crew.

The boat that was unloaded just before ours was a Krogen 44. In a few minutes, it would be our turn. On the 44, slings were attached directly to the steel cradle with huge clevis fittings. With the delivery crew aboard, the boat was carefully lifted from the deck of the ship and moved over the water, while the crew steadied her with long lines from the bow and stern. After a signal from the crew that the boat was in the harbor and was not taking on water and that the engine had been started, the slings were lowered further. The steel cradle dropped beneath the floating vessel, and the crew drove the boat away. It was an intriguing process to watch, and I couldn't wait for our launching.

### DOWN WE GO!

At 11:20 a.m., Adril hailed us to get ready. Betsie, who would drive the van back to Vero Beach, bid us farewell and climbed down the ladder to the ship's deck. John and I rigged the lines that would be used to control our positioning during the descent, while Bob was below double-checking through-hulls, switches, and starting gear. The lift from the ship was smooth, and once clear of the deck, the sling shifted us seaward. Our descent started slowly; then, suddenly, we picked up speed. It felt like a ride in a fast-moving elevator, but knowing this elevator car weighed about 30 tons, it was a bit overwhelming.

Just as I thought we would slam into the water, the operator slowed our descent, and, before I knew it, we were floating gently on the harbor surface. Bob quickly fired up both engines. John gave the high sign to the crew, now far above us, and the slings were relaxed, sinking below the keel. We were under way by 11:30 a.m., and as we backed away from the ship, her huge hull loomed up, blocking the sun.

I was coiling up the long stern line when I heard Bob shout from the helm, "We've got a problem, John." My first thought was, "Boy, that didn't take long." Both of the Yanmar engines had started and were running smoothly, but the port shaft and propeller were not turning. We joined Bob on the flybridge, and he headed for the engine room. John was kept busy at the helm, circling around the basin of Port Everglades on one engine and trying to avoid an incoming containership that was preparing to dock.

After inspecting the engine room, Bob surmised that the electronic shift actuator on the port transmission was not working. He noted that the starboard actuator was painted and the port actuator was not, which led him to



Top: A Krogen 44 off-loaded just before our boat is ready to splash following a 60-foot descent to the sea. I was aboard the Krogen Express so could not shoot photos of our boat lowering, but this gives you an idea of the distance. Middle: John handled the boat on one engine as we motored away from *Pac Adara*. Meanwhile, Bob tried to resolve the problem with the port propeller shaft. Above: Bob felt certain we would successfully pass under this 15-foot bridge. I was not as confident!



## ALL ABOUT SERVICE

### **Shortly after writing this article, I received an update from Bob Loudon:**

"Relative to the transmission problem, the yard met yesterday with Wah Lee, the Taiwanese distributor for Yanmar. They do already have in place a process where every engine is started and run. As part of the process, they shift the transmission to make sure it is working. They insist that when the boat was tested, everything was working properly. They also say that they did not change the shift actuator, as this was working at the time. I have since seen at least one boat that also had non-painted actuators, so maybe they are inconsistent here. The servicing dealer in Stuart, Shearwater Marine, has been on the boat and feels they have fixed it by tightening a faulty connection.

"I've spoken at length with both Yanmar and Mastry, the Yanmar distributor for Florida. There is a revised design for electronic transmissions to assist in enabling a 'get-home' mode. It will be available next summer. Since many of our owners will be cruising great distances between now and then, we will supply them with a temporary part in the meantime, just in case. When the new component becomes available, we will provide it to all of our owners with the electronic transmission.

"Relative to the water leak problem, the yard has increased its process not only to visually check for leaks when the freshwater system is first energized, but also to shut the system off overnight and then listen to see if the pump runs when it is first energized the next day. If it doesn't turn on, the system has held pressure overnight and shouldn't have leaks."

This is yet another example of the level of involvement of the folks at Krogen Express Yachts.

believe someone had replaced the latter. He was unable to get it to work, so we motored away to the nearest fuel dock on one engine.

Our original plan had been to take on fuel and water for the run on the outside up to Stuart. At normal cruising speed, it would have taken about six hours to reach the marina. While John and I tended to the hoses and filters, Bob called Yanmar to describe our problem. The reps told him they could have a mechanic on the boat in two to three hours to inspect the shaft, after which they would be able to properly diagnose the problem. John and Bob discussed the situation and decided we would leave as planned but take the ICW, cruising on one engine. They felt this

was the better option, because if the mechanic could not immediately fix the problem, it might take several days for parts to arrive.

So, at 12:30 p.m., after immobilizing the stationary shaft, we left the marina, passing the mansions and megayachts that line the ICW passage through Ft. Lauderdale. The Krogen Express 52, a substantial trawler that had seemed like a toy on the deck of the ship, regained its scale as we motored away and headed for Stuart, where we would later be dwarfed by 200-plus-foot yachts being tended by uniformed crews. It was like Gulliver traveling alternately between Lilliput and Brobdingnag.

The boat handled well, despite running on one engine. When not constrained by the endless no-wake zones, we motored quietly at 8.6 knots, a far cry from the 16 knots or more we had planned for on the outside. We all knew that it was now going to be a very long day. With dinner in Stuart no longer an option, we broke out the snacks Betsie had packed: beef jerky, cheese snacks, and Ritz crackers with peanut butter. We discussed our individual preferences and bartered like a bunch of schoolyard kids, trading jerky for crackers and cherry cola for ginger ale. Thank goodness we had taken on water.

Before long we needed to switch on the freshwater pump and head switches. Almost as soon as we did, water began to drip from the overhead onto the instrument panel and Bob's laptop. After removing the panel, it became apparent that the water supply line to the windshield washer had not been properly fastened. Bob worked on the line while John and I mopped up the water.

Those of you who have traveled this section of the ICW are familiar with the many low bridges and the inflexibility of their scheduled openings. John thought we required about 14 feet of clearance without a windscreen, mast, or other equipment above the flybridge rail. We cautiously approached the 15-foot Commercial Boulevard Bridge at Mile Marker 1059. Bob, the tallest member of the crew, manned the helm, ready to duck, as John eyeballed the clearance. I sat on the deck of the flybridge with my camera ready and my fingers crossed.

As we passed under the exact center of the bridge, we plunged into near darkness, and the traffic roared just inches above us on the steel grating. But we made it.

As the afternoon wore on, we traveled under many such bridges, and each time our confidence in the boat's clearance grew. The laptop was tuned in to Claiborne Young's cruisersnet.net and its excellent bridge guide. Each bridge and its characteristics, clearance, and opening schedule are clearly listed from north to south, making it easy to keep the bridges straight. We passed



Almost two months after delivery, the Krogen Express 52, now named *Daystar*, cruises in Stuart. ACY applied Awlgrip 2000 to the topsides as well as bottom paint, a boat stripe, and cove stripes. ACY also assembled the swim platform and installed transducers.

under more than 30 bridges during our voyage, so this guide was very helpful.

Darkness began to fall as we transited Lake Worth. The city of West Palm Beach lit up spectacularly, another example of the massive amount of development that has taken place along the Florida waterway. By the time we reached the north end of Lake Worth, daylight had vanished completely, and our trip became much more difficult. Running the ICW at night is not for the faint of heart. It took the full concentration of the helmsman, a dedicated lookout, and another mate watching the chart to locate and positively identify each marker. Even those markers that are lit are hard to pick out from the visual clutter and light pollution of the urban scene. It's easy to confuse a car hitting its brakes onshore with an elusive flashing mark you are desperate to find.

John called Betsie to let her know of the revised plan and our likely arrival time. She was as disappointed as we had been and was very apologetic about the meager supply of food and beverages she had packed, given the length of the trip. We reassured her that we had fairly rationed our supplies and were in no danger of starvation.

At 10:30 p.m., we finally entered the Okeechobee Waterway, winding our way through Stuart. This is yet another confusing stretch to navigate in broad daylight, let alone in the dark with a tired crew. We thought we were home free as we approached the dreaded railroad bridge on the west side of town. But the tender at the Old Roosevelt Bridge told us that the railway bridge wasn't open. It closes automatically about a half hour

before the train rolls into town. So we sat for another 20 minutes, awaiting the baleful sound of the late-night train's moan and clatter.

It was almost midnight when we backed into a slip at American Custom Yacht. John and Bob had a few hours of work to do on the boat before morning, so we bid farewell. Rather than make the three-hour drive to my house on the west coast, I found a comfortable roadside hotel nearby. After a hot shower, I slid between cool white sheets and collapsed into sleep.

As I drove home the following morning, I mentally reviewed the previous day's events. For me, it had been the adventure of a lifetime. The yacht receiving and delivering process had been far more strenuous, mentally fatiguing, hazardous, and complicated than I had ever imagined. I had been truly impressed with the personal involvement of the owners and officers of Krogen Express Yachts. Every other boat aboard *M/V Pac Adara* had been met by an experienced delivery crew, but not by the owners of the yacht company.

I had asked John about that point during our trip north. "It is the best way that I know to become instantly acquainted with the actual condition of each and every boat," he said. "When you unwrap it, inspect it, start it, and drive it, you know exactly what to expect during the rest of the delivery process."

If you are in the market for a Krogen Express 52, you don't just buy the boat; you get Bob Loudon and John and Betsie Tegtmeier as part of the package. And that's standard equipment—not an option. 