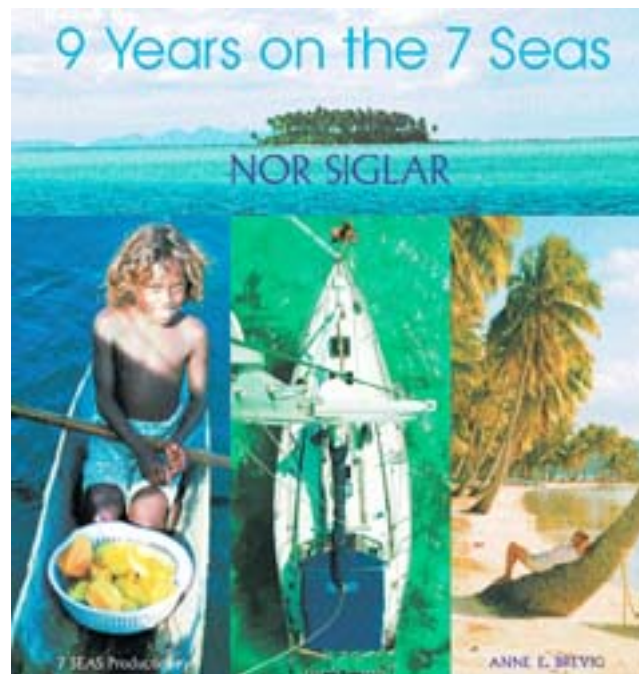


Anne E. Brevig

9 Years on the 7 Seas

NOR SIGLAR

Sample Chapter: The Dream

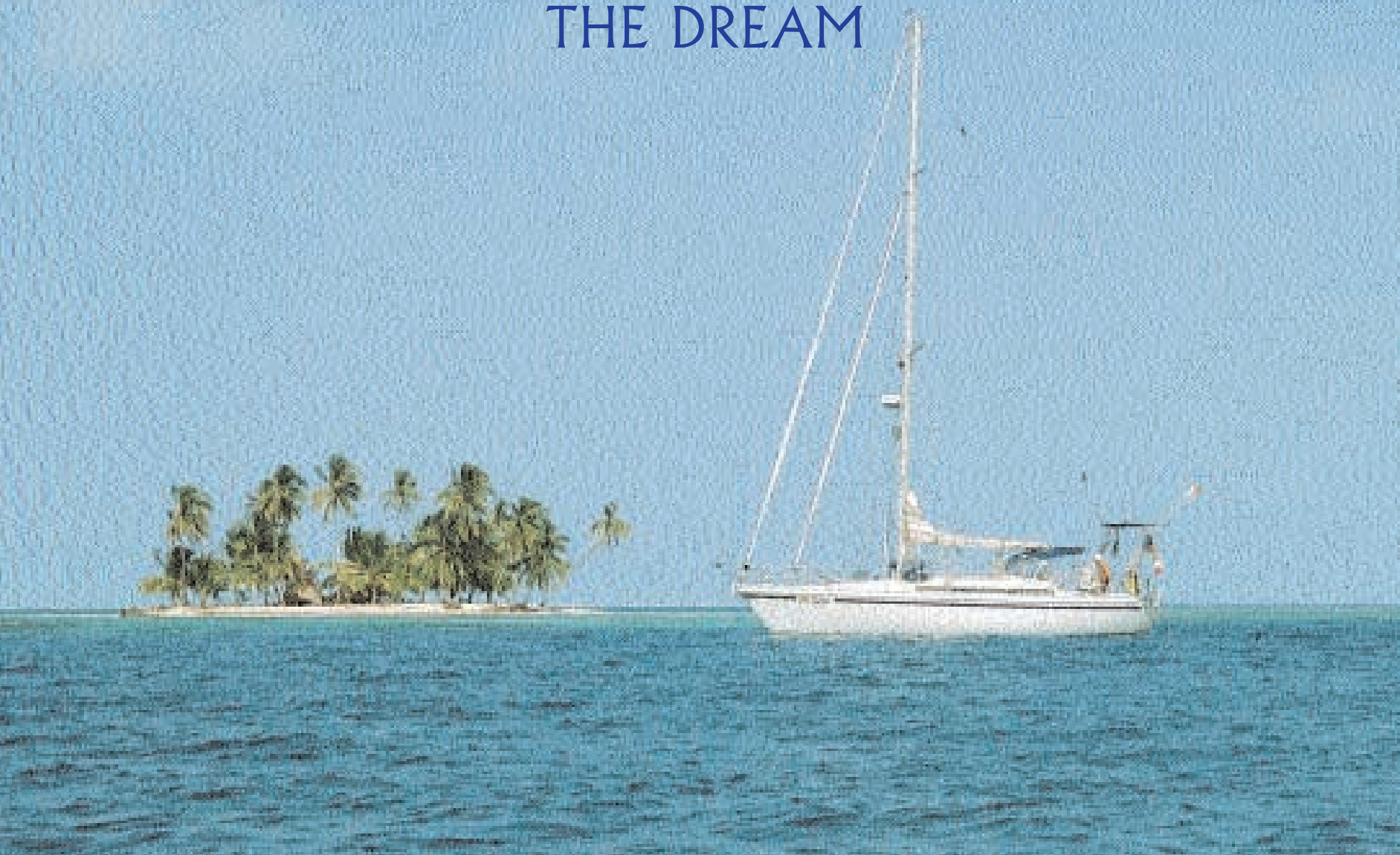


ISBN 0-9737582-0-1

Published by 7 Seas Productions, Port Moody, B.C., Canada
Phone: 1-604-949-1680 e-mail: sevensseasprod@shaw.ca

<http://www.norsiglar.com/ordernow/>

THE DREAM



I’ve just got to sell the boat, Anne!” He looked so despondent, this newfound love of mine, an avid sailor, born on the south coast of Norway with salt water in his veins. In my wallet I carry an old, crumpled black and white photo of a little blond boy in a hand-knit swimsuit complete with a sailboat on his chest. Time and again, Martin, whose hair was now turning grey at the temples, would reminisce about his happy childhood by the sea. Especially the time, when at the tender age of 12, he “borrowed” his father’s 6-metre sailboat, took off without permission, ran into a full gale, was afraid to turn around and almost ended up in Denmark. Yes, indeed, the dream of sailing to distant and exotic shores on his own keel took shape very early in this young Viking.

“No way!” I exclaimed with fervour. The year was 1984; times were tough in Canada, especially on the West Coast, where the economy had hit a record low. In the mid 1950s, after Forestry School in Norway, Martin had emigrated to British Columbia where Canada’s big forests were beckoning. Now, 30 years later, he found himself at the helm of one of the country’s largest forestry consulting firms. His life had changed and he really should part with his beloved sailboat. “But *Elysian* is your sanctuary,” I pleaded. “She is the only place where you can truly relax! If you get rid of her, how can you cope with all the stress you are under these days?”

It was Sunday afternoon. We were on our way back to the city after a perfect weekend in the Gulf

Islands. In bright sunshine and an exhilarating fresh, northwesterly breeze, we sped home to reality and another workweek. Things aboard couldn’t be better. Still, there was a feeling of despair in the air.

Martin began leafing through some nautical magazines, rather nonchalantly. “Look here!” he exclaimed. “This couple has sailed around the world. And not only that, before they left, they lived on board this little ketch for several years!” “What a great idea,” I replied. “Why can’t we do that too?” Little did I know then how that impulsive outburst was to change my life forever.

How I could come up with such a crazy statement is beyond me to this day. Little me, just a country girl, who having grown up on a farm, also in Norway but far away from the coast, had never



set foot on a sailboat until I was 38. I was afraid of the sea, couldn't swim until I was 16, and more challenging still, became seasick easily. Had true love made me lose my senses? Had I gone totally mad? After 20 years abroad, working in various capacities within shipping, I had finally acquired a management position with an international company, which I really enjoyed. The work was interesting and well paid with excellent fringe benefits and a secure future. It was a dream job, the kind of job I had always wanted and worked so hard to get. But now, in a matter of seconds, it was a dream abandoned for new challenges and an uncertain future.

PREPARATIONS

The planning started right away. First, we had to decide what type of boat we should get for our once in a lifetime adventure. Although we loved our old *Elysian*, a 36-foot C&C, she was too small to live on while working full time and getting ready for going offshore. After some deliberation, we decided on a much roomier 40-foot Gib'Sea sloop, which we ordered new from the factory in France.

On a cold and wintry October day in 1985, *Nor Siglar* arrived on a freighter owned by the company I worked for in Vancouver for 17 years. A month later, after having sold the house and most of our belongings, save a few treasures, which kind rela-

tives agreed to store in our absence, our carefully chosen "Northern Sailor" became our new home. At that point, neither one of us would ever have imagined that this space, barely larger than an average size kitchen, would be our home, our *only* home for 15 years.

Living aboard was essential in order to save as much as we could as quickly as possible. Besides, knowing nothing about boats, I had to find out if I could adjust to life onboard. I didn't dare quit my job before I was convinced of that. Just as important was for the two of us to see if we could function together in such close quarters 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Outfitting a brand new sailboat for the high seas turned out to be twice as costly as we had thought. Therefore, to be able to finance our dream, we had to forego a number of things normally taken for granted in regular day-to-day life. Also, the preparations took much longer than expected. As the projects kept multiplying, the "to do" lists grew longer and longer. So it is really true: If you want to be 100% ready before casting off, you'll never get away from the dock!

It was a hectic time. We immersed ourselves in all kinds of nautical literature and attended seminars and slide presentations by experienced offshore cruisers. Although a veteran sailor and navigator,

Martin's sons Nils and Ross and friend Shayne prepare Nor Siglar for her offshore adventure.



Nor Siglar arrives in Vancouver from the factory in La Rochelle via the Gearbulk freighter Charles L.D.

Martin still had to familiarize himself with the maintenance and repair of the engine and equipment. His biggest challenge, however, was to master the mysteries of electricity and the electronics onboard. It was truly mind-boggling for someone, who was already middle-aged before the advent of computers, to learn how to use all the modern gadgets we acquired. For me, everything was new; boat handling and equipment, navigation and communications, even the terminology. A long string of courses qualified me for a full range of nautical skills, as well as the coveted amateur radio licence. Both of us took courses in celestial navigation, radar and first aid.

Martin quit his job nine months before departure. Even so, the last weeks were chaotic beyond belief. Hundreds of things had to be organized; we sold the car, renewed our passports and insurance policies, went to the doctor and dentist, met with our lawyer, accountant and bank manager, appointed a friend to have our power of attorney and to look after our bills and forward our mail. One week before cast-off, I quit my job, we got married, wrote our respective wills and were ready! The trial period was over.

Ours was not to be a circumnavigation of speed and impressive records. We had different goals. Because of our Norwegian roots, we wanted to go

“home” first, to sail to “the old country” on our own keel. After many years abroad, we yearned to re-ignite and nurture relationships with family and childhood friends, now that we finally had more than a few short vacation weeks at our disposal. So instead of heading west, following the trade winds, the traditional route around the world, we chose to go east about first.

Originally, our plan was to reach Spain the following summer for Columbus’ 500th anniversary in Sevilla and the Olympics in Barcelona. Then we wanted to sail in the Mediterranean, before heading north to the Land of the Midnight Sun and the Lillehammer Olympics. We did not realize the banality of it all until homesteaders on a beautiful island in Panama confronted us with the question: *Why are you rushing through paradise?*

Since then, we slowed down, smelled the roses and started to live for the moment. We met people and experienced things we otherwise would have missed. And it is these unique experiences we wish to share with you in our book, hoping that they will inspire other “ordinary people” like ourselves to pursue their own respective Dreams; Dreams that so many carry with them for a lifetime; Dreams that so few dare to fulfill.



CANADA



Coordinates:	Vancouver: 49°00' N, 123°19' W
Location:	North America; borders the North Atlantic, North Pacific and Arctic Oceans and USA along 49° N
Government:	Confederation with parliamentary democracy
Area:	9,976,140 sq. km
Coastline:	202,080 km
Population:	32,207,113 (2003) British 28%, French 23%, other European 15%, Amerindian 2%, other, Asian, African, Arab 6%, mixed 26%
Capital:	Ottawa
Languages:	English 59.3% (official), French 23.2% (official), other 17.5%
Religions:	Roman Catholic 46%, Protestant 36%, other 18%
Currency:	Canadian dollar (CAD)
Industries:	Transportation equipment, chemicals, processed and unprocessed minerals, wood, pulp and paper, whole and processed fish and food products, petroleum and natural gas
Agriculture:	Wheat, barley, oilseed, tobacco, fruits, vegetables, dairy products
Exports:	Motor vehicles and parts, industrial machinery, aircraft, telecommunications equipment, chemicals, plastics, fertilizers, wood pulp, timber, crude petroleum, natural gas, electricity, aluminum

*Last day at work.
Good-bye stress! Welcome freedom!
It is only 10 minutes to downtown
Vancouver from the marina where
we lived for six years.*