

THE VOYAGES OF SKØIERN

It had been a long time
since we have left
Norway to sail, not
around the world,
but in the world.

■ PATRICK AND ANNE MARIE, NANAIMO,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, FEBRUARY 2015



We left our country, family and friends once more, as we have always done. It was not to round the world, to visit what you must absolutely see, no it was only to go on living our tramping life, taking our time to discover countries, to meet people, to live with them, learning their language when we have the time.

In March 2011,

We left Paimpol, in the north coast of Brittany, and we went down the coasts of Spain and Portugal before entering Africa.

At first it was Morocco: Mohamedia, El Jadida, Safi, Essaouira, Agadir. From there we went into the Canarias, then to Cabo Verde, before re-entering the African coasts at Dakar, Senegal. It was hot, very hot at this period of the year but we were so pleased to be in this country where we had so many sailors friends. We sailed into the river Saloum, hence it was really shallow for our draft. It was not too different in the river Casamance, and as the charts were far from accurate we had to be careful. But it was a challenge and we went up to Zyginchor, the main city of this region.

From there back to north to enter the river Gambia. We will sail up to Baboon Island, 150 miles from the sea, anchoring every night close to fishermen villages.

The next and last country had to be Guinea Bissau and the Bijagos islands. Here it was a step back into history, with people living as they did one or two centuries ago.

The end of this year found us in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, waiting for wind.... We had to leave Africa without much fuel, with a fouled hull, and so it took us 24 days to reach the Coast of Brazil!

Year 2012

We had dreamed long time ago of Brazil, and now, here we are, in Jacarei, our first step in South America. Here all is huge, all is far, the buildings are on the shores and we didn't have thought that we had entered a very large country, with so many peoples, in the same time modern and archaic. Salvador, Itapatica will follow, the Abrolhos islands too, with their colonies of seabirds and turtles, then Ilha Grande, Paraty, Porto Belo, and Rio Grande do Sul.

A pampero will welcome us in Uruguay, just before Piriapolis where we had decided to stay for the winter and prepare the boat for the Deep South.

The Rio de la Plata is an enormous delta, with shoal waters for hundreds of miles, but this will not prevent us to visit Buenos Aires and the area.

Puerto Quequen ought to be our last port of call before Patagonia, but the bad weather will not let us reach so easily our dream, and we had to go back. We decided then to change our

plans, sailing to the Pacific via Panama. But we didn't forget Chile and the Patagonian Channels; it was only a matter of time...

Year 2013

The time had come to go from Argentina, even if it was difficult to leave our friends from the "Vito Dumas Club" in Quequen, to let behind us the "assados", the kindness and the good mood of these people, always ready to help you, to talk with you or to share a "Quilmes", the national beer. We go full of memories and we know that we will come back. A last call in Mar del Plata, taking the time to visit the clipper "Libertad", newly escaped from her lengthy call in Tema, Ghana, victim of vultures funds, to go to the museum, this time, Vito Dumas, to enjoy the pampa's skies.

This time the sea was kind, perhaps too much, and we entered again Uruguay. Here in La Paloma, the sea is so hard that we could think that we are in Brittany. Dunes, rocks, pine and eucalyptus woods, birds, the lighthouse, boundless and almost deserted beaches, lagoons, and of course "lobos", but more reserved.

Brazil is only sixty miles from here, we will wait a little for good winds, and then we will sail to the north, to Panama and the Pacific Ocean. We think we have made the good choice, and we can't regret to have discovered this Argentina where we feel so good.

Rio Grande do Sul, our entry gate in Brazil. We didn't thought to stop so quickly, but we had forgotten the magic atmosphere of the lagoon, her birds, her lights and fogs. Here, in the "lagoa dos patos", all is quiet. The barques go and return from the "isla dos marinheiros", full of boxes of salads and other vegetables, in way to the community market, a few yards from here. The horse carts still resist to the lorries and cars, the errant dogs sleep in the streets, the nostalgic "gauchos" pass in their black and red lined cloak, leather boots and beret. We met again the singing Brazilian Portuguese, the fruits, the vegetables, the fish market....

It's good to be back in Brazil! The whim of the weather has prevented us to walk with the whales of Abrolhos, we have seen them only in the distance, some blows and others disputed to the big south swell, brown boobies taking the opportunity of the crossing to rest a little, and, then, in the state of Bahia, the magic of the mangrove, the dugouts, the saguis, small acrobats and inquisitives monkeys... Here all is going on the water, from the solar transportation to those of mules, fishing is going by sail, the last saveiros are still sailing, without engine, pushed by breezes and currents. Discoveries: Cairu and the marvels of the old Jesuit convent, the red ibis growing like poppies in Maragojipe, Valença, bustling city emerging from the mangrove. The likeness with Africa is striking;



Anne Marie & Patrick



El Jadida, Maroco

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Off the Senegal coast



Gambia



Boloma, Guine Bisau

even the Portuguese forts are here! Water surround us, it's a tracery of Rios, sand banks bristling by fish traps, and everywhere the same warmth, the same kindness. It's a pity we can't stay longer....

We are not tired of Brazil, Salvador where we have made, one more time, a good cleaning to our Skøiern, Jacare and João Pessoa where the kids conduct their cows riding horses, where the "lanchas" stay the best mean of transport to join the villages across the river, Fortaleza and his fishermen riding their unbelievable jangadas which we cross in open sea, sometimes at 40 miles from the coast, the feet in the water, standing with their huge sail spread out like a wing. Then it's the river Para, in Amazonia, where we sail up to Soure, in Marajo Island. The bufalos have replaced the horses and, again it's the magic of the river where all occurs, the horses transported with the humans waiting in their hammocks, the zebus, discharged in a savage manner, the fishermen who rounded us at night. We met again our red ibis and this time we have followed them in the mangrove, we will not see them again before long...

In Surinam, change of scenery: even if we are on a river, there are some differences, it's more hot, the thunderstorms are more frequent and overall it is a curious mixing of Nederlands, Indonesia, Africa.... there are roads, beautiful houses with painted roofs and Paramaribo looks at times like South Africa. All sorts of animals are sold, when they are not eaten, and we were on the point to buy a small monkey, let's say Anne Marie...

We are now in the Caribbean seas, in Tobago, Charlotteville, Pirates bay, waiting quietly at anchor the good season to go on, this times through west. Here it's another paradise. Here we come into the Caribs world, where history laid his traces, perhaps more than anywhere else: the slavery, the economic domination. You can feel the leadership of USA, Canada, and others, it's no longer the Hispanic Europe of Latin America but it's also the reggae and Rasta's kingdom!

We stayed almost two months in Charlottesville, Tobago, until the customs asked us to sail away, as our pets were not allowed.


It's a pity, we loved this small and quiet village, the lush forest were everything is growing, avocados, bananas, cocoa, the animals, squirrels, birds, the bay flied over with pelicans, frigates and brown boobies, the so welcoming people, always in a good mood, the fishermen and their lobsters....

Anyway, Grenada wasn't far away. Here in Prickly bay we could have the best treatments in the Caribs for the dog Dick, in St Georges University, get new glasses for the captain, receive our new main sail, and, last but not least, visit the oldest rum distillery in the island (beware, this a 70° proof alcohol!), the cocoa plantations and taste the best chocolate in the world. The island is so beautiful that she deserves well her name of "Spice island".

Now we leave Grenada, heading west, chasing the sun... A good wind from the back push us and it will soon become strong when passing the Columbian coasts. We will then appreciate more the calm of the San Blas islands. Stunning islands, ambassadors of the Polynesian atolls, covered by coconut palms, at only one or two feet from the sea level. Here only live the Kunas Indians. It's their country, snatched by a long fight against the invaders, even the most recent ones. The Western civilisation is only slowly coming in, the women keep their traditional dress, their "molas" are hand sewed, and they row their "ulus" as well as the men. They know that the rising of the sea level threat them, and they are already prepared to establish themselves on land.

A little bit further, at midway to Colon, Portobelo: In the bay you could think that you are still at the time of the galleons full of gold, on land the Spanish ruins faces the multi-coloured buses of Panama, the San Felipe Church is the home of the Black Christ, veneered in all central America, the vultures soar in the sky and you can feel the poverty.

Before exploring the Pacific Ocean we need a clean hull and we make a big washing to our Skøiern, under the palm trees in Shelter bay Marina, just in front of Colon. The woods nearby also attracted us. It's hot, and siesta time ...



... fishermen riding their unbelievable jangadas which we cross in open sea, sometimes at 40 miles from the coast, the feet in the water, standing with their huge sail spread out like a wing.

Year 2014
The Panama Canal

This time, which is unusual, we have been helped by reporters: Thanks to Emilie, Stéphane, Alain, for having followed us, taken pictures, tracked us....

Sunday February 26th we sail from Shelter Bay Marina to the waiting area, the "Flats", with 3 handliners, as we need 4 crews plus the Captain, 4 lines of 125 feet long and 7/8 thickness, extra fenders and an inspection whose result will be two cleats more at the aft and a measured length of 55 feet.... At 4 PM the advisor Roy (Pilot) embark and we start for the first Gatun lock, admiring when passing by the huge gates which will equip the new locks. We follow a merchant ship, the "Polarstream" who will pass the locks with us. At 6 PM we have been through the 3 locks without any problem and we are rewarded with staying for the night in the Gatun Lake, moored at a buoy. Our handliners take the opportunity to take a bath but for ourselves we stay on board as we are feared by the crocodiles (in fact we have seen only some before entering the locks, on the ridge).

Monday morning the howler monkeys wake us and at 6.45 AM, Pilot on board (Hector). Crossing the Gatun Lake is long, 34 nautical miles, as the shortcut, the "Banana cut" is closed. It's a pity for here the nature is pristine, but we have to follow the channel, dredged at 35 feet. At 12.45 we enter Pedro Miguel lock, with two other sailing boats, tied together and closely followed by a bulk carrier, the "Saga Wave", hauled by his 8 "mules". Then we go through the Miraflores locks and at 3.30 PM "Skøiern" is sailing for the first time in the Pacific waters!

It was two difficult days, with much attention but we were well prepared and our crew and pilot were real "pros". The Panama Canal is an extraordinary execution in the technical aspect, very well managed and maintained, and we had a thought for the 20 000 workers who died here during the first attempt of Ferdinand de Lesseps.

Leaving Panama, his buildings for rich people and our faithful pelicans, the long way for Easter Island is waiting for us. We will be surprised by the Pacific, huge salted desert, the encounters are uncommon, a brown booby, a coryphena, no ships...We will have to tack, then sailing reaching for 3 weeks, but the award is here: a short call in Anakena bay, less than 24 hours, just the time the wind shift and get us out of here. Just the time to admire the moais who emit such energy, almost frightening, just the time to admire the horses flocks feeding on, free. Not enough time, but we will come back, one day; Easter is on the road for Chile...

After some more miles, Pitcairn, a child dream, a sailor dream, here we are! The swell is high and we go at anchor in what is called "Western Harbour", an anchorage open to all swells, more than 10 fathoms deep... Andrew comes with his boat to pick us ashore and when we go through the tiny jetty, pushed by a breaking wave of 10 feet, to come alongside to a no less tiny jetty, we understand that the blood of the mutineers has not vanished! They are only 40, on their flowered island, only linked by boat, and Internet, to the world! All are descendants of Christian Fletcher and John Adams, the real patriarch. The young ones go studying in New Zealand, and don't come back, Jean Claude, the pastor, has not many parochians...Fortunately there is the passing cruisers and sailing boats who add some spice in the life of this small community where history, their history, is everywhere and at all times.



Andrew, Pitcairn

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Colon



Easter Island



San Blas Islands

We leave Pitcairn full of fruits and vegetables, we have exchanged our addresses, and we will receive the island "gazette" by Internet, a curious blend of past and present!

And now, Rikitea, Gambiers Islands, our first contact with French Polynesia, with the people's kindness, the cheerfulness of the children who invite us to their school party: Polynesian dances and declamatory art contest. We will meet also other sailing boats, some we had cross months ago and for the first time mutual assistance, friendship, that's so good!

The wind will have some difficulty to push us to the Marquesas and for this we will appreciate even more Hanavave, Fatu Hiva. The arrival in Virgen's bay is gorgeous; it's the most beautiful anchorage we know. The island is not too densely populated, there is not too much 4 wheels drive, the nature is splendid and here also we will make links with the inhabitants, here also it will be hard to leave...

Marquesas Tahuta and his church, the "Aranui 3" more a liner than a schooner, and then Atuona at Fatu Hiva, where we make a pilgrimage to the tombs and in the museums of Paul Gauguin and Jacques Brel.

Many things have changed since their "visit", but the magic of the islands is still there.

Nuku Niva, our last call in the Marquesas. Here, despite the music and the dances, we prepare ourselves for the great crossing waiting for us: repair our computers who obviously don't like the salty air, embark the last foodstuffs, here you can find nearly everything, we will keep the vegetables for 2 weeks, the lemons and grapefruit even more, the scurvy will not be for us!

A last wonderful anchorage in Hanakena, where the village is full of fruits and suckling pigs who eat only bananas and coconuts...The way to the waterfalls are an ancient royal road, the valley was much more populated before, as it's common in the Marquesas, civilization has passed here also.

To be sure to come back one day we have thrown our flower collars and crowns in the bay, but the trade winds already catch us and we take our course true North.

Crossing the equator fishing comes again and this "tazar" 5 feet long, 30 pounds of weight will feed us for about one month! Fresh, dried, in preserves, all is good! Some stowaways: a falcon who couldn't stay on board, the brown boobies don't agree, swarms of "St John boats", as in the Med, and some flocks of dolphins meet us. The trade wind follow us up to the latitude of Hawaii and then the high pressure start playing with us: calms, gales, but in fact we are not in a hurry to arrive, the



Fatu Hiva

days fly quietly, nearly no boats, only the pollution, plastics, fishing gears, sadden us.

Some days before landing sharks will visit us and a whale make his show, jumping out of the water. The cold catch us, we enter the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and it's Canada!

Nanaimo, Vancouver island: after 37 days at sea, 4292 nautical miles, we are back to civilisation, but here, at anchor in front of Newcastle island, Indian reserve of the Snuneymuxw, we stay in nature, and what nature!

The Canada geese wander with their chicken while herons are served in the nest, deers come to graze at night, seals paddle, eagles lurk around in the air, and plovers, ducks, humming birds, squirrels, racoons fill our walks. Wild life burst, in water as on land, and all this close to the town, that's British Columbia!

We take also some time to care of our Skøiern, 3 month of sailing since Panama have washed all the varnish!

Summer in Vancouver had been rich: rich in reunions, in joy and feelings. Manon and Enzo, the oldest of our grandchildren, discover at their turn British Columbia, and meet us again, after 3 years of parting! Despite of the time it was as if we had left them a few days ago. They have their marks on Skøiern, and in the evenings, when we come back from our walks we play relentless card games; it's difficult to get old like this! It's the discovery of Vancouver, Stanley Park and his aquarium, his



Piriapolis, Uruguay

totems, Canada Place, the Gastown steam clock, Granville island, False Creek anchorage with his floating houses, just in the city center...It's the discovery of Nanaimo and Newcastle island, the Indian reserve, and the meeting of owls, Canada geese, racoons, deers, otters, eagles, herons, seals... A trip in waterplane, with the fly over our boat...Reunion also with our Swedish fri-

end Pelle, here in Vancouver for a meeting (the sailors always meet themselves, everywhere in the world!). The Indian totems are now part of our world, an eagle watch over our lounge, joining our tiki from Fatu Hiva.

The kids have gone, they will come back in Brazil to see Rio de Janeiro, we made the promise, and we hope they will succeed in persuading their brother and sister to come with them.

After Vancouver we make a small trip in the Fraser River to see the yard were we will go for our winter works, and we start our rounding of Vancouver Island. Discovery passage, Desolation Sound, Johnstone Strait, Squirrel Cove, Octopus Islands, Alert Bay, Columbia Cove, Nuchatlitz, Hot springs Cove, Ucluelet...all these places are full of history, a maze of islands, fjords, rapids where the currents can be violent, up to 15 knots, all these anchorages we discover, making slowly our way up to the North, with its rains and fogs. The fauna differ: the sea birds are different, loons, auklets, murre, tufted puffins, the sea

Crossing the equator fishing comes again and this "tazar" 5 feet long, 30 pounds of weight will feed us for about one month! Fresh, dried, in preserves, all is good!



North Pacific

otters savour their crab while crawling, the whales are here too. The black bears stay on the beaches, turning the stones in search of food. We will meet some ashore also, a little too close...We will not see the wolves, nor the grizzly of Port Harvey, but he will impeach us to hike too far.

Alert bay, in the North, cultural centre of the First Nations. The museum is extraordinary, we really enter in the Indian culture, and the totems in the village are not only for the show: when they are not the pride of the band they stand in the graveyards, ultimate tribute to the dead.

The west coast is more beautiful, more wild and our meetings more scarce, but more special: so with Bob, in Nuchatlitz, who established here more than 40 years ago, who made all by his own hands: his house, his work shops, the oyster farm, his boat and all this at hours by sea from the first village. He will offer us

vegetables from his garden to welcome us, and in the evening the neighbours will invite us for a memorable dinner, with a salmon fished and barbecued by Bob...At the Hot springs we will take the bath of the year, we could feel in a hammam!

Ucluelet, our last call before Victoria were we took shelter from the first big storm of the season and where we could admire the millenary red cedars on the "Wild Pacific Trail". The Canadian geese flights follow each other, filling our nights with their calls, they migrate southward. Autumn is here; it's time to come back.

Now we are preparing our boat for Alaska where we will spend the summer 2015. Then back to Vancouver Island, San Francisco in October, Costa Rica in December to reach Chile next year. We don't have forget Patagonia... ■



Nuchatlitz

... all these places are full of history, a maze of islands, fjords, rapids where the currents can be violent, up to 15 knots, all these anchorages we discover ...



Les mer om Skøiern på
www.skoiern.com



The ordinary life on board of MARS/SKØIERN

"Skøiern" is my second boat. First I had a "Requin", similar in a way to the famous "Dragon" of Anker. She had no Norwegian stern, but she was deep and low on the water. I loved her, but had to sell her for a matter of money. With "Skøiern" I discovered the double-enders (your spissgatters), and since I really think that they are perhaps the best boats in rough weather, especially in heavy seas from behind. We experienced very bad weathers, especially that night along the coasts of Brazil, when suddenly a storm fell on us, pushing our boat at the speed of 12 knots. We were with the forestay sail, the main with two reefs and the mizzen. It took us more than one hour to be able to lower the main and the mizzen, and still after this we were running at 6 knots. We had big waves, some of them crashing on board, but the automatic pilot was still working and we were safe under our plastic dome. The automatic pilot, Autohelm 6000, actuates a fletner, attached to the ruder, which is free. We can actuate it either by an electric jack, or by just shifting a pin, the wind vane. I had to recut the main ruder, the fletnet is 10% of it. So we steer the 24 tons of "Skøiern" with only 2 amps, and since 15 years we never steer.

To sail around the world relying only on the wind is possible, but difficult. We sail the most we can, but unfortunately we have to motor sometimes and we run our engine also for battery charging and for the water maker. We don't have much fuel capacity, only 300 l., but that's enough for months if

we have good winds. In a year we sail 85% of the distance, 10 000 nautical miles.

Four sails offer many possibilities, and there is no absolute rule. However, most of the time, the mizzen and the staysail are hoist from departure to arrival. The fore sail is lowered as soon as the wind increases, if I don't want to ride the bowsprit and get really wet. The main is almost always up, with one, two or three reefs when necessary, depending of the wind, the sea and the points of sailing. Our speed limit, for safety and for the boat is not more than 8 knots, less when on the wind. In bad weather, when heading, we have to reduce the speed to 4 or 5 knots as the boat is heavy and powerful. Once, in the south of Argentina, we sailed during 2 days, heaving with only the mizzen, and it was working really well.

One important point is that with her present rigging we can easily handle "Skøiern" by two, and most of the time, especially in bad weather, I am alone on deck.

At sea there is always one of us on watch, for 3 hours, even in the middle of the oceans, the AIS on and at night the radar too. And during your night watch you can see the stars, hear the blow of dolphins, and take care of your floating home. During the day it's cooking, fishing, taking our bath on the deck (only under the tropics...), and so on...We are sure not to starve as we have always 5 or 6 month of basic food on board, the water maker provides us 25 liters par day of fresh water, and even if we never had a fridge we always had fresh food on

board, fruits and vegetables. When fish is abundant we make preserves, or we dry it. Except in the South Pacific, which was a salted desert, we often meet animals: Birds, sometimes taking rest on board, dolphins, turtles, whales, manta rays, and here in Canada seals, otters and orcas. It's always a great pleasure, they are gifts from nature.

To maintain a wooden boat in hot countries and waters, you must be very attentive: the bottom must be perfectly painted, we use 3 coats of epoxy primer on the bare wood and then 2 or 3 coats of antifouling paint. It's essential to paint the topsides in white to reflect the sun and the heat. In the same way you need covers or tents when at anchor, it's much more comfortable. And last but not least, your boat must be very well constructed and maintained, with all the hull fittings perfectly tightened.

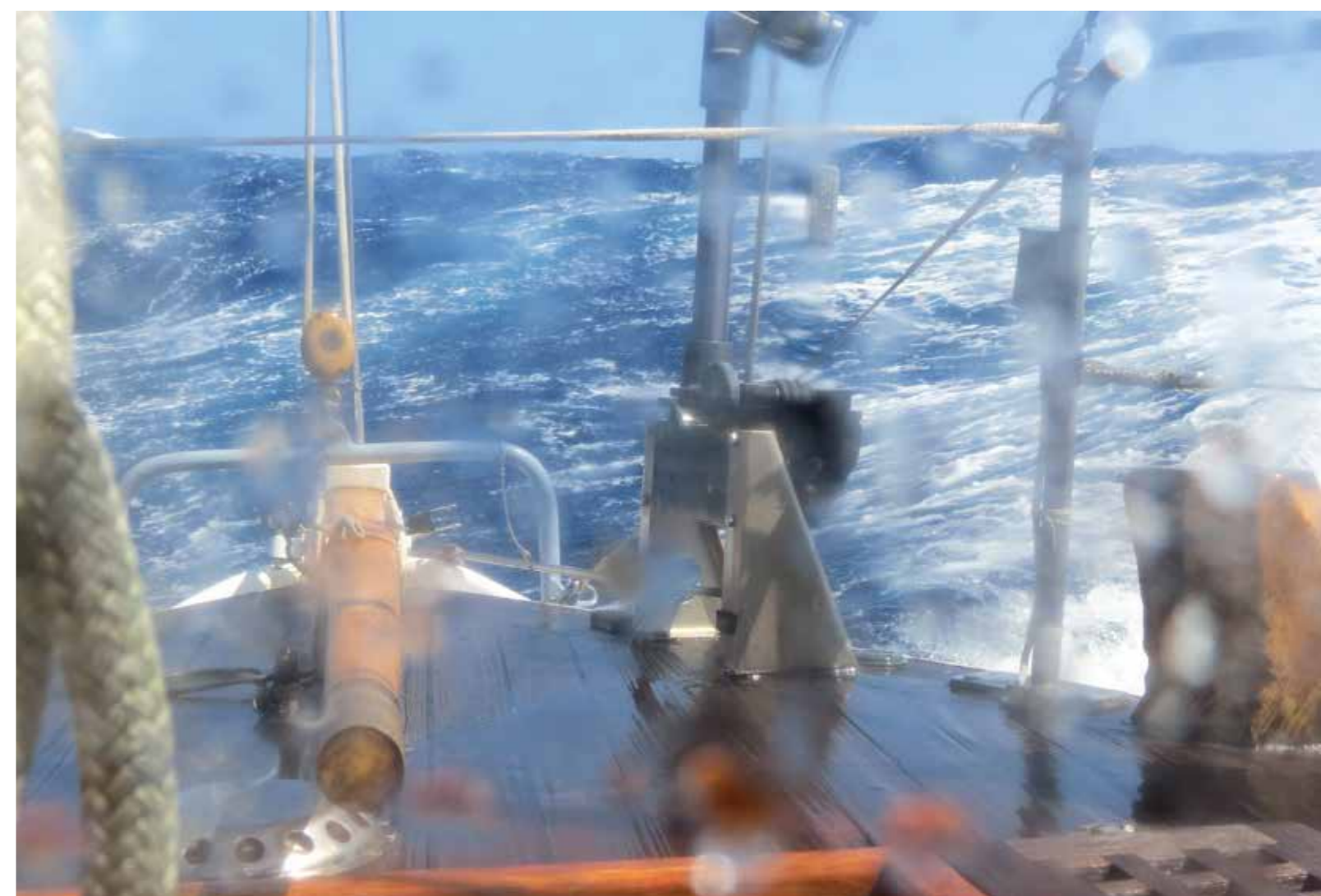
So, indeed "Skøiern" is an extraordinary boat, and her sturdy building allowed her to go on sailing up to now. We can say that Christian Jensen designed her as a sailing boat, with the strength of a fishing vessel. More, she is really beautiful, especially outside of the water, where you can admire the purity of her lines.

To answer the question: is this type of boat the better one, I could say for me sure, I didn't want another one, it's the boat of my life, but remember that there is perhaps more bad sailors than bad boats...

All the best
Patrick and Anne Marie



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North of Columbia