

Socrates the solo sailor has thought of everything

SANDRA McCULLOCH
Times Colonist

Attempting to sail single-handed and non-stop around the world may not be the typical behaviour of a 67-year-old grandmother.

But Jeanne Socrates is not typical. And next week, weather permitting, the retired schoolteacher will cast off from Victoria in her 38-foot boat, Nereida, on an epic, seven-month journey.

Her date of departure depends on ocean weather conditions which, for the next few days, are poor.

Socrates, who was born and lives in London, chose Victoria as her starting point partly because it's a favourite spot and she has lots of sailing friends here.

It also places her well north of the equator to clock up the mileage required for her attempt to be recognized.

Socrates was an only child. Her father died in the Second World War, before she was born, and her mother struggled to make

ends meet. Now Socrates has young grandchildren back in England who are thrilled to hear of her adventures. Old favourites include the tale of a flying fish nearly knocking her out in the Southern Ocean.

She came to the helm late in life, learning the ropes with her husband in 1994, when she was 51.

A five-day course triggered Socrates's enthusiasm. Her husband died of cancer in 2003, but Socrates carried on with plans to sail attend a rally in B.C. the following year, and sailed here alone.

From March 2007 to June 2008, Socrates sailed around the world with planned stops. But her trip ground to a halt 60 nautical miles short of her starting point when, due to an autopilot failure, the boat went aground on a Mexican beach.

Her next attempt was to circle the globe solo and non-stop. She set out in October last year from the Canary Islands, but had to



DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

Jeanne Socrates prepares her boat Nereida, docked in Victoria's Inner Harbour, for her solo, non-stop voyage around the world, which she plans to begin next week. The 67-year-old retired schoolteacher from London, UK, hopes to complete the trip here next May.

make unplanned stop two months later in Cape Town, South Africa, to replace the boat's engine. Two months later, Socrates was heading eastward to Australia and New Zealand. She ended up in Port Townsend, Wash., for repairs in preparation for this attempt.

She is hoping it will be third time lucky. Her route will take her south of Cape Horn, on to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In 2003, Tony Gooch of Oak Bay completed a similar non-stop circumnavigation in 177 days.

"I have a bit of unfinished business to do," said

Socrates of her latest attempt.

Her boat suits her perfectly because it's just the right size to move around and store nine months' worth of food and provisions.

Apples swing from the low cabin ceiling in small, net hammocks. A tool box contains all the gear she needs to deal with electrical, mechanical or plumbing mishaps.

Problems always occur, like the time she lost her automatic pilot and managed to eat, sleep and use the toilet without straying far from the helm.

But Socrates knows what's in store and she's ready for it.

"I've got a lot of determination and I like to see things through — I don't give up easily," she said. "You've got to be confident in your boat."

Even with her credentials as an ocean yacht master, she said: "There are always things you're learning about yourself and the boat and the weather."

Her friend Shaun Peck said: "With this boat she has already been around the world, although she had to stop."

"In the previous boat, she

almost made it around the world but only because of equipment failure did she lose the boat. I'm full of admiration for her abilities and how well prepared she is for absolutely everything."

Socrates plans to sail back into Victoria's Inner Harbour next May. She's trying to raise funds for the Marie Curie Cancer Care, a British charity that enables nurses to care for terminal cancer patients in their homes.

Socrates will post a blog of her journey at www.svnereida.com. smcculloch@timescolonist.com

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Man whose house caught fire turns up

The owner of a Cordova Bay home damaged by fire on Sunday has been located in Edmonton and is expected to return to Victoria, police said. Alberta resident David Kunyk, 47, was in Victoria recently but could not be found after the fire. His cellphone was found at the scene.

Saanich

DISTRICT OF SAANICH

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

OCTOBER 25-29, 2010

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 7:30 p.m., Council Chambers

Bylaws

9095: 885 Sevenoaks Road - rezoning to RS-4 (single family dwelling) ford proposed 2 lot subdivision.

9097: Tax Exemption Real Property Bylaw - 2011 tax exemptions for various properties.

9098: Tax Exemption Real Property Bylaw (Riparian Land) - 203 Goward Road (a portion).

9099: Tax Exemption Bylaw (Private School Exemptions) - tax exemptions for school properties.

Resolutions for Adoption

- Sanitary Sewer Bylaw - housekeeping amendments.
- Tender 35/10 - Portage Inlet sanitary sewage lift station upgrades.

Reports from Members of Council

- Deer and other urban wildlife.

CRD Activities Update

Committee Items

- 3510 Blanshard Street - development permit amendment to allow four fascia signs and to permit third party advertising.
- 3185 Tillicum Road/273. 279 and 285 Burnside Road West - rezoning to a new zone C-15 (urban mixed use) for proposed 104 unit rental apartment with underground parking and commercial space on the ground floor.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 5:00 p.m., Committee Room No. 2

ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 9:00 a.m., Committee Room No. 2

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 7:30 p.m., Council Chambers

- Urban Forest Strategy

For further details please contact the Legislative Division at 250-475-1775 or by e-mail at clerksec@saanich.ca

Meeting agendas and minutes can be obtained from our website at www.saanich.ca

SAANICH ARCHIVES

For research enquiries please contact Saanich Archives at 250-475-1775, ext. 3477; by email: archives@saanich.ca

>FROM A1 Province mourns loss of paramedics, Campbell says

CINDY E. HARNETT
Times Colonist

Premier Gordon Campbell sent condolences yesterday to the families, friends and colleagues of paramedics Jo-Ann Fuller and Ivan Polivka, who died Tuesday when their ambulance left the road and plunged down a cliff into Kennedy Lake.

The first responders would be remembered for choosing to spend their lives helping others, Campbell said.

"Our province mourns the loss of these two dedicated paramedics, and we offer our sympathy to their loved ones, their colleagues and their friends at this difficult time," the premier said in a written statement.

The paramedics were driving back to their base in Tofino from Port Alberni after dropping a patient at West Coast General Hospital when the crash happened.

They had left the hospital about 4:20 a.m. When they failed to arrive back in Tofino by 7:30 a.m., a search began.

A maintenance worker spotted the path of a vehicle that had veered off a winding stretch of Highway 4, cut into the cliff above Kennedy Lake, and landed in the water.

There, about 15 kilometres east of the highway junction for Tofino and Ucluelet, police found the ambulance submerged.

An RCMP Island District dive team recovered the bodies from the ambulance at 3:40 p.m, the

B.C. Ambulance Service said.

"On behalf of the ambulance service, I would like to extend our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families, friends and colleagues of Jo-Ann and Ivan," BCAS chief operating officer Les Fisher said yesterday.

Both the mayors of Tofino and Ucluelet knew the paramedics.

Ucluelet Mayor Eric Russcher said the two avid volunteers could always be found at community events. "[The loss] deeply affects both communities," Russcher said.

The B.C. Coroners Service is leading the investigation into the deaths. The RCMP and Worksafe B.C. are also investigating.

William (B.J.) Chute, of Ambulance Paramedics of B.C., was in Tofino yesterday as several organizations began the work of unravelling why and how the crash occurred on a stretch of highway both paramedics knew so well.

Sooke paramedic Kathryn Pearce Sywake worked closely with both Fuller and Polivka during her years living in Tofino.

She was shocked by the accident because both knew the unforgiving highway — narrow and twisting — well.

"They were my extended family and my friends, and I love them both. I'm broken-hearted," Pearce Sywake said.

"I cannot imagine what [everyone] is going through right now because they were both huge in that community," ceharnett@timescolonist.com

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School trustees tell ministry of concern over computer glitches

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

Local school trustees are keeping the heat on the Ministry of Education in the hope that province-wide computer woes experienced in September do not happen again.

Both the Greater Victoria board of education and the Vancouver Island School Trustees' Association, which represents 12 boards, have sent letters of concern to the ministry after problems with the British Columbia Enterprise Student Information System, or BCeSIS.

There had been problems with BCeSIS in previous years, but they increased in September when teachers had difficulties accessing the system, organizing class lists and doing other basic tasks. While things were on track

by the end of September, it was a tough start to the year, said Tom Ferris, chairman of the Greater Victoria board.

"September's our busiest time using BCeSIS because you're trying to get your numbers and your information sorted. You have to meet deadlines for the ministry which impact on your funding."

He said system failures that nullify hours of work could be "soul-destroying" for teachers.

Helen Parker, who chairs the Saanich board of education and is president of the Island trustees' group, said the goal was to have a "pragmatic fix" to the problems.

The letter written by Ferris on behalf of his board calls for a moratorium on any future additions to BCeSIS until performance issues are resolved. jwbell@timescolonist.com