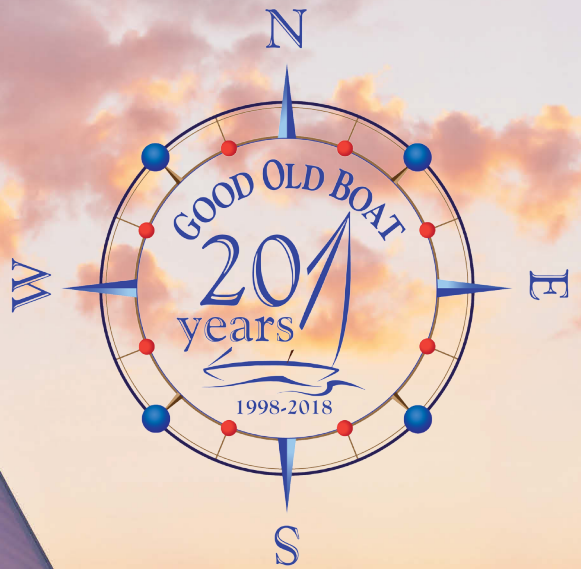
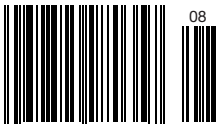


GOOD OLD BOAT™

The sailing magazine for the rest of us!

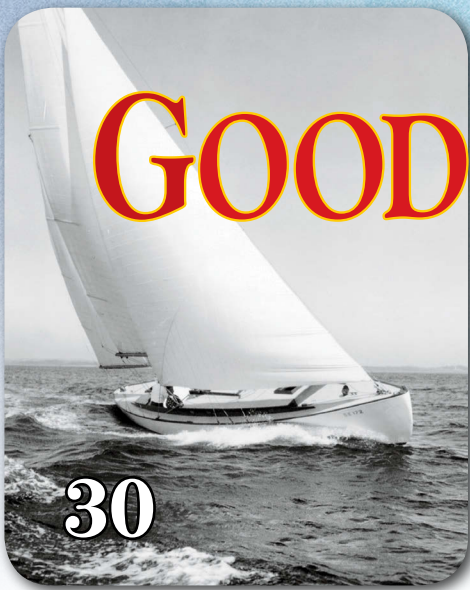


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Contents

JULY/AUGUST 2018

ISSUE 121

Speaking Seriously



For the Love of Sailboats

Golden Globe Race 2018

16 Sailing Back in Time

A race around the world in boats "the rest of us" would recognize
By Fiona McGlynn

20 Keeping It All Together

On long passages, it's a campaign against attrition of gear and the electrical system
By Jeanne Socrates

21 The Solo Sailor's Mind

The youngest circumnavigator advises focusing on the solution, not the problem
By Laura Dekker

Good Old Boat at 20

26 Adventurers Under Sail

World-girdling pioneers inspired generations of sailors with their writing
By Don Casey

30 How Fiberglass Boatbuilding Evolved

Individuals of genius, and technical advances, laid the groundwork
By Dan Spurr



On the cover ...

This Bayfield 32, *Brown Eyes*, was our cover girl in March 2013. Here she is again, sailing at sunset on Long Island Sound, near Groton, Connecticut. Paul Rezendes shot this from aboard *Rachel Kalyn*, his Bayfield 29, using a Canon EOS 5D Mk II.

Review Boat

8 Island Packet 26 Mk II

A beamy shoal-draft overnighter inspired by catboats
By Gregg Nestor

Design Comparison

14 The Island Packet 26 Mk II ...

... and two pocket cruisers that followed
By Rob Mazza

Making Your Own

22 From Soft Dodger to Hardtop

Rigidity and shade were just two of the benefits
By Charles Scott

Rigging Matters

25 Fishing for a Halyard

A sinker and line makes a reliable messenger
By Kevin Alles

Ground Tackle

37 Anchoring with the Bridle Plate

A better way to connect snubbers and bridles to chain
By Drew Frye

Interior Improvements

41 Dank and Fusty No More

Adding a deck hatch transformed the head compartment
By Matt Koch

Maintenance Tasks

46 Reglazing an Aluminum Hatch

Reverse the ravages of age or accidents
By Drew Frye

What's More

Websightings

3 **Digital GOB with Print, a Sailing Site for Millennials, and Podcasts for Sailors**

The View from Here

5 Around the World in Retro

Saying no to wings, foils, carbon fiber, and satcoms
By Michael Robertson

Mail Buoy

6 **Breakage Breakdown, Princess Memories, and Insufficient BTUs**

Simple Solutions

50 Quick Sail Repairs on the Fly

Applying patches with a sticky sealant is as effective as sewing
By Mike Litzow

Product Profiles

54 **Bird-Banishing Mobiles, Light at the Wave of a Hand, and a Wristband to Subdue Mal de Mer**

Good Old Classifieds 55

Reflections

61 20 Years! Who Knew?

A midlife course change has left a legacy in its wake
By Karen Larson



In 1968, Britain's *The Sunday Times* newspaper offered a trophy, named *The Golden Globe*, and £5,000 to the first person to sail singlehanded nonstop around the world. No starting date was specified, but several sailors, inspired by Francis Chichester's one-stop circumnavigation in 1966/67, were already well under way preparing to accomplish such a voyage, and the prize gave them added impetus. Nine set out in 1968 but only one finished: Robin Knox-Johnston, sailing his 32-foot ketch, *Suhaili*.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of that event, Don McIntyre, who competed in the 1990/91 BOC Challenge, founded the 2018 Golden Globe Race to be sailed in good old boats equipped with good old gear and navigation systems as they existed in 1968. The race starts from Les Sables d'Olonne in France, home of the nonstop singlehanded *Vendée Globe*, in July of this year. Since *Good Old Boat* subscribers will receive this 20th anniversary issue in the mail at about the same time, we've included this special section on the race. Follow the race at www.goldenglobrace.com.

Sailing Back in Time

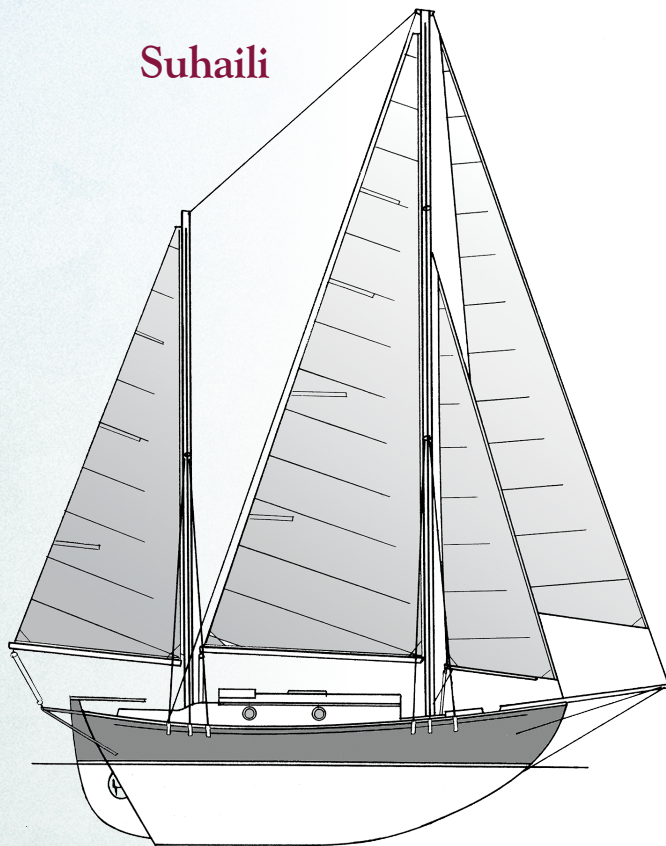
A race around the world in boats "the rest of us" would recognize

BY FIONA MCGLYNN

The 1968 Golden Globe Race was a challenge that drove competitors to glory, enlightenment, and insanity. Fifty years on, stories from the race have become deeply embedded in sailing lore. Robin Knox-Johnston, the race's winner and only finisher, became the first man to sail solo around the world nonstop. On track to possibly win after seven months at sea, Bernard Moitessier quit the race, as he said, "to save my soul," and continued sailing for a near-complete second circumnavigation. Competitor Nigel Tetley pushed his boat so hard that she sank only days from the finish line — all in a make-or-break bid to outrun a boat that wasn't really there. That ghost boat belonged to Donald Crowhurst, the competitor who the world later learned spent all of his months in the race sailing idly in the Atlantic and radioing false position reports before finally taking his life as the threat of discovery loomed. The remaining five entrants dropped out along the way.

In the decades that followed, the Golden Globe race was never repeated, and around-the-world racing became something that the 1968 sailors would barely recognize. So, when the Golden

Suhaili



Robin Knox-Johnston's *Suhaili* is a William Atkin Eric design.

Globe 2018 was announced, I felt a thrill of anticipation. Reading the race documentation was enough to produce heart palpitations: "30,000 miles nonstop ... alone ... with no outside

assistance" That description by itself is nerve-wracking, but this race is truly a re-creation of the 1968 race. Competitors' boats must have been designed prior to 1988 and, in short, if Knox-Johnston didn't carry it aboard his boat, today's racers can't carry it aboard theirs. That means no "GPS, radar, AIS, chart plotters ... electronic wind instruments, electric autopilots, mobile phones ... computer-based devices, electronic watches/clocks ... digital cameras, satellite equipment ... scientific calculators ... watermakers, carbon fiber, Spectra, Kevlar ..." Want to film yourself racing? Better find a Super 8 camera and film. This will be sailing stripped bare to its bones and, in my opinion, one of the most challenging and perilous competitions in the world today.

But it's one thing to be excited about a retro sailing race; it's quite another to sign up for it. Despite having sailed 13,000 miles of blue water myself, I found the prospect terrifying. I wanted to know who these people were and why they were willing to risk life and limb to re-create a 50-year-old race.

Of the 30 skippers who entered the race, 18 remained at press time, and range in age from 26 to 71. Among them



Istvan Kopar's boat is a Tradewind 35, at top. He painted her hull International Orange to make her more visible to shipping. On *Puffin's* launch day, October 10, 2017, after two years of refitting, Istvan and his team manager, Ian Gumprecht, were joined by *Puffin's* former owner's widow and son, Johanna and Matt Nally, who drove from upstate New York for the occasion, above left. Istvan made significant upgrades to *Puffin's* structure, such as bonding the bulkheads to the hull and deck, and took up the sole to get to the tanks, above right.

are seasoned veterans, such as Jean-Luc van den Heede, a five-time circumnavigator and a father figure in French solo sailing, and passionate hobbyists, such as Australian Mark Sinclair, a hydrographic surveyor by trade who, on a recent voyage, forgot his celestial tables and had to rederive the formula to find his position.

American entrants

Of the four Americans who originally entered the Golden Globe 2018, only one, Istvan Kopar (65), will make it to the starting line under the US flag. Nabil Amra, a 42-year-old American-born Palestinian who works as a foreign-exchange trader in Minneapolis, will be racing under the Palestinian flag.

I spoke with Istvan earlier this year. He was at his home in Delray Beach,

Florida, but he was preparing *Puffin*, his Tradewind 35, at Seawanhaka Boatyard, Oyster Bay, New York. He says the distance is a major setback. "It's a brutal drive, 22 hours usually," he told me, from Delray Beach to Oyster Bay on Long Island.

Istvan is no stranger to sleepless nights. Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1953, and despite growing up in a landlocked country behind the Iron Curtain, he pursued a multitude of maritime careers, from merchant marine, to naval officer, to USCG-licensed commercial captain, to instructor trainer for US Sailing. He has logged more than 60,000 miles solo and, in 1990-1991, sailed his self-built 31-foot boat, *Salamambo*, solo on a one-stop east-about circumnavigation of the globe without the use of GPS, autopilot,

radar, watermaker, or any heating device, setting a record in the process. Istvan then went on to skipper and win the 1996-1997 Hong Kong Challenge around-the-world race. In 1994, he moved to the United States, becoming a US citizen in 2000.

With 50 years under his various keels, Istvan felt that the glaring yet-to-do item on his sailing bucket list was a solo nonstop circumnavigation. When he heard about the 2018 Golden Globe Race, he knew it was something he would do. "I'd just had my 60th birthday," he explained, "and when you're this age, you feel the time frame is narrowing down."

Istvan's first goal was to find a boat. The race rules specify that qualifying vessels will be production boats between 32 and 36 feet overall,

designed prior to 1988, and having full-length keels with rudders attached to the trailing edge. Race-approved boats include the Westsail 32, Tradewind 35, Vancouver 32/34, Baba 35, Cape Dory 36, Rustler 36, Hans Christian 33T, and Lello 34.

Having spent 10 years working for National Liquidators, which was the largest boat-repossession and recovery company in the US, Istvan figures he must have had close to 20,000 boats pass through his hands. “I got a taste of several different boats . . . but I didn’t even know what a Tradewind was!” Although an unknown boat in the US (there are about 70 in the UK), the Tradewind 35 presented a few advantages. “The reason I picked the boat was that I wanted to secure my position among the entrants.” (The Tradewind 35 was one of the boats approved early on.) “Also . . . this boat was a three-and-a-half-hour drive away, and . . . the price was good.”

Puffin is a 1986 Tradewind 35 cutter and was mostly used by her previous owners for weekend sailing on Lake Champlain. As anyone who’s worked on an old boat can appreciate,

“For those entrants who do make it to the start, the Golden Globe Race in 2018 will be less a contest of speed than of survival.”

transitioning *Puffin* from suntanning and sundowners to offshore racing machine was an arduous task. Istvan estimates he spent more than \$100,000 of his own money and more than 4,000 man-hours refitting *Puffin*. “I completely stripped my boat, even the gelcoat came off.” In addition to major projects like adding fiberglass to the hull, adding a watertight bulkhead, reducing the size of the cockpit, and overhauling the compression post, he also added what he termed a few “age-related aids” like a mast pulpit (for securing his body while reefing) and several handrails. “It would be silly not

to acknowledge that I am not 20 years old anymore.”

After more than two years of refitting, Istvan feels he’s formed a deep bond with *Puffin*. “One of the most rewarding aspects of this race, at least for me, is that we are able to save and give new life and purpose to a bunch of abandoned and neglected boats . . . At least, I’ll save *Puffin*, and the same thing will happen with the other boats in the race.”

A race to the start

The more I learned about the refits of the various GGR boats, the more I began to appreciate why some competitors I spoke with felt that the greatest challenge in the race would be simply reaching the start line. Most entrants are primarily self-financed, with only a lucky few able to garner full sponsorship. Some, like Mark Sinclair, continue to work full-time. Each boat will take, at a minimum, \$100,000 to become race-ready, and some competitors I spoke with have run up bills of a quarter million. “Unfortunately, the Golden Globe Race took our old home,” Istvan told me. He and his wife had

Anachronistic equipment

Specific modern equipment is allowed on boats competing in the Golden Globe Race 2018, some of it for use only in required race communications and some items for use in an emergency.

Items in sealed boxes:

GPS chartplotter, two sat phones, emergency cockpit electric auto pilot. If any seal is broken, the skipper is deemed to have retired from the GGR and will continue in the Chichester Class.

Other equipment:

- One tracking system, which will post the boat's position to organizers
- Two tracking/messaging units that allow skippers to send up to four 150-character messages each day
- Special-production AIS alarm
- Personal AIS beacon
- Radar detector
- Two GPS EPIRBs
- Search-and-rescue transponder
- LED lights
- Electronic depth sounder
- Solar panels
- Wind and water generators
- Hand-operated desalinator
- Immersion suit
- High-tech fibers for jury rig only

Resources

Website for the Golden Globe Race 2018

www.goldenglobrace.com

Istvan Kopar's restoration of *Puffin*

www.koparsailing.com

Competitors' boats

At press time, these were the 18 boats entered in the GGR 2018:

Biscay 36 masthead ketch (3)
 Endurance 35 masthead sloop (1)
 Endurance 35 masthead ketch (1)
 Eric masthead ketch (*Suhaili* replica) (1)
 Gaia 36 masthead sloop (1)
 OE 32 masthead cutter (1)
 Lello 34 masthead sloop (1)
 Nicholson 32 Mk X masthead sloop (1)
 Rustler 36 masthead sloop (6)
 Tradewind 35 masthead cutter (1)
 Tradewind 35 masthead sloop (1)

recently downsized from their home of 13 years to a smaller house to help finance *Puffin's* refit. "This was maybe the biggest sacrifice, especially on behalf of my wife and my family."

Istvan has had to be thrifty in other areas as well. Rather than use new parts, he's using boat parts that he's saved over the years. "I was so focused on saving everything, old parts that

I rebuilt into *Puffin*. Even my diet has been very money-oriented. *Rather than eating for fitness*, I've been . . . focusing on . . . price, unfortunately."

Preparing *Puffin* has also taken an emotional toll, with Istvan having to go long stretches without seeing his wife while he worked on the boat. "This race started for me almost three years ago . . . So I started the solo lifestyle pretty early."

Yet another concern that absorbs Istvan's thoughts are the requirements to qualify as an official entrant (all entrants are currently provisional). While the boats entered in the 1968 Golden Globe Race started from England, the start for GGR18 was moved to Les Sables d'Olonne, in France. In December, the French Sailing Federation expressed concern about the safety standards of the boats and both the age and experience of the skippers. However, the French maritime authority has since green-lighted the race and safety standards. The race organizers have issued a long list of safety requirements, which is an added challenge for competitors. "Day by day, we now have new unexpected requirements that we have to comply with. It's a huge burden," Istvan says.

Istvan, who is planning to sail *Puffin* across the Atlantic in the spring, is also aware that there's the risk of physically not making the start line. He spoke of a fellow GGR entrant, Australian Shane Freeman, who'd planned to sail from Australia to England in the hope of getting not just the required sea miles but also experience with his boat (another Tradewind 35). He lost his mast shortly before rounding Cape



After two years and thousands of man-hours and dollars, *Puffin* sets sail.

Horn. "So," said Istvan, "it's not just the requirements . . . and all the medical check-offs . . . there's always a risk that you don't physically get to the start line."

A race to the finish

For those entrants who do make it to the start, the Golden Globe Race in 2018 will be less a contest of speed than of survival. In the original Golden Globe in 1968, only one of nine boats made it to the finish line. Competitors are keenly aware of the challenges they'll face after the starting gun. As Indian competitor Abhilash Tomy told me, "I realized that it was very important for the boat to survive a year at sea."

If anything, there may be even more hazards now. For Istvan, operating without radar and AIS makes the risk of collision a real concern (note: special-production AIS alarms are allowed). "There are greater numbers of ships and there are no untouched areas anymore. It's not like the old days where you had a relatively good idea about the shipping lanes."

Navigation will also undoubtedly prove challenging. "I had a three-day refresher course on celestial navigation and I said, oh shoot, I forgot a lot! It will come back, but in the beginning it may be exciting." There are also the limits of celestial navigation. "In the Southern Ocean," Istvan told me, "there are certainly areas where you cannot have a fix for two weeks because it's overcast and there is no way to shoot a heavenly body. It's nerve-wracking to just rely on your dead-reckoning."

Without access to weather forecasts, competitors will have to rely on the barometer and their own observations.

Istvan expects the finish to be challenging. "It's not just the Southern Ocean but the late winter and early spring in the North Atlantic."

As the perilous nature of this race fully dawned upon me, I found myself wondering, "Why?" Why give up your home, job, financial security? Why face dangerous weather, risk of collision, and extreme isolation, all in the name of re-creating

the experience of a 50-year-old race? Istvan pointed at the answer when he told me, "There is a huge gap between regular old-fashioned sailing and new foiling sailing. I always say to my daughter, who is a Navy pilot, you are much closer to modern sailing than myself . . . because it's more like flying. In the Vendée Globe, their boats are like space shuttles, they have land support, minute-to-minute communication, all kinds of analysis. In this respect, the skipper is . . . an operator . . . as opposed to being a self-sufficient sailor."

I expect many good old boaters can appreciate the appeal of going back to basics. In our modern lives we are constantly surrounded by people, deeply reliant on technology, and rarely in tune with nature. It's no wonder that many boaters would describe an afternoon on the lake, let alone 300 days alone at sea, as a blissful if not transcendent experience. As Istvan says, "We need races like the GGR to maintain our heritage and seamanship, as well as to increase the number of self-sufficient, independent, and consequently happy people in the world." 

Fiona McGlynn is a Good Old Boat contributing editor who, after two and a half years cruising from Canada to Australia, relocated to the Great White North and now lives in Atlin, BC. This summer, she'll be joining the fun in France, reporting from Les Sables d'Olonne on the start of the 2018 Golden Globe Race. Fiona also runs WaterborneMag.com (previously Young & Salty) as a site dedicated to millennial sailing culture.