On a dreary, gray day two winters ago, the 72-ft gaff tops'l schooner Lord Jim broke out of a thick fog bank and slipped beneath the Golden Gate, seemingly unnoticed. No throngs of well-wishers had come out to usher her in. And no photographers were there to record her to the aft end of the main boom.

During her first five years, the Knight brothers cruised Meridian along the Eastern Seaboard and up into the Great Lakes, occasionally racing her with moderate success in such contests as the notorious Playboy photo spread, and she survived a Southern Ocean knockdown in mast-high seas and more than 140 knots of wind. But most importantly, she has fulfilled — and surpassed — her designer's original intent, having quietly made her mark as a bluewater voyager. Since completing a massive refit in San Francisco in the late '70s, Lord Jim has done four circumnavigations, plus a variety of tangential side trips.

Today, she's berthed in the same Pelican Harbor, Sausalito, slip that she inhabited during her last stint in the Bay 21 years ago. But her travelin' days are far from over. After completing a long list of renovations and upgrades, Holger and Tracy intend to set out again within the year.

Lord Jim's story is certainly one that's well worth telling, but to do so, we'll first have to turn back the clock to shortly after the turn of the century. Back then, although the usefulness of schooners for fishing and coastal trade had been usurped by steamships, John G. Alden had come to appreciate their inherent beauty and seaworthiness, and began designing a series of stately 'fisherman-style' schooners for gentlemen yachtsmen. With her topsail rig, deep full keel and spoon bow, Lord Jim was typical of the Alden designs of that era, but since she was commissioned to be a bluewater cruiser by the Knight brothers, both MIT professors, she was probably more heavily built.

Her construction was of 2-inch-thick yellow pitch pine planking on double-sawn oak frames, with 1 1/2-inch teak decks laid on oak deck beams. In the spring of 1936, when she came down the ways of the George Lawley and Sons Shipyard in Neponset, Massachusetts — bearing her original name, Meridian — she was, no doubt, a stunning sight. In addition to her main and foresail, her lofty rig carries two tops'ls, three headsails and, depending on wind conditions, either a high-flying fisherman, a big genoa or an enormous, 3,200 sq. ft. gollywobbler, the clew of which extends
Bermuda Race and the Chicago-Mackinac. But in 1941, she was pressed into government service, patrolling the East Coast for German U-Boats under the name *Blue Water*.

After the War, she was sold to Boston businessman Roscoe Prior, who changed her name yet again to *Shoal Water* and freshened her up with a new rig and sails. Al-
though Prior was primarily interested in cruising, he entered her in the 350-mile Marblehead to Halifax Race. Despite the fact that most of the crew jumped ship when Prior announced he was bringing his wife along — superstitious sailors still considered women taboo back then — the big schooner finished second only to the renowned L. Francis Herreshoff ketch Ticonderoga.

Sadly, after Prior died in 1949, the boat fell on hard times. She lay idle for four years, then was donated to the New York Maritime Academy, which didn’t have the funds to properly maintain her. She subsequently went to a New York magician — who renamed her Genie — and then to a radio producer, who apparently bought her with the intention of turning her over for a quick profit. Luckily, her next owner, Bostonian Ross Anderson, was the ideal buyer. Then Commodore of the Boston Yacht Club, Anderson had been looking in earnest for a schooner to race against Niña, a Burgess-designed schooner owned by Commodore De Coursey Fales of the rival New York Yacht Club. Although 35 years old at the time, no local boats, regardless of their sailplan, could beat Niña, but Anderson was determined to knock her off her throne. He quickly set to work putting his new yacht, which he rechristened Lord Jim, back into bristol condition. Among other challenges, her interior had been partially gutted by a galley fire.

Six months later, in July of 1960. Lord Jim was looking every bit like a proper yacht and Anderson was eager to take her into battle, although a chorus of naysayers doubted her potential for success. But Anderson’s friend Ted Hood came up with a sneaky, rule-beating ploy: Lord Jim was fitted with a new 82-ft aluminum foremast similar to the ones used on the 12 meters of the day. (Anderson’s racing resume included an unlucky America’s Cup challenge with his 12 meter Nefertiti.) The tall spar allowed him to fly a gargantuan masthead genoa which gave the 24-year-old schooner the extra punch she needed to beat the local competition. Among other challenges, her interior had been partially gutted by a galley fire.

When the fateful race day came, as luck would have it, the rhumbline to the finish was dead to windward. On a reach, Lord Jim could roar along like a freight train, but upwind her performance was downright sad. So, while the rest of the fleet clawed their way to weather, Lord Jim reached off to the east on a flyer and was all but forgotten during the four-day contest. But as the fleet approached the finish, suddenly — like a scene out of a Disney movie — Lord Jim magically bolted out of the haze to take line honors. Heralded as one of the last great schooner races, it was a classic underdog upset that was recounted with relish for many years at the Boston YC.

Meanwhile, down in the sunny latitudes of the Eastern Caribbean, a fledgling yacht chartering industry had been gaining momentum for over a decade, with Antigua as its principal base. Business was steadily increasing, and by 1966, the family-run Nicholson Yacht Charter firm was interested in expanding its fleet. Julie Nicholson — a New Englander who’d first sailed into Antigua aboard Irving Johnson’s Yankee and later married Rodney Nicholson — was running the charter office at the historic Nelson’s Dockyard. She’d convinced some stateside relatives to buy Lord Jim, as her luxuriously-appointed interior and three double staterooms made her ideal for charter work. Julie soon had paid reservations for a whole season of charters aboard the company’s new flagship. To her horror, though, her relatives got cold feet, so she encouraged a young English skipper named Jol Byerley, who was then captaining a smaller charter yacht, to go up to Boston and have a look.

Jol very much liked what he saw, but he had no cash for the purchase. He remembers Anderson — “one of the most delightful gentlemen, in every sense of the word, that I’ve ever met” — saying something like, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. You can take her away and pay me back as you get the money.” Jol couldn’t believe his ears, “I almost fell over!”
With valuable charters scheduled only a few weeks away, Jol organized a crew and made a beeline for Antigua, despite the threat of stormy November weather. Predictably, they got pasted by a violent storm that drove them 250 miles in one day under bare poles. Shaken, but otherwise none the worse for wear, they arrived on schedule.

Soon afterwards, Jol painted her a deep royal blue and his crew soon had her bronze and brightwork sparkling. With her stately sheer line and great clouds of sail, she was easily the most beautiful yacht in the Antilles, and the queen of the Nicholson charter fleet.

"I love sailing," says Jol, who still lives in Antigua, "and I r-e-a-l-l-y loved sailing Lord Jim, so we sailed her everywhere — in and out of places where the other charter skippers wouldn’t dare go under sail."

As Jol describes it, "The charter scene in those days was about as good as it could be anywhere. There was plenty of work and clients were mainly old-money New Englanders, all of whom came back repeatedly." Occasionally, there were also celebrities such as film star Carol Baker and her producer husband, author C.S. Forrester and jazz guitarist Charlie Byrd. "He actually left me his old Gibson guitar," Jol remembers fondly. The only regrettable client was the notorious trial attorney Roy Cohn, famous for his prosecution of the Rosenbergs, and as Joe McCarthy’s right hand man for his prosecution of the Rosenbergs, and as Joe McCarthy’s right hand man. Cohn’s outrageous behavior and his entourage of young gay lovers proved to be the proverbial ‘charter from hell’ for Jol and his (former) wife Jenny.

By contrast, the charter that was probably the most fun, and brought Lord Jim the most notoriety back then, was tagging along with the 82-ft motorsailor Sorrento during a two-week rolling photo shoot for Playboy magazine. We had the pleasure of perusing a dog-eared copy of the resulting November 1967 edition. It features a nine-page spread bursting with voluptuous bare-breasted ladies lounging on teak decks and splashing in turquoise lagoons, while well-groomed gentlemen in silky plaid shorts look on, unaffected, as though this sort of thing goes on every day in their world. For Jol and Jenny, though, the highlight of the affair was racing in the Around Bequia Race with the entire Playboy contingent along as crew, easily distracting the competition.

That wasn’t the only time Lord Jim was seen on a Caribbean race course. Known today by sailors the world over, Antigua Sailing Week was instituted in 1968 by crews of the local charter fleet as a grand fête celebrating the end of another splendid season. Those lucky enough to have been there would recall such storied yacht names as Royono, Escapade and Eileen. Virtually all the competitors were wooden and, by today’s definition, were already ‘classics’, although they certainly never used that term then. (Ironically, as ASY grew to include increasingly more modern racing machines, the woodies were shuffled to the sidelines, until recent years, when the inception of the Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta began a new golden era for traditionally-rigged sailing craft.)

If Jol’s memory serves him correctly, he raced Lord Jim in the first four regattas, winning her class three times and taking overall honors once or twice. "She didn’t like going to weather," he recalls, "but we were unbeatable downwind. We’d sail wing on wing with the mainsail and topsail out one way and the foresail out the other."

"I have to say, there was never a happier person than me when I was sailing that boat around the islands. With a name like Lord Jim, Jenny and I felt like we were the king and queen of the Caribbean."

With the momentum of repeat clientele, Lord Jim was averaging about 24 weeks of charter a year — which is still an exceptional average. But while her crew kept her varnish gleaming and interior shipshape, she’d undergone only cosmetic repairs since the Anderson years, and Jol knew she needed more refitting than he could afford to do. So in 1972, with some regret, he decided to sell her.

The new owner was an American named Denny Warner, who also intended to charter the ol’ girl. Sadly though, in the lineage of Lord Jim’s caretakers, Warner is best remembered for running her up on the Montezuma Shoal off Mustique, which nearly ripped the stem out of her. Luckily, she was saved and patched back together. But after less than three years of ownership, Warner listed her for sale, and the former queen lay idle once more.

About this time, back in San Francisco, a successful German-born studio photographer named Holger Kreuzhage, then 37, was, by his own estimation, undergoing a premature midlife crisis. Having raced and pleasure-sailed extensively as a young man in both the Baltic and on trans-Atlantics, Holger had developed an incessant yearning to buy a bluewater cruiser and sail over the horizon to adventures unknown.

Working through a Fort Lauderdale broker, he heard about several boats lying in the Caribbean that might fit the bill, the most appropriate of which, it seemed at the time, was a sturdy German-built steel ketch that had been actively chartering and was ready for sea. Another vessel he agreed to take a look at was a 39-year-old wooden schooner that neither he nor the broker knew much about.

"I was pretty much ready to buy that German ketch before I even got to Antigua," recalls Holger. "It appealed to my German instinct, being strong, clean and ready to go. And the price was the same as Lord Jim." But when he got to English Harbor he had a change of heart. Both boats were anchored out off the Dockyard quay, painted by the warm
glow of twilight. "It was love at first sight," says Holger with a smile. "On the one hand you had a German house-frau and on the other a hot Latin mistress. I was definitely sold on Lord Jim even before the sea trial."

Having purchased a six-month-old survey from a previous potential buyer, Holger knew she needed work, but he bought her nevertheless with a minimum of haggling. With a rowdy, funloving crew, he nursed her home to San Francisco "on a wing and a prayer." Bringing her up the coast through the fog, they navigated using a handheld Sony radio as a direction-finder — the only functioning 'electronics' on board.

Almost immediately after they arrived in the Bay in the summer of '75, Holger took his new mistress to Hunter's Point and hauled her on the railway at the old Anderson and Cristofani yard. Only then could he face the 'reality check' of her true condition. He grabbed a long screwdriver to probe the suspected rot in the stem and it slid all the way through like a hot knife through butter. "If we'd hit a log or something on the way north, we would have gone under." There was also lots of rot in the galley where an old ice box had been draining fresh water into the bilge for years. Undaunted, he went to work, commandeering the best shipwrights he could find to assist. As word got out, his team could find to assist. As word got out, his team

Over a four-year period, his team — which included Mario Silveira, Eric Winter, Fred Wiese, Robert Wesley, Paul Farrar, Tony Baker, and Jim McMullan — gave the boat a whole new bow section, replaced all the planks below the waterline, renewed a raft of frames in the galley and engine room, and laid 2-inch-thick teak for a marine ply subdeck over the original deck. "It's now tremendously strong and it also helps to stiffen the whole boat structurally." As if all this weren't enough, they contracted a San Francisco foundry to cast special hardware elements such as a solid bronze sink and a dragon's head which holds the ship's bell.

Finally, though, the former 'queen' was whole again, and in the spring of 1978 Holger put her through her paces during the annual Master Mariners Race — a proud day which renowned photographer Diane Beeston captured on film. With the help of a massive, 1,400 sq. ft. genoa, the big Alden schooner blasted through the chop, with every crew member wearing an ear-to-toe smile. "We were doing 14.5 knots," recalls Holger with a laugh, "totally out of control! That's the fastest I ever made her go, not counting the hurricane."

By the next year, Holger had crossed a zillion tasks off his checklist and was ready to fulfill his dreams of bluewater cruising. He'd assembled a crew of eager young adventurers, including Ira Epstein, who'd helped bring the boat up from Antigua. Befitting this emotional departure into the great unknown, author Sterling Hayden (who then lived at Pelican Harbor aboard the "Wooden Shoe" houseboat) cast off the docklines. That was April of '79, and the proud, black-hulled schooner was 43 years old.

The chronology of landfalls and port calls that Lord Jim made over the next 23 years — through four circumnavigations — is mind-numbing. So much so, in fact, that even Holger sometimes gets confused about the details. Yet he still remembers that first offshore passage to Hawaii vividly. "Once we got into the trades, we had a very fast passage. We were doing almost 300 miles a day for four days."

As Holger and his four crew, it was a glorious time: a mind-expanding voyage of freedom — in an era when freedom and mind-expansion were watchwords of the day. For Holger, the real excitement of his new lifestyle was the long bluewater passages rather than laying over in port, so they rarely lingered long. From Hawaii, it was on to Fanning, Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, the Maldives, Mauritius, South Africa, the Caribbean, Panama and home, all in 2 1/2 years.

They lived off the sea as much as possible, once catching a 180-pound wahoo, and making fish jerky out of what wouldn't fit in the freezer. Off Australia's Great Barrier Reef, they hunted for sharks which brought them a handsome bounty from the resorts ashore. Holger also occasionally earned money en route doing photography. As he was about to leave San Francisco, he hated to give up his longtime clients, so he convinced one of them, Jantzen Swimwear, to fly their models and crew out to meet the big schooner in exotic locations. Even without the Jantzen models on board, just about everywhere Lord Jim stopped she was the prettiest boat in the harbor, which often brought her notoriety from the local press.

The waters of Southeast Asia were the most dangerous for them, as they worried about hitting unlit fishing canoes and floating logs. Near Singapore, in the notorious Strait of Malacca, they had to outrun the local pirates. The roughest sailing was rounding South Africa, where they were hammered by a series of severe storms — after having to douse the storm jib, they still made 9 knots under bare poles while dragging warps.

But the most bizarre occurrence of the
We'd have to serialize this article into three more installments to give you the complete history of Lord Jim's next three roundings. But we'll share a few highlights. The start of the trip began with Holger assembling a "completely green crew." They moved aboard with their gear and learned the ropes at their old Caribbean cruising grounds, somewhere south of the border. The next time the greenhorns saw terra firma was six weeks later, when they made landfall at Acapulco.

Again, Lord Jim made a whirlwind trip around the planet, gobbling up great tracks of open ocean between landfalls. One favorite anecdote of that voyage was seasonal, so the ice was pretty far north already. If we had run into one of those 'growlers' in the night, that would have been it," he recalls.

Although still navigating by sextant and dead reckoning, they did have a weatherfax which informed them of oncoming storms. "That was a big help. But when you are out there you can dodge a little bit north, a little bit south, but you know you are eventually going to get clobbered," he says. "And we did!"

The barometer dropped as far down as it could go. "I came on deck and could see on the horizon what looked like a row of foaming. They had less than 15 minutes to get the sails down, and before they could get them lashed, it was blowing 80 knots and building. As night was coming on, Holger decided to lie ahull, "dragging everything but the kitchen sink — the anchor, chain, two huge warps and some truck tires that I had brought for that purpose. They were still doing 10 or 11 knots, driven by 60-ft seas."

As if that wasn't nerve-wracking enough, by the evening the storm center was rolling over them, and as it passed, contrary swells began to build from opposing directions. "Where they overlap," explains Holger, "you have what they call graybeards. They're like geysers, exploding around you."

One such wave picked up Lord Jim like a bathtub toy and knocked her down violently with "the biggest bang you can imagine." After the storm passed they would learn that the blow had damaged the rudder and snapped two 2-inch bronze steering arms which rendered the heavy-duty Edson steering gear useless. Luckily, Holger had brought along a heavy-duty emergency tiller which saw them safely around the Horn and into Mar de Plata, Argentina.

Months later, Lord Jim was back in her old Caribbean cruising grounds, where she lingered to do a stint of chartering out of Martinique. Holger then took her to Europe, back to the Caribbean, down to Brazil, to the Cape Verde Islands, then set sail for the '87 America's Cup in Freemantle. Unfortunately, rough weather and rigging problems dashed those plans and yet again Lord Jim went to Tauranga for repairs. This time, however, she lay moored there, under the care of an old friend for seven years while Holger was embroiled with legal problems back in the U.S.

In the late '90s, Tracy Brown came into the picture. The former owner/skipper...

Holger takes a sight. Modern electronics are a recent addition on Lord Jim. For most voyages, navigation was by traditional methods.
per of the Australian schooner Sol, she too is a proven bluewater sailor with an ample percentage of saltwater in her veins. In 1999, Tracy skippered Lord Jim up to Fiji, where they planned to do an extensive interior refit at a base that Holger had established outside of Suva. They celebrated the Millennium New Year in Fijian waters by sailing up and down the International Dateline.

When a coup in Fiji closed the government slipway, Lord Jim was taken to Cairns, Australia for a haulout in preparation for what proved to be a long, rough trip home to San Francisco through the North Pacific. Storms in Papua New Guinea drove them off their intended track to Japan, and they soon found themselves in Vava'u, Tonga, where they laid up through the hurricane season. They next stopped in Western Samoa in hopes of finding crew for the 5,500-mile trip back to California, but had no luck. So they clawed their way to the northeast doublehanded.

Constant pounding during a storm near the equator took its toll on the old schooner, then 65 years old, and she sprung a leak that brought in 7,000 gallons of water a day. With limited fuel to keep the batteries topped and the pumps running, they made a radical turn off their rhumbline and made for remote Kwajalein Atoll.

In a darkly ironic twist of fate, the day they arrived, a wide perimeter around the island had supposedly been secured for a ‘Star Wars’ missile test, when Lord Jim came limping into the lagoon.

Tracy and Holger were almost in worse shape than their long-suffering schooner. She had an abscessed tooth, and he had to be briefly hospitalized due to an unknown malady which turned out to be shingles. Believe it or not, while they were recuperating, one of the civilian workers loaned them a Latitude 38 in which former owner Denny Warner’s son had queried the editors about the status of his father’s onetime yacht.

On a late November day in 2001, Lord Jim finally breezed past Point Bonita on her long-awaited approach to the Golden Gate. But, as if the gods were teasing her, a short, steep swell rose high above the transom and pooped the entire cockpit, which had stayed dry since the Cape Horn incident.

Moments later, a solitary motorboat appeared through the mist. As we said in the beginning, the would-be well wishers hadn’t been informed, but Holger’s longtime friend Ira Epstein had acted on a hunch and soon appeared alongside with a bottle of champagne held high. Lord Jim had finally come home.

— latitude /aet