

A "POSTFACE" TO THE LOG OF THE HILDE M²

Dear Reader,

As I write this in July, 2002, after having read the LOG for the first time since 1988, so many complex technicolor memories come rushing to me! It's hard to express all the emotions that remain with me, sixteen years after we dropped the dock-lines at Cobb Island and sailed out to the Chesapeake, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific.

This was a great adventure in my life, and I was incredibly lucky to able to do it -- and then leave it behind while it was still fun. I certainly shed a tear when I left the Plucky - the Sturdy - the Faithful *HILDE M²* in Townsville, but I've always been mostly forward -looking, and then I was looking forward to reunion and adventures with Barbara in Southern Maryland.

I've never regretted that decision. This past April Barbara and I celebrated our Fiftieth Anniversary, surrounded by many good friends, neighbors and family members. Life before, during and after our cruise, has been good for us and I thank Providence for all the blessings we have received.

In the years since the adventure I've heard about only a few of the friends I knew along the way. Several, like Sam McCluney, died at sea in the late 80s. His final story was terrible. His boat, *DX*, was found drifting in the Indian Ocean. He died, poisoned by a spoiled tin of mushrooms. His shipmate was discovered near death, and barely survived to tell the tale to the cruising fraternity. This sort of thing could easily have happened to me. I was prepared for gales, shoals, but not this!

Another friend was later accidentally crushed between his sailboat and a dock in South Africa. At least one just disappeared and his friends filled the ham bands with questions, but heard no answers.

I hope that a few of my buddies might still be enjoying the cruising life. The hard fact is that cruising (even with all care and diligence) is risky and single-handing is riskier still. I believe that nearly all small boat sailors, like the fabled Captain Joshua Slocum, will die following their bliss if they sail long enough.

That is not necessarily a terrible thing. Most of us gladly accepted that risk when we started out. I was depressed to hear that new restrictive rules for offshore sailors were adopted in New Zealand after I left there, in an attempt to save shorthanded or underfunded sailors from their own foolishness.

So -- offshore cruising has become lumbered with well-intended bureaucratic rules at the same time that it has become more technical (read expensive) and has been presented with new random and nearly undetectable dangers from an ever-increasing number of castaway freight containers floating just at the surface of the Seven Seas.

I feel doubly fortunate -- with Barbara's willing help, to have had the adventure and proved our ability -- and to have lived to enjoy those and other memories with her.

I hope that others who feel they can accept the risks without burdening others to come to their rescue, will continue to set out on their own personal adventures, depending on their own caution, preparation, skill and -- of course -- Providence.

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