



OPPOSITE PAGE The past 60 years have been a load of fun! I still think, act and dream much younger than my age, but hey...who cares!
ABOVE Hard to believe it was 20 years ago that Margie and I set sail bound for Antarctica and a year of isolation together alone in a box chained to rocks! Time flies when you are having a ball.
ABOVE RIGHT "Gadget Hut" in 1995 when we became Antarctica's very first "colonists". It was great.
RIGHT I will be expedition leader on MV Spirit of Enderby heading south for some 60th birthday fun.

Happy Birthday, to me!

WHEN YOUR BIRTHDAY IS AS IMPORTANT AS TURNING 60, YOU NATURALLY REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE, HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET TO THAT AGE AVOIDING THE MISFORTUNES THAT HAVE CUT OTHERS DOWN BEFORE THEIR TIME

January 5, 1968 was a big day. I was 13 and a teenager at last. Turning 16 was another long-awaited birthday. I had spent a year rebuilding my first car (a surf wagon!) and now I could get a license and drive myself to the coast to rip more waves.

Next it was 18 and legal at last...wo'wow! My 21st birthday seemed to go forever with one party for the family, one for all my mates and then the "special one" with a few girls! My life became an exciting blur, rushing headlong toward the future with all the

enthusiasm and excitement generated by the prospect of so much to do and my whole life to do it in. Whacko! I got into it, believe me. I set sail to the Pacific for a few years and found myself. I returned to reality with a distorted view that still holds today.

I was 28 when I married Margie and that was like throwing petrol on the fire! We formed the Shorthanded Sailing Association of Australia and travelled to Auckland to show the Kiwis how to do the same! International races were set-up and in 1988, Sir Peter

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Blake crossed the Tasman to enter our Bicentennial Around Australia Yacht Race in his big red Steinlager trimaran. My 35th birthday marked the beginning of my grandest adventure at the time. It was the 1990 BOC Challenge solo around-the-world yacht race, a 27,000-mile epic that saw me grab second place in Class 2. Then there was the big one that everyone dreads. The so-called midlife crisis at 40. On January 5, 1995, Margie and I set out to test that theory and live for a whole

year in a small box (2.4 x 3.6m) chained to rocks in total isolation at the windiest spot in Antarctica and the world, Cape Denison in Commonwealth Bay. I survived the next 10 years of adventuring to make my next milestone. A 50th birthday party complete with a sexy, young barbie doll jumping out of a cake (organised by Margie) and I started to reflect on life for the first time. We had sailed our own helicopter-equipped ice ship to exotic places, travelled the world, been treasure

hunting, looked pirates in the eye, raced rally cars and so much more, but for the first time in our lives, something had changed. We desperately wanted to race the Paris-Dakar desert rally together too. We knew we could do it. We had been doing well in Tarmac events. We developed a workable plan and did the budgets – \$350,000 and it was all very doable! This was nowhere near the dollars we had been spending on our other little adventures...but wait? Hmmm, at that stage in life – yes, we were getting

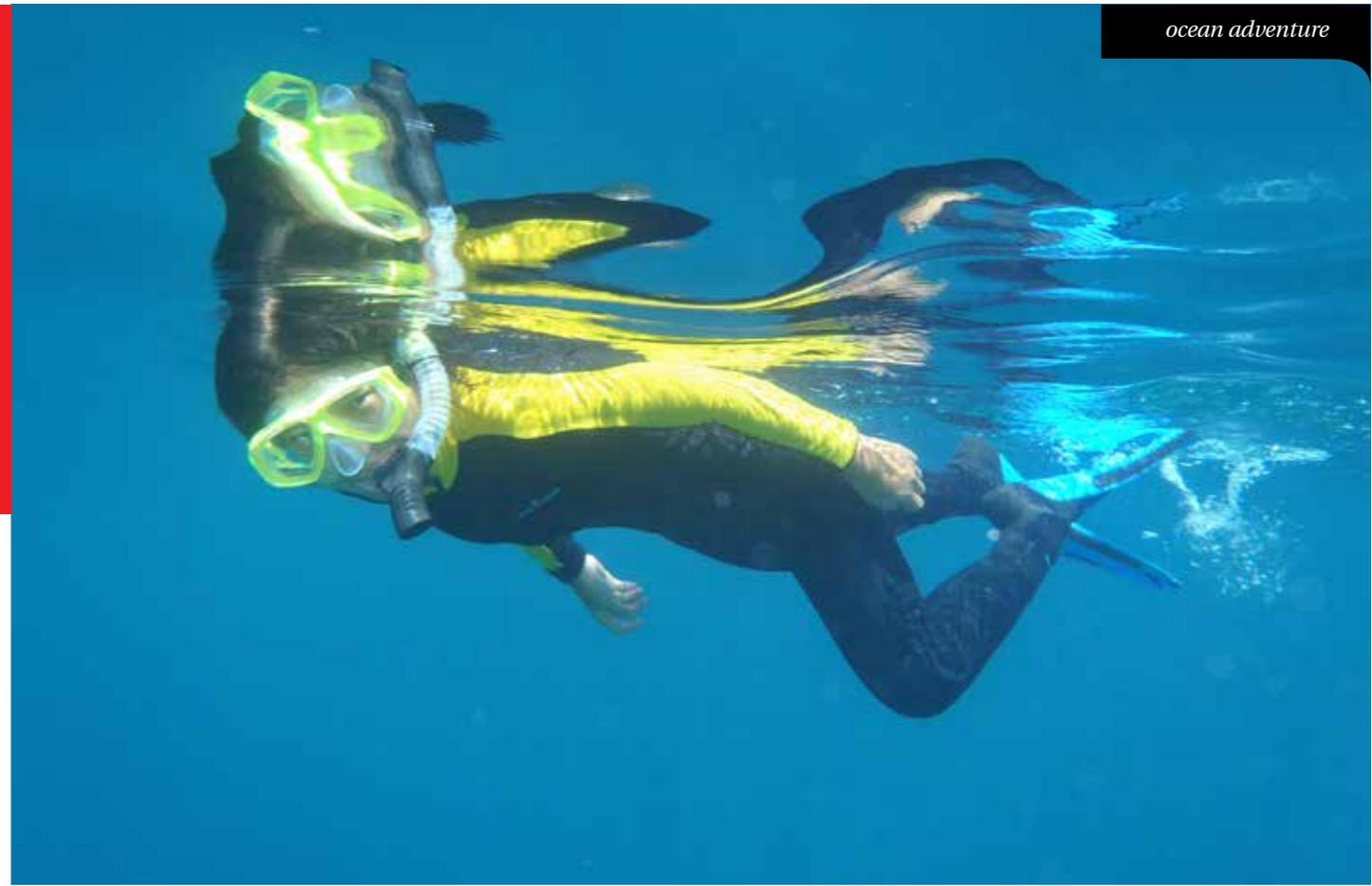
older – it was a lot of money. We could do quite a few other things with that. We realised our earning capacity was diminishing and one day we would be "old". It was a shock to both of us. Not the change of attitude re the money being better spent, but just the fact that we had stopped and even considered that as an issue. We had always just charged ahead and somehow "got" the money. Following big dreams and making them happen was what we did. We were not young and invincible anymore. Yes,



LEFT You never know who may turn up when you play on Macquarie Island on the way to Antarctica. This baby elephant seal just wanted a cuddle!

BELOW Buying one of these defibrillators and keeping it on your boat, work or home, could be the best investment you ever made for someone's life!

RIGHT Jane, my underwater princess, exploring a whole new world and always jumping into adventure head first!



there was still life on the horizon but *not* a “whole life” ahead of us anymore. Maybe we glimpsed the end of the tunnel way up ahead for the first time. I had well and truly pushed life for all it's worth up to that point. There was no denying the fact that now my outlook on life was changing.

I started building the ultimate boat in China but before it was launched, Margie and I decided we should go our separate paths. It was a shock to us both but reality nonetheless. Maybe my midlife crisis was hitting at 54?

When you are 59 you definitely focus on your next birthday. It is not the thought of being issued with your Government concession card that creates the excitement but rather all your friends reminding you about the big SIX ZERO!

This year Betty (my mother) passed away. She was always quietly proud of her No.1 son, even though sometimes she wished she

had drowned me at birth! I loved her and her passing made me reflect on life.

I actually thought I might die young at 52 when I attempted my 13,500km solo gyrocopter flight around Australia. It was a world first and I still write this column. Sailing a 7.4m open whale boat 4000 miles across the open ocean for 48 days at 55, with only two weeks water and virtually no food (following in the wake of William Bligh after the Mutiny on the Bounty) could have killed me. I lost 18kg, but it didn't.

As you read this, I've probably just had that 60th birthday. I will be on a ship in the Southern Ocean leading a group of passengers on another “chilly” adventure. Of the past 20 birthdays, most have been in the Antarctic. It's been an interesting 60 years. Apart from Margie and me separating, I don't really have regrets.

A few years ago I surprised

myself and fell in love again with Jane, my Chinese princess. She has a big heart with a smile to match. She is 35 and we both now look at life through young eyes.

I have always believed that age is just a number and who knows when that number will be up. We have some new dreams on the horizon, but for now it is all about treasure hunting in Tonga and counting to 70...hmm?

LIFE

Vuda Marina in Fiji is not big, less than a 100 boats I suppose. It is more like a yacht club and we base *ICE* there, leaving her for the cyclone season then head to China and Antarctica.

The day we arrived from Tonga to settle *ICE* for summer we met old friends, including our ever-smiling electrician/refrigeration mechanic and I booked him for a job two days later. Unfortunately, he never made it.

The day before, he and two others had climbed

under the sole of a fishing boat to swap a fuel gauge sender unit. There was not much space in there. They emptied the petrol tank but apparently didn't fill it with water. There was an electrical short, a huge explosion blowing the back of the boat out and then a fire.

They were pulled out alive, badly burnt. One died two days later, the second after four days and the third a day after that. I didn't know the other two but he was nice guy, an experienced electrician that seemed to have made one simple mistake.

I write this simply as a reminder that life is precious. It was all simply too hard to believe, so take care hey.

AED

I bought my Automatic Emergency Defibrillator (AED) just two years ago. Rather than leave it locked up on *ICE* for six months over summer, I lent it to the marina office and told them

to let everyone know it was there.

Two weeks ago, I received the following email from the marina manager: “*Just wanted to let you know that we had to use your defib on Friday.*”

“One of the yacht owners was walking along the footpath when it appears he had a heart attack. Bystanders started performing CPR on him and I came running with the defib and hooked him up to it. We performed CPR for about 30 minutes and hit him at least five times with the defib while we waited for an ambulance, but unfortunately we couldn't save him.”

“Thank you very much for having the foresight to leave the machine with us. While it didn't matter in the end, at least we had the knowledge that we did everything we could to try to save him. This has made us recognise the need to purchase our own as well as an Oxy-Viva (resuscitator).”

VOYAGE OF IMAGINATION

Well if you are following my column, you know all about the VOI. We did get three late entries but the total night-sailing experience of all six candidates combined amounted to about 15 nights. On that basis alone there simply was not the depth of understanding or experience that could have been moulded into a competent and safe team. Some would have made a good crew but there was not a potential skipper to choose.

The Voyage of Imagination will not go ahead.

For me it was a breath of fresh air reading the comprehensive application forms and watching the accompanying videos. Each of the six are amazing young people, out there doing it in so many ways. They each have big dreams and some will achieve them for sure. In each case it was obvious to me that their parents had a major influence in setting these people up for an interesting future. I never had kids but if any of these were mine, I sure would be happy!

So was the VOI a silly dream I had? Not sure. I would not call it a magnificent failure. I am glad I put the idea out there. Will we try it again sometime in the future? Not sure. There is a lot going on in my life right now and when one idea ends, it leaves room for another to open. What will happen to Betty (the Tradewind 35 pictured above)? Not sure. Great boat that may be available for sale to the right owner, or I may just keep her.

