



TEXANS GENE AND JIM FINLEY sailed into Calabash last Friday and shared with locals tales of their year-long journey aboard the "Illogical."

## Texas Couple's 'Illogical' Journey Enters Second Year

BY DOUG RUTTER

Jim and Gene Finley are probably somewhere off the coast of South Carolina right now celebrating the one-year anniversary of their independence.

For it was a year ago today, on Oct. 8, 1986, that the Port Isabel, Texas, couple set out on their 21-foot sailboat, "Illogical," with no plan or destination.

They came ashore at Calabash last Friday afternoon, and spent the night at Calabash Marina following the pleas of shopowner Roland Athan.

Finley, 62, said, "When we pulled into Calabash, Roland walked out and said, 'Let me buy you a beer.' He didn't have to twist my arm too hard."

The retired couple said special treatment by dock owners has been the rule and not the exception during much of their trip. But they added that Calabash Marina was the first place they were charged no dock fee.

Mrs. Finley, 60, said the two had sailed about four times and a total of five hours before setting out on this journey. "It's been an experience I'll tell you. We just learn as we go, and you learn something every day."

Finley said they left their Texas home out of boredom more than anything else. "Man, did you ever watch the grass grow?"

He said four acres of lawn in the "semi-tropical" area of southern Texas can get out of hand. "By the time you finish mowing at one end, you have to go back and start over again."

"We thought there has got to be more to life than this."

"And we found it," he added.

The couple said they have traveled approximately 4,500 miles during the past year, going as far north as Hartford, Conn., where they were greeted by the mayor.

Finley said the "Illogical" has been through two motors and a few dozen storms during its maiden voyage. "That boat sometimes looks more like a submarine with all the storms we've seen."

He added, "There's an old saying which says sailing

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—Jim Finley

is 95 percent boredom and five percent panic. It seems like it's been the other way around on this trip."

Mrs. Finley said the emotional high of the trip so far was when they passed under the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. "I just looked up and said 'Thank you. I'm so happy to live in this country.'"

The Finleys said they have met many interesting people on their trip, from Cajuns in Louisiana, to Spanish-speaking people in Florida and the New Englanders.

"They say the world is a cold place to live, that people just don't care anymore," said Finley. "Well, we realize that just isn't true. Everyone has taken us in. There are literally thousands of little Calabashes up and down the coast."

They are heading home right now and hope to be there by Christmas. But as Finley said, "When you're traveling at a speed of 5 knots, it takes a while to go anywhere."

Finley said he may sell his house when he gets back so he can by a bigger boat and sail to South America or Europe. "Would I do it again? Hell, yes!"

He added, "A lot of people say they have a lot to lose by just picking up and sailing for a year or two. But I just tell them that they don't realize how much they have to gain."

Mrs. Finley concluded, "It's been frightening, terrifying and adventuresome at times. But there have been days when we've said, 'If there was anything better than this, God must have kept it to himself.'"

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