

5th Report: Harstad
68°49.04'N 16°31.45'E
Arnøyhamn
70°03.11'N 20°37.99'E
Tromsø
69°39.06'N 18°57.64'E
August 15 to September 13

Route overview



Thursday, August 15. Lars arrives today. The bus takes us downtown. We know the harbor. The old building of the harbor authorities is still as impressive as years ago.

But what is going on? Flags, streamers, and outlandishly funny decorations of all kinds everywhere. Yes, this is a bus stop! We have lunch and ask the service personnel about the event. Harstad is celebrating the annual music festival with performances of several famous bands. The main stage is hidden in a courtyard a few streets away. The crackle and squeaking of sound checks assail our ears, a hair-raising noise out of huge loud speakers.

We have no idea who the celebrities are.



We leave the hustle and bustle and walk toward the industrial harbor. Alex is looking for a new starter battery. In every place that could possibly sell batteries we go in. No success in many stores. In a shopping center Alex finally finds quite a

large selection, but not one battery fulfills the requirements. We go on marching. A specialized dealer does have what we need, but the young assistant cannot answer Alex's detailed questions. And anyway, we could not carry the battery back to the bus station anyway!!

After a long walk we are back in the center. Our bus just arrives around the corner, Alex starts running, I follow immediately, but almost break down with a paralyzing pain in the left leg. Alex hurries back to me, helps me step by step, the bus waits for us! With difficulty we climb on board. I can hardly stop silently crying, but calm down after a while. The bus driver lets us out at the nearest point to the marina. Fortunately, I can lean on Alex and manage to advance foot by foot with clenched teeth. We arrive at the boat and with a little push I am onboard. Alex takes out our medical book: torn muscle fiber or a pulled muscle? No matter, it hurts terribly and just requires rest, nothing else.

At 18:00 Lars suddenly appears unexpectedly early at the pontoon! Laden with bags full of groceries beside his backpack, he climbs up and right after a warm welcome he starts preparing a reindeer stew and rice. The dinner is fabulous. We are overwhelmed! There are so many things to talk about during a wonderful evening.

Friday, August 16. Lars is a great relief, now that I am handicapped with my leg injury. We appreciate his help all along the line. If I rest sitting or lying down the thigh does not hurt. So, the men force me to remain in my corner behind the table and urge me to read or write and be happy. They take care of everything.

We leave the marina of Indre Bergsvågen around 10:00 and begin our voyage toward Tromsø, the destination for this summer. Despite very little wind, the two set the sails; we make no progress; the men fish. Two fish take the bait; one of them frees itself and Lars heaves the other one, a beauti-



ful pollack on deck, and cleans it right away. He will prepare it for dinner.

We will stay overnight in Engenes at the northern coast of the island Andørja. Long ago we met Barbara and Thierry here and celebrated the event on their *Ceres* with a tall heap of shrimp, garlic mayonnaise and white bread.

The church above the village of Engenes shines from far away bright against the background of the dark mountains.



We soon round the northwestern tip of the island, arrive in the well-known little port and moor *Silmaril* alongside the outermost pontoon. The breakwater in the harbor looks



rather large new fishing boats, modern pontoons with shore power

familiar, but other things are new to us, several



and water installed. Years ago, the place was a bit dilapidated. The village seems to do much better today.

Lars hits the road to find the store, he wants to buy shrimp. Alex does not like our mooring. *Silmaril* is too exposed to the wind and the swell here right in the entrance to the harbor and will bump non-stop on the pontoon during the night. I cannot walk without pain, but to stand at the helm is fine; I maneuver *Silmaril* into the guest box behind the outer pontoon. Lars did not find shrimp. Too bad, but he prepares a scrumptious dinner: omelets filled with mushrooms and vegetables. Alex and I enjoy his humorous uncomplicated self and his great food.

Saturday, August 17. Alex intends to have a look at the marina in Finnsnes. We could have a box there for *Silmaril's* winter quarter, as Jørn had suggested to us on Grip. We leave around 10:00, almost no wind, cloudy sky.

The marina in Finnsnes looks good. It lies behind a solid breakwater. Jørn is waiting for us and shows us the box, where *Silmaril* could be placed. The village is not far. Various shops: food, chandlers, a liquor store are within easy walking distance. But the marina does not offer services, no sanitary facilities, no washing machine, no crane. We could not lift *Silmaril* out of the water in spring. Moreover, we would have to hire someone to look after the boat during the winter months. The place would probably get one and a half meters of snow!



Another marina, a little north of Tromsø could also offer a place. Jørn has many connections; he is the harbor master of Tromsø and owns several boxes in different marinas. So, we decide to go and see this one as well.

Finnsnes is biggish. Apart from the shops and businesses it has a landing stage for the Hurtigrute and various fast ferries. That would certainly be an important advantage to consider.

We leave Jørn and the marina and cruise around the nose passed the lighthouse and investigate the harbor of Finnsnes. A fast ferry just left the landing stage.



The weather is bad, dark fast-drifting clouds over the sky. Gray in gray the massive

mountain looms above Leiknes that looks a little like the nave of a church. Far back to the left the antenna of a weather station almost reaches the clouds.

The funny lighthouse in the shape of a garden shed stands at Slettneset on the mainland almost at the entrance to the bay of Kårvikhamn, where we plan to anchor.



This is indeed a onetime shape of a beacon in my collection. Lars smiles: typically Norwegian! Does he mean: a bit weird?

Evening is not far. We are getting close to the bay. Years ago, we had made fast at the pier of the fish factory in the bay and watched Roger Federer in the final game in Wimbledon, hair-raising tension in the boat for hours. Federer won the game!

Today the fish factory is converted into something very big and very busy; we have no idea what is produced now.

The bay is shallow. It takes time to find a good spot. But finally, we are far enough from the various small boats at the buoys and the shore; the anchor holds tight.

Sunday, August 18. Last night, Alex calculated the time of departure according to the current in the Rystraumen near Tromsø to make sure that we pass with the drift.

Right after breakfast the anchor comes up and Lars takes the helm. An ear-splitting wail pierces marrow and bone! He has hit the man-over-board button by mistake! It takes a while to reset the system and for our ears to recover.

Not a breeze, water like oil. The sky is gray, the clouds hang low, murky light; bad weather for good pictures. At least there is no rain.

We pass the straumen with the help of the engine and the current. Although we are late and the flow is not at its highest point, we cruise at 8kts.

Tromsø is in sight. The Arctic Cathedral shines white on the left, the great bridge connects the island Tromsøya with the mainland.



Lars has never been here and takes lots of pictures despite the lack of good light!

We pass the town heading north toward Skattøra Marina, where Jørn could offer us a box for *Silmaril's* winter quarter.

Alex is at the helm. A big fishing boat is almost under the bridge. He does not show the



maril at the first pontoon very close to the breakwater. It yields a gorgeous closeup of beautiful rocks ingeniously stacked without concrete mirrored in the clear still water.

We go for a short walk. Our first impression is positive. There is a crane, the harbor master is friendly, but has little time for us just now. We will be back tomorrow by bus.

I maneuver *Silmaril* to the diesel pump, the boys fill the tank and the empty jerrycans and we are soon out in the Tromsøsundet and on our way back to the city harbor.

I remember the busy place well and hope to find a convenient box.

Just after the bridge the entrance to the harbor



slightest inclination to move aside to give us leeway. Lars says: no problem, but Alex reduces the speed. And then the large vessel does bother to move away from the center of the passage.

Lars estimates distances and traffic conditions far more courageously and precisely than we do. He is very experienced and was certainly right. But the one at the helm decides!

Shortly after the bridge we arrive in the Skattøra Marina and moor *Sil-*



appears. Lars takes the helm, leisurely looks for an empty box and turns into the one way back on the pontoon closest to the pier and next to the X-Yacht *Born to Run*. She belongs to friends of Jørn's and this is her permanent place. We are surrounded by small and large ships, the main pier is close, the view of the old refurbished warehouses behind us very pleasing; the neighborhood is much to our liking. Water and shore power are available at the pontoon,



essential here, since the city does not provide any facilities despite the considerable harbor fees, no showers, no toilets, no washing machines! When we were here before, the hotel offered the

use of a shower in one of the unoccupied rooms and the young lady in the barber shop who cut Alex's hair simply had mercy and let us use her machine. No more such options, the hotel changed policy and the barber shop has changed its owner. All three of us take a nice shower onboard and grant ourselves a special dinner at the restaurant Kaja on the pier.

Monday, August 19. My leg hurts and hampers my moving. We decide to stop at the hospital on our way to the Skattøra Marina. There is a so-called "legevakt", a medical service, where a doctor gives advice after an initial consultation. A taxi takes us to the hospital. The young intern conscientiously asks questions and talks to his superior. He finally gives the same advice as our medical book and Renzo: go easy, rest, and have patience and, if necessary, take pain killers. So, we continue business as usual with my injury.

The taxi drives us to the marina. The boys inspect the premises and talk to the harbor master. I gingerly walk around and take pleasure in another funny picture for my bike collection that is eventually to become a photo album. The boys evaluate the marina: the services are adequate, but the bus station, the closest shops, and the city



center are too far away to walk to. Living onboard in the spring for the necessary work on the boat would be too complicated. The longer we think about our options, the third one, the submarine cave Olavsvern seems the best of all. Susanne and Chérif from Winterthur told us about it in Bodø. They are on their way to Tromsø now and thinking about the best winter quarter for their *Cachana*. We keep in contact once in a while since Bodø and talk about possibilities. They will arrive here in a few days, plenty of time for us to take a short turn north with Lars.

Tuesday, August 20. The Norwegian Breakfast à la Lars adapted to the pantry and the immediate departure: one or two thin slices of brown cheese topped with raspberry jam on Flatbrød or Wasa bread, coffee, and tea, it tastes great.

We leave around 11:00. As we sail out of the harbor, we pass the buildings of the yacht club at the end of the breakwater on our port side. Club members have a 360° view from their lounge and the terrace under the roof.



There is only little wind, but we do everything to avoid engaging the green guy downstairs, as Lars calls our Volvo Penta. Sails are set by the bridge and at low speed, something over 3kts, we

cruise under main and genoa or genoa and jib, both stabilized by the two telescopic booms, along the densely populated eastern coast of the island.

We sight the gigantic complex of the university hospital, a bit further north above Skattøra Marina, residential areas below the wooded top of the hill.



Ski jumps demonstrate that huge amounts of snow regularly cover the land here during the winter.

Cruising along the shore arouses our curiosity. What could the large building



on top of the wooded hill be? The close-up does not give answers and Lars cannot help either.

In the sound between Ringvassøya und Reinøya we are in little populated landscape.



The street close to the water connects hamlets or individual farms. Glaciers crown the dark mountains on the horizon. The wind dies down in the afternoon. We fish, but no success.

Around 17:00 the fishing harbor of Hansnes is in sight. It must be small, the ferries land at piers outside the breakwater. Two of them are moored. Right after them and in front of the old shed we turn off and see that there is little space in-



side. Two pontoons are reserved for the hospital ship and the coast guard. The

only free spot for us is the head of the third jetty. The small red ball floating



close to the breakwater probably marks a stone, but Lars maneuvers *Silmaril* cautiously. We make fast without mishap.

Lars explores the possibilities and organizes shore power from a shed with a very long cable before he goes for a walk.

Alex and I remain on the boat. Walking is still laborious; my steps are stiff and cautious to avoid pain. Directions to rest will be in force for weeks to come. The church is too far away, although its modern architecture is tempting to inspect close up. Lars returns with the news that he found a lumber yard right behind the harbor. If *Silmaril* is going into the submarine cave, we will need wood to construct trestles for the mast that must be unstepped and rest on deck. The boys already discussed the supports. They will buy the wood tomorrow.

A polish two-master arrives in the evening. The blue boat is called *Berg* and is registered in Stettin. Their equipment suggests that they come from Svalbard. We observe their mooring maneuver. The skipper advises the crew with short commands and lands his long boat without hesitation and impressive precision at the fishing jetty. No one on board seems interested in talking to us. The crew disappears



below deck; they must be tired and hungry!

Maybe they do not speak English or German, who knows?

We inspect the boat from afar. Alex, of course, would love to know where they come from and assail them with thousand questions.

Lars prepares another dinner. We enjoy his impressive talent at the stove so much.

Wednesday, August, 21. We wake up with a deep blue sky above us, just a few gray shreds of clouds sail above the mountains. Not a wisp of wind. Alex and Lars walk to the lumber yard and return after a long while with a heavy load of planks.

They stack them on deck and tie them securely to the reeling. They will have to wait here until the boys find the time to build the supports.





A huge school of small fish surround the boat moving in slow motion. Lars tells us that they are young salmon escaped from a fish farm. There are many such hatcheries in the neighborhood and runaways are a real problem.



Captive breeding changes the genetics in the fish and they should be safely separated from the free-living fish in order to prevent their mating. Moreover, the runaways are hardly capable of surviving, since without regular feeding and the lost instinct of hunting they starve to death. The state offers premiums for caught escapees; they are a considerable financial loss and a threat to biodiversity.

We want to leave Hansnes toward mid-day. The weather is changing, clouds gather above us, mostly still white but dark layers show up in the beautiful formations, rain is in the wind and we are anxious to continue to our next destination. Despite the late hour, no one is on deck of the Polish boat. Too bad, no chance of exchange before departure.



We untie the lines and take off, no wind at all so far.

Behind us the white church shines out of the dark green wood.



In the Langsundet between the islands of Rinvassøya und Reinøya we fish. The weather is noticeably changing, rain is threatening. Ahead of us, a raincloud above a splendid rainbow is already dropping sheets of rain menacing to shower us when we reach it.



We still see blue sky between the clouds above the boat. Hopefully the rain will not catch us.



Under this kind of sky to remain dry is probably wishful thinking. But hope dies last.



Suddenly the GPS fails, no data on the plotter. Alex finds a short circuit after some time, restarts the entire system and the breakdown is repaired.

Full speed ahead we sail toward Vannvågen and arrive at the entrance to the harbor with the first large drops.



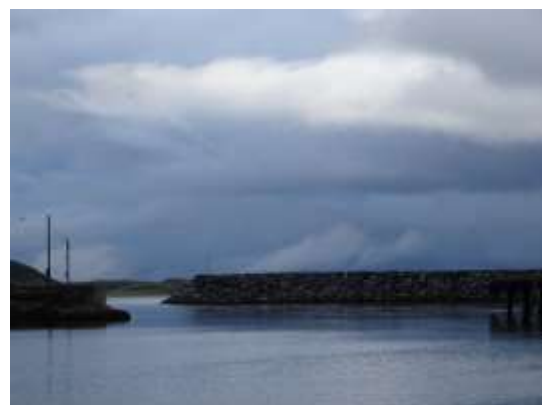
Lars at the helm takes his time to find a good spot. He maneuvers *Silmaril* in his way, slowly, closely, perfectly in the end. Alex grumbles under his breath. He would do it differently. Well, as always, the one at the helm decides.



We are moored, everything shipshape, no heavy rain yet, lucky enough. We spend another peaceful night.

Thursday, August 22. We sleep in, the weather is not great, cloudy sky, no wind, no rain so far, but it is definitely in the air.

The boys go shopping. Beer and a few



other items are in short supply. I still avoid walking and take the time for a few pictures of the harbor despite the unfavorable light conditions. Two fishing boats and a large motor yacht are moored at the main pier across from us, behind us a strange tire snake many meters long rests in the gravel on shore. It may be a scrapped breakwater.



We leave around 11:00. Lars proposes to fish for kveite, halibut. He bought huge hooks for very large fish in the store! We cruise along the shore of Vannøya. While the boys are fishing, I prepare a typical Swiss meal: Chässchnitte, slices of (stale) bread dipped in white wine, topped with a mixture of cheese and egg, and fried on both sides. We eat on deck

and they keep fishing patiently. Nothing doing, not a single twitch on the lines, no sign of a hungry whatsoever. The advice of a fisherman to try our luck in shallow water must have been a joke. After reading up on kveite, we learn that it lives in very deep water, its habitat reaching down to 1500 meters!

At the most northern point of our trip, at position 70°6.8'N und 20°8.6'E, we turn southeast toward Arnøya and the harbor of Arnøyhamn. The boys fish again and catch a small pollack. I pleaded to let him go, but the fishermen were adamant to have him on their plates tonight.

The wind freshens and we sail for a while. We pass a few ships and hear the drone of



As we get close to Arnøyhamn, the imposing wooden church appears.

some planes above us.





The breakwater looms ahead in the gloom, we see a large ship moored in the harbor, turn into the entrance, and see that all the jet-

ties are occupied, except a short boat length directly next to the big ship at the pier.

I manage to back *Silmaril* up alongside, but the anchoring chain of the jetty, quite conspicuous in the clear water prevents me to move all the way. Our boat is too long, her rudder too close to the chain to fasten her securely.

We decide to move and tie up at the big ship *Skartind*. It is 18:45. Lars goes on shore and finds out that *Skartind* is being repaired and will remain here for a long time. We are allowed to connect to one of her power outlets.



All is well, I just ask myself how I will manage the climb up on deck of *Skartind* and up onto the pier.

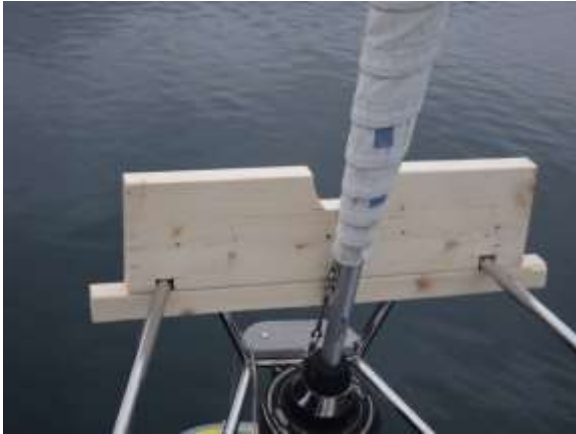
Lars starts work on the wooden supports for the mast.

Alex is watching and lends a hand when



necessary. The "workbench" on the narrow reeling at the bow above the water is not exactly ideal.

We are both fascinated how Lars handles the handsaw. He works quickly and with great precision. Soon the support for the supports take shape.



In a short time, Lars has sawed and temporarily assembled the pieces. He checks the dimensions a last time and the work is done. We are impressed!

The pieces are stowed away, Alex will screw them together and mount them on deck when we are ready to take down the mast.

It was a long day; we postpone the walk to the church for tomorrow.

Friday, August 23. This morning breakfast is served in the cockpit in the sunshine. The weather is just wonderful. As planned, we go for a walk to the church. The climb up on land offers no real problem. Alex helps with a little push at critical moments.

A fat sheep scrutinizes our every step toward the church.

Norway produces a large variety of knitting wool, many interesting mixtures. A good selection is offered in most stores, even in the smallest and remotest. The specialty stores have an impressive stock; wool, cotton and silk in many sizes and colors are on sale for every imaginable project, proof that Norwegian women still knit and crochet abundantly. My heart goes out to them.



The church stands on an elevation a little outside the village.



A large cemetery expands on two sides, a

small shed with a bell tower at its entrance. What is it? Hardly the funeral hall. Unfortunately, everything is shut tight and no information at all on the premises. Too bad, we would have loved to know more about the history of the place. We go back to the boat. It is time to leave. *Silmaril* is waiting alongside the big ship.



Not the slightest breeze in the harbor. We take off and are soon in open water, behind us the bay of Arnøya at the foot of the grand



pinnacles of Skartinden in the east and Småtinden in the west of the island. Out here the wind freshens, we hoist and unfurl the sails and take a southerly course into the Kjølmanen between Kågen and Vorterøya. The wind dies around midday; we don't move, change the sails from one side to the other and fish. And this time with success: Lars gets a large cod, a real beauty.



The village Vorterøyskagen occupies the northern tip of Vorterøya. A fishing boat is moored on a buoy, the buildings of a farm line the shore, a typical fishing and farming community.



In early afternoon, the wind freshens again. Lars is happy and so are we!

At the southern tip of Vorterøya we turn west and cruise toward the Lyngen Alps. Years ago, Alex and I sailed in this region and experienced unforgettable moments. The conditions are similar today, strong free wind, moderate waves and great landscape in the murky light. We enjoy the view of the shore of Uløya and the summits of the Lyngen Alps with the gigantic icefields of the Gammvikblåisen.



The cloudy sky and the hazy view slur the contours of the glacier at a distance, but as we approach the shore, it displays its unsurpassed glory.



We soon reach the northern end of the peninsula and need to decide, where we will spend the last night before we return to Tromsø. A southern course could cause problems. The wind blows from northwest and is forecast to increase, a unfavorable situation for take-off tomorrow, deep in the inlet along the western shore in the harbor of Nordlenangen. We go back to Arnøyhamn; the harbor is well sheltered, we know our mooring place and we will be able to run before the wind to Tromsø, without struggling against the wind out of the inlet before turning south. We tack and cruise north.

Arnøyhamn is not far. Soon the mountains behind the bay show details of landscape on the horizon ahead of us.

It is very cold and we run with a stiff breeze; the windchill factor is considerable. I'm freezing and even our helmsman has donned a hat and a windbreaker!



The wind dies! So much for weather forecasts. Although I have to mention that so far, we have trusted Norwegian forecasts and have seldom been totally disappointed. We tug towards the harbor entrance and look forward to a scrumptious meal.

Saturday, August 24. The alarm clock goes off at 05:45. We slip into our clothes; I brew tea and within half an hour we are off. As soon as we are out of the harbor, we set the sails. At 07:00 I serve porridge and coffee. At a cruise speed of over 7kts over ground, *Silmaril* whooshes along. It is our last sailing day with Lars. All three of us have great fun!

Unfortunately, the sport does not last. Fog comes down, we are wet and cold.

Lars drinks vast amounts of coffee like every day and we join him now to warm our bones and keep our spirits up.

The wind decreases and turns. We take the main sail in and move at a sluggish pace under genoa. We are too slow to reach Tromsø before 15:00 when the Vinmonopolet, the only stores in Norway that sell alcohol, closes for the weekend. We had planned to celebrate our last evening with Lars with a fine meal and a good supply of wine and aquavit. So, the green guy downstairs must help.

Shortly before midday, we spot a large yacht coming out of the Kvalsundet. It is the 92-foot *Antwerp Flyer* on her way to Tromsø, as the AIS information on the plotter tells us. She is still far behind us, but catching up fast.

Lars cannot resist. He sets the main sail again and stages a private regatta with the elegant boat. She slowly comes up behind us, but in the Tromsøsundet, about in line with the Skattøra Marina, she strikes sails. Lars rejoices, we have won! Yes, that's one way to call it! The *Antwerp Flyer* overtakes us running her engine and we see that the crew wears life jackets and off-shore outfits. They probably arrive from Svalbard.





Maybe there is time to reach the harbor before 15:00. We strike sails as well, engage the engine and run at the usual speed of 6kts toward the city.

Just before the bridge, our regatta partner present again her imposing elegance. She probably ties up along the pier a bit north of the city. Space is limited in the harbor, only few boxes are available for such big boats.



We pass the beautiful Arctic Cathedral and turn into the city harbor.



The *Vesterålen* has arrived. It is 15:00 sharp, too late for a supply of aquavit or any kind of alcohol!

The majestic old buildings of the Rorbua welcome us; we will spend the evening there to celebrate.

At the outer most jetty we find a good spot. Lars helps Alex to take down the main

sail and the boom. The job is simply too hard for me and we are very glad for the help. It still is a funny feeling to pass the coming days on the water with an amputated *Silmari*. We take comfort that the genoa is still mounted and that we may be able to cruise without the engine, if the wind is favorable.

The boys are industrious and soon the sail is packed and stowed in the aft cabin and the boom lashed down on deck.

The *Cachana* is tied up on the same jetty. Susanne and Chérif have arrived. We are overjoyed to see them. Together we will prepare our boats for the winter storage in the submarine cave.

We invite Lars for a nice dinner in the restaurant Kaja and proceed to the Rorbua

pub. Music, laughter, and a teeming crowd welcome us. We find a small table in a corner and settle down. Next to us a boisterous group is celebrating happily. They obviously have great fun. Despite the clamor and lots of alcohol, the atmosphere is peaceful, no roar, no swearing, no jostling; everybody is just happy.

Across from us, sitting in two wing chairs at a small table, an elderly couple watches the vocalist at the keyboard, a glass of beer and white wine in front of them. Both quietly observe the bustle. Once in a while the man goes to the bar to get replenishment. They clap occasionally when a song is at its end. They radiate content.

Lars serves a long series of Norwegian specialties. I hold back and keep handing my glasses over to Alex or Lars, a good decision, I feel perfectly fine.

The boys enjoy themselves to the fullest.

We leave without Lars he is not yet ready for bed. On our late way back to the boat, it is past 02:00, my precaution pays off. Alex needs my help to get along the very narrow jetty. We manage passably, laugh at the top of our voices and are happy to have passed such an unforgettable evening.

Sunday, August 25. At breakfast, Lars tells us about the encounter with the nice young lady who had talked to us last night. They came and had a long conversation in the cockpit until sunup. We report our way back, grinning. Alex does not really remember! Despite little sleep and much alcohol all three of us feel perfectly fine, no discomforts, no headache, no stomach problems, quite surprising!

Lars prepares his departure. He flies home tonight. Before Alex and I go shopping we talk to Susanne and Chérif and accept their invitation to a raclette onboard *Cachana* for tonight.

We accompany Lars to the bus station in front of the Radisson Hotel. The time with him was just great. He was a thoughtful enterprising crew member and has become a dear friend despite the considerable difference in age. He wants to visit us at home



this winter and talk about the planned trip to Svalbard next summer. Alex hopes to talk me into coming along when Lars is part of the crew. We will see. During the evening we get to know Susanne and Chérif a little better; we hardly know them yet. The four of us expect our teamwork with excitement.

Monday, August 26. A day spent in the harbor.

Before we sail south, I want to take advantage of the many special shops to look around for Christmas presents. At the same time a few edibles are missing in the pantry. Walking is still awkward and we take most our time.

In the evening, we talk about the further proceedings with Susanne and Chérif. We will inspect the cavern tomorrow.

Tuesday, August 27. Around midday, it is time to go. We follow *Cachana* sailing south toward the cavern Olavsvern, where we are expected for a visit. Without the boom and the main sail, we feel crippled. However, with the genoa and the help of the engine we finally arrive at the military premises of Olavsvern. It is situated at the entrance to the short Ramfjorden, a side arm of Balsfjorden that reaches far inland. Soon the concrete pier appears where we will moor our



boats. *Cachana* has tied up already and we fasten *Silmaril* alongside. Alex and



Chérif are invited to visit the cave. Susanne and I remain on board. The boys leave in a car that takes them to the place where the boats will stay over winter. The canal is narrow, hardly 10m wide and about 80m long. A floating jetty is tied to the concrete pier at its beginning. All the way back a motor yacht is moored that has been here for the last three years, as the boys were told. Susanne and I have a hard time to imagine



the dimensions of the place. But the boys are satisfied. Our boats will put up in a perfect location. They talk to the manager, inquire about the details of the further proceedings, when we should arrive and who is going to bring the crane to take down the masts.

We leave and cruise a stretch further into the fjord eager to see the entrance to the canal. And there it is, the hole where we will have to drive in. A large barge is tied up close to it. We might tie up there before we go in.

The hole is narrow, only 9m high and indeed looks a little eerie.

We sail to the middle of the fjord in a wide curve, get a glimpse of the entrance and the barge, unfurl the genoa, and fol-



low *Cachana* to an anchoring place not far away.

Cachana is a beautiful boat and a great

sailer, a Biga 30 built in a small boatyard in the vicinity of Dortmund.

Our poor half-rigged *Silmaril* struggles along as best she can!

Susanne and Chérif know a suitable bay to the west.

On the way we observe a glorious spectacle in the sky. Sunbeams in constantly changing shape squeeze through a hole in



the fast-drifting angry clouds; they shine in front of the dark mountains and throw their light on the water.

We have plenty of time to watch the breathtaking performance; it is a bit scary, since we are heading directly into the turmoil and plan to anchor in the bay on the shore almost below it.



The bay proves to be unsuitable to anchor for the night. It is too exposed to the predicted wind. Susanne and Chérif propose to proceed behind the small island Ryøya where the yacht club of Tromsø has anchored a float with a small hut and welcomes guests against a modest fee.

Alex runs out of patience to sail against unfavorable wind with our impediment. We go ahead, Susanne and Chérif tug along and fish.

It is getting late; dusk is slowly descending. *Cachana* is catching up and signals to make fast alongside. Will be done in a moment. *Cachana* takes a place between two floating jetties behind the small cabin.

This is very well equipped, there is a table, chairs, a small tube furnace, fire wood, candles and even a batterie-powered small string of lightbulbs.

We are thrilled.

Alex makes a fire, I prepare the drinks, Su-



sanne and Chérif cook a fish soup. We spend a cozy evening with a wonderful meal and animated conversation. There are two more weeks before we are expected at Olavsvern. Many things must be discussed. We plan to prepare the boats for the winter and to build the wooden supports for the masts in the marina by the bridge near Finnsnes. It offers good service, better than the one of the yacht club we have visited, sanitary facilities, washing machine and tumbler, electricity and water on the jetties and a diesel pump. What we will need in terms of material and food is to be had within walking distance.

Wednesday, August 28. We sleep in, eat a leisurely breakfast, enjoy the absolute peace and quiet and take our time before we leave. The weather has calmed down, no rain, no wind. We are planning to anchor one more time, before we sail to Finnsnes. Around midday we say goodbye the enchanting place and cruise south.



Genoa and jib together will hopefully catch enough wind to push *Silmaril* to our satisfaction. Alex is not very patient with little speed. We do move, although with only 2kts! Susanne and Chérif teach us their pattern: they sail even if there is very little wind, fish and enjoy the journey as its own reward. We chug along at snail's pace for hours.



The *Finnmarken* on her way north to Tromsø passes by. Alex catches a small cod. A young seagull ogles the boat. It has probably discovered the fishing rod and hopes for scraps. Nothing doing, the small chap waits for its butchering in the fridge!



Cachana lies at anchor behind the small island Hestøy somewhat north of Gibostad and we make fast alongside. Chérif fires the grill and we eat together in their cockpit, a great meal with vegetables, fish, and a delicious fruit dessert.

We don't trust the weather; wind cold come up

during the night and *Silmaril* needs to hang on her own anchor. The maneuver takes time in the dark. Finally, we feel safe, far enough from *Cachana* and the shallow water. The night is dead calm; we sleep like logs.

Thursday, August 29. We get up late. *Cachana* does not move, not a ripple on the water.



The sky is overcast, but no rain so far. A farm and a small boathouse are reflected in the still water, not a soul around. Once in a while a car passes the farm on the street close to the shore. What a marvelous place!

Toward midday we up anchor and cruise in the direction of the marina at the bridge near Finnsnes.

The bay of Gibostad opens right behind the tongue of land to the south.



The small town seems to have a lot to offer, boat houses line the shore, many boats are tied up behind the breakwater, signs of wealthy proprietors, no doubt.



A group of buildings in good repair at the far side of the bay attract my attention. I assume it is an inoperative fish factory.

There is no activity whatsoever. We have come across many such places. The profession of individual fishermen has suffered greatly, since large trawlers and floating fish factories have replaced small boats and fish can-



neries around fishing communities. Soon the bridge near Finnsnes appears. The Gisund Båthamn lies behind a sandbank close to the shore. At low water, part of it is dry. We cautiously drive along the narrow waterway into the harbor. The long guest jetty is free, its starboard side seems favorable, deep enough water and not close to the rocks. We moor *Silmaril* behind a motorboat at its end, leaving plenty of room for *Cachana*.

We will stay here and prepare everything for the winter storage of the boats. Entering the cave is planned for September 10 or 11, depending on the weather. The crane cannot be operated in strong wind, since the pier where it will arrive is exposed. The date will be fixed shortly before the operation when everybody involved agrees on the favorable day.

All is well, we are pleased to be here and get ready for a nice dinner on the terrace of the marina building.

Chérif grills the specially prepared fish, I serve salad and dessert.

After a scrumptious meal, long talks about the organization of the work in the coming days and who is supposed to do when what, we clean up and return to our boats. The four of us are as happy as can be.



Alex and I sit in the cockpit for a while, enjoy the night-time peace and quiet and relish the wonderful ambiance.

Friday, August 30 to September 6.

Intense workdays are ahead of us. Susanne and I take care of chores in the boat, washing, sorting what remains and what must come out, writing lists, cleaning cooking, shopping. The boys attend to the maintenance of the boats and the engines, oil change, valve adjustment, replacement of old flexible tubes in the head and the pantry and start building the supports for the masts.



We need material and food and walk to the shops almost every day about a twenty-minute stroll. The Chandler and the hardware store soon know our names! We enjoy their friendly help and sound advice.

Rain on and off every day. Despite the pending tasks from morning to evening we

relax, eat together, one meal on *Cachana*, the next on *Silmaril*, and help each other whenever we can. Susanne and Chérif spoil us so much.

Once in a while a boat ties up on the guest jetty. The fisherman and his wife have engine trouble; they are looking for a suitable place to haul out. We talk to them, exchange our sailing experience and when we meet in the Vinmonopolet let them show us their preferred Aquavit from the great number of choices!

A man comes by and gives us the food his wife must take off the boat for the winter. A glass contains a home-made fish preserve, tasty bits in bright red sauce, no idea what it really is!

A young Austrian leaves his boat in the marina during the winter months. He needs information about the proceedings. Susanne invites him for dinner. Later, he disappears without saying goodbye.



Friday, September 6. We did it, everything is ready, the supports are assembled, the date for the crane and for entering the cave is set: we are expected at Olavsvern on September 10. We have three more days to fish and anchor somewhere.

Saturday, September 7. Before casting off, we attend to the last chores, walk to the center one more time, stock up on wine and what is missing for the planned menus of the coming days and then follow *Cachana* to the anchoring place behind Hestøy. We will stay for two days; the place is sheltered, quiet, and pretty.

There is no wind on Gisundet, we chug along, fish and are happy. It is cold, but the sun is out. Shortly after 17:00 we reach the anchorage and make fast alongside *Cachana*. For days, Alex has observed the intensity of the sunbursts and we had hoped to see Northern Lights here, with a clear sky and very little light during the night. The outlook seems favorable for tonight. We have dinner on our boat and patiently wait until it is pitch-dark. Susanne and Chérif climb across the reeling to go back to their own boat; nothing green in the sky. Shortly before we are ready to turn in, we hear them shouting: come out, it is happening! Indeed, right above us in a gigantic circle green shrouds of mist gyrate in all directions; they drift fast or slowly, change hue from very faint to a deep green wraith-like or contoured, with an occasional very slight pastel purple rim.

I cannot accurately couch the spectacle in terms.



We stay in the cockpit for a long time freezing until the Lights start fading and the stars are visible again. There was no time to go fetch the camera, I just needed to absorb the celestial performance.

Deliriously happy about the experience, and very thankful that Susanne and Chérif had been much more patient and observant.

We stay put alongside *Cachana*; there is very little wind and none forecast for the night.

Sunday, September, 8. It is raining. We tidy up and start packing. Dinner will be on *Cachana*. The weather is changing. We untie *Silmaril* and look for our own anchoring spot. In the blackness of the rainy night, Alex misses the length marks on the chain and lets it out to the last link, just before the end of the anchor rope. We will attend to the problem in the morning. It is too dark to see a thing now and we are freezing. *Silmaril* is safely moored on 60m of chain and rope.

Monday, September 9. After the long rainy day yesterday, sunshine, and total calm greet us when we are up. Right after breakfast we tackle the chain problem. With a solid plan and our combined strength, we succeed in getting the chain on the winch again. No catastrophe, no injury, all is well.

We decide to leave here, to spend the last day on the water to fish and to go back to the float with the cabin of the Tromsø Yacht club for the last night. We like the place and look forward to a cozy evening. It is close enough to Olavsvern to arrive there tomorrow at the appointed hour in good time.

The *Polarlys* passes out on the sound on her way to Tromsø. We enjoy the nice weather and the wonderful landscape. Toward the evening we arrive at the float. Susanne demounts the instruments from the top of the mast.



Chérif is afraid that they might be damaged during unstepping. We leave ours where they are. They were never damaged during the maneuver in all our years on the boat and we expect them to remain in good shape this time as well. We will eat and spend the evening in the little cabin. Aperitif party and dinner will consist in everything that cannot be left on the boat and that is not reserved for the meals tomorrow. The potpourri promises to be very interesting.



Alex makes a fire in the little tube furnace and Chérif lights his grill. Everything is in place; we will eat shortly.

A motor yacht arrives in the dusk and makes fast. An elderly couple greets us, but they do not want to join us in the cabin; they remain on their boat for dinner.

It still takes a little while for the food to be ready. Dusk is falling fast

Susanne and I go for our cameras. Such sunsets just must be banned on the chip. Susanne has placed her little herb garden into the club's grill on the float. It has faithfully provided fresh herbs during the entire summer. She hopes that somebody will have pity and take it home before it dies.

The sky is reflected on the water, yellow, mauve, and gray. The black hill divides the sky from its reflection. The colors deepen. The darkness swallows the



lighter colors. Blackness soon envelops us.

It is time for dinner. The candles are lit in the cabin. The potpourri of our last meal together on the water tastes just great. We sit for a long time in the warmth, talk and laugh, and of course discuss the procedure of unstepping the masts and entering the cave. Our excitement grows tangible.

Tuesday, September 10. Now is the time to keep cool. *Silmaril* must be perfectly prepared for her winter dormancy. Alex takes care of the technical aspects; I sort the clothes for the trip and pack everything else. The pantry must provide two more simple meals for the two of us. What can be stored mouse- and bug-secure is appropriately packed and stowed away, the rest put in shopping bags to give away.

We briefly discuss the route with Susanne and Chérif, do we go around the island

where we came from or straight ahead north. The people in the motor yacht took this way and we decide to do the same. It is the shorter way to Olavsvern and we will just carefully check the depth of the shallow water to find a safe passage on this leg.

Cachana casts off and we are right behind her.

The sky is overcast, but is clearing fast. All around us are the mountains and shore we know so well. We are grateful that we do not have to say goodbye for good; we will sail here again next year if we keep in good health.



We arrive at Olavsvern at 13.00. *Cachana* takes the place at the short pier, we moor *Silmaril* at the pier where the military ships usually land. The operator and his gigantic vehicle appear on time. *Silmaril* is first. Susanne and Chérif come to help. The operator works the remote control and moves the crane jib, the rest is up to us. Susanne takes care of the forestay with the very heavy Furlex, Chérif is down in the boat and maneuvers the mast step and the attached cables through the opening in the deck, Alex gives directions and I keep a nervous watch!

The execution is slow, but finally the mast lies securely on the supports. It juts out many meters at the bow and the stern, 6m ahead and 2m in the back. It could not be done otherwise, the boat is 12m, the mast 20m long and the position of the crane on the pier decided on the mast's position on deck. We will have to manage the maneuvers of mooring tonight, casting off tomorrow and entering



the cave tomorrow as best we can.
It's *Cachana's* turn.



The operator gets to work. Susanne and Chérif do not really need our

help. They are much younger than we are and their boat is full 2m shorter than *Silmaril* and their deck-stepped mast shorter and lighter by far.

At 16:00 their mast is down, they rig it tight, while we get ready to leave the military pier. Very carefully we untie *Silmaril*. There is no wind at all and the maneuver poses no problem.

We cruise toward the cave entrance to tie up alongside the large barge right in front of it. *Cachana* remains where she is. We will meet at the entrance tomorrow.

Mooring at the barge is no problem. At snail's pace I steer *Silmaril's* starboard in a wide circle close the rusty hull. Alex spots a large bollard on the deck of the barge and ties up. Perfect landing.

We finish the last chores on and below deck, eat something and enjoy the evening with a glass of wine. Falling asleep takes time, both of us are tense and a little nervous. Soon we will have to enter, fasten *Silmaril* securely, and think of everything important for her hibernation.

Wednesday, September 11. We wake up early. What a day! Nine-Eleven happened nineteen years ago and a dear friend celebrates her birthday today. We will do our best to make the day a happy one and a nice memory.

There is very little wind. A few cirrostratus clouds blur the deep blue of the sky.

After breakfast, Chérif sends a WhatsApp: the door will open at 14:00, when the water level permits the operation. *Cachana* is on her way and will soon tie up at the entrance. We get ready to cast off from the barge and move to the entrance.

Alex takes a few pictures before we leave of the parts we will have to get or buy during the winter months back home, various fittings, filters, the thread of the toilet brush.

Cachana passes us and ties up on the right side of the entrance.



We follow her and soon *Silmaril* is moored safely on the left and ready to enter as well.



Last checks, we cannot afford to forget anything. We consult our various lists, pack the waste, organize the pantry, clean the kitchen, empty the water tank, the boiler, and the hoses, open the cabinets and secure their doors, spread bedding and clothes to air them as well as possible, heave up on deck what is ready to go. We do our best to keep the chaos in the boat as manageable as possible.

Certainly, the situation is quite familiar, however those last hours are always hectic and tense, no remedy against it.

We wait, eat a little something and Alex climbs up on land and takes a few pictures of our unusual mooring.

Silmaril was tied up at the barge; now she is ready to enter this hole.



The massive gate is still closed. We wait, excitement rising! My knees get weak!

Shortly after 14:00 the gate glides slowly into the rocks on the right. I start the engine.

Are we supposed to proceed? Who goes first? After a few moments someone whistles. Let's go. *Silmaril* is first, Alex unties the lines, and with pounding heart I very slowly drive into the narrow canal. The glaring neon lights blind me.

Where am I supposed to go? Alex sees the man in the yellow vest. He waves us on. Alex shouts, advance! go further in! We should have tied up at the floating jetty, but by the time I understood what they meant, *Silmaril* was already past it. So, we continue and I maneuver the boat to the pier behind the jetty.



ble time to prevent the growth of algae in the cave. All of a sudden hustle and bustle in the boat. We try to be quick and yet thorough. *Silmaril* must be in perfect shape. We bombard each other with questions: is everything on deck, luggage, waste, leftover food? Are all the lists checked and rechecked? Is the new electric dehumidifier properly installed and running as it should? The question was what the figure on the control should show, few drops or many? Alex makes a decision, a last glance around, we climb on deck and we have left *Silmaril*. On the pier we wait among an incredible number of luggage, bags with waste and food. Susanne and Chérif are still in the boat. We should have taken our time! Well, the attendants pick us up first and drive us in a SUV through the long galleries, past roundabouts, and junctions out of the mountain. They unload our stuff in front of the administration building and return to fetch Susanne and Chérif. It does not take long and they are back and unload even more stuff than we have! A minivan cab takes us to the center of Tromsø, where we have booked rooms for two nights at the Blue Radisson. We fly on Friday, plenty of time for shopping and an extended good-bye.

We take a little rest and meet later on for a stroll through town. Alex detects the *G.O.Sars* at the pier, the research ship on which our dear friend Anne has been working for the last two years. Is she on board? Alex immediately climbs up the gangway



We did it! Both of us are in! The attendants urge us to hurry. The lights should be on for the shortest possi-



and addresses the officer of the guard. We observe them and understand their body language: Alex asks for information and the officer refuses. However, after a few seconds, Alex turns and climbs down beaming: Anne has not yet arrived, but will come on board tomorrow at 10:00 to begin her month of work on the ship. What a coincidence! We are so happy to meet her. The four of us celebrate the successful storage operations with an excellent dinner in the restaurant Du Verden.

Saturday, September 12. Rain and a murky sky greet us this morning. After a nice breakfast in company with Susanne and Chérif, we get ready to meet Anne. We call her around 10:00. She is already aboard the *G.O.Sars* helping in the kitchen with lunch; we are expected to come see her around 11:00.

How wonderful to see her! She shows us everything on the ship. If we meet someone, she introduces us. She knows everybody, including the captain. We feel that the crew is very fond of Anne; everybody likes her and enjoys working with her. She makes it her morning routine to bring coffee to the bridge, to inquire about the route, the weather, and the tasks of the researchers.

No one is on the bridge now except us and Alex takes pictures to his heart's content. Anne and her colleague take care of the 46 cabins, of the crew's laundry, help in the kitchen and serve the food at mealtimes. They work 12-hour shifts for one month on the ship and go home for one month. Anne loves her work, the friendly atmosphere on board and the exciting research. She especially likes her tasks in the kitchen and service. That's where her talent and experience in presenting food show conspicuously.



The self-serve lunch buffet is a tableau of perfectly balanced colors and shapes. Close contact with the crew and their well-being are dear to her heart and is appreciated and demonstrated. On a previous tour the researchers gave her a big lump of manganese compound that they had brought up from the seabed for examination. She made it a gift for her rock-loving grandson.

The ship's equipment is impressively generous. Everything is large-scale, spick and span and ultramodern: the kitchen and several pantries with individual temperatures, various walk-in cold rooms and freezers, several workshops, laboratories, fitness studios, cinemas, libraries, eating areas and lounges, many offices, gigantic engineering equipment, even a small submarine robot that can reach deep down to the seafloor is on board. After half an hour we say goodbye and



We hope to see Anne and her husband Raymond next year and maybe even sail together.

Susanne and Chérif wait for us on the pier to have dinner together.

Two Hurtigruten ships are moored, the *Kung Harald* at the official Hurtigruten pier, the *Spitzbergen* a little further north behind her.

Alex inquires why the *Spitzbergen* is in Tromsø. She is chartered by a cruise company; we cannot visit. But the *Kung Harald* does not leave shortly. There is



still time and we decide to go on board. Susanne and Chérif have never been on a Hurtigruten ship. We climb the gangway, receive guest permits, and go to explore. A small girl looks out of a window, a glass pane as tall as a man that brings light to the interior and offers a great view.

We climb many stairs all the way up to the top. Far below us a drove of passengers boards a fast ferry.



she is relatively small compared to a cruise ship. The *Aida Perla* for example can accommodate up to 3400 passengers!



The *Kung Harald* is huge in our eyes, however, with her 222 cabins

Back on land, we take a short walk along the main street. Alex wants to find a book on Svalbard. I buy a birthday and a Christmas present for Lynn. Despite the bad light I take a picture of my favored house on this street with its beautiful florist.

The last evening in Norway is reserved to say goodbye to Susanne and Chérif. We go to the Rorbua and have a drink before a nice dinner at the restaurant Arctandria recommended by Jørn and his wife Vigdis.

Back at the hotel we say goodbye to Susanne and Chérif. They fly directly to Zurich an hour after our own flight through Oslo.

Another unexpected meeting awaits us. To our great surprise, Alex's brother Reto arrived in Tromsø today. He will continue to Svolvær tomorrow to board the *Antwerp Flyer*, the beautiful boat we came across on our way back to Tromsø with which we competed in a private regatta instigated by Lars. What a coincidence!

He will be crew for her passage to Scotland.

We meet him at the hotel entrance. After a hearty welcome embrace, I say goodbye

too tired to join them for a pub crawl. It is already late and I must be out of bed at an ungodly hour!

Alex takes him to the Rorbua for a beer and learns the details of Reto's trip.

Tomorrow we will fly to Oslo and Hamburg and rent a car to drive home with the equipment left in the depot at the Schreibers on the Rader Insel.

Friday, September 13. The alarm clock goes off at 04:15; we take the bus to the airport at 05:15 and the flight shortly before 07:00. Our sailing summer is over.

