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Around the world, home, and back

A Norwegian-American family sails the seas to reunite with family and friends

INGRID SLUNGAARD MYKLEBUST
WITH LORI ANN REINHALL
The Norwegian American

On June 5, the Norwegian-registered 50-foot sailboat *S/Y Vilja* sailed up the Hudson River and anchored right below the George Washington Bridge on the New Jersey side. On board was a family of three: Ingrid (47), Jon Petter (53), and Karen Marie (5) Slungaard Myklebust. A milestone had been reached: After having completed a three-year circumnavigation around the world, they had finally arrived at Ingrid's childhood homeport.

The family of sailors had worked hard to get there: first with the 40,000 nautical miles distance they had sailed, then overcoming fear and keeping faith that they could still proceed to New Jersey in the midst of the coronavirus outbreak with its regulations and risk, and finally even riding off gale-force winds out at sea rather than exposing themselves—and, indirectly, an elderly friend—to the risks of the pandemic.

It took a lot of nerve and persistence, but they didn't give up. "What a joy and relief it was to be able to hug friends and family who welcomed us 'home!'" said Ingrid.

Ingrid was born in New Jersey in 1973 to Dagrun Slungaard Jonassen and Jørgen Walseth Jonassen, both Norwegian immigrants. Her father had been a widower, so in addition to her sister, Karen, there were three half-siblings from her father's first marriage: Eric, Christine, and Elizabeth. They all lived together in Bloomfield, N.J.

At age 6, Ingrid moved back to Norway with her mother and sister Karen. They landed in her mother's hometown in Trøndelag, and Ingrid has lived in Norway ever since. But her father, Jørgen, remained in Bloomfield until he died in 1992, and her ties to the United States have been steadfast over the years.

"We have kept close connections to our American hometown, family, and friends," said Ingrid, "especially to the family of Finn and Wigdis Raae in Emerson, N.J." Her father and Finn were colleagues for many years in Det Norske Veritas. Wigdis is now deceased, but Finn is 90 and remains a beloved friend. Finn's daughter Marilyn is Ingrid's godmother, while Ingrid is Marilyn's daughter's godmother. "We have strong bonds, in other words," said Ingrid.



Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

The family sailed into the sunset as they ventured across the Pacific Ocean in August 2018.



Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

The family proudly sailed their boat under the Norwegian flag across the Atlantic Ocean in February 2018.

The family enthusiastically looked forward to meeting Finn on their way home to Norway. But the coronavirus nearly stopped them. First, they were caught mid-sea when

all the borders in the Caribbean closed. They actually considered sailing the 4,500 nautical miles that remained to get back home to Norway.



Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

Ingrid was happy to be back in her childhood neighborhood in Bloomfield, N.J., with her daughter, Karen Marie.



Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

Made it! The family brought out the champagne as they safely arrive in New Jersey on June 5.

But luckily, the seafarers were granted permission to restock supplies and refuel in Suriname on humanitarian grounds. They were then permitted to enter the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands. There, they waited for more than a month, as they monitored the unfolding situation of the coronavirus.

Nearly all the Norwegian sailboats caught in the Caribbean headed back to Norway straight across the Atlantic via the Azores, but with dear friends and family on the U.S. East Coast in New Jersey and Boston, the family decided to wait it out. They wanted to see everyone again and include them on their homebound journey itinerary.

Eventually, the regulations eased up, and the ports of New Jersey opened. Their first stop was to see Finn. Ingrid noted that the 90-year-old is amazingly healthy and strong but still considered to be in the high-risk group for coronavirus because of his age and a heart condition—and this strongly in-

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Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

Father and daughter were all smiles against the magnificent backdrop of the Statue of Liberty, as the family sailed up the Hudson River on June 5, 2020.



Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

It was a joy for Ingrid to reunite with her dear friend Finn Raae, who she has known all her life and is like a second father to her.

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fluenced the family’s plans.

They chose to sail nonstop for 14 days across the sea from St. Thomas to New Jersey, thereby guaranteeing that they had been totally quarantined upon arrival. They even decided to ride off gale-force northerly winds out at sea, lying hove to, rather than going to port underway.

Finn picked them up at the docks, and they are now enjoying their long-awaited stop at home with their family and friends



Photo: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust
The Slungaard Myklebust family.

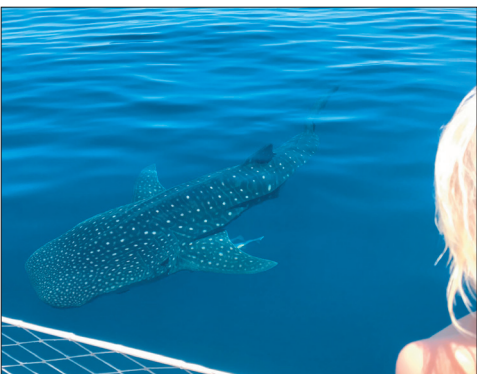
in Emerson and Wayne before proceeding north. They drove to Ingrid’s home neighborhood in Bloomfield and met with a 95-year-old neighbor, who had been isolated since the coronavirus outbreak. Since they had been so well quarantined, she was able to warmly welcome them home.

The family had made some changes in their itinerary and is now sailing long stretches and skipping their sightseeing plans. But they did not skip their heart’s calling: Ingrid sailed her boat home to New Jersey.

Their last stop in the United States was in Massachusetts to visit Ingrid’s big brother, Eric, in Hopkinton near Boston. They were also thrilled to see Ingrid’s big sister Christine and family and her now deceased sister Elizabeth’s son Victor after many years apart.

After this long-awaited family reunion, the family set off on their voyage home via Newfoundland, Greenland, then Iceland, and finally across the Atlantic to Norway. Their future homeport will be Svolvær in the Lofoten archipelago in Nordland.

The Norwegian sailing magazine *Seilmagasinet* (www.seilmagasinet.no) has been following the Slungaard Myklebust family on their journey. They have also created their own website, where you can read more about their journey: www.sailingvilja.no.



Photos: Ingrid Slungaard Myklebust

Sailing the high seas was an adventure for Karen Marie, 5. On her adventure, she saw many extraordinary creatures, including an enormous whale shark off the coast of Madagascar in 2019. She even went swimming with this friendly fellow before her photo shoot on board.



Tall ship tales

A classic film captures a voyage on the *Christian Radich*

LORI ANN REINHALL
The Norwegian American

The year 2020 has brought a lot of changes, to say the least. COVID-19 restrictions have meant postponed plans for many, but at the same time, staying at home has also led to many new discoveries.

For me, I admit that canceling my plans to visit Norway this summer was a hard pill to swallow. Not only had I planned to visit family and friends in Scandinavia, as editor-in-chief of *The Norwegian American*, I was looking forward to sharing new adventures with my readers.

One of them was my long-awaited plans to sail on the *Statsraad Lehmkuhl*, an iconic tall ship considered to be one of the biggest and most beautiful sailing ships in the world. Built in 1914 in Bremen, Germany, the three-masted barque is owned and operated by the Statsraad Lemkuhl Foundation based in Bergen. Over time, the beloved ship with has become a proud symbol of Norway’s second city, where it is docked in the harbor there in all its majesty.

But I know the *Statsraad Lehmkuhl* will be waiting for me in Bergen when I am able to return again, so I decided to spend some of my extra time at home to learn more about Norway’s maritime history. I also mentioned to my husband, Ulf, that Seattle’s Cinerama movie theater was closing, having fallen victim to the downward turn with the COVID economy.

He asked if I had ever seen the old *Windjammer* movie, which he had seen as a boy the Vinterpalatset Cinerama theater in Stockholm. I hadn’t (I was too young at the time—the film had its roadshow engagements around the world from 1958 to 1964). But when I learned there is a documentary about another Norwegian tall ship, the *Christian Radich*, I was intrigued.

A quick Google search yielded an exciting result: the *Windjammer* movie from 1958



Photo: Christian Radich

The S/S Christian Radich was built in 1927 at the Framnæs shipyard in Sandefjord, Norway.

was available for streaming in a 2011 remastered digital version on Amazon. It would be our evening matinee. While we couldn’t experience it in the full glory of a Cinerama theater, we experienced two hours and 22 minutes of entertainment, which was both nostalgic and entertaining.

The official title of the movie is *Windjammer: The Voyage of the Christian Radich*. Following the route of Christopher Columbus to the New World, it documents a 239-day training cruise of 17,500 nautical miles from Oslo across the Atlantic, through the Caribbean Sea, up to New York, and back to Norway.

Windjammer was produced and directed by Louis de Rochemont III and was the only film ever shot in the widescreen Cinemiracle process. There was seven-track stereophonic soundtrack, with a score by composer, conductor, and pianist Morton Gould. Although it was a documentary (as opposed to a flashy Hollywood blockbuster), it was a box-office success, especially popular in Scandinavia. It had a 29-week run in Oslo, where it had 401,320 paid admissions in a city of 375,000 at the time.

The ship’s scribe was none other than Erik Bye, at the time only 31 years old, later to

become one of the most popular radio and television personalities, an accomplished journalist, artist, author, actor, and folk singer. While not credited in the film, Bye also served as the film’s narrator. His young heavily accented voice adds a special charm and authenticity.

The crew on board consisted of Capt. Yngvar Kjelstrup, 16 officers, and 42 teenage cadets, and their mascot, the dog Stump. The *S/S Christian Radich* was a Norwegian school ship, one of the last of the great windjammers still in active service.

The purpose of the school ships was to train young men for careers at sea and to build character, a type of rite of passage. The narrator explains, “It’s up on the yardarm when you first begin to learn your responsibility, not only for your own safety, but for the safety of the ship and your shipmates. It is easy to understand why so many fathers believe that the best training of all in building character and making men is the school ship, the *Windjammer*.”

As we travel on board the ship with the boys, we experience the hard work and perils they face at sea and share in their adventures on land. First, the crew trains in the Oslo Fjord for a fortnight, as moviegoers become familiar with the ship and the trainees, both

above and below deck. And the ship is a beauty: even when competing with sweeping scenery at sea and in 14 exotic ports of call, the ship is the star of the film.

The young trainees not only learn the value of hard work on board, there is also plenty of time for fun. Above all, they prove to be an unusually musical lot. During the journey, four crewmembers form a singing group, leading their mates in lively folk songs and sea shanties. By today’s standards, the scenes may appear a bit contrived, but they are refreshingly innocent and entertaining.

The *Christian Radich* was also perhaps the first school ship that ever allowed a boy to bring aboard his own piano. Toward the end of the film, cadet Sven Erik Libaek is invited to perform Grieg’s “Piano Concerto in A minor” with maestro Arthur Fiedler and the famous Boston Pops Orchestra to play Grieg’s “Piano Concerto in A minor” in the docks of Portsmouth, N.H.

The film is full of colors and contrasts when the ship lands in exotic ports: Madeira in Portugal, Curaçao, Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago, San Juan in Puerto Rico, New York City. At a time when international travel was only accessible to the wealthy, one understands the importance of the life experience and education the cadets gain. There is plenty of unexpected adventure, even a chance meeting at sea with the German training sail ship *Pamir*, later to be lost in Hurricane Carrie in September 1957 with a crew of 86, including 52 cadets.

The *S/S Christian Radich* was built in 1937 at the Framnæs shipyard in Sandefjord, Norway, as a training ship, but the tragic sinking of the *Pamir* raised questions about safety of using such sailing ships for training young cadets. The *Windjammer* film journey also marked was the last of Capt. Kjelstrup, who at age 70, retired after a distinguished career at sea.

Today, both the *Christian Radich* and the *Statsraad Lemkuhl* participate in tall ship races and regattas around the world and are available for sailing training programs and special events—adventure awaits!