



Voyaging pioneers and icons Susan and Eric Hiscock (shown here in New Zealand aboard Wanderer V, years after making Beyond the West Horizon) prove to be willing and happy traveling companions in the film about their second circumnavigation.

“By Jove!”

Fifty-five years ago this month, in July 1959, award-winning British sailors Eric and Susan Hiscock set forth from the Isle of Wight to begin their second circumnavigation aboard their shipshape little 30-foot woody, *Wanderer III*.

Over the next three years and 30,000 nautical miles, the Hiscocks would make 140 stops while calling in at 17 different countries.

It was a remarkable voyage, made more so by the couple's decision to film the adventure for a documentary called *Beyond the West Horizon*, which was originally broadcast on BBC Television in 1963. Now, thanks to a labor of love by Tory Salvia of The Sailing Channel — who uncovered the lone surviving copy of the film, then restored and digitally re-mastered it to HD — the movie is available to a new generation of viewers (www.thesailingchannel.tv). At one point, after recording Susan eviscerating a coconut and then slurping down the juice, Eric admits it was a messy job but adds, “By Jove, it was worth it!”

The same could be said of watching this slice of cruising history. By Jove, the sailing world has certainly changed.

The Hiscocks serve as quirky but accomplished tour guides, white as ghosts, set in their ways, but with eyes wide open and a dry, curious, often humorous take on the places they visit and the people they encounter. And nothing is ever sugar-coated. “Steering was

a bore,” observes Eric, while packing his pipe, during their first offshore hop from Spain to Morocco. “Steering, I think, always is a bore.”

Laundry day is less boring, though Eric notes it's too trivial a chore to waste fresh water on, and we see Susan rinse the clothes over the side as *Wanderer III* barrels across the Atlantic on an 18-day passage to British Guiana. “It's true that the laundry is always a little bit sticky afterwards when it comes to putting it on,” says Eric, but nobody ever said voyaging might not be a little itchy. “And so we went happily on our way,” he adds. “Very busy. Very interested. Very occupied. Never a dull moment.”

There's some stomach-lurching footage of the 1,100-nautical mile thrash across the Caribbean, which even Eric describes as “pretty boisterous.” But the scenes of the Panama Canal transit are astounding, right down to the American pilot, looking quite natty in his pith helmet. “And then we set out on the first 1,000 miles of our 8,000-mile crossing of the Pacific to New Zealand,” said Eric, as *Wanderer* makes her way to the Galapagos Islands. There, they encounter

all sorts of wildlife, including pelicans, which he describes “as some of the most absurd-looking and charming people.”

It's easy to forgive the man for confusing fowl with folks, for one of the truly astonishing things about the film are the empty anchorages and the rare encounters with other cruisers. They hardly ever see anybody else out there.

When they do, however, the results are often comical. In Tahiti, after a 28-day passage to French Polynesia, Eric persuades a gorgeous island lass, in grass skirt, to perform a racy dance. “First she sang a rather vulgar little song,” he adds, though from his lopsided grin it's hard to think he was actually offended.

New Zealand proves to be a lovely stop, and if there's one moment that underscores the difference between then and now, it's when the couple picks up the sacks of surface mail waiting for them. “What a tremendous moment this always is when at last you get the long letters from home, to hear how all your friends and relations and everyone is getting on,” says Eric. “To get the news.” You can almost hear him sigh when, sitting before his typewriter, he concludes, “But of course, these letters have to be answered.”

Onward they go, to Papua New Guinea (“We had to get used to doing our shopping with ladies who wore absolutely nothing at all above the waist”), across the Indian Ocean, up the Red Sea and on to the Mediterranean. Finally they make it through the Strait of Gibraltar and cross their outbound track to close the circle on their circumnavigation, which they celebrate with a “Dundee cake” and a gallon of “hoarded” Spanish wine, both of which they down over the course of a boozy afternoon.

“We were sad that our lovely voyage was nearly ended but we had many memories,” said Eric. With this cool film, the Hiscocks' memories are now ours.

Herb McCormick is CW's senior editor. For information on The Sailing Channel's upcoming documentary on solo sailor Matt Rutherford, visit www.reddotontheocean.com.