

THE CURRENT

CRUISING

Taste of blue water whets appetites

Couple who completed an Atlantic crossing map out a 20,000-mile voyage around Cape Horn

By Jason Fell

STAFF WRITER

A retired Florida couple who participated in the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally in 2004 have dreamed up an ambitious voyage of their own. The two plan to set off in September on a 20,000-nautical-mile, 16-month westward passage from the Mediterranean to New Zealand via Cape Horn.

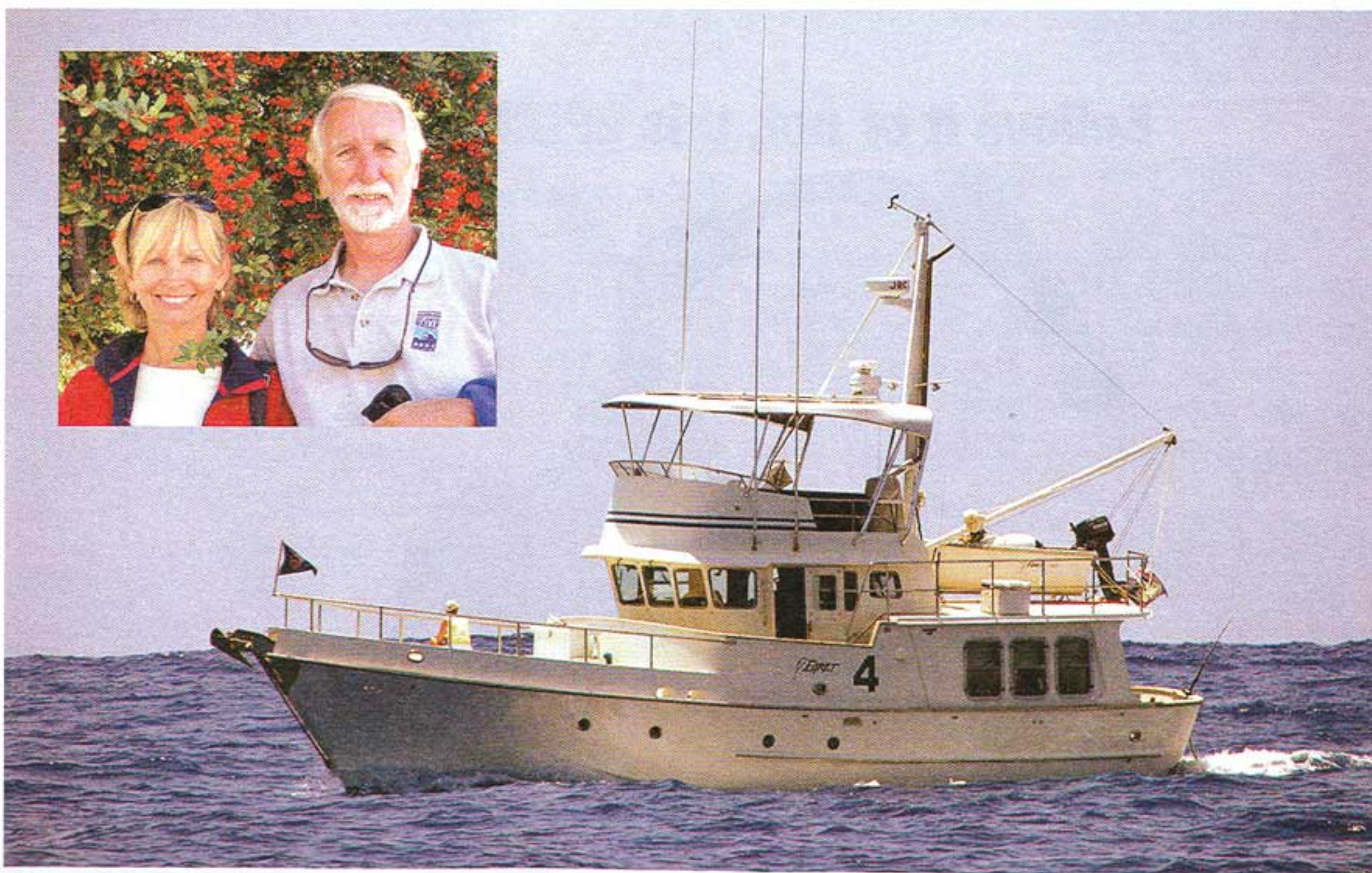
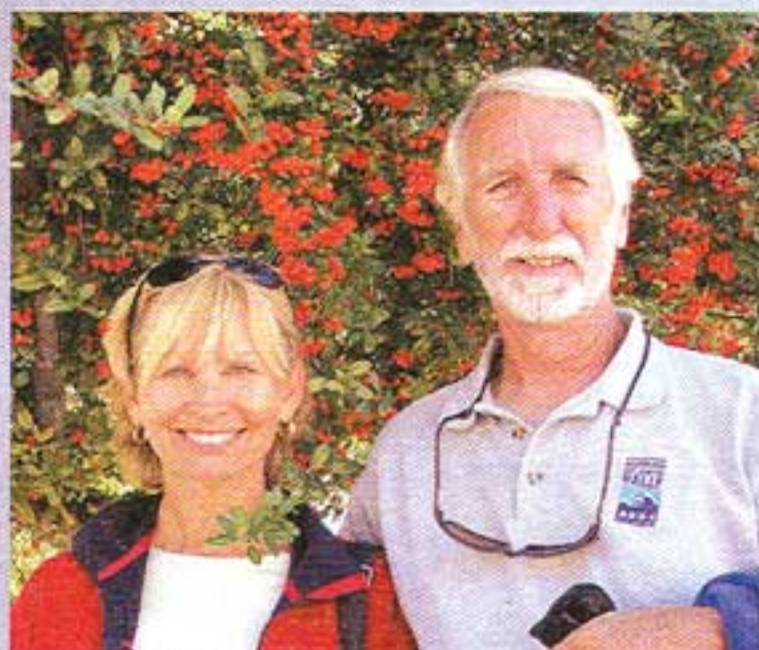
Scott and Mary Flanders, who are 61 and 56, respectively, were to leave Gibraltar aboard their Nordhavn 46, Egret. They have been retired and living aboard since 2002.

"Mary and I have lived our whole married lives — almost 37 years — participating in one adventure or another," Scott Flanders writes in an e-mail to Soundings. "This trip to New Zealand is just another adventure, but this time with long-distance cruising as the venue. Life is simply too short to sit in front of the boob tube watching nonsense and going to work Monday morning regurgitating what you saw, not did. There is a big difference."

From Gibraltar the pair plans to head south to the Madeira Islands, then to the neighboring Canary Islands, where they will pick up extra crew and head down the west coast of Africa, past the Cape Verde Islands. From there the couple will cross the Atlantic to Bahia de Salvador in Brazil, then head south to Uruguay and Argentina, transiting Beagle Channel to Puerto Williams in Chile and rounding Cape Horn. From the Horn they will push north through the Chilean canals, along the Chilean and Peruvian coasts to southern Ecuador, then jump to the Galapagos Islands and the long passage across the South Pacific to the Marquesas Islands. From there the couple will continue to New Zealand.

When Nordhavn got word of the Flanderses' voyage, it decided to dedicate space on its Web site — www.nordhavn.com — to track the couple's progress. "Of course there is an element of excitement when you hear about an owner embarking on an ambitious cruise such as this," says Nordhavn marketing director Jenny Stern. "We know the boat can handle it. The only uncertainty is whether the owner can. In this case the Flanderses are smart, have some real cruising experience, and are very prepared."

Scott Flanders says he and his wife



Mary and Scott Flanders have been living aboard their Nordhavn 46 since 2002.

spent nearly a year and a half preparing for the passage. "Like most successful adventures, voyages such as this require serious planning," he says. "You don't embark on a 20,000-plus nautical mile journey on a whim or ill-prepared. There is a lot of written information to be consumed. There are specialty parts to buy. Gear that works for a 30-degree to 30-degree circumnavigation doesn't necessarily work in the high latitudes. You have to know what you need and be able to fix most anything yourself."

Egret is powered by a 140-hp 6-cylinder Lugger, and has a 28-hp Yanmar wing engine. The boat carries 1,000 gallons of fuel in two tanks and a reserve of 330 gallons in four fuel bladders. "We will use them for sure on our approximate 3,100-nautical-mile sail from Gran Canaria to Bahia de Salvador, Brazil, and the 3,000 nautical miles from the Galapagos to the Marquesas," says Flanders. "Throttled back averaging 6 knots, Egret could easily exceed 3,000 nautical miles on her own tanks, including a safety margin in the typical westabout direction. Egret burns about 40 gallons per 24 hours when throttled back."

Egret's equipment includes an EPIRB,

three VHF radios, two radars, an autopilot, GPS (three mounted and two handheld), and stabilizers. The Flanderses also will take three dinghies, a ditch bag, a Lifesling and a "considerable" inventory of spares, fittings and hoses.

Flanders says the most difficult obstacle they expect to face will be the waters off Argentina. "Below 40 degrees south (the roaring 40s and screaming 50s) the worst wind is the almost continuous westerlies further south and southwesterlies further north," he says. "They slam into the Andes of Chile, then sweep across the pampas of Argentina unimpeded. Argentina has very few ports, and almost all of those are tidal plains with shifting entrances. The trick is when a window is available Egret will stay tight to the beach, unlike sailboats, to reduce the fetch."

One adventure that helped prepare the Flanderses for their voyage to New Zealand was the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally, which took a fleet of 18 trawlers (mostly Nordhavns) across the Atlantic. Two groups of boats — so-called "slow" and "fast" fleets — made staggered starts out of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., stopping in Bermuda and the Azores before finishing

more than 40 days and 3,800 miles later in the Straits of Gibraltar. In addition to learning a few things about long-distance cruising — and about their boat — the Flanders met a lot of interesting people during the rally. They expect to make more friends during their odyssey.

"In long-distance cruising the destinations are great, but the other cruisers you meet along the way are where most of the memories come from," says Flanders. "You get to meet an incredible group of people from all over the world. They are interesting, fun, adventurous and always willing to help one another."

Nordhavn's Stern hopes the Flanderses will help inspire others to set off on their own offshore adventures. "A lot of people dream about long-distance cruising but never take the first step toward actually realizing it," she says. "The Egret voyage will provide that first step for many cruisers. Scott and Mary will tell you that they are just regular people, not lifelong boaters, who had the dream of seeing the world by boat. It takes a lot of hard work and self-educating to be ready for something like this, but the memories you are left with make it all worthwhile." ■