



The Walker Bay sailing dinghy cruises past *ICE* heading out on an inter-island adventure. Will I ever see it again?

# AND THE BAD NEWS IS...

Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong — is also an aphorism of the cruising sailer, not just Murphy's... and Don loves it!

**O**n-water adventures are possible if you own a boat. It could be a tinny, trailersailer, production cruiser or a custom mega yacht. Whatever you have, she will have systems, neat features and equipment that make you proud to own her. She can deliver fun places and unique experiences. Throw in a few friends and you could have a ball. Others may even look on with envy and

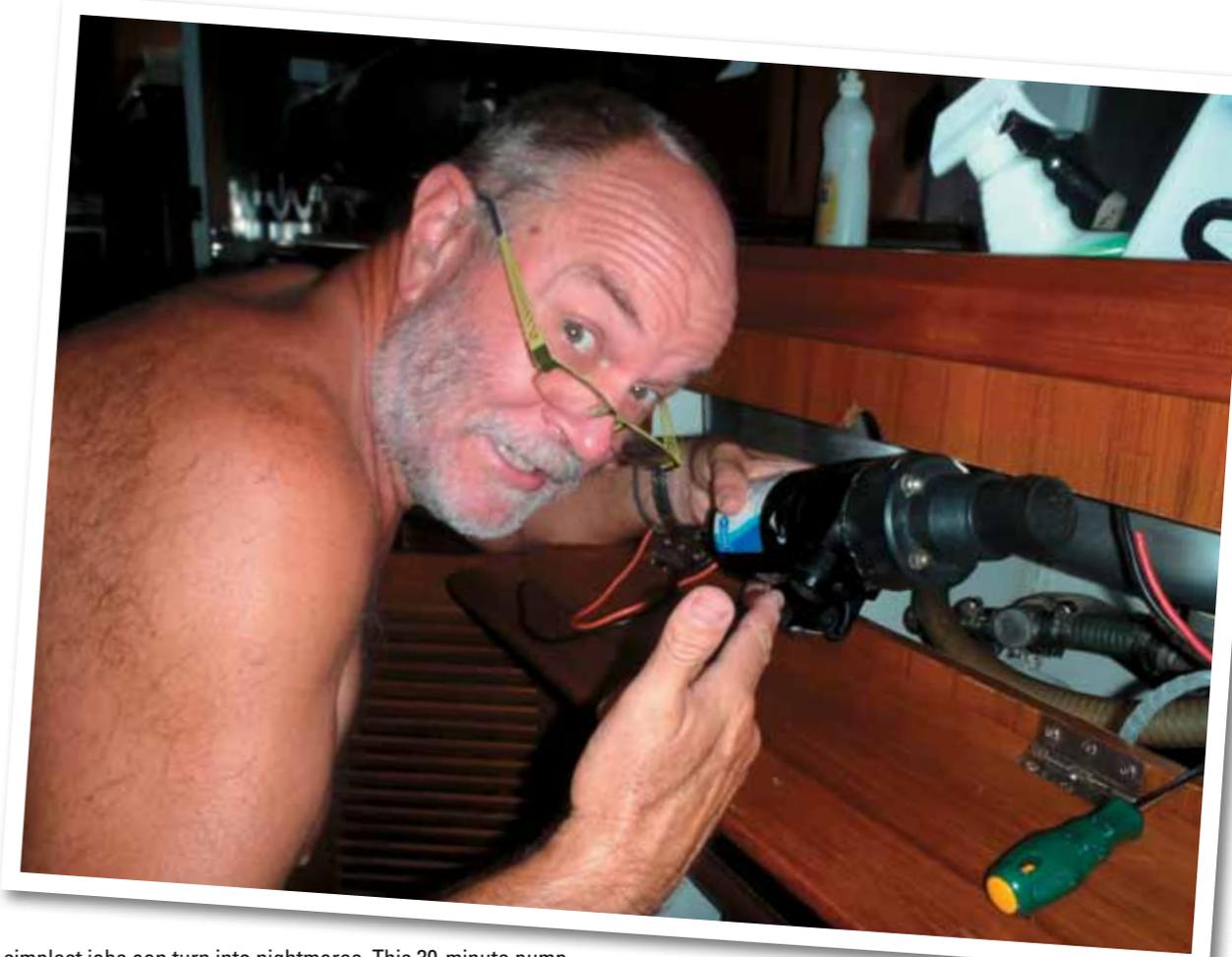
consider you lucky. Those of us with boats, however, know that is NOT always the case. Some may even say the bigger the boat, the bigger the problem!

Even if you never leave on a Friday, don't whistle onboard, always touch wood and go to church every Sunday, there's still Murphy's Law to keep boat owners alert and then busy recovering.

I am in Tonga now on *ICE*, after an "average" four-day passage from

Fiji, with two days of 25- to 35-knot headwinds and 3m confused seas, followed by two days of pleasant reaching among thunderstorms.

It is so good to finally be here and with a month to kill, (while finalising permits to get started on [www.bluetreasure.me](http://www.bluetreasure.me)), we are doing the cruising thing! Yes, more tropical islands and very friendly locals. I also have a work list for the boat that strangely, never gets any shorter?



The simplest jobs can turn into nightmares. This 30-minute pump service became an eight-hour epic!

## TURNING TO MUD

What I am about to tell you, is not so much a RANT about poor-performing gear or crew (I choose what and who I think is the best, regardless of cost), but more to show how even with good equipment/people things can all too easily turn to mud.

I mean it is not uncommon for the simplest 10-minute job to take all day, as things compound out of control, or the crew not thinking for just a minute could then cost you, the owner, \$10,000! Or like I did this morning, snapped the bleed nut on my engine fuel filter, so I go nowhere till I get a new one flown in.

Take tenders for instance. This week I became curious when the couple on a very slick looking cruising cat were rowing ashore all the time in a little inflatable. Turns out it is their spare. They are currently awaiting the arrival of a new \$9000 tender package from New Zealand.

Their last rig was dragged up the beach of an outer island and when the tide came in, it floated out! They saw it drifting, swam back to the cat, raised anchor and headed out into 25- to 30-knot winds and a

setting sun 40 minutes later, but it was gone. Oops. It's surprising the number of people we meet, who have dinghy stories.

## TENDER TIMES

Everyone admires the design of our 3.8m PVC Zodiac (so did I, which is why I bought it), till I tell them it is a total nightmare. I have had 17 inflatables in my life and all, but this one, have been Hypalon and served me well.

The latest started falling apart in the first few weeks out of the box — unfortunately I stored it for two years before using it. The five-year warranty is only good if you pay for a service on the boat in the first 12/24 months!

Zodiac's official response last year to floors, transom, lifting rings and handholds continually falling off, was: "The nature of glue is to break down over time (not necessarily use alone). All boats operate in and under different conditions, this is not a case of a bad batch of glue, but a case of standard running repairs... a case of prevention being better than cure."

Not sure what "prevention" means, but I know about repairs! Last year, we made constant

running repairs with 750ml of the special PVC glue. Over summer in Fiji the service centre spent another two days repairing it.

In the marina there was a virtual scrapyard of PVC boats that were not worn out, just falling apart. This week we pulled off the rope rails. Two other PVC boats in this anchorage are on the beach gluing! Last year, half the PVC boats we saw were problems for the owners.

One three-year-old boat was scrapped. I feel too guilty to sell mine to an unsuspecting buyer, after just one year of use. It looks great but is rubbish, yet too good to throw away. My advice is DO NOT buy a PVC tender! Hypalon is the only way to go, no matter what they tell you.

We have a PVC two-person kayak, which is great, or it was until last week when the crew forgot to tie it up correctly. This is the "independent crew" boat. They love it, as you can just get away for a while on it, go snorkelling, whatever.

First day in the water and after dinner I asked the crew to fit a second securing line for the night. All my boats have two painters to make sure they don't get away. "It

EVEN IF YOU NEVER LEAVE ON A FRIDAY, DON'T WHISTLE ONBOARD, ALWAYS TOUCH WOOD AND GO TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY, THERE'S STILL MURPHY'S LAW TO KEEP BOAT OWNERS ALERT AND THEN BUSY RECOVERING



Adventuring comes with a constant work list managing faulty gear (like our Zodiac!) and regular maintenance, with failing pumps, electronics, lights, outboards and corrosion. The list never gets smaller! It's not all fun.

is not there!" came the call. Oops, it was very dark and blowing 20kts straight out to sea and it was last seen two hours before. Spotlight, radios, torches — I jump in the Zodiac. It has an unreliable outboard... oops. We took off about one mile downwind, looking. I was worried about the engine going silent, so gave up. A frustrating sleep. At dawn the wind had swung a little back onto the main island. I

took off in the Zodiac again along the coast for 90 minutes before fuel was low. During the day the wind continued to swing onshore, I figured it may have turned it around, so we up-anchored and set off in ICE. Right where I hoped it may be we found it late that day. By my estimate, it made an unaccompanied 18nm round trip. We were all "high" to get it back for another day. We also have a back-up Walker

Bay sailing dinghy. It is fantastic with its Hypalon inflatable tube, performance sailing rig, oars and 4hp outboard. A fun boat, when it holds together. First sailing trip out, the rudder hinge and boom gooseneck both broke and since then lots of other "plastic" bits too.

**RISK ASSESSMENT**  
The crew wanted to go adventuring in it to the nearby islands, I said "no way" as I did not want to

rescue them... but if they did a full risk assessment/mitigation plan and were thoroughly prepared, I would consider it. They did that and sea trials in 25kts, when anything that could go wrong did. They learnt a lot. Next day they set off for some fun, with enough spares and safety gear to head back to Fiji. All went well until they were returning late afternoon in 20kts. Tide was out and there was a big reef between ICE and

Kylie with our runaway kayak. We were all happy to get it back after its 18-mile runaway voyage!  
them, with drying rubble on top. To go around would mean another 30 minutes tacking to windward, but it was the only way, or so I thought. Unbelievably, I watched from ICE as they headed straight for it at speed, wanting the shortest not safest route home. They slammed into the reef wall, crash gybed the boom, hitting a head hard but sailing off to eventually go around and tack back to the boat 30 minutes later. With a bruised and dented centre board (and pride) they had survived and the Walker Bay lives for another day! A few days ago, we had a neighbour over for dinner. He told the story of his crew not thinking and leaving his macerator pump on for three days, till it burnt out. The very next day I returned from a big day ashore at the markets. It was a three-mile round-trip walk, with loaded backpack and arms full. I was happy to finally be onboard ICE to relax, till the crew told me they had hooked a fish, lost the entire rod, scuba dived to recover it, but jammed one of the tank valves open... and by the way, the galley sink macerator pump is not working! When I checked the sinks, the plugs were still in, and this caused a vacuum beyond the run-dry feature of the pump. (Crew did not realise we had plugs). So after a day, I am still working on it, as the job compounds out of control! As I mentioned at the beginning, this "is" the cruising thing! And I love it! 🍷