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DEEP-SEA WANDERERS AT DURBAN

By Bianca Lavies

HENRY and Agnes Vink are back after their six-month trial trip among some of the islands in the Indian Ocean on board their 25-ft. Vertue Class sloop.

Aldebaran and her crew looked none the worse and the only change one noticed was that Henry had grown a beard and that the yacht had the addition of an enormous white windvane on her tiller.

They had an air of achievement about them when they stepped ashore and the first thing Henry said was: "One morning, long before we left, I saw a yacht arrive just like this, after a long trip, and while I watched I thought it must be really great to have done a thing like that. Now we have, I can hardly believe it."

They were delighted about the performance of the craft, built by them in the back garden of their Johannesburg home, the adventures they had and the many friends they had made on the way.

Their first stop after Lourenço Marques had been Europe Island which, apart from three Creoles (natives from Reunion) who looked after a weather station, is uninhabited.

There was no anchorage and they rowed ashore in their dinghy. Closer inshore there were millions of huge turtles. They had some anxious moments as the dinghy, which must have looked very much like a female turtle, was chased by them and they thought they might be overturned. However, they managed to reach the shore safely.

The Creoles invited them for dinner and a pleasant meal was had by all, consisting of soup, goat-meat and rice, salad and beans with onions and pineapple juice.

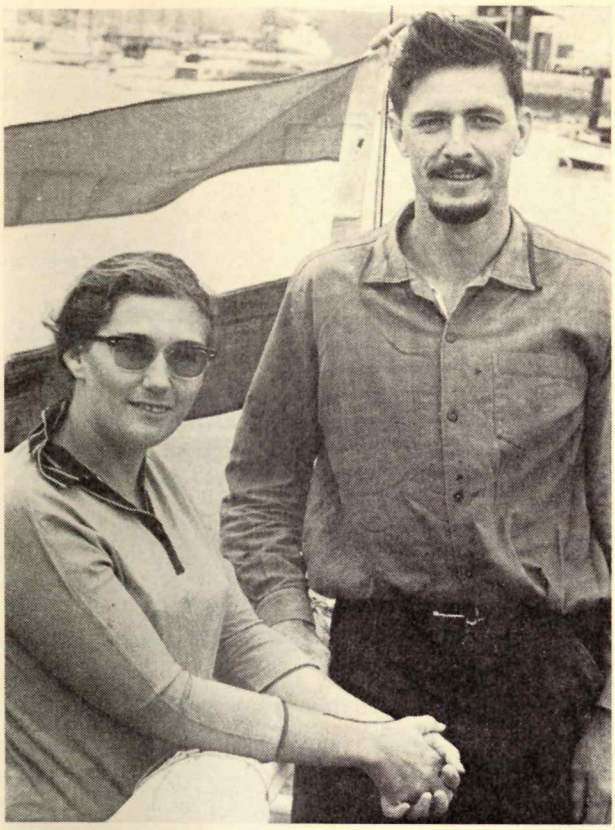
After a turtle hunt with the Creoles they had some more anxious moments when in the dark they could not find their yacht, which they had left without a riding light. The Creoles had told them "there were plenty of sharks". They finally saw the boat's silhouette against a fire lit on the beach to help them.

Their first stop in Madagascar was Morandava, a remote harbour on the West Coast, where perhaps they had the worst mishap of their trip: Agnes broke her glasses. She can see very little without them and was forced to fly to the island's capital about 250 miles away to replace them. The cost was about R80. *Aldebaran* stayed in Morandava for a week.

They then sailed up the west coast of Madagascar to Majunga. There was only 5 ft. of water and they were met by a doctor who was a keen yachtsman, who piloted them to the harbour.

They found the people extremely friendly and were loaded with more invitations than they could cope with. They stayed a month and the advice and information given to them by their doctor friend at Majunga about the North-West coast of Madagascar proved a tremendous help when they continued. He had also given them charts.

This proved a very pleasant part of their trip. Visibility was excellent, there were light sea breezes and (in small coves and bays) they had an anchorage every night.



Agnes and Henry Vink in the cockpit of the Vertue Class sloop *Aldebaran*, **after their seamanlike cruise through what Tom Bulpin calls the Sea of Zanj. Photo: Bianca Lavies.**

At times they could see for 45 miles, this in contrast to the Seychelles where because of moist air one could see less than 15 miles.

They mostly entered on their echo sounder which, as Henry said, "proved its weight in gold on the trip".

After arriving at one of these anchorages along the coast the night before, they woke up the next morning to find a canoe alongside. They were being fetched so that they could be introduced to the village head.

While meeting him, eau-de-Cologne was springled over their heads as it was a very hot day. In the village square they were introduced to all the important people and here they were given the only two available chairs, with everyone sitting around them on the ground.

A toast was drunk to them with coconut milk—and, again, they were the only ones drinking out of glasses.

Although they were sorry to do so, they left Madagascar and set sail for the Seychelles. Beating up, they left the islands to starboard.

"We arrived at Mahe, where we stayed two months. Here Gerry le Grand, the manager of the Hotel des Seychelles, 'made' our stay. He sent up a car after our arrival to take us for lunch, did our washing and gave us an anchorage near the hotel.

"At first we were anchored off the beach opposite a small building called 'The Goggle and Flipper'. This was the bar belonging to the hotel and a favourite sundowner spot.

"For the local crowd of sundowners we soon became a special attraction," Henry said. "Many bets were made whether we would make it or not when we came screaming in on top of a breaker through the surf in our tiny dinghy, which was our only means of contact with the shore."

More often than not they arrived dripping wet, after capsizing, to be warmed up with drinks in the bar after-

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wards. "The wetting was particularly a nuisance when I was all dressed up for the pictures," said Agnes.

They loved the Seychelles, it has an admosphere all of its own, they said, with small secluded beaches and sheltered islands. Here, too, they made many friends. They recorded music on their tape recorder and swapped paperback books.

After two months at Mahe they spent one month at Short Pier at Port Victoria. This was much more convenient for receiving guests on board, as it was alongside a pier. "After all, you could not expect them to capsize on their way in that dinghy," said Henry.

"We even managed to organise a cheese and beer party on board for eight people! The pier was ideal, electricity was laid on for 75 cents a month from a meter on the quay and a tap next to it supplied water as well. Here we did quite a lot of work on the boat. We installed the self-steering device and an icebox."

They saw as much as they could. They hired a scooter to see the island, visited the neighbouring Praslin Island and the American satellite-tracking station.

On October 8 they left the Seychelles. The windvane, they felt, was the answer to comfortable cruising. "Not only does it afford time to sleep, eat and do things about the boat, it is also more accurate, particularly when a skipper is getting tired after about four hours on watch," Henry said.

"The boat performed excellently, doing about 110 to 120 miles a day in the trades," Henry said.

The couple ate a great deal of fish which they caught on the way. When they left Durban they took 12 dozen eggs dipped in lard and wrapped in newspaper. These lasted three months!

They arrived back in Durban on November 19 after sailing by way of the Comoro Islands, Pôrto Amélia in Moçambique and Inhambane, where they spent a week visiting friends.

WALKABOUT RETURNS . . .

A BADLY-LEAKING ketch arrived at the Durban yacht basin on November 12—sailed all the way from Beira to have repairs carried out, which says a lot for Durban's boat yards!

It was the 33-ft. ketch *Walkabout* with three Rhodesians on board: her owner and skipper Mr. J. Marshall, a transport contractor, his son Chris and Roger Wiggins (see below), who had left Bartholomew Diaz near Beira on November 1.

"Her deck was leaking so badly," said Roger on arrival, "that we stopped at Inhambane to buy the necessary material to stop it temporarily."



During the trip they had been hit by a gale off St. Lucia, where they were forced to hove-to for one night. They were in the shipping lane and kept a lookout for ships. "One came excitingly close, but thank goodness it missed us," said Roger.

The *Walkabout* was built in Australia in 1955 by the Driscoll brothers, from Fremantle, who sailed her to South Africa. Mr. Marshall bought her in Durban five years ago.

The Marshalls keep the yacht in Beira and make at least one long cruise a year. They are planning a trip to England next year.

While her husband, son and his friend sailed down the coast, Mrs. Marshall motored down by car. *Walkabout's* crew returned with her by car to Rhodesia.



Sandefjord's **crew (from left): Pat Cullen, Wally Stright, Barry Cullen and their kitten Holyoak.**

SANDEFJORD'S PLANS . . .

THE 51-year-old one-time Norwegian lifeboat *Sandefjord* will be leaving Durban soon for an 18-month round-the-world trip.

On board will be her owners, the brothers Barry and Pat Cullen, Wally Stright, from the United States, who is hitchhiking his way round the world, and their small black kitten Holyoak.

They are planning to leave mid-January and hope by that time to have found three others to join them on their trip, which they are making on a cost-sharing basis of R1,000 for the whole journey including food and maintenance.

What makes their trip different from any other ordinary-everyday-round-the-world-voyage is the fact that they will be making a 16-mm. sound film of their adventures and the life on board.

Barry has a keen interest in professional cinematography and his film of their trip will be his first big venture in this field. The film will be developed in London.

Barry will also be in command of *Sandefjord*. He holds his master mariner's certificate and was till recently employed by the Ellerman and Bucknall Steamship Company as second officer in its flagship the *City of Durban*.

It had been Pat's idea to buy the *Sandefjord* who, after he told Barry of his plans, was immediately fully supported by him.

Where does Holyoak come into the picture? It (they are not quite sure if it is a he or a she yet) was called after the Prime Minister of New Zealand after it was given to them by the New Zealanders on board the Durban-based yacht *Tuarangi* who have named a kitten given by them *Verwoerd*.

The trip will take them to Cape Town, St. Helena and Ascension, to Barbados, the West Indies and Miami. Through the Panama Canal they will go to islands in the Pacific. Then northern New Zealand, Australia and the Barrier Reef where they hope to do underwater fishing and then by way of Christmas Island, the Cocos and Mauritius back to Durban.

"We are particularly looking forward to the West Indies," said Wally with a twinkle in his eye, "the rum is only R1.25 a gallon!"

Since they bought her in May last year, *Sandefjord* has had a complete face-lift.

She was originally gaff rigged, but had been changed to a Bermudan type of rig. The Cullen brothers changed her back to a gaff rig and a completely new set of sails is being made for her by the Durban sailmaker Bill Reynolds.

They also took out the old skylight and the after section of the decking. They sold the old engine for R10 scrap and installed a new Perkins 70-h.p. diesel. A new cockpit and hatchway was built and a new coachroof fitted, which increased the headway below and gave better ventilation.

She is 47 ft. long, her beam is 16.2 ft., she sleeps nine, draws 8 ft. and, with twin staysails, has a sail area of 1,700 sq. ft.

Sandefjord has an amazing history. Until 1934 she was owned by the Norwegian Life Boat Institution, where she has a record of "having saved three boats with seven men from sure death, 258 vessels with approximately 1,100 on board, and piloted 36 ships (700 on board) through fog and storm. Ten per cent of these people would not have made the shore without her help".

She was based at the Royal Cape Yacht Club for years till the death of her best-known local owner, "Tilly" Penso. She was sailed to South Africa by the once-famous Erling Tambs, and is said to have survived an end-over-end somersault in the South Atlantic.



Dag Ekholm (left) and Gunnar Dahlgren on board their 26-ft. cutter *Lukentuss*, **which has been their home for more than two years. Photos: Bianca Lavies.**

SWEDISH VOYAGERS . . .

TWO adventurous young Swedes, who for more than two years have roamed the world seas, have arrived in Durban in their 26-ft. cutter, *Lunkentuss*.

They are Gunnar Dahlgren, 32, and Dag Ekholm, 26, who left Sunsvall—north of Stockholm—in July, 1962. They bought their craft in Sweden and spent 15 months practically rebuilding it before they set off on their adventure.

The first part of their trip they found particularly interesting. Starting at Wilhelmshaven in Germany they had sailed through canals to the south of Europe. By way of Holland and Belgium they had sailed to Lyon in France, where they had to wait for four weeks as there was not enough water in the Rhone to take them to Marseille.

Altogether—with, of course, their mast down—they went through 300 locks and three tunnels.

The worst storm of their trip had hit them just after leaving Marseille and for four days they rode it out with their sails down.

Then they crossed the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Canary Islands, to Barbados, and then continued to the South Sea Islands.

Worms ate some of their planks and in Fiji they spent some time on the slip replacing them.

To catch fish they trailed a line for most of the trip, and their largest catch was a 5 ft. fish caught off the Australian coast.

Mr. Dahlgren is a window dresser and Mr. Ekholm a seaman. They plan to stay in Durban till January when they will complete the last leg of their round-the-world trip by way of St. Helena and Ascension to England and Sweden where the yacht will be sold. ∎



CORSAIR HONOURED: Members of the Cruising Association of South Africa met at a dinner at Constantia Nek to present the Gordon Burn Wood Trophy for the most meritorious cruise of the year. The cup was awarded, for the first time, last year when it went to Mr. A. C. Holgate for his one-way voyage to New York in his schooner *Titch*. **This year's prize-winner was Col. S. H. Jeffrey who sailed his ketch** *Corsair II* **from Table Bay to the Mediterranean. After dinner Gordon Burn Wood handed over the silverware and members then settled back into their chairs to watch a fine film made by Pim Penso on one of** *Cariad's* **world voyages. From the left: Col. S. H. Jeffrey displays the trophy with Gordon Burn Wood; seated are Mrs. Jeffrey, Mr. Cliff Leih, who is president of the Cruising Association, and Mrs. Jerrold Salamon.**
ABOVE, three members of the crew of *Corsair II* **with Kees Bruynzeel of** *Stormvogel* **fame.**
From left: Mike Hellawell, Mr. Bruynzeel, June Jeffrey and Wolfgang Piper. Photos: David Baker.