



Radio Active

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By Geoff Higginson VA7 HIG

Guest Interview -Ham on the High Seas

Usually it is our practise to interview SARC members for Radio Active, but this month I have a special guest interview with a High Seas Ham, VE0 MIA, Andrew Gunson.

Not many of us have the chance to operate from a pitching, rolling and yawing Ham Shack but Andrew does so on a regular basis as Skipper and Owner aboard Maiatla II. Andrew, aka "The Naked Canadian" has been operating on the High Seas and from scores of Pacific and Carribean Islands under Canadian License VE0 MIA.

Since he was a young man sailing on Lake Ontario out of Burlington, Andrew has been called to the sea, first as a deep sea commercial oil field diver, yachtsman and now skipper and owner of Maiatla II with his bride and co-captain Janet, adult children Melissa and Thomas and scores of friends and relatives as crew. Maiatla has been the Gunson's home for 18 years, where they raised their children aboard since they were pre teens.



Andrew gets on air with his Icom 700 Pro with a 130 Automatic Tuner and gets "out" with his backstay as an antenna and of course a ground plate connected to the world's greatest ground plane. Upgraded to a Pactor modem he can send high seas emails to stay in touch. When travelling the VHF and UHF radios were the only means of contacting family and friends and so the children were taught from a young age how to use the radios and proper radio etiquette. At times left alone onboard being able to call mom and dad for help was necessary and possible because Andrew carried a hand held VHF radio when ashore. VHF Marine and Ham Radio were never toys but were essential for the safety and comfort of everyday life afloat, including giving their children a simple and practical way to make contact with other boat kids.

Ham Radio is critical for voice and email communication in emergencies and for receiving weather GRIBs which show weather systems and data in fax format (https://weather.gc.ca/grib/what_is_GRIB_e.html). On their last voyage from Mexico to the Galapagos Islands, a distance of approximately 1000 miles, they lost their engine halfway there due to a faulty fuel injector pump. This was a tense time as they had to rely on wind power alone to get them the rest of the way. Andrew used the ICOM to not only tell their families back home that they would be late in arriving but to notify

the Ecuadorian Authorities that they were a disabled vessel and would require a tow into the harbour after successfully sailing right up to the Harbour Mouth in San Cristobal Island. One of Charles Darwin's most famous land falls years ago, they saw the same strange and wonderful unique creatures that Darwin himself catalogued.

An accomplished writer, he has published two books of his adventures on the ocean starting with "The Voyage of Maiatla II-with the Naked Canadian" (you'll have to buy the book through Amazon.ca to find out what the "Naked" means) and a second book "The Tahiti Syndrome-Hawaiian Style".

Andrew and Janet catalogue their adventures at <https://thenakedcanadian.wordpress.com/> and Maiatla's exploits can be viewed on-line at <http://shiptrak.org/> (VE0 MIA). When at sea Andrew can be contacted on the Sea Farer's net at 14.300MHz daily at 0300UTC, see this on-line at <http://www.pacseanet.com/>.

Avid fishers, scuba divers, and world explorers Andrew and Janet live in Nanaimo when not aboard Maiatla II. Andrew works in the oil patch as a quality control inspector/bricklayer refractory specialist during the busy "shut down" periods, dreaming of Maiatla II and his next high seas adventure.

