



Treasure hunter Anton (this photo) onboard his amazing cat *Sea Rover*. He avoided a mutiny by leaving his crew castaway on a deserted beach for two weeks. *Yume* (right) is home to Japanese solo sailor Shin..



PHOTOS DON MCINTYRE

“OF THE 16 BOATS THERE, 10 WERE SKIPPED BY SOLO MEN OVER 55, ALL LOOKING FOR “SOMETHING” AND HAPPY WITH THEIR LOT”

drawcard for them all and kept their spirits high.

As I sailed away bound for Tonga, I thought a brief collection of just some of the stories and boats was worth sharing with you.

BLACK MAGIC WOMAN

1. Peter, a 56yo Canadian, single, in the army for 26 years, retired and worked as a volunteer for six years, then, with no previous sailing experience, bought the '80s Pearson

36 *Vesper III* and has been cruising the world since.

He arrived in Kokapo, New Guinea last year, and fell in love with a local woman who had seven children. She got pregnant, he bought her a house and planned to stay but then found out about the local black magic and worried he was being poisoned. So he left \$100,000 behind and set off one night for Palau.

Beset by bad weather he had to throw over all her things as they

DON'S PARTY

The people you meet. Don and crew spend six weeks in Palau and mingle with a disparate but likeminded bunch of cruising adventurers

When you finally get to that cruising anchorage after a long passage, you are sure to get to know your anchor mates. They are usually fun and free, with an open mind, free spirit and passion for something... that is why they are out there, too right!
 Well, Palau in Micronesia is no

different. A tropical and diving mecca, with a dynamic and justifiably strong reputation, it draws you in and is a crossroads for people going East and West across the Pacific.
 I was there on *ICE* for six weeks, thanks to some unexpected repairs. Chatting with them in the yacht club or on their boats was a snapshot on adventure as they all had some great

tales to tell.
SOLO FIFTY SOMETHINGS
 Of the 16 boats there, 10 were skippered by solo men over 55, all looking for “something” and happy with their lot. (Is there a story there?). Some had found women along the way, (others tried to pinch two of my crew!) but unexpected adventure over the horizon was a



Sanyasin was hit by a ship that ripped the bows open and nearly took the masts. It did not stop, but who was at fault?

had bad powers. Arriving in Palau he had a "special" mouse onboard he could not catch and believed it was part of the bad magic. Soon, he sets sail for somewhere safe as the world is apparently going to end on December 21 this year!

TREASURED PAYBACK

2. Anton, South African, late 50s, bought his 63ft Wharram catamaran *Sea Rover* in Spain five years ago and has been treasure hunting across the Mediterranean, India and Asia ever since.

He had more treasure hunting gear than me, including the latest sidescan sonars towing magnetometers and metal detectors.

He picks up crew along the way and two recently wanted to get off and basically mutiny, leaving him in a bad situation. So he dropped them on a lonely, uninhabited beach with nothing.

Returning two weeks later, he anchored offshore and had a barbie onboard, while the two castaways watched on. Anton then went ashore and they were happy to sign on again!

THERE'S A PLACE CALLED KOKAPO

3. Jim and Kate, Americans, late 50s, cruising for 15 years on *Asylum*, a Tayana 39.

On March 10 this year, while anchored in Kokapo (Peter above told them it was a great place!), they were asleep with all hatches



locked except the one above their bunk.

Earlier, Kate had smelled some bad body odour while reading in bed, but they had just showered and she eventually went to sleep. Then two locals with knives came through the hatch onto their bed, tied them up, roughed 'em up and took computers, phones, money etc., but spared them. They, too, set sail for Palau.

TSUNAMI SURVIVORS

4. Jim and Jenny, Kiwis, six months on, six months off, cruising their Stewart 36 motorsailer *Amalthea* for many years.

During the horrific tsunami of December 26, 2006, they rode

out the big wave on a marina in Lankawi, Malaysia. The pontoon rose to within 30cm of the top of the pole saving their boat and probably their lives, they were surrounded by devastation.

SHIP IN THE NIGHT

5. Alan, Ariane and now Que. Kiwis, early 40s.

While sailing their 46ft Wharram cat *Sanyasin* from Indonesia on a dark night, they hit a "huge" ship (that did not stop) that left them with two smashed bows and rigs about to fall down. They struggled to the Philippines for repairs last year, Ariane fell pregnant, so they sailed for Palau for the birth of Que.

MURPHY'S LAW

6. Oleg, Ukranian, late 40s, sailing a state-of-the-art multi-million-dollar cruising open 60-style megayacht *Ilove* with carbon mast etc.

Set off, bound for Palau in the middle of a circumnavigation. It was supposed to be a seven-day leg. However, a series of squalls blew out all his sails except for a spinnaker and his mainsail. A broken gooseneck meant it was spinnaker only!

He then lost his motor and autopilots, with just 30nm to go, drifting for the next three days. Eventually, he gave up organising a tow and arrived 18 days after

Black magic and the possibility of being poisoned by his new girlfriend was just one part of the bigger picture for the owner of *Vesper* (top). Attacked by pirates or just bad guys, the result could be the same. The crew of *Asylum* (left) were very lucky.



Home for 25 years (above) and it shows — they all get heavier. Our man Don (right, at right) and crew finally lift anchor after spending six weeks in Palau.

setting out. While waiting for customs he then ran out of water!

WOODEN CLASSICS

7. Then there is Bill the lawyer with political ambitions, American, sailing his 1928 65ft timber schooner.

He has spent the past 15 years cruising from Alaska to Hobart and all ports in between, clocking up 50,000nm.

He has too many stories. Meanwhile, Gary was another timber-boat freak cruising in a perfectly original (except for the electric motor) classic International Eight Metre antique yacht that some classic-boat buffs want to buy in the UK; they are so rare!

ALL TYPES

8. Finally, just for something different, Mark and Pauline from Singapore have spent the last 25 years cruising their heavy *Sari Timur* all over Asia, while Japanese solo sailor Shin, who is sailing his 38 passagemaker *Yume*, was inspired by eight times Japanese solo circumnavigator Minoru Saito, to set out around the world.

These are just a few of my friends



from the last anchorage. They sail boats that cost from \$30,000 to a few million, but are all in the same boat. Not for everyone, but not bad either.

96 THONGS

I have always been amazed at the thongs I see floating about the oceans. They are everywhere, but a few days ago I hit a personal best.

I am writing this, while steaming along on *ICE* (my position now is 2.15N 150.45E), having left Palau for

Kiribati a week ago. It is a 2400nm leg.

Anyway, we headed south to find the east-setting equatorial counter current and we did... together with a massive amount of floating rubbish: logs, trees, plastic etc.

One day, I started counting thongs and by sundown I reached 96, but not one matching pair! And these were only the ones that were within about 25m of the boat.

It is a big ocean out here, so what about the ones we did not see! Makes you think, hey! 🍷

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