



Sailing Is the Easy Part

AFTER A LONG CAREER AS A PRODUCT PLANNER AND EXECUTIVE IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY, **ERICK REICKERT** ('58) APPLIED HIS ENGINEERING SKILLS AND THINKING TO CIRCUMNAVIGATE THE GLOBE.

Cruising in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, you're totally alone. With land a week or more away, the world consists of you, your crew, and your boat. As you plunge into the pitch-dark night beyond the range of helicopters, there's no one to help if something goes wrong.

"It's somewhat scary in the beginning, but you get used to it," says Erick Reickert. "You have to assume there's no assistance—anything medical or mechanical you're going to have to deal with on your own. You have to be totally cognizant of all of the risks and have confidence in your ability to handle them."

Reickert's confidence in his engineering skills pulled him through many tight spots as he circumnavigated the globe on Escapade, his Oyster 55 sailboat. He bought Escapade after retiring from an impressive 30-year product planning career in the automotive industry, where he served as CEO of New Venture Gear, CEO of Acustar, and CEO of Chrysler de Mexico.

Around the world

Built in 1996 to Reickert's specifications for long-term cruising, Escapade took him around the world, from Ipswich, England, where the boat was built, to Antalya, Turkey, and back again.

"My original objective was to sail both the Mediterranean and Caribbean, which meant crossing the Atlantic," he remembers. "But when you get to the Caribbean, and hurricane season approaches, you either have to go south or north to avoid it. We went north one year and the next decided to go south through the Panama Canal and kept going around the world."

With mid-ocean repairs to contend with and pirates to avoid, the entire circumnavigation took four and a half years, and the end was "absolute ecstasy." Reickert says the biggest lesson he learned is that sailing is the easy part. With government requirements for entry and exit, visa issues, customs, provisioning, timing, and weather conditions to consider, preparation is the most challenging aspect of the journey.

"One of the things I brought with me from Northwestern and my career experience is that I was a planner, and I planned nearly everything, not just the kind of boat I selected, but every step of the way," he says. That detailed, methodical approach has earned Reickert a reputation as an expert. In fact, so many people have asked him for advice on cruising that he's publishing a book titled *Sail the World*.

After 15 years of plying the seas, Reickert sold Escapade, after which the boat went through a series of owners and was renamed. When its current owner read Reickert's website detailing the ship's adventures, he restored the boat to its original name and recently took Reickert and his wife, Lady Susan Willis-Reickert, sailing through the British Virgin Islands.

Says Reickert, "I blinked my eyes and I could drift back ten years—it was amazing."

SARA LANGEN