



It took 30 years for Don to realise his first serious exploration vessel in the *Sir Hubert Wilkins*.

CONCRETE PLANS!

As a boatbuilding material, concrete is the pariah, but keep an open mind, it is a cost-effective alternative

On my 18th birthday I decided to build a boat and go cruising. Why? Well I had read all the books by the Hiscocks, Bernard Moitessier, Dr David Lewis, Robin Knox-Johnson and others, so I decided it was better than going around Australia in a VW combie.

It was also because I had seen a concrete boat being built in the backyard of Mike and Gay Lewis. It was a 37ft cutter. If they could do that so could I.

I stuck with it for about two years, but decided to sell and build a smaller 29ft fibreglass production boat instead. Mike and Gay took off on an eight-

year circumnavigation and I started adventuring and owning various boats, all bought or sold here in this mag. Thirty years later, I worked up to owning the greatest little adventure ship you could imagine, the *Sir Hubert Wilkins* (also bought and sold in *Trade-a-Boat*).

Now if you are a *Trade-a-Boat* junkie

like me, you will have seen between these pages some of the concrete “bargains” that come on the market occasionally. Many are — well not for me, but occasionally I see one that is real value for money. There is nothing wrong with a good concrete hull. The late, great Dr David Lewis had a big concrete boat once and even Alan Lucas got in on the act. If you pick it right, any budding adventurer could do the same.

A few weeks ago Mike and Gay pulled into Hobart at the start of their second circumnavigation. Their piece of concrete has been around now for 40 years and you would think it was a boat built yesterday from anything but concrete. If you want to go adventuring on a budget, just keep an open mind to the boats you see.

ADVENTURE SAILING

Now put your hand up if you followed the Jester Challenge solo trans-Atlantic race. This was a classic event with no entry fees, rules, safety regulations, race committee, in fact nothing really. Just turn up on the day and cross the start-line and you're off. It is open to

any boat up to 30ft long, but if you are bigger than that your fellow competitors can vote you in. It is that kind of race. Very much a pure adventure.

Half the fleet got across to the finish, while the other half just had bigger stories to tell than the first half and they were already tall tales. Of course, second across the line was a multihull. To be expected I suppose when you consider the French have been doing that for decade, but in this case it was a 22ft Wharram Tiki catamaran design, (yes, close to a big Hobie cat!) with just a little bit of everything onboard except for the skipper. He had a huge heart and a ton of courage as did all the competitors. Google it, there are some fun stories.

Well what about the Jester Globe solo around-the-world race in S&S34s starting and finishing in Australia. We have our first possible entry, but because S&S34s are hard to get now, the event is open to Duncanson 34, Brolgas, Magpies, Swanson,

Alone Around The World Yacht Race (Google it) in 2000, as it got a bit complicated and I “filed” \$250,000 just to shut it down. We had built three of the boats for the event already and one went on to win the Sydney Hobart Race PH division. Another, *Arctos* (now with Flying Fish sailing school) we filled with eight crew (each contributing \$45,000) and Dave Pryce sailed it around the world via the Southern Ocean and Cape Horn over six months. It was a great adventure. You can read about that voyage on another old website www.oceanfrontiers.com.au

CREW WANTED

Now for the hook? It may be on again. If you ever had a desire to follow in the footsteps of Jessica Watson or any of the other solo sailors, but not go alone, your time may be about to arrive. Late next year I may send one of our specially-built around-the-world expedition 15.2m yachts on a six-month circumnavigation. It will be via Cape

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Currawong etc. In fact any production boat less than 35ft long that was built before 1985. If you are up for it, spread the word.

That unstoppable Aussie, Alex Whitworth is even thinking about a Jester Sydney to Hobart, leaving New Zealand to starboard on the way. Now that could be fun?

The attraction of simple adventure events, with no costly infrastructure and a can-do attitude in small boats is obvious. Only time will tell who lines up, but it was sad to see the Melbourne Osaka Yacht Race cancelled, not to mention the Around Australia Race and Rally. Even the Shorthanded Sailing Association of Australia is challenged when it comes to running major events. When I started that organisation back in 1983 with a group of dedicated directors it was all about adventure, challenge and keep it simple. It worked then?

Even I had to cancel the Together

Horn, South Georgia, Cape Town, Kergulen etc., and there will only be six berths available. It will not be officially announced for a few months yet, but if you are following my column here you have a chance to jump early. It will be wet, cold and tough and you will contribute about \$50,000 and quite a bit of time, but life is for living, hey!

OLDEST SOLOIST

Seventy-six-year-old Minoru Saito is into the final 13 per cent of his last solo circumnavigation, a 24,000nm “wrong way” voyage in *Shuten-dojhi III*, a 55ft steel motorsailer.

He set out in October 2008 and has been underway now for 20 months with many dramas and complications at every turn (click on www.saito8.com). He was rescued off Cape Horn and had to be towed back to Punta Arenas, Chile, for an over winter, while the legal issues around the tow and serious maintenance was carried out.



Shuten-dohji III is not a patch on its predecessor, and is struggling to finish its circumnavigation for her 81-year-old solo skipper.

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Saito's previous seven, yes seven, solo voyages around the world were all done in *Shuten-dohji II*, a boat we built and spec'd for him. The race is now on to get him back to Japan before *Shuten-dohji III* gives up completely. It is getting very tired and recently had to return to Hawaii shortly after setting off. Something tells me Minoru is wishing he was in *Shuten Dojhi II* right now?

PEOPLE YOU MEET

Have you ever noticed, when out cruising, that the people you meet are always just so great, much more fun maybe than the lot you left behind in that other world? I believe there are two basic reasons for that. The first is that they really are great people and the second is that you never spend enough time with them to pick up on some of the negative parts to their character. You hit the road before that happens. Cruising sounds good, hey!

In 1981, I was headed south in the narrows behind Fraser Island in my Duncanson 29 *Skye* returning from the Whitsundays. Onboard were two very beautiful and very naked girls (I was 26 and single!).

We were negotiating a particularly shallow stretch with a rising tide when we came across a classic timber gaff

ketch from the USA called *Sabot*, on its side in the mud. I shouted out to see if they needed a hand and a girl said no, they would be afloat soon. I then shouted across that I would love to check out their boat later and was immediately bombarded with some profanities, not because I was naked, too (as you do right?) but because the boat was full of mud!

So began a longstanding friendship with Dick and Mary Ann Stresau. They eventually hung out at the Berries Bay cruising community in Sydney and I continued a life of adventure that always had dramas that needed fixing. They were always there to help.

During the numerous panics in my life they have been there. During the BOC Challenge, Mary Ann was out frantically trying to find us money. During the year living together alone in Antarctica with Margie in a box, chained to rocks, Mary Ann ran the business for us and the schools program — all for free.

Recently, Mary Ann passed away after a long sickness and was laughing right to the end. She touched so many people. I have never met anyone like her before and doubt I ever will. She was one of those inspirations in life that we learn from and one of the many great people you meet cruising. 🍷



Mary Anne Stresau, mentor to Don, passed away recently after a long illness.