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hops. As they and others who followed the guide were to discover, it meant that if you had time and patience, you could do the north coast of Colombia — and for all intents and purposes the nastiest part of getting to the Eastern Caribbean — without necessarily getting clobbered.

The Kenoffels' guide was published in *Latitude* in the early 2000s, so some of the details may be dated. But the locations of the anchorages shouldn't have changed. Because of the length of the guide, we can't publish it until next month's *Latitude*, but we'll start with some excerpts from their preface:

"The key to cruising the Colombia coast safely and comfortably is weather. This is especially important if you plan on doing it offshore, but also applies to running along the coast. The Caribbean has two seasons; the Wet Season, from June through November, and the Dry Season, from December through May. If you travel in the transition months, late March through mid-June, or mid-October through mid-December, you are more likely to find calmer conditions. And generally speaking, the farther south you go, the lighter the winds.

"The weather gurus almost always recommend staying at least 200 miles offshore, but that's based on fears for cruisers' personal safety more than weather. In our experience, the weather conditions offshore have been worse than inshore, inshore meaning within five to 10 miles of land.

"Currents are an issue. Normally there is a one-knot westerly current along the Colombian coast. At times there is a half-knot easterly current near Cartagena."

Be sure to check out next month's *Changes* for the Kenoffels' guide.

— *latitude/rs* 09/15/2015

*Readers — In the early 2000s personal
Rarely visited anchorages such as this one
in the Eastern Caribbean can make the bash
across the Caribbean Sea worth the effort.*

LATITUDE / RICHARD



safety was a big concern for cruisers transiting the Caribbean coast of Colombia. That no longer seems to be the case, but always check with Club Nautico in Cartagena for the latest news.

Convergence — Wylie 66 Sally-Christine Rodgers & Randy Repass Eight Years of Cruising (Santa Cruz)

Randy Repass and Sally-Christine Rodgers haven't been in a hurry to complete a circumnavigation. They started on their westabout go-around 11 years ago, and still haven't made it out of the Med. Their cat ketch with unstayed masts is currently on the hard in Malta.

In 2004 the couple and their then-9-year-old son Kent-Harris, along with Santa Cruz cruising vets Jim Foley and Linda Moore and their 5-year-olds Trevor and Dana, took off for the Marquesas. Sailing pretty much a rhumbline course, they made the nearly 3,000-mile passage in 15 days. That's flying.

"Convergence is faster than the typical cruising boat," Sally-Christine explains. "She commonly sails at 8 to 10 knots, often hits 15 to 18 knots, and has hit a top speed of 23 knots. She once did 240 miles in 24 hours."

Jim, Linda and their kids left after *Convergence* got to Tahiti, and for the most part Randy, Sally-Christine and Kent-Harris have been cruising around the world by themselves during a series of 'extended summers'. Kent-Harris obviously needed to be homeschooled during their cruising. While Sally-Christine will be the first to admit that "homeschooling is a job," she also feels that it's been very beneficial for their son.

"Randy and I believe that classrooms are highly overrated and don't have enough fresh air. We feel that students learn more by being outside, where they can learn through experiences, and seeing, smelling, touching and tasting things. This is particularly true with our son, as he's dyslexic."

The couple soon found that Kent-Harris added a lot to their cruising experience. "The great thing about cruising with kids is that they open so many doors. Our son, like almost all cruising kids, was our ambassador."

Once their first extended summer was over, the family left *Convergence* in Raiatea so they could



return to work. As most *Latitude* readers know, in 1975 Randy founded what would become the 300+ store West Marine chain, and is still the chairman of the board.

When the three returned to *Convergence* the next season, they sailed to some of the more remote islands of French Polynesia, the Cooks, and some other islands on the way to New Zealand. They left *Convergence* in New Zealand, where they say she received the best boat care of their cruise.

With two cruising seasons under their belts, they were able to get an idea of how Kent-Harris was doing with homeschooling. "We used the books and curriculum at his regular school to make his reentries as seamless as possible," says Sally-Christine, "and we were thrilled to see that he was well ahead of most of his classmates."

During his times aboard the ketch, Kent-Harris was learning more than

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Faces and places, clockwise from above right: An Iman's wife toys with Kent-Harris' red hair in Turkey. 'Convergence' on the run. An Arab man in the Sudan. The Repass-Rodgers family at the start of the cruise. An orangutan in Borneo. Doll-like Indonesian girls performing in Bali.

academics. "He couldn't help but realize that cruising on your own boat is hard work and not like being on a cruise ship," says Sally-Christine. "He had his jobs on the boat, he took his turn cleaning heads, he helped resupplying the boat, and so forth. Despite the work, he appreciated how lucky he was to have the opportunity."

Two adults and a boy aren't a lot of crew on a 66-foot boat, and there are differing opinions on how difficult it was to sail *Convergence*.

"For Randy it was a piece of cake," says Sally-Christine. "I'm a great crew but not a great sailor, so it wasn't as easy for me. *Convergence* was the biggest boat that I'd ever sailed on, and we faced some rough weather that I found to be mind-altering. You have to remember that I was a mother and no longer a 20-year-

old girl happy to be getting blasted by spray. So it's fortunate that Randy had designed a boat and a rig that is so easy to sail. Actually, it was Randy blending his ideas along with those of a lot of other very experienced sailors, which is why she's named *Convergence*."

The family next sailed back to Tonga and Fiji, and spent quite a bit of time in the latter. "While we always enjoy meeting fellow cruisers, Randy and I were particularly interested in spending time in the more remote and less-visited villages. We found some of our favorites when we circumnavigated Vanua Levu, Fiji, where we were the first white people some of the locals had ever seen. It was magical for us, the essence of adventure cruising. And I'm still in contact with some of those people."

In 2007 they sailed up to Vanuatu, the Banks Islands to the north, and across to Australia, arriving just south of Bris-

bane. This would be the site of their most serious accident. *Convergence* struck a sandbar, which caused Sally-Christine to hit her head on a coaming, fracturing part of an eye socket. She then fell down the companionway into the galley, landing on the back of her head.

"I don't remember much of the next year, and to a certain extent the head injury affected my speech and balance. I'm much better now, but I still get headaches and have other issues related to the head injury."

Randy decided Sally-Christine needed to be eased 'back into the saddle', so they spent the following cruising season in the more mellow waters of Australia's Whitsunday Islands.

The next season's major destination was Tasmania. "I can't begin to describe the quantity and quality of the bird and sea life down there other than to say it's otherworldly," says Sally-Christine. "Tasmania is a very interesting and exciting place for those who revel in nature. However, it's often very windy and it's not a place for white sand beaches and palm trees. Hobart is an incredible city, and they are enjoying a wooden boat renaissance. Randy and I liked the people of Tasmania because they were more self-reliant than most. They have to be."

Sally-Christine and Kent-Harris didn't do the passage back across the often-rough Bass Strait to mainland Australia, so Randy and crew took *Convergence* all the way up the east coast of Oz and then around the top to Darwin. Mom and son joined Randy for Indonesia, home to 17,500 islands.

"It's impossible to visit all the islands, of course, but Indonesia is a fabulous country, and many of the islands have

The locals at Banda hadn't seen many boats like 'Convergence'. Nobody anywhere has seen many boats like the Westerly-built cat ketch.



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their own rich and diverse cultures. Among the places we enjoyed visiting were Banda, which had been the center of the Dutch East Indies Company, and Borneo, a primitive highlight. There is so much more to Indonesia than Bali, although it's great, too.

After Indonesia, the three traveled through Malaysia and made their way to Thailand, where *Convergence* was left for another off season. The next passage was overshadowed by the very real threat of pirates and by the loss of the lives of four fellow cruisers.

"Randy, my brother, and a good friend took *Convergence* from Thailand to the Maldives, then past Somalia to the Red Sea," remembers Sally-Christine. "This was right at the time that the Southern California sailing vessel *Quest* was hijacked by Somali pirates and her four crew murdered a few days later. It was a very emotional time, as I first had to call Randy to let him know that *Quest* had been hijacked, and a few days later I had to let him know that the four Americans had been killed.

"Randy said he would never do that passage again," Sally-Christine continues, "and he's a guy who will do almost anything. One of the things that made it more scary is that he and the crew had decided not to be part of a convoy of cruising boats, as the convoy would be going too slowly and Randy felt there would be 'too many captains'."

Sally-Christine and Kent-Harris joined Randy and *Convergence* once the cat ketch had made it safely to Turkey. For the next two years they really got to know Turkey and Greece, but mostly Turkey.

"Cruising in Turkey was very different than crushing in the South Pacific, as there were a lot of charter boats and a lot less sailor camaraderie in Turkey.

Randy and son Kent-Harris. The latter was a boy when the cruise started, but can now drink legally. At least in certain countries like Croatia.

If a boat shows up at an island in the South Pacific, you naturally go over to meet the people because they are fellow adventurers and because there aren't so many of them. In Turkey, where many of the boats are charter boats, you just don't do that. As for the Turks, they were some of the nicest people we met anywhere."

The 2013 season started with Kent-Harris, then 19, delivering *Convergence* down to Corfu, where Randy and Sally-Christine met him. "It was the first time that he was in charge — although he had Aussie Tim Sales along as crew," says Sally-Christine. "Tim had built a 46-ft wood ketch by himself, right down to and including making the turnbuckles. He did the first Whitbread and just knows everything about sailing. They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, Tim was one of the most important residents of Kent-Harris' village.

"During that season we cruised the Greek Islands, Venice, Croatia and Montenegro. Kent-Harris, now a sophomore at Georgetown University, got a terrific education, for he was reading books such as the *Iliad* while sailing in the wake of the characters he was reading about. You get such a great education while cruising. It added up to Kent-Harris' — as well as Randy's and my — having a much better understanding of why the world is the way it is today.

"Another great thing about cruising is all the people you meet. For example, we took a guy — a baron, actually — sailing out of Syracuse because we found out he was a sailor. He later invited us back to the palace his family has owned for 300 years. We got to stand on the balcony where Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton had visited with the man's grandparents.

"When you sail somewhere, you get a different reaction from locals than do regular tourists. Nowhere was this more true than in French Polynesia. The locals appreciated the fact that we'd gotten there the same way their ancestors had."

Some cruisers are anal about counting the number of miles they've sailed and other such statistics. Randy and Sally-Christine are not. "We have no idea how many miles we've sailed, nor do we care. We have always



calculated our lives by the experiences we've had, and we're incredibly grateful to have been able to explore so much of the world together — while in love and with our son along with us."

As with all cruisers, the couple's cruising plans are unclear, but "Randy is hot to trot west across the Atlantic, so we'll probably do that early next year."

Sally-Christine had to have a hip replaced in 2012, and when the recovery took a little longer than expected, she decided to write a book titled *Convergence — A Voyage Through French Polynesia*.

"I wrote the book, perhaps more for women than men, because I believe that everybody has a journey in them. In my case, I'd grown up hearing what the South Pacific was like in the 1930s from my father, who had been a purser on a Matson Lines ship. It took me almost 50 years, but I finally followed in his footsteps. So I shared my journey and what it was like to cruise as a family today. The book has a lot of large photos and

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Convergence, he says that "everybody who lives in the United States is lucky."

Randy does, however, have one complaint: "There aren't enough hours in the day."

— latitude/rs 09/25/2015

Cruise Notes:

Some straight talk about cruising catamaran pointing ability. A couple of months ago Greg Slyngstad of Sammamish, WA took delivery of **Fujin**, the radical-looking 53-ft all-carbon 'fast cruising cat' designed by Greg Bieker of Seattle and built by Gold Coast Yachts of St. Croix. The cat has a very unusual salon and even more unusual bows. Slyngstad recently reported that he and a crew had done a 35-mile passage, presumably a reach, from St. Croix to St. Thomas in less than two hours. While averaging more than 17 knots, they noted that one of the things *Fujin* is missing is spray shields at the helmsperson positions.

Since Slyngstad has had tremendous success racing monohulls — he again won his class with his J/125 **Hamachi** in this year's Transpac — and because he plans on racing *Fujin* in next year's Voiles de St. Barth, we knew he'd be very interested in seeing how high he could get his new cat to point.

"We were tacking through about 100 degrees in cruising mode," he told *Latitude*. "I think we'll get close to 90 degrees when pushing hard."

The takeaway for people interested in buying a cruising cat is that they should take claims of a typical cruising cat tacking through less than 100 degrees to be complete rubbish. Cats have so many good qualities that we've never understood why some salespeople or owners insist on 'stretching' the truth when it

The point is, don't expect your cruising cat to be able to point as high as the all-carbon, Paul Bieker-designer 'Fujin'.



PHOTOS BY LATITUDE / RICHARD

Spread; When Ha-Ha and other boats head south in Mexico this winter, they can fuel up at Turtle Bay. One way to get fuel is at the pier. You anchor then tie stern-to. Another option is to take fuel from a fuel barge. Insets; A view of the 'office' on the pier. The baseball field, where fuel is not available.

vignettes, and I hope it will encourage women to find their own journey, perhaps on the water, as there is so much to be learned from being on the water. And it can be true if you're on the water with a sailboat, a kayak, a SUP or whatever you like.

"Randy and I care deeply about marine conservation, and feel all mariners have a huge responsibility to protect the ocean. As a result, all the proceeds from the boat will go to marine conservation."

The book is available at some of the West Marine stores in Northern California, and at westmarine.com. It is not available at Amazon.

Sally-Christine says that it's very important for men to support the women with whom they cruise, as some women are not as experienced or fearless. "Randy gave me a little reward — a pearl — for every significant passage that

I completed. I now have a spectacular long strand of Tahitian black pearls. The pearls are my badges of courage."

That said, after all her years of cruising, Sally-Christine has distilled from her experiences the secret to being a happy crew. "Fast passages and slow sex." It seems to us that could be the quote on a hot-selling T-shirt at West Marine.

We only spoke to Randy briefly, and he primarily wanted to report how "totally blessed" he feels. Having seen much of the world during the four to five months of each of the last 11 years he's been on

