



World Navigator
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August 15th, 2011

"Look famous, be legendary, travel light, act easy, appear complex, seem a dream, prove real!" These words kept the crew of Montigne side by side through thick and thin, through storms and sunshine!

It was a cold rainy day in mid May 1999 that I took command of the Montigne at Lake Union in Seattle. Embarking on board the 47m Feadship ex Paminuch I never dreamed of the places she was to take me over the next seven years. The Owner invited all the new crew to his ranch for a barbecue locally and there I met the man that I was to travel over 60 different countries with. My next meeting was in Chittam locks leaving Lake Union for the Puget Sound. With the lockmaster demanding we exit the lock as the gates opened the first maneuver with Montigne with the Owner stood beside me left a lot to be desired as the wall kept sucking us back on to it. The Owner talked about this day for years to come! I now know the secret is to hide from the lockmaster for fifteen minutes until the boiling water subsides.

The plan was to circumnavigate every two years and be available for charter in different regions for the client who wished for world travel like my Boss but did not want the associated costs of ownership. We completed our first circumnavigation in 25 months. This trip took us first to the waters of Alaska with memorable time spent salmon fishing close to Sitka and Nootka on the outside shores of Alaska and British Columbia. I was at this time graced with my wonderful daughter Chloe her birth happening as we were on anchor in a valley where I had to use the bow thruster to keep satellite signal so that I could speak to my wife. Quite what the crew thought of their Captain shouting 'Puuuush' down the phone when the moment came, I will never know!

Following this was a 96 day shake down cruise with guests on board that had me wondering what I had got myself into. With all parties fished out, I could not eat another salmon burger; we sailed south to the warmer waters of California and saw the Hollywood sign in the distance as we transited the US coast south. Fishing and bear watching behind us it was off to Panama for my first transit of the canal and then a cruise from Isla Mujeres, Mexico, Cancun to Belize and Guatemala. In Guatemala I extensively planned a trip by tender up the Rio Dulce River for the Boss who at the last minute invited me along. Seeing the rewards of the crew efforts for a shore trip was interesting, squashed sandwiches and no plates in the lunch we packed, plus my personal embarrassment of getting a driver who spoke no English. After an hour or so up river we drove to the mountains, a drive that brought me closer than I had wished to the Owner having to small talk for eight hours. An easy feat for me, most would think, especially anyone who has spent a night on watch with me can testify.

Next Florida and, after doing some yard work, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and BVI for a top golf course tour. White Witch in Jamaica, I believe, took the award for best we visited.

With a busy charter season shaping up in the Med our next port of call was San Remo for the boat show to entertain brokers with our expectations of Asian adventures ahead. We chartered in the Med and enjoyed the usual delights with our Owner, everything going as planned with the thanks to the awesome All Services agency and Phil from Yachthelp in Palma. We even managed to get a couple of weeks R&R before the 'Montigne Experience' began in earnest. The next trip saw us embarking in Cefelonia, Greece and cruising through the Greek Islands, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon and dropping off in Israel. Now we were seeing the true job. The key was to establish a good relationship with a knowledgeable agent to keep this flowing. Makis at A1 Yachting in Greece and Nagib, Felix Maritime for Syria, Lebanon and Israel. Any country with water became possible from now on. We started to develop a system where we would arrive in port to be met by a guide and agent, this enabled the guests to get a tiptop tour, historic facts

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and the best restaurant available.

From Israel to Thailand, via Suez, Aden, we bunkered there the day before the USS Cole was bombed, with a fuel stop in the Maldives. We cruised Phuket with Owners and charters whilst we also became the third yacht to visit Yangon in Myamar. Any captain that wants to get away from the wind and swells of the Caribbean should talk to their Owners about Asia. Incredible cruising. We signed SEAL Superyachts as agents who I had known for some years before the area became popular. The diving, fishing, beaches, blue seas make this a must visit to me for any boat cruising worldwide. SEAL as with most agents seem to never sleep. We had needs almost 24/7, and they were there. Assistance with the freshest fish and fruit to jungle tours. They even sorted out a freezer breakdown at two in the morning distributing meat around the local town's available freezers to save our stock.

Next stop Australia, with a fuel stop in Bali to say hi to Made Girip, an old friend and the agent from my Turquoise days, we then made good time to Cairns. We cruised all there was to cruise on the Australian East coast in a three week period with great logistical support. It is just such a damned long coast and I never got the photo Richard Morris promised me of the boat and Sydney opera house. Next time! Cairns Slipway under the supervision of Ley James turned us around on a refit of huge proportion in an incredible time and price. Ley and Sarah Beck from Great Barrier Reef yacht services made sure we were treated like royalty, and apart from the brief bad experiences with the awful Bundy rum those Aussie's call liquor, the trip was a great success for us and Australian yachting.

Shipyard work complete in Queensland we stopped in Vanuatu, American Samoa and Honolulu on the way back to Seattle. Our arrival was June 20th 2001. We had departed Seattle on June 1st 1999. On our arrival in the Juan de Fuca Straits, and just as we were ready to make the turn South into Puget Sound, I had a phone call from the Owners office saying slow down a helicopter was on the way to take some pictures with the Olympic Mountains in the background. Slow down! 30 miles away from finishing a circumnavigation, 30 miles away from finishing a trans Pacific, Slow down! I will let your imagination tell you how I felt about that. We slowed down.

I had quite a strange feeling after the end of this voyage but was soon again in the fishing grounds of Alaska, which this time was broken up with guest's trips and charters through British Columbia. Seeing brown bears from the wheelhouse and small icebergs is a fantastic experience so far removed from the normal sights. After a quick visit to Seattle again we sailed south to El Salvador where we were delivered the best ever flower arrangements by a lovely lady whose son had looked the boat up on the internet to enable her to prepare them. We embarked the Owner up a creek. We had to cross a sand bar at the ocean entrance where the surf was on my radar and a little rowboat with a glow stick led the way. A bullet proof car was ready for the airport run, a short trip on a four seater aircraft landing with the same glow sticks to the main airport to greet him made for an interesting pick up. El Salvador to Nicaragua and onto Panama again. We disembarked the Owner after our transit of the Panama Canal, and sailed to Aruba while the Owner took in sights ashore during the three-day trip at sea. We then sailed from Aruba through to Trinidad visiting all islands along the way.

The rest of the winter saw us in the Caribbean's usual places for charter, and off the beaten track for golf courses with the Owner. Season end saw us back to Florida and some crew, who now had circumnavigation's under their belts, moved on.

Now ahead was my favorite part of all of the voyages, and the most rewarding leg for me as a captain. We sailed for London and the opening of Tower Bridge for our arrival. It does not get much better than that on a Monday morning! We were assisted by Chris Livett who has his office on HMS Belfast, a battle cruiser museum on the River Thames that I explored many times as a school kid. Chris is a Thames Waterman and his knowledge of the river was fascinating. From England we sailed to the Norwegian Fjords, Sweden, and Denmark through the Scattegat and into the Baltic Sea. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia and Finland completed our Baltic trip. I could tell stories galore of this trip, none of which I feel should be written. The pilot in Estonia boarded us at the sea buoy and remarked that he had never seen a yacht like ours until that morning when he took Princess Valentina to her berth. Two in one day. We stopped in a place called Visby off the coast of Sweden southbound for fuel due to some offshore duty.

VISBY ON THE COAST OF SWEDEN SOUTHBOUND FOR RUSSIA DUE TO SOME ONSHORE DUTY FREE RULE, AND FOUND THE IBIZA OF THE BALTIC.

What a fantastic cruise that is. From Helsinki we sailed for Gibraltar and France to embark charters for the last part of the summer season. After routine maintenance we sailed again for the Indian Ocean and Thailand completing charters again in Thai and Myanmar waters for the winter. The plan was to sail for Indonesia and the Philippines but with a two-month charter in the Med secured we returned for the summer. We visited Venice and cruised to Croatia, Montenegro and of all places Albania. Here the JLT agency and Edward worked miracles for our ports and clearances and Albania was strangely enough OK. I had offers of Navy Seal protection, to telexes to say do not come for security reasons, but when we arrived everything went well. The view from the aft deck though was of a pile of scrap metal about 30 feet in the air, not quite Monte Carlo.

From Dubrovnik we sailed to Spain and cruised the milk run for the two-month charter. Any crew who have done a two month charter will know that even if the guests are great, which ours were, you can never really relax. After the charter we sailed two days later to pick up the Owners in Istanbul. This took a lot of strength to get going and to add to our misery we had head seas all the way into the Black Sea to Bulgaria, Romania and the Ukraine. We actually passed the port of Balaclava where I read with interest in the pilot book that the name we use for those wooly head pieces came from the soldiers, in freezing conditions, wearing their socks on their heads with slits for the eyes. From the port of Yalta, a rich Russians retreat, we set sail back to Marseille for some yard work.

Some readers might remember the story I told in Yachting Matters where the Boss decided he was in need of a real curry and we sailed for the port of Bombay. I think next to Shanghai, which I visited on Ambrosia some years ago, Bombay was the most fascinating city to explore. Anchored in front of the Gateway of India the smog would lift occasionally to reveal a huge city. Our agent there, Asshim had me laughing every time we spoke. He would say, 'if you need anything give me a tinkle', a great British expression that only my grandmother used meaning phone me. We cruised the Indian coast to Goa where we finally found a curry to challenge all curries, ten pounds lighter! we steamed on to the Maldives. We then sailed for Thailand again to resume our eastward passage.

On the next Owners trip in Thailand the Boss casually said he was busy for the next couple of months and would not need the boat. It was decided that he wanted to cruise his own country having sailed to so many other places. East Coast of the States for the summer. His word was my command and we sailed from Phuket for Ft Lauderdale. The total miles logged for that trip was 11,600nm. As we arrived at the Bahia Mar marina in Florida someone on the dock asked me, 'did you just come from the yard'! I think he was living inside or we were traveling 'outside the box.' What a great compliment to my crew. I learned from Captain John Bardon years and years ago on the schooner Jessica, and thought he was nuts for it then, having just crashed our way across the Golfe Du Lion, clean the boat before you enter port!

At this time the boat was put up for sale somewhat seriously. None the less we made our way up the Chesapeake Bay to Philadelphia, the new regulations stretching the Maryland pilots to comply, and my explaining to the coast guard why I was reporting and changing my NOA (notice of arrival) three times a day. I had a funny incident in a town called Portsmouth where while anchored 100 metres from the US Coast Guard station and after very regular reporting with times and places the coast guard called us up and asked where we were. A 47 metre boat is not so small in that area. I guess he did not have a window. After cruising as far as Bar Harbour, where I had my life threatened by a young fisherman for running over one of zillions of fishing pots in the shipping channel, we headed for the Lauderdale Boat Show. I doubt I will buy a summer home in Bar Harbour.

With no takers at the show we sailed for the Caribbean on charter and out to the Galapagos for January 2005. From the Galapagos to Costa Rica and up to the Sea of Cortez in Mexico for the summer. Our arrival in Mexico was made interesting as there was not enough water in the bay to get to the berth on the opposite side, where we had been allocated to carry out our refit. A Spanish speaking crewmember and again a good agent solved the problem after some time and a few pesos of course.

Encouraged by talk of qualified buyers at the San Diego Yachtfest we had first to sail to San Francisco for Lloyd's work. What a great bunch of workers they are at Bay Yacht and Ship. I highly recommend them for a haul out on that coast. San Fran is such a great city and the compulsory pilotage will get you an 80 dollar tour of the historic sites, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Oakland. Pilots love to talk about their harbours.

On to San Diego and the Yachtfest where we won 'best boat in show'. Again my memories are so fond of San Diego, what great friends I have found in and around yachting there. With this show under our belt the Montigne days were obviously drawing to a close and we made our way back to Florida, around two hurricanes one of which, tropical depression 29, was to become hurricane Wilma.

The Montigne sat her days out in Ft Lauderdale waiting for her new owner. An interested party made a run at the boat and I was asked if I would consider the delivery to the Far East. 'Sure I said' 'I could use the sea miles.'

The trip never came off and I said farewell to a fine vessel that had served her Owners and crew proud. For the two weeks prior to departing for the sale I drove over 17th Street bridge daily and looked down on Montigne at her berth at Pier 66 with a sense of loosing a part of me. On walking away when the day came I had gathered all of my feelings into an old sea bag and walked off proud and content at having been a part of an incredible journey.

What was the best place that we visited! It was a question often put to me. I never really knew how to answer it until the Boss one-day did it for me when asked the same by an agent. He replied, 'Mangos and oranges are both tasteful fruits, how can we compare them to say which are best. The world with its people is a fascinating place, with so much beauty and many wonderful folk.'

And to see it, underway was the only way!

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