

MENSA WORLD JOURNAL



**Intrepid sailing duo - see Member Profile
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Member Profile

by Susan Jensen

Janice Johnson and Alan Posner left Long Beach, California in 1996 and sailed alone through 20 countries over the course of three years.

Janice was a longtime friend of Alan's wife Lekha. A month before she passed away from cancer, Lekha asked Janice to "take care" of Alan after she died. As Lekha likely intended, Janice and Alan eventually became a couple.

Mensa had been a big part of Janice's life since her twenties. Alan, an introvert, wasn't enthused about attending Mensa meetings, but did so just to please Janice. He got hooked and joined. Janice and Alan have been active Mensa members in four American states and now live in Southwest Washington. Alan is currently the Treasurer and webmaster for Oregon Mensa, while Janice is Recording Secretary and has held other positions.

Alan was a Californian gastroenterologist. Janice was an HR manager in Oregon high tech until she moved to California to be with Alan. Janice had never sailed, but agreed to Alan's life dream of a several year sailing trip.

They bought a 15-year-old 44 foot schooner they named Prologue in which they sailed down the west coast of Mexico, Central America, through the Panama Canal, South America, the Eastern Caribbean and Puerto Rico.

Twenty friends joined them at various points in the trip and brought



cash and parts for the boat. Most found the sailboat uncomfortable and too much work, especially pumping the head (toilet).

There were many dangerous passages. Their propeller shaft broke, becalming them 100 miles off Panama's shore. They sailed up the northwest coast of Colombia, the eighth most dangerous passage in the world. In the Sea of Cortez, two men in an open fishing boat came alongside the Prologue, asking for directions to Cabo. Alan noticed their boat was filled with neatly stacked packages covered with a tarp and had an unusually large new motor. He thought, "Drug runners." When the men started to climb aboard, Alan yelled "No, no, no," and raised his only weapon, a rusty machete. He continued his terrifying tirade until they climbed down and motored into the darkness.

Janice has written a book about their sailing trip called *Stumbling Aboard: A Reluctant First Mate Sails through 20 Countries*. She is also the author of middle-grade and young adult novels, writing as JJ Kay.

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