

OPPOSITE ICE welcomes the dawn over Pangimoto Island, just offshore from Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga.

LEFT Big Mama Yacht Club, the place to be in Tonga!

BELOW LEFT The real "ISIS", a beautiful Greek goddess.

BELOW What is wrong with this picture? NO SEAT!



This boating life!

IT'S THE LIFE FOR ME, THE GOOD AND THE BAD, SO GET ABOARD AND CHASE YOUR DREAMS

A blue lagoon, swaying palms, gentle breezes, white sand. Just sometimes you have to pinch yourself to realise you are alive on this breathing planet. Living a boating life can shift you to some of the greatest places on earth and get you mingling with the most interesting people. If you believe in really living, making your own luck and choosing your own destiny, you may also realise something many have

trouble understanding, let alone achieve. A happy, healthy, fulfilling life. Isis to me is the mystical ancient Greek goddess of health, marriage and love. She was the daughter of Geb, god of the earth, and Nut, goddess of the sky. She was not related to Poseidon, god of the sea, but an interesting family all the same. Reality bites when sadly, each day for now, another group calling itself ISIS in another part of the world, generates such horror, sadness and grief, you have to ask

yourself why? I then thank a superior being (whoever he or she may be) for the good luck of being born in Australia, basically healthy, hanging out with cool people and owning a boat! Boats, like many things in life, can be both good and bad! I will let your imagination colour the good bits, while I give you some of the "other bits" that recently made me smile on ICE, cruising around Tonga, chasing old ship wrecks.

GROGANS

Toilets are always an

issue and often leave you standing in "it"! More than once over the years I have wrestled with little "grogans" in pipes and bilges. Boat toilets fit the general criteria for all things boating. If it is mechanical, one day it will break! With my crew finally settling in to life onboard, the crew toilet seat hinge suddenly broke. They asked when they would get a new one. "From America," I said, "... in a few months." Unhappy faces!

I went on to explain that

many yachts take the toilet seat off and just use the bowl - easier at sea. Strange faces? "And by the way, when the pump fails, you will be the ones stripping it down to fit the new seal kit!" Shock on the face of some, who were just coming to terms with actually having to take control of their own waste and personally launch them, manually, down the drain.

I often simply "dump" off the back of the boat at night, not even using the toilet. Suddenly one of my crew stopped using the toilet

completely. I wondered? Hmm... obviously he did not want to be responsible if the pump failed, needing repair. Prior to this toilet conversation he already had phobias about this pump toilet and the head, not wanting to touch anything. My intrigue was answered a few days later. One of our close neighbours in a crowded anchorage asked if our toilet was stuffed because one of our crew was launching logs, dumping off the back, in broad daylight! Hmmm... I had a chat.

APPLES!

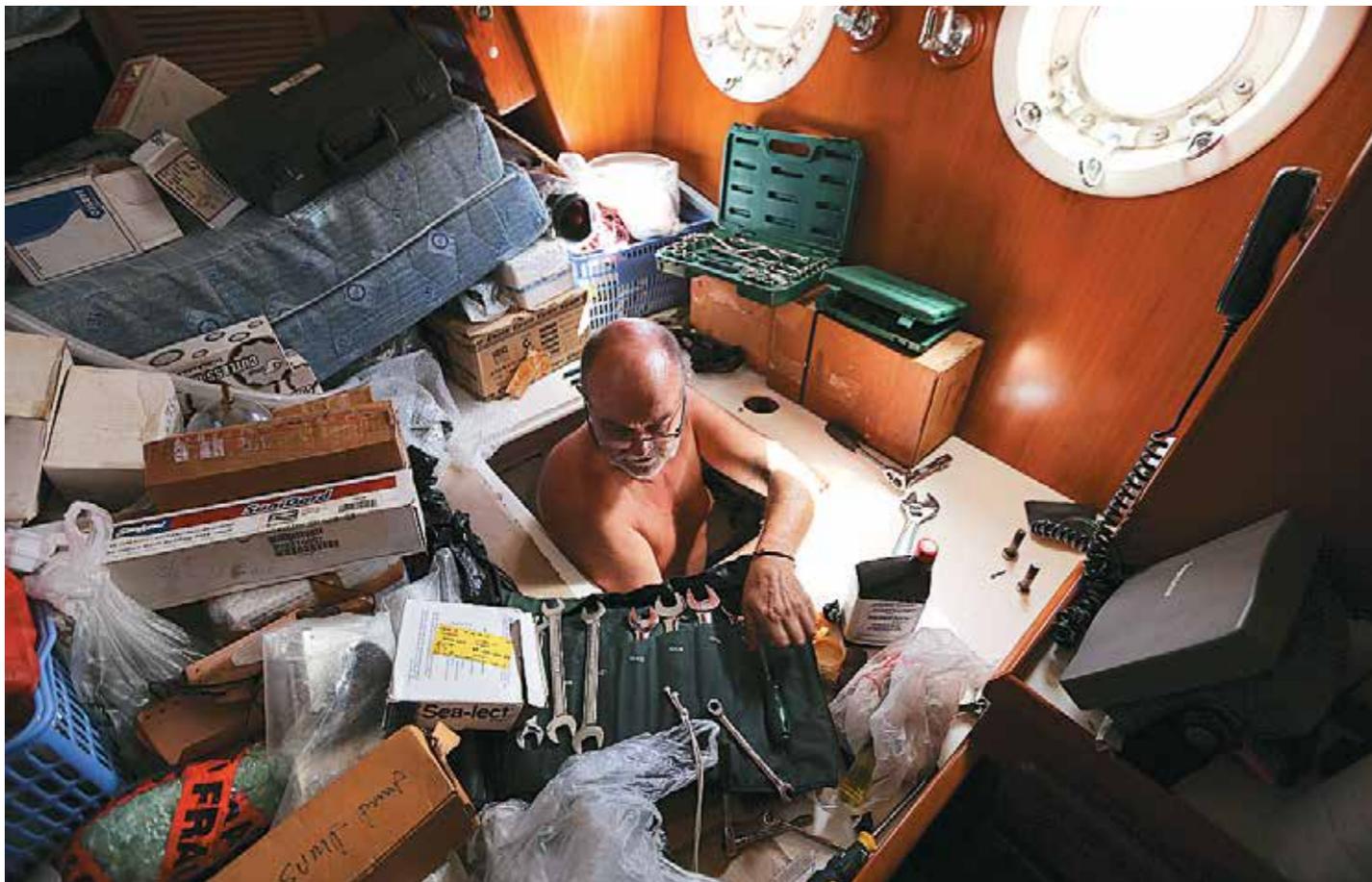
Choose your weapon, Apples or bananas? With a crew of five on ICE we have between us three huge external hard drives, backed-up by six computers, three iPads and six iPhones. By my best estimates that amounts to about 3000 movies, too many music tracks and plenty of ebooks. Personally, I am all about getting out there and doing things in the sun, or deep blue, but every second night when the generator is run I like watching a

movie on the big screen, consumed by our surround sound home theatre, up loud!

I am a banana man but most of the crew have Apples. Problem is, no matter what anyone says or does they can rarely get the Apple file format, type, size or whatever right and onto the USB stick, while I wait passively and patiently for that night's movie to screen. We sometimes give up after an hour or so of trying, with not enough generator time left to run the full movie. Things are



"One of our close neighbours in a crowded anchorage asked if our toilet was stuffed because **one of our crew was launching logs, dumping off the back, in broad daylight!**"



OPPOSITE TOP It is surprising the amount of time you spend "doing things" on a boat. Servicing the steering and autopilot systems is just one of them.

ABOVE Another beautiful boat, up from New Zealand for the Tongan gamefishing season. Awesome tender but someone forgot to show the captain how to install a radar reflector in the "rain catcher" position? Place it on a table and that is the attitude to mount it.

OPPOSITE BELOW Crew of *Pickety Witch* over for a barby. I talked about life over the past 50 years and they talked about life over the past 50 years.

LEFT Also happy to have a boat! African and Syrian refugees trying to escape to a new life in a safer world.

not Apples onboard, but let's not start that war.

The good news: our computer savvy crew are a big bonus for our magnetometer work, but that software only works on bananas, fortunately.

BEARS

Now a huge brown bear, let loose each night aboard *ICE*, can be your worst nightmare. Our two-berth forward cabin is very comfortable with big upper and lower bunks, privacy

curtain and a watertight door. Our saloon pilot berth is snug and as private as you would want with a full-length curtain. With three new crew I put the two guys up forward and the lovely Annetta in the pilot berth.

All were happy until it was discovered that a huge bear was on the prowl, roaring and unstoppable each night. Two were not sleeping. Good earplugs were not available in Tonga. Over the next few weeks there was much shuffling and sleeping

around. Annetta finally won the day, by having 50 earplugs flown in from Germany, sharing them and letting the bear sleep in the saloon. Fortunately Jane and I have a soundproof aft cabin!

I could go on and talk about how I accidentally pumped 150lit of fuel under the cabin sole and into the bilge, or how our fridge will not fit out through the pilothouse doors, now it needs to be replaced. Or did I mention the saltwater

high-pressure deckwash pipe? That burst below deck pumping 400lit of saltwater through lockers, stationary cabinet, destroying printers, before finally making the bilge. Or the 20amp 24V drain on the batteries when everyone is charging computers! Ahh, the boating life. But I would not have it any other way.

THE YOUNG ONES

Only occasionally do you see little boats with young people out here on an

adventure. When I was a member of that generation they seemed to be everywhere. So it was that the 9m *Pickety Witch* sailed into our anchorage from New Zealand and started making a lot of noise... mostly laughter and all pure energy. Ahh, those were the days. The first interesting reaction was from one of my own crew. He assumed the 30-year-old skipper must have rich parents to own that boat.

"No, not really," I explained.

"You could set yourself up with an ocean cruising boat for not a lot of money, if you really wanted too."

The four crew aboard played hard for the next couple of days, even "spinnaker flying" at anchor, something I had not seen done in 20 years! I asked them over for a barby and the stories ran thick and fast.

These guys were out doing it and looking for a cause, a worthwhile project to set-up, or

support. The boat had cost Craig about \$NZ26,000 and another \$13,000 to setup with all the gear. His girlfriend Anna had just finished a degree in sociology, 19-year-old Tom (who had 10,000 miles under his belt) is soon heading home to England to take up a four-year cadetship as a ship's officer, while Elly, also nineteen, is fresh out of school. It was so good to meet someone more interested in life, than schoolies week!

They are "GoPro blogging" on their website, so if you are up for a taste of young people more interested in ocean adventure and making real choices in their lives, than simply go with the flow and go check it out at floatingfoundation.net They are fun little movies.

With a smile on my face, all I kept thinking about was the whole life these guys have in front of them! Yes, they are lucky in New Zealand too. ■