

Letter to my daughters

*Annikki and Julika Gélinas
Uppsala, Sweden*

St. Malo, April 13 1980

Yesterday was your birthday, my dear Annikki, and I often thought about you.

Many times during the evening, I went topside to try to see, up in the sky, the lovely constellation of the Dolphin. I finally had to go to bed without seeing it : the Dolphin is a summer constellation and even late at night, it was still too low and the horizon was cloudy. I told myself that I should have given you a group of stars that can be seen on your birthday, but I comforted myself at the thought that the Dolphin is a lovely constellation, even if it is not very bright. As soon as I discovered it in the sky, I thought that you would like it because you are always joyous and playful like a dolphin. I can still remember the day I saw you for the first time, the day of your birth, thirteen years ago yesterday, you were already smiling!

But I could see, high in the sky, the lovely Northern Crown, with the Pearl in its middle, and right away I had before my eyes the charming smile of my own little pearl, my dear Julika.

For quite some time, I have wanted to tell you the reasons that pushed me to undertake this long voyage, but I realize that it is very difficult. It is easy to find reasons, but none of them seems to me more important than the others. Finally, I had to admit it is beyond reason. If I go, it is because I feel deeply inside myself that I must do it. It is a dream I have had for a long time and my good fortune - or better, the Magick-Bird - made the circumstances favorable even though I did not plan it consciously.

Of course, I must mention my interest in sailing. Sailing became for me a way of life and I try to do it as best I can. The success or the failure of such a voyage depends almost entirely on the amount of energy I put into its preparation and execution. If I want to do it non-stop, I must have foreseen even the smallest detail. I try, of course, to take advantage of the experience of those who sailed those waters before me: they are my guides. But I try to steer away from the mistakes they could not avoid, and to add to the sum of this knowledge, the fruit of my own experience and talent. Maybe that way, if the Magic-Bird wants it to be, can I contribute to improve the art of sailing a small boat across the oceans.

And if I chose to sail non-stop, it is also because this is the only way I can sail around the world without missing a single summer with you: if I leave in August, after spending June and July with you, I will be back, if all goes well, in April or May, soon enough to spend another summer with my loved ones.

When I left Montréal, five years ago, to go sailing with Jean-du-Sud and the Magick-Bird, I was looking for a way of life that would be closer to what I wanted, deep inside me. It seemed more important to me to work at getting peace of mind, than at earning and spending money. After five years of this way of life, I could experience all the good it did me and I feel that eight or nine months of solitude could allow me to consolidate what I have already acquired, and progress even further. It happens that some people feel the need to be alone, at some point in their life, either to go through some difficult step of their spiritual evolution, or to give themselves the liberty of progressing more easily.

This is what I have felt these last years and it is, I believe, my deepest motivation.

"When you have long skirted vast expanses stretching to the stars, beyond the stars, you come back with different eyes ". It may be that I am also looking for that different vision that Bernard Moitessier found deep inside himself.

Moitessier also wrote: "In the high latitudes of the Southern Ocean, one is in the hand of God ". I prefer to say in the hand of the Magick-Bird. We have lived together for so long, the Magick-Bird and me that I feel He will do all He can to guide me through. You can even help Him to help me. Anyone can do it and the more love there is, the better it works.

Sir Francis Chichester, a great British sailor, did a single-handed circumnavigation on this same route, with a boat very difficult to handle. His wife, who loved him very much, had organized a group of people who prayed for him, while he was at sea. And he wrote that this had helped him a lot, in his difficult moments.

But to get the same result, you don't have to recite prayers. All you do is quieten your mind and your heart, and right away, you are on the wavelength of the Magick-Bird.

Who knows, I may be at that moment fighting against bad weather and I will feel that I am no longer alone, that others, somewhere, are sending me their love, and this new energy will help me overcome my fear or my fatigue, reminding me that the Magick-Bird is looking after me.

And if it did happen that, as the song after which I named my boat says, "Jean-du-Sud found his ultimate storm ", I hope that you will not be sorry for me. I will try to do the great passage without fear or regret, and my last thoughts will go to you. You may not see me, but I will be fortunate enough to make my nest very close to you, deep inside your heart, and help you from the inside with the Magick-Bird, for the rest of your life.

A bientôt, my sweet Annikki

A bientôt, my tender Julika

Papa Yves