

Rusty (this photo) stopped during a lull in the wind, after it had dragged the anchor about 300m to within 12m of our mooring in a 35kts blow... a tense period. She cannot drive a car, or a motorbike, as Chinese do pushbike, so when I trained Jane (inset below) to drive the Zodiac we got worried.



PARADISE LOST

Trade-a-Boat deprived **DON MCINTYRE** and crew remain marooned in the Pacific and it's not all paradise, but there's time for plenty of varied reflection and words of advice

Zhou Suijuan (Jane) is from a very traditional Chinese family. She lived happily with her parents and sister in one room (with no toilet), until she was 10 years-old. Her parents worked hard for her education and she became the English interpreter at Seahorse Yachts in Zhuhai. In the beginning, she knew nothing about boats or the ocean, but became the project manager during the three-year build for my boat *ICE*. I can vividly remember my total frustration/exasperation,

while standing on a part-completed *ICE*, trying to explain to her what a battery was — for about 15 minutes! — until she “got it”. Now 30, she is crewing on *ICE*, a huge adventure that has taught her more about life and the world than you can possibly imagine. Jane has a clear, uncluttered view on many things and makes us all laugh at times with her profound statements and comments, borne from a simple, yet unique background of Chinese culture and tradition. Last week she asked me a question that is stuck in my brain! I am not sure of

the answer, but it got me thinking. I am currently sitting in a heavy oil slick, anchored off a beach that looks good from a distance, but can make people physically vomit just standing on it. This is Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands, Republic of Kiribati. If you follow my column (or www.bluetreasure.me) you will know that I had to sail here without an engine, as my injector pump (and spare) both failed at sea while crossing the Pacific from the Philippines to Tonga. I have now been trapped here (yep, still stuck!) for 10 weeks, waiting for “special” John Deere (JD) “custom”



The Government trading vessel *Mei Momi* (top) that dragged down on us. It carries up to 100 people and cargo between islands. Built in the 1980s, she is past her use-by date. *ICE* (above) has been trapped in Tarawa now for 10 weeks. We are just a \$1 million fish and weed attractor without the John Deere.

tools to arrive, so I can remove an oil seal on the engine. I did not receive any response from John Deere USA to my desperate emails and after the Taiwanese JD agent told me the tools were not available for three months, I searched and finally found some in the USA. They should arrive within days.

HULKS ATTACK
 The oil slick came from one of the rusting hulks (not “yet” on the reef beside the other 11 wrecks within one mile of us). With no engine and a very exposed anchorage, I am happy to have *ICE* on a mooring, loaned to me by the Water Police. They operate the Pacific Class Patrol Boat donated to Kiribati by the Australian Government.

I am surrounded by boats that have long passed their use-by date but are still used here because they are affordable! They're old traders and fishing boats that somehow find

goods and people to move from place to place. You have to believe what you see. Survey and maintenance are not happening.

Two weeks ago, Jane and I were on *ICE*, while the rest of the crew were ashore. A huge thunderstorm/ weather cell passed through, with 30 to 35-knot winds, 1.5m seas and blinding rain. The Government trading vessel *Mei Momi* started dragging its anchors, heading straight for *ICE*.

We radioed the port control to notify them, as there were no crew on the ship. We watched and waited for 90 minutes as it went beam-on to the wind, dragging at about 1kt in anything above 30kts. When less than 100m from us, the wind dropped. The crew came out a few hours later and moved the ship.

DEJA VOUS
 A week ago it all happened again. This time it involved a trading ship

that should be called *Rusty*. It's in such bad shape that the hull plating has holes in it (above the waterline) big enough for a person to put a hand through! Its pumps run all the time, and no crew onboard. The wind is now gusting 40kts and Jane and I are alone again. It was not looking good.

I had all the fenders out as our bow was pitching underwater and we were ready to cut the mooring lines and try to sail off with the genoa into the grey. The ship came to within 10m of our mooring buoy before the wind died. The crew returned to the ship 45 minutes after our radio call and were underway just as the next 35-knot gust arrived.

It was in the heat of this moment, that Jane asked the question, “What happens to all the old boats?”

“These here will eventually go to the bottom probably, as they are not worth sending to the wreckers,” I explained.

“But what about all the old yachts?” asked Jane.

“Oh, they just get fixed-up and someone has a cheap boat,” I said. “*ICE* will be good for 100 years.”

“But what about when they get really, really old and no good?” asked Jane.

“Hmmm?” I explained, “I'll get back to you — we have a ship about to hit us!”

YACHT WRECKERS
 Have you looked at used-car prices lately; you can pull a bargain at two years-old. More so if it's an expensive bit of “quality” with a fancy bonnet badge! Cars, like toasters and TVs, are disposable and the recycling date is getting shorter and shorter. Nothing new about our throwaway society, hey!

I bought my first car in 1970 (a Ford Prefect panel van) while still at school. It was in pieces and I rebuilt it with more pieces from the local wrecking yard. It worked and cost \$145. Every weekend it took me surfing and gave me somewhere to live for nearly 18 months before I sold it for \$200! When I started McIntyre Marine Services in 1984, I bought a two-year-old Ford Econovan that was a bargain, put a huge company logo on it and finally sent it to the wreckers, rusted out, 15 years later.

But where are all the yacht wreckers? Hmmm. Certainly you see some glamour boats among the bargains on eBay and between these pages, or the rotting skeleton of a timber classic up the muddy creek in the mangroves. There



John and Naomi and their 1980 Cape Dory (top, with a 2in GRP hull) they bought for \$65,000 five years ago. They're happy! Carlo and Elisabetta (above) onboard their 44-foot 1980s classic they bought for less than \$100,000 and on which they have cruised for the last 10 years of a 20-year voyage.

are huge yards in the USA with "dreamboats" rotting on the hard as we speak, not fit for a "project". But who pays to bury them? Some of the current "brand" boats are now built on automated production lines, partially using robots and are becoming more like production cars. To me they are looking more like part of the throwaway society every day. I wonder if there is a hidden "recyclable" logo somewhere on the hull. LOL!

GRP boats started turning up in the 1960s with 2in thick hulls, but by the '70s and '80s it was 1in and now is only a few millimetres — so what about the yacht wreckers? Is the time approaching?

Some of the best buys for cruising/adventure boats are now those built in the 1980s or earlier in GRP — even the French production boats (first into mass production) of that vintage are strong and should keep

indefinitely, with love and refits. Watch out for osmosis, corrosion, cockroaches and bananas in the gearbox, then grab a deal and go see the world. You will be helping the environment, saving yourself a huge amount of money, get going sooner and stay out there longer.

What's more, you may not get stuck in a place like Tarawa, with a very expensive John Deere engine, bought from an American company that says it's engines are, I quote: "Backed by a company you can count on for service and support — no matter where you explore or work." Am I missing something here?

TAB DEPRIVED

The worst part about being here so long is having only two old copies of *Trade-a-Boat* onboard. I must have read every page 20 times and can even memorise the page numbers! Excitement levels increase when

THE WORST PART ABOUT BEING HERE SO LONG IS HAVING ONLY TWO OLD COPIES OF *TRADE-A-BOAT* ONBOARD. I MUST HAVE READ EVERY PAGE 20 TIMES AND CAN EVEN MEMORISE THE PAGE NUMBERS!

another yacht arrives.

There have been just three. A Leopard 46 cat headed for New Zealand at the end of a five-year 50,000nm voyage with Kiwi owners, a "vintage" 1980 36ft Cape Dory (with 2in thick GRP hull) from Canada and a 48ft centre cockpit GRP '80s classic with Italian owners. We all had stories to swap over dinner, but the Italians were really shocking!

Carlo and Elisabetta have been cruising the world for 20 years including one circumnavigation. They left Italy in a steel yacht, but steadily became frustrated fighting the rust. Ten years ago in Australia, while helping another boat tie-up, they found it was for sale, bought it on the spot and then sold theirs through *Trade-a-Boat*. For the past six years, they have based themselves out of Fiji.

Every summer they haul out and put their boat *Barca Pulita* in a "hole on the hard" for the cyclone season and return to Italy to produce TV documentaries of their sailing from the video they shoot. They also give talks at yacht clubs, and all together earn enough money to return the following year. They have published many books and are quite the celebrities at home. So what was so shocking?

While we have been trapped on the mooring in Tarawa, they have been sailing in and out every few weeks, cruising the other Gilbert Island. Each time we say goodbye we add, "We will NOT be here when you get back!" But we always are. One Island, just 26 nautical miles north of here, is in their opinion, "the nicest place they have been to, anywhere in the world!"

AGHHHHH! 🚩