



Bring it on

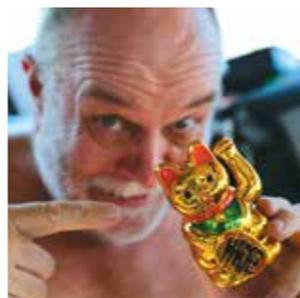
MEET MY NEW CREW FOR OUR NEXT WRECK-DIVING ADVENTURE IN THE TROPICAL WATERS OF TONGA

Excitement levels are building! A tremendous sense of anticipation grows daily within each of my three new crew signed onto *ICE*. We sail for Tonga (and hopefully more wrecks) in just two days. For the

past month we have been living the simple adventure of life, revolving around a marina that is a "hub" for all those crossing the Pacific, in either direction.

Vuda Point Marina in Fiji is more like a yacht club. It is a real assortment of characters and boats, all

with amazing stories to tell, as happens each night over at the "sunset bar". Mega yachts costing \$270 million are mingling with global cruisers costing \$15,000, or dedicated adventure yachts returning from, or headed to, the Polar regions. Under unique hats dwell



LEFT Here's me and my new crew for our 2014 Tonga wreck-diving expedition. Oh, and we have one other secret crewmember... let's hope it works!

ABOVE LEFT *Vagabond*, abandoned and bought for \$2000 at Point Vuda Marina, Fiji, was stripped, then sold for a profit as scrap steel. Some dreams eventually come to an end.

ABOVE *Sea Quest* is the 50ft boat I built in 2002 for a client. I bought her back two years ago before selling her on to Tobias Fahey a few weeks later, so he could have a crack at a solo non-stop circumnavigation. Unfortunately he had to give up and two weeks ago I tried to buy it back ... but just missed out. Jimmy Cornell's World Odyssey Race is still on my mind!

"This crew is older and wiser, just the thing for a complex hunt below the sea. Time to go do it."

enthusiastic minds, all out living their dreams. Just to be among them sparks my brain and puts a spring in my step.

With our bright red hull and most unlikely captain and crew, we fit in really well. I wear a simple hat and Jane just has the cutest smile! Our three crew? Well, they make us look good: "Brownie" is basically your typical Aussie carpenter/builder who has been mucking around in boats and diving all his life. Recently separated and sporting two new titanium hips, he continues to follow his dreams at 55. We call him "the old bloke!"

Yau Ming, 45, is a retired Singaporean stockbroker with Master's degrees in history. He is a passionate diver and underwater photographer hoping to be first to the surface with a Ming Dynasty vase! With little boating experience his current adventures are

with rope work and within the pages of our *Sailing for Dummies* instruction book.

Annetta, 44, from Germany, is our technological and digital know-how expert with a long career in film, television, computers and multimedia (expect to see some changes on bluetreasure.me soon). She was in the middle of global travels when I offered her a crew position and has now discovered a whole new underwater world as a PADI diver, a condition of her joining. Something tells me Annetta could save the day with our magnetometer, as there is plenty of computing required for that.

My Blue Treasure crew this year is totally different than those of the past three. Why? Well, I am often asked how I select my crew from the many applicants each season. I have been doing it for 20 years now on all my adventures and we always

end up with great teams.

My first rule of thumb is passion - any lack of experience can always be overcome with dedication and an intense desire to simply be there doing it. Second, is the ability to share the real cost. This always sorts the men from the boys, because again, I only want people who really want to be there, not just on a free holiday - \$500 a week is similar to accommodation and food in the suburbs of Melbourne anyway.

Finally, I look at the skillset we require to do the job at hand and attempt to fill those.

This year is quite unique from any other. This crew is older and wiser - just the thing for a complex hunt below the sea. Time to go do it.

SERENITY

There are times in life when you just need to kick back and let life happen. So it is

with my mate Bob. The other side of 65 and now receiving an Australian pension, he hangs out on what I reckon is one of the boating world's classic designs. Built of timber in 1961 in Hawaii, *Serenity* is an Atkin's Ingrid design. I met both for the first time three years ago when I landed in Point Vuda Marina.

Bob came by his boat many years ago through a strange set of circumstances and, being built from timber and residing in the tropics, she always needs work. In fact she needed a major refit and new engine before he could sail to New Guinea.

Armed only with his Australian pension, he bought an abandoned dream, *Vagabond II*, on the marina for \$2000, stripped it of a great Bukh engine, Taylor kerosene stove, fuel tanks, gauges and vents etc., then sold the hull as-is for \$1500 as scrap steel and the excellent rig for \$1000.



ABOVE L and R Bob kicking back and letting life happen on his beloved *Serenity* – not a bad way to spend your retirement money. An oldie but a goodie and definitely not abandoned. Bob Hagner's classic Ingrid design has plenty of life left in her, as well as a new motor and stove. Bob originally had plans for a surf charter business in her but now just lets life happen.

BELOW I first saw this 12m classic yawl more than two years ago when it arrived in Fiji from the USA. Twelve months ago it sold on eBay, sight unseen to the UK for \$11,000. After one visit the new owners said "too hard" and it has been abandoned – so do you have \$2000 and a bit of time?

Five days later, he motored away on a new adventure with a new engine, all the new gear and \$500 beer money! No doubt about Aussie ingenuity and spirit of adventure!

IN OR OUT?

I often marvel at the extra amount of life I get back when I am out doing something. No more TV current affairs, no weekend papers (that take four hours to wade through) ... in fact, sometimes, no more news or public opinion at all. There is a simplicity to all that. I just switch it all off for a while and life blissfully rolls on. You actually get to focus on living your life, rather than worrying about other's lives and how lucky we are to be healthy and happy.

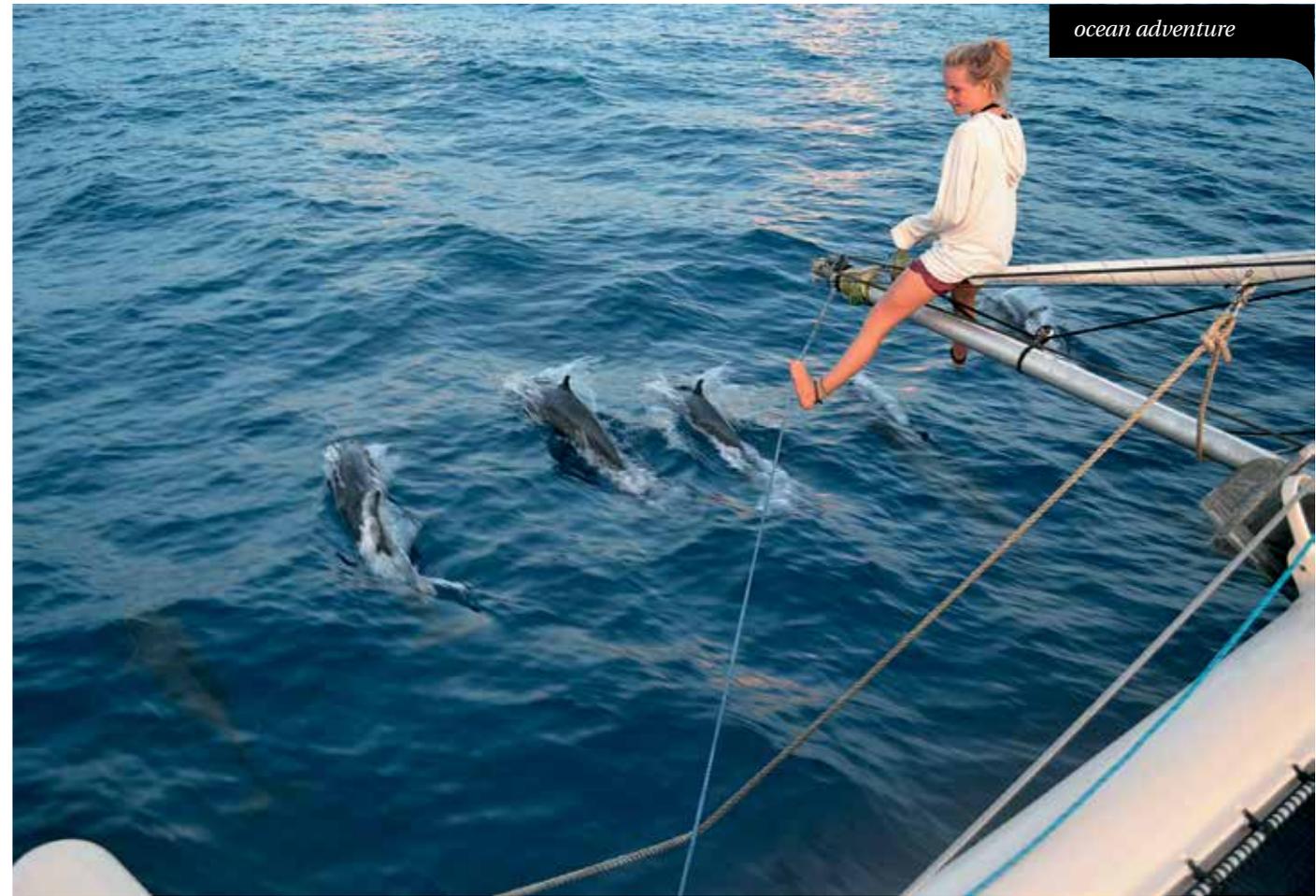
Seems to me, Facebook may be an even bigger timewaster for many. As a boy I still remember adding up the total time I would spend tying up shoe laces, assuming I would do that twice a day for every day of my life! I bought slip-ons and to this day rarely tie

laces. I am not on Facebook very often but when I do get there, I am amazed at the number of people who want to convert me, tell me the meaning of life, what they had for breakfast, or that they just burped, or worse! Oh yes, and there are ads now too!

My mate Tobias Fahey, who a couple of years ago attempted a solo non-stop circumnavigation in *Sea Quest*, recently opted out of Facebook, citing frustrations and time wasted, as he cruised all that drivel. He reconfirmed phone and email numbers to friends and invited them all to real face-to-face encounters, or phone chats – anytime.

Not a bad idea I reckon, but Facebook should be like everything in life – all in moderation. Adventurers use it effectively to communicate with followers and occasionally you get to meet up with some "way cool" people who can inspire you.

A very young Mara Stransky sent me a friend request this week. She is the



ocean adventure

ABOVE Mara Stransky is living a life on and in the water, which has to be the best thing you could do to any young mind. Facebook means different things to different people, but everything in life should be in moderation ... OK, except maybe the oceans and engaging our beautiful world.

daughter of a sailing friend I had not seen for 20 years. She made me happy to be alive when I read one of her random timeline posts. Here it is: "There is just something about sailing, I don't know what it is, whether it's the insane rush, the freedom, the independence, the diversity and challenge of it, or perhaps the knowledge that however many times you go out and however much you learn there will always be so much more, but whatever it is, never fails to bring an idiotic smile to my face.

"For some reason the world seems 10 times brighter and no problems matter as much (not that I have that many!) All of a sudden it seems like anything and everything in the world is possible.

"Why do we worry? Why do we take things so seriously? Life is a crazy adventure and you never know what might happen tomorrow – this minute,

right now, will never be repeated so make the most of it! Shit happens, but life goes on! If you get a chance, take it. If it changes your life, let it. Nobody said it would be easy, they just promised it would be worth it."

I know it's not for everyone, but for me sailing is the best sort of high – it's that escape from everything that really makes you feel alive. So look around you and notice the good things, make them count for more than the bad because it's your outlook that defines you!

DOING IT!

When I raced against Japanese sailor Minoru Saito in the 1990 BOC Challenge solo around-the-world yacht race, I had no idea he would go on to complete seven solo circumnavigations in *Shuten Dojhi II*, the boat I built for him. He did an eighth circumnavigation in another boat and now at 80 he may be heading to

Australia to fit a new rig in his beloved *Shuten Doghi II*. I wonder why?

In the same category, Russian Fedor Konyoklou is an adventurer who does not believe in moderation. He just rowed into Mooloolaba a few weeks ago. At 62 he completed a 16,000km Pacific crossing from Chile in 160 days. Over 35 years this extreme guy has done all the major adventures you could possibly think of: mountains, sailing, rowing and now he is up in the air about hot air balloons! His life is adventure in large doses... I love adventure but everything in moderation suits me just fine. I "dip my lid" to him. Follow him on konyokou.ru

CAUGHT OUT! Argh! The mega yacht A,

looking like a floating submarine and constructed by the same builders of the German WWII battleship *Bismark*, is in Fiji. When I saw it, I had no camera, but it looks stunning. Built for Russian Andrey Melnichenko at a cost of \$300 million, his first trip was to Norway to load three Monet paintings (usually valued at about \$70 million each).

He then got upset with the paint job on A, so is now reportedly suing paint supplier Dulux for \$100 million for touch-ups. With 35 crew, it is believed to cost \$20 million a year to maintain A. It is big, bold and a sculpture of rare beauty. Some like it, many hate it, but I am not sure how it will go on the second-hand market! ■