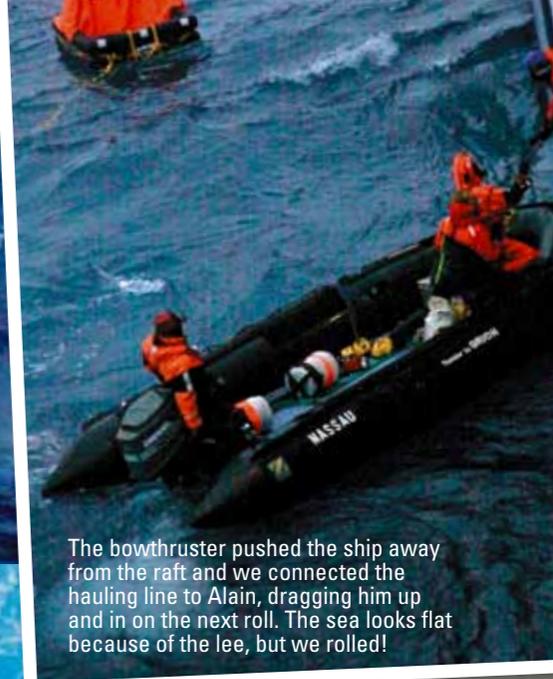
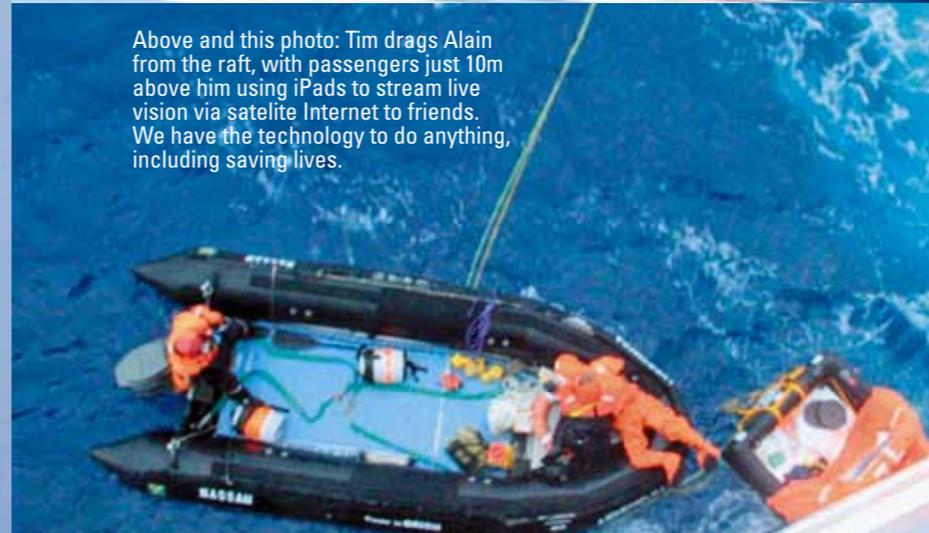




RCC Canberra had four aircraft on rotation overhead for three days — not cheap! These guys were flying past the bridge windows, just under the clouds and lead us to him with flares the last two miles. They carried air-droppable survival gear. Brilliant!



Above and this photo: Tim drags Alain from the raft, with passengers just 10m above him using iPads to stream live vision via satellite Internet to friends. We have the technology to do anything, including saving lives.



The bowthruster pushed the ship away from the raft and we connected the hauling line to Alain, dragging him up and in on the next roll. The sea looks flat because of the lee, but we rolled!



That first hug from Margie after Alain's own miracle... RCC Canberra, flight crews and all involved felt very proud.

# SOUTHERN OCEAN RESCUE

**DON MCINTYRE** relates the January rescue of French solo-sailer Alain Dulord in the Southern Ocean and asks: "Who pays?"

In early February, I was at the bottom of the world, 2500 miles south of Hobart, as far down as you can go by ship. I was in Antarctica to check out Scott and Shackleton's huts. I have done it many times over the past eight years as expedition leader on MV *Orion*. But this season is different.

We struggled through 240 miles of serious pack ice to get here, placing us at the extreme limit of our endurance and allowing us

only 10 hours to effect the landings before having to head north, back out through the pack ice. We entered Scott's hut for three hours, while it blew 25 to 40kts with drifting snow and -30°C wind-chill temperatures. Ninety-five ecstatic passengers were then disappointed but accepting of the fact that we could not "bag" the other prize, Shackleton's hut, as it was just too dangerous to make a landing at the ice edge.

Satellite images now show the

pack ice area closing in behind us as we race north to engage in battle once again. I cannot give you the final outcome. I have just emailed head office in Sydney to warn of a potential delay to our arrival in New Zealand.

We sail in 5-star luxury onboard *Orion*, yet these expeditions are true adventures. We work with the elements, never against it. The 'Antarctic factor' dictates what we can and cannot do. Every voyage

has an unknown outcome. Often the nearest ship is more than 2000 miles away. We are on our own. If we ever needed assistance, we can tell the world with an EPIRB but we know it would not be a speedy recovery. Because of these factors we undertake a huge amount of contingency planning to prepare for all emergencies, just in case.

I have raced solo around the world and many times to Antarctica on small yachts. I even sailed 4000 miles across the Pacific in an open whale boat following in the footsteps of William Bligh after the Mutiny on the *Bounty*. I have completed a world-first gyrocopter flight and some crazy adventures on land too. To date I have never had to be rescued, so yes, I am lucky, even with all my risk assessment and mitigation efforts. I am lucky too, because I live my life with freedom to engage the world and wild places in my own way. After a year living with Margie in a box chained to rocks in Antarctica, I cried when I saw a seal living in a plastic bag at the Sydney Aquarium. He had lost his freedom.

## SOUTHERN OCEAN SOS

A few short weeks ago *Orion* was tasked to rescue a solo French sailor in the Southern Ocean. You may have read about it or saw it on the nightly TV news. We had to divert some 680 miles from our course and cancel a planned stop at Macquarie Island, southeast of Hobart. Some passengers were a little disappointed and even the captain expressed a dislike of solo sailors! Hmmmm? None however disagreed with the humanitarian principle of saving a life. Occasionally in life you can be the person in the right place at the right time, or the wrong place at the wrong time. You can interpret that as you will.

Sixty-three-year-old Alain Delord is a very experienced sailor with 17 transatlantics under his belt. He was sailing his dream, a solo non-stop challenge around the world in a 10.3m yacht. Four-hundred miles below Tasmania he was hit by the remnants of an Indian Ocean cyclone, then rolled in huge seas, dismasted and with the boat filling fast with water he decided to abandon ship. He did not see his

boat sink as it drifted away. During that night he was rolled out of his liferaft five times, losing everything but his EPIRB. He was cold in the 8°C water and exhausted. He thought he was going to die.

Fortunately he had managed to speak to the Rescue Coordination Centre in Canberra by satphone before the dismasting and had been heading for Hobart, so they had an idea of where he was.

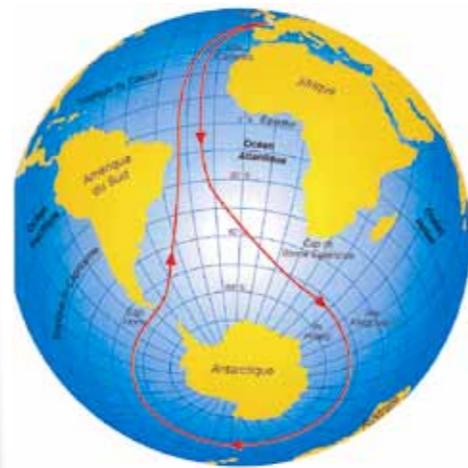
Aircraft were overhead within hours of his EPIRB activation and unsuccessfully tried to drop extra survival gear. Fortunately the next morning one drop succeeded. He now had a survival suit, food, water, extra communication gear and another EPIRB. Luckily the weather was moderating to 35kts and 5m seas.

## ORION TO THE RESCUE

We were now racing to his aid, surprised that we were the closest vessel. The captain came up with a



Alain Delord, 63, leaves France aboard his ill-fated Archambault 35 *Tchouk Tchouk Nougat*.



Delord's round-the-world route.

### ORION GETS NO COMPENSATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OR INSURERS FOR ASSISTING. THE PASSENGERS ON THE SHIP ARE ALSO NOT ENTITLED TO ANY REFUND UNDER EXISTING LAWS

were also used. The rescue was not cheap. So why do we do it? Why not just drown out someone's last gasp, while we listen to our iPods?

When Scott and Shackleton went to the ice as explorers and adventurers, there was no one around to rescue them and there were no EPIRBs. All the passengers on *Orion* today would hope that if they were ever in trouble, someone, somewhere, would turn off their iPods and come help — or at least do the best they safely could.

Should we stop someone's spirit of adventure just because we do not want to rescue them? Risk is a part of daily life. How should we decide what is enough or just too much risk? In my mind, it appears most people feel alive, proud, self-assured and confident once they have faced some form of adventure or risk, be it paddling a canoe, sailing to Antarctica or bushwalking for the first time. It is literally character-building stuff! Is it too risky to send *Orion* to the end of the world? Human endeavour and technology is built on risk.

Humans are so clever that we can now rescue people from most corners of the earth. But should we? Is that system put in place to rescue only good people? Are solo sailors good people? Or should we just rescue ordinary people in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Maybe Alain was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Who would you think is the wrong person to rescue? And who will make that decision? Should we ask for a credit card first? What would you give to save a life? If someone called you and said they want to take your car and never give it back because it will save a life of someone's son or daughter, would you give it?

If gardening is your hobby you may



Alain's hands after three months on the yacht, three days in the raft and a few hours in the water.



Alain's core body temperature was normal — no hypothermia after three days thanks to the survival suit, but his arm was beat-up from hanging onto the raft all that time.



Happy Days! Me and Margie bid farewell to Alain when leaving the ship in Hobart bound for France, family, friends and a new life.



No.1 Zodiac team ready to go in 30 minutes: (L to R) Me, Tim, Falco and Steve whose GoPro did not record? bummer.

plan and I had to pull all the teams together and make it happen. We practiced for all contingencies. Two-and-a-half days later we approached Alain in poor visibility, 4m seas and 25 to 30-knot winds, guided by flares from a C130 Hercules flying at 300ft, just below the cloud base. We had only an hour before dark.

Ninety-three passengers lining the upper deck hung on as the ship rolled nearly 30 degrees, with the captain doing an excellent job drifting down onto the hapless Frenchman. With Alain's first weak wave from the liferaft there was a huge cheer from the crowd! It was very surreal.

Meanwhile, having prepped the Zodiac crew, I was now below at the side-gate hatch, a hole 3m from the water that opens in the side of the ship normally allowing guests to exit for shore excursions. I had to open the hatch on command and asses the conditions for its use, set-up hoist lines to recover an injured/

weak Alain, then give the go-ahead for the Zodiac to launch. The Zodiac would arrive at the hatch for a final check and I would jump in to lead the raft recovery.

I opened the hydraulic hatch and, wow, no freeboard, then I saw the next swell. It rolled in like a scene from the *Titanic*, tonnes of water flooding past my waist, nearly washing a sailor down the passage to the lower decks and worse, on the next roll, nearly taking a sailor out through the hole! I knew the watertight doors were closed down below but, oops, we were now flooding the crew mess and hospital, the hydraulic pumps in full reverse!

### TENSE MOMENTS

The captain repositioned and gave the go-ahead again. I opened the hatch and we were stable for the moment. I gave the signal for the Zodiac launch then looked right as the hatch slowly opened. Wow, Alain was just 20m from the door, I screamed for him to sit on the raft canopy so I could throw a heaving line. He spoke no English. Then I saw the Zodiac hit the water. Alain was now drifting fast to the bow, pressed to the hull by the ship bearing down on him. We did not want him past the bow, as the weather to lee was vital. Tim was in the Zodiac racing towards me but I waved him on direct to Alain. Time was critical.

Steve the Zodiac driver did an awesome job. A huge cheer from the crowd erupted as Tim dragged Alain from his raft. Tim was in a hurry, knowing we were still taking water through the side of the ship.

The freeboard at the side hatch was up and down with the rolls. We attached the hoist line, synchronised the roll and pulled him in. A recovery team took Alain to the hospital and I shut the hatch

as soon as they hoisted the Zodiac, completing its 6.5-minute voyage.

Margie was the first person to meet Alain in the hospital. He walked in! He was battered and bruised but had a new life. He called it his miracle. Ninety minutes later, Alain was in his 5-star suite with a bed larger than his raft, sipping Australian red wine. His smile grew when he discovered I was a solo sailor. He was shocked when told we had come so far to rescue him and humbled when he realised the passengers had to end their voyage for him.

### COUNTING THE COST

So once again the media asks, "Who pays for the rescue?"

Australia is a signatory to an international treaty that requires us to take responsibility for search-and-rescue actions in a specific part of the world at no cost to the recipient. Other nations control other areas. Our area is huge and a Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) is established and operational in Canberra, 24 hours a day. It has access to rescue assets all around Australia. It can ask for military assistance and direct ships — who are required under maritime law to act — to a survivor.

*Orion* gets no compensation from the government or insurers for assisting. The passengers on the ship are also not entitled to any refund under existing laws. As a goodwill gesture, not a legal requirement, the company made a generous offer to guests for the disruption; even though the remnants of Alain's cyclone went on to deliver 50-knot winds and huge seas at Macquarie Island on our scheduled visit day. It would have made landings impossible.

For three days, RCC Canberra chartered commercial aircraft at great expense, and military aircraft

Gusting to 40kts with drift snow and -30°C windchill, Scott's Hut at Cape Evans is an impressive place. Ninety-three passengers made the visit in these conditions, everyone on their own special adventure.



well think mountain climbers, solo sailors, fishermen, even Antarctic tourists are reckless adventurers who should probably stay at home. Okay, so who pays for the rescue? Simple, it's those that can and do assist that pay.

Now think about this. It is illegal to sail away from most countries without an EPIRB. Why? Because governments must mount a search if someone goes missing. Even if you were to sign a right-to-die contract with all the rescue coordination centres around the world stating that "you do not want to be rescued", they cannot and will not

acknowledge it. They are obligated if they can to investigate and search, so an EPIRB makes their life easier. If no one is able to assist a distress call then no one pays. If no one can pay the price for planes or fuel or manpower then no one will search. But if we as human beings are in the right place at the right time and are able to assist someone who is in trouble then the search and sometimes the rescue just happens to the best of everyone's ability and many people are proud of that.

There is NO black-and-white answer to this question... we are all just humans. 🙏