

PREFACE TO THE LOG OF THE *HILDE M²*

SAILING ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Karl had enjoyed canoeing on the Potomac River as a boy, and later participated in a couple extended AYH (American Youth Hostels) canoeing trips in New England. In 1969 and again in 1971 Barbara and Karl enjoyed canoe touring with their children in Quebec's Parc La Verendrye.

At one point they lashed their canoes together, caramaran-style, and crossed one of the larger lakes under makeshift sail. As a kind of extension to that, in the early 1970s the Edlers took some sailing lessons at the Annapolis Sailing School. After basic 'round the bouys' practice trips in small boats from the school, longer weekend trips were taken in larger craft.

ABOUT THE *HILDE M*

Eventually the family bought a used 27 foot Catalina sloop and used her for trips along the eastern and western shores of the Bay. The boat was christened the *HILDE M*, after our daughter Hilde Melena. A highlight of 1977 was a solo trip for Karl around the Delmarva Peninsula. It almost came to an abrupt end when the little 9-horse outboard motor died part-way in the crowded Ocean City sea channel at the height of the outgoing tide

In 1978, after several years of sailing the *HILDE M* on the Chesapeake Bay we decided to find a larger boat capable of offshore cruising. We didn't have any specific plans then, but Karl had long thought about the possibility of longer cruises to interesting places. The Catalina was nimble and fast, but not easy to operate when short-handed and was uncomfortable for long periods of living aboard.

We pored over cruising magazines and attended boat shows, asked all our sailing friends and read lots of books about blue water cruising. Gradually our list of boat possibilities became shorter. Many yachts were priced far beyond our means. Others we thought were unseaworthy or complicated to sail. We gradually became more and more interested in "double enders" as hardy blue water boats modeled after Norwegian North Sea fishing and rescue craft.

Good sailing friends in West River, Maryland, had bought a Westsail 32, an older classic cruising boat. It was a heavy beamy full keel double ended cutter, with a single mast, and split rig (jib and staysails forward and a medium sized mainsail aft). We sailed with them and were impressed with her many good qualities -- but the boat seemed a bit difficult to handle and didn't sail very well to windward. Karl dreaded the thought of trying to escape a lee shore in strong wind. We looked at several boats of similar design and eventually settled on a 31 foot Southern Cross cutter designed by Thomas Gilmer of Annapolis and built by Clarke Ryder of Bristol, Rhode Island.

During a trip to the Ryder boatyard we bought hull number 100 which he was building to show at the 1979 Annapolis Boat Show. We took delivery right after the show and our son, Fritz, helped sail her to her new home on the West River. Her name was *HILDE M²* (as in "M squared"). She was beautiful and we were so proud of her! In the nine years we sailed her we never regretted having bought her -- and she never once let us down.

OFFSHORE SAILING

After many weeks of "fitting out" and dozens of trips ranging from a few hours to a week or more in the Chesapeake, we planned some offshore trips.

In 1980 Karl and Hilde sailed coastwise from Cape May, NJ to Block Island, Mystic Seaport and back to the Chesapeake via Long Island Sound and New York Harbor. The only crewmember who didn't suffer from seasickness was Mother Jones, Hilde's cat. Aside from our rough first day in the Atlantic, the boat and equipment worked well and the visits in southern New England were great fun.

In 1981 Jan and his friend, Fred Detrich, sailed with Karl from Norfolk VA to St. George Bermuda, taking five days outbound, navigating by sextant. They were met by Barbara and Janet and spent several days enjoying the island before Jan, Janet and Fred flew home and Barbara and Karl sailed home. There were many adventures but the cruise was very successful.

On another occasion, in 1983, Fritz and Barbara accompanied Karl on a trip to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard using LORAN navigation. Gradually, both Karl and the *Hilde M²* became better prepared for long distance sailing and many trips, both crewed and single-handed, were made to harbors on the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays.

DREAMING OF A CARIBBEAN - PACIFIC CRUISE

As a boy, Karl had loved reading *SAILING ALONE AROUND THE WORLD* by Captain Joshua Slocum. He had often daydreamed about a major cruising adventure to far-off islands but didn't seriously think about that possibility until 1984 when it appeared that he might be able to take an early retirement from his non-appropriated fund civilian job at the Pentagon if (as looked likely during the second Reagan Administration) some NAF operated employee services were to be shut down or privatized.

He took adult education classes in navigation at the University of Maryland, attended amateur (ham) radio club sessions and enrolled in SCUBA diving classes at the Naval Research Lab pool. He also started collecting and reading cruising guides and charts in earnest. Barbara created and sewed dozens of fabric items, including spray shields, awnings, windlass covers, even an emergency pack to be taken when abandoning the boat, and courtesy flags for every place that might be visited in the Caribbean and the Pacific.



A few of Barb's home-made courtesy flags

Karl and Barbara moved the *HILDE M* to a tiny marina on Cobb Island in the Potomac and used the considerable savings in slip fees to buy and install extra cruising gear. Less time was spent on day cruises and many weekends were spent working on the boat. Among the necessary improvements were a boom gallows, a power windlass and large chain locker filled with a quarter ton of 3/8" chain (for anchoring in "coral country", an Aries wind vane for self-steering under sail, an emergency life raft, and a radio rescue beacon.

By early 1986 the early retirement looked to be near and Karl began stocking hundreds of items from spare pumps and engine parts to SCUBA gear and canned food. When his job finished in May 1986 Karl was nearly ready for the big adventure.

The only problem was that no one else in the family was available to take an extended trip. Fritz, Jan and Hilde were living independently and had work commitments. Barbara had five years to go until retirement. She encouraged Karl to go anyway, and worked hard to make the trip a reality.

Karl would stay in touch with Barbara via ham radio and would send written reports home. Barbara would be the business and home base manager, and would put together a newsletter for family and friends. She would also join him for passages in the islands when possible.

CRUISING THE DREAM

Finally, in mid-October 1986 everything was ready -- or as near so as possible -- and the adventure began.

Here are the reports that Barbara produced from the letters and rough drafts that Karl sent her whenever he could over the next two years. Her own comments show the perceptions back home.

Please realize that this is a personal account and it contains a LOT of daily routine and detail that may bore some readers.

Our object here has been to share the real day-to-day experience of single-handed offshore cruising. There are also some obscure names of local places and "yachtie" boating terms. A good world gazeteer and a basic reference book such as Chapman's PILOTING, SEAMANSHIP AND SMALL BOAT HANDLING would probably help de-mystify some of Karl's more arcane remarks.

Good armchair cruising! We hope you find it mostly interesting -- and that you will embark on an adventure of your own one day.

Karl and Barbara Edler

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[Return to Home Page](#)