

THE CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF S/V KAMAL

A journey by Greg and Lauren Henry aboard their Pearson 365

Excerpted from e-mail correspondence between Randy Powers and Lauren Henry in December, 2003. It is presented on this website with the permission of Greg and Lauren Henry.

Part VII

Madeira • Canaries • Atlantic Crossing

Madeira

(Article written for local magazine) 10/02

One of the most popular places to visit in Madeira is the Funchal marina, where visitors can shop and dine while watching the bustle of local sailors and fishermen. But you have to walk out to the end of the pier to see the really interesting boats. Beginning around September you'll find a profusion of yachts anchored outside, many of whom have made the journey from mainland Europe, some even further. This past October if you had been looking out you might have seen our boat rocking gently among them. My husband and I left New York City in our 11 meter boat three years ago, and in a few months will cross the Atlantic to complete a circumnavigation which took us through the Panama Canal to the Galapagos, across the Pacific to Australia, along the islands of Indonesia and up to Thailand, west to Sri Lanka and Oman, up the Red Sea, through the Med and has brought us finally here to Madeira.

Madeiras reputation stretches far and wide, and it was based on the enthusiastic reports from other cruising yachts that we decided to call here. And we have not been disappointed. For such a small island there is a wonderful variety of things to do and see, from wilderness hikes to an evening at the symphony. Our five month old black Labrador puppy loves to romp in Funchals beautiful parks, and we've enjoyed visiting several local museums. (Although luckily for me Greg is an electrical engineer and could help interpret the exhibits on the upper floor of the Museu de Electricidade, where the explanations were only in Portuguese!) But most of all we've found the best way to appreciate a place is to put away our maps and guidebooks and stroll without purpose, or catch a ride on a bus without a particular destination in mind. Chances are good you will stumble upon a lane that will delight you, or a meal you will find yourselves reminiscing about for years to come.

Soon our adventure will come to an end, but our time spent here in Madeira will rate among the most interesting of our many ports of call.

Canaries 11/02

In the few months since Oona and Donal's visited us in Sardinia, Kamal has continued to forge westwards through the Mediterranean Sea towards the Straights of Gibraltar, Spain, Portugal and the Canary Islands, our ultimate destination before "the big sail" across the Atlantic. We were happy to welcome more friends in the Balearics, Mike and Lisa from 'Jemmana', who sailed with us in company from Panama to Tonga. Months earlier they'd experienced their own exciting sail off the Balearic islands, rolling their boat twice and being rescued 24 hours later by helicopter, and so it was with disbelief for us and *deja vu* for them, that while sailing to Mallorca in only 20 knots of wind we heard a sharp crack followed by the surreal sight of our starboard forward lower shroud swinging wildly. For you non-sailors, shrouds connect the mast to the hull of the boat and keep it from toppling over the side, so they are some of the more useful pieces of equipment on board. For one interminable moment we all stood frozen in shock, then in a flurry of activity effected a makeshift repair, which in the end would hold us together until Gibraltar almost 600 miles away. We found out later from the manufacturer that our failed turnbuckle was likely produced in a bad run. We have since replaced all the old suspect hardware with bright and shiny new ones.

After anchoring several hours later, we managed to salvage the rest of the afternoon with a swim and some cocktails accompanied by the usual critique of neighboring boats and their anchoring techniques. We waved goodbye to our friends at the end of a rainy week. They were returning to England, where a brief and unusual spell of beautiful weather was just about to draw to a close.

From the Balearics, we sailed to the town of Sotogrande on the Spanish coast. We were busy preparing the boat for entry when we looked up to see a powerboat speeding towards us. I was just beginning to wonder if it was actually possible that they didn't see us sitting right in their path when I saw the driver flash me a huge grin. I broke out in a smile of my own, because it was our friend Dave, who had recently settled in the area and who we had come to see. With him were his wife, father in law and baby daughter, our very own welcome party. We had last seen each other in college and that night we had a lavish reunion dinner in their apartment. Our plan was to make the final push to nearby Gibraltar early the next morning in order to avoid the fierce mid-day winds. So, reluctantly, we tore ourselves away and returned to the boat around midnight. We pulled up the hatchboards to be

greeted by Seidon gazing up at us from the bottom of the stairway innocence personified. All around him was chaos; he'd managed to reach three bags of Doritos, tear them open, eat about two thirds of the chips and leave the rest strewn all over, smashed and trampled on among ripped bags and other detritus. Welcome to the wonderful world of on board dog ownership. For weeks afterwards we continued to find bright orange crumbs stuck to the bottom of our feet as we walked inside the boat. This episode convinced us that as much as we didn't want to do it, Seidon would have to be restrained when we left him on board. We rigged a nylon lead tying him to the floor with a bit of leeway to walk around. The lead lasted all of a few hours before he gnawed through it. From nylon we progressed to chain, which seemed to be the ideal solution. After watching him attack the chain relentlessly we finally broke down and bought him a plastic crate. It keeps him and the boat safe, and although he has tried to chew that too, so far he hasn't enjoyed much success.

Other than a few fairly entertaining incidents, Seidon has proven to be a great sea dog, completely at home on the boat and entirely unperturbed when conditions get rough. The one question everyone asks is how he relieves himself. He goes on a plastic mat, which is connected to the boat by a line. When we need to, we just throw it overboard and let the ocean clean up the mess. Nevertheless he loves walks ashore, and is in heaven when we're tied to a dock, as we were in Gibraltar.

Gibraltar, a tiny patch of England marooned on the southern coast of Spain, is known affectionately as "the rock". Why is immediately apparent - Gib is really no more than a huge rock sitting at the end of a spit of land. The land itself is low and long enough to accommodate an airstrip, which one has only to walk across (yes, you really do cross the runway) to reach the Spanish border. Gibraltar has belonged to England for several hundred years and its citizens are overwhelmingly in favor of remaining British, but the Spanish don't care and want it back anyway. Britain seems almost ready to wash their hands of the matter. It's a strange situation and a bit of an odd place, overrun by British tourists who flock there to see the Barbary monkeys living on the rock, eat fish 'n chips and buy duty free liquor and cigarettes. Other than that, its attractions are few but we enjoyed stocking up on goods unavailable anywhere else, and being able to communicate with everyone in English, a first since Australia.

Most boats sail straight from Gibraltar to the Canaries but we chose to go further west and north to the Portuguese coast, and only then south to the islands of Porto Santo and Madeira, and from there to the Canaries. Along the way, we tasted sherry in Puerto de Santa Maria, only one of three towns where the liquor is authentically produced, then brought Kamal twenty miles up the Rio Guadiana, which divides Portugal and Spain. We visited the

small towns on either side of the divide and watched a profusion of wildlife along the banks, as well as birds soaring high above. We left Portugal at Lagos and arrived three days later in Porto Santo. It was a difficult trip - so rough that we wouldn't let Seidon in the cockpit at all the last day.

Porto Santo is a small island blessed with a beautiful white sand beach which spans almost the entire length of its southern shore. The long harbor wall is covered with paintings left by transient yachts, and now includes one by the crew of Kamal. Although we enjoyed our time there and Seidon absolutely loved the beach, we were even more enchanted with nearby Madeira.

Only twenty miles or so separate the two islands, but their differences are vast. Where Porto Santo is dry and bereft of vegetation Madeira is practically overflowing with water and covered in lush forest. The biggest town in Porto Santo has one main street and one central square, but Madeira has several beautiful towns, and its capital, Funchal, is marked by intricately cobbled streets, old, stately buildings, quaint parks, and manages to achieve cosmopolitan vitality while retaining a certain rustic charm. We visited local museums, tasted the region's trademark wines, and took Seidon on his first driving tour of the island.

Our last passage brought us to the island of Tenerife in the Canaries. Kamal is berthed in a marina in Santa Cruz, a town on the North East side of the island. We are joined every day by a growing number of boats, all waiting for hurricane season to end so we can embark on our Atlantic crossing. Predicting hurricanes is an inexact science and there is no magic date after which you are guaranteed they will no longer develop. All we can do is watch the signs and act on our best guess. Our target date to leave the Canaries is November 20th, but that is of course flexible and subject to change. A good passage will have us arriving in the Caribbean 21 days later, and we plan to close the circle in St. Bart's, one of the islands we visited on our way out three years ago.

As soon as we arrive, Kamal will be up for sale, so if anyone is interested in buying a 36ft fully outfitted cruising boat ready to go...send us an email or leave a message in the guest book!

Atlantic Crossing 12/02

It took us just over 21 days to sail from the Canary Islands to St. Barths in the Caribbean. We had a fairly unremarkable crossing with few breakages, although conditions could have been better winds averaged 22-25 knots and the seas were consistently 10-12 feet and confused to boot. As a result, we rocked and rolled, and surfed down waves while at night the squalls barreled down on us.

To help give you a sense of what our passage was like, here's a sample of how we passed our days:

Meals:

Conditions such as we had make life at sea tiresome imagine trying to fix yourself a sandwich as the condiments roll across the counter, meat flies out of your hands and bread flips off the plate. You learn to do things slowly, with everything in its place, all the while trying to keep from falling over.

Radio Schedules:

Our days typically began with the morning radio net when boats underway call in their position and weather conditions. Its a laborious process, and as more and more boats left Europe heading west, the net swelled it often took over an hour to complete check-ins. Afterwards, the frequency opens up for boat to boat traffic and the airwaves turn into one big party.

Later in the day, we'd tune into Herb Hilgenberg, transmitting from Ontario, who for the last 15 years has broadcast weather forecasts for boats on passage. Not only are his predictions superb, but his sched is worthwhile for the entertainment value alone. In the high season, Herb contacts upwards of 60 boats a day, and that would make anyone testy.

Herb: You're reporting southwesterlies but Im sorry, I just don't see that in your region so you must be mistaken; take another look outside.

We checked in with Herb back in 1999 and our final communication when we were off the Panama coast was memorable:

Herb: Um, Kamal, Im sorry but I just cannot read you. What are you using for an antenna, a wire coat hangar?

What can you say to that? So I feigned ignorance telling him we had poor copy and signed off. It turned out there was a problem with our radio but Herb doesn't suffer fools or electronic failure gladly, and among our friends the wire hanger comment became legendary.

Night Watches:

They are probably the longest, loneliest time of the day. Each boat has its watch system, usually some variant of 3 hours on and 3 off, but that didn't work for us, it seemed as if we no sooner fell asleep than it was time to get up again. So our system developed into two watches of about 5 or 6 hours each. That's a long time to

stay awake and remain alert, but the payoff is a good solid sleep, usually wedged into our bunk with cushions and blankets. Nighttime is also when you hear the most interesting sounds, like people whistling, music playing or the white noise babble of people at a cocktail party. Perhaps the true culprit is wind in the rigging or the groans of a flexing boat, but they seem real all the same. You might think I've ingested too much seawater, but Kamal is not the only boat to have experienced the phenomena, so maybe were all a little crazy.

Chart Plotting:

Once a day we calculate how many miles we made in the previous 24-hours and note our position on the chart. In the early stages the marks look pathetically far from our destination and I try not to think about how many miles we have yet to cover. But as landfall grows closer, the compulsion to calculate becomes impossible to ignore, especially when the gps finally shows hours to go. We sit with a calculator figuring; if we make so many knots, we can arrive by such and such a time. What if we sped up by 2/10 of a knot? You'd think that after 18 or 19 days at sea a few more would mean nothing, but every day is exponentially more tortuous, especially as boats in front of you begin to arrive and report back on the joys of being ashore.

Down Time:

The remainder of our time is spent doing a lot of, well, nothing. I had thought I would be industrious, taking advantage of all those spare hours to do something wonderfully productive, but the truth is that it takes all our energy just to keep the boat running smoothly. We read, take naps during the day to supplement the shorter nights, and try to reserve our energy for the unexpected. This year we heard several sad stories from others making the same trip: one couple lost their rudder and ended up on board another boat after scuttling (sinking) their yacht. Another cruise ended even more tragically, the husband on board a 51 foot yacht fell overboard and drowned while still attached to the boat. His wife was unable to recover his body until hours later when a nearby yacht came to her aid. It's easy to grow complacent, but diligence is needed to monitor chafe, wear and tear, rigging, equipment, and to look into any unusual or suspicious noises. The worst usually happens at night, when the weather is bad and you're feeling queasy.

So, you wanna go cruising?

If you do, or if you have any other questions for us feel free to write us at

HYPERLINK "[mailto: ketchkamal@hotmail.com](mailto:ketchkamal@hotmail.com)"

ketchkamal@hotmail.com

and well do our best to help.

Crossing our outbound track marked the end of our circumnavigation, and the end of our logs as well. We hope you've enjoyed following our travels, and we thank everyone for logging on especially those who have taken the time to leave us messages in return.

Wed also like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated web master Bruce and his trusty sous-guru Reva, as well as all of our relatives for their love and support. Although their instincts might have been to have us committed when we first told them our plans, we thank them for not going through with it.