

Miles of wisdom, years of knowledge

To the editor: They say that it takes a village to raise a child. Likewise, it takes a fleet to raise a sailor.

I was taught how to sail by what I consider to be the archetype of a sailor: middle-aged, portly, weather-beaten-looking face and permanently dressed in foul-weather gear and rubber boots. I think he even had a beard, surely the pinnacle of the model sailor, giving legitimacy and strength to everything he said. I spent a total of four weeks in his company and, as an introduction to the cruising life, I looked upon everything he told me as if it was some kind of magic — from the

something that my old-salt hero had never attempted or achieved.

When James and I decided to have kids, we asked other sailing families about it. One couple that was helpful and imaginative with



James Lloyd-Mostyn



Above, an anchoring tip the Lloyd-Mostyns learned from other voyagers. Left, Jess, with daughter Rocket, received tips from other cruising moms on good baby carriers.

new words in this strange-tongued sailing language to the mysteries of knots, line coiling, wind awareness and sail trim. He'd spent decades sailing with tens of thousands of miles under his belt and yet had never crossed an ocean. In my first three months of sailing my own boat, I crossed the Atlantic —

their solutions for adapting a boat to life with children had lived aboard for nine years. Yet, they had only had experience sailing in and around their home port in the U.S. and then the few hundred odd miles down to Mexico. When it came to the live-aboard life they were pros, but they had virtually

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no offshore sailing experience.

Yet, rather than dismissing either example because of their limitations, we've discovered that we can gain a lot to further a more holistic sailing view by listening to

all manner of boat-folks: permanent dock-dwellers, those who've sailed for years in one small harbor, boaters who still carry out all their anchoring and close-quarters maneuvers under sail, experienced



Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

The Lloyd-Mostyn's Crossbow 42, Adamastor, at anchor in French Polynesia.

ocean-crossers or those who've done many long passages at sea, sailors who've gone to remote or challenging places, cruisers who've built or re-built their boats from scratch. The crucial part is knowing where the gaps in their wisdom are.

We met a Dutch couple who sailed in Patagonia while pregnant with their first child and talk about it nonchalantly, as if it's run of the mill. Yet the things they can tell you about sailing through ice, anchoring with a spider's web of lines leading ashore, or even kitting up properly to live alongside glaciers are astonishing. We know a crazy Frenchman who spent six years building his boat from the hull up and the whole bespoke beautiful thing looks more like a funky traveler's hostel than a sailboat. But he'd be the first person I'd ask about any fiberglass work. I've lost count of the number of

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single-hander chaps we've crossed paths with who can all advise you on their strategies for getting enough sleep safely at sea.

This pick-and-choose attitude to morsels of everyone else's know-how also affords you the chance to learn from and hopefully avoid other people's mistakes. We have numerous cruising friends who can tell great stories about horrendous passages where they encountered 50- or 60-knot winds, total engine failures, sails exploding into tatters and anchor chains tangling fast in coral. We nod and listen sympathetically, quietly noting any extra information that we can store for later if they were attempting something at the wrong time of year, during a bad forecast or using shoddy equipment.

Startlingly, we too are now asked for advice on all kinds of boat life. Sure, we have plenty of miles under our keel and two oceans and a couple of babies to add to our experience. Yet we still consider ourselves quite new to sailing as a whole and look back on just how green we were when we started out with a mixture of horror and awe.

When we announced we were buying a boat to sail around the world, my parents, who are not remotely from sailing stock, looked at me as though I'd suddenly declared I was now a caterpillar — it was so far off their radar of knowledge. Yet despite their initial questions being “Are you allowed to sail at night?” “Can you anchor mid-Atlantic?” or, my personal favourite, “Are you buying a boat

with cupholders?” my mother did give me some sage advice.

“Wear a jumper [sweater] and don't drown” — guidance that continues to steer me well after four years at sea.

—Jess Lloyd-Mostyn is a frequent contributor to *Ocean Navigator*. She lives aboard her Crossbow 42 *Adamastor* with her husband James and their daughter Rocket and son Indigo. ■



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