

Here's the story behind the historic anti-nuclear sailboat that just arrived in the bay from Hawaii

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The Golden Rule, a ketch that sails to advocate for abolishing nuclear weapons, passes the Golden Gate Bridge while en route from Sausalito to Berkeley.



Photo: Noah Berger/Special to The Chronicle

Exhausted but exhilarated, the crew of the Golden Rule brought the historic anti-nuclear sailboat into the San Francisco Bay this week after a difficult, monthlong voyage across the Pacific.

The four-member crew set sail on the 34-foot ketch May 4 from Honolulu, where a different crew had stopped in 2019 along a planned journey to the Marshall Islands — only to be halted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

They described a beautiful, yet frightening, return journey that included strong winds, big waves and freezing temperatures.

Malinda Anderson, one of the Golden Rule's two captains, said the crew bonded over sharing jokes, listening to podcasts and music while "freezing our butts off" during their four-hour watch shifts.

"We just had each other," said Anderson. "We had as much fun as we could during very harsh conditions."

The Golden Rule, one of the first environmental and peace vessels to sail the ocean to protest nuclear weapons and war, had also encountered rough seas on its [first historic voyage in 1958](#). That year, a crew of mostly Quaker activists sailed to Hawaii aboard the ketch with the goal of interfering with U.S. atmospheric nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

But that trip also was thwarted, first by bad weather and then by the arrest of its crew in Hawaii. But according to Veterans for Peace, owner and manager of the Golden Rule, it inspired future endeavors by groups including Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherds.

The Golden Rule's mission is to oppose nuclear weapons and war. Most recently, its principals applauded the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which [went into force](#) in January.

Helen Jaccard, project manager of the Golden Rule Project, said that during their recent stay in Hawaii, the team met many residents of the Marshall Islands who had to relocate or experienced severe health issues due to the nuclear testing.

Jaccard and other team members gave more than 100 presentations on the island to discuss the dangers of nuclear weapons and war. Jaccard said she plans to do the same in California before the Golden Rule embarks on another voyage along the Gulf Coast with a new crew.

For the current voyage, crew members had to fill out an application and were then selected by Capt. Kiko Johnston-Kitazawa based on the different skills needed for a voyage, such as managing the engine, cooking the food and keeping the boat shipshape. The voyage was funded by donations, according to Jaccard.

The crew included Nolan Anderson, a Seattle filmmaker, and Michelle Kanoelehue Marsonette of Albany, Ore., a freelance business consultant and energy worker.

“There were moments during the crossing itself that were terrifying,” said Anderson, describing how he had to climb the mast while the boat swayed back and forth.

But the scare and overall experience were worth it, said Anderson, who is working on a documentary about the sailboat.

“It’s not about you and your personal growth and development,” he said. “It’s about changing the world and having an impact.”

Johnston-Kitazawa said he was proud of his crew’s perseverance.

“They just kept plugging away,” he said. “And I think that’s a good metaphor for the whole effort towards nuclear disarmament. It’s often arduous and difficult and you don’t see any results in the short term, but by continuing to persevere, eventually you get a result.”

For Kanoelehua Marsonette, the trip was personal. Her father’s family is Hawaiian, her brother is a retired Marine Corps and Army sergeant, and she has a friend, also a veteran, who she said was impacted by chemical exposure during his service.

“A voyage across the ocean from my father’s land to my mother’s land was more of like a ceremonial peaceful thing that I could do to really bring in all of the aspects of my life,” she said.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/local/article/Here-s-the-story-behind-the-historic-16223739.php>

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