

Dry Clean



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Written on a throwable flotation device/cushion: Do Not Dry Clean...and it occurred to me looking at this cushion, weeks since leaving dry land and stairs and elevators and tablecloths and washing machines and cars and trees and flushing toilets and showers, sailing across the sea, feeling soggy and salty throughout and dreaming of a hot shower, that dry and clean are two things that I would not be for a while, and what would I give to be, at that moment, dry OR clean, let alone both!

This is the story of a sailing voyage across the ocean from New York to Spain, with a stop in the *Azores* for a crew change and watering. The first 20 days were spent sailing from NY to the Azores, after 4 or 5 days, a brief stop in Santa Maria (where Columbus stopped on the way back from the New World), and sailing 12 more days to Spain.

This is the story as told in its original but spell checked and corrected form. It was written during the journey on my old Radio Shack laptop. It didn't have a hard disk, only 3½" floppies to store data, the operating system was in memory, and the black and white panel wasn't lit at all. Because of this, the battery lasted a good long time the display and was very to see in direct sunlight. It was not easy to work with in dark places nor at night, thus the need for some after-the-fact spell checking and correcting.

There were 6 people aboard a 38 foot Irwin sail boat, equipped with a Perkins diesel motor (I mention the Perkins going “pop pop pop”, as diesels do, later on). The crew consisted of six sailors for each leg: Captain Jack Loda, his wife Liz, his daughter name sake of the boat, were on the first leg, as well as the outsiders: Bob Bucannan (known here as BoB), Bob Grizzel, AKA Griz, and yours truly, me. Christianne was listed as crew but couldn’t really function as crew, as she was handicapped with Cerebral Palsy. She has a very sweet personality, but she needed help getting around and keeping watch.

We received a beautiful send off from the deputy Mayor of New York City on the aircraft carrier and museum “Intrepid” because we were representing New York state in something called the “America 500”, which was 500 sailboats leaving from Spain going to the *New World*. I was helping the boat get to Spain to make the voyage back, and also fulfilling a 3 year old dream of sailing to Spain in ‘92, sort of a backwards Chris Columbus (we were trying to find a new trade route to California, when we encountered, quite unexpectedly, a new continent). I learned a lot from this trip, one thing being that everything happens for a reason, and connections between lives come from the strangest places.

I was on the boat for the whole time, and left her in Spain. It was a trip that I had planned in 1990 to take solo, but there just happened to be someone going my way...

The boat

The trip was sailed on the good ship Christianne, an Irwin sailing vessel 38ft long, originally designed to be sailed a lake—not the ocean. She is a cutter (two sails in front), mid cockpit, very beamy, plenty of room compared to other 38ft boats.

The 'sleeping' arrangements

The Christianne sleeps 6, two in the forward V-berth, two in the main cabin, and two in the aft berth. [Some sailing terms: berth means bed or whatever you call a piece of plywood with some foam on it, V-berth is the one in the front of the boat where you can play footsies with your roommate, forward means toward front of the boat, aft mean towards the back] The forward berth had a divider between the two sides, keeping bodies separated. This is possible because the forward berths are left and right, or port and starboard. When the boat is heeling [leaning because of the force of the wind on the sails] to one side, this divider prevents both bodies from commingling. The rear berth did not have a divider, since the sailors were forward and aft of each other, and the heeling of the boat would only make them be on their heads or on their feet, not rolling into each other.

Then there was my bed, the couch in the middle of the boat. When the boat was heeling to the right side, or the starboard side, I would rely on a lee-cloth to prevent me from falling out. This turned out to be the majority of the trip between New York to the Azores. From The Azores on, I moved into the forward V-berth, which was not the place to be on the second half of the trip, as wyou will see.

The Send off and the Legs

The Christianne was representing New York State in what was called the “America 500”: 500 sailboats that would trace Chris’s trip from Spain to the New World 500 years later. Because of this, we got quite a send off: The Intrepid Sea/Air/Space Museum (formerly aircraft carrier) hosted it, attended by the Deputy Mayor of NYC (in brown throwing confette), the Governor’s assistant, and several other City and museum officials. The program included the requisite speeches, and several choral numbers by local schools. It



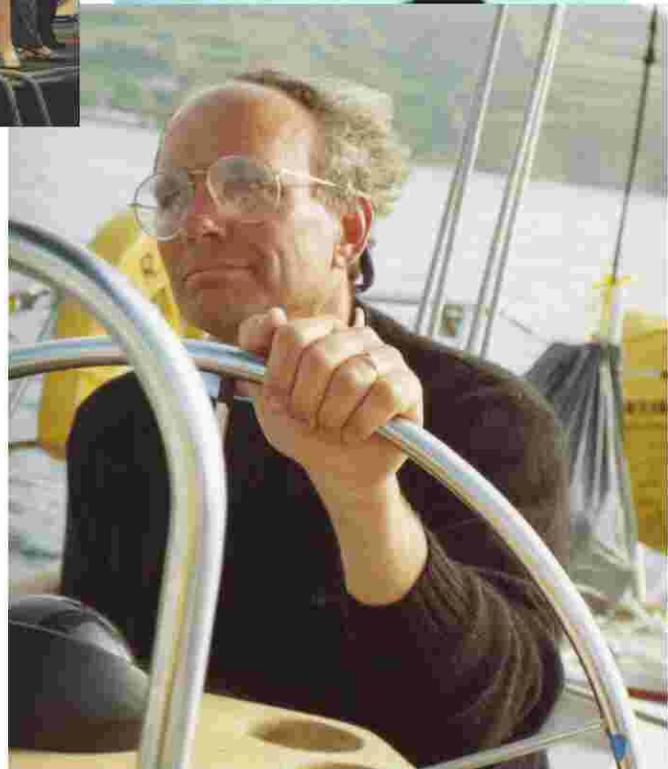
was attended (in the photo in order left to right) by a high school buddy named Rich, a girl friend named "Girlie" in pink and my Mom (Dad was there too somewhere). There were photographers, even a chase boat. It was quite the occasion, culminating in our departure, pushing off to face an uncertain voyage: none of us had ever gone this far...

There were 2 legs of the trip. There was New York to The Azores, a volcanic chain in the middle of the Atlantic. The second was from the Azores to Spain. There was a change of crew in the Azores: Bob, Christianne and Liz flew back to New York, and Peter, Herman and Joe arrived to complete the last leg.



The crew from NY to Azores: Jack Loda, Liz Loda, Christianne Loda, Bob Bucannan, Bob Grizzel, myself

The Captain, one Jack Loda, a vet by day (cats, soft tissue surgery was his specialty) as sailor by weekend, was accompanied by his wife Liz and his daughter, the boat's namesake, Christianne. It should be noted that Christianne is handicapped, cerebral palsy, to be precise. Part of the purpose of the trip was to prove someone like her could make the trip. It did prove to be a challenge at times. Not only to Christianne, but also to the boat and her crew. Liz was a good ocean-bound cook, kept her watch well, and in general did more than her part.

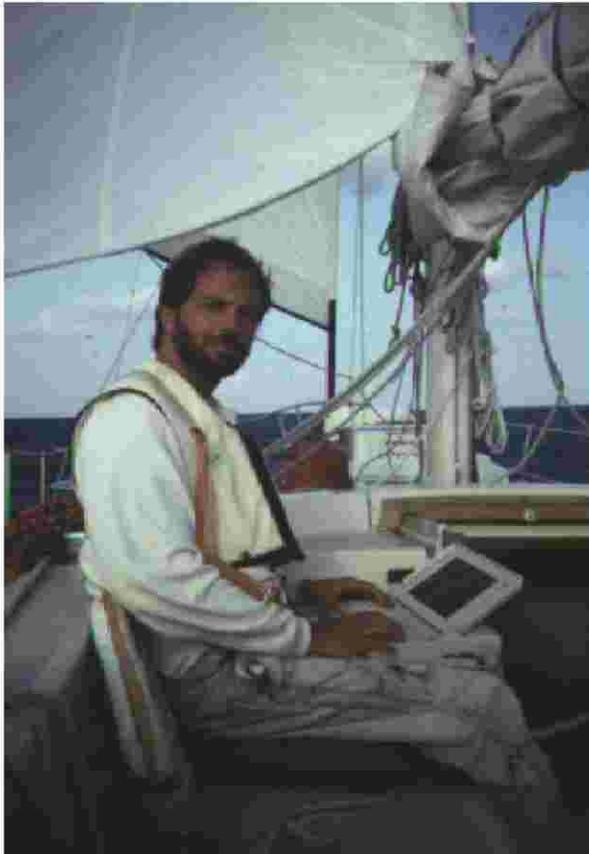


Bob Bucannan (known here as BoB), a “retired at age 45 successful former owner of a travel agency” from Phoenix. We spent many evenings talking about life in general. He was planning to buy a boat, this was a practice run for him. Was never on the ocean until this trip, but he sailed a lake during a storm. Took courses on Diesel mechanics and celestial navigation before the trip. Good singing voice. BoB got married as an indirect result of this trip: Through Herman and our first Mardi Gras in Louisiana, he met a lady named Ruby and married her.



Bob Grizzel, AKA Griz, age 50's and also retired, formally an owner of a beer and wine wholesale store on long island. Sold at great profit and began to enjoy life. We spent many evenings talking about life in particular. He was closest to me on the first leg. We kept each other company during a few shifts and felt comfortable talking to each other about anything.

Myself, 29 (at the time) still in the midst of a support contract to Con Edison, the New York City power and gas company. I decided to go on the trip in 1990. In 1992, I was looking through the Sunday Times for a boat, when I happened upon an ad. It was Jack Loda looking for crew. He just happened to be going my way. I knew right away that I would be going to Spain, by sailboat, with other America 500 sailors. I wanted to see the World Expo in Seville Spain as well. And I do still have my entrance ticket.



The crew from Azores to Spain: Jack Loda, Bob Bucannan, Herman Venable, Peter, and Joe

Herman Venable, near age 50, the Cajun cook, became my travel companion in Spain and Gibraltar, and also turned out to be my *Brother from another life*. We are still good friends years later and visit each other several times per year. He lives in Louisiana and has introduced me to Mardi Gras, as well as a new family there.

Peter, Joe and Herman replaced Griz, Liz and Christianne (the girl, not the boat). I cleverly (so I thought) moved to the front bunk at this time, with was NOT a good idea as you will see later. Peter and Joe I don't know much about and we only saw each other for a one year anniversary of the trip on the boat.



The Sailing Vessel Christianne, Joe on deck waving, Herman seated



Bob, Jack and Christianne, leaving NY Harbor

Below is a photo of me in my “Bed” for the first 20 days of the trip across the Atlantic Ocean. The lines holding me up are tied to something called a “lee cloth”. It is supposed to keep you from falling out of bed when the boat is sailing and the mast is at an angle, or “heeling”. Lee means the opposite side of the wind...so the lee cloth prevents you from falling out of bed. Or it’s supposed to. It did, sometimes. But my head and feet would dangle out, so I began to use the wooden back of the settee or the “boat couch” as my fall-preventor. It did work better, and kept me company, like a big wooden teddy bear covered with material.

One last thing I should mention: Occasionally I mention someone named “Karen.” When I was 11 years old, I created a character (or if you believe in mystical stuff, then I “became aware of her”) that I would some day meet and share my life with. The term ‘soulmate’ wasn’t a household word back then. I picked the name Karen for a variety of reasons, mostly because I like the way it sounds, and I feel I have communicated with her. I still believe I will find her, she lives today in my stories and my dreams. And in my future...





**Christianne, leaving NY Harbor.
WTC and chase boat with news photographers below**



