

Don and friends in *Talisker Bounty Boat*. They successfully re-enacted Captain Willaim Bligh's 1789 Pacific Ocean crossing in an open boat from Tonga to Timor this year... sans mutiny.



JUST DO IT

Don's back. A lot thinner but still keepin' the big adventure dreams alive

Sailing 4000 miles across the Pacific in an open whale boat during the **taliskerbountyboat.com** voyage was an interesting weight-loss program.

I shed 18kg in 48 days, but the major revelation was that life can be good, even without toilet paper. My other boat *ICE* (15.2m steel motorsailer) has all the trappings for a comfortable life at sea anywhere in the world, but there is a serene simplicity to open-boat cruising that is now very attractive.

The last time I had enjoyed those simple pleasures was as a teenager in my Heron sailing dingy. I cruised in it for a week with a tent, a box of food, a lifejacket and one chart (and toilet paper). That was fun and a real adventure.

The fact that I had no charts across the Pacific this time made it an extreme adventure not for the fainthearted. I enjoyed every minute of it. Now with a growing list of past adventures I am often asked two simple questions. What's next, and how can I find the time and money to do all these things?

The person asking the question often has a vested interest. They want to do an adventure, too, but think it is too hard, or they have to work so don't have the time, or they don't have the money. I simply tell them they are wrong on every count and that they can do it if they want.

Adventure is ANY activity that has an unknown outcome — you don't have to sail solo around the world. If you really want to do something, just set your sights on it and don't look for excuses not to do it. You don't need anything else other than a passion to want to do it and then it will happen. But it is up to you.

To answer the question, I never have enough money or time and have to work, too? What's next? The Shackleton James Caird open-boat voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia in the Antarctic, but more on that later!

Sorry to have missed a few of my columns. Now that I am back, it took me a while to read-up on the back issues of *Trade-a-Boat*. The web is great, but it's always relaxing to thumb through the pages of a good magazine and dream!

DON AND JESS

Jessica and I finally got to catch up at the Sydney International Boat Show. I was in the middle of the Pacific battling kidney stones and lack of food and water when she returned, so it was great to have some laughs together and talk about future projects for both.

So much has happened in the past 12 months. As expected, Jess has fallen in love with *Ella's Pink Lady*, so I sold it to her knowing that it will become a symbol of someone very unique who is following her dream.

I don't have to tell anyone that she has inspired millions, but the thing that really surprised me was the number of little girls who love her. Jessica is now the hero of a generation much younger than she is. That has to be good for so many reasons. Thanks Jess!

“Is 14-year-old Laura Decker too young? Only those close to her will know that. It is not hard to sail solo around the world once you decide you really want to do it”

MORE SOLOISTS

It was great to step off the *Talisker Bounty Boat* and catch up on a few months of adventure news. A crazy guy, Alessandro Di Benedetto, has just sailed a 6.5m boat solo non-stop around the world in 268 days.

Slowed when dismasted off Cape Horn, he patched it and put it up, and kept going with the bit that was left! He is one BIG adventurer. I salute him. And what about our own Jamie Dunross? An incredible feat sailing solo around Australia in another S&S34 with some serious issues that I would call a big disability, but he just considers it another challenge. Way to go mate!

If you asked either of the above two about: How? Time? Money? — you would get the same answer I know, “Just go do it if you really want to.”

Then there was Abbey Sunderland and Laura Decker. Media from around the world chased me for comments. I was so excited and happy to see that Abbey was rescued safely deep in the Southern Ocean, another credit to AusSAR (Australian search and rescue service). She convincingly proved that

she is a competent solo sailor, with real courage and determination.

Some would say that luck was not on her side. That is true, but I also believe you can go a long way in life to make your own luck. Was the record of Youngest a bad influence that could have lead to lack of preparation in her case? Is chasing the record a bad thing and how young is too young? I know the record was not driving Jessica — it was the challenge.

If you asked Abbey the question: “If you had unlimited money and time to prepare, would you have used that boat and left at that time of the year?” I'm sure her answer would have been: “No and no”. She was chasing the record and it influenced her decisions.

I'm also a great believer of going with what you have, rather than not at all, but the most important thing with any adventure is to minimise risk. You make your own value judgments and can make your own luck. Get it right and you should succeed.

Is 14-year-old Laura Decker too young? Only those close to her will know that. It is not hard to sail solo around the world once you decide

you really want to do it. Then you must do everything to minimise risk. Anything is possible if you have the passion.

I chose 18-year-old Chris Wilde from the UK to join the *Talisker Bounty Boat* expedition just days before leaving Sydney. He had no sailing experience at all and had not even been on a boat before. Some thought I was foolish, but Chris was passionate about coming and was an excellent swimmer!

Over the 4000 miles I watched him grow and engage the world and all the opportunities it offers. Life is an amazing thing. It is up to us to grab it with both hands and get out there to make the most of every day and every breath.

I live with two simple philosophies: no regrets, and the belief in karma. If you are up for an adventure, just grab your life with both hands and take control. I am just a 55-year-old big kid who tries to keep his heart young and expectations high, but I never allow my dreams to die!

If you are short on ideas for your next adventure, just sit back, relax and enjoy all of the pages that follow. 🌊