

## More Passage Notes from the Field by Jeremy McGear

• "I never guessed that the right guy for me would be a do-gooder from Iowa—Davenport—who likes to build latrines," says Dana Schwartz, 32, a real-estate attorney from Los Angeles on track for a partnership in a big-name firm, about Chris Bessenecker, 38, her boyfriend and co-captain aboard *Ker-Mor*, a 35-foot wooden Mariner ketch designed by William Garden. They met in November 2001 at a fundraiser party for Project Concern International, a nonprofit international health organiza-

tion for which Chris was working and for which Dana's firm was doing pro bono work.

In 2000, realizing he needed a little balance in his life—he'd spent his entire adult life helping others, including four years in Honduras with the Peace Corps doing water and sanitation work and a traumatic six months in Tanzania working with refugees of the genocide in Rwanda—Chris had taken sailing courses, then purchased *Ker-Mor*, moved aboard, and began dreaming up an adventure for himself.

Two months after they met, Chris asked Dana if she'd join him on a



**Chris Bessenecker and Dana Schwartz gave up corporate life in California to cruise in a wooden boat to Central America—and beyond.**

year-long sailing voyage. How could she not? Instead of sitting behind her desk day after day, she could be exploring exotic places, communing with nature, meeting new people, and taking photographs to her heart's content, all with the man she loved.

Although *Ker-Mor* is a sturdy vessel designed for cruising, she needed a lot of equipment and work to make her ready for voyaging. Dana and Chris didn't mind going without a shower, hot water, and refrigeration, but they did in-

stall an electric windlass, solar panels, radar, a self-steering wind vane, a composting head, new batteries and wiring, new rigging and more, all in a very busy five-month period.

In January 2002, they set off and for four months sailed along the Mexican coast and down to El Salvador. When Dana was growing up, her family owned a series

of boats, but neither she nor Chris had much sailing experience. They learned quickly, while enduring some frightening weather, minor breakdowns, and painfully sleepless nights trading off three-hour shifts at the helm. They've enjoyed the new experience and the challenges so much that they've decided to lengthen their trip from one year to two, thus giving themselves time to get to know places better and to travel around Central America by land for four months. They now envision sailing *Ker-Mor* to Costa Rica, and possibly Panama, before heading west to the South Pacific islands, and even New Zealand, before returning to California. "But we're not making any promises," says Dana, who posts her logs and photos at *Ker-Mor's* website ([www.ker-mor.com](http://www.ker-mor.com)).