

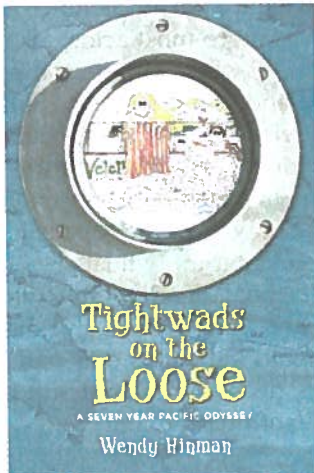
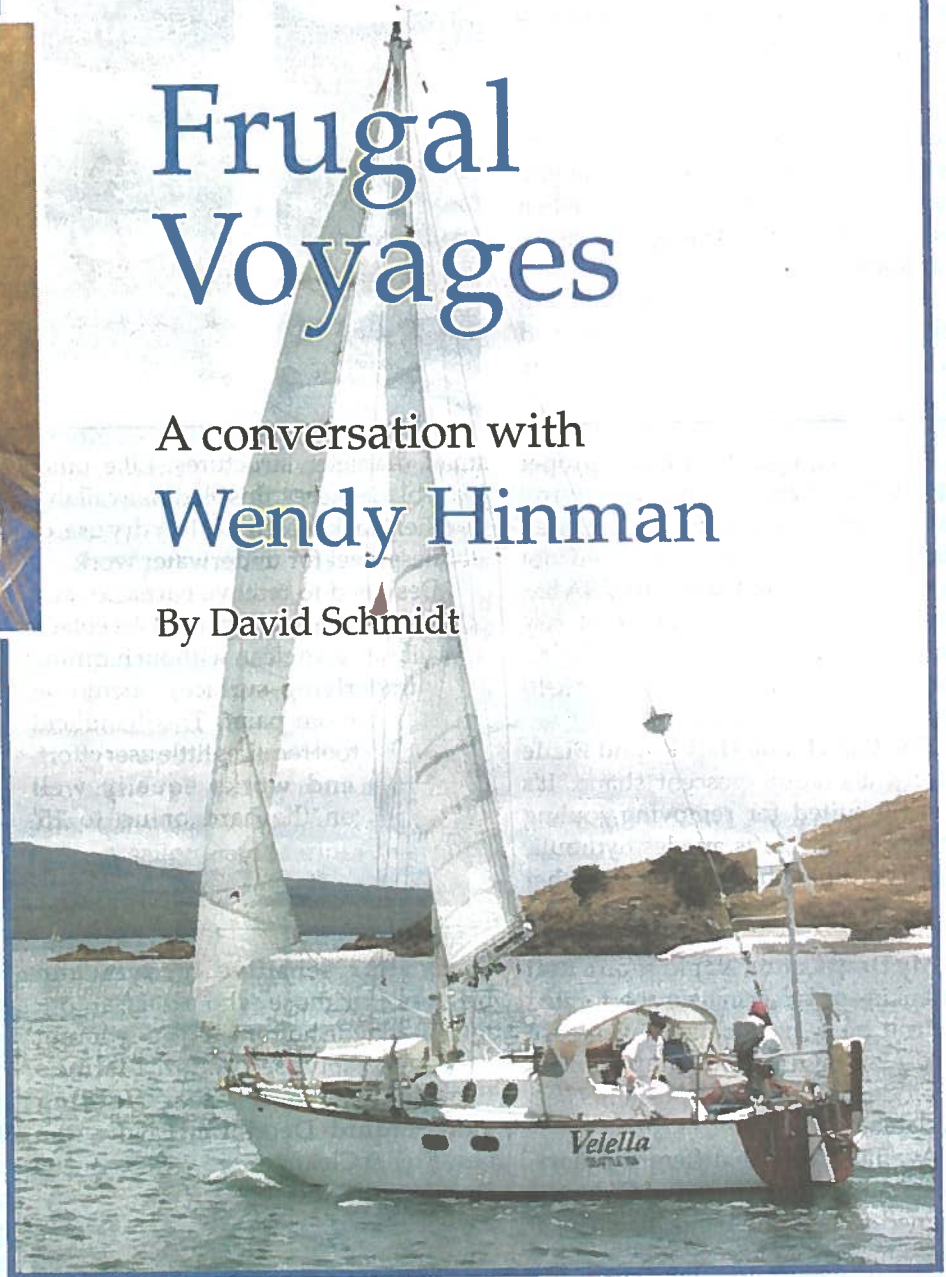


Frugal Voyages

A conversation with
Wendy Hinman

By David Schmidt

Wendy's "Tightwads on the Loose" is not only entertaining, but reveals the unvarnished ins and outs of the true cruising life. Available through the Tightwads on the Loose eStore, through your independent bookseller or Amazon.com.



Some cruisers wait until they can afford the perfect boat before venturing to foreign shores; others simply go. Wendy Hinman (48) and her husband, Garth Wilcox (52), paid-off their mortgage early, rented out their Seattle home and just went. "Verella," a 1979 31-foot, Tom Wylie-designed light-displacement, cold-molded cruiser, was their choice for what proved to be a seven-year odyssey throughout the Pacific Rim.

All told, Wendy, Garth and *Veleva* reeled off 34,000 miles, calling on nineteen countries en route. Impressively, the couple thrived on just \$1,000 a month (\$33 a day, not including *Veleva's* purchase price)—their home-rental profits and the errant job along the way.

While *Veleva* didn't offer Garth (6'1") standing headroom, her simplicity, her light working loads and her performance-minded design safely delivered the couple home in 2007. Since then, they bought a house with a large shed on Bainbridge Island (or, as Wendy termed it, "a man cave with a house") and Wendy recently published her first book, *Tightwads on the Loose*. They've also been debating their next boat (likely a 35-38 footer of Garth's design) and their next voyage (likely a cruise through Europe, via the Horn). I caught up with Wendy at this year's Seattle Boat Show to learn more about her extensive sailing background, and to hear about their next offshore adventure.

How did you guys get into sailing?

I moved to Hawaii when I was seven and my parents bought a Cal 27, which we sailed all over the islands. Later, we cruised the Chesapeake on a Catalina 30. It was our family thing—it was a good life. Garth sailed around the world with his family as a teenager,

and was shipwrecked on a Pacific Island for a year.

It was always an unspoken thing that someday we'd have a big adventure on the ocean together.

How did you begin your Pacific journey?

We did a shakedown cruise around Vancouver Island, and then we did the milk run [to the South Pacific]—we were usually the smallest boat by at least nine feet. It was fun to [retrace] Garth's [previous] voyage and to see where he was shipwrecked on an island south of Suva, Fiji called Makaluva.

By the time we got to New Zealand, three-quarters of the people who crossed with us were selling or shipping their boats home.

You really cruised 34,000 miles on only \$33 a day?

Whenever we ran short, we just sailed to an anchorage and went snorkeling.

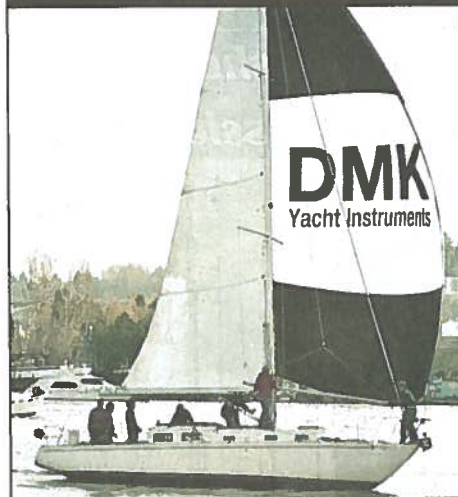
If we couldn't fix our gear, we just found a way to go without it. At one point, we were sharing one light bulb to read. We bought some bad fuel in New Zealand that kept clogging the fuel filter. Even with a new filter it would only run for ten minutes, so we sailed in and out of most anchorages for months.



Wendy in Japan.

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What electronics did you carry?

We had two handheld GPS units, a battery monitor, a laptop and an SSB radio. We had a terrible time with our electronics—they got fried twice, once in the Marquesas and once in the Solomon Islands. So, we borrowed a GPS, and just kept sailing.

Did you carry a water maker onboard?

No. We carried 45 gallons of water, which was good for about three weeks—that's about one gallon of fresh water per-person, per-day.

Did you guys encounter any pirate activity?

We were approached by some menacing-looking people in the Philippines and we also heard and saw some weird stuff in the night, in both the Philippines and the Solomon Islands.

Was one storm particularly bad?

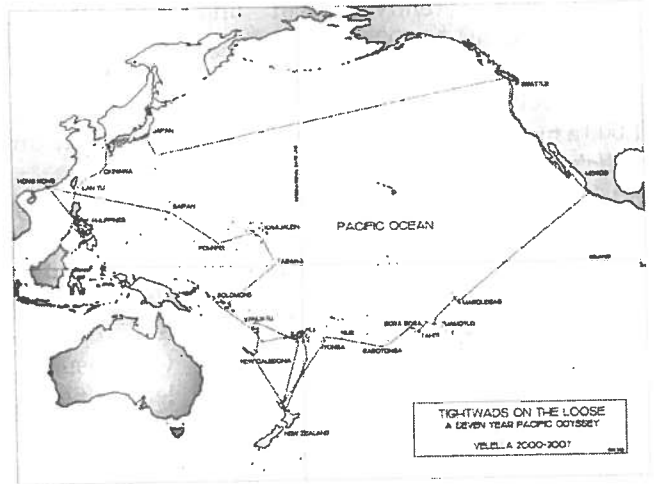
We survived gales in the South China Sea—a nasty patch of water—and several typhoons in port, but the worst storm was the last one, mostly for psychological reasons. We were 18 miles off of Estevan Point on Vancouver Island's west coast after 46 days of nonstop sailing from Japan, but we were forced to spend three more days.

Am I correct that you guys sold Vellela?

We kept her until June of 2012. We brought her down to the Corinthian Yacht Club to celebrate the launch of my book. It was really important to me to have her there, both to celebrate the book and the boat. I miss her so, so much—I want to be going sailing!

What are your plans for your next boat?

We're thinking of something that's between 35-to-38 feet. Gath is 6'1" and he needs to be able to stand up this time!



Garth is a naval architect, and he's really interested in designing it himself. We're also thinking of building it in our shed at our new place on Bainbridge. Basically, we bought an acceptable house with a great spot to build a boat.

It will either be made of strip planks, cold-molded or [built out] of plywood, and it will likely be a multi-chined boat. Also, we want a lifting keel, which really breaks up the interior on a boat that's any smaller. It's not a small project to build a boat!

What are your cruising plans for the new boat?

We're intrigued by the canals of Chile and the thought of cruising throughout Europe. We'd like to sail from Seattle, down the west coast to Cape Horn, then up and over to Europe.

Will your next cruising adventure be like your last one as far as "frugal cruising" goes? Or, will you guys do things differently this time?

I think so. There's equipment that we'd like to have, but we'll keep it simple. We proved that simpler really does work—people on the simpler boats tended to stay out [cruising] longer. We want a bigger boat but not a heavy one—maybe around 14,000 pounds—because we don't want to kill our performance. Also, I don't want a boat that represents my financial security. We want the ability to leave the boat and feel OK [about leaving her]. Also, bigger boats equal bigger distances between the locals and the cultures that you want to see.