

So good to be back on the road. *ICE* is an excellent dive boat!

CRAZY CREW

Don is at sea again, this time in Fiji, with a new crew on a treasure hunting adventure

Selecting crew for any adventure afloat is a real art. It is part science, a touch of good luck and plenty of gut feeling. I have been doing it since 1993, when I first sailed to Antarctica. At the end of the day, I never worry about it, as it adds to the rich colour of life and becomes part of the adventure. I do like people

with passion though and always look for that special something!

When 28-year-old Amit from Israel contacted me, wanting to join our treasure hunting team this season on *ICE*, I smiled! He was a combat training specialist, served six years in the Israeli army as a sniper, had a BSc in marine biology, was a qualified scientific diver, underwater photographer

and videographer, a kite surfing instructor, certified captain to 24m, and was prepared to drop everything to join! Why not... see you in Fiji, Amit. He arrived two months later.

I had been in China starting a new three-year project, a 24m 120-tonne version of *ICE*, and was scheduled to fly back to Fiji to meet him when all flights were

cancelled because of flooding. A few days later the flights were cancelled again, with a cyclone bearing down on Fiji. Wow! *ICE* was uninsured, as I was just changing to a new company, and Jane was onboard with Amit. Fortunately, it missed.

A week later I finally joined Amit on *ICE*. He is a cool guy, quiet and confident and "now" learning to play the recorder! He sold everything he owned to join the crew (all crew contribute \$500 a week to help run the boat) and now has no money and no ties with the outside world. He is starting a new life.

I knew he was short of money, but a few days after joining, I found out just how much. To join, he prostituted himself to science. I was gagging for air (laughing) as he explained.

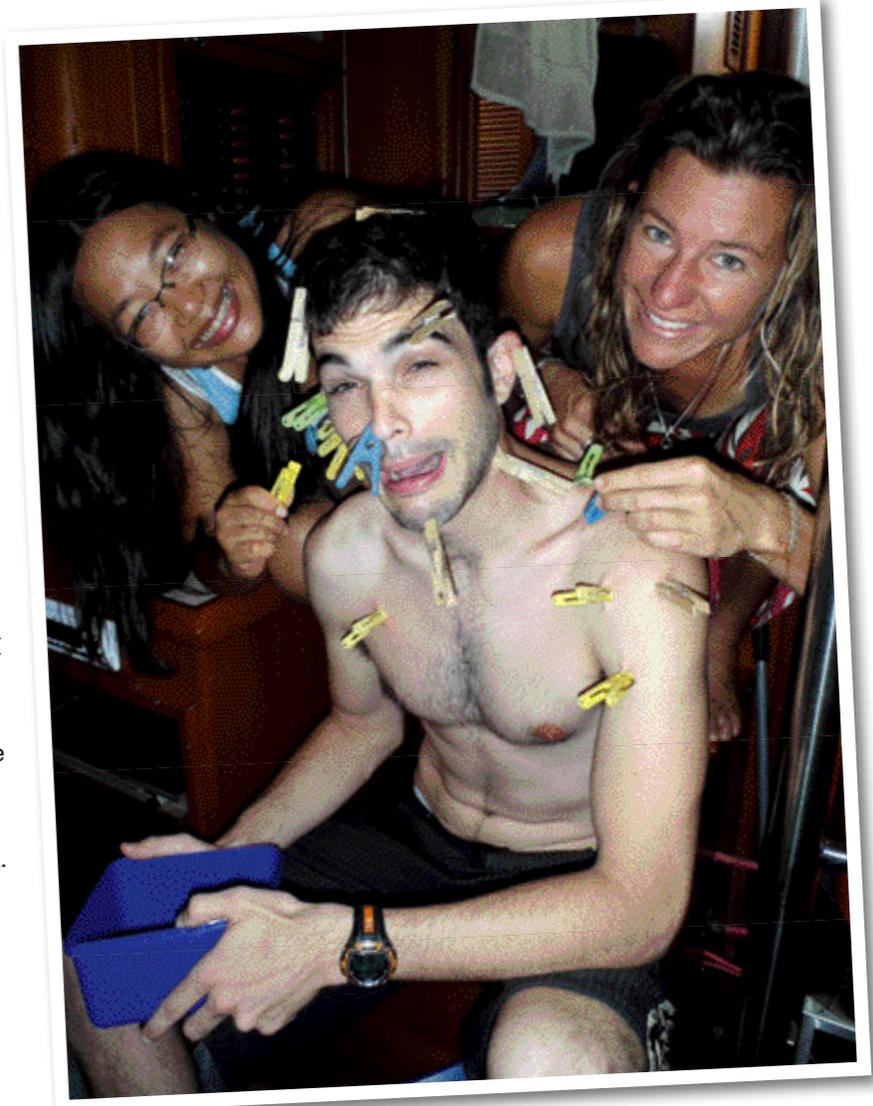
Over a four-week period, each day, for quite a good dollar rate, he let "them" do weird experiments on his body, mind and soul. One scientist believed women's tears held pheromones that excited men. To prove that they also needed men's tears, so he had to watch sad movies to make him cry. But Amit is not your usual guy. No tears, so more sad movies. Still no tears. He took the money anyway.

Then there were the top secret tests, with no explanations... like more pleasant movies with a twist. Every few minutes there were horrible loud sounds through headsets, after which they took his ear wax? Or how about the horrible smelly boxes test, or three hours of continuously flashing strobe lights, vertical, then horizontal, all the time with Amit pushing buttons from reflex. As I said, I like people with passion, Amit will be just fine.

Kylie, also 28, has flown in to join us. She is a sailor, free diver, surfer, and has an advanced diploma of photography. A universal wanderlust for travel kept her backpacking for the last five years. Now she has a new home for the year and a new adventure. As you read this, we should all be on our way to Tonga at last. Want to join the team? Contact me through www.bluetreasure.me

SURPRISE CREW

In 1993, my first adventure crew included 200 teddy bears, an SAS soldier, a cameraman and an "ordinary Joe" by the



My crazy crew! Jane (left) and Kylie (right) test the "power of pegs" to withstand trade winds on the rail, with Amit happy to oblige.

name of Hanz. We were bound for Antarctica in my 50ft yacht *Buttercup*. I had just sailed in the BOC Challenge Solo Around the World Race in that yacht. Hanz was a big bloke but worried about heading south as he suffered from seasickness. I said okay, so he started a risk minimisation program. He bought ginger tablets, wrist bands and went to a naturopath, and got 30 small hand-blown glass bottles of black "goo" with hand-carved cork stoppers. He also took up meditation and hypnosis to tackle the problem.

The surprising thing about Hanz, was, that when he was sick, he screamed hard and loud! It happened a lot. We were all happy to spend time in Antarctica. Inevitably, we had to sail north and Hanz was not excited.

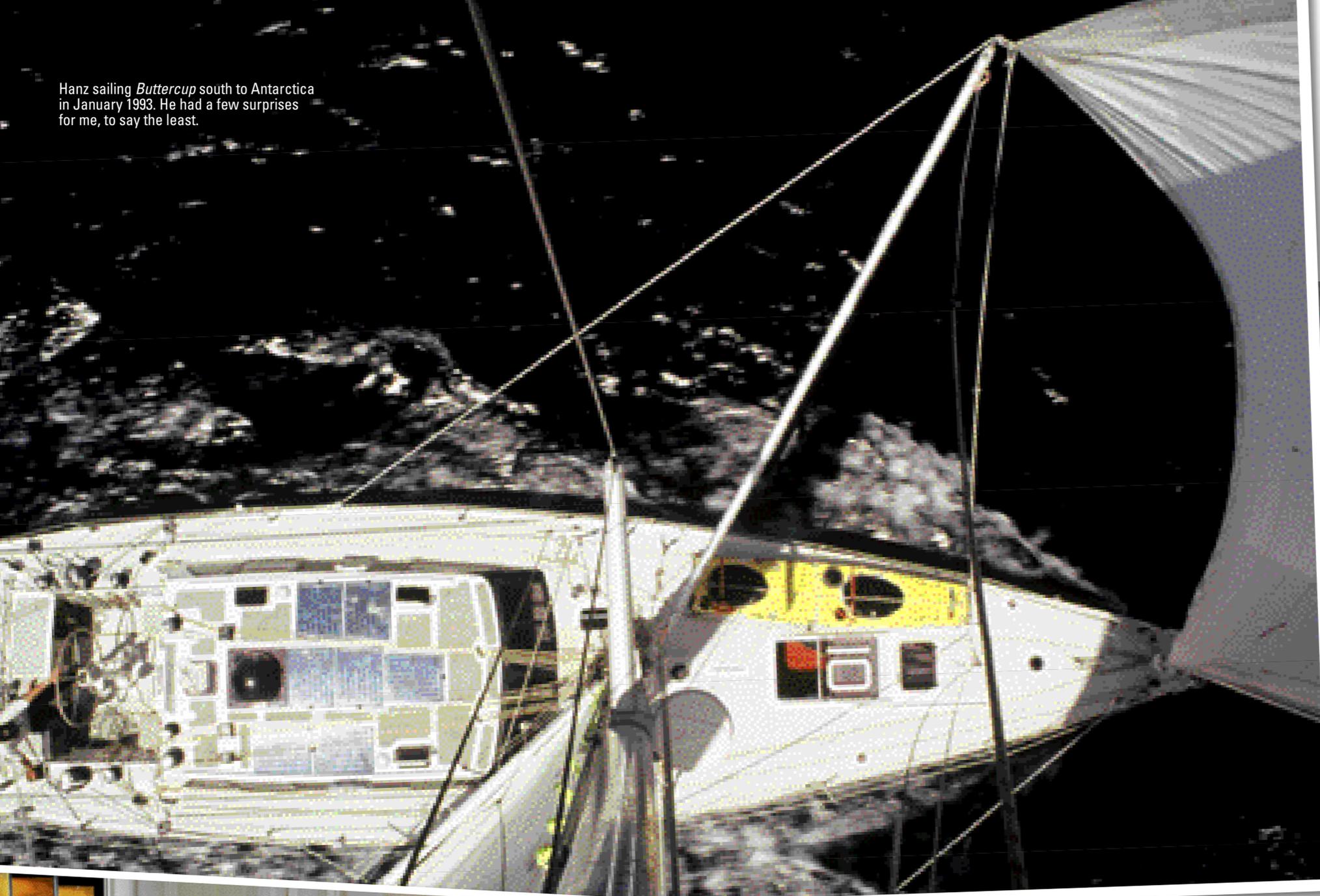
Sailing so close to the South Magnetic Pole meant that we lost

our compass. It froze solid and our autopilots quit too. When the compass finally started to come back, I noticed every time Hanz was on the wheel, he would steer all over the ocean. I would have to shout out to him from below. And every time I tried the autopilot, it would never work. Bummer!

When we were about two days from Tasmania (having sailed 3000 miles over the five weeks) still hand steering, I was beside Hanz in the cockpit. He has Band-Aids over his wrists? I jokingly asked if he had tried to commit suicide, due also to the constant "screaming over the side".

"No," he said, "they hold the magnets that magnetise my blood to help my seasickness." WHAT! Sure enough, as I watched, when his wrists rolled over the binnacle compass while holding the wheel, the compass error created by the magnets increased to 25

Hanz sailing *Buttercup* south to Antarctica in January 1993. He had a few surprises for me, to say the least.



WE ARRIVED IN SYDNEY WITH NO ENGINE, BROKEN STEERING, BURST FUEL TANK, TORN SAILS AND 200 HAPPY TEDDY BEARS. WE HAD TO BE TOWED IN. HANZ WAS DREAMING OF CHICKEN FARMS



The colourful King of Tonga died in March. The Late George Tupou V and I (left) discuss my upcoming Talisker Bounty Voyage in April 2010. He left a lasting impression on me.

degrees! Aghh!
After my explanation of why you keep magnets away from compasses, he realised his mistake. He then said: "Lucky the magnets on my ankles were at least a metre from the compass." WHAT! Oh, no! When off watch, the autopilot compass was just 12in from his feet as he lay in his bunk. I had tested it only at the times when he was in his bunk. Aghh!
We arrived in Sydney with no

engine, broken steering, burst fuel tank, torn sails and 200 happy teddy bears. We had to be towed in. Hanz was dreaming of chicken farms. A few months later, he signed a contract and we built him a 54ft Adams Radford centreboard cruising yacht. Just months after it was launched, he set off on a three-year circumnavigation with his wife and two young daughters... some guy!

THE KING IS DEAD

The King of Tonga died suddenly in late March. It was a shock and surprise to many. What an amazing man, who knew how to live his life and care for his people. He was into cars, planes and other "fun" activities, yet his people

Sailing *Talisker Bounty Boat* with 18 school kids off a small island in Tonga (above). Just 200m away, unbeknown to us at the time, was the first of "a few" virgin shipwrecks we were later to discover. This was the real beginning of Blue Treasure, our latest expedition.

and the Kingdom of Tonga were everything to him.
He used a London cab to travel around and many in the world thought he was eccentric. About the taxi, he once said, "It was easy to get in and out of." That made sense to me. It certainly created a presence and probably cost less than something more official? I am the first to agree that anything in life with a bit of fun, has more meaning. So why not.
I was humbled to meet his Excellency the King prior to the Talisker Bounty Boat voyage in April 2010. It was a warm,

friendly engagement, with a very knowledgeable man, who was keenly interested in Bligh and the early history of Tongans engaging with European cultures. He presented me with an "hourglass", later used every day of our voyage (which I know I'll cherish). That day left a lasting impression on me, as have the Friendly Isles.
He brought about constitutional change. The power of life and the freedom of this amazing place will keep Tonga moving forward into a new future, with a new elected government. If you have never been there, you need to go! 🇹🇴