



Tooth hurty

IT'S DENTIST TIME, AND IN CHINA THIS IS ANALOGOUS TO BOATBUILDING – YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

What is it about dentists? Nothing personal, but the thought of someone doing “things” in my mouth is not my idea of fun. When I was about six I went under with ether and some deep little breaths to have four perfectly good back teeth pulled – top, bottom, left and right – to make “room” and reduce crowding. When I woke up I had pulled the head off my teddy!

Last year I smashed a tooth in the Pacific and while in Antarctica over summer, sub-zero temperatures cracked

another which eventually shattered back in Australia. In Sydney while working on my yacht I held my breath and walked into a dentist and out the door again with a \$24,000 quote for root canals, one extraction, two crowns – and he would consider implants later? Hmm, even less fun! With only five days in Australia before heading for China, I had no time to reconfigure my teeth or cash flow anyway!

For the past seven years I have kept an apartment/office in Zhuhai, China, in the Pearl River Delta. It is the centre of all boatbuilding in China. My

partner Jane and I work as Owner's Representative/Project Managers on various Chinese-built boats. Jane trained at university as an air traffic controller and became an accountant then English interpreter that led her to join Seahorse Marine. She was boatbuilding project manager/interpreter for Western clients. Six years later we joined forces adventuring and she left her job.

China is an intriguing and evolving place. I love the people, the food, the culture and their boatbuilders. Even today with a low Australian dollar you can still get good value if you

are smart, deal direct and pay close attention to what's happening on your boat as it's built. Our biggest project at the moment is the McIntyre 78 Motor Sailer being constructed for a New Zealand owner. It'll be used for high-latitude adventure charters and built to full RINA classification, able to operate commercially in any ocean anywhere in the world. Basically, a big sister to *Ice*, my 15.2m explorer adventure yacht.

Over the past 10 years the rate of change I have witnessed in China is staggering. Infrastructure projects are everywhere, social change and working

conditions are heading toward what you and I have called normal for a generation. But costs are increasing too, so China is getting much more expensive and complicated.

Seahorse Marine has been building semi-custom trawler yachts in fibreglass and steel for about 30 years. America used to be its main market but right now Australians are among its biggest clients, with good reason. Value for money is still there and there is nothing quite like its boats built anywhere else in the world, certainly not in Australia. We now work closely with them.

OPPOSITE PAGE Boatbuilding should not be like pulling teeth with the right people involved! To save money you have to get it right!

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP As owner's representatives, Jane (left) and I now work with Seahorse Marine project manager Mr Yong Jie (right). The Chinese can build superb one-off steel

boats but it is important to maintain good communications, in Chinese! Launch is scheduled for February 2017; The 24m McIntyre 78 Motor Sailer; A female welder at work on John Whale's new boat at Seahorse.

DURRIE DENTIST

So I walk into the local Chinese dentist, a bit surprised to find a motorbike and dog sleeping in the waiting room surrounded by all manner of other “stuff”. There is no nurse and the solo dentist is smoking?

I sit in his chair and get my tissue-numbing injections around the tooth to be attacked. He lights up another cigarette behind me while I wait for the tingling which came, but we still wait for his cigarette to finish. He wipes his pliers on an old rag, butts out the stub and starts pulling. Bits appear, much talking to

Jane, more pulling, a big bit is displayed like a trophy. Hmm, but I notice only one root? More talking, I am trying to dream of Tonga!

Jane tells me he has left one root in my jaw, with a bit of tooth too, and it will all be fine, it will grow over, no problem. I slur a question, “You mean, leave it there forever?” He replies, “Yes!”

With the next patient and his family now looking over my shoulder entertained in a now surreal situation, I retort, “Get it out!”

By this time, when he plays again, the anaesthetic is wearing off as it was not a nerve-deadening injection. Time to leave, with half a



TOP LEFT Diesel Duck 462 no.14 just set sail for America. Note the Chinese boom-less rig, okay but not for me. *Ice* has a furling boom and mizzen with boom so you can lash everything down in a seaway and keep sailing. **ABOVE LEFT** An advantage of a semi-production boat is you can customise and *Moby Duck* has a super-powerful jetski as one of the tenders! Owner, Jeff Appel, traded down from a Nordhavn 55 he cruised solo for more than 10,000 miles and before

that owned a Watson 72 built in NZ. He likes the smaller enviro-friendly footprint! **ABOVE RIGHT** Built in 1976, the 20m S&S ketch *Flyer* famously won the 1977-78 Whitbread. Recently acquired by the Revival of *Flyer* foundation after sailing more than 300,000nm as the sloop *Alaska Eagle*, the original builder Royal Huisman last year completed a back-to-original refit. A tribute to the late, great "Conny" van Rietschoten skipper and owner of all the *Flyers*.

"He wipes his pliers on an old rag,
butts out the stub and starts pulling"

tooth still there. The dentist is happy and expects me to leave it as is!

A bit of research and a bloody night over, we head to what turns out to be truly the most modern dental clinic I have ever seen. The latest high-tech everything and infection barrier control that would impress returning astronauts from Mars. It was like a five-star hotel. Even the nurses

looked beautiful.

Thirty dollars later it was done and two stitches pulled yesterday's mess together. My new best friend can do the lot to world's best practice for \$4500. China is like that. You just have to know how and where! Now I do and I save nearly \$20,000!

I always say adventure is any activity with an unknown outcome, but

boatbuilding and dentists should not be an adventure.

DONGFENG

I started watching Cornelis van Rietschoten racing his various *Flyers* around the world in the second Whitbread Round the World Race a long time ago. The first 20m *Flyer* was launched in 1976 and won the 1977-78 Whitbread. It had a radio direction-

finding antenna aft instead of satellite domes. It was inspirational stuff watching the videos when they were ultimately released. Indeed many years ago on three separate occasions I very nearly took part.

The first evolved with some serious help from the late Sir Peter Blake to mount my own entry. The second opportunity came when I was selected as the

skipper of an unsuccessful entry bid involving Hugh Treharne and John Bertrand. When that failed, a few years later I briefly considered another entry while sitting out a year of isolation in a small hut in Antarctica.

How times have changed. The current Volvo Ocean Race can be in your face 24/7, (what is a video cassette?), and while I often

question how people can be glued to their iPod and Facebook 24 hours a day watching pictures of cats and reading meaning-of-life messages, I have to admit the Volvo has me hooked and at times glued to FB and websites!

The level of technology bringing the daily Volvo adventures into the lives of those interested is nothing short of stunning. The

Australians competing are my new champions and the Dongfeng entry says it all ... okay, the Chinese entry has a lot of international crew, but if you followed the lead-up you know the back story of some very brave inexperienced Chinese that gave it a go like real adventurers facing the unknown. The Chinese are here to stay and I "tip me lid" to 'em!

You don't have to aspire to do the Volvo to watch the high drama and courage of the competitors. Just sit back and be inspired by everything about the event, including the organisation. Money is not something you even ponder in the Volvo and the skippers and crew are close to modern day gladiators, out giving their all. Too bad about the America's Cup hey! ■