

## CLASSIC CRUISES



Photo by Scott Kuhner

PHOTO 1

on around . . ." The implications of the seemingly idle question were overwhelming. Further discussion and study produced potential ports of call, such as New Guinea, Bali and others which beckoned. This beckoning, combined with the probability of immense personal satisfaction in completing a circumnavigation eventually won us over.

"Kristi," I said, secure in my ignorance of what lay ahead, "Let's sail around the world."

Once we committed ourselves to the concept of a circumnavigation, to long-distance voyaging, we began to look for our ultimate boat. Again, preconceived notions dictated our decision.

As a teenager sailing in San Francisco Bay, I was mesmerized by the grandeur and beauty of the "big boats" racing on the bay. Then, as now, there were none to compare with the likes of *BARUNA*, *BOLERO*, *ATHENE*, *GOOD NEWS* and the rest of that queenly fleet. Nevertheless, I resolved that, if I could ever afford one of those yachts, I would buy one. Suddenly, to our combined amazement, we found that we could. There was a catch, however; we could buy an elegant 53-foot Sparkman and Stephens yawl, which we found after a year of searching, and not have much money left to go cruising, or we could buy a lesser vessel and be well provisioned, economically, for a long-term voyage. Naturally, we opted for our boat, *SKYLARK* (Photo 1), the boat of my dreams. That decision, as happy as we were with the boat, turned our venture into an unusually low-budget affair.

*SKYLARK* is a classic Sparkman and Stephens design, built by the F.F.

Pendleton Yard in Wiscasset, Maine, in 1937. She is built, naturally, of wood — mahogany over oak with teak decks — and came well equipped, ready to go offshore. We bought her on Valentine's Day, 1971, and so what if we used up most of our cruising fund? We would manage . . . somehow.

We spent the remainder of 1971 outfitting *SKYLARK*, pouring over charts, some 300 altogether, and planning the voyage. So many of our close friends knew of our plans to sail around the world that, as the end of our five-year plan for departure came closer, people began to ask, "When are you leaving?" We had told so many people that we *had* to leave! Although

our coffers were not as full as we would have liked, the boat was ready and we made plans to get underway.

Accompanying Kristi and me were two close associates: Kristi's brother, Robby Fouts, who would be our Chief Engineer for the voyage, and a close family friend, Merv Nichols, who was instrumental in helping us get the boat ready for the trip and who would sail with us to Tahiti. On a bright morning, February 26, 1972, we bid a brave good-bye to friends and sailed out the Golden Gate, bound for adventure and parsimony on the high seas.

*In shakedown mode, SKYLARK set sail southward, porthopping down the Californian and Mexican coasts toward Acapulco where she would take departure for the South Pacific.*

Cruising starts out as a big vacation and then progresses to the point where it is a lot of work, and finally, to the point where it becomes a way of life. Early on in the trip, when we were still in the "vacation" mentality, we used to go daysailing with friends in various ports. Here I am (Photo 2) slashing through the water, glimpsing a dolphin's eye view of *SKYLARK* sailing to weather towards the entrance of Acapulco Bay. The thrill of riding the bosun's chair was not only the dousings and the exhilaration of speed; it was also the excitement of seeing the boat, only a few feet away, heeling toward you as she knifes through the waves. It's an awesome and beautiful sight and something which we would never do during an ocean passage,

PHOTO 2

