

24 Local Cruisers Abroad

JEANNE SOCRATES SETTING CIRCUMNAVIGATION RECORD AT AGE 76

by Kurt Hoehne



While Jeanne Socrates officially calls Lymington, England, home, we in the Pacific Northwest also get to claim her. In 2012-13, she completed a nonstop solo circumnavigation – starting and finishing in Victoria, BC – setting the record as the oldest woman to do so at age 70. She is currently in the midst of another circumnavigation at age 76, which would set the oldest age record for both women and men (solo nonstop), again starting and finishing in Victoria.

Socrates and her Najad 380, *Nereida*, cast off from the Causeway dock in Victoria on October 3rd, 2018, auxiliary shaft sealed for record-setting purposes, towed by a Prince of Wales whale watching boat and escorted by three of

Victoria's famous water taxis. *Nereida* is well-traveled, but is basically a stock boat. She was built in 2006.

48° North caught up with Socrates via satellite phone at 40° South, 014° East (just about to the Cape of Good Hope). Though virtually out of sight of land for nearly a year, Socrates is remarkably plugged into communications technology via email and Iridium satellite phone.

Socrates' daily blog is comprehensive, detailing the trials, tribulations and triumphs along the way. There have been many equipment trials, as there are with virtually any offshore voyage. Imagine, if you will, a 76-year old woman, tackling the following repairs:

Genoa Overboard – In December, her genoa furling line broke loose from the

drum. While dropping the sail, the genny went overboard (still attached at the corners, but collecting large amounts of seawater). By the next day she was able to get it completely back onboard when seas subsided, and soon had the furler repaired and the sail re-hoisted.

Mainsail Leech – This ripped in mid-January and, as of early February, required removing the main to belowdecks where she can stitch and reinforce the leech. "Probably the most annoying problem," Socrates says. "That sail has given me a lot of problems, and it's almost new!"

Generator Water Pump – Had to be replaced in the first few days.

Solar Power – Remade all the electrical connections to get it working again. Only 1-2 years old.



Midway through
the genoa
overboard
experience.

Instruments – Corrosion also took down all the instruments and required a complete overhaul.

Boom Vang – Surprisingly, the boom vang rivets broke loose from the mast. Socrates' solution was an elaborate lashing arrangement.

There are many more items on her list. While her preparations for this trip were thorough, she's quick to point out that given more funds or more time, some of the problems could have been avoided. Like all experienced singlehanders, she's amazingly self-sufficient.

And she's tough. Wrestling a 38-footer's genoa dragging overboard at night in big seas would be a massive physical task, at any age.

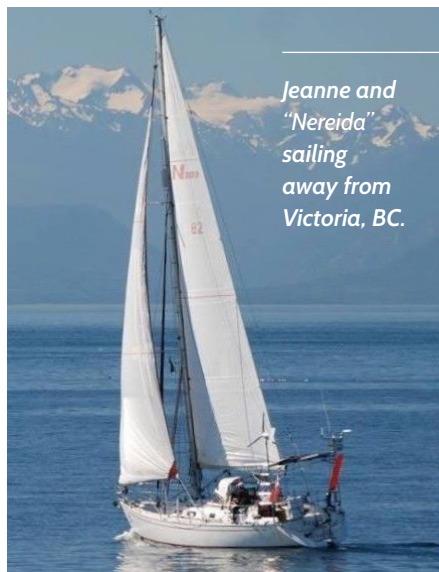
This time around, Socrates has a lot more support and a lot more communication. Thanks to her digital connections and detailed information about her progress and daily life, including the posts on her

blog, there were even parties at Royal Victoria Yacht Club when she passed Cape Horn and Cape Agulhas (near the Cape of Good Hope).

"Mature" sailors are rightfully getting a lot of press these days. The recently concluded Golden Globe Race was won by 74-year old Jean-Luc van den Heede, and septuagenarian Robin Knox-Johnson's competitive IMOCA program in recent years has also turned heads. Interestingly, Socrates had consciously avoided the weather system that pitchpoled and dismantled GGR competitor Susie Goodall.

Her voyage is also raising money for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (UK). A donation page is on her website.

As this issue of *48° North* goes to press, Socrates is disappointed she's three weeks behind where'd she'd hoped to be thanks to a long Doldrums transit and a storm in the North Pacific. But as always, she's positive and looking forward to finishing up this round of the planet at the end of May or beginning of June in Victoria. Ⓐ



Jeanne and
"Nereida"
sailing
away from
Victoria, BC.

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