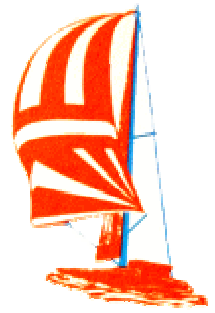


A Foreword by Heide Wilts

***"When the time comes and one can do it,
then the time has passed when one could have done it",***



wrote a German poet. Erich and I decided that this was not going to happen to us!

Our main aim for the future was to live for and from sailing the oceans, to visit extreme latitudes and even spend a winter in the Antarctic. To achieve this, we rearranged our lives.

Five years ago we gave up our home and professions and overcame the many subsequent hurdles. It was not easy: on the contrary, even today we wonder how we ever managed.

We have been sailing for three decades now. When we first married, I asked Erich what his greatest wish was. He replied, "That you won't deprive me of my love for sailing." The future economist had chosen to study in Hamburg because he would be close to the North Sea and could sail there. Coming from Stuttgart, I was a "landlubber", however, an Aquarius by berth. My zodiac sign must have played a role in my meeting Erich after my medical studies and my moving with him to the North Sea as a young doctor.

We worked our way up from a Finn-Dinghy and a number of smaller yachts to FREYDIS, our present 14 meter Hydra steel sloop with retractable keel, modified for the extreme conditions to be expected on our travels. The name FREYDIS stems from a Viking saga. Freydis was the daughter of Erik the Red, the discoverer of Greenland, and the first woman to head an expedition across the Atlantic. Our "Viking woman" has taken us on long, adventurous voyages to the far north and right down to the south. We called this our "ice cruises"; the highlights being, the wilderness, which threatened us, and its great beauty, which we delighted in. On board FREYDIS we visited Spitzbergen, Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland, rounded Cape Horn so often that we have lost count, sailed all the way round South America, crossed the Drake Passage four times and, were icebound in the Antarctic and had spend a winter there. And in between, there were a number of magnificent ocean passages, also in the tropics – which the pair of us often mastered on our own, whereas in the more extreme latitudes we mainly sailed with differing crews.

What do we want to prove? It is certainly true that sailing in high latitudes is more dangerous than on the so-called "barefoot route" and involves more risks. However, when we set out on our adventures, we have our fears and anxieties under control. Due to our years of experience and careful planning, we are confident of being able to deal with any possibly dangerous situation. We try to ascertain certainties concerning the unknown ahead of us which enable us to cope with any unexpected occurrence as a mere additional challenge. This is what makes our lives exciting and fascinating, as man has, after all, a basic need for adventure and desire to sound out his limits.

So we prepared the higher but well calculated risks in order to prove that our world is still full of wonders and they are worth preserving with care.

Summer 1994 - Heide Wilts

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