

## Entertainment

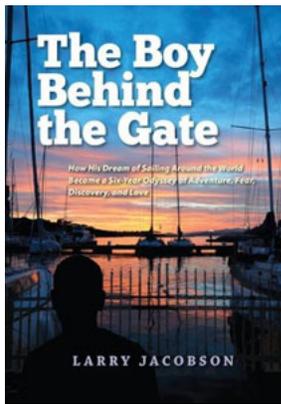
### The Boy Behind the Gate

by Roger Briham

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All of us have crazy ideas: dreams of throwing aside the every day and the ordinary, of venturing to places hitherto unwandered and uncertain. As a boy, Larry Jacobson would stand behind the gates at the marina in Long Beach staring at the yachts, dreaming of what it would be like to sail in them--to leave the shore and just ... go.

Now he knows. Jacobson and his partner Ken Smith became the first openly gay couple to circumnavigate the globe by sail when they returned to California in the summer of 2007 -- six years after they set sail aboard their yacht *Julia* from their home in Emeryville on San Francisco Bay.

Across the Pacific to Australia and Southeast Asia, through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean, past Gibraltar and across the Atlantic to the Panama Canal, they traveled with a rainbow flag flying from their mast. **The Boy Behind the Gate** is Jacobson's story about the six-year voyage, drawn from his emails, ship's log, personal journal and subsequent

reflections. It is a tale about crystalline beaches in paradise, tropical innocence, raucous parties, playful dolphins and charging komono dragons. It is a story about love, joy and exultation. But more than anything, it is a story about courage.

Not courage summoned at one dramatic climax at the book's finish. Rather the courage to step away from the familiar shore: from one's job, one's home, one's life. To leave safety and risk risk.

Jacobson loaded *Julia*, named after his mother, with every possible hi-tech gizmo possible: navigation and radar systems, radio and internet--even an electric toilet. On the surface, the sophisticated gadgets are supposed to tame the untamable, but as he repeatedly discovers, complicated systems are prone to failure. It is Jacobson's and Smith's daily struggle to hold things together in the face of hellacious weather and mechanical breakdowns that provides the drama among the idyllic interludes.

And then there is the human factor as well. Small quarters on a big ocean can make for raw personalities. The sailors spend as much time it seems trying to find balance in their emotions as they do finding balance while using the can or cooking in the galley. And shortly into the trip, Smith leaves to return home. As Jacobson sails

on, they are not sure where their relationship is going.

The book features plenty of pages of beautiful color photographs from the trip, and more are available on the author's [website](#).

Although Jacobson explains what is happening as far as weather and mechanical breakdowns are concerned, he does not bog his narrative down in nautical jargon. Sailors will enjoy comparing notes from their own adventures, get a few laughs about some of Jacobson's naivete at journey's start, and getting advice about what-not-to-do for their own future adventures. But even non-sailors will identify with the sense of adventure and the discoveries that come when we venture forth from behind the gate.

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Roger Brigham, a freelance writer and communications consultant, is the San Francisco Editor of EDGE. He lives in Oakland with his husband, Eduardo.



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