

# Unplanned 'Round Th

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When Immu Hiilivirta left St. John in 1970, it certainly was not with the intention of sailing a 37-foot sloop around the globe. Not at all.

But that, in fact, is just what he spent the last five years of his life doing.

The adventure started when Immu returned to his native Finland to oversee the construction of the Dulcinea, a Swan 37 Sparkman-Stevens one-ton cup sloop, as he described it, which was built by Nautor.

Immu, who had lived in St. John since 1963, was used to things not being ready when they were promised, so he took it all in stride when the boat construction fell behind schedule. The only problem was that by the time the Dulcinea was finished in the winter of 1970, Finland's waters were covered with ice.

"So they shipped the boat to Majorca, Spain, and I set sail with a Swedish friend and an American friend for the Canary Islands and then

But then his friend was called home and he was running out of money, so Immu set sail for Pago-Pago, which is an American territory, and left the Dulcinea with a friend while he flew back to the states on business.

During his stateside respite, Immu managed to get in two trips to Aspen, Colo., for skiing, one bout of pneumonia, one visit to the Virgin Islands, and completion of a real estate deal to replenish his diminishing funds.

"And then I met this girl in Aspen and I asked her if she was willing to sail the boat back to the West Coast with me because I knew it was too difficult to sail it alone," he explained. "I still had no intention of sailing around the world.

"She came back to Pago with me and we decided, 'What the hell, the deal went through, I had the money, and we'd continue sailing west.'"

From there the trip continues to read like a travelogue -- Western Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia, Australia, the New Hebrides, New Guinea, Indonesia, Bali, Singapore and Thailand.

the Cape Verde Islands and from there across the Atlantic to Martinique," Immu said. "We made it in 15-days -- one of the fastest crossings in that size boat."

From Martinique they sailed to the Virgin Islands, where Immu recalls that he won the Memorial Day Race in 1971, prompting a distinctly cold shoulder from the competing Virgin Islands yachtsman.

"After that my friend and I took off," he said. "We went sailing. I had no idea to sail around the world. We just sailed."

The first stop was close to home: Norman Island. From there they headed for Grenada, then Porta Azores, Venezuela ("a fantastic place -- I recommend to every sailor, but you have to have papers first."), then Colombia ("it's nothing for sailors") and eventually the San Blas Islands ("also incredibly beautiful.").

In each port they spent anywhere from a few days to a few months, living and eating simply to make their money stretch as far as possible, Immu explained.

Early in 1972 they decided to go through the Panama Canal, which Immu says is a story in itself, and from there headed toward the Marquesas, Hawaii, Tahiti, Tuamotu, Tahiti again, and finally French Polynesia.

"We ended up in Bora Bora, a very familiar tourist trap and a beautiful island, almost as pretty as St. John," he said.

Then there was a brief brake while Immu returned in the spring of 1974 to see his mother, who was ill in Finland and died soon afterwards.

When he got back to the Dulcinea, he and his girl crossed the Indian Ocean, a sail that took 37 days.

"We went to the Seyehelles Islands and then to Kenya, where we spent about two months and saw the elephants and everything," Immu said. "And then we sailed down the African coast to Durbin, South Africa, and eventually went to Capetown, which was a hard sail."

Immu spent Christmas of 1975 in Capetown and left in January as one of 150 entries in the Capetown to Rio race, a grueling 2,600-mile sail that took him 25 days.

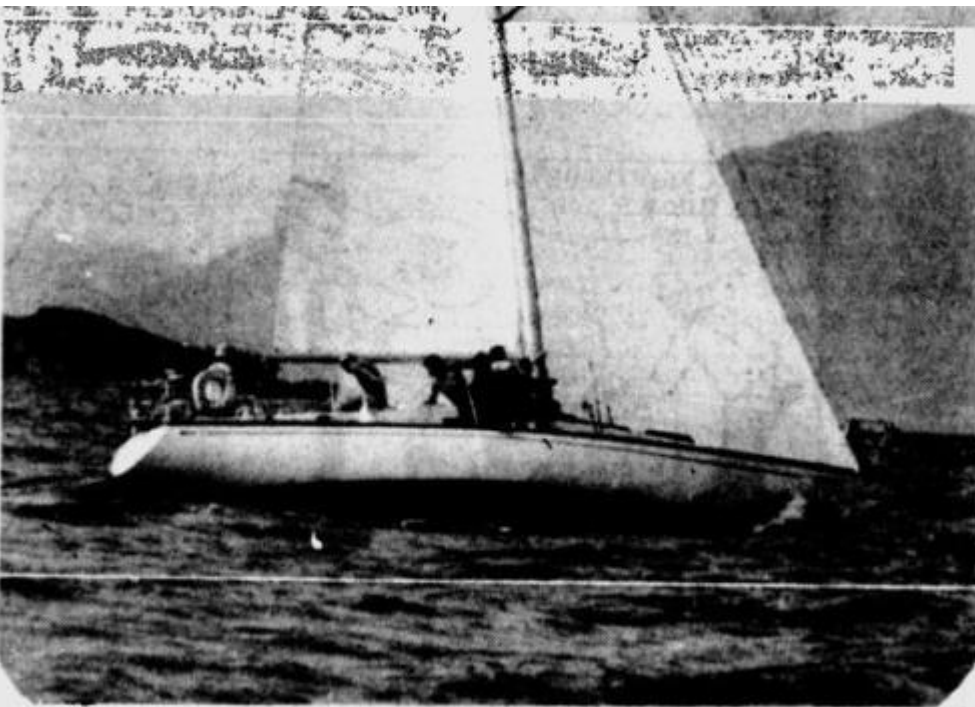
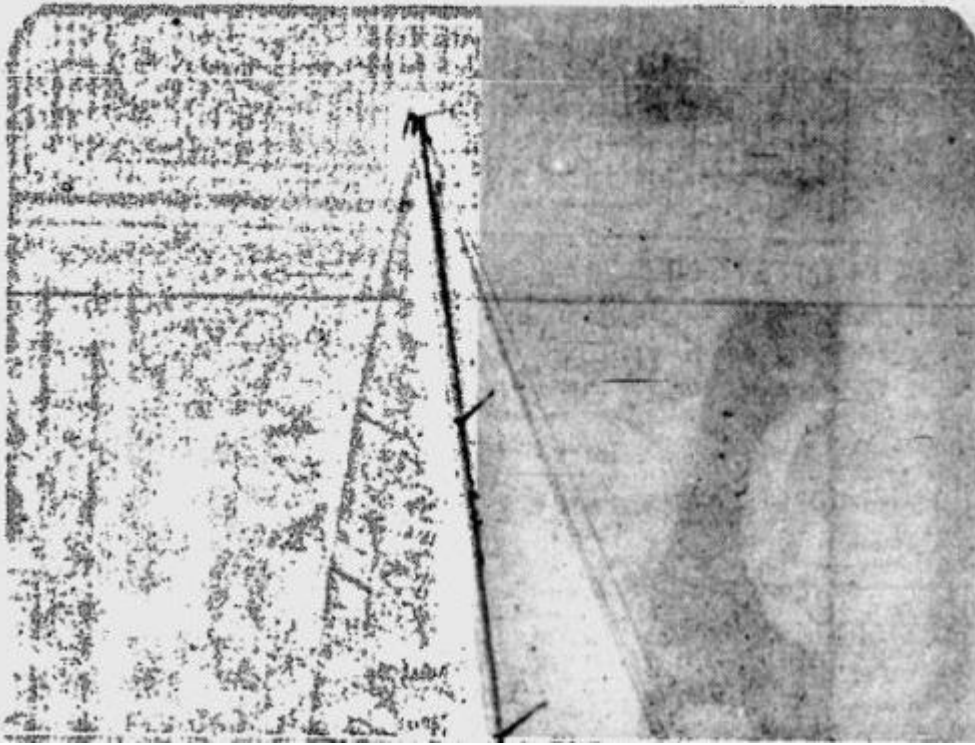
Although he finished 55th, he notes proudly that "We lost to Ondine -- every sailor knows the boat Ondine -- with maximum rating." And, he added, expressing what every sailor knows, "Every little goofing really hurts in a race."

From Rio, Immu gradually sailed back to the Virgin Islands, stopping here and there along the way. And here he is.

What now?

"I'm selling the boat," he said, "and then I'll probably go to Finland and buy another boat -- a Swan 38 -- or I'll build a little house on St. John and retire. I've sailed enough now -- around 50,000 nautical miles, which is a lot of sailing. But I don't know. My plans are so in the air still. Maybe I'll go out sailing again."

# ne World Trip



**THE DULCINEA** races through the water as Immu Hiilivirta of St. John, third from left, gives directions to his four crew members.