

Log of the *HILDE M²*



Vol. 1, No. 11

Issued by the Admiralty, Accokeek, Maryland

January 29, 1987

THE BIG DAY, Karl, Cousin Jim, the *Hilde M²*, and Alice the aloe enter the Panama Canal tomorrow... Somehow, it's hard to believe; the departure from Beaufort, NC, was exactly 3 months ago today.

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Three great phone calls from Panama bring welcome news. The first, via a radio phone patch through an amateur in Texas, on Friday night January 16, lets me know the HM² is off the coast of Panama. Although you can't really have too fantastic a conversation when you can't hear very well and there's a third party on the line, it's an awfully sweet sound to know your favorite sailor has completed another passage and has arrived safely where he's supposed to be!

He picked up Jim in Porvenir on the 20th as per schedule after Passage 2 which, though rough, was quick and without the storm and other problems of Passage 1. A disk with the story is on its way to me now, and I'll get it to you shortly as Issue No. 12.

The second call, on Sunday night January 25, is via land-line so I get to talk more at length to Karl and also to Jim. They both sound pleased and excited. They've had a great week in the San Blas, are sending molas home (can't wait to see mine!), and are ready to tackle all the challenges of getting ready for The Transit.

Karl says he was SO GLAD to see Jim -- says he (K) talked non-stop the first five days! Guess he didn't realize how much he had been missing human companionship! He says Jim's fluent Espanol is very helpful too.

Earlier tonight, the third call, just from Karl this time, gives us more time to talk over some things and lets me know they're going to give it their All tomorrow. Vessels under 65 feet can only enter the canal on Tuesdays and Thursdays and are ordinarily required to take two days, spending the night at a lake half way across. However, rumor has it that, at least some of the time, southbound boats are allowed to move through without a stay-over. It definitely takes about eight or nine hours. They have arrangements made for the hired (and required) pilot, and for three additional line handlers from other yachts. Not clear to me whether this means K will have to return the favor or not, we'll find that out later.

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Alas, not all the packages are at the post office or the yacht club. The biggest problem is that the replacement Tiller-master isn't there. I checked some information on hand and confirmed that it was shipped Air Freight, so he's going to check at the airport and, cross your fingers, boy-oh-boy do we hope it's there! He really needs it, plus it cost a few bucks.

However, he does get several packages -- a much needed reversing solenoid for the electric windlass, a spare handle for the manual windlass, and various other smaller items. Also, he especially enjoys letters from several of you. Don't be surprised if you get a postcard of thanks eventually. He hasn't been able to buy any in Panama.

TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: A little space for some more answers to frequently asked questions....

The *Hilde M²* is a Southern Cross 31, hull number 100. She has a full keel and is of medium displacement (9 tons I think). The "31" refers to length on deck, with the bowsprit sticking out in front a few feet, and the windvane sticking out in back a foot or a little more. She has a "tall rig", which means she's almost 45 feet above the water to top of mast, and a little over 5 feet under the water to bottom of keel. (Officially 4'7", but that was before we loaded her down with equipment and stores for The Voyage!).

She was designed by Tom Gilmer, derived (at least somewhat) from the classic Colin Archer double-ender, and built by Clark Ryder of Bristol, RI in 1979. She was displayed at the Annapolis Boat Show in October 1979, which meant a lot of people got to come aboard and admire her, and we got a slight discount since they didn't have to transport her back after the show. Although she's basically a stock vessel, Karl flew up to RI before she was quite finished, so had a chance to have a little input (wish it could have been more) into her specs.

She's always the prettiest boat in the anchorage (at least we think so!), with her nice lines and ivory hull with red boot stripe. She used to have red sail covers and genny stripe, but then we decided to switch to brown, which K had always wanted, thinking we'd get the red repainted to brown some time later. Well, in all the work and commotion of getting her ready to depart, the paint job never got done and so right now she's an interesting combination of colors. All of which doesn't keep her from (as I said) being the prettiest boat. One of these days we'll include a picture so those of you who haven't been sailing with us can see what I mean!

Below-decks, there's a navigation station, galley, two settees, and fold-down table in the (ahem) main salon, then the head, and then a formerly large v-berth and lockers in the forward cabin. I use the word "formerly" advisedly, for we partitioned it in order to provide more storage for sails, diving gear, etc., and to provide for the 3/8" BBB chain going into a new locker.

Since this is beginning to look like the brag department (it's not meant that way), I'll just modestly throw in a few remarks about all the custom-made canvas and other fabric work aboard, by yours truly (natch). Everything I could dream up from fitted mattress pads and sheets, through a fitted cover for the Seagull and straps to hold the mast for the dink up against the overhead, to a little canvas bag to hold a tiny flashlight in the cockpit so you can see to decipher the combination lock... one of my favorites is a flat little bag which hangs on the bulkhead in the head and keeps things like toothbrushes and such easy to grab. You must all visit and see for yourself.

Oops, all this took more space than I intended... will have to stop now and continue later (can you wait?). In the meantime, while you're waiting, as you drudge through the snow and ice at home, beam a thought or two to our crew down in the tropics; poor things, think of all they're missing....

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MANY THANKS to all who've sent such nice letters and offered good words of support and encouragement to me as well as Karl. Also special thanks to several of our neighbors who helped me with car troubles on a recent snow day, and to son Fritz who continues on almost a weekly basis to do extra chores and keep me going!

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