

Larry Pardey, Mariner Who Sailed the World Engineless, Dies at 80

With his wife, Lin, he circumnavigated the world twice on wooden boats he had built. And they always took their time.



By Richard Sandomir

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On a perilous westerly course bound for Cape Horn near the southern tip of South America in 2002, Larry and Lin Pardey made their approach into the hazardous currents of the Strait of Le Maire aboard Taleisin, their 29-foot, engineless wooden yacht.

Well after midnight, with Ms. Pardey on watch and Mr. Pardey asleep below, she lost sight of navigation lights but realized, suddenly, that several large rocks were in front of her, not the open water that she had expected.

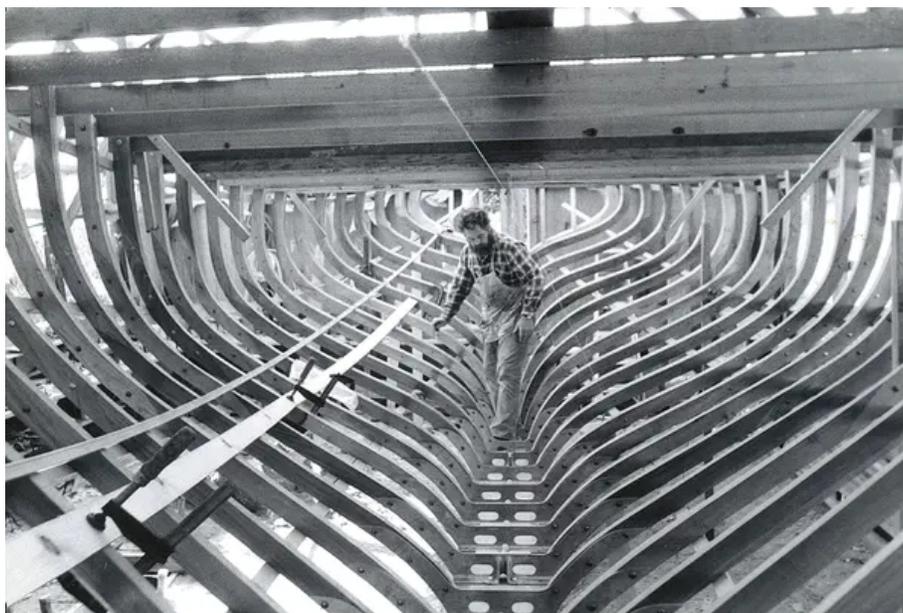
“I threw the helm and tacked to turn and reached out to sea on a reciprocal course,” she said in an email. “At the same time, I yelled for Larry to get up on deck. He ended up being thrown from the bunk on the cabin sole, then scrambled quickly into the cockpit.”

They were, for a short time, lost. Mr. Pardey took the helm as his wife studied their charts to determine the safest course back to open water. They eventually passed through the strait and headed to Cape Horn.

By then, the Pardeys were more than 30 years into an adventurous life at sea, twice circumnavigating on boats that Mr. Pardey had built. Their voyages brought them renown among cruisers: sailors who take their time on long trips, often to foreign parts.

“Without exaggeration, Larry is one of the greatest small boat sailors of any era,” Herb McCormick, executive editor of *Cruising World* magazine, said in an interview. “The degree of difficulty — of sailing boats without an engine for 200,000 miles — is an amazing thing.”

Mr. McCormick, who wrote the book “As Long as It’s Fun: The Epic Voyages and Extraordinary Times of Lin and Larry Pardey” (2014), added: “Larry’s little motto was, ‘If it was easy, everybody would do it.’ He almost went out of his way to make it harder: building the boats, engineless, and sailing upwind around Cape Horn.”



Mr. Pardey in 1982 building his 29-foot boat, Taleisin, an engineless wooden yacht. Lin Pardey

Mr. Pardey, who embarked on his final long ocean voyage in 2009, died on July 27 in a nursing facility in Auckland, New Zealand, near his home. He was 80. He had a stroke last year and had learned five years ago that he had Parkinson's disease, his wife said.

Life aboard their boats, first the 24-foot Seraffyn, then the Taleisin, was simple. They had a compass, a sextant and a radio transmitter but used no GPS. systems, and no engines. The lack of complexity suited Mr. Pardey's facility for navigation and reduced their costs.

"When we first set off, we could live in Mexico for \$200 a month," he told The New York Times in 2000. "The way we looked at it, a \$3,000 engine cost 14 months of freedom. We never dreamed of going cruising and being comfortable, we just dreamed of going."

They fulfilled that dream many times over. Their first circumnavigation, starting in 1968 on an eastward route, spanned 11 years and took them to 47 countries. Beginning in 1984, they spent 25 years traveling west on their second circumnavigation, touching land in 30 more countries.



Mr. Pardey with his wife, Lin, sailing on the Mediterranean in 1975 aboard their 24-foot boat, Seraffyn. The trip, their first circumnavigation, lasted 11 years. via Lin Pardey

Lawrence Fred Pardey was born on Oct. 31, 1939, in Victoria, British Columbia, and was raised in Shuswap Lake and in Vancouver. His father, Frank, was a butcher, and his mother, Beryl (Peterson) Pardey, was a homemaker. Earl Marshall, his grandfather, who worked in sawmills and construction, preached to Larry that he should earn enough money to do what he loved.

As a boy, Larry had a dugout canoe and then a rowboat rigged with a wool blanket for a sail. But his serious interest in sailing did not peak until he was about 17, when he bought an eight-foot sailboat while working for a waterfront sawmill in North Vancouver. He then purchased a keelboat and, in 1959, a sloop, which he called Annalisa.

"She was built in Sweden for the Crown Prince of Denmark as a diplomatic gift," he was quoted as saying in "As Long as It's Fun." "She'd been built from a single mahogany log and varnished inside and out." He added: "She was perfect."

By late 1964, Mr. Pardey had left British Columbia for Newport Beach, Calif., and was working on a schooner when it went to Hawaii so that the crew could film background shots for a TV series, "The Wackiest Ship in The Army." Mr. Pardey, in a hula skirt, appeared briefly in the show.



Mr. Pardey on a sea trial in 1984 off the coast of California. That year he and his wife would begin their second circumnavigation, touching land in 30 more countries. Lin Pardey

He was soon skippering a ketch and, in May 1965, meeting his future wife, Lin Zatkan, in a bar. She was working at the time in the corporate office of the Bob's Big Boy restaurant chain in Pasadena but craving adventure, Ms. Pardey said. Sailing, she felt, would satisfy her wanderlust.

Three days after they met, they were together for good.

"I guess he was pretty romantic back then," she told The Sailing Channel in 1993, "but what was even more romantic was what he offered me: a way of getting out of the 9-to-5 syndrome, seeing lots of the world."

They married in 1968 and three days later, Ms. Pardey launched the boat they had built, Seraffyn, by smashing a bottle of Champagne against its bow.

The two were rarely, if ever in a hurry. They did not adhere to a schedule and worked only enough to finance their sailing. Their circumnavigations took so long because they spent a lot of time exploring 15 of the countries they visited and using them as income-producing bases of operations, repairing and restoring boats and ferrying them to their owners.

“We never set off the circumnavigate,” Ms. Pardey said in her email. “We just wanted to sail, explore and meet interesting people, do some racing in interesting places. But at some point we ended up halfway down the road, and logic led us to complete the circle.”

They collaborated on books and videos that chronicled their adventures and offered how-to advice to sailors. Ms. Pardey had the narrative skills, Mr. Pardey the technical knowledge.



Mr. Pardey and his wife in 2010 at their home on Kawau Island off the North Island of New Zealand. They met in 1965 in a bar. Three days later, they were together for good. Herb McCormick

In his review of “Seraffyn’s European Adventure” (1979) in *The Times*, Raymond Sokolov wrote that Ms. Pardey “has, in her deceptively simple and fresh-faced style, told the story of an unusual and appealing marriage partnership, a special way of life.”

In addition to his wife, Mr. Pardey is survived by his brother, Marshall.

Their final big voyage in 2009 took them from Southern California to New Zealand, via the Line Islands and Tonga, where they met a goddaughter named Linlarry.

“Although he was aware of his diminishing physical abilities, he attributed this all to normal aging, saying, ‘What do you expect after you’ve used your body so hard for 70 years?’” Ms. Pardey said of her husband. “‘Boats wear out. So do people!’”

Richard Sandomir is an obituaries writer. He previously wrote about sports media and sports business. He is also the author of several books, including “The Pride of the Yankees: Lou Gehrig, Gary Cooper and the Making of a Classic.” @RichSandomir

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