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UNDERWAY

NEWS and NOTES from the CRUISING COMMUNITY

Edited by Jennifer Brett

A PERFECT ANCHORAGE

A cloudless sky, a palm-fringed islet and a clear lagoon — who doesn't dream of anchorages like this?

Memories of the atolls have been calling to my husband, Seth, and me ever since we left the South Pacific 10 years ago. So when we once again had the time to make the crossing, we jumped at it. Adding to our excitement was the fact that we've become avid photographers in that decade. Looking at pictures from our circumnavigation always conjures regret that we were not photographers then and didn't capture our stunning experiences with equally stunning images. So here we were, not only about to revisit Polynesia, but to do it with an arsenal of DSLRs and a burly underwater housing.

We try to keep photography a passion rather than an obsession; we have many days when we put down the camera and just go do stuff. But we also have certain shots we want to create. This image was one of those.

The author takes a swim underneath *Celeste*, a 40-foot cold-molded cutter built in 1985, on a calm day in the Tuamotus, in French Polynesia.

Even when still on the crossing, I was dreaming up over/unders. The one I most wanted was of one of us freediving, with *Celeste* and the palms of a motu behind.

It proved surprisingly difficult. Over/under images are almost impossible in anything other than mirror-calm water, something we didn't have all season. We got shots obscured by splashes or made into either simple underwater or simple topside shots depending on the wave. But finally, everything aligned. A deep enough anchorage close under a motu put us in its narrow lee, giving us the glassy surface we needed. The wind was actually southeast instead of boxing the compass in one of the many fronts that we'd experienced, which meant we were in a perfect position for glowing evening light. We fitted up the waterproof housing, decided on me as the swimmer and jumped in. We played around with distance to get both the underwater and topside halves in focus, and then we had fun, swimming in the perfect water and blasting away with the shutter — we'd finally gotten our shot. Balance is important though, so the rest of the evening we just snorkeled, with the camera put away.

—Ellen Massey Leonard

SETH LEONARD