

# SKIP NOVAK

DWELLING ON THE PAST IS NOT IN SKIP'S NATURE, BUT THE NEXT EDITION OF THE NOSTALGIC GOLDEN GLOBE RACE HAS PIQUED HIS INTEREST

**D**uring the time of the COVID I have found myself recounting my past sailing history on webinars, podcasts, Zoom calls and other online forums, of which I have done far too many for my own ego. But I really don't like dwelling on past events. To wit, I have never re-read my two books, *One Watch at a Time*, or *Fazisi – the Joint Venture*. No, I like to look ahead to the next project and luckily have always kept something on the boil to plan for.

However, that's not to say I can't vicariously become involved in the most famous of retro sailing events, the Golden Globe Race.

Sceptical of the whole idea during the first edition, I cannot help but follow the second, due to begin on 4 September 2022. Why? One of my Pelagic skippers, Kirsten Neuschafer, is entered – the only female entry.

Kirsten, a gem from South Africa, landed up in the Pelagic world about five years ago. I can't even recall how she got on board, but after sailing with her on an expedition to South Georgia I was sold. She has crewed on *Pelagic*, then *Pelagic Australis* on many voyages to the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia and logically took over running *Pelagic* during the last three years. She is one of those increasingly rare individuals in the yachting game who, as we used to say, 'just gets on with things'. She's in the game for the doing, and is happy with a challenge. And she has taken on a big one.

As an inveterate single-hander, the Golden Globe must have been in the back of Kirsten's mind for some time. Of course, dreaming is one thing and putting a plan together and following through is another.

During the spring of 2019, after delivering *Pelagic* non-stop from the Falklands to Bermuda (stopping there only to apply for a US visa), she eventually fetched up in mid-coast Maine where I had friends scheduled to help her prepare for what was to be an Arctic sailing season.

For a variety of reasons our refit was delayed and what was left of the summer was a friend's cruise circumnavigating Newfoundland. Not needing too much encouragement, over saloon table conversations Kirsten bought into the

idea of the Golden Globe. She did some research and located a Cape George 36 for sale, coincidentally on the north coast of Newfoundland. The boat was surveyed later in the fall and purchased with help from her Newfoundland crew.

When COVID struck last March the adventure of getting back to the boat began. Back in Maine we optimistically relaunched *Pelagic* hoping our August charters (once the curve had 'flattened out') could continue. The plan then was for Kirsten to bring her Cape George 36 *Minnehaha* back to Maine in early fall to begin the refit for the GGR.

Of course, she never got there – until this past December. Sailing from Newfoundland to Maine in mid-winter might seem cavalier, and many of us advised against it, but she was determined to get south. The real

challenge was getting herself across the border into Canada. After so many false starts, where most of us would have thrown in the towel, she pulled it off by some bureaucratic loophole. In short order the boat was

launched and she set off cautiously down the Newfoundland coast in one snowstorm after another. After crossing the Cabot Strait, she called a halt at Summerside, Prince Edward Island, at the onset of the winter freeze up. The locals took her in and a heated shed was offered so she could get to work.

Within days the teak deck was ripped up, hatches dismantled and a dicky engine and drive train seriously looked into. The plan is to continue to Maine in April, re-rig with a new mast and begin sea trials – and continue to raise money to make this dream a reality ([kirstenggr.com](http://kirstenggr.com)).

From that point she'll have a year and a half to prepare for the start of the race.

Getting this project together is a tall order, but I'm confident she'll get to the starting line and beyond to the finish.

I speak for all my charter clients who have sailed with Kirsten who have, without exception, been more than impressed with her abilities and more importantly in just being an excellent shipmate – not that the latter is critical in the Golden Globe! As any single-hander knows, above all, you have to be comfortable in your own skin. ■

## 'I like to look ahead to the next project'

