A Voyage North on *Morgan's Cloud*

JOHN HARRIES and PHYLLIS NICKEL

Introduction

John Writes in December

Phyllis, our friend Grete, and I were finishing dinner and the last of a bottle of wine. The conversation turned to the Arctic, as it so often does when the three of us are together.

Grete, an eminent anthropologist specializing in the people that inhabit the circumpolar regions, was telling us of her multi-year project to study the impact of climate change on those people and her desire to visit and study the communities of Greenland herself after having spent much of the last few years supervising other scientists from an office.

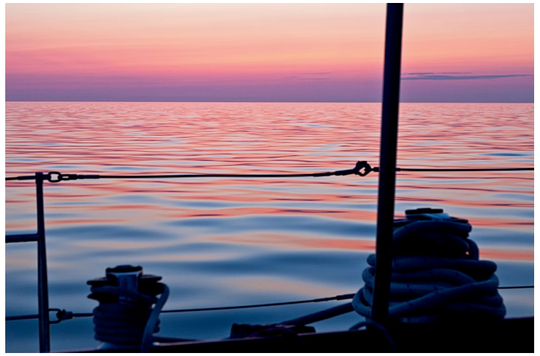
We talked about the logistical problems of visiting these communities and suddenly realized that our expedition sailboat, *Morgan's Cloud*, provided the answer.

A year and a half later Phyllis and I were once again—we have spent much of the last 20 years sailing the northern North Atlantic and adjacent Arctic waters—northbound. This book is the story in photographs and text of that voyage.

Our primary task over the four months the voyage encompassed was to make the science project a success, not take photographs or write accounts. This means that there were fewer photographs to choose from than we would have liked and fewer still taken from the land, which are usually better than those taken from afloat. In fact, I took the liberty of using several of my photographs from our previous voyages north to fill things out. And the text was written during the project, often hurriedly in the small amount of time left over from handling our boat in a challenging environment.

So if you are expecting a slick book like that produced by those who travel specifically for that purpose, this isn't it. On the other hand, I feel that the book has immediacy and reality just *because* the content was created by the two of us while we were making the voyage happen. We hope you will agree that this has merit.

? Tips on reading this eBook.



⇧ A calm evening off the west coast of Newfoundland. When the choice is pounding into a northeast wind or this, we choose motoring.

⇨ First evening outbound from our base in Nova Scotia. Reaching along the Nova Scotia coast.

⇦ Boys enjoying a warm day at Maniitsoq, a small town and regional center, 100 nautical miles north of Nuuk. Maniitsoq means "place of rugged terrain", a fitting name, as can be seen in the background.

⇨ The inner harbour at Maniitsoq.

⇦ Our quick departure from Newfoundland and fast passage to Nuuk gave us a week to cruise north. Here Dave and Shelly marvel at the rugged beauty of Hamborgersund as we steam back out of an uncharted branch fjord after taking a look at a tidewater glacier.

⇧ In all the years we have been coming north this is one of perhaps three or four times we have sat in the cockpit. Warm sun and just enough breeze to keep the bugs away made it possible. Mind you, that is a bug zapper in Phyllis' hand. Oh yes, and everyone was wearing long underwear.

⇦ Uummannaq Fjord at 2300. Even after a long and grueling day, we were still awed by the beauty around us.

⇧ A Northern Fulmar skims the water. This member of the Petrel family is reputed to be the most numerous single species of seabird in the world. Once north of 50°N it is rare to scan the ocean without seeing at least one Fulmar and often hundreds.

A Brief Report From Disko And Uummannaq Fjords

Phyllis Writes on July 17th from Amitsup Sudlua, Greenland

We have now been working on the science project for 10 days, visiting a number of villages in Disko and Uummannaq Fjords. As both of these are icefjords and the villages were originally sited based on proximity to the hunting grounds, not on whether they had a good harbour for a deep draft sailboat, we have faced a few challenges.

For one thing, we have not been able to stay in any village overnight, meaning that we've had to travel between the villages and the few available anchorages on a daily basis, upping the exhaustion factor and emptying our diesel tanks faster than expected. We've also had to set anchor watches almost every night due to the amount of ice, and we even had to steam through 3/10ths ice (30% of the water's surface covered) to get to one village. But we've been able to visit all the villages on Grete's list for this area, so we've completed the first part of the project.

From a lay person's viewpoint, what John and I have noticed, in terms of climate change, are water temperatures up to 9°C (48°F) in the fjords and 11°C (52°F) in one shallow anchorage. We've also had a few steaming hot days with temperatures of up to 25°C (77°F)! Let me tell you, we didn't bring clothes for that kind of weather. Even smart wool itches when it's that warm! The water and air temperatures were much lower when we were here 16 years ago.

I'll let Grete tell you what she's found from her interviews:

> "We have now visited six villages and the trend is clear. The weather is observed as warmer throughout the year, and it is more unstable and unpredictable. The sea ice is forming much later than it used to and is in poorer condition. Sea ice used to form in October, and over the past ten years it has formed later and later in the season, this year as late as March.
>
> This cuts the season for traveling, hunting and fishing on sea ice by four to five months. Dog sled remains the choice for transport, although snowmobiles are on the increase. Without good ice conditions it is not possible to use the sea ice as a platform for traveling, so there has been a shift from sea ice to open water fishing and hunting."

Yesterday we left Uummannaq Fjord and traveled 100 nautical miles north to the Upernavik area, which is definitely different than the fjords we just visited. For one thing, sea ice stays a lot longer up here; in fact, it only went out three weeks ago. We recorded sea temperatures of 4°C (39°F) at the mouth of the fjord and only 7°C (45°F) in this anchorage. There are still snow patches down to sea level in places.

And the geography is substantially different than further south: more barren rock and lower more rounded hills cleft by numerous river valleys. From a navigational point of view, there is a lot more white space on the charts up here (areas without soundings), so our forward scan sonar will be getting a real workout.

Fishermen returning home in the evening.

⇧ Berg ice in Jakobshavn Icefjord.

⇨ A humpback whale feeds in the Jakobshavn Icefjord, which is choked with huge icebergs that calve from the largest glacier in the northern hemisphere. It moves an incredible 20 meters (65 feet) a day. Ten percent of the bergs from Greenland come from this glacier, which has retreated drastically in recent years.

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