Society of Woman Geographers. Flag Carrier Report

Thank you for representing the Society of Woman Geographers (SWG) as a Flag Carrier. Please complete this report after your expedition and keep responses concise but provide details where helpful. Attach photos separately where noted.

Name of Flag Carrier:

1. Expedition title, dates, and location(s):

Small sailboat circumnavigation by two women of different generations. Started February 2021 and completed June 2026.

2. Purpose of your expedition (1–2 sentences):

The purpose of the expedition was to sail around the world, starting in the San Blas Islandes of Panama (on the Caribbean side of Panama) and return there in a two-year time frame.

3. Who was part of your team (names/roles/affiliations):

Kelly Gregory, sailng partner and first mate from San Blas Islands, Panama to Fiji

Cristinla Aggazzotti, crew member from the Galapagos to Fiji

Louise and Marta, crew members from Fiji to Vanuatu

Kelso Bradshaw, crew member from Vanuatu to Lombok, Indonesia

Uli Makareiko, crew member from Lombok, Indonesia to Kalamata, Greece

Vince Shrigley, crew member from Bawean, Indonesia, to Pangkor Marina, Malaysia

Ylva Carlsson, crew member from Langkawi, Malaysia to Djibouti

Jonathan Muhiudeen, crew member from Djibouti to Ismailia, Egypt and Kalamata, Greece to Port Saint Louis, France

Dimitris, crew member from Cyprus to Ios, Greece

Bella, crew member from Monemvasia to Kalamata, Greece

4. What were your main objectives, and did you achieve them?:

I did not achieve the original objective of circumnavigating from the San Blas Islands with Kelly Gregory. I did achieve my personal circumnavigation of crossing all the lines of longitude in my 34-foot sailboat Islander. However, that personal circumnavigation started in 1997, when I sailed out of Post Saint Louis, France and headed west.

5. What were the most significant findings, outcomes, or contributions?:

The most significant outcome was the completion of my personal circumnavigation after twenty-nine years of sailing.

6. What challenges did you encounter, and how did you address them?:

When I applied to SWG in 2021 with the hope of carrying the SWG, I had the idea of a sailing circumnavigation on my 34-foot sailboat Islander, starting and ending in the San Blas Islands on the Caribbean side of Panama. I hoped my sailing partner/crew member, Kelly Gregory, would become an SWG member, so the circumnavigation would be accomplished by two SWG members of two generations.

Things did not work out as planned. Kelly and I had originally planned to start our circumnavigation in March 2020, but the COVID pandemic forced us to delay. Kelly and I started sailing from the San Blas Islands in February 2021. We transited the Panama Canal, then spent several days on the Pacific side of Panama at the Flamenco Yacht Club. There we met a sailor named Jonathan Muhiudeen, who was sailing his 52-foot ketch Sinaran to his home in Malaysia.

By the time Kelly and I reached the Galapagos (about 800 nm), we had determined we needed a third person on board, especially to spread the load of keeping a 24-hour watch. We found Crisitina Aggazzotti through an internet crew finding service. Though we had exchanged emails and spoken on the phone, we did not meet Cristina until she arrived in Galapagos.

Kelly and I had not planned to stop in Galapagos, but a parting starboard shroud made a stop for repairs imperative before we could continue. Once Cristina arrived and repairs were complete, the three of us left for Nuka Hiva, French Polynesia. It was a 26-day passage (about 3000 nm). During those three and a half weeks, as we three sailed together from Galapagos to Fiji, we talked about Cristina joining SWG.

We spent two weeks in Nuku Hiva, resting and reprovisioning, before visiting Rangiroa and Tahiti. As we explored French Polynesia, we buddy-boated with a catamaran named Flight Plan, captained by Vince Shrigley (about 800 nm).

In Tahiti, I had numerous repairs made to Islander: replaced our broken windlass, the rest of the standing rigging, and various other equipment.

From Tahiti, we sailed to Fiji, an eighteen-day passage (about 1900 nm) during which we experienced the worst weather of our trip: an intense electrical squall, lasting about eight hours with high winds and heavy seas, lightning illuminating the cockpit like a strobe light.

Once we arrived in Fiji, we expected to continue to Lombok, Indonesia, where Islander would stay during the upcoming typhoon season. But COVID was still causing international disruptions. The Indonesian government stopped issuing visitors' visas. We could either leave Islander in Fiji for the typhoon season, or head to Indonesia without proper documentation. Australia was firmly closed to all yachts. Rather than risk having Islander confiscated because of lacking documentation, I decided to leave Islander in Fiji for the November to May typhoon season.

In May 2022, I returned to Fiji to prepare Islander for the continuation of our circumnavigation. Cristina had joined us only for the 2021 season, so I did not expect her to return. However, I was deeply disappointed when Kelly informed me she had decided to try out to join a crew for a round-the-world race and would not return to our circumnavigation.

Islander and I were in Fiji, with no crew. After several attempts to find crew to sail a long distance with me, I ended up sailing with two women to Vanuatu, a four-day sail (about 500 nm). I knew they were only available for that short distance, but I had made some progress.

In Vanuatu, Jonathan arrived. He now had five crew members on Sinaran and I had none. He agreed to let me ask one of his crew to sail with me. A young man named Kelso Bradshaw, twenty-four years old, with limited sailing experience but great intelligence and enthusiasm, agreed to be my crew.

But now the plans for my circumnavigation had completely changed. I had missed the weather window to sail across the Indian Ocean in 2022. With Kelso, we sailed from Vanuatu, past the Solomon Islands, to Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, and across the north side of Papua New Guinea to Sorong, Indonesia. [Note: Along this route, we passed the Sepik River drainage where SWG member Ingeborg de Beausacq made several exploratory expeditions in the 1950's. I felt a kinship with this early adventurer as we followed the deserted coastline.] Kelso and I then sailed to Lombok, Indonesia, stopping for several days of scuba diving in Raja Ampat and Labuanbajo. Kelso left Islander in November 2022 to pursue other adventures. I left Islander on the hard at Medana Marina on the northern tip of Lombok until January 2023 (about 4500 nm).

By then, I had found another crew member, a young Czech woman with excellent sailing experience named Uli Makareiko. The plan was to sail to Singapore, picking up Vince Shrigley along the way, and sail all the way to Greece. Uli and I left Lombok as planned and

picked up Vince in Bawean. But the weather had turned against us. The Northern Monsoon arrived earlier than usual. and we could not sail against the heavy headwinds. To make matters worse, I fell in the cockpit and broke the knuckle of my right-hand little finger. We stopped at the island of Karimunjawa, where I caught a ferry to the hospital in Semarang, where the surgeon put two metal pins in my knuckle and little finger. My right hand was only partially functional from then on.

Still, progressing slowly in zigzag fashion, we continued sailing and reached the Straits of Malacca, between Indonesia and Singapore and Malaysia. These are the busiest Straits in the world from a commercial shipping point of view. We successfully crossed the Straits, sailed past Singapore and entered Malaysia at Johore. There, I fell and fractured two bones in my right foot. The doctor's prescription was to keep my foot immobilized in a brace and put no weight on it for six weeks. I could scoot and hop around on Islander, but off the boat I was confined to a wheelchair. From Johore, we sailed to Pangkor Marina, Malaysia, where I had Islander hauled out and put on the hard. Uli, Vince, and I parted ways in Pangkor in April 2023. (about 2500 nm)

I returned home to Greece where, in May 2023, I was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer in my left parotid gland, which had started to spread to my right mid-facial nerve. Fortunately, I was treated at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, first with surgery to remove the cancerous gland, then radiation therapy, augmented by chemotherapy. The cancer was killed. It was a tough year.

In January 2024, I returned to Pangkor Marina, where Uli joined me. We sailed to Langkawi, where Uli's friend Ylva Carlsson joined us. The three of continued the route Uli and I had hoped to sail in 2023. From Langkawi, we sailed non-stop to Uligan, a northern island in Maldives (about 1700 nm). Officials there were amazed to see a sailboat arrive with only three women aboard, no men. That had never happened before. Maldives is a Muslim country, as is Malaysia.

From Uligan, we sailed to Socotra, the island called the Galapagos of the Indian Ocean, another Muslim entity, owned by Yemen (about 1200 nm). Our agent there was as shocked at the Maldives officials to meet a woman captain and crew. From Socotra, we sailed to Djibouti, arriving on March 1 (about 700 nm). There Ylva left us, as she had previous plans.

The next stage of our journey was through the Red Sea. In 2024, there had already been dozens of attacks by Houthis based in Yemen on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. We would be passing through Muslim countries for the 1200 nm length of the Red Sea. I decided Uli and I would be less vulnerable if we had a man on board. I asked Jonathan to join us. He agreed. We decided to stay on the African side of the shipping lanes that bisect the Red Sea. The Yemeni side, and the Houthis, seemed more dangerous. I believe I made the right decision, although we did suffer an incident with the Afars as we passed Eritrea.

Our first stop in the Red Sea was Suakin, Sudan. Then for the next month, we slowly worked our way north, against the annual headwind, to the Suez Canal. Halfway through the Suez Canal, all pleasure craft are required to stop at Ismailia. The dangers of the Red Sea behind, Jonathan returned home to Malaysia.

Uli and completed our passage through the Suez Canal and sailed directly to Cyprus (about 300 nm). We added a third crew member, a Cypriot named Dimitri, who joined us to Kastelorizo, where we entered Greece. We sailed to Rhodes and Ios, where Dimitri left to return to Cyprus. Uli and I sailed to Monemvasia, on the Greek mainland, arriving on May 16, 2024 (about 500 nm). I had Islander hauled out to spend the winter on the hard.

In April 2025, Uli returned to sail with me for a third season. We added a young New Zealand woman to the crew. But we sailed only from Monemvasia as far as Methonia, Greece, where we started crossing the open waters toward Sicily. It became clear that this combination of crew was not working. We turned around and sailed back to Kalamata, where I left Islander at the Kalamata Marina for the winter (about 200 nm),

In June 2026, Jonathan agreed to sail with me to Port Saint Louis, France, to complete my personal circumnavigation, and return with Islander to Kalamata. We sailed to Portorosa on the north coast of Sicily, spent three days, then sailed past Elba to the north of Corsica. From there, we sailed to Port Saint Louis, France, where I crossed my wake, that is, I crossed the easternmost line of longitude line I had previously crossed in Islander, which was in 1997, twenty-nine years ago (about 1000 nm).

We anchored in the shallow bay for two nights, then turned back and headed east. We sailed to Marseille, where we celebrated my circumnavigation on Saturday, June 27, 2026. SWG members Mechtild Rossler, Kevin Kling, and Joanna Biggar, all arrived. Mechtild brought a bottle of champagne, courtesy of SWG. The SWG flag was flying on the port flag halyard.

The circumnavigation we celebrated that night was not the one I anticipated when I applied to carry the SWG flag in 2019. We celebrated my personal circumnavigation, which began at Port Saint Louis in 1997. In 1997, I sailed west from Port Saint Louis and arrived in Barbardos before Christmas. The next year, I sailed through the Caribbean Islands to Fort Lauderdale. Fort Lauderdale is west of the San Blas Islands in Panama, from which Kelly and I departed. My twenty-nine years of sailing between 1997 and 2026 have been filled with pleasures, difficulties, frustrations, happiness, and profound love for living on the ocean in a small boat, propelled by the wind.

Note: Kelly Gregory and Cristina Aggazzotti joined SWG in 2025. Crisitina Aggazzotti was elected to the SWG Board of Directors in 2026 and serves on the Flag Carriers Committee.

N.B. Distances are measured in nautical miles (nm), one nm equals 1.15 statute mile. Islander averages about 100 nm every 24 hours. All distances are approximate, as one does not sail in a straight line from one point to another.

7. What was the most meaningful or memorable moment?:

There were many meaningful moments on a voyage of this length. One that stands out is the shock of the government officials when Uli, Ylva and I entered Uligan in the Maldives and they discovered there were no men on board Islander. This had never before happened in their experience. Uli, Ylva and I took it for granted that we three women were capable of sailing across oceans. We had not recognized what an anomaly we were.

8. How did it feel to carry the SWG Flag? (Please include a photo with the flag?

I am proud to have carried the SWG flag through five years of sailing adventures. I felt a connection with other SWG members who have carried the flag, and also with SWG members such as Ingeborg de Beausacq, who explored the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea in the 1950's, which I sailed past over seventy years later.

9. How will your expedition findings/experiences be shared (publications, presentations, media, community engagement)?:

The first book to reflect a portion of my circumnavigation is entitled "Nigtwatch Haiku," coauthored by Ulyana Makareiko, Ylva Carlsson, and myself. I am writing a more complete account of my sailing experiences to be entitled "Crossing Longitudes," This new book will complement my book of travel essays entitled "Connecting Latitudes."

10. Do you consent to your report/photos being shared by SWG (website, newsletter, social media)? Please tag SWG during your expedition with updates if possible (Facebook and Instagram) Please also list your social accounts for cross-posting

Yes, I consent to my report and photos being shared by SWG.

My Facebook account is Barbara Jean Euser. My Instagram account is barbaraeuser.