



**LAPPING
THE
PLANET**

A Memoir of Inspiration
Perspiration and Betrayal

BRIAN HANCOCK



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For Tory, Tom and Eli - my life's greatest gifts

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PREFACE

I HADN'T PLANNED on writing this book. There was a thought in the back of my mind that I would write a book about how two longtime friends came up with the idea of starting a new global yacht race. It was an inspired idea; to create an affordable around-the-world race for smaller boats. The event would open up the realm of offshore sailing to a whole new generation of sailors. Unfortunately along the way something happened and the happy ending that we all look for in a story was replaced by one that, for me anyway, was borderline tragic. What was truly a dream come true, turned into a nightmare. What should have been life's golden ticket became a one-way ticket to financial ruin and emotional desperation.

So I wrote this book instead.

As a storyteller I am able to recognise a good story when I see one. This is a good story. Granted it was not a happy story with a perfect ending but it's a story that needed to be told. As Baal-Schem-Tov once said: *"Above all remember that*

true tales are meant to be transmitted. To keep them to oneself is to betray them."

One morning last summer, while staring out the window watching a low fog drift across cold Maine water, I thought about putting this story on paper. It was early and my friends were asleep so I brewed a fresh pot of coffee and started to tap the keys. I had no idea where I was going; indeed that's one of the great pleasures of writing. Once you start, the story takes you to places long forgotten. This one took me back to my childhood in South Africa to some sad and poignant memories. It took me out on the open ocean, alone, on my own boat to that magical place where there is a direct tap into the energy of the universe. It led me on a voyage of introspection and self discovery and it allowed me to put what took place into perspective and to measure it against the broader picture of my life.

I am deeply sad about what happened. The central thread of the book is about how my one time friend and business partner, Josh Hall, and I started a new business and through guts, determination and creativity founded and got funded what became the Portimao Global Ocean Race. For whatever reason, I have asked for an explanation but never got one, Josh took the company and the event for himself. He set up a set of circumstances that allowed him to take the lot and to this day he still owns and operates Global Ocean Sailing Ventures, a company I founded. I, on the other hand, am still recovering from financial ruin. If Josh has an explanation that contradicts what I have written I suggest he write his own book. Without any explanation or input from him I have written my story. I accept that there are always two sides to every circumstance but I can only write from my perspective and my point of view.

In order to keep this as a narrative I have introduced Hall's voice. The content of what he says is accurate. Of course, for the

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sake of moving things along, I have had to paraphrase a lot of the dialog between us. I don't mean to put words in anyone's mouth but as I said, the story needed to be told and I have done so with as much compassion and clear thinking as I can muster. I have also, at times, used a bit of poetic licence in order to keep the narrative flowing. In the end, you, the reader, must form your own opinion and draw your own conclusions as to what happened. I hope it does not detract from the substance of the book and as this is a memoir, I hope that it gives you an insight into my life, a life that I have always considered charmed.



1

where
this whole
adventure starts

IT STARTED, as these things often do, as a few lines scribbled on the back of an envelope. What perhaps made this a little different was that the voice on the other end was coming in over a satellite connection while I was jotting notes with a blunt pencil.

“So what do you think of the basic idea?” Josh asked. The line had a dull hum with an occasional pop but his question was clear and to the point. What did I think? I thought it was bloody brilliant. “Sounds good to me,” I replied. “Let me come back to you with an email adding my thoughts. But all in all I think we are onto something here. Tell Joe that his dream is going to come true after all.” With that I flipped the phone shut.

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I stared for a long while at the cold water swirling under the dock. Ice crystals had turned it sluggish and the dark sky above Portland reflected grey and ominous in the rising tide. Typically for me I saw bright sunny skies in the reflection; perhaps I should have looked closer at the dank, dirty water and seen the future for what it would become. Or maybe not.

I was born an optimist. Actually, to be perfectly candid, my optimism is born from a naive, starry-eyed view of the world, a trait I treasure despite what happened. That early December evening was full of promise. The forecast was for a fair wind in the morning, the boat was ready, and my crew mate, an old friend Brian Harris, was below stowing the last bits of gear in preparation for a 700 mile passage from Maine to Bermuda. We would leave at dawn on an ebbing tide, ride it out into the Gulf of Maine bound south toward warmer waters, another adventure on a life lived close to the edge. I had no way of knowing that three days later we would be facing a savage frontal system that had started as a dust storm over Kansas, gathered strength across the Mississippi Delta and intersected with the cold Atlantic waters to produce a line of squalls packing near hurricane force winds.

We were sailing a steady northerly breeze south of Cape Cod before either of us flipped open the laptop to check our email. The weather, despite the icy chill, was fair and the boat ate up the miles surfing steep sided swells with ease as the autopilot checked and corrected our course, it's tiny electronic brain doing the hard work.

"Hey I just got an email from Commanders," Brian said referring to our weather routing service that we had contracted to keep an eye out for bad weather. "They say we should abort the trip and head straight for Newport. There is bad weather brewing off the Carolinas and it's heading our way."

I look aft at the cresting waves and think there is no way we

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are going to turn around and head directly into the wind, the only way back to the nearest land.

“The email from Commanders is quite specific,” Brian continues. “The front they are talking about is still a few days away but it’s going to be dangerous especially if it catches us in the Gulf Stream.” Brian leaves the navigation station and joins me at the companionway hatch and we both watch the building seas rolling up from astern. The thought of turning back and sailing into the wind and waves is not a pleasant one. It’s OK going downwind but it will be near galeforce headwinds if we turn around. “What do you think?” Brian asks. I don’t answer. I don’t need to. Our options are not good. Turning around and sailing upwind in an early winter gale is not high on the list of fun things to do. Continuing south on an intersecting course with a different storm is also not a great option. “Let’s send them an email and tell them that we are going to take our chances with the front,” I finally say, my propensity for procrastination guiding my thought process. “There is just no way we can turn back in this weather.” Brian nods in agreement and sends the email.

AT THIS STAGE in my life I am all too well aware of my character flaws. Years of sailing and travel in remote parts of the world have given me a unique insight into my soul. I know what makes me tick. I also know my weaknesses and procrastination is one of them. I guess I am not that different from most people. By putting off the inevitable you are taking the easy road, but all too often it’s the wrong one as we discover moments later when the reply from Commanders comes in. ‘You have to turn back,’ it says leaving no room for negotiation. ‘The front off North Carolina is going to collide with another coming down from Canada and it’s going to be dangerous especially if you are still in the Gulf Stream.’ I stared at the words on the screen and then at the wind

instruments. It's gusting well over 40 knots. If we turn around the wind across the deck is going to be close to 50. Brian shrugs. He knows what we have to do, as do I, and without saying a word we ready the boat.

Brian Harris is one of the best sailors I know. He's the manager of the boatyard where our 40-foot carbon fiber spaceship has just undergone a complete refit. The boat is in immaculate condition and I am sure that it will be up to the task. It's the crew I am worried about, me especially. I have seen my fair share of rotten weather but most of the real bad stuff happened far out to sea with plenty of sea room to run away from the worst of it. When you can't outrun weather you simply have to deal with the cards you are dealt and we knew we had bad cards in hand the second we turned into the wind.

The storm jib and triple reefed mainsail was far too much sail to be carrying. The boat heeled violently while washing machine sized waves crashed into the cockpit. The water was cold but nothing compared to the air as the windchill pierced exposed skin sending us scurrying below in search of more clothing. The cabin was already a wet mess as loose items banged around and bilge water sloshed onto the leeward bunk. Above the din we could hear the autopilot struggling to keep the boat on a steady course on its near-impossible mission. We braced ourselves as the boat lurched from wave crest to trough, the crashing from the bow reverberating through each carbon thread as the highly strung boat took the relentless pounding in stride. Brian gave me a wan look. For now the boat was holding together but the question still remained. Just how much abuse could it take before something broke?

A trip south in December is usually fraught with trouble. It's something all delivery skippers try to avoid but the mess and stress of daily life often means that good intentions slip by the

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wayside and before you know it there is more than frost on the pumpkin. It was the same for us as the yard work took longer than planned and the sails were late arriving. Sea trials were held over Thanksgiving weekend and by the time the boat was ready, the malls had been in full Christmas swing for almost a month. We knew it was late to be leaving New England but all sailors are blessed with a short memory and an innate sense that the wind gods will be kind. We were no different.

“As soon as we get into the Gulf Stream we will be fine,” I remember telling Brian. “The first couple of days will be a bitch but after that it’s going to be a lovely trip to Bermuda.” I could already imagine the smile on my face as we sipped cold Dark and Stormy rum drinks and watched the kids fishing the quay in St. George harbor while our families back home shoveled snow and chipped ice off their cars. How wonderful it is to be an eternal optimist.

As the wind gusted over 50 knots and the boat heaved from wave crest to bottomless trough I knew that we were in trouble. There was no way we were going to make it back to land until the wind either abated or died, and the forecast for the waters south of Nantucket were for the same strong northerlies for the foreseeable future. We emailed Commanders one more time hoping for a better reply but they had built their business on providing honest forecasts to mariners scattered across the globe, and they were not about to sugarcoat this one for us. ‘If you can’t make headway your only option is to try and make it south as quickly as possible,’ came their terse reply. ‘If you are still in the Gulf Stream when the front hits you could see hurricane force winds. Your only hope is to get south of the Gulf Stream into cooler waters.’

All weather systems travelling over open ocean suck energy from the waters below. Warm water fuels the systems and they

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gather strength; cold water can diffuse the energy but the Gulf Stream, that meandering flow of tropical water that is spawned in the Caribbean, is some of the hottest on the planet. If we were to dodge a bullet it was imperative that we get south as quickly as possible. We disconnected the autopilot, grabbed the helm and slowly bore away until the banging stopped, replaced immediately by the hiss of water flying by the hull and the shudder of boat speed as we rocketed south. For now we were safe; tomorrow would be another day.

2

where
the seeds of
wanderlust are planted

I WAS BORN UNDER A LUCKY STAR. Not sure which star it was precisely, but I know it was a lucky one. I left my home in South Africa in the late 70s seeking fame and a little fortune as a professional sailor, and found riches far beyond my wildest dreams. Actually, to be perfectly honest, back then there was no such thing as a professional sailor but a few of us rag-tag gypsies forged a new profession as Sailors for Hire, and as we plied our trade across the globe the world shifted slightly on its axis and a new career was born. These days you can make a decent dollar as a professional racing sailor and an even better buck as a professional cruising captain. The world of superyachts is exploding as business barons try and outdo each other by building

bigger and more sophisticated yachts, and a good captain can pull in more than a thousand dollars a foot annual salary. When you consider that a 150 foot yacht is considered average size, and add to it the fact that a captain has very few of his own expenses, you can see why many of them spend their spare time managing their investment portfolios.

It was not like that at all in the late 70s. We worked for food and expenses and hitched rides on boats going places. To earn a few dollars we traded goods buying whiskey in South Africa for \$20 a bottle and selling it in Brazil for more than double taking the profits and “investing” them in woven goods like intricate hammocks found in the street markets of Bahia. A \$10 hammock could fetch \$100 in Bermuda. Back then whaling was still legal in the Azores and I bought a pile of beautifully carved scrimshaw and sold it in London for a handsome profit.

Among my prize possessions were two treasured items; an old manual typewriter and a Reed’s Sailmaker sewing machine. An old mate and editor of South Africa’s only sailing magazine would buy my sailing stories, he still does, and my training as an apprentice sailmaker taught me how to repair sails and run the machine. There was always the odd boat needing a spinnaker repair and I would set up shop on the quayside and sew for hours. Begging, bargaining and bartering were necessary skills to survive and I did just fine. By the time I was 21 I had seen everything from the back streets of Rio to the halls of the Capital Building in Washington DC as a guest of Alaska’s Senator Ted Stevens.

Those early days racing, sailing and seeing the world ingrained a certain street sense in me which I used over the next few decades to balance a life of adventure and the pesky problem of having to earn a living to support a family. It’s a fine line that I negotiated perfectly for most of my adult life, at times banking a small fortune whilst at other times living on rice and beans

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to survive. I discovered that this kind of financial uncertainty lent an edge to my life which I enjoyed. I never planned on growing fat and happy in a mundane existence, but I have since discovered that wives and girlfriends usually prefer stability. They are attracted to the gypsy in me but really want the security that comes from a regular job and steady paycheck. I understand this now more than ever, having learned the hard way, but back then when the world was full of promise and probability I could not get enough of it. My backpack was always packed and ready to go at a moments notice. It's a bit more complicated these days as my backpack is filled with laptops, zip drives, hard drives and a slew of cables and wires to keep it all working, but the spirit and intention are still there.

My freewheeling lifestyle was the envy of my friends. From the outside it looked to be an almost perfect existence and I worked hard to make it appear that way. I was not only visiting far flung parts of the planet but I was rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous. Princess Diana, who was prettier in person than on paper, handed out the prizes for the 85/86 Whitbread race and was friendly and gracious, a pure English Rose amongst a bunch of unwashed and scruffy sailors. She paid particular attention to our crew on *Drum*, the British boat owned in part by legendary rocker Simon le Bon, lead singer of the 80s pop phenomenon Duran Duran. Le Bon and the two managers of the band owned *Drum* and sailed on board for the race around the world. Luckily for us the Princess was a fan and personal friend of Simon so we had a special entree to her attention.

It was four years earlier when I was racing the 81/82 Whitbread on the American yacht *Alaska Eagle* that we had been invited to Washington by the senior senator from Alaska. We were to meet Ronald Reagan, but circumstances conspired against us as John Hinckley had other plans for the president and he was in hospital

while we were wined and dined by Senator Stevens as a personal favor to the owner of *Alaska Eagle* who was a major campaign contributor. We did meet fellow sailor Ted Kennedy who thought we were nuts to even think of racing a sailboat around the world but that was back in the days when most still thought the world was flat, at least around the edges.

Perhaps my most impressionable celebrity encounter was in a small bar in St. Barts in the West Indies. Jimmy Buffett was far from the household name he has since become and Buffett was at the bar playing guitar for whoever was interested in listening. I had never heard of him but liked his songs and the tropical beat they offered. I think what I liked most about his music was that it spoke directly to the free spirit in me and years later, when hemmed in by a mortgage, small kids, and a minivan parked in my driveway, I could escape to the sound of steel drums and calypso intertwined with clever lyrics, and as Buffett so eloquently put it, a "*Caribbean Soul I could Barely Control.*"

Money was never an issue with me. I could always find some, make some or spend some without having to think too much about it. I always figured that making money needed to be fun as I knew that fortunes could easily be lost and it would be a damn shame if the lost money had been earned the hard way. When I lost it all after my first marriage came apart I thought long and hard about the value of the almighty green back. Ten years after I had first met Erin in a bar in Marblehead, Massachusetts I was right back where I had started; broke and busted but with a bank full of memories and experiences that no divorce lawyer or ex-wife could take away from me.

A couple of years later, on a chance phone call from an old friend, I made back all that I had lost, and more, when the friend sold me his million dollar yacht for something substantially less than fair market value. I think I am one of the few people that

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doubled my money on a boat sale, but there you go. Life is all about opportunity and opportunity is simply recognizing it when it presents itself.

After my first round the world race in 1981 I lived for a while on a yacht with Erin in the stunningly gorgeous village of Villefranche sur Mer, a short boat ride west of Monte Carlo on the Mediterranean coast. There, among the history and mystery of ancient architecture and the rich and famous I pinched myself daily wondering how a kid from Africa could find himself a stone's throw from a topless beach and a string of amazing restaurants that instilled in me a love of food and wine that remains a huge part of my life today. For years I tried to cook meals that tasted like the simply prepared dishes served al fresco on the waterfront, but always failed miserably until it dawned on me: the sights, smell and sound of a bustling harbor have as much to do with the flavor of a meal as the cut of meat or amount of garlic and butter added to the sauce.

Even paradise can get boring and after six months in southern France I took a job offer back in the States. Erin missed her family and I missed a challenge. We packed our bags, rented a car and drove north through the mountains sampling the food and wine that France is famous for. I learned a valuable lesson on that trip. You don't need to be rich to live like the rich. We were, by most measures, completely broke but a baguette and cheese and a bottle of wine followed by a swim and a nap in the hot sun was a lunch fit for a king, although I doubt kings have the time. We did, and we slowly wound our way north tasting Dijon mustard in Dijon and Burgundy wine in Burgundy until we finally found ourselves at Heathrow Airport boarding a plane bound for the States.

Erin went home to visit her parents, I bought a camper van and lived in it on the side of the road. People thought that I was

nuts but less than a year later I had saved up enough money for the down payment on a house. It was that house and subsequent spike in real estate values that garnered me a small fortune. It was also real estate that lost it for me. I sold the house, bought a few more as investments and watched them lose value when the tax laws were changed at the end of '89. It was the stress of tenants setting fire to an antique three-family house we owned, coupled with plunging home prices, a miscarriage, and a general restlessness in my heart that brought about an early end to my marriage to Erin. As I said before, women, especially when they become mothers, crave stability above all else, but wanderlust is not something easily purged from the bloodstream and while Erin took up residence in a small apartment with our two year old daughter, I took off for Tierra del Fuego to go hunting.

3

where
we get ready
for the storm

WE WERE NOW IN A RACE against time. The front that had developed in the plains was marching toward the coast. The smaller system, born in Canada, was moving south. The two would intersect off Virginia and form one big system that would continue on an easterly course. Brian and I, aboard our tiny carbon capsule, were hurtling south as fast as we could in an effort to get across the Gulf Stream into cooler waters. We were on a collision course with no way out.

We readied the boat as best we could, lashing down equipment and stowing things below. Something as insignificant as a coffee cup can quickly become a dangerous missile if the boat is knocked

down. We downloaded weather maps every couple of hours and kept in regular contact with Commanders. The situation was not getting any worse, but it was not improving either. On deck the sailing was good and the little boat was loving the big seas. I stood in the companionway and watched the bow dip below the wave ahead as the boat accelerated down the face of a cresting swell. It looked like it would bury itself and we would spin out, but each time, just when I thought we had passed the point of no return, the bow would rise again, shake the water off the deck and ready itself for the next onslaught. We were eating up the miles and with every mile the temperature got a tad warmer. It was becoming possible to go on deck without full battle gear. Hats, gloves, goggles and multiple layers of socks were peeled off and left below.

We were nearing the edge of the Gulf Stream and the warm water was moderating the air temperature. Suddenly, as if someone had flipped a switch, we entered the Stream and the change was immediate. It was instant summer. The cold, cobalt blue waters of the Atlantic turned a warm turquoise and it almost felt as if life was OK; until we remembered the forecast and noticed the barometric pressure starting to drop, slowly to be sure, but dropping nonetheless.

The day before the storm was as good as any I have spent at sea. The wind was from astern and the weather almost tropical, a welcome change from the bitter cold of Maine. It was the first time since we set off that I had time to think about what Josh had said on the phone. For weeks, months even, we had been griping about the state of short-handed offshore ocean racing. Josh, a veteran of three gruelling solo circumnavigations, and me with a few circumnavigations of my own under my belt, felt that we had a particular perspective on the situation.

It was growing increasingly difficult to participate in a race

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around the world. The big ones, the Volvo Ocean Race and Vendée Globe were for professionals only. The Volvo, as it's known, used to be the Whitbread Round the World Race, an event that I was intimately familiar with having participated in three of them in the 1980s. With Volvo's cash injection and marketing savvy the race had become the biggest and best around the world race, a must-do for any rising professional sailor. It had become brutally tough and their slogan, Life at the Extreme, just about summed it up. Just about, I say, because you have not seen extreme until you have sailed a Volvo 70 sailboat through the roughest and toughest ocean of them all, the deep Southern Ocean.

Where the Volvo differed from the Whitbread was in its intensity. The Whitbread was certainly tough and the fact that it was new and breaking new ground was an important part of it, but the Volvo is simply brutal. All day, every day, it's a struggle to hang on and keep the boat moving at full speed. The worst part of it is that there is no relief, no down time when you can get off the boat and relax for a few minutes. For weeks on end it's a rollercoaster ride across some of the most remote and hostile water on the planet.

The Vendee Globe is harder still. It's the same intensity as the Volvo, but you get to do it all alone, without stopping. Three plus months of gruelling, non-stop action on huge, highly strung boats that are a handful to sail when the weather is good, and almost suicidal to sail when the weather is not.

Between the two events there is no longer room for amateurs and it was this very point that Josh and I lamented. In addition to the boats themselves, the budgets were starting to rival mainstream sports. A Volvo campaign was going to cost a sponsor close to \$50 million if they were going to have any chance of winning. In my day a million dollars was enough to compete. Things had certainly changed and in our opinion, not all for the better.

While Brian and I were coasting through a gently undulating Gulf Stream toward our unwelcome date, Josh and his co-skipper, Joe Harris, were racing double-handed from France to Brazil. They were competing in one of the prestigious French races, the Transat Jacques Vabre. Joe, a Boston based businessman with his own wanderlust firmly ingrained had bought a world class 50 foot yacht to race around the world. The problem was that the event he was going to compete in suddenly changed the rules making his million dollar investment too small for the race. Joe, understandably, was pissed off and his negative energy combined with Josh's experience fueled a spirited debate as they sailed south. It was a topic they talked about incessantly and one that soon formed the basis of an idea, which, when combined with my own thoughts, would fuel a movement that would have a lasting impact on my destiny.

Josh and Joe were well into the Trade Winds when Joe finally said, "You know, rather than bitch about the state of ocean racing why don't we start our own race?" It was a question that hung in the air. Far out to sea the kinetic energy was connecting with my psyche and the idea that had been bouncing around in my own head suddenly began to take shape. For years I had been thinking of starting a new around-the-world yacht race but I could not picture it. I had just come off a project out of the Middle East, a race around the world for massive maxi-multihulls.

The race was the brainchild of a good friend of mine, Tracy Edwards, the skipper of the first-ever all-female crew to compete in the Whitbread race. In 2003, after a long search Tracy finally landed sponsorship for her Whitbread team from Royal Jordanian Airlines. It's a long story how that all happened but it taught me to think out of the box when it came to seeking funding for a crazy idea. Her campaign was hugely successful, not only for her crew and her sponsor, but it fueled a full-on movement to

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involve more all-girl teams in sailing culminating in 1992 when Dawn Riley, one of Tracy's crew for the Whitbread, put together and skippered the first ever all-female America's Cup entry. It just shows the power of an idea and it was a lesson I would never forget.

Because of her success in the Middle East Tracy returned to the area to find sponsorship for her new race, the one involving maxi-multihulls. She exhausted every possibility before finally landing a meeting with the Emir of Qatar. What happened next and subsequently is a bit murky and the subject of many debates, but in essence Tracy got massive sponsorship from the country of Qatar to stage the first around-the-world yacht race to start and finish in the Middle East.

I was inspired by the idea and luckily enough to be hired as Communications Director for the event. The pay was good, but the prospect of spending time in the land of camels and money was more interesting to me. The upshot of it all was that the race was a big success, except for one small point. Tracy ran out of money before the start and the million dollar prize money offered to the winner ended up being nothing more than an IOU tucked into a gold envelope that was ceremoniously handed over at the prize giving. Unfortunately the all important funds to back it up were not there.

The event officials, myself among them, were not paid, the prize money was not forthcoming and Tracy fled the country as fast as she could before the bill collectors came calling. She was clear of the Middle East but not clear of her UK creditors who forced her into bankruptcy leaving her destitute and licking her wounds. It was a fabulous experiment that had gone awry and was foremost in my mind each time I thought about starting my own global race.

That was until Josh sent me an email. 'Joe and I have been

talking,' it read. 'We think there is room on the sailing calendar for an around-the-world race for smaller boats, say 40 to 50 feet. What do you think?' His email traveled via satellite to land in my inbox at a time when I was still licking my wounds from the Tracy debacle, but also looking for a new project to sink my teeth into. What did I think?

My first thought was that there was indeed room on the sailing calendar for a new race around the planet and smaller boats meant that it would be more affordable. Suddenly all those thoughts and ideas that had been rattling around in my brain crystallized into one single, razor sharp image. The event I was having a hard time picturing was suddenly there in all its clarity. A new race, for single-handed and double-handed sailors, raced around the world in 40 and 50 foot sailboats. What an idea. It would be affordable, would open up global racing to a much broader base and could be pulled off using the traditional route, the same one I had followed on my first circumnavigation. "Let's do it," I replied hitting the send button and with that the Global Ocean Challenge was born.

4

where
among other things,
the mast breaks

THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON the barometric pressure started to drop steadily and as it did I could feel the knot in my stomach tighten. By our best estimate we still had 60 miles to go to the southern edge of the Gulf Stream, a good seven or eight hours of sailing. The latest satellite photo of the front showed a deep trough of low pressure less than a hundred miles to the west of our position. The center of the low was to the south of us and the whole system was tracking to the northeast at 15 knots, a mix of numbers and variables, none of which gave us any way out of the awful situation we had sailed ourselves into.

Brian and I had discussed all options at length. We had weighed the pros and cons of each and concluded that no matter

what we did, we were in for a full-on hiding from the wind gods. There was no escape. The boat was ready, we had eaten well and cooked some extra food that could be had cold later. I gulped some energy gels and a cup of strong black coffee. It was going to be a long night.

The sunset was spectacular. It always is when there is an approaching storm. Towering cumulus swirled in dark shadows painted red and orange and finally purple as the sun set spluttering and sizzling into the ocean. The wind was starting to pick up as cats paws darkened the surface of the water, the first foray blowing warm gusts, heavy with moisture and laden with energy. As the wind hit the sails the boat heeled quickly, but just as quickly the energy was turned into boat speed and we rocketed forward, the speed topping 12 knots. We had set a storm jib and triple-reefed the mainsail, about as much as we could do until the big blow came. Then suddenly it was dark, very dark. The last of the sun was gone and storm clouds obscured the slither of moon.

With the darkness the tension rose and the wind began to build, first gusting 30 knots, then a steady 30 with gusts close to 40. "I think it's time we altered course," I said to Brian. We had talked about intersecting with the front at a right angle and pushing through as quickly as possible. The wind on the leading edge would be out of the southwest, not great, but on the back side it would be from the northeast, from behind, and when you take away forward boat speed, the wind across the deck would be reduced. "I agree," Brian said. "Let's do it."

We tightened sheets and changed course so that we would be perpendicular to the system. The satellite photo showed that the front was no more than a hundred miles across and we estimated that with a forward speed of around 7 knots, and with the front itself traveling at 15 knots, we could conceivably be through the worst of it in six or seven hours. Six or seven hours of hell, but if

we could hold the boat together we would survive. We had done it before.

The water hissed along the side of the hull as the boat rose and fell with each wave. Brian and I stayed below in our foul weather gear ready to hop on deck at a moments notice, the autopilot doing yeoman's work back aft keeping the boat on a steady course. I lay in my bunk while Brian braced himself to leeward between his bunk and the navigation station. From his vantage he could look up and see the mainsail and mast through a small cabin port. It was really the mast that concerned us the most. The carbon fibre wing had already done one circumnavigation and while the survey showed no problems whatsoever, carbon is one of those things that can go at any time.

Where I lay in my bunk I had a clear view of the wind instruments and they drew my reluctant gaze. The numbers were mesmerizing. As much as I wanted to look away it was almost impossible. At the top of the mast a wand and anemometer were recording the wind speed and direction, sending it down a tiny wire to the electronic brain at the nav station. The numbers, displayed in red to reduce eye fatigue at night, might well have been red as a warning. The wind was blowing a steady forty plus with stronger gusts coming every few minutes. I could sense the extra wind before the display registered the higher number. The roar of wind in the rigging ratcheted up a notch with each gust, but it was the vibration that resonated throughout the interior of the boat that told of the increase. Each vibration seemed to have a direct connection to my nerve endings and as the gale raged outside, my body felt electrified as I huddled in my sleeping bag bracing against the bulkhead. Every so often Brian would look over at me and shrug. Not much we could do other than hold tight while the boat took a pounding.

"I am going on deck to take a look around," Brian announced.

“I can’t stand not knowing what’s going on up there.” He was right of course. We had prepared the boat in advance of the storm but now that we were in the thick of it we needed to know if any lines were chafing. Unless we were hit by a rogue wave we would probably be OK unless a line chafed through or a sail split at the seams. Brian tightened the hood on his foul weather jacket, adjusted his life harness, and made his way slowly up the companionway. He eased the hatch open and the outside roar immediately filled the cabin. A wave washed over the deck and a small amount of water sloshed down the companionway.

“Crap,” Brian said. “This isn’t going to be easy.” I reluctantly climbed out of my warm sleeping bag and swung over to the hatch. “Let me help you,” I offered. “I will open the hatch while you jump out. Let’s just wait for a break and then go for it.” Brian nodded. We could feel the storm and held on tight while the boat rode each wave. For a few seconds the wind abated and I opened the hatch. Brian quickly scrambled into the cockpit and as I slammed the hatch shut I could hear him clipping his harness onto a strong point engineered for just that purpose. A couple of minutes later I could see the weak beam of his flashlight sweep the sails. It was almost as if the dark night swallowed up any light. As he pointed the flashlight up the mast I could see that it had started to rain. Clicking the radar off standby I saw a large patch of interference due west of us. The front had formally arrived.

A few minutes later Brian banged on the hatch. I slid it open and he clambered below bringing with him a torrent of water. “It all looks good,” he said unbuttoning his foul weather hood. “Nothing is chafing and the sails look OK. But shit it’s blowing out there,” he understated. “If this is as bad as it’s going to get we will probably be OK.” No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the boat started to shake violently. It was as if a giant hand had grabbed the mast, and like a dog with a play toy, was shaking

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us from side to side. I felt the knot in my stomach tighten. If the mast stands up to this kind of abuse we will be lucky, I thought to myself. I knew that Brian was thinking the exact same thing as he leaned to the side and peered aloft through the small deck hatch. The wind was gusting close to sixty knots and the rain and spray lashing the deck made it impossible to see even the lower section of the mast, let alone the vulnerable top section.

A FEW YEARS EARLIER I had worked as Communications Director for the *Around Alone*, a single-handed race around the world. It was a privileged position; I was hired to tell the story of 12 brave men and one woman as they raced their boats around the world through some of the roughest waters on the planet. Each sailor was a unique and distinct personality and I got to know them intimately. After 30,000 miles and nine months racing the Italian competitor, Simone Bianchetti, was less than 50 miles from the finish in Newport, Rhode Island. He had passed through the same waters where we were currently sailing, also trying to beat an approaching front. Simone was pushing his 60 foot carbon sloop as hard as he dared knowing that the boat was tired.

It was just after three in the morning when he called me. "Brian," he said. "I am in a terrible gale. I don't think that I am going to make it to Newport." From my warm and safe home in Newport I had been tracking the front that was ravaging the leading boats as they neared the end of an arduous circumnavigation.

"What do you mean Simone?" I yelled down the satellite phone. There was no reply and I figured he had hung up the phone. I clicked on my mail program and saw that there was a new message. It was from Simone and read: "Wind 60+. Waves bigger than Southern Ocean. I am sure the mast will break."

I called his Project Manager who was with Simone's wife and a half dozen Italian journalists who had come over for the finish.

“Mauro,” I said. “Did you see that message from Simone?”

“Yes,” he replied. I just spoke to him. He sounded very worried.”

Just then my satellite phone rang and I saw it was Simone again. “Brian,” a weak voice said. “My mast has broken.” With that the phone cut out again.

I clicked on the race tracker. Each boat had a transponder installed that automatically sent the boat’s position, via satellite, to our race headquarters where it was immediately translated into a position on a digital chart. I zoomed in on *Tiscali*, Simone’s boat. As I rolled my mouse over his position a small pop-up screen gave me the raw data from onboard. Wind speed was at 55 knots. Boat speed had been averaging 11 knots, but it was currently registering 0.2 knots. Distance to the finish was a mere 29 miles. I called Mauro back and he too had heard the news. The *Tiscali* team were stunned. This was the third mast that had broken on the boat in the space of a year but this was especially bitter with the finish line practically in sight. We commiserated for a few minutes and then I rang our shore team. “Cancel the press boat,” I said. “We won’t be needing it today.”

Simone had become a bit of a legend in Italy. He was a man born a hundred years too late. He should have been a sea captain in the days of clipper ships and uncharted waters. His temperament was better suited to life at sea than life on land as he usually got into trouble on land. Like many Italian men he had a voracious appetite for women and enjoyed a drink or two.

A few months earlier when the fleet was in New Zealand, he had heard me telling the story of my first skydive. It was a tandem jump from 14,000 feet and it turned out that my jump partner, a lovely lady who claimed to have over a thousand jumps to her credit, was a lesbian. Just before you leap from the plane there is a small camera on the wing that takes your picture. In the hangar

Viv, my jump instructor, had posted duplicates of each photo. Among them was a burly chap completely kitted out for skydiving except for one small detail. He was stark naked. "Viv," I said. "What's with this guy?" pointing to the naked man.

"Oh," she replied laughing. He was a Scot. Wanted to be naked for his first and last skydive." I looked at her curiously.

"How was it?" I asked. She laughed again. "Well it was OK. He was so scared there was not really anything to see and besides," she added, "I am a lesbian so I wasn't looking."

The day after telling that story to a group of people Simone came up to me. "Brian," he said. "I want go skydiving but I don't want to go by myself. Will you come with me?" I said I would and as we drove over to the airport Simone looked at me quizzically. He started to say something then thought the better of it. A while later, just as we pulled into the airport, he asked in a quiet voice. "Brian, is that lady really a lesbian?" I looked at him wondering what he was thinking.

"Yes," I replied.

"How long is the jump?" he asked.

"It's about a minute free-fall and then four or five minutes with the parachute." I replied. Simone smiled.

"That's enough time," he said. "I will change her mind."

A couple of days later I saw Viv and asked her about the jump with Simone. "How was he?" I asked.

"What do you mean?" she replied. I looked at her and she must have detected a smile at the corners of my mouth. "Why do you ask?"

"Did he say anything to you?" I continued.

"No," she replied. "He was so scared he didn't utter a word on the way up or the way down. Why do you ask?"

“Never mind,” I replied.

I was thinking of Simone and wondering how he was going to get his crippled boat to the finish in Newport when the satellite phone rang again.

“Brian,” the voice shouted down the line. “I will be at the finish in 40 minutes. Make sure everyone is there.” I stared at the phone stunned. Did he say 40 minutes?

“Simone,” I yelled back. “I thought your mast was broken.”

“Yes,” he replied. “But only the top 20 feet. I fixed it.” As *Tiscali* leapt off a square wave and crashed into the trough below the top section of the mast had snapped like a twig. It doubled up on itself but by some miracle the mast had not toppled. Seizing the opportunity Simone had hoisted himself aloft and lashed the top section. He had run some stabilizing lines and secured what was left of his mast. All of this was done while a full-on gale raged.

I called Mauro and gave him the news. We scrambled the press boats and took off out of Newport harbor heading for the last known position of *Tiscali*. The wind had eased slightly and a filthy smudge of horizon gave us a bearing. It was just starting to get light and a weak sun licked the bottom of black storm clouds. Silhouetted against the sky was a small speck, a boat with a broken wing. As we roared closer I could see that the mast had snapped. The top section was lashed to itself and the whole rig teetered precariously. Simone was at the helm, his hat pulled low over his eyes. He did not wave when he saw us. He just looked anxiously aloft and then back down at his compass. He had three miles to go until he reached the layline for the finish. He would have to make one last tack before crossing safely and we all knew what he must have been thinking. The mast was secured for a starboard tack; there was no telling what

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would happen when the wind come onto the other side of the boat.

Tiscali sailed slowly toward the finish. With each errant wave the mast shook and it looked as if it would topple and fall, but miraculously it stood. As we got closer to the finish the seas calmed a little but there was still the problem of the final tack. I could see Simone crawling around the deck clearly trying to rig up a something to support the mast but he was quickly running out of water. He was going to have to tack, or risk running aground. Slowly, and with great deliberation, Simone brought the boat through the eye of the wind. We held our collective breath, and as the wind came onto the port side of the boat the mast suddenly shifted. It fell to leeward, but only a few feet before the supporting lines took hold. Simone looked aloft, smiled, took off his hat and waved to us. He was going to make it. *Tiscali* picked up speed, heeled slightly and charged across the finish. Bianchetti completed his third solo circumnavigation in as many years and the relief was palpable. Sadly, a month later he was dead. As I said, Simone Bianchetti was a man best suited to life on the open ocean. Too much fun on land killed him. He burned the candle at both ends, enjoyed life and everything it had to offer with the enthusiasm of a man determined to squeeze every bit of juice out of living, and one morning he was gone. He was only 35.

THE WIND STEADIED out at around 55 knots but the seas were still building. We were right on the edge of the Gulf Stream and I estimated that within the hour we would be out of the Stream and into smoother waters. Brian was still braced between the navigation station and his bunk monitoring the wind instruments and every so often trying to look aloft.

“Brian,” I said. “I was just thinking of Simone.” He looked at

me and smiled. Brian knew him well having been a part of the same Around Alone event.

“What were you thinking about,” he asked. “All those masts he broke?”

I laughed. “Yes,” I replied. “That and other things. He was something else that guy.”

Brian smiled again. “Did I ever tell you about the night in Brazil when Jeffrey and I went to his room with a half bottle of scotch?” he asked.

“No.”

Brian laughed out loud, the sound incongruous against the roar of a raging gale. “You remember how he would always buy everyone dinner in Bahia?” I nodded. Simone was generous to a fault.

“Well one night after Jeffrey and I had drunk way too much we decided that we would stop by Simone’s hotel room with some whiskey. It seemed like a good idea at the time. It was around three in the morning and we knocked on his door never figuring that he might be asleep. We heard some noise from inside but no one came to the door, so we knocked again. Still nothing. We could hear some voices and it dawned on us that he might have been in there with a lady. We were just about to leave when the door opened. Simone saw it was us, yelled something in Italian, and slammed the door.”

“What was all that about,” I asked.

“Hang on let me finish,” Brian continued. “A couple of days later Simone was still glaring at us so I thought that I should apologize for disturbing him. It was a stupid idea anyway. So I went by his boat and said I was sorry. I told him that if he was in there with a hooker that I would not say anything. You know

what he was like. Simone just glared at me and then he smiled that great big smile of his.

“No man,” he said. “I was not in there with a girl. I thought that you were the fucking federales. I flushed \$5000 worth of cocaine down the toilet.”

Brian and I both laughed. It felt good. I could feel the tension ease a little. The boat was hissing along lurching from wave crest to bottomless trough. It was handling the seas very well. Every so often a cresting wave would swamp the deck. There was a small leak at the companionway hatch and each time a wave landed on the deck water would squirt down the hatch. It had collected in the bilge and I could hear the automatic pump running every few minutes.

We must have been right on the edge of the Gulf Stream when the mast broke. I felt the boat ride the crest of a wave and break through the back of it. It had happened many times. There was short period of weightlessness before the boat crashed into the trough below. This time the boat hung suspended for a moment longer than usual. Brian and I held our breath and then there was a loud crash as the flat section forward of the keel slammed squarely into the trough. A split second after we hit there was another bang, this time from the mast. At least it sounded as if it came from the mast.

Brian swung down to leeward and shone a flashlight up through the hatch.

“The mast is still there,” he shouted. “At least it looks like it’s still there. I can see it but the rigging is all loose. It’s just flapping around.” I grabbed my jacket and life harness and we both clambered on deck. The boat was still sailing fine and as far as I could see the mast was still upright but the rigging was all loose. It was a mystery. We grabbed a spare halyard and fastened

it to the windward side, tightening the line with a winch. Brian clawed his way along the leeward rail with a second halyard and attached it outboard, just aft of the mast. We put tension on both halyards to support the mast and then collapsed in the cockpit to try and figure out what had happened. The air was suddenly colder. The clawing clamminess was replaced by a chilly, biting wind. "We are out of the Stream," Brian yelled as if reading my mind. "It's flipping cold." I sat with my back against the side of the cockpit bracing with my feet on the opposite side. To leeward I could make out cresting waves but the ocean was as black as night and it was impossible to tell where the water ended and the sky began.

"What do you think happened?" Brian asked. "It's a mystery. How can the rigging be loose yet the mast is still upright?"

"Hang on," I said. "I think I know." I unclipped my harness, pushed the hatch open and climbed below. Making my way forward I hung on to the navigation station until I was at the mast. It was partly encased but just where the carbon tube passed through the deck I could fit my hand. I stuck it in the gap and felt the mast. It was slippery to the touch. I could hear a strange grinding noise and every so often a weird popping sound. I crawled back to the navigation station and grabbed a large flashlight. Shining the light on the mast I saw streaks of black all over the bulkhead. It was then that I knew what had happened. I had seen it before.

The first time I raced around the world one of the smaller French boats had the same problem, although her mast was not carbon fiber. On the leg to New Zealand the crew noticed that every other day the rigging was becoming loose. They could not figure out what was happening. It's true that wire rigging does stretch but not by the amount they were having to deal with. It was only when they removed the mast in Auckland that they

discovered the problem. The mast had broken right where it passes through the deck. For a short section the mast tube is out of sight and this is where it had snapped, the two halves grinding against each other while the mast lost an inch a day. The same thing had happened with our carbon mast. I was sure that the tube had exploded right in the mast partners, out of sight, and it was the partners that were supporting the mast and keeping it in the boat.

I explained my theory to Brian and he agreed. The rig had collapsed on itself losing about six inches in length. It was still being supported by the deck partners and the jury rigging that we had concocted with the spare halyards. Unless we fell squarely off another wave the rig may well be fine for the rest of the trip. We huddled in the cockpit discussing our options. There was basically nothing we could do other than hope for the best.

The rain stopped abruptly and moments later a weak moon filtered through the dark clouds. It lit the surface of the water and for the first time we could see the size of the waves. Massive curling breakers washed off to leeward flinging spindrift high into the air. The wind picked up the spray and flung it across a white, foaming sea. It was an unreal sight. We looked to be atop a mountain staring down on churning clouds but it was only the sea turned white by the gale force winds and huge, breaking seas. Then suddenly the clouds were gone and as if on cue, the wind started to ease.

“We are through the front,” Brian announced. “We can probably alter course.” He went below to change the setting on the autopilot while I sat in the cockpit marvelling at what I was looking at. Not often does one get to see a full-on gale in all its magnificence. It was as if we were sailing on a different planet. With clear skies above, the full strength of an almost full moon shone brightly. *How lucky can one person be?* I thought to myself. *How damn lucky?*

BRIAN HANCOCK

To live life so close to the edge and to still feel the thrill of it as if I was a teenager experiencing adventure for the very first time. *How many people get to see the kinds of things I have seen?* I wondered. *How many people are born under a lucky star?*

5

where
the decision is made
to go for it

SHORTLY AFTER BRIAN and I sailed into Bermuda, Josh and Joe sailed into Bahia, Brazil to finish their race from France. Their arch rival, American Kip Stone on his Open 50, *Artforms*, was still far astern having had to stop in Spain with sail problems. After celebrating their victory and greeting the sunrise Josh fired off a quick email.

‘We will be leaving to sail to Rhode Island in a few days,’ he wrote. ‘Joe and I have had many discussions about the race idea and we really think that we are onto something. As soon as we get to the States we need to sit down and come up with a plan. Keep some time between Christmas and New Year open.’

I returned to my home in Marblehead before the riggers from France came out to fix the broken mast. Sure enough the rig had collapsed on itself right at the deck partners but with some careful engineering, they were certain that it could be repaired. By the time I got back home winter had taken a firm grip on New England and snow lay in patches on the dying grass. I was excited about the idea of the new race but careful not to mention anything to my wife. I knew that she would be less than enthused by this new idea.

Sigrun is Icelandic and does not share my eternal optimism and nor does she suffer fools gladly. She is much more practical and the prospect of starting a brand new around-the-world yacht race, without a cent in the bank, or a job, would be viewed quite dimly, and with good reason. I had almost bankrupted my family a few years earlier when I bought a boat to race solo around the world, before collecting the reef off Bermuda and putting a sizable hole in the boat. I sold the boat a few years later but the sting of it had taken some of the fun from our marriage. Sigrun, like most mothers, wanted stability in her life and a brand new venture built on a flimsy foundation was hardly the basis for a smooth running household.

This did not stop me from thinking about it and my mind ran in overdrive. After more than two decades as a professional sailor I was more than ready to quit life on the open ocean but it was hard to transition out of one thing into another. To be absolutely blunt I was unemployable in any strict sense of the word. Who in their right mind would hire a forty-something with only a high school education and three decades in the school of hard knocks? I had made a good living sailing but the skills learned racing fast boats around the world hardly translated into something practical for most paying jobs. My books had done OK and I loved writing them but with a growing family, book royalties hardly covered

the mortgage let along college tuition for my daughter who was now 20. I simply had to find an outlet for my sailing expertise, one that combined my love of writing and communicating. A global yacht race was just the thing.

Joe and Josh had floated the idea of a more affordable solo race around the world. I had thrown in the idea of combining both singlehanded sailors and double-handed teams and coined the tag line, the *World's First Solo Double Global Ocean Race*. It had a nice ring to it. At the end of the Around Alone, the one Bianchetti raced, the owner and Race Director, the venerable Sir Robin Knox-Johnston asked me for my opinion about what to do with his event. He presumed I had some ideas, and I did. The Around Alone was struggling against the Vendee Globe. With the Vendee being a predominantly French event, and without stops, it cost less for the competitors. Most of the professional solo sailors came from France and were opting to do the Vendee.

I sent RKJ, as he's affectionately known, an email with my thoughts. Instead of competing with the Vendee, why not change the Around Alone into a slightly different event. 'Why not create a double-handed event,' I wrote. 'Or perhaps keep the race solo but make it more affordable. Forget the 60-footers and open the race to smaller boats.' Sir Robin took my advice and I am sure gave it due consideration, but in the end he binned the ideas and stuck with his original concept.

My own email had nagged at me for years. I was sure that double-handed was a good concept. Shorter, double-handed races were springing up around the world and they were a big hit. And smaller boats meant that more people could get into the game. Smaller boats mean lower budgets and lower budgets are good for sponsors looking to maximize their investment. Both ideas had niggled at me for years but it had never quite

dawned on me that I should start my own event. That was until that original satellite call from Josh. Why not, I thought. How hard could it be?

I was about to find out.

6

where
we think through the logistics
and still decide to go for it

JOSH AND HIS CREW arrived in Newport, Rhode Island on Christmas day. The boat was going to be decommissioned and put to bed for the winter. His plan was to stay in the area for a while so that we could hash out the details of the new race idea and spend some time socializing over the New Year. The “summit”, a round table discussion about the race concept, would be held at Joe Harris’s lovely home in Hamilton, Massachusetts. It would be the first time the three of us had been in the same room and on the same page, so to speak. We invited Brian Harris, the same Brian with whom I had sailed to Bermuda a few weeks earlier, and Joe’s sister Wendie Demuth, to join us. Brian has been around the international sailing scene for decades and

Wendy was a crack marketing and PR person. We needed as much input as possible.

With Josh coming to stay for the night I had to break the news to Sigrun that we were planning on starting a new race. She was interested, but skeptical. I couldn't blame her. To most people starting a new global event was simply out of the scope of their imagination. Many people have a hard time contemplating a job in the next city let alone the intricacies of setting up and running a brand new concept in five different countries.

I barely gave that part of it any thought and I am sure Josh was the same. I have always had a global view and being a transplanted South African, living in America, carrying a British passport, married to an Icelandic woman with American children, I have always considered myself a citizen of the world. No, to me the scope of the race was no big deal. In many ways it was like the race itself; you need to take big projects and break them down into bite size chunks. It's the only way you get through them.

My friend Skip Novak, with whom I raced the Whitbread Round the World Race, once wrote a book entitled *One Watch at a Time*. A race that's 30,000 nautical miles can be overwhelming to contemplate. Boats sail slowly and 30,000 miles is a lot of miles. The way to approach something like a circumnavigation is to break it down into manageable pieces. Consider the entire race as five shorter races such as the 85/86 Whitbread. Take each leg and break it down. Start to the equator, for example. Then look at that portion of the race and consider that it will likely take two weeks to get to the equator. So that's just two weeks. Well you can easily get through one week, that's just seven days. You know you can get through a day. That's only five watches and you know you can easily get through a watch so you take an enormous event like the Whitbread and get through it one watch at a time.

Simple. Same thing with the race we were contemplating. We compartmentalized it; find a sponsor, get competitors, find a start port, figure out the stopovers, get them organized and get on with it. Simple.

It was that time of year when the world floats effortlessly, that stagnant period between the hangover of Christmas and the one you anticipate getting from New Year. It's hard to concentrate on work and most people simply take the time off to be with family and enjoy the season before the credit card bills show up in the mail. I drove over to Joe's house through some of the loveliest parts of Massachusetts. Horse country, and the beautiful estates of the well-heeled were immaculately tended with thoroughbred horses cantering along freshly painted, white fences. Pockets of snow lay on the ground in the shady parts adding a festive touch. I was excited. For more than a month the race had been a dominant thought in my mind and in fact I had thought of little else. I knew that we were onto a good thing and was looking forward to seeing Josh and really coming to grips with the idea.

A half-size Santa ho ho'd at me as I knocked on Joe's front door and moments later I was let in. The rest were already there gathered around the table. Since it was Joe's house he led the proceedings. He also pushed his agenda. Joe already had a boat and it was ready for a race around the world. "The boat is costing me each month," he said. "So the sooner we can get this race off the ground the better." It was December; Joe was pushing for a race starting the following September or October. "There's nothing like a deadline to keep everyone focused," he said.

Joe was right, of course, but I was skeptical. We had no money, not even a remote possibility of a sponsor, there was an awful lot to do and we had no business structure. We talked about all of these details, costs, some budget ideas, race format, even a name for the event but it was hard to come to an agreement. Josh and

I were the only two with vast offshore sailing experience and an intimate knowledge of what it took to get a campaign together for such a long race. Joe had business experience and being a successful businessman he was impatient for things to happen. His job as CFO of a large Boston-based real estate development company paid well and he was used to throwing money at things to get them done.

No matter which way we looked at things it was going to take a lot of money to jump-start an event and no one seemed willing, or able, to throw some seed money into a pot. After six hours we came to some conclusions. We would look at the possibility of starting the race the following September but secretly we all knew that this was not going to happen and it was on the table simply to placate Joe. We would open the race to 40 and 50 foot boats only and have two divisions; solo and doublehanded. I thought that starting the race in Europe was a good idea, that there was not sufficient interest in shorthanded sailing in the US to get a sponsor interested. Also, it was more practical to start in Europe with hurricane season still in swing through November making a US east coast start a bit tricky. Joe wanted the race to start in Boston and had some connections. Brian Harris even suggested Portland, his home town. The ideas were all good and the day was productive but as often happens, too many people and ideas can overcomplicate things and while we had made progress we were far from any consensus.

It was dark when Josh and I left to head back to my home. I had a quick pitstop to make along the way. A few days earlier a wonderful friend had died. Lee van Gemert was the very first sail consultant hired by Ted Hood and was largely responsible for Hood becoming the dominant sailmaker in the 70s and 80s. Lee was also the person credited with inventing rollerfurling, a simple system of getting rid of sail area that would revolutionize

shorthanded sailing. He had died of a stroke at 86 after a full life and his wake was being held in Marblehead. I stood by the side of his coffin and wondered what Lee would have thought about the race idea. So I asked him, and he answered. I could hear his voice in my head. *“Go for it,”* the voice said. *“If you can feel it in your gut you are onto something good and I know you can feel this one in the pit of your stomach.”* Lee was right. It's not often that you can feel an idea take hold in your stomach and when it does there is very little you can do other than follow your instinct.

Later that evening when my children and Sigrun had gone to bed, Josh and I cracked open a bottle of red wine and we started talking about the day's events. Around midnight we opened a second bottle by which time we had made some real progress. The race would be called the Global Ocean Challenge until such time as a sponsor came along. We would take an existing company name and logo that I already had and call ourselves Global Ocean Sailing Ventures. We decided, for tax purposes, to base the business in the Channel Islands. I would start to create a sponsorship proposal and Josh would work the phones to see if he could get us some meetings. We both agreed that we would consider a US start and finish port if there was money, but that our preference was for a European start. We also agreed that the two of us would go it alone. Neither of us had any spare money and while Joe did have some and seemed willing to put up a bit of seed money, we agreed that our sweat equity was going to have more value in the long run. I drained my glass and stared into the bottom of it looking for some wisdom, but all I saw was the dregs of two bottles of red wine. “Time to hit the sack,” I said and Josh agreed. We were a little drunk but we had a race and I was certain that neither of us would give up on the idea.



7

where I once bought a boat

JOSH HALL IS A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL. Yes I know that you can say that about many people but in the rough and tumble world of professional sailing he rose slowly to the top for two reasons; he is charming and he is persistent. Born in Ipswich, England Josh set out to become one of Britain's best solo sailors. He cut his teeth working for Sir Robin Knox-Johnston on the catamaran *British Airways* but always had in the back of his mind the idea to field his own entry in the Around Alone, the original single-handed around-the-world race.

In 1990 he launched *Spirit of Ipswich*, a homespun effort that would rely on local businesses and the sailing public for funding. It worked and Josh joined the elite ranks of those determined men and women that had sailed alone around the world. It was

a well worn slogan that more people had flown in outer space than had sailed solo around the world. His accomplishment was nothing short of extraordinary.

Like many of his fellow singlehanded sailors, he was not satisfied with having done only one race. "One thing you learn along the way," Josh always said, "is how to do it better the next time. It would not be right to let all that knowledge go to waste." And so he set about organising his second campaign, this time for the 1994/95 Around Alone. By now he had some credibility having done it once, but credibility does not always translate into sponsorship. It was back to fundraising the hard way, sending out hundreds of letters and opening hundreds of rejections. Then one night at a fundraiser in Ipswich Josh was on stage selling his campaign. "We still have sponsorship slots open," he said, "but they are going fast. If you want to be part of this campaign you had better sign up right away." He was selling smoke. Sure the campaign had some support but the sponsorship slots were hardly selling fast. Still, Josh is charming, and persistent. It was hard not to like his folksy ways and after all, he had already sailed around the world once.

As Josh later related to me over one of our many bottles of red wine. "So after the event Claire Lewis came to me," he said. "Claire was the marketing person for Gartmore Investment Managers, one of Britain's leading investment companies. They had been very successful and while they didn't need brand recognition, they did need a way to entertain and impress potential clients. Claire thought that the idea of corporate outings out on the boat would appeal to her bosses. So she came to me and asked if she was too late to get in on the sponsorship. I had to keep playing along," Josh continued. "I couldn't let on that the entire campaign was still up for sale. Claire was clearly worried that she may have missed a great opportunity but I assured her that there was still

time to get in on the deal. As always it was my strategy to get a company hooked for a small investment, over deliver on the deal, and then go back and ramp them up for more money. This is just what happened with Gartmore.”

It was the corporate outings that appealed to the executives at Gartmore. Sailing is big in the UK. They are hardy souls and keen to get out on the water in almost any weather. Josh would base his boat on the south coast of England where it was easily accessible by train from London, and he would take people out for a day on the Solent, that narrow strip of water between the Isle of Wight and the British mainland. “They loved it,” Josh said. “They could not get enough of it. We would leave the dock after a safety briefing, head out into the Solent, haul up the sails and go sailing. The boat heeled over, people were scared, there was plenty of speed and we usually took a mooring off Cowes for lunch. By the time we got back later in the day they were exhausted but had had a memorable day. Much more memorable than a day of golf or tickets to the cricket match.”

This simple formula slowly reeled in more money from Gartmore. They were not that interested in the Around Alone but could see the value of using Josh’s race around the world as a focus for inspiring their clients, and certainly knew that once he got back he would have more than enough stories to enthrall clients each time they went sailing. Claire was thrilled, she had spotted a perfect opportunity for her bosses and they were happy. It was time to ask for more money and Gartmore happily agreed. Josh’s second entry in the Around Alone was secured. It didn’t, however, go according to plan. Halfway down the first leg of the race from Charleston, South Carolina to Cape Town Josh hit what was thought to be a submerged container. The boat started to sink and race officials quickly sprung into action. They diverted one of the closest competitors, Australian sailor Alan Nebour, a born-

again Christian who had raised money for his campaign from church donations in his hometown of Newcastle. Alan knew in an instant that God had called upon him to save Josh and a few hours later had him safely onboard his boat. The two of them sailed to South Africa where a very grateful Josh Hall thanked his fellow competitor for saving his life.

The sinking did not deter Josh, indeed it strengthened his resolve to get another entry together. Gartmore were amazed by his tenacity and agreed to fund a new Open 60 for the 1998/99 Around Alone. Finally, after years of struggle, he had a top notch campaign and a new boat under construction. Things were looking up for Josh Hall but his third campaign also came to an abrupt ending when the mast went over the side of the boat a few days after leaving New Zealand.

WHILE JOSH WAS preparing for his third Around Alone, I was on a parallel course, so to speak. The race had been my own dream for a number of years and the only thing that stood between where I was and certain victory, was about a million dollars! I had neither boat nor budget, but such small details have never clouded a good idea. On New Year's Day 1997 I followed my long-held ritual by writing down my hopes and dreams for the upcoming year. I had read someplace that "*Goals are Dreams with a Deadline*" and lived by that credo. I wrote down my plan to participate in the Around Alone the following year. I sketched out some numbers and a timeframe and after tallying it all up, I stepped back from it.

Indeed, I needed around a million dollars to get the campaign off the ground and a bit more than that to keep it off the ground. My bank account was alarmingly close to empty, I was living alone in a small apartment in Marblehead trying to be the best father I could on weekend visits. Still what are dreams if they are

not lofty? I wrote up a plan of action and gave myself six months to pull it off.

My plan at the time was to buy an old Open 60 sailboat. There were plenty on the market. An Open 60 is a magnificent machine. In the late 90s they were nicknamed 'aircraft carriers' because of their excessively wide beam. Water ballast was the way to add stability and increase power to the boat and the further outboard you could place your water, the more effective it was. Hence the excessive beam.

I contacted a few yacht brokers and they sent me listings of some really great boats, but it was an exercise in frustration. Some were really good deals but I simply had no way to even place a deposit on one of them. Each day I looked at my goals for the year and each day my dream of entering the Around Alone looked to be more and more laughable. I sat at my small desk and watched snow fall silently on the bush outside my window. I watched the flakes swirl and dance as they hit the backdraft behind the house and doodled with my pen. There was just no way anyone was going to hand over a million dollars, and a month into it I was thinking of giving up. Then the phone rang.

"Hi Brian," the voice said tentatively. "It's Andy Upjohn here." I had not heard word from Andy in more than three years. Back then I was working as a sail consultant for Doyle Sailmakers and Andy was a customer. He was building a state-of-the-art carbon fiber yacht for the 1994/95 Around Alone and had chosen Doyle as his sailmaker. I liked him a lot. He and his wife, Alexandra, moved to Rhode Island from their base on Bainbridge Island so that they could be around the yard where the boat was being built.

Andy had a trust fund; Upjohn Pharmaceuticals had afforded him a nice life but he was unspoiled by the money. He was a keen outdoorsman and loved the idea of sailing around the world. He

named the boat *Alexandra* after his wife, and I remember the look of sheer delight they both had as their beautiful Open 50 touched the water for the first time. In the end it didn't work out for Andy. He wasn't as keen on solo sailing as he thought he would be and a couple of years later he and Alexandra got divorced. On that cold February day when he picked up the phone and rang my number he was what's known in salesman parlance as a 'motivated seller.' He had a boat named after his ex-wife.

"Brian," Andy said after we exchanged pleasantries. "Do you know anyone that might be interested in buying my boat?" We talked about the boat. In fact I had seen it listed for \$600,000 and while I knew that it had cost him close to a million, I was sure that it was overpriced at \$600K. I told Andy that I was looking to buy a boat but that his asking price was a bit out of my range, a massive understatement. Before I hung up I promised that I would spread the word about his boat and went back to my doodling.

February was a bitterly cold month. Ice had formed on the harbor freezing salt water and snow storm after snow storm lashed New England. I was writing articles, giving talks wherever I could find an audience, and selling the odd sail to make ends meet. Each day I looked at my goals for the year and each day they looked more and more unrealistic. Then the phone rang. It was Andy again.

"Hi Brian," he said, this time without any hint of uncertainty. "I have an idea. I want you to buy my boat."

"Great Andy," I replied. "You know I love your boat and it would be perfect to race around the world." I had long since lowered my sights from an Open 60 to an Open 50 and adjusted the budget accordingly. "It's just that six hundred grand is a bit out of my budget."

"That's why I'm calling," Andy said. "I have lowered the price

to 250, knocked four hundred thousand off my original asking price." I knew that a quarter million dollars was a bargain for his boat. It had been lovingly built at Concordia Custom Yachts and was a piece of art as much as it was a sailboat. He was going to take a 75% hit on what he had spent having the boat built.

"That's great Andy," I said. "It's still a bit out of my budget, but let me see what I can do. Give me a few days. I will call you back." I stared at the phone for a long while after Andy had hung up. That really was a good price but it might just as well as been a million dollars. I simply had no money.

A day later Andy called back. "Brian," he said. "I want you to buy my boat. I have lowered the price to \$150K. How does that sound?" It sounded downright superb and I kept Andy strung along. I was loath to admit how little money I actually had, or more to the point, that I had no money at all, but he was genuinely excited about me taking his boat around the world. We talked about how good it was finally going to be to have the boat raced across the Southern Ocean. Like the Open 60s at the time, *Alexandra* was a beamy fifty-footer, a perfect platform for riding the big swells of the Deep South. I finally started to admit to Andy that I was a tad short of money and I could feel the wind go out of his sails. He said he would call me back within a week.

An hour later the phone rang again. This time it was Andy's lawyer, a soft spoken gentleman with a midwestern accent. "Hi Brian," he said smoothly. "I understand that you and Andy have been talking about his boat. Andy is really excited about the prospect of you taking the boat in the race. He asked me to call you to talk about the sale and to come to an agreement." I was suddenly nervous. I had really led Andy along and now I was embarrassed by my actions. "I understand that you are a little short of money," the lawyer continued without hesitation. "Andy recognizes that fact and

has asked me to put forward the following proposition. If we can agree on the selling price of \$150,000 he will loan you \$100,000 toward the purchase price meaning that you will need to come up with just fifty thousand.”

I stammered an inaudible reply down the phone line but the lawyer ignored my comments and continued. “As soon as we have concluded the transaction Andy will forgive the loan. He will tear up the note for the hundred grand he has loaned you so you will only have to pay fifty thousand for the boat. We need a sales price of 150K for tax reasons, I am sure you understand.” I was not sure that I understood but what I was sure was that I was being offered a million dollar yacht for fifty thousand dollars. I stammered again and then finally managed to spit out a sentence. “How long can I have to get you the fifty thousand?” I asked. There was a bit of a pause and then the lawyer spoke again, this time a hint of frustration in his voice.

“How much money do you have?” he asked, not unkindly. I replied that I had none. There was a long pause and then he continued. “Do you think you can raise five thousand dollars by next week?” I swallowed hard and said that I was sure that I could find five thousand. “OK,” he replied, “I will have my secretary contact you. The boat is in Fort Lauderdale. She will organise you an air ticket to Florida for next Wednesday. Bring five thousand in cash or check, it doesn’t matter. You can buy the boat with that but you will need to pay the other \$45,000 within six months. See you next week,” he said and the phone went dead.

A few minutes later the phone rang again and a perky voice explained my travel arrangements. I was to pick up my ticket at American Airlines the following Tuesday. I could stay on the boat and she gave me the name of the marina where it was located. I was to meet Andy and his lawyer on Wednesday morning at 9 at Bahia Mar, a luxury hotel in the Intercostal Waterway in Fort

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Lauderdale. “Everything you need will be there ready to sign,” she said. “Just bring a check for \$5000. And have a nice day.”

I started at the phone and then out the window not sure what to make of what had just happened. I had bought a boat. A boat that had cost close to a million dollars to build. I had just bought it for \$5,000. And then a cold sweat hit. Where the heck was I going to get \$5,000?



8

where
I land on US soil
for the first time

I GRABBED MY HEAVY winter jacket from the closet by the front door and pulled on my snow boots. By the door was a basket with hats and gloves and I took a heavy pair before heading out the door. A winter storm had passed during the night and Marblehead was blanketed in a wintery veil. The sound of cars driving the narrow streets was dampened by the heavy snowfall as I made my way into the old, historic section of town. It was postcard perfect. Marblehead is one of the most picturesque villages I have ever seen and I felt lucky to call it home. How I came to live there is another bit of serendipity and each time I recalled how I ended up in Massachusetts, I smiled to myself.

I had been working on a boat in Spain when I got a call from an old friend, Gerry Downton. He invited me to join him in the States to sail a brand new maxi-boat from Massachusetts to Florida. I had never been to the US and jumped at the opportunity. The plan was that he would pick me up at the airport in Boston the following week. Without giving it much thought I wrapped up the job in Spain, spent all but my last \$5 on an air ticket, and flew to Boston. It was the end of October. After clearing Customs at Logan airport I wandered out to the terminal in search of Gerry but he was nowhere to be found. It was late afternoon and I hung around the terminal until dark wondering what to do. I had no contact numbers. In fact I had no idea where the boat was going to be docked.

At the airport there was a massive map of the Massachusetts coast and I studied it carefully. North of Boston was the small town of Marblehead. I recognized the name. It was where Hood Sailmakers had their headquarters and I surmised that where there was a sailmaker, there would likely be boats, and where there were boats, there would be someone who knew where *Xargo*, the boat I was supposed to deliver, was located. I grabbed my bag and took the underground north to a bus station. The pretty lady with a lovely accent at the Information Booth had assured me that there was a regular bus service to Marblehead.

The first thing that struck me was the cold. I was still wearing shorts and a T-shirt. Madrid had been hot when I flew out earlier in the day, but late October in New England is on the cusp of winter. Fortunately the bus was right there and I jumped on board, sat down, and looked around. Next to me sat Dracula. Across from me was the tiniest witch I had ever seen. She was sitting next to a chap dressed up as a bag of bones. I had never heard of Halloween. It's not something we did in South Africa and I had no idea that October 31 is a big party night in America. I thought

that I had landed in Disneyland. They looked right back at me probably thinking my day-at-the-beach costume was original, if not practical.

The bus slowly made its way north stopping every now and then to let ghosts and ghouls board while bunnies and birds disembarked. I watched with amusement. So far America was turning out to be an interesting place. Half an hour later we pulled into Marblehead and the driver announced we had arrived. I was loath to get off knowing full well that the temperature had likely dropped since I boarded. I looked around and then without much of a plan, started to walk. I ended up at the Boston Yacht Club, a magnificent old New England club located on the harbor. It was deserted except for a night watchman. By the end of October sailing season is well and truly over and the club was shut down for the winter. The night watchman had never heard of *Xargo* and had no idea who Gerry Downton was. I was starting to get worried. It was getting late. I did not know a single person on the whole North American continent and that \$5 I had started with when I arrived at Logan, was now down to \$3. I sat on a bench outside the club and thought that I might just freeze to death.

Ten minutes later the night watchman came outside. "Hey you," he said. I knew that he had to be talking to me and stood up. I thought he was going to shoo me off the bench. "Come quick," he said. "I think your friends are coming into the harbor. I heard them call on the radio." Sure enough, out near the entrance to the harbor, I could make out the masthead lights of what was clearly a large boat. They had called looking for a mooring to pick up, but when they found the harbor empty they grabbed the closest mooring, shut the radio off and went to bed. I called a few times on the VHF but clearly they were not listening. I could see the boat, I knew there was food and friends and warmth

on board, but there was absolutely no way I could get out to it. The watchman assured me that the launch service had long since hauled their boats for the winter.

Things were not looking good. I was cold to the bone but struck by how beautiful the town was. The narrow street along the harbor was lined with quaint, brightly painted houses and I could hear people laughing and drinking as they enjoyed their Halloween festivities. I longed to be invited in but could only stare through the windows. I walked briskly to keep warm and finally, around midnight, when the parties were over and everyone was in bed, I sat on a bench at the entrance to the harbor. In the distance I could see the loom of Boston. The moon had risen and Marblehead's beautiful harbor was bathed in a soft light. A single boat bobbed out on a mooring. I could see the anchor light of *Xargo* burning brightly and thought of everyone tucked up in their bunks below. I shivered and then decided that I had better start walking again.

I made my way back down Front Street and half way along noticed what looked like a small dinghy propped up against the garage of someone's home. The lights in the house were off, the family probably sound asleep. I crept in the shadows along the fence until I got to the garage. It was indeed a small dinghy and better yet, there were oars alongside. From the garage to the water was about 75 feet. The garden sloped dramatically away from the house allowing me to drag the dinghy with ease. I pushed it into the water and secured it with a tether while I went back for the oars. The house was still dark. Had anyone been awake they would have seen me in the moonlight but all witches, goblins and gremlins had long since turned back into pumpkins. I pushed off, rowed gently, and a few minutes later was safely on board *Xargo*. This was my very first night in America. I had started the day what seemed like a lifetime ago on a boat in southern Spain

and here I was on a different boat in the middle of Marblehead harbor, among friends.

The next night I went to one of the area's most famous bars, Maddies. It's known for its huge mixed drinks and beautiful women and it was there that I met my first wife, Erin. Whoever said the US is the land of opportunity must have heard about my arrival that cold October night.

AS I LOOKED OVER a partially frozen Marblehead harbor I once again marveled at my luck. How could it be that I had just bought an immaculate, beautifully engineered Open 50 sailboat for fifty thousand dollars? Less than two months after I had written my goals on a piece of paper, step one, the hardest part, getting a boat, was almost a reality. I still was not sure where the five grand was going to come from but given the way things happen with my life, I felt that something would come along. I was not wrong. I walked along Front Street, the same quaint, narrow street I had walked years earlier on my first night in America, past the house where I had "borrowed" the dinghy, all the way out to Fort Sewell at the harbor mouth.

Once again the harbor was empty except for a few lobster boats moored at the far end. I watched while one of the lobster boats, a blue one belonging to a friend, Ray Bates, worked the edges of the harbor. Ray was pulling his traps and if I knew him like I did, he was probably grumbling to himself about the high price of gas and the low price of lobster. It was hard work as he went from trap to trap hauling each in turn, checking for any catch and adding bait where necessary. It may have been hard work but it was a sight as familiar as any that was quintessentially New England. I felt blessed to live in America.

By the time I got back to my apartment the landlord had plowed the driveway and my neighbor had swept the steps clean

of snow. I kicked my boots off, chucked my hat and gloves back in the basket and noticed that the light on my answering machine was blinking. I guessed it might be Andy calling me back but instead it was an old mate from Canada. Dave Mathesen is one of Toronto's top lawyers and an all round nice guy. His message said that he had heard about my effort to race in the Around Alone and wondered if he could help. How perfect was that. Ten minutes later, after I hung up the phone, Dave had promised to wire me the \$5000 I needed for the deposit on the boat.

I BELIEVE THAT THERE are certain unseen forces at work in the world, forces that you can tap into at will. I am most definitely not a religious person; on the contrary I despise those groups that take this energy and try and make it their own. Instead I have a much more simplistic view of how things work. I believe in some basic tenets in life. The more positive energy you put out, the more good you do, the more it will come back to you, and in spades. The same applies to negativity. Put out some negative energy and it too will come full circle and bite you on the backside. I do believe that if you want something you need to set your mind to it, either write it down or think it through carefully, and then set it aside. An invisible force starts to work and there is a collective energy that comes into play. Before you know it the world around you starts to change. You are unaware of this change until it starts to affect you and then suddenly the earth tips a little on its axis and your dreams start to come true. That is, of course, if you have set things in motion with a positive push.

I have often wondered if this is the same thing as prayer. There are times I wish I was a religious person because simple things, like prayer, appeal to me. I like the idea of being thankful and saying so on a regular basis. I like the idea of asking for things, for other people. I like the simple routine of being grateful for

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the world around me. As a professional sailor I have seen some of the most amazing sights and I am in constant awe of the beauty that surrounds us. It saddens me to see people settle for a life that is anything less than extraordinary and I wish I could tell each and every one of those people that it's all in their minds. A subtle but deliberate change in the way they think, the way they view themselves, and the way they view the world can make a huge difference in their lives. At least that's the way I think and it has worked for me, time and again.

THE FOLLOWING WEEK I hitched a ride with a friend to Logan airport and presented myself at the American Airlines counter. There was a ticket with my name on it and a flight to Fort Lauderdale due to take off in two hours. I had some time to kill and wandered into a coffee shop where to my surprise an old friend, Larry Rosenfeld, was also killing time waiting for his flight. Larry had been enormously successful and ran a large software development company called Concentra which he had founded a few years earlier. His was one of those only-in-America stories where you can start a business in your basement, or at the kitchen table, and with some determination and hard work grow it into an empire. Larry had recently taken his company public and the IPO had been generous. We talked about business and life in general and then he asked where I was going.

"I just bought a boat," I said. "For the Around Alone." Larry was an enthusiastic sailor and was amazed by the sequence of events that had me hours away from owning my first boat. "Look," he said. "When you get back to Marblehead, let's get together. Now that Concentra is a public company I think that we could use some exposure for the brand. I might be interested in sponsoring you for the race." I was aghast. A few days earlier I was about to give up on my dream. Now I was about to buy a boat and

had found my first sponsor. Larry and I shook on a tentative agreement and I boarded my plane for Florida.

Over the years I have spent much time in Fort Lauderdale and like the laid-back way of the people in America's south. A three hour flight from Boston and you are in a very different part of the world. The taxi dropped me at Bahia Mar and I called the room number of Andy's lawyer. I was nervous, sure that Andy would change his mind, sure that something would come up and the deal would be off. In my briefcase was a check for \$5,000. It seemed absurd that I was buying a boat with so little money. I took the elevator to the fifth floor and knocked on the door.

The lawyer was just as he had sounded on the phone; calm, reassuring and with a kind face. "Andy will be right along," he said. "Meanwhile let's get started." Laid out on his bed were a series of documents. He pointed to each in turn and explained what they were. It was really quite simple. There was a basic Purchase and Sale Agreement, a recent survey of the boat and a note loaning me \$100,000, from Andy. I had signed most of the documents when Andy arrived. He looked happy to see me and flashed his wide grin. "So you're buying a boat," he said. "I am really glad that you agreed to buy my boat. I hope that you have a lot of fun and that your dream of sailing around the world comes true."

He signed the papers and then said he had to go, that he had a flight to catch. The lawyer handed me copies of the documents and as he led me to the door he suddenly remembered something. "Just a moment," he said. He went back to his briefcase while I wondered if something was wrong. It had all been too easy. "Just one moment," the lawyer said. I waited patiently and then heard him say. "Here they are." He held up a set of keys. "You are going to need these," he said tossing me the boat keys. I smiled, shook his hand, and left his room the proud owner of one of the fastest fifty foot sailboats on the planet.

9

where
I fall in love,
again

THE NEXT YEAR WAS one of the best of my short four decades on the planet. I had an amazing boat, a focused goal and I met a stunningly gorgeous woman. I used to watch her walk past my office window pushing a small boy in a stroller. She had no wedding ring and she did not look American. High cheekbones and piercing eyes gave her a European look and it turned out that I was right. Sigrun is Icelandic and a few days later I met her in person the first time. I was running a road race put on by the local gym and we were introduced by a mutual friend. I had no idea after that chance meeting that she would be the mother of my two sons, but that's how life goes sometimes. You just never know what's around the corner.

My strategy was to use the boat as hook to get Sigrun interested. I was sure that she, like many others, would be intrigued by my desire to race solo around the world. It turned out that she did not like sailing and furthermore, viewed the whole idea of sailing around the world with a jaundiced eye. In short, she was not impressed. She was, however, interested in the idea of joining me in Jamaica where I had the boat moored. It had been a long, cold winter and the thought of some sunshine and rum was appealing, even if she did have to spend time with a rag tag South African. She and another friend flew to Montego Bay and joined me on board for the sail from Jamaica back to the US.

We left Port Antonio, a tiny city on the western end of the island, and headed for the Windward Passage, that narrow gap between Haiti and Cuba. Sigrun had been expecting a lovely sail with cold drinks and hot sunshine. I was hoping for at least some good weather but the dark clouds hanging low over the high peaks of Jamaica were not a good sign. A few hours into the trip we were slamming into a short, steep seaway and my crew were not feeling well. Neither was I and the next morning, after a jerry can of diesel split open and filled the aft section of the boat with an unctuous, slippery mess, I turned the boat around and we surfed back to Jamaica. My first big attempt at impressing the aloof lady from Iceland had been less than successful. But I was not about to give up. Dale Carnegie once said, "*Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.*" There seemed to be no hope of a relationship with Sigrun but I was not about to give up.

I managed to round up two Jamaican crew members and the three of us sailed the boat to Florida. Sigrun and her friend joined us in Fort Lauderdale and we spent a quiet couple of days before I took off on my first long singlehanded trip from Florida to

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Marblehead. The week it took was superb. Warm winds from behind, a steady Gulf Stream and the thrill of being all alone out on the open sea. A close call with a ship did not take away from the voyage and I sailed into Marblehead harbor before dawn on a Sunday morning and took a mooring close to Fort Sewall. I was anxious to get home and rather than wait for the launch service, I decided to swim ashore. I wrapped a pair of shorts and shirt in a bag, taped it to my head and stripped to my underwear. It was just getting light when I lowered myself into the cold water and started swimming.

Every summer in Marblehead there is a reenactment of Glover's Regiment. They take it all pretty seriously and a large group of men and women dress in traditional garb and camp in period tents at Fort Sewell. Unbeknownst to me this was their weekend for reenactment. I swam slowly to shore making certain that the bag strapped to my head did not get wet and a few minutes later scrambled through thick seaweed onto the rocks surrounding the fort. I clambered up the steep grassy sides and was met by an amazing sight as I crested the hill. Below me was a scene right out of the sixteenth century. About a hundred men, women and children were camped out. Some were cleaning their muskets, others had open fires going and looked to be cooking breakfast. They turned to look at me and I must have looked a sight, wet and bedraggled in the briefest of briefs with a package strapped to my head. It was as if I had simply appeared out of nowhere. They stared at me as if I was nuts. Then I looked closer at them. There they were, all dressed up to look as if we were living in a time warp. Sure they had fires going but looking closer I noticed that they were all munching down on delicacies from Starbucks.

Sigrun may have been a hard sell but she has a sense of humor and can appreciate a joke, especially if it's at my expense. I am not sure if it was the Glovers Regiment incident or simply

my persistence but later that summer she and her son Brendon moved in with me.

Marblehead really is a wonderful place to live and for Independence Day the town is decked out in red, white and blue. There is a flower box competition and fireworks. Everything is scrubbed and clean with manicured lawns and yachts in full regatta dress. A year after Sigrun moved in with me I said to her, "You know, this is going to be a beautiful week. The town is ready for the 4th of July, everything is just right. Why don't we get married? Think how much we will save on fireworks." She shot me a piercing look and then smiled. "Sure, why not," she said and two days later we were married in a simple ceremony on a dock on Marblehead harbor. We had only told the Town Clerk but a few friends got wind of things and gate-crashed the ceremony. We pretended that the fireworks and parties the following day were all for us and life could not have been better.

10

where I cross the Atlantic and crash the boat

I JOKED THAT I SPENT our honeymoon alone at sea, and in a way I did. A few days after we got married I flew to the Azores where my boat was moored. I had sailed it over earlier in the year with the plan to sail it back, alone. In order to participate in the Around Alone you need to do an ocean crossing of no less than 2,000 miles. I was going to sail from the Azores to Bermuda and then on to Marblehead, and after a couple of days of preparation I pushed off from Horta and set a course south. I watched the tall peak of the island of Pico drop slowly into the ocean behind me and sat on the side of the deck dangling my hand in the warm water as it trickled down the hull. I felt at home on the boat and was looking forward to the challenge of crossing the ocean.

There is something spiritual about being all alone on a small boat far out in the middle of a big ocean. There is a freedom you can't experience anywhere else. It's the routine, and focus. Having focus, having a goal in life and living with purpose sets your mind free. I have seen it happen many times and felt the same exhilaration when I was racing around the world in the Whitbread Race. The big picture objective of the Whitbread is to circumnavigate the world. For over a year of your life nothing else matters. Each day you eat, sleep and breath the race. At sea it's even better. Your days are reduced to a bare minimum. You stand watch, you eat your meals and you try and get as much rest as you can. It's a primitive existence without the distraction of the traffic and jams of daily life. There is no television, no Internet, no kids and no nagging bankers or pesky bill collectors.

I have seen relationships flourish during a Whitbread and it's not because absence makes the heart grow fonder. It's the focus, the everyday reason for getting up and getting on with life. I have seen the same relationships fall apart when the race is over. Unless you can parlay that goal-oriented existence into something else, we all get bogged down in the grind of daily life. It's just too easy to get sucked into the hum and drum of making a living. So to be back at sea, alone with my thoughts, on a boat of my own, was an absolute pleasure and as the days melted into each other I lost track of time. Around me the undulating ocean looked timeless, the same blue water that earlier explorers had seen with the same horizon ahead looking like outstretched arms just waiting for them.

I had been in the habit of sending Sigrun a brief email each morning. Satellite email was in its infancy and I used a primitive box that allowed me to transmit short text messages. It was reassuring for her to know that all was good on board and fun for me to get a bit of news from home. But Sunday dawned bright

and clear and for the first time on the trip I was able to turn to the west and set a spinnaker. After a few minutes of preparation I hoisted the large white billowing sail leaving my autopilot to do the hard work of helming. The boat responded immediately and surged ahead surfing the short steep seas. It was a glorious day and being Sunday I decided to shut off from the world, to enjoy my own little space and time. I cracked open one of my precious supplies of beer, grabbed a jar of Portuguese olives and my book, and for the rest of the day sat comfortably on the aft deck reading and watching the world go by.

Monday morning it was back to business. I flipped open my computer and there was the regular email from Sigrun with a bit of news from home. Below it was another, this time with the subject heading, are you OK? Below that was another email from her with the subject reading, please email me back if you are OK! "Crap," I said out loud. I had forgotten to send her an email. As the rest of my emails slowly downloaded I saw that they were all from Sigrun, a dozen in all, each getting more and more frantic until the last one read in capital letters, 'IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF A JOKE IT'S NOT FUNNY YOU BASTARD!!' I felt terrible. She had come to expect an email from me and no email could only mean one thing; bad news. I replied, and apologized, but I don't think that she ever forgave me.

Each day the line of my chart that stretched out from Horta toward Bermuda got longer and the distance between Bermuda and my boat got shorter until I could finally see the faint outline of the island on the horizon ahead of me. The outline slowly turned into tropical lushness with amazing turquoise water and pink sandy beaches. I had arrived in paradise and completed my qualifying sail for the Around Alone. As I tied up in St. George harbor I felt an immense sense of accomplishment; it was a feeling that would be replaced by despair just a few days later.

Only those people who have sailed alone for long periods know the pull. It's hard to articulate. Josh and I had many discussions about solo sailing and the intensity of the experience. We were on the same plane, so to speak. At the time both of us were focused on our own paths. I had never met him but had read his exploits in the press and as with many sailors, I connected to him in a visceral way. I knew on some level that we were brothers. Born in a different time and place but very much connected by a love for the sea and a love for new challenges.

While I was bobbing my way across the Atlantic, Josh was putting his new Open 60 through its paces. The boat was an amazing piece of machinery. Massively powerful carrying a huge amount of high tech sail area with no comforts of home below. It was a purpose-built yacht with a single-minded skipper. The sinking four years earlier had faded into a distant memory and Josh was fully determined to not only make it around the world for a second time, he was sure that he could win the race. With an eye for graphics he took boat branding to a new level; he had a French artist paint vivid graphics on his sails. The graphics depicted flying fish and dolphins in bright turquoise and blue. His sails were a stunning work of art. His "tropical" sails, those for the up and down legs of the race, were bright and gay. The sails for the Southern Ocean were the same graphical theme, but in dark shades. It was a clever move that got *Gartmore* on the cover of most sailing magazines.

It had not all been smooth sailing for Josh, it never is in these kinds of endeavors. While his sponsor, Gartmore, had been very generous with their sponsorship they had not quite committed to the whole budget leaving Josh to be creative in many areas. It can be said that his creativity for raising money is only surpassed by his propensity to spend it. His accounting system seemed to be his back pockets. Cash came in one pocket and left via the

other. Those that worked for him remember lavish dinners with expensive bottles of wine flowing until the early hours. The same people also knew that he was skating on very thin ice financially. But what is an adventure if it's not built on an insecure financial footing? Ask those explorers of old who set off for remote parts of the planet on a less-than-adequate budget. Sometimes you just have to go for it.

MY OWN INCLINATION toward money tends more to the frugal. I don't mind spending it if it's coming in, but if it's not coming in then it's time to reign things in. As I sat in the paradise that is Bermuda I longed to rent a moped and tour the island. I longed to get a hotel room for the night and wash off the salt and slime from two weeks without a shower, but there was no budget. Concentra's sponsorship had dried up when the company's stock price plummeted and no one else had jumped into the fray. I hoped that by finishing my qualifying sail, corporations would start to take me seriously. Perhaps, more than anything, I hoped that Sigrun would start to take me seriously. Buying the boat had been great but I very quickly learned the lesson many sailors learn. The purchase price is only the beginning. Boats are expensive and they can eat a person alive. I was able to keep my home intact on small sponsorships and the odd honorarium from a speaking engagement, but it was barely enough to support a family, let alone a family with a yacht. Unless a sponsor could be found it would be hard to make the start of the Around Alone only four months hence.

I left Bermuda to sail back to Marblehead, a trip of around 700 miles. The forecast was good for the passage except for one variable; a hurricane located a thousand miles to the south. The National Hurricane Center in Florida was uncertain about its track. Some computer models had it tracking to the west to make

landfall in the Carolinas. Other models showed it veering to the north before, as the weather prognosticators liked to say, heading safely out to sea. Safely out to sea was fine if you were on land but not so great if you were one of those out to sea. I kept a beady eye on the weather and set a course for Cape Cod.

The following morning I was well on my way when the forecasted track for the hurricane became more certain. The hurricane would track to the north and pass between Bermuda and the US mainland. It was time to abort the trip. I took my spinnaker down and turned the boat around. The hurricane was still days away so there was no huge rush to get to land, but equally there was no point in hanging around. I had only one small problem. I had given away all my Bermudian charts to a cruising sailor and had nothing on board for the approach to the island. It was not complicated. The north side of the island, where I would make landfall, is ringed by a reef, but the reef is well lit. All I needed was the positions of the lights and I could find my way in.

I called Bermuda Harbor Radio and asked them for the coordinates of the lights. I should have admitted to them that I did not have a chart and asked them to guide me in, but I was embarrassed by my lack of charts. "What competent seaman goes offshore without charts?" I mused to myself. Instead I used the coordinates to make my own chart and made landfall on the first light around midnight.

As soon as I had it identified I turned to head toward the next light but what I did not know was that you can't go from light to light. The reef juts out a little and it was that part of the reef that I hit. The sound of carbon being wrenched apart still haunts me today. I had added a fin forward of the keel to help give the boat some directional stability and to take some of the load off the autopilots. It was this fin that was first to connect with the

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reef. As the fin hit, it ripped a hole in the bottom of the boat and water started to flood in. We were sinking and sinking quickly. Fortunately one of the safety features of an Open 50 is that it has watertight compartments. I slammed the door to the forepeak closed and the flooding was contained forward of the mast. The water level rose until it was the same level as the water outside the boat, and then it stopped.

Meanwhile I had gybed the boat out away from the reef and in doing so I felt a sudden jolt as the rudder hit. I found out later just how lucky I had been. The carbon rudder stock was snapped inside the blade but there were still enough threads of carbon to keep it attached. I needed the blade to steer the boat. Had the rudder broken off completely there would have been no way to maneuver and I would likely have washed up on the reef. Instead I was able to fire up my small outboard engine, the only means of propulsion, and limp slowly into St. George harbor. My dream of a solo circumnavigation had come to an abrupt halt and my spirit was crushed.



11

where
Ellen
gets a ride

AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, I believe I was born under a lucky star. I have had a charmed run of it and it was constantly amazing me that every year life just seemed to be getting better. It was uncanny. My Around Alone effort, whilst unsuccessful, had been filled with thrills and adventure say nothing of a gorgeous woman who had let me know, via email since I was at sea at the time, that we were expecting a baby. I had come to take it for granted that things would work out just fine and mostly they did. That was until my carbon boat collided with a coral reef. For months I could not get the sound of it out of my head. I had been below at the time checking the GPS and the bang resonated in the empty hull so loud that it shook me to the core. Some nights

I would wake suddenly sure that it had just been a bad dream, only to find myself in a pool of sweat and the knowledge that it had really happened.

For the first time in my life I lost my confidence and it was not a good feeling. I have always been able to waltz through life like a life-size Peter Pan, but suddenly that air of invincibility was gone, crushed like the splintered rudder post on my ill fated yacht. Along with the grounding came the sudden and stark realization that I had built my campaign on a pile of promises and a great deal of optimism, neither of which were good for paying the mortgage. I had racked up more bills than I cared to admit and they were all about to come due. Sigrun was pregnant and nesting and needing more than just some vague notion of how we were going to extricate ourselves from the mess I had so blithely placed ourselves in. I didn't have any good ideas. That heady feeling of having a plan and purpose in life was gone, replaced by a sense of regret and anxiety. Then the phone rang.

It was an old friend, Merfyn Owen, one of the great yacht designers that roamed the world in search of millionaires in need of a fast boat. His girlfriend needed a boat for the Route du Rhum, another of France's historic solo races. Merf had heard about the grounding and thought that I might be interested in chartering the boat. I was. "Who is your girlfriend?" I asked.

"You probably haven't heard of her," Merf replied. "She just finished sailing the mini-transat. Her name is Ellen MacArthur." I had in fact heard of her as I had followed the mini-transat with great interest and enjoyed Ellen's updates from onboard during her arduous crossing. I had heard of her, but most people had not. That would all change over the next few years when Ellen went from relative unknown to the world's most celebrated sailor. She leveraged the charter of my boat into a victory in the Route du Rhum and sponsorship for a full-on campaign for the Vendée

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Globe, the solo non-stop race around the world. Her Kingfisher Campaign kicked into high gear when Ellen went on to win the Transat, a brutal upwind slog across the Atlantic from Plymouth, England to Newport, Rhode Island. She then silenced the critics, who regarded her victory as some kind of fluke, by coming second in the Vendee Globe beating many of the world's top solo sailors, Josh Hall among them.

I was just happy to have the stress of the boat off my hands and grateful to Ellen when she picked up the boat in Bermuda, rebuilt the rudder, and sailed it off across the Atlantic. I had one less financial drain to deal with and one less thing to think about.



12

*where
I discover that sex
leads to children*

THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED the grounding were filled with days so amazing that I had to pinch myself, and days filled with such deep despair that it seemed as if the darkness would never go away. I simply could not shake the sense of failure I felt at having screwed up so badly.

To be honest I was quite enjoying wallowing in misery; it was a luxury that I had avoided until then as the negative energy that it imparts was not part of my life plan. But it felt good and I could almost understand how some people simply choose to be miserable. Both happiness and sadness are choices and until that point I had chosen to be happy. The problem, however, was that no one else was enjoying my misery. Sigrun was sick of the financial stress and rapidly getting sick of me. It was only when

an old friend called and asked me to join him on his Swan yacht for a circumnavigation of Newfoundland that I was able to shake the sadness. I wrote my first book, *Spindrift*, during the voyage and it was a cathartic experience. The words poured onto paper and the grounding was put in perspective against all the other incidents and accidents in my life. I returned to Marblehead just as Sigrun was in full bloom about to pop out our first child. She looked radiant.

Tomas was born right on schedule.

Labor started during the night and the following morning we stopped by our favorite bagel shop to pick up breakfast on the way to the hospital. Sigrun was taking it all in stride but nothing was happening despite the contractions coming more and more frequently. Shortly after lunch the doctor stepped in to see what was going on and found that the baby had done a flip and was breached. He ordered a cesarean section and told me to get scrubbed up. "Just one thing," he said. "If you feel queasy, stick your head between your legs or leave the operating theater. Whatever you do, don't be sick in the room." His advice was not reassuring but a half hour later I watched a man I had met only moments earlier take a sharp scalpel and slice my wife's belly open. After a few minutes of digging he produced two tiny feet. "Dad," he said looking at me. "Grab these feet and pull." I reached over and took Tomas's feet, sticky with blood and vernix, and with the help of the doctor and nurse pulled my son into the world. It was a moment that puts all of life into perspective. Nothing is more pure than the birth of a baby and I was thrilled to be so fully involved.

Three years later Eli Hancock arrived. His mother and I did the hundred or so laps of the maternity ward trying to help dilation while Eli kicked and squirmed in the warm belly. He was not quite ready to face the world but nature has its own plan and despite

his protestation he was born just after dawn on a cold February morning. This time I helped with the head and shoulders as he came out the right way and as I placed his wet, wriggling body on his mom's chest, I felt as all parents do at that life-changing moment, an absolute and indescribable joy.

With two small children, a teenage daughter and a stepson, it was clear that my carefree days were over. There were mouths to feed and the mouths demanded food each and every day. There is nothing like a bit of parental stress and worry to focus your mind and I was still trying to focus mine. I was booking more and more speaking engagements and promoting *Spindrift* as well as a thick book on sails and sailing named *Maximum Sail Power* that had been commissioned by a publisher in Vermont. The same publisher had bought the rights to *Spindrift* (I had originally self published) and released the book under a new, and distinctly more pretentious title, *The Risk in Being Alive*.

The speaking was fun and I was connecting with audiences across the US and Canada. Generous audiences who enthusiastically embraced my stories and bought my books. But try as I might, the bills coming in outnumbered the dollars coming in and Sigrun and I were battling to keep a roof over our heads and good food on the table. It seemed like it was either feast or famine; some days I would land a good speaking engagement and bring home a pile of cash. Other days it was much harder to make a decent living but I was determined to march to my own drum. Who was going to hire me for a real job anyway, I reasoned to myself. I was in my late 40s without any formal education. Besides I could hardly imagine being tied to any kind of formality, much less a desk.

So it was against this backdrop that Josh entered the picture and the moment he and Joe Harris suggested starting a new event there was simply nothing to do but grab the idea with both hands

and run with it. We spent that New Years eve with Josh at the home of Brian Harris and his lovely wife Alison and son Jackson, and slightly hungover faced the start of 2007 full of optimism. I was happy to have a focus and another season beating the bushes, speaking at small yacht clubs across a cold and windswept Canada, was taken in stride. I had a focus and with it came that liberating feeling. Each morning I woke early, anxious to check my emails and sure enough there was plenty of positive news. It seemed like the sailing world liked the idea and were heaping praise on us for thinking of it and having the courage to start a new global race. We were building momentum, and with some carefully timed press releases, we were creating the illusion that we were further ahead than we actually were.

MY ROUTINE FOR YEARS has been to rise early, long before the sun, and after a coffee in bed with Sigrun, don my running shoes and hit the road. On the eastern side of Marblehead harbor is Marblehead Neck, a peninsular that houses some of the most spectacular homes in New England. It is some of the priciest real estate in the US, but also some of the nicest. I would arrive at the start of the causeway that joins mainland Marblehead with the "Neck" and park my car at Deveraux Beach. In the winter it would still be dark and I warmed up my gloves and hat on the car heater before quickly pulling them on and jumping out of the car. The cold always took my breath away. As a South African I could never imagine running in long-johns, layers of clothing, and hats and gloves, but one can get used to just about anything.

A couple of minutes of hard running and the cold melted away, replaced by those addictive endorphins that keep runners coming back for more. I like to run. There is something comforting about the slap, slap of my feet on the pavement. It reminds me of the slap, slap of waves on the hull as we sail across an ocean, an

endless rhythm that resonates somewhere deep within me. At the end of the causeway I turn right and run along the beach road. In the distance, to the south, I can see the lights and buildings of Boston clearly silhouetted against the early dawn sky. The road winds to the left then goes up a steep hill. By this time I am puffing and sweating and coming up with every excuse in the book for slowing down but moments later I get a clear view of the open ocean. If my timing is right I get there just as the sun crests the horizon and there have been many times when the sight is just so breathtaking that I stop dead to take it all in. I know that many of the people who live in those huge houses along the ocean have long since left for their offices in Boston. They are the Captains of Industry, lawyers, bankers and businessmen and women that bring home plenty of bacon but never get to enjoy the view. I enjoy it for them and a mile and a half later the road takes a slow curve to the left until it starts to double back on itself. I run down a steep hill and up the other side and as I turn the corner toward the west I get to take in Marblehead Harbor in all its beauty.

If it's summer when I am running, the sun is well up and the birds and flags and clatter of the wind in the rigging rings out across the harbor and I love the melody. They are sounds as old as time and it always quickens my pace. Always, that is, unless some new boat in the harbor catches my eye and I stop and wander down the dock of the Eastern Yacht Club for a closer look. It's not a long run, just a few miles, but it's my sanity, my anti-depressant and my healthcare plan rolled into one.

When I arrive back at my car huffing and puffing I am ready to take on whatever the world throws at me. Usually it's the kids fighting over who gets what for breakfast. I doubt that I would have made it through the long, hard, discouraging days of trying to drag a new business up a steep hill with no money in the

account and not much support on the home front without my daily running routine. Sure the sailing press and friends in the field were encouraging and it was thrilling to be starting something new, but it's equally hard to be doing it all on a tenuous financial footing. There were many times that first year when I thought that we must be mad for taking on something so big knowing full well that neither Josh nor myself would quit. We had staked our future on the event and quitting was simply not an option.

13

where
Ricardo
calls

A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE Global Ocean Challenge was formally launched I got a call from an old sailing acquaintance. Yes it's true, the phone does seem to ring at the most opportune times. This time it was Ricardo Diniz, a Portuguese sailor whom I had met only once before. We had exchanged emails for years and I liked his sincere manner. Ric is a guy that's hard not to like. He is, as Sigrun said numerous times, almost Godly handsome. It's true, he is good looking and has everything that I don't; height, he's well over 6-foot, good hair, he has plenty and not one grey while mine that is not falling out is turning a rusty white. And he has a calm and comforting demeanor.

"Hi Brian," the soft voice on the other end of the phone said.

“This is Ricardo Diniz. I have heard about the race you and Josh are planning and I think I may be able to find you a sponsor here in Portugal.” The way Ric is able to convey a message left me feeling absolutely certain that he had something tangible. We talked for a while and I hung up the phone almost in disbelief. Could it be true that Ricardo could get the City of Lisbon to sponsor the race? I love Lisbon, in fact I love Portugal and the Portuguese people and Josh and I had been talking about finding a start/finish port somewhere in Europe south of the Bay of Biscay. It seemed almost too good to be true, but Ricardo was adamant. “I know the mayor personally,” Ric had said. “Portugal is looking for marine events to showcase our long history of sailing and exploration. The Global Ocean Challenge is precisely the kind of event that Lisbon is looking for. In fact I am sure that I could get the mayor to sponsor the first two races.”

I called Josh. We had been running the business using the latest online conveniences and Skype was our lifeline. Free phone calls were right in our budget. We had also used Google Earth to view potential marinas in Europe and along our proposed course. At times we were surfing sailing sites, talking for free while he sat in his house in France and I sat at my desk in Marblehead. Josh was very interested to hear what Ricardo had said, but skeptical.

“I know Ricardo,” he said. “This is not the first time I have heard that he has a big sponsor on the hook for a few million dollars. Ric always has a few sponsors on the hook. But who knows? This one may be for real.” I knew that Josh was being realistic but it somewhat deflated things. In the end Josh offered to call Ric direct to get the scoop.

The hardest part about any new idea is finding the money. Let me take that back. The hardest part about any new idea is having the courage to go for it. Over my many years of speaking to sailing audiences around the world, one of the most common questions

asked is the obvious one. “What’s the hardest part about sailing around the world?” Without being flip I have to answer that the hardest part is leaving the dock. Many, many people dream of one day setting off on a trip around the world on board their yacht. They plan, prepare and dream, but they never get around to leaving. There is always some reason why next spring will be better than this fall, or perhaps waiting for some new safety equipment is a smart move. The hardest part is coming up with a date for departure and sticking to it no matter what comes up. On that day you have to get on your boat and throw the lines ashore. Mark Twain said it best. *‘Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.’*

So just as with leaving the dock and heading for a blue horizon, starting a new venture requires courage and a strong conviction that all will end up well. It also takes money, and plenty of it. The budget we had for the race was around a million US dollars. The money to keep house and home together until we found a sponsor would have to come from other sources and both Josh and I kept working at other projects to bring in some income. Josh was hired as the project manager for a mutual friend, Kojiro Shiraishi, who was participating in the Velux 5-Oceans solo around-the-world race. I kept on selling books, giving talks and selling the odd sail. For almost two decades I have sold sails built by my good friends who own the Quantum sail loft in South Africa.

Josh called back an hour later. “It seems as if Ric may well be onto something,” he said. “In any event we will need to pursue every lead that comes our way. If Lisbon does not work out as a sponsor, they might be interested in hosting the start and finish.” I agreed and Josh and I took a tour of the waterfront compliments of Google Earth. There were numerous marinas where a fleet

could be kept and the Tagus River was certainly a perfect place to start an around-the-world race. Josh hung up and I was left daydreaming. I have fond memories of Portugal, the Azores Islands being my favorite place on the planet. I first visited there in 1979 en route from Antigua to England and fell in love with the simple beauty of the islands and charm of the locals. I have been back many times and the place remains unchanged.

Ricardo owned a marketing and PR company and he offered us a state-of-the-art website. "You have to look good," he said. And he was right. First impressions are everything. It was a generous offer and he set his team on it. They first came up with a very distinctive logo followed by a superb website with all the bells and whistles. We were looking good and the feedback from officials in Lisbon to the idea of the race was positive.

Things at home were not that great, however, as Sigrun was skeptical about the whole affair. She had never fallen in love with the idea of sailing around the world, was never impressed with the irresponsibility shown by those that left families and children at home while they took off on a self-centered adventure. She was right, of course. There is something completely selfish about a solo circumnavigation. It usually places families on the verge of bankruptcy, it's dangerous by any measure, and it's completely self-indulgent. The problem is that if you have been bitten by the bug there is very little you can do about it.

The same was true of the race. Josh and I were bitten and bitten hard but we also knew that we had a good idea. It was not only the positive feedback from the sailing community, but both having been in the industry for a good many years, we knew deep down that we were really onto something. The new best thing in sailing. I can honestly say that I could feel it deep in my bones and it was this conviction that kept me focused. That's not to say that the focus was at the expense of everything else. Sigrun had

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gone back to school to become a nurse leaving me the sole bread winner and I was keeping the bills paid and the wolves at bay. It was not easy, but I kept telling myself that nothing worth doing is ever easy.



14

where
Lisbon Tourism makes us
an offer we can't refuse

RICARDO WAS GOOD to his word and shortly after our stunning new website was launched he called with some good news. “I have an invitation from Lisbon Tourism for you and Josh to come to Portugal,” he said. “They are very excited about the event and really want it to happen in Lisbon. They want to impress you, show you around the city and show you how good it could all be. When can you come over? They are paying for everything.”

The news was like honey to my ears. Was this in fact the break that we had been waiting for? Could it be too good to be true? Josh and I talked things over and figured that they would not be

going to the effort and expense of getting us over there if it was all a charade. Besides we had not been in the same room since New Year's day and it would be good to meet up in person, better yet if Lisbon Tourism was picking up the tab. After some back and forth we fixed a date with Ricardo and started planning our visit to Portugal.

I started by Googling the hotel they had chosen and 'from the air' it looked very nice. I could tell that it was in a nice part of town, the old, historic section not too far from the waterfront. I walked virtually along some of Lisbon's quaint, narrow streets and familiarized myself with the marinas and bridges. I wanted to be fully prepared for the meeting. I even managed to scrape some money together to buy a decent blazer and with a new haircut, my shoes shined and new jacket donned, I set off for the airport. Sigrun wished me luck and I knew she was sincere. Landing a deal with the city officials would certainly make my dream come true but Sigrun was thinking more practically. She knew that a deal with Lisbon would give us some much needed financial stability. I waved to her as my ride sped off and silently crossed my fingers hoping for more than just a bit of good luck in the days ahead.

I arrived in Portugal feeling as one does after a long transatlantic flight. My body clock was screwed up and I needed a shave but I was floating six inches off the ground. We were in Lisbon to talk business and that business was the next great around-the-world race. Sleep be damned, there was talking to do. Lisbon Tourism had sent a car for me and my driver whisked me into a shiny new Mercedes and we sped out into Lisbon morning traffic. I gazed out the window and watched the people all heading to work. How different it was from America. No one was eating in their cars, instead they were smoking frantically. I sat back and closed my eyes. I was in Portugal, the place where "my" race was going to take place.

LAPPING THE PLANET

The hotel was just as it looked on Google Earth. It was a small “boutique” hotel, tastefully renovated and in one of the best areas of Lisbon. Josh would be arriving later and Ricardo would join us for lunch. I stretched out on the bed and caught 10 minutes of sleep before grabbing a quick shower. Moments later the phone rang. Ric was at reception. I took the miniscule elevator down to the first floor and embraced Ricardo. He was as excited about the whole thing as I was. Ric is passionate about Portugal and being one who has traveled a lot he understands some of his country’s quirks and oddities and is able to put it all into perspective. His enthusiasm for Portugal was infectious and I knew that there was no better place on earth to start and finish our race.

Josh joined us and over lunch Ric outlined the plan for the next few days. Lisbon Tourism had designated a driver and a car for us and he was charged with taking us around to all the historical and interesting parts of the city. We would spend two days sightseeing, getting a feel for the city and how the race would fit in. On the third day we would meet with city officials and discuss the event and a future partnership. To be honest we still had no idea what to expect. Surely it wasn’t as was easy as them simply agreeing to a two race deal. We had already sent them an outline of our event and the proposed sponsorship package but had not received any feedback.

We talked through every angle and even Ricardo admitted he had no idea how things would play out over the upcoming few days. We finished lunch and agreed that at the very least we would make the most of our time in Portugal and enjoy the city and the great hospitality we were being offered. I went to bed that night with a feeling we were on the verge of something big.

There were a number of reasons why we wanted to start the race in Europe, especially Southern Europe. Historically the solo

around-the-world races had started from Newport, Rhode Island on the US east coast. Newport is a lovely venue, perfect for a race start/finish port except for one small detail. Because you want the fleet in the Southern Hemisphere during the summer months, you need to start the race in early fall in the Northern Hemisphere and early fall is still hurricane season. Granted the most active part of hurricane season is over but there is still a chance of one and the last thing you need is a fleet of vulnerable solo sailors on a collision course with a meandering hurricane.

There is also a lot more interest in offshore racing in Europe and while it would probably be ideal to start the race in France where the bulk of our potential competitors lived, France also had some drawbacks, the biggest of which is the notorious Bay of Biscay. Many say that the Bay of Biscay is among the roughest waters on the planet and they are probably right. During my first circumnavigation, the only time we ever had to set a storm trysail was a 1,000 miles from the finish in a full-on gale in the Bay of Biscay. Bordered to its south by Spain and east and north by France, the Biscay, at it's more commonly known, is on a lee shore for the frontal systems that sweep across the North Atlantic. These late summer storms can pack a punch, especially if they start out as remnants of a hurricane and gather strength over the open ocean. As they approach the French coast the continental shelf abruptly rises and the water in the Biscay is shallower than the water to the west. It's the shallow water and severe storms that combine to make the Bay of Biscay an unpredictable and often dangerous body of water. Many of the top French events start in the Biscay and often the fleet is decimated on their first night at sea.

We were looking for a start/finish port south of the Bay of Biscay and that left Spain and Portugal. As Ric, Josh and I sat at an oceanside caf  looking out to sea I could see the trade winds

blowing and imagine the first night at sea for our competitors. Hours into the race they would have a spinnaker set and a warm trade wind at their backs. What could be better?

PATRICK, OUR DRIVER, was an affable man clearly used to showing his city to journalists and visiting dignitaries. I was not sure where we fit in but Lisbon Tourism were definitely laying it on for us. There was no expense spared and Patrick took us from tiny caf es that served espresso and *Pasteis de Nata*, delicious custard tarts, a local delicacy, to fancy waterfront restaurants where we drank fine wine and sampled some of the port that Portugal is famous for. All the while Josh, Ric and I talked about the race, potential sponsors and our hopes and dreams for the future.

After our first day of touring the city Josh and I sat at the rooftop bar of our hotel overlooking Lisbon. "You know," Josh said. "I think we should invite Ric to join us in the business." Josh was not only being practical; we were going to have to pay Ricardo a pile of commission should we in fact get a deal with the City and Josh reasoned that he might be interested in putting most, if not all of his commission, into the business as his part ownership. In principal I agreed with Josh. It would be good to not have to pay out a chunk of money in commission and a third person in the business would balance things a little. It would be more democratic with three people. Let's just see how it goes," I said. "I agree Ric is a great guy but there is no need to dilute our portion of the business, just yet."

The following day we toured Lisbon's new aquarium and took a cable car ride along a new section of the city recently developed to host the World's Fair. We ate sardines and drank more wine and I fell in love with the place. The weather was perfect and I felt a real connection with the people. There are many Portuguese people in South Africa and I grew up listening

to the shopkeepers speak Portuguese. Our neighbor on our northern border, Mozambique, had been colonized by Portugal and my childhood was filled with stories of legendary Portuguese meals enjoyed by my Mom and Dad when they took vacations to Lourenço Marques. The prawns and port was all they could talk about and now I knew why.

That night we returned late to the hotel and the rooftop bar was closed. We stopped by reception and asked if we could buy a bottle of cognac and the man behind the counter smiled and produced a full bottle. "Charge it to my room," I said magnanimously feeling the glow of a good day on the town. I later regretted my utterance when the cognac showed up on my room tab costing over \$300. I hoped that Sigrun would not see the bill and feel secure that until she reads this, she remains oblivious to the fact that I had blown the weekly food budget, the one that had become increasingly hard to come by, on a bottle of Portuguese brandy.

15

where
the big meeting
happens

DAY THREE DAWNED BRIGHT. I got up early and pulled on some running shorts and my well-worn running shoes. My head hurt from the brandy and late night but I was determined to get a few miles in before our big meeting with the city. I took the tiny elevator to the ground floor and stepped out into a quiet Lisbon dawn. The sun was just breaking the horizon and a cool light cast low shadows on the cobblestone streets. There was only two ways to go; up or down. I chose to go up and started off up an impossibly narrow street lined with shuttered restaurants.

Within a few minutes I was puffing heavily, the cognac having a decidedly adverse effect on my breathing. I pushed on through

the worst of it and soon fell into a rhythm, the sound of my shoes slap, slapping against ancient cobblestone. Twenty minutes later I made it to the top of the rise and stopped to admire the view. I was looking down over the red rooftops of Portugal. The sun had turned the eastern horizon into burnt ochre and the color spilled over the terracotta roofs and seeped down onto the narrow streets. In the distance the Tagus River sparkled in the clean morning air. "Damn," I said to myself, "how perfect. How absolutely perfect." I could just see a fleet of high tech yachts setting sail on a modern day voyage of discovery just as Portuguese explorers had done centuries before. I could see my fleet, my boats, my friends, sailing out the river on their own voyage of discovery. "*Lisbon*," I begged, "*please make my dream come true.*"

I joined Josh for breakfast and after we retired to our rooms to get ready for the meeting. Ricardo would meet us and take us over to City Hall. The meeting was scheduled for two in the afternoon but we were due to meet our man Josh, our principal contact with the city. We were all silent as we drove the few short blocks to City Hall. Ric, as usual, had his phone glued to his ear but he too was keeping calls short and to the point. This was clearly a big meeting, a make or break meeting.

We arrived at City Hall. Ric rattled something in Portuguese and we were led in through security and directed to a restaurant at the far end of the building. We would be meeting Josñ for lunch. I looked around and everyone was dressed impeccably. Black on black seemed to be the colors of the day. Young, smart, and in the case of the women, beautiful people rushed around, cell phones glued to their ears with a sense of urgency in each step. I looked at the khaki jacket I had just bought and the tie I had borrowed from Ricardo and wished I had worn black. It was too late.

Josh appeared, cell phone glued to his ear. He continued the conversation while shaking hands and introducing us to Paula,

his colleague from Lisbon Tourism. Paula's card showed that in fact she was head of Lisbon Tourism and the person responsible for the days we had spent as her guest in a city that she quite clearly loved.

We were shown to a table by the window and set about eating yet another fine meal. Every few minutes a waiter would appear by my side with a bottle of delicious wine and I was desperately trying to pace myself. The wine was so good but I knew that I had to keep my wits about me. Josñ and Paula were slugging back the wine and Josh, Ric and I were trying to keep pace, but their future did not depend on the outcome of the meeting. I knew that how I acted at that lunch would have a big effect on how things would turn out during the meeting. It was a lesson I had learned years earlier, in Uruguay.

AFTER MY DIVORCE from Erin I took a job working for Doyle Sailmakers in Marblehead. Robbie Doyle was an old friend and he kindly gave me a job when things were looking a bit low. One of the first leads was from a Uruguayan team looking to race in the 1994 Whitbread Race. They were a national team with the skipper, Gustavo Vanzini, a navy man. He had put out bids to all the big sailmakers asking them for quotes on a sail inventory that would cost upward of a quarter million dollars. In short it would be a good order and I did my best to be competitive with my quote. I knew that my experience having already done a few Whitbread races would count, but my commission on the order was generous and we desperately wanted the business. In the end I was invited to Uruguay to meet with Gustavo and his team. Doyle was on a short list for consideration.

I flew to Buenos Aries and took a commuter flight to Montevideo. I had been in Uruguay many times and loved Montevideo. It's an old city, rough hewn from cowboys and a bit of tourism. The

Uruguayan people are a proud lot, as we all are, but being from a tiny country they seemed to wear their patriotism on their sleeve. Gustavo met me at the airport. He was tall and direct, a naval officer for sure. We shook hands and jumped into his car. He barked something to his driver and then settled back in his seat. He outlined two scenarios. We could go direct to his office to meet his crew and go over the proposal I had sent him; or we could stop along the way for lunch. He suggested a place called the Mercado del Puerto. As it happens I had been to the Mercado del Puerto many times. It was one of my most favorite place on the planet. It's essentially a market at the port, one that has grown in a haphazard way over the years. Like many European markets there is a mix of farmers, fishermen and locals looking for a good deal. There are no tourists.

Gustavo laid out the options as we bumped our way along a pothole filled street. I could hear Robbie Doyle's words in my ears as we sped toward their campaign office. "*Be professional, bring home the order,*" he had said. He was right, of course, it was a big order and would be good for the company. Gustavo, a tall man with a pencil-thin mustache looked at me quizzically. "What do you think?" he said. I looked out the window feeling jet lagged and tired and said, "let's go have lunch."

A few months later, after the money was in our account and the sails built, I was sitting in England having a glass of beer with Gustavo. We had become friends and I asked him why he had chosen Doyle Sails for his boat. He looked at me and smiled a huge smile. "Those other bastards," he said. "All the other sailmakers. They all wanted to go back to the office and discuss the contract. "You," he continued looking directly at me, "you wanted to go for lunch! I knew in that moment that I could trust you, that you were one of us. In Uruguay food is important. You chose food over business and that was enough for me." He mentioned later

that our prices were the most expensive of all the sailmakers but Gustavo was a man of the people and I learned yet another very valuable lesson.

WE STRODE INTO the massive conference room at Lisbon City Hall. It was ornate with a huge oak table dominating. I looked out the window and it overlooked a small town square. People filtered in, all stopping to introduce themselves. They immediately handed over business cards and I could see that Josñ had assembled a diverse bunch of well connected people from Lisbon Tourism, Portugal Tourism, the Portuguese Sailing Federation, and others. We were seated around the conference table and Jose asked us to explain what the Global Ocean Challenge was all about. I squared my shoulders and started.

“The world of offshore ocean racing is exploding,” I said. “Races like the Volvo Ocean Race and the Vendée Globe are getting record fleets and the sponsors are paying top dollar to be associated with sailing. It’s the original ‘green’ sport and with climate change very much on everyone’s mind, sailing offers some interesting opportunities.” I went on to explain that the Dutch bank ABN AMRO had fronted 50 million euros for a two boat campaign in the Volvo Race. These were big numbers and I could see that it got the attention of all seated at the table. I knew what they were thinking. There was no way a city government could afford close to that kind of money and I quickly reassured them the Global Ocean Challenge would be done for a fraction of that cost, for a similar return on investment. There were nervous chuckles all around. I did my best to convey the excitement and global nature of what we were proposing and after 15 minutes handed things over to Josh.

Josh is a very articulate speaker and he tackled the tougher part of the sell, the money, logistics and return on investment.

Everyone was taking notes and looking interested and if I could gauge the room I knew that we had serious interest among those assembled. Their questions led me to believe that this was all new territory for them. They got the gist of the idea but sailing, global events and two foreign guys who had made a living out of racing sailboats were a bit much to grasp. Then it was Ricardo's turn. He started slowly explaining how he knew Josh and myself and how he had contacted us and suggested we bring the race to Portugal. Then he slowly picked up the pace, his passion for his country and sailing coming clearly through. Suddenly Ric was on a roll and there was no stopping him. He knew that there was a lot riding on the meeting and simply rose to the occasion. By the time he ended with a heartfelt plea to his fellow countrymen to embrace the Global Ocean Challenge I felt sure that we had delivered a one, two, three punch. The assembled group were clearly impressed.

When the meeting was over a few milled about asking more direct questions. The mayor's assistant came up to me. "That was very impressive," he said. "I want you to know that the mayor is very interested in this event and I will convey my thoughts to him later today. This is exactly what Lisbon needs and while I can't speak for the mayor, your budget seems quite reasonable." He gave me a limp handshake and shuffled off to another meeting. Just as we were leaving City Hall the mayor walked in and Ric deftly cornered him. He gave us each a sincere handshake and smile but I could see that he had no clue who we were and why we were there but at least he had our faces when his assistant briefed him later in the day.

Ric, Josh and I left City Hall and convened at a nearby cafe to discuss the meeting. It had gone well, that much we were sure of. I was glad that we had met the mayor and appreciated that while the Global Ocean Challenge was near and dear to my heart,

he was probably more preoccupied with the city sewer system, schools falling apart and his next reelection campaign. We drank a few beers and retired for an early night.

The following day was Saturday and I slept late. I missed my children but at the same time appreciated the fact that they were not there to wake me early as they usually do on weekends. Josh and I had a loose plan to meet for lunch and around 11:30 we left the hotel and wandered down to the waterfront. We found ourselves in a part of town where only locals go and many of the restaurants had set up outside barbecues and were grilling fish over open fires. "Let's grab a beer," Josh suggested and we took seats on plastic chairs outside a fairly seedy looking restaurant. "If this place is not any good we can move along." I looked around. It was not a fancy place by any measure but it was my kind of place. Not pretentious. It was unlikely that anyone from the meeting at City Hall would be stopping by and we ordered a second beer.

I love Portuguese sardines and ordered a plate with a jug of white wine. Josh had something more conventional and ordered a jug of red. Soon we were on a roll. The tension we both felt pre-meeting was gone. Things had gone well and we felt sure that Lisbon was honestly and sincerely interested in the race. We dared not believe that we had found a sponsor and instead ordered more wine. This was to be the first of many long lunches that Josh and I shared. They usually started slow but after a few beers and a bottle of wine each we knew that there was no stopping us. More wine flowed. There was coffee I remember and some after dinner drinks and just when we probably should have left with half our brains intact, we ordered more wine. The smell of cooking over the open fires was permeating my senses and I felt a warm and very content glow settle in. Dusk fell and Josh suggested that we have one last bottle of wine to celebrate

the end of the day. I honestly don't remember much beyond that. I know that Josh settled the bill and I remember him saying that it had not cost that much and I remember taking the tiny elevator up to my room, but that was it.

I woke around 3 with a severe hangover and a parched mouth. I could hear music and laughter wafting from the street through the window in the bathroom and after along swig of water, I pulled on some shoes and headed out.

The town was alive and bustling with activity. Any and all tourists had long since rolled back the sidewalk and gone to bed and the young, hip locals had reclaimed their city. The bars were full and people spilled out onto the streets. I knew that the only way to kill my hangover was to walk it off and I set off on the same route I had run earlier in the week. I breathed in the sights and smells of Portugal and hoped that I would be able to call it my second home. As I gazed over the rooftops I could hear laughter and music and see the lights in the Tagus River and I felt that all was right with the world. I had no idea that a few short weeks later I would find myself handcuffed to a bed in an overcrowded jail cell.

16

where
the men in blue
take me away

SIGRUN WAS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC when I told her about the meeting in Portugal. The idea that someone would actually hand over a few million dollars to fund a sailboat race was a bit alien to her, but she was willing to go along with things so long as I was able to bring in additional money to pay the ever increasing pile of bills. There was her school tuition, books to buy, kids to feed and a mortgage to pay. Tory was in university in Western Massachusetts and there was her tuition to pay and books to buy.

Earlier in the year Erin and I had found ourselves in court in a dispute over the amount of tuition, on top of child support, that

I was required to pay. It was a reasonable request on her part but it could not have come at a worse time. The judge had no interest in the fact that I had other children to take care of and a wife who was in school. "Take out a second mortgage on your house," he said. "Education is important. Find some way to pay for it." He added a one time payment of \$10,000 on top of my weekly child support obligation and gave me three months to pay it. It was fair to say that a lot was riding on the outcome of our meeting in Lisbon.

As usual things did not move as fast as we would have liked. Ricardo was staying on top of matters pushing things along in Portugal while Josh and I kept the race on simmer, recruited additional competitors and negotiated with stopover ports. We had Cape Town fairly well sorted and had bids out to Wellington, Auckland and Tauranga, all in New Zealand. The South American stopover was proving to be a bit difficult, mainly because of rampant crime. We were creating a family-friendly race and the stories of armed muggings and pick-pocketing in Brazil had us a bit nervous. The race would have to stop in South America as it was too far to go from New Zealand direct to the US. I was sure something would come up.

While all this was going on I was negotiating some deals to sell sails and had bagged a large sail order out of the UK. All that was required to close the deal would be for me to fly over and measure the boat. My friends at the Quantum sail loft in South Africa would build the sails, and if all went well, I would pick up a commission sufficient to cover the \$10,000 owed to Erin for school tuition and enough left over to pay the bills on the home front. It was all riding on me going over to England and I once again scraped together enough money for an air ticket. I called Erin and explained to her that I would be able to get her a check as soon as I got back from the UK and she was fine with that plan. This would

be two weeks after the court ordered payment date but I was not worried. So long as she was paid and not taking it up with the judge, things should be fine. Unbeknownst to both of us the non-payment of the college tuition, which was tied to my child support, set off all kinds of red flags. It showed up on the state computer system as me being over \$10,000 in arrears in child support and this forced an immediate court date. The day before I was due to fly to London I got a summons to appear in court two days hence. I couldn't believe it. I simply had to be in England to close the sail order. The customer had changed all his plans in order to accommodate me and I was sure that if I made another change he would lose interest and buy his sails elsewhere. I called Erin. She agreed that she would go to court and explain the situation to the judge. "Don't worry," she said. "I am sure that it's going to be alright." With that reassurance I jumped on my plane to Heathrow and did not give the matter a second thought.

I met the customer outside of Bath and we measured the boat and talked details about the sails. At the end of two long days he handed over a check and signed a contract for new sails. It was a sizable order and I was relieved that some of the financial pressure was off, at least for a few weeks. I had an early flight out of London and would be back in the US the following evening. The next morning I woke in a small bed and breakfast in the middle of rolling green English countryside, climbed into my tiny rented car, and drove the winding roads back to Heathrow arriving just in time to catch my flight. I knew that it was going to be a long day but I had no idea just how long.

WHEN I LEFT MY HOME in South Africa in the late 70s I had no idea where the long and winding road would take me. I was a kid looking for adventure and a way to meet girls. I had no idea that I could turn my love of the water and sailing into an

exciting and cutting edge career as a professional sailor. In many ways I was riding the crest of a wave that seemed as long and as unpredictable as a giant Southern Ocean roller.

The years passed by and along the way I made plenty of money and lost plenty of money. At one point I owned a few investment properties but a change in the tax laws sent real estate prices on Cape Cod plummeting and my net worth went south quicker than a pumpkin tossed off the Empire State building. It didn't bother me. I knew that I could always make enough to get by.

It was only when I was in my mid forties that I suddenly realized that I was basically unemployable. I had no formal education, I had never held a conventional job, and my resume was filled with long periods where I was wandering the African bush rather than commuting to a stable job. If I was an employer I would not have looked twice at my job application. I would have tossed it right into the bin. So I was forced to find ways to make money by being creative.

As my family grew and responsibilities increased, I was having to make more and more money and it was not easy, especially with Sigrun back at school. I simply had to break free from the daily grind and make it big and I had staked my hopes on the Global Ocean Challenge.

There is definitely money to be made in sailing races especially one with a broad vision like the GOC. Sponsors, vendors and competitors all want to participate in a global event and while we were never under any illusion that we would get rich off one race, by slowly and steadily growing the business with the long term in mind, we knew that there was at least the chance that we would score big. It was these two factors that had me focused on making the GOC a success; failure was simply not an option. I knew that the instability was causing grief on the home front and that it was not fair to Sigrun and my boys, but if we were successful we

would once and for all break free of a hand-to-mouth existence. I would take hurdles like the sudden \$10,000 payment in stride, accept it as my responsibility, and deal with it.

I LANDED AT LOGAN AIRPORT late in the day and Sigrun and the boys picked me up. We drove back to Marblehead and after a quiet dinner, I read Tom and Eli a book. I was feeling a bit knackered from a long day of travelling and had just poured myself a glass of good red wine and settled into my easy chair when the police burst through the door. They flashed badges and grabbed me roughly. "Are you Brian Hancock?" they demanded. "Yes," I stammered. "I am."

"You are under arrest," they said. "You need to come with us." And with that they dragged me out the door onto my front lawn where the shorter of the two cops took great delight in handcuffing me. Sigrun, hearing the commotion, raced outside in time to see me being hustled into a police car.

"What the hell is going on?" she yelled as the car sped off. "Fuck you," she screamed after me. "What have you gone and done now?"

I settled into the back seat of the cop car. There was a heavy wire grid between myself and the two officers who sat smugly on the front seat.

"You know why you are being arrested don't you?" the tall officer said. I stared blankly at him. I had no clue.

"No," I answered sullenly. "I have no idea why I am being arrested."

"You are in contempt of court," the short chap sneered. "The judge ordered your arrest." Then it dawned on me. The child support situation. "Fuck," I muttered under my breath. I thought that Erin had smoothed things with the judge.

“There’s been a mistake,” I said. “My ex-wife said that she would speak to the judge and it would all be right.” The two officers looked back at me over their shoulders and burst out laughing. “You have no clue, do you?” they said. “You did not show up for court and the judge issued a warrant for your arrest. We are just carrying out our orders.” The tall cop looked at me in the rear view mirror and shrugged. “I am sorry mate, you don’t look like a bad guy but we have our orders.” I slumped deeper into my seat and stared sullenly out the window as we sped out of Marblehead, through Salem, the Witch City, and beyond to the next town. I had no idea where we were going.

“Where are you taking me?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” came the abrupt reply.

It was around ten in the evening when we pulled up in front of the maximum security prison on the outskirts of Boston. I had no idea the place even existed. We rounded a corner and I saw the massive fence floodlit in the dark night. Looking closer I saw that there were two fences, each about fifty feet high, both topped with razor wire. There was a gap between them and guard towers with floodlights panning the perimeter.

“Fuck,” I muttered to myself. Up until this point I had thought that there had been some kind of misunderstanding, a mistake that I would easily clear up as soon as I had the chance to talk to someone not in uniform. The cop car pulled slowly toward the gate and after a brief interview the first of two gates slid open. The car pulled forward slowly and a security guard stepped out of his shack and approached us.

“May I ask your business,” he grunted.

“Yes,” the short officer replied. “We have prisoner Hancock with us. We need to admit him.” There are few times in your life when your backside puckers and this was one of them. I

was tired, it had been a long day, but it was more than that. I had read enough to know that mistakes are made and the word prisoner hit me in the gut so hard that I almost threw up my airplane dinner over the short cop. It almost seemed too unreal to be true but the flashing lights, the razor wire, and the snarl on the cops face had me thinking that I was in for a long night. It was longer than I could have imagined. The car pulled slowly forward and stopped as the first gate closed behind us. After a muffled clang the second gate opened and we entered the prison compound stopping in front of a large sign that read, "ADMISSIONS."

I was still handcuffed as we entered the drab building but once inside the tall officer grabbed his keys and released my hands. "Don't try anything funny," he said and I wondered if he was joking. What, did they think I was going to throw myself at the razor wire and shred myself to pieces? I nodded and an extra large lady started firing questions at me. She was filling in the admission form and after an endless amount of questions she grabbed a plastic bag from behind her and pointed to a sterile white room off to the side. "Go and change," she barked. Put all your civilian clothes in the bag and bring them back to me." There was no door on the room but I didn't care. I had already suffered enough humiliation and quickly stripped and changed into my prison garb. The bright orange uniform was hardly becoming; it was three sizes too big, but again I was past the point of caring.

The situation then went from bad to worse and there was not much sign of things improving anytime soon. I handed in my bag of clothes and after signing a form was promptly marched into a white sanitized room. A prison orderly was already in there. "Right," he said. "Drop your pants, turn around and spread the cheeks." I did what I was told. It was not that much fun. He

seemed satisfied and marched me off to the prison nurse. She was no friendlier than the admissions person, and no smaller. She looked decidedly unhappy about working late and I was some place where she could vent her anger.

It was well after midnight when I left the nurses station. My blood had been taken, I had been given a series of injections, and I had been poked and prodded all over. A prison guard took me by the elbow and together we walked into the bowels of the maximum security prison. We went through a series of gates, none of them locked, until we suddenly arrived at a massive cell filled with fifty or so prisoners all trying to sleep on narrow bunk beds. It was a hopeless situation. The fluorescent lights were burning brightly and there was no way anyone could sleep, so men of all ages were tossing and turning trying to cover their eyes. The guard showed me to a bunk and then pulled out a set of handcuffs. "Lay down on the bed," he ordered. I did as he asked. "Put your arms above your head." I was starting to panic. I had heard stories of new inmates getting raped and it had not gone unnoticed that I was the sole white person in the room, except for the guard.

"What's this for?" I asked. The guard looked at me and smiled. "It's to protect you from yourself," he said. "Most prisoners freak out on their first night in jail. They disrupt the other inmates and get beaten up. This way you will not be able to cause any problems." He grabbed my wrist and handcuffed it to the bed. I could hardly believe what was going on. A moment later he grabbed my other wrist and handcuffed it to the other side of the bed. I was literally manacled to the bed, unable to move my arms and at this point completely bewildered by what had happened. Earlier in the day I had been driving peacefully through the pleasant English countryside; now I was handcuffed to a narrow cot in a jail cell in a maximum security prison. "Crikey," I thought to myself, "what next."

LAPPING THE PLANET

What happened next was actually quite amusing. I lay still, looking up at the ceiling, wondering what the night had in store for me. The lump in the bed next to me started to stir and a very black man poked his head out from under the blanket. He looked my way and gave me a massive smile. His smile looked so incongruous in that miserable place. "Hey man," he said. "What are you doing here?" he started to chuckle and then held up his hand. "Don't tell me, don't tell me," he said. "I know why you are here. It's something to do with a woman, right?" He laughed out loud and a few of the sleeping bodies around us stirred. "Man," he continued. "Every time a white man comes in here it's because of a woman. We's all a bunch of bad ass black folk. Some of these niggers are rapists and all of them are thieves. But every now and then a white boy shows up and it's always a woman problem." He looked at me and laughed. "Am I right?"

I couldn't help but like the man. His face had so much character. Given another path in life he could have been an actor but fate had dealt him some bad cards. I smiled ruefully at him, not having to say anything. "Don't worry," he said. "No one in this place is gonna hurt you. Just try and get some sleep. They wake us up at 4:30." He grabbed a spare blanket from the bottom of the bed and tossed it to me. Cover yourself with that and get some sleep. They will take the handcuffs off after an hour or so." With that he turned over and within minutes I could hear faint snoring emanating from under his covers. Moments later they dimmed the lights. I did the best I could to cover myself and felt a deep exhaustion wash over me. Around me 50 men farted, snored, coughed and spluttered as they tried to sleep away another day of their sentence. I lay wide awake wondering what tomorrow, or should I say, later that day, had in store for me.



17

where
I am
released

I WAS JUST STARTING to doze off when the guard came to remove my handcuffs. “I am taking these off now but I don’t want any shit from you,” he warned. I rubbed my wrists but said nothing. I wasn’t sure if I was remotely capable of giving anyone any shit at that point and thought that I might say so, but quickly thought better of it. I rolled over and squeezed my eyes closed. “How hard was it going to be,” I wondered, “to pull this bloody race off.” It just did not seem fair. The race was a good idea and I had been giving it every ounce of energy I had, but suddenly I was in a jail cell strapped to a cot facing some kind of criminal charges that by any reasonable measure should never have been lodged in the first place. I was thinking of Lisbon and the fine

bottle of brandy that Josh and I had shared on the rooftop terrace when darkness closed in and I fell into a fitful sleep.

It must have been less than two hours later when someone shook me roughly. "Prisoner Hancock," the voice said. "It's time to get up. You have a date in court." Through the fug of jetlag and lack of sleep I tried to make sense of where I was. I had been hoping it was all a bad dream but the farting, coughing and loud snores quickly brought me back to reality. The only bit of good news was that there was a promise of a court hearing. I hoped that I could explain to the judge that there had been a misunderstanding and he would release me.

I hopped out of bed and dragged my tired, aching body to the showers. They had given me a toothbrush and razor and I did the best I could to clean up in the dim light. Four other equally sleepy men joined me. They too had court dates and were trying to look as presentable as possible. I climbed under a dribble of cold water and scrubbed myself clean but it was a hopeless situation. The others had skipped the shower altogether and by the time I was dressed in my bright orange uniform, the other inmates were settled in front of a small TV.

"The guard said that we could watch some TV," one of the inmates said. He gestured to chair beside him. "Sit down. This is a really good show."

I plopped down on the hard chair and took a look at the TV. The four inmates were glued to the screen. I could hardly believe my eyes. They were watching a FoxTV show called Cops. It was a reality show about policemen going about their business of arresting people. The cops, usually short, swarthy, white men were chasing after a series of black men who had done something wrong. I almost had to pinch myself. The inmates, all of whom were black, were running their own commentary of the show.

“Wow man,” the one chap said. “That nigger is going to be taken down. He’s just a bad motherfucker.” I watched as a stocky cop puffed and panted as he chased after a car thief while a police helicopter hovered overhead. The inmates were shrieking with delight. “They’s going to nail that motherfucker. He’s going away for at least 10 years.” The situation was unreal. 24 hours earlier I had been enjoying a large pint of Guinness at Heathrow airport. Now I was in front of a tiny TV getting a running commentary on a crappy reality show from four hardened criminals. I was almost sorry when the guard come by and flicked the TV off. “That’s it prisoners,” he said. “Time for breakfast.”

We ate in a cold mess. I was not hungry and the hard bagel smothered in apple sauce did little to wet my appetite. I drank half the sweet coffee and tipped the rest into the bin. We were all marched to the booking area and given the bags containing our civilian clothes. I have never felt happier to pull on a pair of jeans but my happiness was short-lived. They made us stand in a line and one by one handcuffed us. Then the worst part of the whole experience happened. They added ankle chains, linking the ankle chains to the handcuffs with a short length. It was so short that we were all stooped over. Then, to add insult to injury, they chained us together. It was beyond belief. No matter what I had done, I certainly did not feel that I deserved to be in a chain gang.

We were marched slowly out of the prison to a custom van. I don’t really have the word for it because I had not seen one before and haven’t seen one since. It was a van with small compartments, like individual cells. We were unlocked from each other and stuffed each into our own compartment. We were then handcuffed to the door once it was locked and bolted shut. The whole scene had become so ridiculous that I was starting to enjoy myself. I was pretty sure that within a few hours I would

be back home as if I had never seen this side of life. It was actually fascinating.

The van rumbled slowly out of the prison and equally slowly back to Salem where the District Court was located. They led me to a separate area from the others and as I walked past a small office I saw Erin sitting in a chair. Her back was to me and I was thankful that she had not seen me. It was humiliating to be shackled. I was shocked to see that she was there and wondered what was going on. They kept me in a side room for over an hour. I could hear muffled voices coming from the next office and I was sure that I could hear Erin talking. I had no idea what to expect and was completely taken aback when one of the arresting cops came into the room. "Hey," he said to me. "It looks like there has been some kind of mistake. You should never have been arrested. Your ex-wife has cleared things up. You are free to go. He took the handcuffs off and smiled. "You probably need a ride home, don't you?" I nodded and followed the cop out to his car. "This time you can ride up front," he said.

18

where
my troubles
continue

I WAS SURE THAT my short stint behind bars had used up all my bad luck for a while, but I was wrong. A few weeks after my release I landed a decent speaking engagement outside Toronto and was humming along the New York State Thruway, chatting on my phone, when a sudden, loud noise interrupted my call. It was a short siren burst and I reflexively looked in my rear-view mirror to see blue lights flashing. My heart sank. I hadn't been speeding and wondered vaguely if cell phone use while driving was banned in New York. I pulled off to the side and watched as a young ayrian police officer stepped out of the car, his knee high boots glinting in the midday sun. As he approached my car I rolled down the window.

“Can I help you officer,” I smiled trying hard to be polite. The man did not smile back.

“License and registration,” he said extending his hand. I reached over to the glove compartment and dug around for the car papers. The compartment was a bit of a mess but I found what he was looking for and handed them over. The man left without saying a word.

“Crap,” I muttered under my breath, “now what?” The last thing I needed was a fine of some sort. I was sure that I had been driving under the speed limit and the car was properly registered. I sat for what felt like ages until the police officer returned to the car. He looked for a long time at the contents on the back seat. I had an amplifier, speakers and a couple of case of books, paraphernalia for my talk.

“What’s all this stuff you are carrying,” the cop asked. I explained that I was heading for Canada for a speaking engagement. He looked at me and the corners of his mouth turned into a mirthless smile.

“No you are not,” he said. “Get out of the car.” I was shocked. Get out of the car - this was serious. I climbed out and moved to the side of the road away from the traffic that was roaring by.

“You are driving with a suspended licence,” the policeman said. “And you were talking on your cell phone. That’s the reason I pulled you over. Did you not see that sign back there on the New York border? There is a big billboard that states that driving while talking on a cellphone is strictly prohibited.” If I had been in any other circumstance I would might have quipped that I hadn’t seen the sign as I was too busy chatting on the phone, but thought better of it.

“I didn’t know,” I said lamely. “I didn’t see the sign.”

“And what about driving without a licence?” he asked. This

was the first I had heard about this. As far as I knew my drivers licence was fully up to date. I shrugged and replied. "I thought that my licence was valid. I have no reason to believe it was suspended for anything."

The policeman looked at his notes. "It was suspended two months ago. You had an outstanding speeding ticket that you never paid. You were notified by mail that your permit to drive was suspended. Two months earlier I had been in Lisbon but I would have seen a notice in the mail when I returned. I had absolutely no idea about the unpaid speeding ticket and mentioned so.

"You were caught speeding in Burlington, Vermont, in 1982. You were fined \$35 and you did not pay the fine." I was gobsmacked. I had been to Vermont numerous times in the 80s but did not recall a speeding ticket. I was pretty sure that had I received a ticket back then, I would probably have chucked it away. No one bothered to pay fines in the days before computers, but it seemed as if things had finally caught up with me.

"You are going to have to find another way to get to Toronto," the officer said. "We are taking your car." I was stunned for a second time. They were going to tow my car and leave me on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere. I had 200 people showing up for the talk and simply had to get to Canada.

The police officer returned to his car and I sat in a glum silence by the side of the road. This was just becoming too much for me to deal with. Sure I wanted a race and was prepared to suffer a bit to get what I wanted, but this was the last straw. I couldn't believe my bad luck.

A few minutes later a tow truck arrived and my tiny Toyota was hooked up ready to be hauled away. The police officer handed me a ticket. "You need to get your licence reinstated before you

can get your car back,” he said clearly enjoying himself. “No licence, no car.”

There was no way I was going to be able to get to Vermont and back to upstate New York without a car. Indeed I had no idea how I was going to get to the nearest town without a car. The tow truck driver, sensing my predicament, leaned over and rolled down the passenger window. “Hey buddy,” he said. “I can give you a ride into town. Jump in.” The cop took off, burning rubber, clearly pleased with himself. I jumped into the smelly truck and introduced myself to the driver. “Thanks,” I muttered. “I would have been a bit screwed if you hadn’t offered a ride.”

The truck driver was a large man with an even larger beard. Through the fog of his cigarette smoke I could see that he had kind eyes but I knew that he was not going to give me my car. He had a contract with the State Police that was too lucrative to jeopardise. Instead I sat in silence. I wondered how I was going to explain all this to the guy in Toronto. He had promoted the event and was expecting a large crowd.

Ten minutes later we took the exit for Amsterdam, New York. I had driven by the town hundreds of times but never noticed it. A couple of gray factories were belching out smoke and the place looked listless and deserted. We pulled up in front of a large compound filled with seized cars. The driver leaned over and shook my hand. “You need to get your licence or come with someone who has a licence before we can give you your car back,” he said, not unkindly. I grabbed my backpack and jumped out of the truck. We were in the middle of nowhere and I knew that I had an important call to make. The sooner I let the event organiser know of my predicament, the better. Perhaps they could find a replacement but I doubted it. I was due to start speaking in less than five hours.

The call did not go well. I had worked hard to convince them

to hire me as a speaker and they had promoted the evening across the whole Toronto region. I have always had a good following in Canada and I knew that some of my diehard followers were planning on being at the event. I hardly blamed the organiser for being angry but there was very little I could do. I had no idea how I was going to get home let alone to Canada and back. I sat on the sidewalk and held my head in my hands. This was just too much to deal with. I thought of calling Sigrun but knew that she would be unhappy about the ticket and in any event there was very little she could do to help. I was going to have to sort the mess out myself.

I had been sitting there for fifteen minutes when a scruffy man walked past me. Out of the blue I had a sudden inspiration. I jumped to my feet and ran after him. "Hey mate," I said. "Can I talk to you." The man stopped and turned around. He took a long drag on his cigarette and blew the smoke out slowly through his nose. "What do you need?"

"Do you by any chance have a drivers licence?" I asked. "I need someone with a drivers licence." The man gave a short laugh and turned to keep walking. "I don't have a licence. I lost mine years ago. DWI." I was not surprised. He appeared drunk and it was barely past lunchtime, but I was desperate. "Do you know anyone with a licence," I continued. "Anyone, it doesn't matter. I need someone for five minutes and I will pay a hundred bucks." The man stopped and looked at me with a faint smile.

"What do you mean?" he said. "Someone gives you their licence for five minutes and you give them \$100."

"Something like that," I said. I explained that my car had been seized and I needed a legal driver to help me get it back.

The man laughed. "My girlfriend has a licence. I will give her a call but I need to borrow your phone." I handed him my cell

and he dialed the number. He turned his back to me while he spoke to the girl. He seemed to be having a hard time convincing her that it was a legitimate offer. Finally he hung up. "She finishes work in 20 minutes and will meet us here. Can you buy me a beer?"

I was relieved but we were not quite home free yet. I still had to convince the car pound to release my car. We stepped into a dimly lit bar and I ordered two Budweisers. The man drank his down in one gulp and sheepishly asked if I could buy him another. I placed more money on the counter and looked around. It was a sad state of affairs. A dozen or so middle-aged men were drinking silently. They had been talking when we walked in, but now they stopped and watched me and my new friend drink our beer. I excused myself and stepped out into the sunlight to make a call to the event organiser in Toronto.

"Don't cancel the show just yet," I said. "I may still make it in time but I have one small favor to ask." There was a long pause on the other end before he replied. "Anything you need just so long as you can make it here by six-o'clock."

"I need you to go on Google Maps and see if you can find Amsterdam, New York. Once you find it take a look for some back roads that will get me up to the Canadian border. I can't go anywhere near the highway. I will call you back in 10 minutes."

My friend had ordered himself another beer and had just started to down it when a very large woman stepped into the bar. Her frame blocked all light from the outside. As her eyes adjusted they settled on the two of us. She walked over. The girlfriend had arrived.

I quickly explained what I needed while she sipped from my beer.

"Look," I said. "Here is all I need. You must come with me and

bring your licence. They will give the car to a driver who has a valid licence, but you can't be stinking of beer. I will give you \$100 and buy you a half dozen beers if this all goes well."

"What about me?" the guy said. "Can I have another beer." I took a \$10 bill from my pocket and laid it on the counter. "We will be back in a few minutes," I said.

The girl drove slowly to the car pound and we both went into the small office. The truck driver was behind the desk. He gave me a quizzical look but said nothing.

"This girl here is my girlfriend," I said to him. "I had forgotten that she lived in Amsterdam. She's going to drive me to Vermont to get my licence." I could see that the truck driver was amused. He looked at the girl and then back at me. She was at a minimum twice my weight and I would have guessed the five-o'clock shadow was no more than a day old. She pulled her drivers licence from her small purse and placed it on the table. The trucker looked closely at the date and photo and handed it back to her. "Here are the keys," he said. "Have a safe drive to Vermont." He slid the keys across the table and we quickly left the office.

"You drive," I said to her. "We need to find an ATM machine." She plonked herself down behind the wheel and I could hear the suspension groan. She might have been large but to me she was one of the most beautiful people in the whole world.

We drove around the block to an ATM and I withdrew five \$20 notes. "Here you go," I said. "Thanks." I added an extra \$20 from my pocket for the beers I had promised and dropped the girl back at the bar where her boyfriend was waiting.

The next 15 minutes were going to be crucial. I needed to get out of town without being spotted by the police. I was sure that my car make and model, and licence plate number had been circulated when I was pulled over. The last thing I needed was

to run into the jack-booted cop. I huddled behind the wheel and called the guy in Toronto.

“You find Amsterdam on Google Maps?” I asked. “I am on the corner of Main and West. Get me out of here but we must avoid all main roads for at least 20 miles.”

While the event organiser in Toronto looked at his computer screen, I followed his directions. We took a series of back roads until I was sure that we were clear of any police. Time was running out but at least I had my car back and if I pushed hard, I might even make it in time for my talk.

It was close to 7-o'clock when I arrived at the auditorium. The place was packed. I had changed clothes while driving down the busy 401 highway so all I needed to do was plug my laptop into the projector. I took a deep breath and looked out at the gathered crowd. “Ladies and gentlemen it’s great to be here,” I said. “Let me tell you about this great idea I have for a new around-the-world yacht race.”

19

where I fly
ten thousand miles,
for lunch

MY FATHER ALWAYS stood tall in my life. He was a successful engineer and while I don't know if this is true or not, I suspect his success was more a part of his people skills than his engineering prowess. I am sure that he was a good engineer, but he was an outstanding people person and I learned much from him by listening to his phone conversations and observing how he treated other people. There are a few basic tenets in life; treat others the way you would like to be treated, show respect for everyone - everyone that is, not just people who look and think like you - and be a good listener. Dad was one of the first people in South Africa to take a Dale Carnegie course in self-improvement and public speaking. Years later he sent me to

one and the lessons they imparted were invaluable. They were also quite simple and it shouldn't have taken a 10 week course to reinforce.

It's not hard to find the good in people if you only take a few moments to look for it and I have tried my whole adult life to never judge anyone by their circumstance. My brief experience with prison only served to reinforce that sentiment. The young black man in the bed beside me that shared his blanket was a shining example of someone who took a moment to reach out. Sure, he was amused by my misfortune but there was no need for him to share anything let alone his blanket and his sense of humor. It took no effort on his part yet the lesson he gave me was priceless. When my older brother, paralysed from a climbing accident, took a black woman for a wife, my father, who grew up in apartheid South Africa, embraced her and welcomed her into the family. These are small lessons, lessons in life, but they are also the essence of life.

My mother died when I was 17. Without putting too fine a point on it, she died from too much booze and too many cigarettes. It was a tragic loss that I am sure could not have been foreseen, or avoided. With her gone my father took on a more prominent role in our lives and he led by example. He treated people kindly, gently, with respect and consideration. He never talked down to anyone and while at that point in his life he was not a religious man, he carried himself better than most who wear the outfit and trappings of a religious order, but would just as soon run you down in the parking lot on a Sunday after mass.

I never told him about my brief run in with the law. He would probably have been amused and as always, would have sided with the police. I did tell him about my plans for the race and he was a stoic champion of the idea. Every conversation that I had with him, always on the phone as he still lived in South Africa, quickly

got straight to the point. "How's the race going," he would ask. "Are the bloody Portuguese going to give you some money? What about this guy Josh. Is he a good man?" I was worried that his health was not as good as it should be but his mind was sharp and his advice always welcome and usually right on the money.

"I know you like Josh," he would say. "I don't know the man, never met him, but be careful. Get it in writing. We live in a different age now. Don't let it cloud your character, but cover your backside. Always get it in writing. It's just a fact of life." At the end of each conversation I would feel a slight emptiness. I missed him dearly. Living so far away I wished that we could be sitting together on his lovely sunny porch sipping cold South African wine talking face-to-face about the race. Then the phone rang.

"Are you Brian Hancock?" a voice thick with a South African accent asked. "Yes," I replied.

"I am Chris Frost. I am the Commodore of the Royal Natal Yacht Club. We are looking for a speaker for our annual Trafalgar Dinner and I was given your name. Might you be interested?"

"Yes," I replied, "I am interested. "When is the dinner?" There was a slight pause. "It's on Friday, this Friday." I stared down the phone line. "Do you know that I live in the US?" I asked. "Yes," he replied. "We would be very willing to cover your flight and make it worth your while." This was Tuesday, my talk was Friday, my Dad always had a big lunch on Saturdays. "Count me in," I said. I will be there on Friday. As I was hanging up the phone I heard him say. "You need to bring a tux. It's a black tie affair."

I hung up the phone and started to scramble. A quick trip to South Africa would not only give me a few hours with my father, but it would allow me to cement our race stopover in Cape Town. I booked a flight out of Boston for the following morning and

threw some things together. Up until that point in my life I had not worn a suit, let alone a tuxedo, but by pure luck a friend of the same height and build had one hanging in his closet. It was musty and smelled of mothballs, but he was happy to loan it to me. I packed it neatly on the top of my suitcase and Sigrun dropped me at the airport.

The timing for my flight to Durban was tight. It was a mammoth trip with stops in Washington, DC, Dakar and Johannesburg. I was scheduled to arrive on Thursday and would need a full day to recover and prepared for the talk. So needless to say I was dismayed when I was bumped off the plane in Washington. The South African airways jet was overbooked and my name was randomly selected.

“Sorry Mr. Hancock,” the pretty lady said. “You are booked on tomorrow’s flight. We will get you a room for the night.” There was no point protesting. She was just doing her job and I was the unlucky one. I checked into my hotel and sent an email to the Commodore. “It’s going to be tight,” I said. “The flight arrives in Durban at 6 Friday evening. What time did you say dinner started?”

The South African Airways jet landed with a light bump and taxied to the terminal. The moment I stepped off the plane I felt that familiar humidity wrap around me. It was a hot Durban night and I had about an hour to get ready for dinner. My friends picked me up and whisked me to their home to shower and change and with a few minutes to spare we arrived at the yacht club. I had grown up sailing at a club across the way, the Point Yacht Club, more of a working man’s club. The Royal Natal Yacht Club was for those with a bit of breeding, and money, and I know for sure that they would never have let the likes of me cross their threshold. So I was smiling to myself as I was ushered in as the guest speaker for the night.

LAPPING THE PLANET

Colonialism is a distant memory in all the Southern African countries, but some establishments still hang on to some of its last vestiges and the RNYC is one of those establishments. I enjoyed every bit of the male-only, black tie dinner replete with top notch wine, aged port, after dinner brandy, and the requisite cigar. I think my talk was OK. In a sense I had finally come full circle. When I was a teenager I used to sit alongside the international jetty that was part of the club complex and look longingly at the yachts that stopped by. They were all from somewhere far away and the sailors all spoke different languages. The boats looked as if they had seen some hard gales out on the open ocean but there was a spirit of friendship, camaraderie and a gypsy lifestyle that was infectious. I drank it all in hoping that one day I would be able to join their ranks. Here I was 30 years later trying to put together an around-the-world yacht race hoping to capture some of the same spirit and essence of those early travelers.

The next morning I drove through the lush vegetation of the Valley of a Thousand Hills to my Dad's home on the hills outside Pietermaritzburg, the town I grew up in. There is something so right about breathing the air you were born into and I felt a peace and sense of belonging as we wound our way toward lunch on the porch. As usual it was just as I remembered it. Cold white wine, superb food prepared by Judy, my step-mother, and the noises of birds in the trees and monkeys scrambling along the branches. These sounds were such a part of my childhood and I loved every minute of it. I could see that my Dad was thrilled with the visit but it was tinged with some sadness. In my heart of hearts I knew that this would be the last lunch he and I would have together. He had non Hodgkin Lymphoma and the disease was slowly sucking his life away. It had been a long trip from Boston but it was worth every precious second that we spent chatting about the race and my plans for the future. When I

hugged my father goodbye I was sure it would be for the last time and as I drove away the road was a blurred haze as hot tears streamed down my face. Saying goodbye is never easy, not when you know it may be the last time.

The following day I flew to Cape Town and drowned my sadness in a vineyard near Stellenbosch. I was joined by an old friend and we sat in the sun soaking up the spectacular view and soaking up gorgeous wine by the bottle. There are times when I wish that I had never left home but I knew that those return visits were made more special by the fact that I no longer lived in the country. I was leaving the following evening to fly back home but first had some important meetings to tend to. Durban had been business, the trip home had been pleasure, the meetings were the future and I was determined to secure Cape Town as a firm and organized stopover for the Global Ocean Challenge.

20

where Dr Carito saves the day

WHILE I WAS AWAY Josh had been on the phone with Jose and Ricardo. They had progressed things to the point where Jose agreed that we should draft up a contract for two races. He wanted to see a draft and would pass it around the various agencies that would be involved, but to us being at the contract stage was heaven sent. We were both running on fumes and fumes do not put food on the table. Sigrun was getting more and more anxious about the finances and I understood perfectly where she was coming from. It had been over a year since we had formed the company and announced the race. A year of sacrifice and constant financial pressure.

“We are so close,” I told her on numerous occasions. “I am sure that we will have a deal with Lisbon soon. There is no way that we can stop now, we just have to keep going.” As usual Sigrun shrugged. She saw it all as pointless and in those times when I was being completely honest with myself, I could only agree with her. One of the problems we had was that we already had competitors who were building boats. I had met a few months earlier with Lenjohn Van Der Wel, a Dutch born South African who had made a living running a Superyacht. He was keen to give it all up and get back to some “real” sailing, as he put it. Lenjohn was sold on the race and had informed his long-time boss that he was quitting. The boss, unhappy about losing his captain, decided to sell his boat. Our announcement of a new global race was having far reaching consequences and we simply could not pull the plug no matter how dire things got on the home front. There is a certain responsibility that comes with your actions and I was more than prepared to live up to my responsibilities, on all fronts.

We sent the contract over to Portugal and followed it up with a few phone calls. The wheels of politics grind slowly but with some constant pressure we got Jose to agree that we should return to Portugal to iron out some of the details in the contract. This time there was no offer of free air tickets but the meeting was so important that we simply had to be there. Instead of paying the mortgage that month, I paid down my credit card and immediately filled it again with a round trip ticket to Lisbon. I borrowed a black suit and jumped on a flight to Portugal.

This time Ricardo met me at the airport. He was all smiles and full of confidence. He had been working behind the scenes with some of his other contacts within the Portuguese government and it seemed as if the Global Ocean Challenge was the current buzz. Everyone seemed interested in the event and Ric was confident

that we would be able to work through any stumbling blocks in the contract and move forward with a deal.

“There is, however, one small issue that has come up,” Ric mentioned, almost in passing. “The Deputy Mayor of Lisbon. Paula’s boss. There is a small piece in the newspaper today about him apparently being involved in a corruption scandal. It has something to do with a building contractor and a kickback scheme. It’s probably nothing.”

I was not so sure but Ric’s enthusiasm was infectious and I let it go. We met Josh in a small hotel and found a cafe for dinner. The food in Portugal is superb and a few glasses of local wine and some fish and things were looking rosy. We were not sure what to expect from our meeting but all of us truly believed that we were on the brink of getting sponsorship despite the niggling bit of news about the corruption.

The more we traveled around Lisbon the more we saw it as the perfect place for the race. It had everything from graceful architecture, culture, plenty of maritime history and a fabulous waterfront. There was, however, one small detail that niggled us. The Port of Lisbon was not owned by the city. It was a separate, stand alone entity and while the port often worked with the city, they were under no obligation to do so. We were slated to meet with the head of the port in advance of our meeting with the city.

The next morning we arrived at the port offices overlooking the Tagus River. From atop the building we had a spectacular view of the approaches to Lisbon harbor as well as far up the river. In short, the port officials could keep an eye on all the comings and goings along the waterfront. We met with the head of Lisbon’s port and he was friendly and affable. He was intrigued by the idea of our event and could see the benefits a global event like ours would have on his port. We discussed logistics and he tentatively agreed that if the city was prepared to sponsor the race, we could

count on his support. He would, he added, have to run it by his board. As we were leaving his offices he said something that took a little of the wind out of our sails. "I'm afraid that I am mighty skeptical that the city will actually sponsor your race," he said. "I know that there has been some talk about it, but the city budgets are stretched thin and the mayor has more pressing issues to deal with. In any event, good luck. I will be happy to help you with the race but first get the city to agree to the sponsorship and then we can talk about logistics." Josh, Ric and I exchanged glances and left to go and have lunch at a waterfront cafe.

Our big meeting was scheduled for the following morning and I woke early, planning on a long run to clear my head. I pulled on my running shoes and set off up a wide, leafy street. The cobblestones were weathered and smooth and the incline slight and I made easy work of the hill. At the top I turned right and ran toward the center of town. It was still early and the bustle of the day had not yet started. A few walkers were out and the coffee shops were filling up but I felt as if I had the city all to myself. Forty-five minutes later I was back at the hotel showering and trying to get my head around what the chap at the port had said.

While Josh and I were having breakfast he got a text message from Josñ. I munched on cheese and bread while Josh read the message, his brow furrowing slightly. "Josh will not be at the meeting," he said. "We are to meet with Paula and her assistant only." This was not good news. Paula was head of Tourism and carried some weight but we were hoping for a meeting with the mayor. At the end of the day he was the one that would agree to the funding. A second text indicated that Ricardo was outside ready to take us to our meeting. We packed our bags and headed out the door.

I could tell a few minutes into our meeting that things were not going well. Paula looked stressed and her assistant, Marita,

looked indifferent. Ricardo's earlier comment about the Deputy Mayor and the small corruption problem was clearly more than a simple issue to be swept under the carpet. Paula did not mention it but it was obvious that they were uncomfortable. The tone was decidedly different from our previous meeting but despite it we were determined to push things along and keep it all on track as best we could. Paula was flipping slowly through the contract making notes and asking questions when Marita suddenly asked. "Who will be paying for the police?"

"What do you mean?" Josh asked. "It's a city event, surely the city will provide policing." Marita seemed harried. "No," she replied. "Usually it's the event organizers that provide police. You need to get a separate budget for this. Figure out how many police you will need and how much it will cost and get us the budget. You will have to pay for it though."

We were hung up on the police issue for a long while and then we got on to the issue of actual funding for the race. "We think we can apply to the PIT fund for some of the money for this event," Paula said. "It's a fund set up for promoting tourism. Actually it has not been set up yet. When the casino was built, there was an agreement that some of the proceeds would go direct to the city to promote tourism. This is agreed to but as far as I know no funds have been paid and the process for applying for this money has not yet been established." My heart sank. We had been hoping to walk away from the meeting with a tentative deal in place; instead we were slowly, but surely, being given the brush off. The rest of the meeting was formal and cordial but I could tell that Josh was fuming. We shook hands and promised that an email with the budget for police would be sent later that day.

"Fucking hell," Josh muttered as soon as we were out of hearing range. "He never mentioned anything about any PIT fund

or police. He could have told us some of these things so that we could have been better prepared for the meeting.” Ric looked sombre. He was thinking hard. “I have heard about this PIT fund,” he said. “It’s a lot of money. The casino generates a ton of revenue and I know that the fund will be there but I have no idea how long it will take to get the actual funding secured.”

“Let’s work on the budget for police,” I added. “At least we can get that to them and then we can look into the PIT fund.” We ate lunch quietly. The meeting had not gone well but we were not discouraged. At least they were still interested and there was a pot of money to dip into for the event. Those were all good points. Josh and I returned to the hotel and spent the afternoon putting together an email and budget to address the police issue. We were working from the reception area as there was no Internet access in our room. We fired off the email and sat patiently waiting for a reply. Josh sent Paula a text to let her know that the email was in her inbox. There was nothing we could do but wait. Every few minutes I checked my email but there was no reply. “I am going back to my room,” Josh said. “Call me if you hear anything.” He was just getting into the elevator when an email landed in my inbox. It was from Paula.

“Wait Josh,” I said. “You had better take a look at this.” Neither of us had to read past the first line to know that our dream of a race out of Lisbon was over. Paula had given us a polite brush off. There was still the hope of the PIT funding but we all knew it was just added as a token gesture and there was no real meat in it. We were, plain and simple, at the end of the road with Lisbon. It may have had something to do with the corruption problems of the Deputy Mayor, but I doubted it. Jose had led us down the garden path and in our enthusiasm we had believed his sincerity.

I knew that Sigrun would be furious. I had convinced her that we would have a deal in place and that our financial woes would

be over and now I knew that I was going to have to break the news to her that I had spent the mortgage money on the airfare. I felt like a complete failure. How could I have been so stupid? How could we have ever thought that Lisbon would come up with a few million dollars when the city had a budget shortfall? I returned to my room and held my head in my hands. What was I going to tell Sigrun? Worse yet, what were we going to tell our competitors?

That night Ric joined us for dinner in a small cafe. It was a glum affair. Lisbon was out. Portugal was out. I could not see any way forward. My disappointment cut right to my bones and even a couple glasses of wine could not pull me from my funk.

“I have a plan,” Ric said. “I have been keeping this to myself for obvious reasons which you will see when I tell you what I think we should do now.” Both Josh and I were skeptical but listened anyway. “I think that the city of Portimao will sponsor the race,” Ric said. “I have been talking to them about sponsoring my entry in the race which is why I haven’t talked too much about this, but if there is not going to be a race out of Lisbon, why not run the race out of Portimro. They won’t have enough money to pay for the race and my entry, but at least we will have a race. I will call the Vice President of the city now and see what he says.”

Ricardo flipped through his contacts on his phone until he found the one for Dr. Luis Carito. It was clearly an important call; probably the most important call of his life. The phone rang twice and a voice answered. Josh and I sat listening to the conversation unable to understand a word of it. Ricardo was animated, clearly explaining the situation. When he hung up he looked relieved.

“That was Dr. Carito,” he said. “He is the Vice President of Portimao, what you would call a Deputy Mayor. He is in many ways the power behind the city. Anyway, I explained to him what had happened and suggested that this would be a good event for

Portimao. He's definitely interested and has agreed to drive to Lisbon the day after tomorrow to meet with us if you can delay your departure."

"How far is Portimao from Lisbon,?" I asked.

"Three hours drive," Ric replied. "He would not be making that kind of effort if he was not interested. Carito is the Deputy Mayor but he is also the one that holds the keys to the money. If he says he's interested, he's interested."

My ticket was non-changeable and I had no money to buy a new return ticket. Josh, on the other hand, could change his ticket for a small fee and so it was agreed that he would stay an extra day and along with Ric, meet with Luis Carito. The next day I flew out. I shook hands with both Ricardo and Josh and walked slowly through security. "Good luck," I said, "I will call you tomorrow. That's if I am still alive after Sigrun is done with me." Josh gave me a rueful smile. "We can't give up," he said, and I knew he was right.

I WORKED FEVERISHLY to change our original document prepared for Lisbon, to customise it for Portimao. It looked very professional and they waited nervously for Carito to show up. Josh was smoking one cigarette after another pacing back and forth. Ric, as usual, had a phone glued to his ear and was working his contacts for information. I was already back home and had survived my homecoming. Sigrun was resigned, "I knew it was all too good to be true," was all she said, and I was relieved. She was not interested in the meeting with Portimao. "I am not sure why you and Josh and this guy Ricardo do not give up on the idea. You are never going to get anyone to give you money." She was right, but at the same time I knew that we would never give up. If you quit then it's over. If you keep pushing and pushing

eventually something will happen and I was prepared to keep pushing for as long as I humanly could.

Dr. Luis Carito was all business. He was dressed impeccably and swept into the airport riding a cloud of confidence. It was easy to see why he was a successful politician. He ordered a coffee and flipped through the document that Josh and Ric had prepared. “Yes,” I like this idea,” he said. “As you know Portimao is a city that has built itself on events and we like events, especially those that will make use of our great waterfront. We have a wonderful new marina and harbor.” His English was perfect and he skimmed the document once more. “There is only one problem,” he said not waiting for a reaction. “We can’t do two races. We can only do one. The second race is beyond the mayor’s current term and we can’t put a contract on the next mayor if Mayor Da Luz is not reelected. So, we will do one race, if that’s OK. We can always talk about a second race. We never do things just one time only. We like to build long term relationships. And one more thing, we can’t do the race in 2007, it’s too soon, we will have to do it in 2008. If you agree then we have a deal.”

Ricardo told me later that he swears he could see tears in Josh’s eyes. It may have been the cigarette smoke but this kind of response, coming two days after the disastrous meeting with Paula and Marita was about as good as it gets. Carito stood up and shook hands with Ric speaking to him in Portuguese. He then took Josh’s hand. “We have a deal. You have my word,” he said. With that he turned and walked briskly out of the airport. We had a deal. We had his word. It would be a while before the handshake turned into a contract but Dr. Luis Carito was a man of his word and in that moment the Portimao Global Ocean Race was born.



21

where
spring
turns to summer

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST I had never heard of Portimao until Ric mentioned it. I had no idea where it was located and no clue how big it was. I Googled the city and surprisingly my search continually turned up the name Madeline McCann, the small British girl who was kidnapped in Portugal. She was taken from Praia de Luz, a strip of sandy beach ten miles to the west of Portimro. It was a heart wrenching story that had me hugging my own children closer each time I thought about it.

I opened Google Earth and plugged the name of the city in the search box. The globe spun and zoomed into a small city located on the Algarve coast of Portugal. I could see a long, white sandy

beach curving in a pleasing arc. There was a harbor entrance adjacent to the beach and I followed the River Arade upstream a little and discovered a large, modern marina on the left hand side. I zoomed in for a closer look. It was indeed a big facility and I could tell that the two sides of the marina were separated by a large hotel complex with a big swimming pool in the middle. From my bird's eye view it looked like a wonderful place to start and finish an around the world race. The marina was close to the harbor entrance making it easy for crews to go out and do sail checks or whatever they had to do. I could see what looked to me like a lot of restaurants along the beach, and the beach itself was a family paradise. We were planning a family event; this was the absolute perfect home for the race.

Dr. Carito, good to his word, put us in touch with the events manager in charge of all events in Portimro. Luis Piscaretta quickly made contact and asked for more details about the race. "Send me all the information you have about the race," he said. "We need to have a good understanding about this event so that we can do a good job for you and for the city." It was decided that Josh would be the point man dealing with the city. He was on the same time zone and was frankly better suited when it came to discussing some of the finer points of the contract. I would concentrate on the media.

Ricardo assured us. "Piscaretta is a great guy," he said. "Really a wonderful down to earth man. You are going to like him a lot. He knows what he is doing, does not bullshit and I am sure will get the job done. We are in good hands."

I conveyed all Ric had said to Sigrun and she seemed happy with the situation. I had picked up some other good paying work and the bills were covered. I had even managed to cover the mortgage payment that I had used for the air ticket and as spring rolled silently into New England it truly felt as if we were on

a new beginning. I was running every morning and gradually the smell along my morning route changed from icy cold to the warm fragrance of flower blossoms and freshly raked mulch. As I rounded the corner at the halfway point and ran along the harbor I could see that boats were being launched for a summer of sailing. For the first time since we started this whole affair I felt at peace with everything and sure that we finally had a race fully sponsored. Then Josh called.

“I have just had a call from Piscaretta,” he said. “It seems as if we are not going to have a contract signing anytime soon. There is a problem with the funding.” I felt the blood drain from my head and stood to walk. I always walk when I am on the phone and feeling stressed. Sometimes after a conversation I realize that I have walked a mile around the graveyard opposite our home. I was halfway around the graveyard before Josh and I had come to terms with the news Piscaretta had conveyed. There was not a problem with getting any money from Portimro. Instead, because of the corruption situation with the Deputy Mayor of Lisbon, there was a new system being put in place. Any large amount of money being spent on an outside source was going to have to be vetted by a new court. The problem was that the court had not yet been established and until it was in place and all the parameters decided, our funding could not be released. In fact, Piscaretta had added, the sponsorship for the Portimro Global Ocean Race was going to be the first test-case for this court.

This bit of news was not great not only because of our own personal cash flow problems, but for our competitors who were looking for some kind of announcement from us about the sponsorship. We were leaking bits of information but until the contract was signed and money in the bank, we could not say for absolute certain that there would be a race. In fact, our announcement that we were postponing the race a year was met

with skepticism by the sailing press. We had strung things out for as long as we could and the troops were getting restless.

“Don’t worry,” Piscaretta had said. “This will not take too long and we will have this event all sorted.”

AS SPRING TURNED into summer I grew increasingly concerned about my father’s health. I knew that he had a fatal disease and was living on borrowed time but his spirits were high and he was constantly asking about the race and the sponsorship situation with Portimro. “Do you think they are really going to sponsor you?” he asked constantly. I had no good answer. I had not met Luis Carito and was working from a playbook written by Josh and Ricardo. Worse yet, old people latch onto certain things until they become ten times bigger than they really are. I would call my father hoping to talk about life in South Africa and more mundane things like the weather, but he was relentless about the situation with Portimro. “When are they going to sign that contract?” he pestered. I would always divert the conversation to another topic, one that he was equally passionate about: Obama.

My Dad loved the fact that a young, articulate African American was kicking some butt in American politics. I shared his view. I was totally inspired by Obama, not only for his political views and the fact that he had come from humble beginnings, but as someone who thought of himself as a decent public speaker, I was mesmerized by his oratory. He was still a long way from winning the Presidency but it was clear that his effect was being felt around the world.

By mid-summer the court that would vet our sponsorship had still not been set up and once again I was scrambling to find money. I could have taken a regular job of some kind, but I was starting to feel certain that the race was going to happen and it would not be fair to any employer to start, and then suddenly

quit. So it was odd jobs, some writing assignments, and I had put the word out for any sailing jobs. Then the phone rang.

It was Lia Ditton, a small, sexy solo sailor from the UK. I had never met her but had followed her sailing exploits through her writing and was really inspired by her free thinking spirit. She had raced solo across the Atlantic on a small trimaran and then delivered the boat back to England, again by herself. As an artist trained at London's prestigious Chelsea College of Arts, she needed a final project for her degree and decided that she would recreate her solo transatlantic trip, day by day, on land. She would place her trimaran outside the College and live onboard for a month. The press dubbed it *Ellen MacArthur meets David Blaine*, Blaine being the illusionist who spent 44 days suspended in a box over the River Thames. I thought it was a brilliant idea and was keen to meet her.

Lia was captain of a 60-foot trimaran that had just completed the Transpac Race to Hawaii. It was no ordinary trimaran; the boat was the same one used in the colossal financial boondoggle, *Waterworld*, starring Kevin Costner. I had not seen the movie but I had heard that there were some good sailing scenes. Lia needed crew to help sail the boat back to the US and asked if I was interested in a delivery. I was indeed interested in the money, but the best part of the Transpac Race is that it's a downwind sleigh ride to Honolulu. Coming back would be upwind. In a trimaran. I could not think of a worse combination. I told Lia that I would call her back, that I needed to check with my wife. I then checked my bank balance for inspiration and without checking with Sigrun I placed the call to Hawaii. "Count me in," I said. "I will see you on Friday."

I have to give Sigrun full credit for living with me, I know it's not easy. I am probably not the easiest person to live with but often, and out of the blue, I would have to leave town. There were five of us living at home. Sigrun, Tomas, Eli and Sigrun's

growing teenage boy Brendon made it a full household and if I was out of town the full responsibility fell on her shoulders. She had her own school schedule to juggle as well as her gym routine, say nothing of finding some time to spend with friends. When I told her that I was going to Hawaii and would be away for at least three weeks, it was as if I had just told her that I was heading out to pick up some milk and bread. She shrugged. "Make sure you stay clipped on. The boys need a father." With her good advice I threw some shorts, T-shirts and my old and well worn foul weather gear in a bag and flew to Hawaii.

I have to confess that as hard and as disruptive as my life had become, there was a part of me that was thrilled by the spontaneity of it all. One day I was mowing my lawn wondering what the future held; the next I was on a plane to Honolulu. We banked in over the airport and I looked down on thick lush foliage edged by a sparkling white sandy beach and an expanse of turquoise water. I was dropping into paradise. Only problem was that we were scheduled to leave as soon as I cleared customs. Fortunately Lia had other plans. She met me at the airport along with a young, handsome Mexican by the name of Carlos. He was addicted to kiteboarding and had convinced Lia that one more day of kiteboarding would be good for the soul. I agreed, as did Lia who added, "The only thing better than a day kiteboarding is a day kiteboarding after a nice sushi lunch." An hour later we found ourselves tucking into some of the best sushi I have ever eaten and afterward I took a stroll along Waikiki Beach. The Global Ocean Challenge, Piscaretta, Carito and the whole cast of characters that had recently come into my life were suddenly a distant memory.

22

where
I star in my own version
of Waterworld

WE LEFT THE FOLLOWING MORNING. There was a light breeze in the harbor but as we motored out, it started to increase. We hoisted the massive mainsail and eased off onto a reasonable course for Diamond Head. The boat literally took off. The water was relatively smooth and with the sheets eased a little we were riding on the leeward hull, the windward hull flying high and the center hull just starting to lift. The boat speed surged past 20 knots and we were having an absolutely amazing ride until we rounded Diamond Head and encountered a large rolling sea in the Molokai Channel.

The boat started to slam and water was flying everywhere. It

washed across the deck with fire hydrant intensity making the short trip from the windward hull to the center cockpit a treacherous exercise. If this was upwind sailing in any kind of a breeze I wondered how the boat and crew were going to hold together for the 2,000 plus mile passage to San Diego. It turned out we were not. The boom was flexing dramatically and even with both reefs in the mainsail we still had too much sail area up. I looked at Lia and she read my mind. "We are bearing away," she yelled. "We are going back to Honolulu."

The 20 or so mile ride back to safe harbor was among the best of my entire sailing career. The boat skimmed across the water happy to have the breeze from behind. We quickly came up under Diamond Head and within minutes were back tied to the dock, the same dock we had left just hours earlier. It took the rest of the day to get the mainsail off the boat and most of the following day to find a sailmaker willing to take on the job of adding a third reef. In fact we never did find a sailmaker willing to do the work but we found one willing to give us space so I dusted off my sailmaking skills and set about adding the third reef. There was nothing unpleasant about being in Honolulu and with Portugal on the other side of the world, I almost justified putting everything out of my mind.

After a week in port we set off again. This time we took the advice of a few locals who suggested that we sail 'west to go east'. In other words rather than go out into the Molokai Channel and face a certain beating, they suggested we go behind the island where we would find more moderate winds and ease gently into the passage. It turned out to be excellent advice and 12 hours later we were skimming across the ocean sailing a northerly course, the tropical island dropping quickly into the ocean in our wake.

For someone with a bad back, like me, going to windward on a trimaran is a painful experience. On the windward pontoon at

the helming station there is a small plastic seat that is very comfortable and you can sit in it for hours and drive the boat. The problem is not when you have a steady breeze and the windward hull is flying through the air. It's when the hull suddenly drops 8 feet and slams down into the water. The jolt it sends right up your spine is mind numbing especially when it happens time and again as it did for the first three days of the voyage.

We were sailing north to clear a large area of high pressure that sits in the Pacific between the Hawaiian Islands and the US mainland. The ride under the high is what makes the TransPac such a great race. We were going to go over the top to avoid strong headwinds, but it was a long way around. Each day the weather cooled a little and life below decks in the space capsule like cabin became more bearable. On my off watches I lay tucked into my bunk and read. It's one of the great pleasures of being at sea. You have time to read all those books you gather while on land but never have the time to read. One book, *Dark Star Safari* by Paul Thoreau made me homesick for Africa while a Steven King novel had me glad I was out to sea far from the psychopaths and miscreants that roam on land.

Despite the best weather tracking models that predicted that we would be able to turn to the east after three days, the high pressure drifted north at the same speed as us and it was a full week before we were able to make a slow curve to the east. By this time we were closer to Alaska, than California, and certainly much closer to Anchorage than San Diego, our final destination.

The wind abruptly died and we motored for three days. It was an extraordinary experience. A flat, mirror sea so calm that we could see stars reflected in the water. I sat on deck for hours and contemplated our decision to start this new event. It had been almost two years of hard graft and we still did not have any money in the bank but I was proud that I had not quit. Josh had never

given any indication that he had had enough and I think it was probably this personal pride that each of us had that kept us going. There was simply no giving up. My experience told me that persistence is one of the key elements of any successful venture. The only problem was that my marriage was showing signs of wear and tear and I was immensely sad about that. I thought of my small boys and their smiling, expectant faces and hoped that the money would come soon and Sigrun would forgive me for putting our family through such a grind.

The wind slowly filled in again, coming first in light puffs that marred the surface of the water and took the flap out of our sails. It slowly increased and the boat skimmed silently across the flat surface leaving only a few tiny bubbles in our wake. It was like sailing a spaceship and our crew had become a cohesive team. As the wind increased so did the boat speed and we rocketed down the Californian coast, San Diego firmly in our sights until on our 14th day at sea we made landfall and motored to a safe marina. It had been a good crossing and I knew once more the magic and pull of the open ocean. The experience had cleared my head, put my life back into perspective, and renewed my enthusiasm for the race. I was ready to grab the world with both hands.

23

where
the ghosts of years past
come to haunt

THERE WAS GOOD NEWS and bad news when I checked my emails. The good news was that the Portuguese court for vetting our sponsorship was in place and they had the details in front of them; the bad news was that it would take at least two more months before they had a decision. “Don’t worry,” Piscaretta said, “this is only a formality. The sponsorship will be approved and we can have this race.” His words were encouraging and his sincerity even more so, but it was still difficult to convey this to Sigrun without losing more credibility. I had told her that by the time I got back from the trans-Pacific trip this whole mess would be behind us. She just shrugged. “I will believe it when I see it,” was all she said.

Interest in the race was still running high and every day there was a new potential competitor asking for information. I had put together some promotional materials which were available to any prospective competitor. The short DVD could be customized, as could the sponsorship proposal. The idea was to take some of the cost and creativity out of the hands of the sailors who were better off selling their campaign to sponsors than learning software to create a promotional video. It was a good strategy. It's a well worn phrase, but also true: the hardest part of any around-the-world race is getting to the start line and our goal was to make that part of the experience just a little bit easier.

Josh meanwhile had fallen in love. When I first met him, albeit briefly, I remember the beautiful family he had in tow at the prize giving of the 1998 Around Alone. His children were young and his wife was everyman's dream of a good mother. You would never have known that there were marriage problems but shortly thereafter they were divorced. A few years later, when Josh was fully embroiled in his Vendée Globe effort, he fell head over heels for a pretty French lady who gave him a son. That relationship did not work out either and for the last few years he had been flying solo. In our many late night conversations conducted through the generosity of Skype I knew that Josh was lonely and would love to fall in love. As usually happens, just when you are not looking for it, someone comes along and on a corporate charter during Cowes Week he met Catherine.

It was, according to Josh, love at first sight. He immediately sounded buoyed and I was very happy for him. My love life was fading like a falling star and to be honest I was envious. I remembered the heady early days of my relationship with Sigrun and compared them to the present, and the many nights when we went to bed and slept with our backs toward each other. I so desperately hoped that the financial stability that a sponsored

race would bring would improve my marriage, but I also knew that I was hoping against hope.

LOVE IS ONE OF THE human traits that remains unfathomable, at least to me. I love the idea of being in love, of falling in love and staying in love. My heart is in the right place when it comes to love but either I choose the wrong person to be in love with, or it's me. It's probably me. It's a pity though because I feel that I have a lot to offer.

Much of my adult life has been affected by the early death of my mother. She died when I was 17. I was away in the army at the time and got a call from my younger brother Rob who was the only sibling still living at home. "You had better come home," he said over the phone. "Mom is in the hospital and not doing great." There was nothing ominous about his call. Indeed he had no idea how sick my mother was. She had been admitted earlier in the day. I was grateful for the excuse to get out of the army for a few days and drove the 8 hours it took to get home without giving my Mom much thought.

My parents had recently separated and Dad and Judy were living in a tiny house on a large plot of land which they planned to develop. I was asleep on the floor with my girlfriend when there was a knock on the door. Dad, already awake, answered the door. It was a family friend. We had no phone at the house and he had driven out to deliver the tragic news. My mother had died in the night.

The official cause of her death was liver failure, but I knew better. She died of a broken heart. My mother was a simple woman who lived at a time when her job was raising children and keeping a home. She had plenty of help with the home. We had numerous servants who took care of the cooking, cleaning, ironing and gardening. It was Mom's job to keep them busy and

she was good at it. Our large, sprawling home was always clean and we ate like lords of the manor. The problem was that she was bored, and to fill the long days when we were at school or away at some sailing regatta, she drank. At first it was a hit from the wine bottle in the fridge, but as so often happens, her drinking escalated. It went from relatively innocuous wine to the hard stuff; Bols Brandy, strait up. There was no point in diluting the effect. Like most alcoholics she was very good at covering things up. When my Dad was home she white-knuckled it, but he traveled a lot and when he was gone there was no holding back.

When we were small we used to jump at the opportunity to sleep on my Dad's side of the bed when he was away on business. It was a real treat and even as we grew to be almost teenagers we liked to tuck in alongside Mom. There was always a battle for the space but slowly the battle got easier. It was not that my older siblings were getting too old for sleeping in Dad's bed; it was that each in turn had come to experience their own child's nightmare.

I was 12, I think, when I first knew that my mother was an alcoholic. I was asleep on Dad's side of the bed when I heard an almighty crash. I jumped out of bed and ran out the door in my pajamas to see what had caused the commotion. At first, in the dim light, everything looked to be in order. "Mom," I called out. "Are you still awake?" There was no reply. I went through to the 'den' as we called it, a cozy kind of family room. The lights were still on and there was an ashtray filled to overflowing with cigarette butts. Alongside it was a half bottle of brandy and a tumbler full of the tawny liquid. No sign of my mother.

"Where are you Mom?" I called. "I'm scared, I heard a crash." There was no reply. I walked out the den and into the dining room and saw that there was some broken glass on the floor. I was trying to get a closer look when I suddenly saw the comatose form of my mother lying on the floor under the table. I screamed.

LAPPING THE PLANET

My two older brothers came running. My sister, wise to my mother's ways and the oldest, was out with her boyfriend. She would come home late at night when she knew that somehow my mother had made it to bed. Each of us children had in turn discovered my mother like this. She was nearly unconscious from too much brandy and my older brothers, Pete and Christopher and I managed to drag and carry her to bed.

My mother was allergic to gluten but it was never diagnosed until much later in her life. Whenever she ate flour she got ill so she ate very little. As a result there was not much to her. She weighed less than a hundred pounds but a drunken deadweight, even one that is only ninety-five pounds, is hard to carry. We managed to get her onto her bed, get her shoes off and the covers over her and that's how we left her. None of us spoke about it and the next day we all went about our business as if nothing had happened.

For the next few years I dreaded the days when my father would travel. I knew that Mom would crash. I would go to bed early in the hope of falling asleep so that I would not hear the inevitable thud in the middle of the night. I would try and sleep with the pillow over my head but it never worked. No matter how tired I was I would jump at every sound. I knew that at some point there would be a crash and sometimes, when I had just fallen asleep, I heard the bang and clatter as things were dragged to the ground. By this time Christopher and Pete were old enough to be out on school nights and they took the opportunity to be elsewhere when Dad was away traveling leaving me with the problem of dealing with Mom.

One night I had just fallen asleep when I heard Rob scream. We had kept him sheltered from Mom's shenanigans and he was happy to be able to sleep in Dad's bed without any competition from the rest of us. He too was asleep when he heard the crash

and found Mom sprawled on the kitchen floor. He was the last to know but despite the long night that we spent comforting Rob who was crying inconsolably, we never brought it up again. The awful truth of what happened in the dark of the night was never discussed in the light of the day. Worse yet we wordlessly conspired to shelter my Dad from the real scope of Mom's problem. Years later he told me that he knew she had a drinking problem, but had no idea it had escalated to such an awful extent.

Finally Pete called a meeting. It was time to come up with a plan. We knew that one of those nights she was going to really hurt herself. We had no idea what to do but in our childish wisdom we figured that she was probably bored and that was the reason she drank. Most evenings we would avoid the den where she spent her long nights because of the thick cloud of rank cigarette smoke that hung listlessly in the air. In addition to her brandy addiction, Mom chain smoked. We came up with a plan whereby one of us, on a rotating basis, would sit with my mother and keep her company. We would play Monopoly or some other board game. This was in the days long before South Africa had television. The plan, naive perhaps, was at least a plan.

For a while things got better. Mom knew that we were trying to keep her from drinking too much and she in turn tried to keep things under control, but we also knew that her frequent trips to the bathroom were to take a hit from the bottle stashed in the toilet cistern. One night I was sitting with my mother talking about school, life, I don't really remember what else, when the subject of my father came up. "Do you know, I am terrified that your father is going to leave me," she said. I looked over at her, surprised by her outburst. Even though she was in her mid-forties she looked as if she was in her early sixties. The brandy and cigarette combination had not been good and my mother was aging rapidly.

“As soon as you kids are all grown he is going to leave me and I will have nothing left to do with my life.” They were painful words but I understood what she was getting at. Raising children was her life, it was all she had. She had no job, no hobbies, and one by one as each of us grew old enough to leave home we took some of her purpose in living with us. Of course we had no idea, but that was precisely what she was trying to say to me between pulling on her cigarette and sipping brandy. Her eyes filled with tears and she exhaled slowly. “When you kids are all gone your Dad will find someone else and I will have no reason to live.”

Two years later when I was in the army and Rob was getting ready for his call-up to mandatory National Service, my Dad broke the news to her. He too had been waiting for us kids to grow up and leave the house before disclosing the affair he had been having with his secretary. In the end he could not wait any longer and moved out. I came home on a weekend pass and got dropped off in front of our house. We had lived there since I was three and it was the only home I knew. I walked up the front path and opened the heavy front door. The entrance hall, which was actually quite grand, was dominated by an old cuckoo-clock and the first I sensed something was wrong was when I saw that the clock was gone. There was also a different carpet on the floor and when I went into my bedroom, which I shared with Rob, I saw that it had been completely repainted. The dark red paint with black foot prints that I had so lovingly painted up the wall and onto the ceiling had been replaced by a clean off-white. Just then a lady walked into the room behind me.

“Who are you?” she asked. “What are you doing here?”

“I live here,” I stammered. “This is my room.” The lady looked at me and then surprisingly stepped closer to me and gave me a hug.

“You poor thing,” she said. “Did your parents not tell you that they had sold the house?” I felt my body go numb from the news.

The only way of corresponding with me in the army was by letter and neither Mom nor Dad had thought to tell me that they were separating and had sold our home.

“Yes,” the lady continued. “Your parents, you know, they are getting a divorce. Didn’t they tell you?” She realized then that I had no idea about any of it and she had just broken some life-changing news to me. “Come,” she said. “Let me make you a cup of tea.”

We sat in the kitchen, a very different looking kitchen, while she dialed around trying to find out where I lived. Finally a neighbor knew where my Mom was living and gave me a lift to her new home. I knocked tentatively on the front door of a terrace flat and my mother answered. She was tiny. She had wasted away to almost nothing and not surprisingly, she was drunk. “He left me,” was all she said then added almost as an afterthought. “Sorry that we didn’t tell you we had sold the house. It all happened so quickly.”

I sat in a strange living room in a strange home with a woman that was dying before my eyes. I was seventeen and had suddenly grown up. My childhood was over and the reality of my new life hit me squarely between the eyes. So I was not the slightest bit surprised when our family friend delivered the news of her death. Her words, spoken through a fug of cigarettes and booze, were at least honest. “As soon as you kids are all grown he is going to leave me and I will have nothing left to do with my life.”

I AM SURE THAT a decent shrink would have a field day with me. There is plenty to work with but at the same time I am not sure that any of my weird and wonderful character flaws have much to do with my mother’s early death. Maybe I am just in denial. I have chosen to live a life full of travel and adventure because of one simple fear: I never want to be lying on my deathbed with an ounce of regret.

LAPPING THE PLANET

It's a well worn phrase; 'you never hear a dying man wish that he had spent more time in the office.' It's true and I was not about to leave this planet wishing that I had spent more time mowing the lawn. No, I plan to squeeze every last drop of juice out of the life I have been given and I plan to live each and every day to its fullest. This life quest has in many ways been a curse as much as a blessing. Once you have tasted the open road it's hard to stuff the genie back into the bottle. I had tasted life at the extreme and could never settle for the mundane. Instead I settled for a life that was full and rich, but fraught with problems on the home front. Perhaps I should have married someone with the same wanderlust in their veins, but you can't help who you fall in love with and I fell in love with Sigrun.

Plain and simple.



24

where
sardines and a man named
Piscaretta feature

THANKSGIVING ROLLED AROUND and we thrust the boys into their best clothes and traipsed over to Tom and Deb McNulty's house for the annual turkey feast. Years earlier we had stopped by their house for a drink on Thanksgiving and ended up staying well past midnight. We had so much fun that it became a tradition so each Thanksgiving we scrub and polish our growing boys and enjoy the very best meal of the year. I love Thanksgiving simply because it's a time to give thanks and I like to give thanks. I am truly grateful for the charmed life I have been blessed with and this year I was more grateful than ever. Luis Piscaretta had finally called with some good news. "Your sponsorship has been approved, I think it's time we met."

Josh and I immediately booked tickets and we planned to meet the following week, in Portimao.

It seemed clear that we were on the home run with finding the funding for the race, but the days were marred by a slight personality problem that had arisen between Josh and Ricardo. Perhaps the best way to put it is that Josh was having a problem with Ricardo. Ever since Lisbon fell through Josh had slowly, almost imperceptibly, started to disassociate himself from Ric. In many ways he blamed Ricardo for the deal falling through when in fact it had nothing to do with him at all. It was unreasonable and I did not like some of the things he was saying about Ric but decided to let it slide. I certainly did not want to let the issue force a wedge between myself and my business partner.

I flew via London stopping briefly to meet with an old friend who was working as a professional cameraman. We were in the initial stages of putting together a plan for a series of television programs about the race and I wanted to talk with Clive in the hope of getting him involved. We met in a pub outside Gatwick Airport and talked about old times and the upcoming race. Clive and I had raced together from England to Australia in 1979 and his mother and father had become my surrogate parents.

The following morning I flew to Faro, the closest airport to Portimro. Still desperately short of money I decided to take the train from Faro to Portimro rather than spring for a taxi. It was a Sunday morning and the train wound through some peaceful pastoral land. Out the window I could see lemon orchards and olive trees. The countryside was dry, but pretty and peaceful and I was feeling quite content when we pulled into Portimro 45 minutes later.

The city had arranged for us to stay at the Tivoli Hotel, the same hotel I had “flown” over courtesy of Google Earth. The hotel formed part of the marina complex and Piscaretta had indicated

that both the Tivoli and the marina would be involved in the race. This was my first visit to the city we hoped would be the home for the race and as the taxi wound through the city streets I gazed at the mix of modern and historical architecture.

We drove along the Arade River and I could see restaurants setting up for lunch and could smell the first waft of grilling sardines. The taxi finally pulled up in front of the Tivoli and ten minutes later I was checking into a lovely room overlooking the marina. I could hardly believe that we were close to finally getting the race funded but there was still some hard work ahead of us. Since Josh would be arriving later in the day I decided that I would treat myself to a leisurely lunch and wandered out of the hotel toward the beach.

There is a large wooden boardwalk that runs the full length of Praia da Rocha, Portimro's gorgeous beach. Every hundred yards there is a restaurant and on this warm Sunday morning they were all emanating tantalizing smells. I walked the length of the boardwalk and then doubled back. I had settled on a place that advertised Portuguese sardines for \$5 and was shown to a table overlooking the beach. Within moments a carafe of cold white wine was in front of me. I poured myself a glass and settled back to enjoy the view. Being December the beach was quiet but there were a few families walking the boardwalk. The locals were all dressed in their Sunday best having just come from church. The rest were tourists, German mostly. I was sitting in the sun and soon the wine was dancing around my brain. I was exhausted from the two years it had taken to get this far and nervous with anticipation about the days ahead. I sincerely hoped that nothing would go wrong.

Suddenly the phone rang, jolting me out of my revelry. It was Ricardo. "Welcome to Portugal," he said. "Welcome to my country. Let's hope that this visit is better than your last," he said referring

to the disastrous visit to Lisbon ten months earlier. We talked a while and I thanked Ric for all his efforts. Without his energy and passion we would never have made it this far. For the last five months he had worked diligently behind the scenes pushing and nudging things along. Every few days he would call me with an update. Josh had asked that he stay out of negotiations with Portimro, but both Ric and I knew that his involvement was critically important no matter what Josh thought. "Cheers Ric and thanks for everything," I said just as the waiter laid down a plate of steaming sardines in front of me.

By the time I dragged myself out of the restaurant I had killed four carafes of wine and chased the sardines with desert. The late afternoon sun cast long shadows and as I walked slowly back to my hotel room I could not think of a more perfect place on the planet to start and finish an around-the-world yacht race. The week ahead was going to be stressful, but for now I was as happy and as content as I could ever remember being.

THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON we had our first scheduled meeting with the city events people headed by Luis Piscaretta. We were to meet at his offices and Josh and I took a taxi across town. We had copies of the contract as well as other bits of information about the business structure. I have to admit feeling some of the same trepidation I felt just before the meeting with Paula and Marita in Lisbon. We were certainly more advanced with Portimro but despite it all you can never be certain that things will go your way.

I immediately relaxed when Luis Piscaretta came into the room. He was young, handsome and had an easy and relaxed way about him. His eyes had a certain sparkle that made him look like a mischievous kid looking to cause a little trouble. We followed him to a small conference room and he introduced us to his team.

First there was Pedro Romao, his second in command. Pedro did not have anywhere near the same presence that Piscaretta had, but was enthusiastic about the race. The third person was Ivo Faria, a young man originally from Angola. Ivo would be directly responsible for the race and was to be our go-to man. I liked him immediately. His smile was disarming and his manner easy and very friendly.

For four hours we discussed the contract, the race and our hopes and aspirations for the event and how it would impact Portimro. There was no sense at any time that they were not going to go ahead with the sponsorship. We left on good terms and Ivo dropped us off outside a charming fish restaurant. Josh and I ordered a bottle of wine and some olives as an appetizer and we dissected the meeting. It had gone well. We had expected Luis to do his due diligence and he had definitely asked the right questions. At some point he had made it clear that we needed to negotiate directly with the Marina de Portimro and the Tivoli Hotel if we wanted them as race partners. Both entities usually work with the city on all their maritime events but they were under no obligation to do so. If Portimro wanted the race and the marina did not, then the deal would be a bust. You can't have a yacht race with no place to keep the yachts. It was left that we would meet separately with the marina and hotel the following day and amend out contract accordingly.

Late the following afternoon we met Marina Corriea at the Tivoli Hotel. Yes, her name is Marina and she is the head of the marina. How convenient. She was tall, confident, and very interested in hearing more about the race. She listened intently and like Luis Piscaretta, asked all the right questions. Clearly these were very experienced and professional people. The Portimao Global Ocean Race was going to be their first event that actually bore the name of their city but other than that this was nothing

new to them. For an hour Marina quizzed us and finally she settled back in her chair and smiled. "Yes," she said. "I like this. This is a good idea for Portimao and for the marina. The problem is that I need to convince my board to go along with this." She stopped for a second and looked at Josh and I. "But I am sure that I can convince the board. I will let you know tomorrow." With that she rose and left the room.

Our meeting with Mario Candeias, General Manager of the Tivoli Hotel, was a breeze. He was another young and clearly upwardly mobile hotel manager. He knew what it was all about and quickly agreed to most of our requirements. "If the city and marina are in, you can count on me," he said and then rushed off to another meeting.

Josh retired to his room while I took a long walk. I set off along Praia da Rocha, this time at the water's edge and not along the boardwalk. The Atlantic waters were still warm from the summer sun and undulated lazily in the fading light. I took my shoes off and enjoyed the feel of soft sand as it squished between my toes. Much hung in the balance of how the following two days played out. I had drained all my savings accounts and my checking account was running dangerously low. My credit cards were at their max.

Back home Sigrun and the boys were preparing for Christmas, the kids oblivious to the financial situation that had both their mother and me stressed to near breaking. If the Portimao deal fell through we would definitely lose our home to foreclosure. Things were razor tight and each time I thought about the trusting, hopeful faces of my children, I felt like a terrible parent. I had placed my family squarely at risk and did not feel very good about it.

On the other hand I knew that I could not give up. Boats were being built, people had sold their homes in order to participate

in the race, and my own personal reputation was on the line. If I had quit it would have been left to Josh to deal with matters and I was not going to place that burden on him. Somewhere deep in my gut I had always felt that we would pull things off but never in my life had I been so financially strung out.

It was dark by the time I arrived at the end of Praia de Rocha and I cut up toward the city. Running parallel to the beach was a road that had numerous bars and restaurants. The area was bright and bustling and I made my way to a small bar and stepped into the cozy atmosphere. The waiter brought over some olives and I ordered a glass of red wine. All around me young people chatted away in Portuguese. They were workers who had stopped in to share a drink with friends before heading home. I felt envious. They had normal lives; mine had been anything but normal and it was teetering on the edge of feast or famine. In less than 48 hours I would know what the future held for me and my small family back in Marblehead.



25

where
Google saves
the day

I COULD TELL BY THE LOOK on Josh's face that he had some bad news to tell me. He was sitting at the bar at the Tivoli sending a text message when I walked in. The wine and walk had me in a contented mood but that instantly evaporated the moment I saw the look of concern on his face.

"I just got a call from Piscaretta," he said. "There is apparently a problem with our contract. He wouldn't elaborate but wants an urgent meeting in the morning."

The news hit me right in the deepest part of my stomach. Things had been going too well and I knew that something would happen. It's just that niggling feeling you sometimes get when

things are going your way and you can't believe it's all so easy. I grabbed the bar seat beside Josh and ordered a glass of wine.

"Any clue what the problem is?" I asked. Josh took a long swallow and shook his head. "No idea mate. He sounded agitated and in a hurry. It was almost as if he didn't want to be making the call but had to since it was his job to do so." We stared glumly at our drinks knowing that it was going to be a long night. Ricardo called in response to Josh's text and we talked things through with him, but he had little to offer. "These guys are very professional," he said. "It may be that some of the language in the contract is not quite right. I am sure that it's not a big deal. They would never have invited you over to Portimro if they were not going to go through with the sponsorship." Ricardo's words gave me some comfort but I excused myself and decided to get an early night. The quicker we got through the night and discovered our fate, the better.

Sleep did not come easily. I had downed a glass of port before flicking the light off and the syrupy drink numbed my senses as I drifted into sleep, but two hours later the port had worn off and I was wide awake. It was the worst possible time to be awake. The hotel was quiet and I sat in bed alone with my thoughts. I saw that Sigrun was on Skype and almost called her but thought better of it. There was no use having both of us lying awake. I noticed that Josh was also on Skype and figured that he too was probably awake. There was nothing to watch on TV and I flicked channels mindlessly until finally falling back into a fitful sleep.

I woke just as the first rays of a new day filtered through the window. I felt hung-over and nauseous but decided that I needed a run to clear my head. If we were going to get some bad news I wanted to at least have a clear head for it. I pulled on my running shoes and stepped out into a cool dawn.

This time I headed for the center of town and a few minute

later the slap, slap of my shoes echoed against the steep sides of the old buildings. I was running on cobblestones being careful where I put my feet. After 15 minutes I realized that I was lost. I had no idea where I was. The streets were so narrow that I couldn't use shadows to give me a bearing. I walked for a while doubling back thinking that I recognized the restaurant where we had eaten, but I was mistaken.

Suddenly the narrow street opened up to a large square dominated by a massive fountain. Beyond the fountain I recognized a square building as the City Hall and walked toward the front door. Months earlier Ricardo had sent photos of Portimro and among them was one of the City Hall. Many times I had gazed at that photo imagining myself inside the building, with Josh, sitting with the mayor, about to sign the contract that would change my life. Visualization is a powerful tool and I could imagine the mayor's office as we talked about what the race could do for Portimao and then finally mayor Da Luz smiling and inking the deal.

This morning the place was empty and since I had lost the momentum from my run I decided to stop for a coffee in a small café on the other side of the fountain. It came thick and rich and steaming and was just what I needed to bring my spirits back up. Maybe the meeting with Piscaretta and his team would go well and perhaps Ric was right and that it was just a technicality in the wording of the contract that was the only glitch.

PISCARETTA STRODE INTO the foyer of the Tivoli Hotel looking grim. The twinkle in his eye was not there, or maybe it was and I just didn't see it. He came right to the point. "The mayor will not sign the contract as it is," he said. "I am not sure what we can do about it but let's talk. Global Ocean Sailing Ventures is based in the Channel Islands. That's not good. It looks like tax evasion."

Josh started to say something but Piscaretta silenced him. "I

know,” he said with a faint smile. “I know that you are not trying to avoid taxes and the Channel Islands is a perfectly legitimate place to base your company, but you have to understand that the mayor is very sensitive to anything that looks improper. To him this looks like tax evasion.”

I thought of the long hours Josh and I had spent discussing the business and the time and expense we had gone through to set up the company in the Channel Islands. We had contracted a management company that deals with just this kind of issue and they had been very tough on us. They were not about to be a part of any tax avoidance or money laundering operation. The Channel Islands are a perfectly legitimate place to base a business and as global citizens Josh and I had decided that it suited our business objectives quite nicely.

“So what do you suggest?” I asked, somewhat timidly. “Is there another option?”

The twinkle had returned to Piscaretta’s eyes. “Yes,” he said. “There are some options. If your company was based in the UK or the US there would not be any problem. It’s just the Channel Islands that presents a problem. I am not sure what you can do about it with only a day left in your visit, but let me know what you want to do and I will discuss it with my team. Maybe you will have to return to Portimro in the new year to sign this contract.” He stood, shook our hands, and departed.

I pushed back in my seat. “That’s not as bad as I thought,” I said. “We can form a UK company.” Josh also looked relieved. “Yes,” he agreed. “Let’s get on the Internet and see what we can find.”

I Googled ‘*how to form a UK company*’ and half a second later the screen filled with options. The top listing was for Companies Made Simple, a UK based organization that specialized in forming

a company in less than 24 hours. While I read through their information, Josh took a call from Marina. “That’s great,” I heard him say. “Thank you Marina.” He hung up and I looked up from my computer screen. “The Board of Directors for the marina have given the go ahead for them to get involved with the race,” he said. “We can have all the dockage we need and full use of their facilities before and after the race.”

That was good news on top of the good news that I had discovered on the Companies Made Simple website. I had downloaded a form and they guaranteed that for J100 we could have a UK based company with a London address within 24-hours. Our meeting with the mayor was set for exactly 24 hours hence. It was going to be close.



26

where
the mayor
makes my day

WE TOOK A TAXI from the Tivoli. It was only a short ride to City Hall. Our meeting was scheduled for 4pm. An hour earlier the company documents had been faxed through and Global Ocean Sailing Ventures was now a registered UK company. Piscaretta had been OK with the plan. En route Josh placed a call.

“Hi Luis,” he said. “I have the new address for you.” He looked down at the fax still warm from the machine and read off the London address. I could hear Piscaretta reading it back to him. He was in his car also heading for City Hall. We arrived at the same time.

“Come on up,” he said and we followed him up some ornate

stairs to the second floor. He took us to a conference room. “Just wait here. We need to amend the contract.” Josh and I sat quietly in the room waiting for Piscaretta to return. A clock on the wall ticked loudly. I started to pace looking at a series of black and white photos of previous mayors. I wondered what they would think about a new yacht race paid for by the citizens of Portimao. Suddenly Piscaretta reappeared. “Just a few more minutes,” he said. “We are waiting for Dr. Luis Carito.” Tick. Tick. Tick. The clock chimed 4:30. My palms were sweating. I was confident that things would go well but you never know. Josh looked more relaxed but I knew that he was feeling the same as I was. If Portimao did not come through with the money we were basically sunk.

A few minutes later a secretary came into the room. “Can you please follow me,” she said. We stood and followed her through a series of outer offices to a large wooden door. She knocked quietly and then stood aside to let us in. The mayor’s office was grand. His desk was off to the side and he, along with Luis Piscaretta and Luis Carito, were seated at an ornate table. They rose and came over to greet us. I looked the mayor directly in the eye but he was not giving anything away.

“OK,” Piscaretta said. “I am going to explain things to Mayor Da Luz in Portuguese. It’s easier that way. I am going to tell him about the race and the change of address for your company.”

For the next 15 minutes Piscaretta spoke animatedly. I was trying to follow along but my Portuguese is limited. Occasionally some English words were used so we had some idea what they were talking about, but mostly none of it made any sense. The mayor was stone-faced. He flicked through the contract idly not paying particular attention to it. Occasionally Luis Carito would chime in with a comment or two but mostly it was Piscaretta giving the pitch. I wondered if the mayor had any idea about the race before our meeting. It was hard to tell.

Finally Piscaretta stopped and sat down. “I have explained everything to the mayor,” he said to us in English. My palms were sweating and I could feel my heart banging silently against my ribs. The mayor looked down at the contract and flipped through it once more stopping to read some portions. No one said a word. Out in the street I could hear cars rushing by, some honking horns. There was the occasional squeal of brakes.

“What are we waiting for then?” the mayor said smiling. “Let’s get on with signing this thing.” He reached for a pen and initialed each page before signing and dating the last page. There were five copies of the contract and he signed each of them before passing the documents to Luis Carito who initialed each page and signed the last one. The various contracts made their way around the table until they ended up in front of me. This was the moment I had visualized for almost a year. I took a pen from my jacket and signed each contract. We had finally secured funding for the race.

Josh was the first to speak. “Mr. Mayor,” he said. “I have something very important to ask you.” I had no idea what he was going to ask. The mayor leaned forward a bit. “Mr. Mayor, would it be possible to take a few photographs.” For the first time since we entered the room the tension was gone. The mayor, clearly a politician, was thrilled with the idea of a few photographs and for the next 10 minutes we took photos, shook hands, and clapped each other on the back. The Portimao Global Ocean Race was finally a reality. We had a deal.

THE FIRST PLACE we stopped was in the same bar where I had enjoyed a cup of coffee the previous morning. We ordered a beer and stood shoulder to shoulder with some of the locals. Neither of us said anything. Across the square the fountain was still spraying water in a series of jets. I looked up at the second floor windows and noticed

that the lights were still burning. Moments later they went out and the mayor appeared at the door to City Hall. He was alone. He stepped onto the square and turned to lock the door behind him.

Josh and I watched him walk slowly away from City Hall. I wondered what other business he had conducted that day and was surely grateful that he had signed our contract. More than three years had passed since Josh and Joe Harris first floated the idea of a new around-the-world race. Three long, hard years of pain and exhilaration. What had started as a dream, an idea, was now a reality and the feeling was beyond description.

I am not going to attempt to describe how the evening unfolded. Suffice to say we were in a celebrating mood. Josh called Ric and gave him the good news. I called my father in South Africa but only got his answering machine. Same with Sigrun. I left her a message telling her that I would call later with all the details.

We left the workers bar and found our favorite fish restaurant. The wine came by the bottle, not the glass, and sometime after midnight we found ourselves back at the bar at the Tivoli Hotel where we knew they had good brandy. Around 2 in the morning I fell asleep, or rather passed out, but the excitement was still running around my brain and at five I was wide awake again. I hopped out of bed, grabbed a warm jacket, and set off for the beach.

The night air was cold but I didn't care. I ran along the boardwalk with tears in my eyes. Sure I was still a bit drunk but I was mostly intoxicated with the sheer thrill of having finally secured a sponsor for the race. I walked the length of Praia da Rocha stopping occasionally to gaze out to sea. The moon was still high and it shed its watery light on the still water.

Dawn was breaking when I returned to my room. I had a flight at 9 in the morning and had started to pack when I felt

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my eyelids begin to droop. I lay back against the bed and briefly closed my eyes. That was how the hotel staff found me in the early afternoon.



27

where
I reach
a half century

THE NEW YEAR was as packed with hope and promise as any I could ever remember in my short, almost half decade on Planet Earth. I had not really given it much thought but my 50th birthday was less than a month away. I wanted to do something special to celebrate the milestone, but with money tight I knew that going somewhere far away, and preferably warm, was out of the question. I wanted to spend some time in introspection, to really contemplate what I had done with my life and to think about how I would like to spend the rest of it. I didn't know as we cheered in 2008, that within a month I would be getting more introspection than I could have bargained for.

There is a funny story attached to my birthday which probably comes from being the fourth of five children. When I was young I always celebrated my birthday on January 25. Those were the days when birthdays really counted and January 25 was a special day to me. In South Africa, when you turn 16, you have to apply for an identity document. My dad dug through his files looking for my birth certificate. I can still hear his voice as if he had spoken the words only yesterday. "I have found your birth certificate," he announced triumphantly and then, followed by a short silence, he added, "Oh shit." My father never used bad language so it got our attention. "You are not going to believe this," he said, "but we have been having your birthday on the wrong day." I was actually born on January 24, not January 25. For 16 years we had celebrated on the wrong day. These days I celebrate on both days. I am not one that shies away from growing older and "counting backwards from 40." Each year is a milestone worthy of a two day celebration.

With my bank account sufficiently replenished with a paycheck, the first in almost three years, I was starting to think about places to celebrate turning 50. There is a lovely walk along the beach in South Africa. It takes a full week. You walk 20 odd miles each day and check into a small bed and breakfast each night. The beach is completely deserted and runs along the Wild Coast, a long stretch of completely untouched coastline on South Africa's east coast. I was browsing the Internet dreaming of the perfect way to celebrate a half century when the phone rang. It was my younger brother Rob.

"Hi," he said in a voice that sounded oddly strange. I wondered if something was wrong.

"You had better get down here as soon as you can if you want to see Dad alive. He has taken a massive turn for the worse." My father had been putting up a brave fight against his cancer, but I

knew that the disease would win in the end. Two weeks earlier he and Judy had traveled to Pretoria for Christmas and by all accounts he had done great, but the traveling and excitement of the holidays had taken a toll on him and Dad was exhausted. One day he was absolutely fine, the next his mind was gone. I had spoken to him a couple of days earlier and he sounded tired but quite chipper. "He doesn't recognize me," Rob said, his voice on the edge of cracking. "He was fine two days ago but I think the end is coming."

I hung up the phone and stared for a long while at the thick blanket of snow that covered my front lawn. My father, the rock of my life and probably my closest friend, was entering the final stage of his long journey on earth. I was truly grateful that I had the money to buy a last minute air ticket and later that evening I flew out of Logan airport bound for my last trip home. Even though I had been on the road for 30 years and had lived in the United States for most of that time, I still regarded South Africa as my home. I knew that it would all change once Dad was gone. As the jet flew through the dark night I thought of all the wonderful times my father and I had spent together since I started traveling. Dad, being ever practical, had bought a travel agency as a retirement business. With my siblings scattered across the globe from Calgary to Auckland and in-between, the only way to see us all was to own a business that gave him cheap travel.

The first time we met up in a foreign country was in Italy. I had been on the road for over a year with only the odd letter from home, but Dad had written to say that he and Judy were going to take a holiday in Rome. I was living in the south of England at the time and Dad wondered if I could make it down to Italy to spend a few days with them.

I managed to scrape together the airfare and took a late flight out of London. I was just 21 and had grown my blond hair long.

The sailing had me well tanned and I was lean and healthy. So was the girl in the seat next to me. She too was blond, had piercing green eyes and a gorgeous smile. Long before we landed in Rome we had agreed to share the cost of a hotel room. Life's little gifts come when you least expect them and as a summer sun rose over the rooftops of Rome the girl and I were still awake enjoying being young and carefree.

I had promised to make contact with my father that morning and dug through my bag for his hotel contact information. They were staying at the Ibis Hotel on Via Arturo Mercanti in downtown Rome.

"Shit," I said to the girl, what's the name of this hotel we are staying in. She rolled over and grabbed a note pad from the night stand. "It's the Ibis Hotel."

"What's the address?" I asked.

"Via Arturo Mercanti," she replied. Of all the hotels in Rome. I called the front desk and asked if by chance Mr. Basil Hancock had checked in. "Yes," came the reply. "He is in room 404."

"What's our room number?" I asked the girl. She squinted at the key and replied. "We are in room 402."

MY SISTER WAS DUE to land in Johannesburg a few minutes after mine. It turned out that we arrived at the same time and we both took the short flight to Durban where Rob met us.

"He's no better. If anything he's worse," Rob said. "Hospice doesn't think he will last much longer." I have to admit that I was really shocked by the news. Sure my father was ill but I was not expecting him to die so suddenly.

We drove through the lush green hills along a road we traveled many times as kids in the back of the family car. There were eight

of us in total, five kids, two dogs and the maid in a car packed full of our gear for a week at the beach cottage. My mother would chain smoke while we kids fought in the back seat. These were the days long before air conditioning had been invented. The dogs were hot and slobbering and inevitably one of us would poke the other in the ribs by mistake. That would start a fight and the noise from the back of the car would escalate until Dad leaned over the seat and took a swipe at us. When he was older he suffered from tennis elbow, but had never played a game of tennis in his life. I could hardly believe that those days were over. My childhood had flashed by and suddenly here we were driving through the Valley of a Thousand Hills to see my father live out the final few days of his life.

He was asleep in his easy chair when we got to the house. A pall hung over the place, a kind of hushed silence. Asleep he looked just fine, but when he awoke he had no idea where he was and who we were. It was awful. I remembered the trip I made a year earlier when I had flown all the way to South Africa to have lunch with Dad, how alert and inquisitive he had been. Now, just a few months later, his mind was gone.

We all have to deal with aging parents at some point in our lives and to be honest Judy, my step-mother, and Rob and his wife Nadine had borne the brunt of Dad's illness. Sue had done her fair share with frequent visits, but the rest of us were stepping in at the last moment. In most ways we had it easy, except for the abruptness of it all. The others had witnessed a slow deterioration and had become used to the inexorable creep of his cancer. The last time I saw him he had walked me to my car and given me a big hug. The man in the chair was a shadow of that person.

It's a cruel fact of life that we have to witness our parent's death: those of us who are lucky enough to outlast them. Nothing, however, prepares you for it and the following few days were

painful as we gathered in our concern and grief to watch the life slowly seep from him. At times he was alert and could make small talk but most of the time he lay in his bed sleeping while we carried on with our lives as if everything was just normal.

A week after I arrived in South Africa Dad suddenly perked up. It was Sunday and Dad always loved Sunday lunch. I had roasted two chickens sitting perched on beer cans and we were sitting down to a feast when Dad woke up and said that he wanted to have some lunch. My sister, a nurse for 35 years, got him into his wheelchair and he sat in the sun drinking a beer and enjoying the conversation. It was almost as if he had miraculously recovered. We all felt guilty being there. He must have known why all his children had flown in from far flung parts of the planet. He laughed a little and told a few stories of his own and I could hardly believe it was the same man that I had seen in his easy chair a week earlier, the one who did not recognize me and wasn't too sure who he was.

After lunch I sat in the sun and drank a whole bottle of cold rose wine. The sounds of Africa were all around me. Monkeys leapt from branch to branch while huge hadedas, one of Africa's most common birds, flew in to dig worms from the lawn. Hadedas are matronly looking with a long, curved beak and a raucous call. Their cries are a sound so ingrained in my blood as an African child that I can't imagine a life without them. By contrast my domestic life back home in Marblehead seemed sterile and boring.

The next day Dad was gone again, away to a place where dying people feel some comfort. He was lapsing into Afrikaans and telling stories of his time in the war. His body was slowly shutting down but dying takes time and each day we went about life as best we could. It was one of the very few times our whole family was together and we knew it would be the last so we took the time to drive around town reminiscing about our childhood.

We drove the road where I had run naked for a mile as part of a school prank. We paid a visit to the home where we grew up. The house looked the same, but smaller than we remembered. The town had also changed. We grew up during apartheid and the small city had a distinct British Colonial air about it. These days it was pure Africa, the sidewalks teeming with people, the fancy department stores more like overcrowded bazaars.

I had almost forgotten that my 50th birthday was looming and smiled wryly to myself when I thought that just two weeks earlier I was trying to come up with a plan that would give me the kind of introspection I sought. How ironic. Here we were at our remaining parent's deathbed talking about growing up African and how our lives had changed once we each in turn decided to travel the world. We tentatively broached the subject of our mother's death, a passing that had been quickly swept under the rug as Dad remarried and the rest of us went on with our lives as if women in their forties die every day. None of us had really spoken about it, not among ourselves or even much to our spouses and friends. It was almost as if she never existed.

A few years earlier, on a guilt ridden visit back home, I decided to try and find her grave. I knew she had been cremated and I knew where her ashes were immured so I showed up at the graveyard early one morning in search of her remains. Since I knew that there would not be an actual grave, just a plaque and place for the ashes, I started in that area of the cemetery but could find nothing with her name on it. Finally, after a few hours of searching I decided to ask for help and knocked on the door of the small office.

"Hello," I said to the lady seated behind the desk. "I hope that you can help me find the grave of my mother." The lady, a large, middle-aged black woman, gave me a friendly smile. "Sure," she said. "I would be happy to help. Can you please give me her

name and the date she died.” The name was easy but the date was not. I had an idea it was in July or August and I thought that I had the year right and gave her what little information I had. The lady was aghast. “You mean to tell me sir,” she said, “that you don’t know when your mother died?” She glared at me accusingly. I explained that it was a long time ago and no, I could not remember precisely when it had happened. The lady asked me to sit down and I could see that she was agitated.

“Mr. Hancock,” she said. “Your mother died more than 20 years ago. Are you telling me that this is the first time you have ever visited her grave?” I was really taken aback, but the lady was absolutely right. I had not taken the time, not even once, to visit her grave and pay my respects to the woman that had given me life. The guilt swelled up inside of me like a tangible force. I was really ashamed but tried to mitigate my feelings by explaining that I lived overseas. The lady shot me a harsh look. “Your Dad still alive?” she asked.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Does he live here in Pietermaritzburg?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Have you visited him in the last 20 years?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Well then Mr. Hancock, you should have visited your Mother.”

The lady was right and I had no excuse. I sat uncomfortably while she paged through her files. She asked for the name and her last known address but still could not find any record. I was certain I had the correct graveyard and was starting to feel a little uneasy about the whole thing. Surely there had to be a grave or plaque or something. The lady had almost given up looking when she said to me, “There is one last possibility.” She left the

room and came back a few moments later with a small textbook, the kind we had used in school to learn how to write and form our letters. She paged slowly through the book shaking her head and grunting. Finally she said to me. "Your mother's name was Yvonne?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Her maiden name was van den Berg?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Here she is then." She turned the book around and showed me a penciled-in name. There, in a small script, was my mother's name. Alongside it was a date and time.

"Do you know what this is?" the lady asked. I shook my head. "These are the records kept by the person that operates the crematorium. That time there is the moment her body was cremated. It's the only record we have of her here at the graveyard."

I was devastated. I left the place feeling numb. For many years I never said a thing to anyone but finally got up the courage to ask my father what had happened. He insisted that he had paid for a plaque and a space at the graveyard but I could tell by the way he spoke that he was not quite sure if anything had ever been done. He too had never once visited the cemetery. I guess our family is a bit like that. Good and able to stuff it all in and keep pushing it down and down in the futile hope that years of grief and anger would never resurface.

MY 50th BIRTHDAY came and went. We had a braai, a South African barbeque, but there was not much to celebrate. A few feet away my father lay asleep in his bed waking occasionally to look around in a bewildered state. His frame was tiny, his skin almost translucent. Sue and Nadine kept him clean and comfortable while we waited for his final breath. After lunch

Judy said to me. “How about we give your Dad a bit of your birthday champagne?”

I felt bad that I had not thought of it myself. Dad loved his drink and had been asking for a few sips of beer every now and then. We walked through to his room and he was awake, almost alert. He smiled when Judy mentioned that it was my birthday as if he knew and was well aware of the day. She held the sippi-cup to his lips and tipped it slowly. My father had been expecting a drink of water and had not counted on an explosive mouthful of champagne. It may well have been his last alcoholic drink that finally killed him. Two days later he slipped into a permanent coma.

The day was spent in a suspended state. We knew that the end was near. It was a lovely warm summer day and the birds were making a racket outside his window. The Hadedas came and went. Ha ha ha ha hadeda they shrieked as they took flight, calling out to each other. In the early afternoon the monkeys arrived. They were trying to swipe the dog food that Judy had left out for the hadedas. They swung in the trees outside the bedroom window. Judy shooed them away with a broom but they clambered onto the upper branches just out of her reach chattering and muttering to themselves. As soon as she went inside they hopped back down onto the lawn and scoffed the remaining dog food.

It had been a habit of my parents for decades, a throwback to Colonial times, to bring out the ice bucket and pour drinks at sundown. This evening was no different except the sun was now hidden behind a heavy blanket of drizzle. The silver tray was loaded with ice and cold wine, the crystal glasses tinkling in anticipation of the evening ritual. Dad waited until all glasses were full and then quietly slipped away. He died on his own terms, in his bed, with his family there. It was sad, but not really.

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He died an African at heart, a loving father and an all-round good guy. I will try, but I don't think that I will ever be the great and caring person that he was.



28

where
the race
is officially announced

IN HINDSIGHT THERE were two big mistakes made during our final days in Portimao, mistakes that I would come to regret as 2008 unfolded. The first was the sudden transfer of our company headquarters from the Channel Islands to England. It was something that we had to do in order to satisfy the contract, but the result was a UK based company with a UK bank account. Even though I am a British citizen and hold a British passport, I was not able to be listed on the bank account. At the time we formed the UK company I presumed that there would not be any problem so perhaps we can't call it a mistake, but as things unfolded it turned out to be disastrous for me.

The second mistake came in the fug of our third bottle of

wine on the night we celebrated signing the contract. Josh had previously floated the idea of having Catherine, to whom he was now engaged, join the company as our first and only employee. My gut resisted the idea but Josh is nothing if not persuasive. When we formed the company we talked for hours about building something for our families to enjoy. Josh wanted his kids to be a part of the event and I was hoping that Sigrun would agree to travel with the race and bring the boys along to each stopover.

Each time I talked with friends about the idea of Catherine joining the company, the response was the same, and unequivocal; it was a bad idea. For one, Catherine and Josh were joined at the hip. For two, it's generally a bad idea to hire family members especially when the company consists of only two people. I knew in my heart that it would be a mistake but I was in a celebrating mood and sometime during the course of the evening I told Josh that he was welcome to put Catherine on the payroll. She was out of a job and had the skills necessary to be a part of the team, at least that was what Josh said. It turned out that the stars sparkling in his eyes clouded his judgment of her abilities. It would be months before it became clear that she was simply not up to the job by which time it was too late.

None of this was apparent as we prepared for a big press launch in Lisbon. As the biggest city in Portugal and the seat of the government, Lisbon is where the media have their offices and rather than hope that they would travel to Portimro for an announcement, it was decided that we would take the show to them. The press reception was planned as part of the Lisbon Boat Show. The mayor, Piscaretta and a number of other Portimro officials would meet us in Lisbon for the announcement. The city had contracted a Lisbon based PR agency, Ana Lima Communications, and Ana Lima herself was hard on the case. We had modified the Global Ocean Challenge logo to become the Portimao Global

Ocean Race logo and provided Ana Lima with some graphics which she would use to create a large backdrop.

I returned to Marblehead briefly after my father's death, but quickly packed my bags again and jumped on a plane for Portugal. For a change it was a breeze charging the air ticket, not the mad scramble to pull together enough money to afford the flight.

I had not been back in Lisbon since our awful meeting with Paula and Marita and felt a certain sense of satisfaction as I drove through the streets of Lisbon heading for the Tivoli Hotel, a grand old place in the heart of the city. Josh and I would spend two days preparing for the press announcement. We would also strategize the best way forward now that we had money to spend.

We were facing a number of problems. Since announcing the Global Ocean Challenge more than two years earlier, the press and sailing public had been kind and generous with their support, but they were becoming skeptical. You can only play the game for so long and to be perfectly frank we had built the event with smoke and mirrors. Now that we had the race sponsored by a city in Portugal most had never heard of, there was a bit of healthy skepticism. We hoped that the press announcement would change all that. The other problem was that the first signs of the recession were starting to hit. Many of our potential competitors were self-funded entries and the feedback we were getting from them was that they were nervous about the economy. We would have to wait and see what happened.

Even though we were in Lisbon, Josh was reluctant to call Ricardo and his negative attitude toward him put me in an awkward situation. I felt, no, I knew, that had it not been for Ric we would not have a race. Ricardo was the person who had first brought the race to Portugal and he had worked tirelessly behind the scenes to shepherd the sponsorship through its various hurdles. He alone deserved the credit for getting our dream funded. It galled me

that Josh would not acknowledge that fact, but worse yet, he was seeking to distance himself, and me, from Ricardo. Perhaps I am weak and should have voiced my feelings, but I have always tried to pick my battles carefully and this was not a battle I wanted to pick a few days ahead of the press announcement. I secretly hoped that the problem would go away with time, but it was a naive hope as it only got worse.

We arrived at the boat show early and found Ana Lima and her team setting things up. She was all business and the reception area looked very professional. I hoped that there would be a good turnout and was happy to see that some newspaper and magazine journalists were already starting to show up. A few weeks earlier we had secured sponsorship from Musto, one of Britain's best marine clothing manufacturer, and they had supplied pants, jackets and very nice shoes for Josh and me to wear. We looked good. Relaxed, confident and thrilled to be there. The mayor arrived along with his entourage and we greeted like old friends. It was time to get the show on the road.

Ana Lima led the conference and we took turns to speak. I started followed by the mayor, Marina from Portimro marina, and Josh. The mayor called Josh and me Children of Portimro, which led to us nicknaming him Dad. I sat behind my microphone looking at the crowd of reporters and television cameras and could hardly believe that we had finally pulled it off. The announcement underlined the contract we had signed a few weeks earlier and the news went out across Portugal and around the world. The coverage was superb. The Portimao Global Ocean Race was definitely a reality.

At the end of the conference the media stuck around for some food and drink and I spotted Ricardo. He came over and shook my hand. "Well done," he said. "That was really great. It was so nice to finally see it all come together." He stepped back from me and gave me a quizzical look.

“Is everything OK?” he said.

“Sure,” I replied. “Things could not be better.”

“Are you sure?” he pressed.

“Yea, why do you ask?”

Ric smiled and continued. “Maybe it’s nothing but I have a funny feeling. Are you and Josh getting along OK?”

Now it was my turn to be surprised. We were not getting along very well and the main reason was Ricardo. Josh had pulled me aside moments before the press conference started and complained to me that Ricardo had shown up. “He’s such a bloody opportunist,” Josh said. “Look at him just showing up here uninvited.” I was about to say something when Ana Lima took me by my arm and herded us to the stage. I was shaken by Josh’s comments. Sure it was one thing to not call him once we got to Lisbon, but Ric had every right to show up at a media event. He was after all, part of the media.

“Things are OK Ric,” I said. “Sorry that I did not call you. We have been super busy and there has not been much time,” I lied. I felt terrible but Ric gave me a hug.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “Just let me know what I can do to help. You know I am always here for you.”

Looking back now almost two years later I realize that it was that moment when things began to change. It was nothing earth shattering; just an imperceptible realignment of the relationship Josh and I had as friends and as business partners. I had witnessed him turn on a good friend and it should have been a warning to me.

Instead, in my naive, starry-eyed view of the world, I was confident that this was just another glitch on the long road to pulling off a new global yacht race. After the press conference

BRIAN HANCOCK

Josh and I stopped in a cafe for a drink. I should have voiced my discomfort at the turn of events, but instead let the cold beer wash away my worries.

29

where
the competitors
assemble

JOE HARRIS CALLED ME as soon as I got back to the US. “So this is finally a reality?” he asked. “Who would have believed it? When Josh and I were talking about a new, affordable race on the Transat Jacques Vabre, I never really imagined that it would actually happen. You are to be congratulated for your perseverance.” We agreed to meet the following week to discuss his own entry in the race and a few days later we met in a comfortable pub near his home in Hamilton. Fresh snow lay about but inside a roaring fire kept us warm.

“I am struggling to find a sponsor,” Joe admitted. “As you know this boat is costing me a lot of money and I need some sponsorship

to help offset the bills. It would be irresponsible of me to use family money to pursue my own dream.” Joe was right and his entry mirrored those of many of the other potential competitors who had contacted us. Some had boats, some just had dreams, all of them needed varying degrees of financial support. Joe and I discussed some ideas on how he might attract sponsorship but I could get a sense that even though a solo circumnavigation had been a life’s dream, he was slowly but surely backing away from competing in the race. It turned out I was right. A few months later Joe announced in a brief news release that he had turned his focus to his family and other business interests, and would not be a competitor in the Portimao Global Ocean Race.

The news really saddened me. Joe had been a catalyst for the whole idea and I knew that it had been a burning dream of his to race single-handed around the world. For him to give up must have been a heart wrenching decision, but he had thrown in the towel. His decision set off a chain reaction. There were a number of French sailors planning on racing solo in the 50-foot division, but as soon as Joe withdrew his entry, the rest did the same. Rather than gaining entries, we were starting to lose them and it was very worrying. We had hoped to get 10, maybe 15 boats to the start line but as summer came around we were looking at less than 10 boats. That was before the recession really started to bite.

Earlier in the year Josh had received a call from a young German sailor. He politely introduced himself as Boris Herrmann, a dinghy sailor who had done a bit of offshore sailing and had managed to secure a sponsor for the Portimao Global Ocean Race. “Would it be OK for me to enter your race?” he asked. It turned out that Boris, and his co-skipper Felix Oehme would become the stars of the race. They were exactly the kind of people we had envisioned as competitors; young, energetic and upwardly mobile. The Portimro Race was going to provide a platform for

them to get into the world of offshore racing at an affordable cost and prove to themselves, and their sponsors, that this was a worthwhile marketing and branding effort and definitely a worthwhile investment.

Boris was not only very intelligent, he had movie star good looks and a very engaging manner. He had been very clever in his pursuit of sponsorship and had targeted a German shipping company named Beluga Shipping GMBH. Beluga specialized in carrying oversized cargo, a niche market I never knew existed. You have an oil rig in Australia and need it in Moscow, you call Beluga and they figure out how to ship it there. The owner of the company was young, a sailor, and tremendously successful. Boris played to all these points and after two meetings he had secured full sponsorship for the race. In fact he had secured sponsorship for a number of races; the first of which was the Transat, a single-handed upwind slog across the Atlantic from Plymouth, England to Marblehead, my hometown.

I followed the race closely and was delighted to see that Boris was sailing near the front of the pack. This was not his first solo crossing. He had raced the mini-transat a few years earlier, but it was his first time on board his recently purchased Class 40 and he was racing against some of the big guns in sailing. His girlfriend, Meike, was already staying in my spare bedroom and we were looking forward to having Boris join us. As he approached Marblehead we went out on a launch to watch him finish. His blue and white *Beluga Racer* appeared out of a dark night, slipping silently across the almost perfectly still water until he crossed the finish line right off the entrance to Marblehead harbor.

While Boris was honing his sailing skills a British duo were honing theirs. Honing is perhaps not the right word for it. Jeremy Salvesen and Victoria Sanders-Perrin were rank amateurs hoping to compete in the race. Both had signed on as crew for a different

around-the-world race, but when the operator of that event went belly-up they found themselves looking for a new challenge. That was when they learned about the Portimao Race.

We had hoped all along that the race would attract a new breed of competitors and Jeremy and Victoria certainly fit the bill, but Josh and I were concerned that they had so little sailing experience that they might be a danger to themselves. They were self-funded and training hard but we wondered how they would manage a disaster in the deep south. Josh agreed to meet with them to help advise on their campaign, but it was really a meeting Josh wanted in order to gauge their competence. A few days later he called me. "They are fine," he said. "They are young, smart, hard working and above all they have a great attitude. I am sure that they will be OK." *Team Mongli* became our third definite entry behind the South African team of Lenjohn and Peter van der Wel and the Germans on *Beluga Racer*.

The newest boat in the race was a stunning red and white rocket ship named *Desafio Cabo de Hornos*. It was the latest generation of Class 40s and was being built for a Chilean sailor. The skipper, Felipe Cubillos, had painted his boat in the graphics of cave paintings found in Tierra del Fuego in southern Chile. The paintings had been done by the Yahgan Indians, one of the primitive tribes that lived on the shores of Patagonia. It was on these Indians that Charles Darwin, while on a trip through Patagonia, modeled his theory of evolution. Their existence was so primitive and so close to the primates that walk on all fours, it led Darwin to write his ground breaking book, *The Origin of Species*.

Cubillos and co-skipper Josñ Mucoz were an experienced team and would have to be considered the favorites to win. Theirs was a slick, well organized campaign, the only drawback being that their boat was launched late in the summer and they would not have a lot of water under the keel prior to the start.

The field of solo entries dwindled as the recession started to bite and as August rolled around only two remained. Two terrific entries. The first, and indeed one of the first competitors to contact us, was a Belgium sailor by the name of Michel Kleinjans. He was a highly experienced solo sailor and had an existing boat which he planned to modify and optimize for the race. *Roaring Forty* may have been 10 years old but it looked brand new when Michel arrived in Portimao in time for the start.

The other solo entry was the gentleman of the race, a 69 year old grandfather of five. Nico Budel was a salty old seadog sailing a boat that had already twice circumnavigated. His ride, *Hayai*, had been built by a Russian sailor Viktor Yazykov, one of my old crew mates from my third Whitbread Race aboard the Soviet yacht *Fazisi*.

There is a funny story attached to his effort. Yazykov was late leaving Charleston for the first leg of the 1998 Around Alone, and in his haste to get going he cut himself. Nothing big and barely worth bothering about, but once Viktor got into the tropics, the sweat and grime infected the wound until it swelled up to a golf ball size.

He consulted the race physician who advised that he would have to lance the infected area. Viktor cleaned his navigation station as best he could and with a camera running, filmed his self-surgery. It was a good bit of tape. You can see Yazykov with a tourniquet around his arm take a scalpel to his elbow, followed immediately by a gush of puss and blood. A second later Viktor drops out of the frame. He had passed out.

The doctor, meanwhile, was on the other end of the satellite email waiting for news of how the operation had gone. What Viktor had forgotten to mention was that he had been taking loads of Aspirin for pain, and Aspirin, being a blood thinner, had caused Viktor to bleed profusely. Yazykov spent 12 hours passed

out in a pool of his own blood. OK, I know there is nothing funny so far, but while he was unconscious, his boat, without the autopilot set, racked up the best 12-hour run of the entire circumnavigation.

Nico would be sailing the same boat with very little modifications. He was fit, tough and an inspiration to us all and we were delighted to have him as a competitor.

As late September rolled around these ten sailors gathered in Portimao for the start. There would be two weeks of security checks and plenty of parties. The start, October 12, 2008, was just around the corner.

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where
the pitfalls
of ocean racing are exposed

JOSH RENTED A LUXURIOUS VILLA just outside of Portimao for the few weeks leading up to the start. I thought it was a bit extravagant especially since the Tivoli Hotel was a sponsor, but his reasoning was that we deserved a nice place to stay and his logic was that it was in fact cheaper to rent the place than pay for additional hotel rooms for the rest of our team.

We had contracted Clive, my cameraman friend, to follow the race and shoot footage which we planned to use for the television series. We had also hired a top photographer, Ingrid Aberly, to come and gather some stock footage of the pre-start and start. To help me with the writing Oliver Dewar was hired for a few days.

There was also Alan Green, our rules guru, who would be in town through the start to help with race logistics. It was a growing team but we wanted to put our best foot forward for the city and to get the race off to a good start.

I should have been over the moon with happiness as my plane landed in Faro, but instead my stomach was tied in knots. It was very clear that Josh and I had very different views when it came to spending money. He thought nothing of paying for the best and while I admired his confidence, I also knew that we had a limited budget and it would be better to finish the race with money left over to tide us through until the second race, than to live in a grand villa complete with pool. It was not necessary.

Worse yet I found out that he had hired his son without consulting me and when I moved into the villa it was hard not to notice that he and Catherine took the master suite on the second floor while I was relegated to a tiny room off to the side. Having said that it did make sense for them to have the large room but there was an unspoken inequity being created and I was not happy. I thought of saying something but there was a ton of work to do so decided to get on with things and chat with Josh later.

Portimro sparkled in the late summer sun. The Portuguese tourists had left town, their children returning to school, and the city hung in that suspended state between the summer crowd and the rush of Northern Europeans who were soon to head to Portugal to escape the cold weather. Praia da Rocha was raked clean of any of the excesses of late night revelry that had happened over the summer, preparing for the more staid crowd that rented beach chairs and dined on burgers and fish in the string of local restaurants. I paid a visit to my favorite restaurant ordering a plate of sardines and a large carafe of cold white wine

and pushed the issues that were bothering me aside. I know now that I should have faced them head-on but as I already pointed out, procrastination is one of my weak points.

The first competitors to arrive were *Team Mowgli*, the British duo of Jeremy Salvesen and Victoria Sanders-Perrin. I drove around to the far side of the marina where they had docked eager to introduce myself. I could tell by their body language that all was not well. Pip, their ruddy faced Project Manager, was affable and friendly but I could tell that he had something to say. A few minutes later he pulled me aside.

“Things are not good,” he said. “Jeremy and Victoria are not getting along.” I was shocked. A few weeks earlier I had spoken to both of them right after they finished their qualifying sail and they seemed ecstatic. In fact I had some video footage that they had shot loaded on my computer and I decided that it might be interesting to take a look at it. The *Mowgli* crew were heading off for breakfast and I returned to my office for some video viewing.

What I saw was gripping television. Jeremy was extroverted and seemed to be loving each and every minute of their great adventure. Victoria seemed less enthused and then the footage turned to some self-filming that she had done. She was wedged into the corner of the cockpit facing the camera. Behind her I could see the white foam of cresting waves and hear the dull roar of a hostile ocean. Jeremy was obviously off watch and presumably asleep. Victoria, lovely to look at in person, looked drawn and disheveled. She looked exhausted. The few days at sea had sucked the spirit right from her eyes and she was on the verge of tears. I say that the footage was gripping because I was witnessing pure emotion. A young woman who had given up a terrific job with Xerox to chase her dreams had suddenly found herself in the middle of a nightmare. Tears streamed down her

face, her body shriveled from emotion and stress. I watched the footage until Victoria clicked the off-button and then I called Josh.

“What do you hear from *Team Mowgli*?” I asked.

“It’s not good,” Josh replied. “Jeremy can’t stand Victoria and wants her off the boat.”

This was not good news. We did not need to lose another competitor but it looked as if *Team Mowgli* was in trouble.

“What do you reckon we do about it?” I asked. There was a pregnant pause and then Josh replied.

“That’s the reason I had David do the delivery with them. He’s now qualified to do the race. I am going to call a meeting with all of them and suggest that Victoria head home and David take her place.”

It was a good suggestion, but I felt awful for Victoria. I know all about putting your hopes and dreams on the line and I hated to see her dream get crushed. Then I had a bright idea. We had been talking with another British entry who had a boat but needed some extra funding. I immediately called Josh.

“I have an idea,” I said. “Why don’t we try and hook Victoria up with Simon Clarke? He needs some money, she has some money, I am sure that we can get them qualified before the start.”

Josh was enthusiastic. “That’s a great idea,” he said. “I will put it to them when we meet. Well done. That’s a great thought you had.”

The meeting did not go well. Jeremy, affable when the camera was rolling, had a darker side to him. He had been a very successful businessman and it was obvious that he had bullied his way to success. He wanted Victoria off the boat and he wanted her off the boat and out of their rented villa that day. He was

willing to drop some money to make it happen. Josh did his best to keep things on an even keel but he too could see what was going on. The meeting ended and I ran into Pip on the verandah of the Tivoli Hotel.

“Jeremy is the asshole,” Pip said not mixing his words. “I wouldn’t want to sail anywhere with him, but he is the one with the money and has put in a lot more money than Victoria. It’s his boat and if he wants her off the boat, then he will get her off the boat.”

Pip is a successful lawyer and he knew what was happening was wrong, but he also knew there was no other way forward. Josh meanwhile had suggested the alternative plan to Victoria and she seemed interested. For her it was about saving face. She had set herself up for this grand adventure, told her friends and family that she was setting off to sail around the world, and the absolute worst thing was to pack it in before the race even started. I felt her pain and tried to talk to her but she was distraught. In the end it did not work out with Simon Clarke. There was not enough time to pull it off and I think she was worried about heading off on a major expedition with someone she had not yet met. She finally had to admit that her dream was over and she slipped quietly out of Portugal.

ONE OF THE MOST gripping books I have ever read is a sad story about a British man who entered the first ever solo, nonstop race around the world. The book is called *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst*. Crowhurst, a young entrepreneur, had his mind set on entering the race and found a backer to help pay for it. His sailing skills were nowhere up to the task, but what he lacked in skill he made up for with enthusiasm. Unfortunately you can only get so far with enthusiasm. Crowhurst had chosen a small catamaran for the voyage and it quickly became apparent that the

boat was not up to the task. Those observing later admitted that they knew that Crowhurst was not up to the task but declined to say anything at the time. With the start of the race rapidly approaching Crowhurst readied his boat for departure knowing in his heart of hearts that he would not make it around the world.

This is where his ego came in and it did so with disastrous consequences. Unable to admit to himself and his supporters that he lacked the necessary skills to get the boat around the world, he decided to set off anyway. Peer pressure forced his hand and on a blustery late summer day he set off to sail around the globe, without stopping. Less than a week into the trip the boat was starting to fall apart. By this time it was blatantly obvious that he would barely make the equator, let alone Cape Horn, but even so he was unable to turn back. He simply could not face those he had bragged to about his expertise. Instead he came up with a rather ingenious idea; he would fake his voyage.

Back in the late 60s there was no such thing as satellite communications. Indeed radio communications were rudimentary and the fleet was required to make contact with race officials once a week. Crowhurst decided that he would stay in the relatively safe waters of the North Atlantic and send weekly position reports as if he was heading off for the Southern Ocean. If he was able to avoid being spotted by passing ships he might be able to fool the race authorities. It was not an easy task but Crowhurst was no fool. He kept two separate diaries and it's these diaries that are the basis for the book. The deception, the solitude and the tedium of long days at sea slowly led to paranoia and mild insanity.

His final undoing came when his fake position reports showed him chasing back up the Atlantic toward the finish in hot pursuit of the second place boat skippered by Nigel Tetley, a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy. Tetley, hearing that he might lose his position to the unknown and relatively inexperienced

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Crowhurst, piled on extra sail pushing his boat as hard as he dared and a few days later the boat broke up and sank under him. The news was probably the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back. The insanity took over and 243 days into his voyage Crowhurst stepped off the back of the boat and drowned. His delusion had him believing that he might be capable of walking on water.

The winner of the race was none other than the great Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, the same RKJ who owned the Around Alone race. Tetley was awarded a consolation prize and built himself a new trimaran, but he never really recovered and ended up committing suicide a few years later.

IT WAS WITH THIS STORY and many others like it swirling around my head that I took stock of our competitors. It was up to us as Race Organizers to make sure that we didn't have another Crowhurst among them. With the way modern yacht races are tracked there was simply no way for anyone to pull off a scam, but neither Josh nor myself wanted any kind of issue with our sailors and we were both very well aware of the mental strain placed on sailors that are at sea for long periods. Indeed, I had witnessed a complete mental collapse during my first Whitbread Race.

In 1981 the face of offshore yacht racing was very different from where it stands today. It was considered a brave adventure, not an elite sport, and as such events like the Whitbread attracted a rag tag bunch of social misfits, myself among them. Since we were there for the adventure and the experience, we were not about to skimp on the luxuries of life and enjoyed wine with dinner each evening. Sure the conditions were not optimal, but it was the buzz we were after, not the bouquet.

Our cook for the trip was an alcoholic restaurant owner from

Ibiza. He made sure that the boat was well stocked with not only wine, but a few cases of mixed drinks as well. The problem, however, is that the stress of living in a confined space with a dozen other unwashed men on a wet and wild ride across the cold Southern Ocean soon picks away at any personality weaknesses.

Not long into the second leg it was obvious that Bob, one of our watch leaders, was also an alcoholic. Bob had a series of mental issues which had been masked by living a stable life on land, but the unstable life at sea, aided by a pile of booze, quickly probed at his soft spots. The problem really escalated when Bob and the cook depleted all the alcohol on board with two more weeks of hard racing still to go. The drying out was not pleasant to witness.

We arrived in Auckland and were treated as celebrities. Sailing is a national past time for the Kiwis and they loved us, putting on party after party, night after night. Bob and the cook were in their element and Bob, being an insomniac, was living high on the hog. It all caught up with him on Christmas Day. Bob had been on a week-long bender, hours of hard drinking interspersed with a few moments of sleep. On Christmas morning a few of us went down to the boat to get some work done, the start of the third leg being the following day.

As we approached the boat we could see a small crowd gathered. On the foredeck Bob was pacing back and forth. He was well into his speech and had the crowd mesmerized. His oratory was excellent, but he was not making any sense. The crowd was watching with morbid curiosity. Bob hardly recognized us as we jumped on board but I remember two things about him very clearly. The spit around his mouth was collecting at the edges in a white froth, and the look in his eyes was one of wild terror. Bob had gone off to some other place where the mentally disturbed go

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and it would be six long months before he came back to reality. We had him checked into a hospital under the care of an excellent doctor and took off to race to Argentina the following morning. When Bob and his doctors finally got his mind back on an even keel we had long since finished the race back in England.

I WAS CONFIDENT that the issue with *Team Mowgli* had been resolved in a way that was better for the race and hoped that it was the last unexpected problem that we would have to deal with. Over the next few days the rest of the fleet dribbled in, all of them remarking on how perfect Portimao was. The boats docked side by side in the marina just outside the Tivoli Hotel while Ana Lima and her team set up their media center in the hotel atrium a stone's throw away. Things were starting to come together nicely and despite my concerns about Josh and Catherine, we were settling into life at the villa.



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where
the stress level
rises

THE FINAL WEEK LEADING up to the start was hectic. We were a small team aiming high, running a race on a tight budget. From the outside things probably looked good, but internally all was not well. It was clear that there was no chemistry between Catherine and myself and she was getting on my nerves, in fact she was getting on everyone's nerves. She was out of her depth and not handling stress very well. I liked her a lot but it was simply not working out and I deeply regretted allowing Josh to hire her. Her stress was rubbing off on everyone, Josh in particular.

One night we got back to the villa where Josh and I had been

cooking dinner on a rotating basis. It was very cathartic to finally push the laptop aside and spend an hour in the kitchen. Josh had stacked the place with cases of French wine and we were getting through them at an alarming rate. One night my partner came in looking grim faced.

“What’s up?” I asked. He just shrugged and poured himself a large glass of wine. I could see that he was wound tighter than a cheap watch. “Where’s Catherine?” I asked innocently.

“She still in the car. She won’t come in,” he replied. “She just winds me up these days.” I was glad that I was not the only one getting wound up tight by his fiancée, but it was not a good situation. We all needed to take a deep breath and relax; this was, after all, a dream come true for all of us.

“Are you going to just leave her in the car?” I asked. Josh didn’t answer. Instead he poured himself another glass of wine and lit a cigarette. I helped myself to a beer and headed outside to the pool. It was a gorgeous night, the air still and smelling of honeysuckle. I pushed my chair back and relaxed feeling the cold beer wash away the mess and stress of the day. Josh was quiet but he was lighting one cigarette after the next; never a good sign.

We talked through some of the day’s events and finally sat down to dinner. Catherine was still in the car. Finally, well after dinner was done and the dishes cleaned, Catherine slunk into the villa and went straight to her bedroom. Nothing was said but internally I was angry. I realized that it was a personal issue between her and my partner, but she did also work for me and her attitude was awful. I could feel a knot of tension in my stomach tighten and poured myself another glass of beer to help loosen it. It was the wrong approach, but it was late and I figured that there would be plenty of time to work things out after the race start.

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Safety of the fleet was of paramount concern and our chief rules and safety officer, Alan Green, was working hard to ensure that all the competitors had the necessary equipment onboard. We installed small tracking devices on each boat. The devices would allow us to poll the boats on a regular basis. The poll data would be translated into a position on the website. In fact the poll would also include the boat's speed, direction, and a bunch of other data that would make it interesting for those following the race. Long gone were the days when sailors raced across barren stretches of open ocean in relative obscurity. These days we knew to the meter where every boat was and how they were doing. The trackers were as much a safety tool as they were a device to keep the sailing public interested.

I found myself getting very emotional each time we had a gathering. The setting in Portimao was stunning and things were going very well with the city and local media. I could still hardly believe that we had pulled it off. After the dark days just after Lisbon turned us down, to the night I spent in prison, it had been a long and arduous struggle but the dream had come true. The dream that started so long ago with a single phone call, had turned into a reality due largely to the fact that we had never given up. No matter how tough it got both Josh and I had stuck with it and we were being rewarded for our perseverance.

One night I retraced my footsteps where I had walked in the pre-dawn hours the day before the mayor signed our contract. I started in my favorite restaurant with a plate of sardines and a few jugs of wine. The view was perfect. Praia da Rocha stretched as far as I could see and a full moon bathed the sparkling waters of the Atlantic in a soft light. The wine and food had me in a contented mood. I took off along the boardwalk at a brisk pace feeling good about life and where things were headed. On the home front my marriage was much better now that we had some

money in the bank. It's amazing how stressful life can be when you are broke. Sigrun was genuinely pleased for me and was looking forward to news about the race. She and the boys were not able to join me because Sigrun was in nursing school and was intent on acing her grades.

At the end of Praia da Rocha I turned toward the city center. The streets above the beach were bustling with restaurant goers but I wanted to get deeper into the city, away from the touristy areas. I headed in the direction of the old part of the city and as soon as the pavement turned from cement to cobblestone I knew I was in the right place. I stopped in a tiny, dingy bar filled with locals and ordered a shot of brandy. I was clearly out of place but the locals were warm. I wanted to tell them that I was a 'Child of Portimao', Mayor da Luz had said so, but instead smiled at them when they looked my way.

I needed to take a break from the race and the personality issues that were playing heavily on my mind. I wanted to get among the people who had given their hard earned money, by way of their taxes, to fund my dream. The brandy helped me make conversation and what I found were kind, honest, caring men and women. None of them had any clue about the race, never heard of it, most had never ventured close to the marina since it had been built. They did understand that Portimao was a city that marketed itself with events and they were proud of it. Furthermore they liked the mayor, said he was a man of the people, that he came from a humble fishing family and they respected that.

It was late when I left the bar but I kept walking and a few minutes later I was at City Hall. The fountains had been turned off for the night and the building was dark and empty. I looked up at the mayor's office and thought back to the afternoon Josh and I had sat with bated breath while Piscaretta explained the concept of the Portimao Global Ocean Race to the mayor. I could still feel

the flood of relief that came when he smiled and said, "What are we waiting for then. Let's get on with signing this thing." We had come a long way and we were only just beginning. Our long term plan was to reinvest all the sponsorship money into the first race and grow the event until it was a major global race and we could demand more money for sponsorship.

I grabbed a final nightcap in the bar across the square and then started to walk slowly back to the race office. My path took me past the good fish restaurants but they were all closed. I walked along the River Arade and turned back into the center of the city hoping to take a short cut. Suddenly, right there in front of me on a massive outdoor television screen was a shot of Josh aboard his Open 60, *Gartmore*. A helicopter hovered just ahead of the boat while standing on the transom, Josh was at the helm steering his powerful yacht through a throng of spectator craft. It was the very first video I had done, the short promotional video I had cobbled together for our meeting in Lisbon. I hardly remembered giving it to Portimao but there it was as large as life, images of boats and people flashing across the screen. The video ended and the screen faded to the words, Portimao Global Ocean Race, Sunday October 12, race start at 14:00. The words were in Portuguese of course but I knew exactly what they said.

The race start was less than five days away and there was still so much to do.



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where
you realise that your life
may depend on your competition

THE GERMAN TEAM of Boris Herrman and Felix Oehme were clearly running their effort with German precision. They were very organized and very media savvy. Their campaign was in marked contrast to the South African brothers Lenjohn and Peter van der Wel. They were working hard and playing hard but their boat always seemed to be organized chaos. I pulled Lenjohn aside. “Is everything going OK?” I asked.

He gave me a wry smile. “Have you seen the bloody stock market these days? All my operational budget for the race was in stocks and 85 percent of it is now wiped out. Gone. I have no idea if it will come back and if it doesn’t, I have no idea how I

am going to finish this race.” He put his hand on my shoulder. “But don’t you worry about that. You guys have done a great job. I am really looking forward to the start. We will figure it out somehow.”

The Bernie Madoff scandal had just broken and stock markets around the world were starting to fall. The housing bubble had burst and the effect was being felt globally. Lenjohn was not the only victim but he was our competitor and we knew that his problems, and those of the rest of the fleet, would be our problems until all the boats were safe and sound back in Portimao.

Further down the dock the gentleman of the race, Dutchman Nico Budel was hard at work on his boat. He looked the part of a salty seadog, his generous white beard matching his hair. He had a twinkle in his eye which his wife, Myrna, told me was due to an active and healthy relationship with a passionate woman. She meant herself, of course. Nico had recruited his strong and able sons to help prepare his boat and they were working methodically through the list of last minute items. The dock alongside was piled with spare parts and freeze dried food.

David Thomson, the new co-skipper of *Team Mowgli* was at the top of the mast working away. A rigger by trade, David was clearly making sure that if anything failed it would not be the rigging. He had been freely giving advice to some of the other competitors and I was very pleased to see that there was already a growing sense of camaraderie among the sailors. They knew, as did we, that the best chance of rescue, should you need it, was by a fellow competitor. To emphasize that point and really as a way to give the event credibility among the hard core sailors, we had invited solo sailing legend Giovanni Soldini to come down to Portimao. Soldini, a hugely successful and well respected sailor himself

had been involved in a dramatic mid-ocean rescue of a fellow competitor.

THEY WERE RACING the Around Alone, the one I was aiming for on my own Open 50 before we collided with the reef off Bermuda. Soldini had come second in the 50-foot division in the previous edition of the race four years earlier and was back again, this time with a powerful Open 60. Among his fellow competitors was Isabelle Autissier, a top solo sailor from France. Autissier had risen rapidly to the top of single-handed racing by crushing her competitors in the first leg of the 1994 Around Alone. She had found a weather anomaly in the Southern Hemisphere and had the courage to grab the opportunity. As she did so the window closed behind her and Isabelle rocketed into Cape Town five days ahead of the fleet.

It was on the second leg of that 1994 Around Alone race that things all came apart for Autissier. A massive wave crashed over the boat ripping her cabin top clean off. The mast was also part of the casualty and she was dramatically rescued a few days later, moments before the boat sank. So it was an older and wiser Autissier that showed up on the start of the 1998 Around Alone with a brand new boat. She had put it through its paces by setting a new sailing record from New York to San Francisco and was well prepared to dominate the race despite tough competition from Soldini and some other well known sailors, Josh among them.

On the third leg of the race, as the fleet headed deeper into the Southern Ocean, a strong frontal system roared up from astern bringing with it some steep seas and strong winds. Autissier was through the storm and in relatively calm weather when her keel snapped off and the boat capsized. It was a crushing blow for the French sailor who was currently leading the pack. Fortunately

for her Giovanni Soldini was not far astern and at the request of the Race Officials he altered course for the stricken yacht. Soldini arrived on the scene a few hours later and found the upturned hull, but there was no sign of life. Down below Isabelle huddled in the darkness without a working radio. She had no idea that her rescue was imminent. Soldini circled the boat a number of times calling out to the French sailor but there was no reply. "I was just starting to doze off when I heard a funny bang on the hull," Autissier said later. "It sounded different enough that I knew it was not a wave. I pulled on my survival suit and climbed out the escape hatch to investigate and was thrilled to see Giovanni there."

Soldini, tired of yelling, had grabbed a large hammer from his tool box. On a pass when he was close enough he lobbed the hammer at the upturned hull and it was that noise that Isabelle had heard. Moments later she was safely on board with Giovanni and the two sailed the rest of the leg to Uruguay. It was simple story of courage and survival and the media loved it.

WITH THE START just two days away Josh called a meeting so that we could discuss the format for the start and pre-start parade up the River Arade. We met on the verandah at the Tivoli. Josh's son Sam was there along with Clive, our cameraman. Catherine was late arriving so we started the meeting without her. We were well into our discussion when I spotted Catherine sauntering slowly our way. She was in no rush at all and appeared unhappy. Her cheeks flushed easily when she was stressed and I could see, even from a distance, that her face was red. She arrived at the table without apology and then promptly sat down with her back to the rest of us. She leaned back in her chair positioning herself so that she could make the best use of the sun. Occasionally she would look back at us over her shoulder and chime into the conversation, but

most of the time she was silent working hard on her tan. I was furious, but typically said nothing. We were too close to the start for an argument. I could see that Josh was fuming and he too was trying to keep a lid on his emotions. It was a disgrace and had she not been the fiancée of my partner I would have sent her packing that afternoon. But instead I jammed that incident down right there where all the other hurts and upsets had been stuffed over the years and tried to forget that the whole thing happened.

If I am to be completely honest I was no longer enjoying myself. Everything about Portimao was just perfect, the boats and sailors were almost ready for their great adventure, the marina looked postcard perfect with the race flags and banners strewn around the place, and the city officials were already starting to talk about Race #2. It should have been one of the happiest times of my life but the knot in my stomach about Catherine and the lopsided race management team left me feeling like an outsider looking in on my own event. Worse yet I knew that Ricardo was planning on coming down for the send-off party and Josh had vowed to have him physically removed from the premises if he so much as dared to show his face. There was absolutely no reason for it other than Josh was building up to something which I later found out to be part of his big-picture plan for the race. I should have heeded the signs. Ricardo was going to be the first victim that Josh had his sights set on; as soon as he had been dispatched the focus would be redirected. At the time I knew none of this but I wish now that I had paid more attention. It was going to change the face of the race forever. And my life forever.



33

where
the start gun
fires

RACE DAY DAWNED BRIGHT. It was postcard perfect. I got up before dawn and drove down the country lane from our villa to the race marina. Alongside the road sheep grazed barely lifting their heads to watch me drive by. The town was deserted and I enjoyed the open streets and early morning stillness. As I crested the hill I could see the ocean was like glass despite a forecast of wind for the start.

The marina was quiet, only the Chileans were awake and on board. The light emanating from the cabin interior of *Cabo de Hornos* gave it a cozy look. Felipe was at the navigation station pulling the latest weather maps. Nico's sons were also at the

marina and were stowing the last packages of freeze dried food. I walked toward the Tivoli restaurant and saw Ingrid Abery, our photographer, downing an early cup of coffee. She smiled at me.

“Grab a seat,” she said. “Are you excited? Nervous?” I was both and said as much. We talked through the start procedure. We had decided to cancel the helicopter as the expense and logistics were more than we deemed reasonable. Ingrid would join Josh and Clive and a number of other invited VIP’s on a massive RIB that would chase the fleet to the first turning mark of the course, a waypoint off Cape Sagres, 20 miles into the race.

The committee boat, on loan from some South African friends of mine, was already at the main dock in front of the restaurant. I could see that Alan Green, our Race Officer, was onboard stowing his gear. He would conduct the start procedure. It was key that we get the race off cleanly and Alan was regarded as the best in the business. The British team and entourage arrived and took a large table off to the side. They looked excited and not the slightest bit nervous. Then Josh showed up. He came straight to my table.

“I heard that Ricardo is going to be here,” he said. “He’s not welcome.” It was not a good way to start a conversation and my appetite for breakfast rapidly waned.

“He’s perfectly welcome to be here,” I replied. “The start is open to everyone, especially the Portuguese, and he is after all Portuguese.” Ric had called me the night before telling me that he was coming down with one of Portugal’s biggest musical talents, Mafalda Arnauth, a fado singer. It was typical of Ricardo to show up with a beautiful celebrity and I was very happy that he was coming down. I felt sick to my stomach about the situation that was developing but Ric had been there from the very beginning and as I looked around the increasingly crowded Tivoli restaurant I knew that had it not been for Ricardo and his contacts in

Portimao, none of us would have been here. It was, after all, Ricardo who had called two years earlier suggesting that we bring the race to Portugal.

Josh had been distracted by some other pressing issue and had moved on from my table but his comments left a sour taste in my mouth. I could tell that the day was going to be stressful. I left with Ingrid and we walked down to the marina. She was bedecked with camera equipment, some sporting sizable lenses. Ingrid wanted to capture the crews arriving and was soon clicking away. I returned to the media center to brief Ana Lima and her team. A camera crew from RTP, Portugal's national television station, was about to arrive and they wanted to interview the sailors. There was a lot to do and I quickly forgot about the incident with Josh.

At ten-o'clock a local priest arrived. He would bless the fleet. It's a nautical tradition for a priest to bless sailors and their boats before they set off on a long voyage and right on schedule the priest strode into the Tivoli in his robes. I escorted him down to the boats and watched as he went from boat to boat offering a blessing. Then it was time for each boat in turn to leave the dock. We had set up a large PA system and carefully chosen appropriate send-off music for each of the teams. A large crowd gathered and a massive cheer went up for each of the boats as the dock lines were thrown ashore for the last time. The next time the sailors would touch dry land would be South Africa, we hoped.

The plan was for the boats to parade up the Arade River to the center of Portimao where a breast cancer awareness road race was taking place. In the early morning sun the six yachts motored slowly up the river to acknowledge the applause of the crowds assembled alongside the waterfront. I was in a RIB when I noticed that the South African team had still not applied the race branding graphics to their hull. They had the large decals

on board, but time had simply slipped away and they were in breach of one of the race rules. We pulled alongside and I spoke with Lenjohn. A minute later he handed me the decals and I hung over the edge of the RIB slowly applying the graphics while *Ocean Warrior* motored back down the river. Ten minutes later the boat was fully branded and ready to start.

I was to be on board the committee boat with Alan Green. Dr. Carito, Luis Piscaretta and various dignitaries were also on board including a great friend, Admiral Koos Louw, head of South Africa's largest naval base. He, along with Vitor Medina from the Royal Cape Yacht Club, had come over from Cape Town to attend the festivities. We were just getting ready to leave when I spotted Ricardo. He was with a gorgeous woman heading toward the VIP area.

"Shit," I thought to myself. I had hoped that he had made his own arrangements to watch the start as I knew that he was in for a bad reception if Josh clapped eyes on him. Josh had warned the skipper of the boat that in no way was Ricardo Diniz to be allowed on board for the start. It was all so unnecessary and ridiculous. I pulled Simon Farrington, the boat captain aside.

"Simon," I said, "is there any chance we can use your dinghy?" Tied astern of the boat was a sizable RIB bobbing gently in the water.

"Sure," he replied, "help yourself." Josh shot me a dark look as Ricardo stepped on board. He introduced me to Mafalda Arnauth who gave me the traditional double-cheeked kiss and smiled warmly.

"Ric," I said. "I have organized a RIB for you and Mafalda. It will be a lot better for you to be on your own once the race gets underway. We will have to remain on station after the start. With a RIB you can chase the boats." I could see over his shoulder that

Josh was casting dark glances my way. He looked about to come over and say something when Dr. Carito arrived. His demeanor made a quick about turn and the full-on charm started to ooze. I was disgusted. Something was afoot and I did not like the taste of it.

AFTER MY DAD DIED, Judy kept his voice on the home answering machine. As she explained to me, she simply did not have the heart to erase it and secretly I was glad. I missed his voice and wise council and at times when I was stressed I would call home hoping that Judy would not pick up. As we pulled away from the dock I placed a call to South Africa. The phone rang a few times and then the answer machine took over. It was a basic message, something about running in from the garden which explained why he had missed the call, but my Dad's voice was as clear as if he was sitting right next to me. I could feel the tears well up in my eyes. They were tears of joy and sadness and frustration. This day was the culmination of three decades as a professional sailor, it was a dream come true and a wonderful accomplishment.

I looked back at the city of Portimao and it sparkled in the late summer sun. The boats were resplendent with sponsor flags and banners and there was a tangible excitement in the air. The only thing that marred an otherwise perfect day was the attitude of my business partner. I could hardly fathom what was going on and was sad about it. There was no way that Ricardo should have been treated as anything other than a VIP. Josh and I had talked for years about this moment and I was mystified as to why he was acting in such a negative way.

The gun fired, the sound ringing out across the rippled water. Dr. Carito blew the smoke away and smiled. The Portimao Global Ocean Race was finally underway. The six competitors had lagged behind the start line jockeying for the best position, but as soon

as the gun went off they tightened their sails and rocketed across the imaginary line that stretched from the committee boat to a far-end buoy. *Beluga Racer*, the Germans, were first to cross followed closely by Michel Kleinjans, the solo sailor from Belgium. Only Nico Budel on *Hayai* held back. In his wisdom he knew that it was a long race around the world. No point in getting into trouble before the first turning mark. I remotely uploaded my observations to the race website to keep a growing group of followers happy. Images from the start would follow.

Soon the boats were out of sight. Kleinjans aboard *Roaring Forty* had moved into the lead and as he approached the stunning Cape Sagres he was joined by dolphins that played in his bow wave. Michel climbed out onto the bowsprit and leaned closer to the water, playing with the dolphins. They, and others like them, would be his only companions for the next six weeks. He, along with the nine other sailors had over 7,000 long ocean miles ahead of them. The sun set spluttering and sizzling in the west as night fell on the first day of the world's newest global ocean race.

ps - cover photo is Kleinjans and the dolphins

34

where
pirates, dust, disputes
and dumb luck all play a part

I WAS IN LONDON en route home when Josh called. “We’ve got a problem with *Mowgli*,” he said. “They are being followed by a sinister looking boat and are really worried.” The fleet had enjoyed a fast start to the race and the boats were off the African coast in a region known for piracy. A mysterious looking boat had suddenly appeared astern of the British entry and was tracking them closely. Just then an email landed in my inbox. I could see that it was from Jeremy Salvesen, the skipper of *Team Mowgli*.

“Shortly after dawn this morning we were sailing about 40 miles off the Western Sahara coast when we came across a

fishing boat about two miles off our starboard side,” he wrote. “Over the next hour or so it became clear that he certainly wasn’t fishing and that he was simply keeping pace with us. He gradually came closer and closer. We are concerned for our safety.” The boat closed to within a 100 metres off their stern and stayed there for nearly an hour before slowly drifting off to their port side.

“I have advised them to forget racing for now, to use their engine if they need and to get all the flares out and ready,” Josh continued. “The flares can be a very effective weapon if necessary.” Just then Josh received a call from the boat and signed off with me. I clicked on the race website and saw that *Mongli* was still sailing at a steady 6.5 knots, about right for the conditions. Their course looked to be good without any erratic movements.

Further to the west *Beluga Racer* and *Cabo de Hornos* were averaging over 7 knots but none of them could match the speed of Michel Kleinjans on *Roaring Forty*. The dolphins off Cape Sagres had certainly brought him good luck and combined with his ample sailing skills he was showing the rest of the fleet how to leverage a good start. Two days into the race and he had a 29 mile lead on the entire fleet. As I ran my mouse over his position the boat speed popped up and *Roaring Forty* was the only boat averaging over 8 knots.

Just then Josh called back. “It looks OK for now,” he said. “The boat has drifted away from them and has disappeared over the horizon. They have resumed racing. The only concern they have, and it’s a legitimate one, is that the boat was having a good look at them during the day and may return after dark. They will keep their radar going and alert me if anything appears on the radar. Meanwhile, about all we can do is wait for nightfall.”

Mongli was in one of those strange areas on the planet where even though they were close to civilization, they were sailing

in a lawless zone. Typically, had this happened off the coast of Australia, their Coast Guard would have been alerted and a ship or light plane dispatched to investigate. The west coast of Africa was quite different and we were concerned for all the boats. It reminded me how the world had changed.

Two decades earlier I had sailed in the exact same waters and while we were not concerned about pirates, we did have a strange sensation come over the boat one night. It was really odd and mysterious. It was a very dark night and there was a muggy closeness to the air. In the early hours before dawn the dew that fell was slippery and had a weird feel to it. Not like the usual damp that settles on everything.

Just as dawn broke and the first rays lit the sky we saw what had happened. We were covered in mud. A Sahara sand storm had blown out to sea and the closeness we felt was the dust which turned to mud from the dew. Everything, from the sails, mast, deck and down below was covered either in dust or a light mud, and it took days and numerous squalls to get the boat clean again.

The situation with *Team Mongli* was not quite so innocent but to our relief they made it through the night without any visitors. The morning poll showed that they had gybed over and set a course that would take them further offshore, away from any strange fishing boats.

The course for the first leg would take the boats south toward the equator sailing mostly in trade wind conditions. It would all change as soon as the fleet reached 10 degrees north where they would start to feel the edges of the doldrum region. The doldrums, or Pot au Noir (Black Pot) as the French so aptly describe the area, is tactically difficult and mentally challenging. The wind dies away to nothing as the massive weather systems of the Northern and Southern Hemisphere do battle with each other. Instead you are left with a windless calm interspersed with thundering squalls

accompanied by torrential rain. It's 300 miles of grim hell until the trades to the south take over allowing the sailors to break free of the unsettled weather and set a course for the corner of Brazil.

Beluga Racer was first into the doldrums and first out the other end followed closely by *Cabo de Hornos*. Michel aboard *Roaring Forty* was holding tough at less than a hundred miles astern but as a solo sailor he was at a big disadvantage. The double-handed teams were able to push around the clock. Kleinjans needed to sleep.

We had set a gate off the coast of Brazil, a way point that had to be honored by all the boats. The idea of the gate was to keep the fleet close together for safety as well as to make the racing interesting. It was also a place where the competitors would accumulate points toward their overall total for the race. The Germans were first through the gate and slipped quickly into trade wind sailing on the west side of the South Atlantic high pressure extending their lead to over 200 miles.

I was back at my desk in Marblehead pushing out media to an increasingly larger audience. We were getting requests for video clips and images from the non-sailing press and that was precisely what we were interested in. Sailors are a loyal and dedicated lot and we knew that they would follow the race; we were hoping to attract a large, non-sailing audience.

The leaves outside my office window were just starting to change color to those stunning oranges and yellows that have made New England a sought after tourist destination, when a strange email landed in my inbox. It was from Catherine. She was in a hotel room in Spain; alone. Josh had left and was driving north to France. Apparently they had a huge row and their relationship was over. Her email was an apology for her behavior in Portugal. A small part of me was relieved as I had left Portimao without discussing my feelings with Josh. Now I would not have to.

On the other hand I was sad. There was a purity in the concept behind the Global Ocean Challenge and that extended to the way we were going to run the business. Josh and I discussed it many times. This was our race, our company, and we were going to have fun with it and that included involving loved ones. It was obvious that Josh had been in love with Catherine, he told me so many, many times. He even mentioned that she was too good for him given his baggage of failed relationships. So while I was glad that the thorny issue of the lopsided race management team had resolved itself, I was sad that the race had ruined what had once been a great friendship and relationship. I called Josh to get the story. He too had been feeling the stress in Portugal. He ended the conversation with some good news.

“I had a chance to sit down with Carito before we left Portugal,” he said. “They loved the start and the send-off party. Their only regret is that Portimao did not have a local entry in the race. Carito is already talking about race #2 and says he will muster all city agencies to put an entry in the next one.” That was certainly good news as we did not want the event to be a one-hit wonder.

A week later Josh was back in France and he called to tell me that he and Catherine had patched things up. He was not completely thrilled, he said, but since they had already purchased her air ticket to Cape Town and we needed someone on the ground in South Africa to handle logistics, it made sense that she continue with the race. Just because you have a relationship issue should not automatically mean that you lose your job. I could only agree since it was already a ‘fait accompli.’

After a month of racing the Germans had opened up a commanding lead and they looked invincible. They had cut the corner on the South Atlantic High without slowing and shaved some miles off the course further extending their lead over *Cabo*

de Hornos. Unless something broke or they made a big tactical error they had Leg 1 in the bag. Except Mother Nature had other plans.

A small ridge of high pressure extended down from the large central high pressure that controls all the weather in the South Atlantic and this ridge was directly in front of *Beluga Racer*. I was tracking them on the race website watching their speed plummet from a steady 10 knot average, to 8, then 6 and finally it settled at between 2 and 3 knots. Astern of them I saw that Felipe on *Cabo de Hornos* had altered his course to dive deeper south. He had witnessed the Germans fate and was not going to fall into the same trap.

35

where
a small boy
goes missing

IT FELT STRANGE to be back in South Africa without my Dad alive. I would always call as soon as I landed but this time placed a call to Judy instead. She had moved from their home outside Pietermaritzburg, to Pretoria, to be closer to her two sons and their ever increasing pack of grandchildren. She sounded tired and a bit bewildered. The move had been sudden and I thought that she might be having some buyer's remorse. I promised to pay her a visit at the end of my stay and hung up the phone in time to board my flight to Cape Town.

The South African Airways jet banked low over the Cape Flats and I looked down on a mass of shanty towns baking in the

summer sun. These ubiquitous townships were popping up on any spare real estate and had changed the face of Cape Town. When I was a child the Cape Flats were a deserted stretch of land far from the city center, but now this teeming mass connected the city with the outlying communities in the wine region. Urban sprawl was sprawling in a sad and desperately impoverished way and I wondered where it would all end.

South Africa was certainly a better place since apartheid fell but the government was having a hard time plugging the border as hoards of immigrants from further north in Africa migrated south, attracted by the prospect of work. My taxi whizzed by a jumbled mass of corrugated iron, wood and caked mud that formed some of the small homes alongside the highway and I saw small, barefoot children playing in the dirt. I felt guilty. Here I was heading to the Royal Cape Yacht Club in the center of the city anticipating a long lunch sure to include a bottle or two of wine. I sheepishly buried my guilt and gave the taxi driver a large tip.

Josh and Catherine were already on station and had set up an office on the second floor of the club. It was a temporary solution until the club cleared some outlying offices for us to use. Our boats were arriving sooner than expected and we had caught the local organizing committee by surprise. Josh seemed distant and Catherine barely acknowledged me. I figured that there was some lingering unease about their relationship turmoil, but I had long since put it behind me and was looking forward to the stopover and the rest of the race. The Royal Cape Yacht Club was a perfect place for the fleet and flags fluttered listlessly in a dying breeze.

After checking my emails and updating the race website I decided to take a few hours off to decompress. The club had kindly arranged a new BMW each for Josh and myself and I was

looking forward to taking it out for a spin. I motored slowly out of the club premises and turned toward Table Mountain. I was going to take a familiar mountain road over a pass between Lion's Head and Table Mountain. It was the road home when Sigrun and I had lived for a while in Hout Bay, a small community on the back side of the mountain.

The car purred quietly and I soon crested the hill. I am used to the view that greets you as you look down the other side but each time I get to the top of the pass and look out over the Atlantic it takes my breath away. It's simply one of the most spectacular sights. To the south the mountain range stretched as far as I could see. Below me a long white sandy beach formed the central focus of Camp's Bay, one of Cape Town's trendiest suburbs. But it's the ocean that always grabs my attention. It's never the same. This summer afternoon the turquoise water was sparkling, bathed in brilliant sunlight. The gentle undulation washed up on the sandy beach in frothy foam while far below I could see children paddling along the water's edge.

I dropped down onto a coast road and gunned the engine as the road wound along a narrow path between the sheer mountain and a sudden drop to the water below. It's a beautiful drive and soon I was looking down on another of Cape Town's rich suburbs, Llandudno. I knew where I was going even though I had not yet admitted it to myself. I had to exorcise a bad memory.

WHILE I WAS WORKING for Tracy Edwards on the Oryx Quest, the race out of the Middle East, we based ourselves in Hout Bay. It made perfect sense. Marblehead was covered in a blanket of snow while Cape Town shimmered in summer sun. With the Internet I could work from anywhere and so chose to work from Hout Bay. We rented a lovely home a few streets back from the beach and Sigrun, along with Brendon, Tomas and Eli, moved in

for six months. I had wanted to expose my children to a South African upbringing and was delighted when the first thing they did was kick off their shoes.

On summer evenings, when the wind was not blowing, we would pack a picnic and drive to Llandudno to watch the sunset. South Africa is very relaxed and along the beach families would toast the sun's disappearance with chilled champagne. If it was a particularly good sunset there would be a round of applause before people settled in to dine on fine food and finish up a few bottles of good South African wine.

One particular evening we arrived at the beach to find that the wind had picked up. We were at the north end and decided that we should move to the other end where we would be sheltered by some steep rocks. I walked with Eli in a backpack with Tomas running ahead of us. Neither Sigrun nor I were paying close attention to Tom as he paddled along the water's edge. Something distracted us and when we looked back, Tomas was gone. He had simply disappeared.

At first it was nothing as we simply could not believe that he had gone far, but very quickly panic set in. The beach was wide open with a few families scattered on blankets. It would have been easy to spot a small boy but he was nowhere to be seen. I felt my limbs go numb, like in one of those bad dreams when you are being chased by a monster and no matter how hard you try, you just cannot coax your legs to move. Sigrun was not having this problem. She was frantic and had plunged into the water certain that he must have been picked up by an undertow and pulled out to sea. She was diving under the water searching frantically for him.

By now people on the beach had noticed our panic and joined in the search. He was definitely not on the beach which left only one option; he had to be in the water. I was sure that he was

gone. If he was in the water he had not surfaced for more than five minutes and the water on that side of Table Mountain is freezing cold. I joined Sigrun on her search below the waves and could see that she had completely lost it. This was a mother's worst nightmare and her face was wrenched into an agonizing grimace.

After 10 minutes and no sign of Tomas the awful fact of what must have had happened started to set in. I tried to calm Sigrun but she was not going to give up searching even though she too knew that her search might be in vain. Then suddenly someone called out.

"Is he wearing red shorts and a white T-shirt?"

"Yes." I could not say any more as the words choked in my throat.

"I think he is here," the voice called out. I looked toward the cliff face and saw a lady waving. "Come quick," she yelled. "This may be him. He says his name is Tomas." I scrambled over a low ledge and looked to where the lady was pointing. There was a narrow gap between the rocks. The gap led to a small cave tucked under a massive bolder and there in the cave, playing peacefully with some shells, was my three year old son.

I SLOWED THE BMW and turned onto the narrow winding road that led down to the beach. We had left Llandudno Beach after finding Tomas and never returned. The memory was so raw and painful. I have, however, learned over the years that you need to close the loop on things. It's not good to leave matters open-ended. I drove slowly down toward the water and parked the car. The heat of the day was gone and just as before, families were making their way to the warm sand to celebrate the end of another day. They looked tanned and happy; I was pasty white

having just arrived from the Northern Hemisphere and my heart was in my mouth. I knew that I had to go back to the place where we had 'lost' Tomas and I also knew that it was not going to be easy. That kind of memory never fades.

The pink sand was warm and silky. Small rollers crashed onto the beach and rolled gently up the shore. I headed directly to the cliffs at the south end and long before I got there I could see the gap in the rocks where Tom had slipped through. I squeezed through the gap and found the cave where he had been playing. It was a tiny space but I could not help but notice dozens of tiny footprints in the sand. I fervently hoped that the mothers and fathers of the children who had played there knew where they were going. I grabbed a handful of sand and let it slip slowly through my fingers. I had closed the circle, the memory was no longer a giant in my mind.

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where
the Tavern of the Seas
lays out the welcome mat

THEY CALL CAPE TOWN the Tavern of the Seas and the name fits. For centuries seafarers have plied their trade around this infamous cape at the foot of the African continent. From the ocean it is one of the most spectacular landfalls. The square mass of Table Mountain slowly rises out of a heaving sea until its distinct tabletop is clear to the eye while alongside, Lions Head crouches in eternal protection.

These days it's modern seafarers that call in to replenish supplies and repair their boats. The latest in a long list of famous vessels was less than two hundred miles away, holding tenaciously onto a slim lead. The German boys on *Beluga Racer* had squandered

a 400 mile lead and were pushing hard to hold onto the slim advantage they still enjoyed. To the south, on a better angle of sail, Felipe Cubillos had the younger sailors squarely in his sights. The way it looked from my laptop, taking into account the latest weather forecast and my own local knowledge, the race would restart in the lee of Table Mountain. It turned out that I was wrong, but not by much.

I was staying with some great friends, Jan and Belinda Reuvers, in their guest apartment of their stunning house overlooking the Cape Flats. I had been up most of the night keeping track of *Beluga Racer* and *Cabo de Hornos* as they battled their way toward the finish of Leg 1. My eyes were scratchy but I was filled with excitement. The first boats would be into Cape Town by lunchtime.

I packed my laptop and foul weather gear into a small bag and jumped into the BMW. A hazy dawn was breaking and in the distance Table Mountain was a purple hue. It was Sunday and the highway was empty except for a few surfers heading for the beach. The car purred down the highway and in less than 15 minutes I pulled into the yacht club. Our Portimao Global Ocean Race banners were fluttering gently in the early morning breeze. The club was branded and ready for the first arrivals.

I was hoping to witness the finish in a helicopter. The *Beluga Racer* PR people had chartered a chopper and hired a local cameraman to document their historic win. After a quick breakfast on the terrace I called the cameraman. He confirmed that the chopper was on standby and there was room for me. I called Josh to let him know that I would be up in the air and took off for the small helidrome.

The pilot was young and good looking. He pointed to a small blue helicopter out on the pad. "We will take that one," he said. "You tell me when you want to go. We will fly out and meet the boat. If they are moving slowly we can always come back to save

fuel and then go out again for the finish.” My iPhone was dialed into the race positions and the latest poll showed *Beluga Racer* 12 miles from the finish. The Chileans were the same distance astern of them. Unless something went wrong the Germans were looking good for a victory.

“Let’s go,” I said to the pilot. “They are making good speed. If we don’t go now we may miss some good footage.” The pilot jumped into his seat while I strapped myself in alongside him. The cameraman was in the back where he had more room. I heard the engines rev and we started to lift off. The helicopter shuddered a bit and then rose vertically. As we spun to the south I saw the full expanse of Table Mountain directly in front of me and seconds later we were over the summit and heading out to sea.

Below the water sparkled a dazzling blue. There was an occasional white-cap. I stared ahead and within seconds had located the boat. They were on a broad reach on a course for Green Point Light House. The boat was humming along and seconds later we were overhead. Boris and Felix, ever the showmen, were hamming it up on the bow. Both had scruffy beards, both had wide smiles. They were going to win the first leg of the race and were ecstatic by the prospect. For my part I was simply thrilled to witness history. Here was the leading boat in my race blasting toward the finish line off the harbor entrance to Cape Town.

As *Beluga Racer* sailed into the lee of the mountain the wind died a little and the speed dropped but they were still making good time. The race was being scored on points so the amount of time they won by would not matter, so long as they crossed the finish line in first place. The chopper hovered just above the mast while I leaned precariously out the door snapping images for the race website. Then suddenly they were over the line. I heard the gun go and moments later Boris and Felix embraced. It was a stunning moment.

There was no time to lose as *Cabo de Hornos* was due to finish within two hours. I raced back to the club in time to witness the Germans down their first beer and then we all jumped into RIB's to go out and greet the Chileans. We had just cleared the harbor when we spotted the bright red hull. They had given up the fight for first place and Felipe and Josñ were relaxed and happy to see the leg come to an end. They had been at sea for 42 days. The wind had strengthened a little since *Beluga Racer* finished and there was no slowing down in the lee of the mountain. Instead they roared across the line into second place.

The rest of the fleet came in over the next few days with the exception of the South Africans. They had found themselves stuck in a ridge of high pressure and wallowed for days in a windless zone. The worst part was that they had run out of food and had to break into their emergency supplies from their life raft. I watched their progress closely and felt their pain. It was as if every bit of bad luck had come their way and I knew that they were hungry and ready for some dry land and a large steak.

They finally made it into Cape Town ten days after the Germans. They were arriving just as the local fleet was heading out for Wednesday night racing, so their welcome was huge and well deserved. Lenjohn and Peter looked exhausted and a bit drawn. Their ordeal showed in their faces and I could tell that some of the spirit had left their eyes. Still, a few good meals and some rest would work wonders and sure enough, two days later they were fine and looking forward to the second leg.

WITH THE EXCITEMENT and frenetic activity of the boats finishing I had not given much thought to the situation with Josh and Catherine, but I was deeply aware that things were not good. Josh was not his usual friendly self and I barely had two words to say to Catherine. They had rented an expansive home overlooking

LAPPING THE PLANET

Llandudno Beach, no expense spared, and since they were on the opposite side of Table Mountain it was not easy to get together and socialize. Instead I spent my time with old friends and worked away in the race office while they went back to their place to watch the sun set over the Atlantic.

It was obvious to me that we were going to have to have a long chat about things. I was very unhappy about the way Josh had been spending money, the house in Llandudno was not the only extravagance, but the lopsided race management team had me once more feeling like an outsider looking in on my own event. At the same time I did not want to cause a scene. The main problem I was having was with Catherine and I was keenly aware that she and Josh had patched up any issues between them and he would not be amenable to any criticism of her. I felt hopelessly stuck in a bad situation and could not figure a way out. In hindsight a good heart to heart talk would probably have taken care of many of the problems, but instead I buried my head in my computer and tried to get as much work done as possible. Cape Town was lovely and it felt good to be back in my own country. I wish now that I had done things differently but hindsight is always 20:20.



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where
the chatter in my head
is on the increase

IT WAS GETTING increasingly harder to quieten the chatter in my head. The background noise was on the increase and I knew it was a result of stress. As my concerns go up, so too does the level of my subconscious brain activity. I know this for a fact as I have looked inside my head. On long passages at sea when the daily routine is diminished to the basics: sail, eat, sleep, sail, eat, sleep ... and the external stimuli such as radio, television and obnoxious people are no longer there, there is a stillness in your brain that is hard to find on dry land. It's a purity that is addictive, but also fleeting, as sooner or later you have to reintegrate into society and all the noise and chaos resumes.

I first discovered this inner quiet when I raced with the Soviets in the 1989 Whitbread Round the World Race. I had not planned to do the trip but 48 hours before the race started my old friend Skip Novak called. He was the co-skipper of *Fazisi*, the first, and by happenstance, last Soviet entry in the Whitbread. Skip needed help sailing the boat to Uruguay and knew that I was always up for a challenge. I hastily agreed and flew over to England arriving less than a day before the start.

We had left the dock when Skip pulled me aside. "I probably should have told you earlier," he said, "but none of these guys...." He waved in the general direction of the crew. "None of these guys have ever been offshore before, none of them have sailed a boat bigger than 40 feet, and none of them speak a world of English." Skip delivered the news in his usual harried manner and then went on to direct the crew on how to raise the mainsail. The start was less than an hour away.

For the next 28 days I was sailing on a high tech, highly strung yacht with 14 inexperienced sailors, none of whom I could have a conversation with. Sure Skip was on board but he was on the other watch and we met for a few minutes at each watch change. We quickly settled into a routine and the familiar slap, slap of waves on the hull and the routine of sail, eat, sleep, sail took over. Only this time it was different. Usually there is a lot of banter on board and often music, but on board *Fazisi* there was no music and I sat alone with my thoughts.

We were ten days into the trip when I suddenly noticed a quiet in my head. I could no longer remember any advertising jingle and I could not remember one television ad. It had taken almost two weeks to purge the clutter, and the serenity that replaced it was like liquid gold. When I sail alone I am able to reconnect to that fine strain of gold and it's one of the reasons I keep going back for more. So yes, I feel as if I can look inside

my head and what I was seeing this time was a mess. I was covering up a lot of baggage with long evenings of good food and wine, but the underlying mess was still there. I needed to do something about it.

There were two main concerns; the situation with my business partner had to be addressed, that much was clear, and I vowed that I would sit down with him and air my grievances, damn the consequences. I sent Josh an email alluding to my concerns and he replied that he was always available for a chat. The second concern was less tangible. I was missing my father; in fact I was missing my family. This was the first time in my life that I had been back in South Africa without any family there. Shortly after my Dad died, my younger brother Rob took a job offer in Northern Ireland and promptly immigrated. I could not put my finger on my unease but knew that some time away from the race would be good.

I planned a trip back to Pietermaritzburg to visit my Dad's grave. I needed a couple of days to myself to quiet the chatter and booked a flight to Durban. I had my phone and computer with me so it was not as if I would be out of touch but I really wanted some time to myself to think. The Cape Town stopover had been hectic with a formal prize giving at City Hall and various other commitments. A few days back on home turf was all I needed to recharge the batteries.

I emailed Josh and told him that I was going away for the weekend and he replied kindly.

“Do what you need to do Mate.”

I drove myself to the airport and sat back in the seat as the South African Airways jet took off. As the pilot banked over the city I could see far below our fleet of yachts tied up in front of the Royal Cape Yacht Club. Soon we were flying over the Hottentots

Holland mountains and beyond up the gorgeous Wild Coast until we landed with a slight bump at Durban airport. I rented a small car and drove inland toward Pietermaritzburg.

Natal is a lush, hilly province and the flowers were out in full force. I opted to take the back roads rather than the highway and the narrow road wound through some breathtaking countryside. Local Africans still lived in mud huts, most of them painted gaily in vibrant colors. It was a scene from a century earlier and despite the poverty there was a sense of peace and prosperity in the air. Small children ran down to the side of the road cupping their hands in the hope of some money or food. I had bought a half-dozen bags of sweets for just that purpose and enjoyed watching the look of delight on the shiny faces as I handed over the candy. Most cars simply blew by so they were grateful for anything, even if it was only a toffee.

Soon I was in Pietermaritzburg and the city was heaving. Gone were the days of orderly streets, fancy department stores and the air of British colonialism that permeated the place when I was a child. Instead, a rough and tumble Third World city was trying to fashion itself out of the remnants of colonialism and the prospect of a bright future. I quickly passed through the city heading for the cooler hills on the northern side where my father and Judy had lived for three decades. The ramshackle huts were replaced by expansive homes each surrounded by high walls and large wrought iron security gates. Crime was still one of the main sources of income for many people.

I had left South Africa before my Dad's ashes were returned to his final resting place so I was keen to see where his remains were interred. The graveyard was in the garden of the church he regularly attended in the final years of his life. It was a peaceful place with only a few grave sites and I quickly found the one I was looking for. The name on the grave, with his birth date and

date of his death chipped permanently in granite, was a mild shock. I knew he was dead and long gone, but to see his name and the finality of the 'end' date took me by surprise. I felt a sob in my heart and wiped away a tear. 'This is no good,' I thought to myself. I should be here having lunch with Dad and Judy, sitting out on the porch sipping cold wine and enjoying Judy's good cooking just as I had done for over half my life. Instead I was sitting on the hard dirt alongside a small stone. 'This is just no good,' I repeated to myself and then I had an idea.

I hopped back into the car and drove to the local supermarket. In a few minutes I had picked up some bread and cheese and a bottle of good wine. I stopped next door and bought a knife, plate and a decent glass and headed back to the grave. Dad may be gone but that did not stop me from having lunch with him. I spread a towel on the ground and pulled the cork on the wine. Three hadeda's flew overhead making a racket as they came in for landing. I looked around for the monkeys but they were lying low. I poured myself a glass of wine and tipped a little onto the soft dirt alongside the grave.

"For you Dad," I said. "Cheers."

Most of the bottle was gone when the monkeys arrived. I was just dozing off in the warm sun when I heard them chatter. They were in the trees beyond the graveyard staring down at me with their large, inquisitive eyes. I tossed the remains of my baguette their way and gave my Dad the remains of the wine. I felt at peace. The noise in my head had subsided, replaced by calm.

I would spend the rest of the afternoon driving out to the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains to spend the weekend with Pete and Barbara Dommett. Peter is one of my oldest and closest friends and he has a stunning spread in the foothills of Sani Pass. It's the largest dairy farm in Natal and a perfect place to relax. As the dirt road unfolded ahead of me I knew that

BRIAN HANCOCK

I had done the right thing by getting away. Sometimes in life you just need to get off for a while and let the world spin without you. This was one of those times and I was ready to get back to Cape Town and get the boats out of there on their way to New Zealand. I was also ready to lay things open with Josh.

38

where
some major changes
are made

IT WAS MONDAY MORNING and I was on the highway heading back to the airport. The phone rang and I saw that it was Josh so I pulled to the side of the road to take the call.

“Where the hell are you?” he growled into the phone. “We’ve got major problems here.” I explained that I was on my way back and would be back in Cape Town that evening. “What’s going on?” I asked.

“We’ve run out of money and we are going to have to stop the race, that’s what’s going on.” I was dumbfounded and could barely reply.

“Portimao have not been making their payments and it does not

look like they are going to be able to make any more payments. We are out of money and you chose to piss off for the weekend. We need to meet no matter what time you get back.” With that he hung up the phone. I sat looking at the dust that had collected on the dashboard of the car and felt like I had been kicked in the guts, yet again. We could not have run out of money, it was not possible. We had taken in hundreds of thousands of dollars and the race had barely started. There simply had to be a mistake. And what was this about Portimao not being able to make their payments? I knew they had some of their own internal issues as the recession started to bite, but they were people of impeccable integrity. There had to be some mistake.

The contented feeling I'd enjoyed after two days in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains had quickly faded replaced by a sense of foreboding. There was something nasty in Josh's voice. Something was out of place but the most pressing problem was the idea of having to stop the race. We could not do that. We would be opening ourselves to scorn and ridicule, say nothing of numerous lawsuits.

I drove the rest of the way in numbed silence and arrived at the airport early for my flight. I had planned on stopping by the grave one last time but was well clear of Pietermaritzburg when I remembered. I opened my laptop and picked up a wireless signal. There was a curt message from Josh. “Meet me in the office at 6 tomorrow morning. I may have a solution.”

I played things over in my mind as the plane bumped through pockets of warm air. I had not looked at any accounting since we received the first payment from Portimao. With the sudden change of company address from the Channel Islands to London and the fact that Josh was the only one able to access the bank accounts, I had let him handle the finances. I trusted him implicitly and while I didn't like some of his extravagant ways, I knew that he was a

man of absolute integrity. How then could we be out of money? It was not possible even without that payment from Portimao.

The chatter in my head was back, louder than ever. I arrived at my apartment late and went straight to bed but sleep would not come. I tossed and turned and long before dawn I awoke and decided to go for a run. The air was cool and damp, typical of a humid summer night and before long I was sweating profusely. There were no level surfaces. It was either steep uphill or steep downhill and I quickly gave up and returned to my room for a shower. Half an hour later I was in town and pulling up outside our race office. I saw that Josh was already there. He was making photocopies on our small portable machine.

“Ah Brian,” he said, “give me five minutes. I am just printing something off the Internet.” I sat at my desk and fired up my computer. A few minutes later Josh pulled up a chair. “We are in deep shit mate,” he started. “We are likely going to have to stop the race. We just can’t let the boats go into the Southern Ocean without adequate funds in place to track and rescue them if it comes to that.” I agreed and was about to ask how the heck we got ourselves into such a predicament when Josh held up his hand to silence me.

“I do have two possible scenarios that might get us out of this jam.” I leaned back in my chair trying to keep my emotions in check. We had come too far to simply lose everything. I didn’t interrupt as Josh laid out two scenarios.

He had been speaking to some potential investors about putting some money into the company and had come up with two different options. The first investor was interested in buying me out of the race. He was offering \$50,000 for my shares and would keep me on a retainer until the end of the race. After that I was on my own. The second scenario was a bit more complicated. This investor had offered to loan the company \$50,000 on a short

term bridge loan until Portimao were able to come up with their payments. This would at least allow us to get the boats out of Cape Town and into New Zealand by which time it would be a new year and a new fiscal year for Portimao and hopefully they would be able to tap into new money to meet their race obligations.

The first scenario I dismissed immediately. I was not going to be bought out of anything for any amount of money. Sure \$50,000 sounded like a decent chunk of change but I was never in this for the short term and I was never in it for the money. So that scenario was out and besides buying me out might alleviate my own financial issues, but it would do nothing to solve the mess that the race was in.

“Who are these investors?” I asked. Josh would not look me in the eye and replied. “I can’t tell you Mate. They are old friends of mine from my *Gartmore* days. People that loaned me money back then. They want to remain anonymous.”

“So you are telling me that you have some guy who wants to remain anonymous buy me out of the company?” I continued.

“Yes, there are two different people and two different options. Neither of them want to have their names known. They have been following the race and like what they see and want to help out.”

“The first scenario is out,” I stated flatly. “I, no we, have put too much into this event to quit now. I never quit when things got really tough and I am not about to bail on things now, not for \$50,000, not for any amount of money. Let’s look at the second option.”

Josh leaned back in his chair. He did not look comfortable. He looked exhausted. He leaned forward again and said. “I take it you are not going to accept the offer to buy you out. If that’s the case we can explore the second scenario but there are some conditions

attached. This guy will loan us \$50,000 for a short term. I have offered to secure the loan with a lien against my house. There is a second condition and it's up to you what you want to do with this. The guy does not know you, has never met you, and does not feel comfortable loaning you the money. He will loan it to me, but not to you. The only way we can do this is if I am the complete shareholder of the company for the period of the loan."

I let the words sink in. "Let me get this straight," I said. "We can get a bridging loan to get the boats out of here. That will give us time to go back to Portimao and make them understand how serious the situation is? By the time the boats get to New Zealand we will be in a new fiscal year. What have Portimao said about making their payments?"

"I spoke with Piscaretta. He said that once the new year rolled around they should be able bring their payments up to schedule."

And how much do they still owe us?"

"A little under two hundred thousand."

To me this was just another hurdle to deal with. We had dealt with many since announcing the race and this was just one more issue we faced. Stopping the race was not an option. Too much money and too many dreams were invested in the outcome of the event. If we stopped the race there was no way Josh and I would be able to recover from the fallout. We simply had to keep going. This was not an ideal situation but it seemed reasonable. If we called the race off my shares in Global Ocean Sailing Ventures would not be worth anything anyway.

I leaned forward. "OK Josh," on a Gentleman's Agreement I will let you have my shares until we get some money in from Portimao. The moment we get the next payment we pay off the investor and you return my shares to me." I stuck my hand out and Josh took it.

“It’s the only way Brian. You know I would do the same for you,” he said. I felt a combination of tears and nausea stick in my throat. Josh left my office and I could hear him next door in his office. I am not very good at this, I thought to myself. All the stress is not good for me. On the one hand I was relieved that we would not have to stop the race. I could not imagine breaking the news to the competitors. On the other hand I was not comfortable with the situation. The race management was already lopsided with Josh, Catherine and Sam outnumbering me three to one. I was not happy with the way some things were being done and I was more than a little pissed off that Josh, who was in charge of the budget and spending, had placed the company and the event in such a mess. If we were out of money it was simply not acceptable, but if that was the case then this was the only way forward.

Moments later Josh returned. He had a form for me to sign. I was agreeing to give him my shares in the business. I signed the piece of paper and pushed it back across the desk. “Well at least we don’t have to stop the race,” I said. “That would have been disastrous.”

“I am going to make a copy of this and keep it with the other company documents in the filing cabinet,” Josh said as he walked out of my office.

The clock on my computer read 6:45. I desperately needed a cup of coffee but the club would not be open for breakfast for another hour. Instead I opened my emails and started to reply to the most urgent ones. Leg 2 was scheduled to start in five days.

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where
there is a
mid-ocean rescue

THE BOATS were barely into the Southern Ocean when the first front hit. These low pressure systems girdle the bottom of the globe in varying degrees of intensity. They are laden with moisture and push the seas ahead of them into liquid mountains. The actual systems are quite defined and track in a fairly predictable manner. On board each boat computer programs manipulate the weather and the boats performance data so that sailors can position themselves to best deal with what the wind gods dish up for them.

We had been tracking a particularly intense low as it gathered strength in the Roaring Forties and whilst I was sure that the

boats and competitors would be able to handle the worst that came their way, it was still a concern. All the boats had crossed the fabled 40th parallel and were officially in the Southern Ocean although they were not able to dig deeper south. As part of the overall safety strategy we had placed a series of way points in addition to the gates, which the boats had to honor. The way points were designed to keep the sailors from cutting distance off the leg by diving south.

The Great Circle course, the shortest distance between two points on the earths surface, from Cape Town to Wellington took the boats right across Antarctica. While this would not have been very practical, there would still be a tendency by the bravest to try and go as far south as they could. By adding the way points we took that option off the table.

There was a new race leader as *Team Mongli* scooted into the lead. Jeremy Salvesen fired off a quick email describing life on board. "The wind on Saturday night increased to over 50 knots with the boat speed climbing to just below 21 knots while the sea became angrier and angrier," he wrote. "Finally by Sunday morning our first Southern Ocean cold frontal system had passed us by and we were able to catch up on some well earned sleep. We will have a bit of time to sort out the boat and our personal gear and prepare for the next one!"

As quickly as it had arrived, the front moved on and the fleet was mercifully unscathed. It had been harrowing for sure. From my office back in Marblehead there was very little I could do other than offer encouragement and moral support. I had seen my fair share of Southern Ocean storms and knew the fierce punch they carried. It was almost surreal to be so intimately involved with each boat yet at night, when Tomas and Eli were in bed after reading a good book, I would join Sigrun in the living room of my warm and cozy home for a glass of wine. While the sailors

experienced brutal cold and isolation in the middle of the Deep South, I clambered into a warm bed and let go of the world for a few hours. The competitors were not so lucky.

As Christmas approached I knew that things would be getting tougher on the sailors. The holidays are a time when you want to be with friends and family, not on a wet boat sleeping in a wet bunk. We decorated our home and the boys eyes glistened with excitement as they counted down to the only day of the year that really counts for small boys. I doubted the big boys at sea were thinking too much about their Christmas plans as another large low pressure system was bearing down on them. This one was packing even more wind than the first. Nico Budel on *Hayai* was the southernmost boat in the fleet and the first to feel the brunt of the second front. In a satellite phone call he related what happened after a 60 knot gust knocked him on his side

“This morning at 4 o’clock I wanted to take a second reef in the mainsail but the batten started to come out and it got stuck behind one of my shrouds,” he said. “That meant that I could not get the sail up or down. Then suddenly the wind increased from 40 to 60 knots. The boat was shaking hard and vibrated for 30 seconds. I can tell you they were some of the longest seconds of my life!!! I was seriously thinking that the boat must be falling apart!” He then added. “What I have noticed is that the weather forecast was 20 knots more than they had predicted. So the Roaring Forties is just like a female. It does exactly as it wants to do!”

Nico was taking it all with a good sense of humor, but little did he know his boat was taking more of a beating than it could withstand. As a third front, later dubbed the Christmas Day Storm approached, Nico was still the most southerly boat in the fleet. Michel Kleinjans, the sailor with the most experience, was rightfully concerned about the position of *Hayai*. “Honestly

I wouldn't like to be in the place where Nico is right now," he wrote. "He is the oldest man in the fleet and is going to sit in the most wind." His email continued. "I have been preparing since last night for the weather to come. I know it's far too early but I have been sailing underpowered all night. Perhaps my imagination is getting the best of me when I look at the weather forecast, but I think it's better to be safe and prepared and even a little slow. I want to emerge after Christmas unscathed so that we can fight again. Right now I am sitting having a coffee like a soldier in the trenches just waiting to get out there."

The racing was intense. *Team Mowgli* were extending their lead and the Chileans on *Cabo de Hornos* had moved into second. Boris and Felix on *Beluga Racer* were in an unfamiliar third place but they were taking the long view. In order to win you need to finish. There was no point in pushing hard and breaking something. "We are taking care of the boat first," Boris told me.

By this time Josh was back in France and monitoring the fleet closely. We had had very little communication since I handed him my shares. I was upset that he had let the finances get into such a mess and further annoyed when his son Sam let slip a couple of days before the start, that Josh and Catherine had flown First Class to Cape Town. Maybe they had paid for the fares themselves but it still seemed reckless to me if the company account was running low. For my part I had not taken a salary for three months and was running my expenses on borrowed money. I sincerely hoped that Portimao were good to their word about making a payment as soon as the New Year rolled around.

The Christmas Day Storm flattened Nico Budel once more. The small cars that attach his mainsail to his mast exploded forcing him to drop his sail wiping out his communications equipment in the process. He was waiting for a respite in the weather to fix things. And then things turned really bad.

Hayai, the oldest boat in the fleet was also one of the more innovative. Where the other boats relied on water ballast for stability, *Hayai* had a very high tech canting keel. In order to add stability that could be translated into power, he was able to cant the keel out to the side of the boat. The weight of the lead bulb on the bottom of the keel created a large lever that allowed him to pile on sail area. Unfortunately the severe weather had weakened his keel and he placed a call to Josh. He was in deep trouble and had altered course and was sailing due north hoping for calmer waters.

The massive lead bulb attached to the bottom of the keel was coming loose. If the bulb separated from the keel the boat would capsize. This was the worst possible thing for a competitor and I might add, not a great situation for race organizers. I prepared a brief press release that read as follows:

There is a developing situation on board Hayai, the Open 40 yacht being sailed by Dutch sailor Nico Budel in the Portimão Global Ocean Race. Nico has reported a problem with his keel and is concerned about its integrity. In that regard he has altered course to avoid the strongest winds associated with a low pressure system approaching from the west.

Race Director Josh Hall has also diverted the closest competitor to Nico to assist should an emergency arise. Today at 13:00 UTC Belgium sailor Michel Kleinjans on board Roaring Forty turned back and set a course to rendezvous with Hayai. The two boats are just under 500 miles apart and with the current conditions will not be able to rendezvous for at least 36 - 48 hours.

"This is normal practice in a situation like this," said Race Director Josh Hall. "Nico has conveyed to me that he is concerned about the safety of his yacht and I have asked Michel Kleinjans to alter course to rendezvous with Hayai to lend any assistance. Until the boats rendezvous

or Nico is able to better determine the status of his keel, no decision will be made about a course of action. International sea rescue authorities have been notified as part of standard procedure, but in circumstances like this it's normally a fellow competitor who will lend assistance."

There will be more information posted as things develop. For now Nico is safe and while concerned about his boat, he is in good spirits.

Michel and Nico are old friends and there was no hesitation on his part when he was asked to turn back to rescue his sailing mate. "I know that he would do the same for me," Michel told me, and he was right. It's an unwritten law of the oceans. Just as Giovanni Soldini had gone to the rescue of Isabelle Autissier, Michel turned into the wind without thought for his own safety.

The following 24 hours were the most tense of the race. To make matters worse another Southern Ocean storm was bearing down on the fleet. Nico could expect winds gusting over 60 knots. Josh, working with Alan Green, had located a 17,000 tonne bulk carrier going by the hopeful name of *Radiance*. The boat was heading west and was around 600 miles north of the position of *Hayai*. Captain Singson, master of *Radiance*, was happy to comply with a request to divert to the scene to effect a rescue.

While *Radiance* steamed south, Nico hunkered down. He donned his survival suit and huddled below anticipating the worst. If the bulb broke off he may be trapped inside when the boat capsized. If he was to remain on deck he would definitely suffer from exposure say nothing of the threat of being washed overboard. He had to stay below and hope for the best.

A very long 24 hours later *Radiance* was on the scene. They found the tiny boat in a windswept ocean like a needle in a haystack. Nico was ready to abandon ship and he, Josh, and Captain Singson talked through the procedure. The ship would

provide a wind shadow and drift down on the stricken boat. At the last minute Nico would pull the seacocks in order to allow his boat to sink, and he would then clamber into a net tossed over the side of the ship. With the wind still blowing gale force it was not easy for Captain Singson to maneuver his 17,000 tonne ship, but the captain was experienced and no stranger to a sea rescue. He had been involved in the rescue of a Japanese solo sailor in Australian waters in 2004.

While the rest of the fleet and an anxious sailing community waited for news, the mid-ocean rescue went off flawlessly. Nico was plucked from his boat and moments later was safe and warm aboard *Radiance*. His last sight of his beloved yacht was of it sitting low in the water and the cold Southern Ocean slowly filling the cabin interior. The race tracker was still sending position reports but a few hours later they ceased.

Hayai had sunk.



40

where
things go from
bad to worse

I THOUGHT IT BEST not to mention the issue of my shares to Sigrun. I felt uneasy about what I had done. At the time it seemed to be the only solution, but upon reflection I felt I had acted hastily. I should have at least called a lawyer to get some advice but it was too early in the morning to get council. Josh seemed to have anticipated my response and had already prepared the paperwork for signing. He had not offered any accounting and had ignored my various emails asking him for some accounts. On the other hand he was traveling, there were storms in the Southern Ocean, Nico needed rescuing and there was also Christmas and New Year to deal with. Things were full on. Nonetheless I was dangling out there without much of a safety net.

Worse yet I had not taken a salary and had been floating the company expenses on a variety of credit cards. When I finally sat down at the end of the year and produced my own expenses I was a bit shocked to see that I was owed just under \$85,000. What if Portimao were not able to make any future payments? They were obligated for sure, but did we really have any leverage with them? Josh and I both knew that a lawsuit would be costly and we did not have much chance of winning in a Portuguese court. What if I had demanded my expense reimbursement before the boats got to Cape Town. Would we have run out of money before the race even started?

Things did not add up.

As the new year rolled around I tried calling Josh but he was never available to talk. At night I lay looking up at the ceiling wondering what we would do if Portimao simply could not honor their contract. We had a fleet of boats halfway around the world. I knew that Josh must have been thinking the same thing and I was anxious to talk to him about it, but we could not connect. Emails were brief and sporadic.

I finally sat down and wrote a long email expressing my concern. Sure the loan had got us out of Cape Town but what would happen in New Zealand? I attached a spreadsheet with my expenses and suggested to Josh that maybe he alone travel to Wellington. We could save on my air ticket and expenses. I also suggested that we cut back to just the two of us working on the race. As much as we needed someone on the ground in Wellington we would have to do without Catherine. I suggested that we each take a deep pay cut until we were sure that Portimao was good for the rest of the money they owed us. His only response was to the suggestion that only he travel to New Zealand.

I could feel an uneasy knot developing deep in my gut. It was a sense of foreboding, like something rotting deep within. I had

never felt this kind of stress. In the past, when we were working hard to build the event and money was tight, there was a certain amount of stress. This was a different kind of stress and I didn't like it one bit. I tried to run it off by increasing my daily route but that elated feeling I usually had after some good exercise was nowhere to be found. One night when I was reading a book to my boys Tomas looked at me as said, "Are you OK Dad? You look sick." I felt sick. After reading the book and getting the two boys to bed I went back to my office to check on the progress of the race and update the website.

Not surprisingly *Beluga Racer* had taken the lead once more with the Chileans in hot pursuit. The Brits on *Team Mowgli* had slowed and seemed to be sailing more conservatively. Michel was not far astern and sailing his own race now that Nico Budel was out. I wrote a brief update for the race website and went to upload it only to find that my password didn't work. 'Hmmm, that's strange I thought.' I tried again. Still no luck.

I saw that our web guru, the person who had created the website, was on Skype so I dropped him a quick note asking him to check my password. Seconds later he was off Skype. I emailed him asking him to call me. I said it was urgent. Nothing. I called and left a number of messages. Very strange, but then websites are never perfect. Around midnight I finally gave up and went to bed but I could not sleep. There was something going on and I was not happy.

The next morning I skipped my run and placed a call to Josh. He was at his home in France. He picked up but immediately asked if he could call me back. His young son was over and he wanted to spend some time with Joseph before taking off for New Zealand. I tried the web guru again but nothing. I was getting a little upset. The website guy was supposed to be available 24/7. I had no way to update the website and I was sure that I would

soon be getting dozens of emails from anxious race followers looking for the latest news. Then I noticed that I wasn't getting any emails at all. My email system was down.

I tried to hide my worry and got the boys off to school. Sigrun was gone for the morning and I sat waiting for Josh to return my call. The bad feeling deep in my gut was getting worse. Then the phone rang. Caller ID showed it was Josh. He came right to the point.

"I have sold the company," he said, and without waiting for a response he continued. "It's the only way we can save the race. We are not going to get any money from Portimao and the only way we can get these boats around the world is to have someone else take over. The investor that loaned us money in Cape Town is willing to cover the costs of the rest of the race and so I decided to sell him the company." I could hardly believe what I was hearing.

"You can't just sell the company without consulting me," I stammered. "It's my company. You never mentioned a bloody thing about this. Yes I know that we have some financial issues but you have not been available to talk about them. What do you mean you have sold the company and who now owns my race?"

"Look Mate," Josh continued. "There is no other way. We don't have any money. I had to make a decision that was best for the race and this opportunity came up. It's the only way to ensure that the boats get to the finish. We owe it to the competitors. Without any more money from Portimao we simply can't do this ourselves." And then came the unkindest cut. "You know that I can do whatever I like with the company as I am the sole shareholder. There is a lien against my house for the loan we took in Cape Town. I just could not deal with any more of a financial burden."

I really did not know what else to say. I sat in complete numb silence. “Who is this new owner then?” I asked.

“I can’t tell you. I told you before that he wants to remain anonymous.”

“That’s bullshit,” I said. “And you know it. You have sold my company, my race, to some guy who won’t even divulge his name. That’s just absolute crap. What about the money the company owes me? I am owed 85 grand.” I was fuming. “I am going to hang up now and digest this and then I will call you back.”

Moments later an email arrived to my personal email address. It was from Josh.

Hi Brian,

None of this is at all pleasant I know, but the guy has demanded that your portimaorace email address is suspended so hence I am mailing you this to your other addresses. As I said, I have a very small window of time right now whereby he has agreed a US\$10,000 once and only payment – it is only available for 48hrs and requires that you sign both pages of the attached document.

I am afraid that otherwise there will be nothing for you and I am not in control of that situation. I do wish now that you had accepted the payment for your shares in Cape Town but that offer has evaporated completely.

This is not what we ever envisaged happening to us but these are terrible times all round and the unthinkable is occurring everywhere. Call whenever you want.

Cheers, Josh

Attached to the email was a two page deed stating that I accept a one time \$10,000 payment and then go off quietly. I was

aghast. This was suddenly more than I could deal with. I sat for a long while with my head in my hands. How the hell could this have happened? I felt a surge of anger at the people in Portimro. How could they have let us down so badly? How could Josh have bugged up the budget so badly? Why was I so dumb not to pay closer attention to the money? Worse yet, how could I have been so stupid to give Josh my shares? There was something about that situation that smelled rotten. I realized that Sigrun would be back in a few minutes and I needed some time to digest what had just happened without a barrage of questions from her, so I jumped in my car and took a slow ride across town.

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where
some devious deeds
have taken place

NEW ENGLAND was in the grips of a brutally cold spell and the streets were littered with old snow banks that had become hard ice walls. People around town huddled against the biting wind as they ran chores and went about their daily lives. I was oblivious to the cold and grime. My mind was reeling and my thoughts were a tangle of unanswerable questions. I simply could not fathom what had just happened. I knew where I could pick up a free wireless signal and pulled to the side of the road flipping open my laptop to check my email. There was another one from Josh.

Hi Brian - I know how hard it is, it is for me. In essence the business

is restarting from scratch and I am forced to write off a huge amount of money and have a charge still on my house. I am not in control of things any more by any stretch and although the paper says 30 days I know if it is signed off I can force it to be paid within 7-10 days. It is a slim window of opportunity I have to get you even this US\$10 (while on paper for the day or so the shares are in my name still) because he did not want to pay anything and I was trying hard the last few days to make it a better offer. He can go through a very simple process of removing you more formally which would not be pleasant at all and you would end up with nothing at all. Very soon there will be nothing on the table - not my choice but that is the way it is.

Cheers, Josh

I had just been fired from my own company.

None of this was good news. We had worked for so long to make the race happen and now suddenly, through no fault of ours, we had lost the lot. I felt nauseous. I called my old friend Brian Harris and told him what happened. I asked if I could drive up and meet him. I needed someone to talk to. Brian immediately agreed. "Let's meet halfway," he said. He told me that he would call Josh to find out what was going on. He and Josh had been close friends for more than a decade.

The drive gave me something to focus on. I called Sigrun and told her that I was meeting Brian for dinner and would be home late. The events of the last few days and the sense of unease I felt were taking their toll on me and I felt exhausted even though it was only the middle of the day.

Brian and I met in a restaurant in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He had spoken to Josh who confirmed that indeed he had been forced to sell the company to some mysterious investor. "He mentioned that Portugal had not paid any money and were not

going to make any payments,” Brian said. “This was the only way of saving the race.” I looked at my watch. It was too late to call Piscaretta. Our contract stipulated that if there were any big changes to the company structure that we needed to notify them immediately. This was, by any measure, a big change. I would call him first thing in the morning then I realized that the following day was Saturday. I would have to call on Monday.

We commiserated for a while longer and then I left to drive back home. Even though it was late in Portugal I knew that Ricardo would still be awake. He rarely goes to bed before 3 in the morning. Sure enough he picked up the phone on the first ring.

“Hi Brian,” he said. “I was just about to give you a call. There is something funny with the race website.” I explained to him what had happened. Ricardo listened in shocked silence. “I had a feeling something like this was going to happen,” he said. “I had an email from Josh a while back telling me that since Portimao were not making any payments that I could forget the rest of my commission.” Ricardo was due a percentage of each payment as his commission for helping secure Portimao as a sponsor. “Do you really think that there is an investor, or do you think it’s just a story?”

“I don’t know Ric,” I said. “I know that we were out of money in Cape Town and we had to borrow money to get the boats out of there. But I am pissed that our race budget was mismanaged and I am also upset that Portimao have not held up their end of the agreement.”

“Are you sure about Portimao?” Ric asked. “It’s not like them at all. They are very honest and very professional. They would never leave you guys with a fleet of boats halfway around the world. Do you want me to call Piscaretta?”

“No,” I said. “Let me deal with it. I first need to talk to Sigrun. She is going to be devastated. We have absolutely no money in the bank and all our credit cards are to the max. She’s going to be really angry.”

I watched the highway pass under my wheels and wondered what I was going to tell Sigrun. What I was going to tell my boys? How could I look any of them in the eye? It was late when I got back home and thankfully Sigrun had gone to bed.

I found an open bottle of wine and drank most of it in ten minutes. I desperately wanted the pain to go away and as the wine slid down, I felt a slow numbness creeping up from my toes. I didn’t have the energy to flick the television on and sat in the dark. The chatter in my brain was in overdrive and I knew that I would not be able to sleep. I found another bottle and slipped the cork. None of it tasted good. The bitter taste in my mouth was overwhelming everything. Half an hour later the second bottle was gone and I fell into a drunken sleep.

Around 3 in the morning I was suddenly wide awake. I tried to remember what had happened but all I could feel was a thumping between my eyes. Then it all came back to me in a flood. Then the tears came. I simply could not stop them. They were tears of rage, frustration, humiliation and a hundred other emotions. I was financially ruined. The ridiculous offer of \$10,000 would barely make a dent in the deep hole of debt that had accumulated. I was emotionally drained. I guess I had an unease about the whole thing since I gave Josh my shares but I never expected it to come to this. I wondered how Josh was feeling. He must also be gutted at having to sell the race but at least he was still involved, still drawing a salary.

I stepped out into the cold predawn and started to walk. I had no idea where I was going but I knew that I had to keep moving. The air was bitterly cold and soon my face and fingers were numb

but I had absolutely no feelings. No physical feeling, no mental feeling. Things had shut down in my brain. I walked through the old part of town out to Fort Sewell where I had sat so many years earlier on my first night in America. The harbor was as empty now as it was back then. I walked down Front Street past the Boston Yacht Club and finally back over the hill toward my home. It was just getting light when I arrived back home and I noticed that there was a light on in my bedroom. Sigrun was awake. I would have to tell her the news.

She could tell that something bad had happened the second I stepped into the room. "What's going on?" she asked. "You look a mess." I sat on the side of the bed and started from the very beginning. I told her about the shares. I told her how things had deteriorated between myself and Josh, how I had a bad feeling all December, and I told her about the investor. She listened without interrupting and when I was done, had only one thing to say.

"Josh has screwed you and I am amazed that you can't see it. There is no investor. It's all a big lie. It's all a story to get your shares and to screw you out of the business. I knew he would do something like this. I never trusted him." I started to argue but part of me knew that there was more than just a kernel of truth in what she has said.

"What do you mean you never trusted him?"

"Look, how can you trust a guy that is talking to his business partner on Skype and sending me porn at the same time?"

"What did you say?"

"Back before you guys got the race off the ground. He saw I was on Skype and we started to chat. He told me that he was chatting with you. Then the conversation started to go a bit weird and he started to send me some lesbian porn. I shut my Skype off and never heard from him again."

“Why didn’t you say something to me at the time?” I asked.

“You and Josh. You were so much in love with the idea of the race. You could not see what it was doing to your marriage, to your family. I kept trying to tell you that your focus was ruining the relationship and marriage but I knew that you would never listen. If I told you that your beloved business partner was sending me porn you would have just shrugged it off. So I said nothing. I never trusted the guy one bit. Mark my words. There is no investor. It’s all bullshit.”

There was not a lot I could say. The race had taken over my life. I felt it was the only way to make a success of something. To really focus and give it all I had. I knew that my marriage was failing but I had a responsibility to the competitors and to the sponsors who had put up their money for our dream. I was not able to get my head around the fact that Josh may have been a touch dishonest when he talked about needing an investor. One of the reasons our partnership worked so well was that it was based on trust. I trusted Josh implicitly and could not believe that he had done something dishonest. The next few weeks would prove me wrong.

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where
some new information
is unearthed

THE EMAIL THAT I SENT Piscaretta came back stating that he was out of town for a few days which explained why I was unable to reach him on the phone. I was determined to get to the bottom of what had happened if only to prove Sigrun wrong about Josh. She never liked the idea of the race, in fact she never liked any of my ideas so I was not surprised by her comments. I could not believe that Josh had done anything wrong but as I earlier stated, I have a starry-eyed view of the world.

My friend Pete Dommett, the dairy farmer from Natal, had noticed that I was no longer writing the daily updates and called me. I explained to him what had taken place and mentioned

Sigrun's allegations. Peter and his son had flown down to Cape Town for the start.

"You know I think she is right," Pete said. "I met Josh the day after you and he had discussed your shares. Look, I am only a dairy farmer but I do know a certain thing about body language. I have two thousand cows on my farm and none of them can speak. I need to be able to read their body language. I could tell by Josh's body language that something was seriously wrong. I should have said something then and regret that I didn't."

The days following were some of the worst of my life. I could not believe that it was over. I knew that the boats were due to finish in Wellington and could barely bring myself to look at the race website. It was now being updated by Oliver Dewar, the same Ollie we had hired to help out in Portimao. Just getting out of bed was struggle. It was as if my body had shut down and was refusing to function. I was in a kind of daze but I knew that we needed to get some money in the house otherwise we were going to starve. I wrote a painful email asking if anyone had any kind of work for me. I was careful to not mention what had happened with the race. I circulated the email and got an immediate response.

Kip Stone, a former solo sailor, had a thriving retail business in Bar Harbor, Maine. The place was called *Cool as a Moose* and sold anything moose related to the throngs of tourists that packed Bar Harbor in the summer. He needed a large warehouse gutted and new shelves added. He was paying \$15/hour. I stared at the email. He had to be kidding on the pay. That would barely pay for food let alone heat, say nothing of my mortgage and other expenses. It was, however, the only response. I waited before replying certain that something else would come up.

My neighbor, Larry Ross, is one of the kindest people in the world. He is also one of the biggest, towering close to 6 feet,

10 inches. Larry has a thriving business driving people from Marblehead to Logan airport. He had built the business the old fashioned way; honesty, courtesy and an amazing work ethic. Larry wanted to help and suggested that I do some of his driving shifts. They paid \$40 a trip and took a little over an hour.

The next few mornings I was up before 5, dragging my tired and aching body out of bed, and off to pick up some paying customers to take them to the airport. It was hard to get my head around the work but it was much needed money. Without it we quite literally could not buy food.

The sense of failure and guilt I felt was threatening to overwhelm me. I felt stupid about it. It was just a race and only money but no matter how I rationalized things, I still felt awful. It was exactly a year earlier that my father had died and while the days leading up to his death were difficult and painful, I hate to admit that they were a breeze when stacked up against the way I was feeling. If it had not been for the constant calls from Ricardo and a good friend, Larry Rosenfeld, who was helping me sift through the mess of what had happened, I would have sunk into a depression. I am not that way inclined but the life had been sucked from me and I was having a hard time thinking straight.

To make matters worse I was eyeing the clock waiting for 6 in the evening to come around. I would wait until one minute past 6 before pouring the first glass of wine. The alcohol was the only thing that took the edge off and I was craving the evenings when I could shut off for a few hours and numb things from my toes up. I knew it wasn't good, we could not afford the wine, but I rationalized things by saying that without the small break that the wine gave me, I would have sunk even lower.

One morning I was driving some people to the airport. It was early and bitterly cold. They were heading some place warm. I dropped them at Logan and was driving slowly back home when

I noticed a new billboard alongside the road. There was a picture of an old station wagon. It looked derelict. I read the words below. "You are looking at what some children call home."

For a few seconds I did not get the ad. Then it hit and with it came a wave of nausea. I pulled over the side of the road and started to throw up. Between the vomit and the tears and the cold and all round misery I was a wretched mess. Long gone were the heady days of sipping cold drinks on Praia da Rocha. I was a hungover drunk that could barely feed his family. My dream had turned into a nightmare. I sat there for a long time and sobbed. It was not something I had any control over. The tears and nausea alternated. Finally, when there was nothing left, I drove back home. I called Kip Stone. "I will take that job if it's still available," I said.

The country was gearing up to elect a new President and it was the only bright spot in an otherwise grim January. Piscaretta and I had traded calls, the first three boats arrived in Wellington and I had a new job; warehouse man. *Beluga Racer* had once again narrowly beaten the Chileans. I was keen to see how close it had been in the end and reluctantly clicked on the race website. There, on the Home Page, was a picture of Boris and Felix celebrating with champagne. In the background I saw Josh. Alongside of him was Catherine. Clive the cameraman was also in the picture as was Josh's son Sam. I could not believe my eyes. So much for no money. Air tickets to New Zealand are not cheap and the whole gang was there having a grand old time. Then the phone rang. It was Piscaretta.

We talked for a while. I explained what had happened. He had not heard from Josh but had noticed that the race updates were coming from Ollie and were no longer being written by me. "What's going on with the money?" I asked. "When do you think that Portimro will be able to make some more payments?" There

was a pause at the other end of the line. “I don’t know anything about this,” he said. “Let me check with Ivo. He is in charge of the race and money. I can tell you that I don’t like what you have told me and I will be contacting Josh for an explanation.” A few minutes after he hung up, the phone rang. It was Ivo.

“Hi Brian,” he said. “I am so sorry to hear what’s happened. Luis Piscaretta told me a little of what happened. Can you explain why you are no longer involved in the race?” I told Ivo about the money situation, about having to stop the race in Cape Town, about the investor who now apparently owned the event. “Brian,” Ivo said softly. “I understand your story but there is something wrong with it. You say that the company had run out of money which is why you had to get an investor. Why was that necessary? We transferred money to your account in December. It was \$50,000.” It took a while for his words to sink in. They transferred \$50,000 in December. “Did that go to the Global Ocean Sailing Ventures account?” I asked.

“Sure,” Ivo replied. “I am looking at the documentation right here in front of me. We transferred \$20,000 in November and \$50,000 in December. It should have been in your account around December 9 or 10. We transferred \$10,000 last week. It would have been your bank account on January 14. You had better check with Josh on that. No, we have been making payments and we have another to send next month. That one is for \$10,000 and another one in March for \$45,000.” I could not believe what I was hearing. “Thanks Ivo,” I said. “I appreciate you guys a lot. You have been very kind and professional with us. I hope that I haven’t let you down in any way.”

I flicked open my computer and turned to the calendar. The day I gave my shares to Josh was December 9, the very day we were to receive a transfer from Portimao for \$50,000. Sigrun was right. It was all bullshit.



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where
oddly enough, a John Denver
tune makes all the difference

OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, between my thankless job dragging heavy shelves out of a warehouse to fill a large dumpster, I was able to unearth more information. Jannie Reuvers, my friend that I stayed with in Cape Town, gave me the contact information of an expat South African living in London. Martin Penny was a lawyer and a very good one. “He’s a sailor,” Jannie said. “I am sure that he will help out.”

I am truly grateful to Martin for the help and encouragement he gave me over the next few months. He never asked for a cent in payment yet treated me as professionally as if I was a major client. Martin, at his own cost, pulled the papers on Josh’s house

on France. He had to engage a French lawyer to do so but we wanted to see if any lien had been placed against the house. Not surprisingly there was no lien. He then pulled the company papers to see if the company had in fact been sold. What we found was surprising. The day before Josh and I met in Cape Town and I handed over my shares, he had secretly gone into the company documentation and had me removed as Company Secretary. The following day he had me removed as a Director. There was no way he ever planned on giving me my shares back. The whole story about running out of money and having to stop the race was just that; one big story.

Looking back on it I should probably have seen it coming, but I didn't. I am the kind of person who loves with all my heart and the kind of person who trusts completely. The Josh Hall that I knew had built his reputation on integrity. Sure I knew that he had some legal problems in the past but they were always the other person's fault. Even though our friendship had suffered over the past few months I never, ever would have believed him capable of such a bold face lie. He had told the same story to Brian Harris, one of his closest friends. What was the point? Surely he knew that I would find out sooner or later.

This knowledge did not help alleviate the deep sense of betrayal and loss that I felt. In fact in many ways it made it worse. If we had run out of money and there was an investor, then I could have chalked it up to bad race management and taken some of the responsibility. Certainly I should have paid closer attention to the accounts, but bookkeeping has never been my strong suit. The fact that Josh had concocted a story to get me to hand over my shares to him was devastating and it hit me right in that vulnerable part of your stomach saved for just such an occasion.

Martin Penny needed some extra documentation. "Where is the contract you have with Portimro?" he asked. "I need to see a

signed copy. Where is a copy of that document you signed when you gave Josh your shares? I need to see that as well.” All of these documents were in New Zealand, in the mobile race office. The piece of paper I had so innocently signed, the one Josh had neatly filed away. *‘I am going to make a copy of this and keep it with the other company documents in the filing cabinet,’* Josh had said. The paperwork was going to New Zealand. Josh already knew that I wasn’t. It was all part of the plan.

While Martin gathered facts and unearthed information I went back to the hard job of trying to earn a living. I was starting from a standstill. The warehouse job was coming to an end and I was glad about it. Sure we needed the money but it was barely enough to cover the gas it took to drive to Bar Harbor and mentally it was killing me. Each time I turned on the radio there was more bad news about the recession and more and more people were losing their homes to foreclosure. I tried to apply for some State help. Massachusetts is very generous in that regard, but because I had not worked for a Massachusetts company in over a decade, I did not qualify for anything, not even welfare. “You are one of the people that don’t really belong anywhere,” the pleasant sounding lady from social services informed me. I used to think of myself as a citizen of the world; now I just wanted to be a citizen of someplace that could lend a helping hand.

I was still struggling to function at any level. I woke up each morning exhausted because I had not slept. The bottle of wine had put me to sleep but as soon as its effects wore off, I was wide awake, the chatter in overdrive. I had not exercised in a month and couldn’t bare the thought of dragging my heavy body out onto the road in the pre-dawn light and running my usual course. Nothing was helping and I felt as if I was sinking deeper and deeper into a black hole of misery.

As the bills piled up at the end of the month I started to wish that

I had taken the \$10,000 offer. At least we would have heat. Sigrun's father was gravely ill and I knew that she wanted to go over to Sweden to visit, but there was no way. We were slowly, inexorably sinking and I was sure that we would lose our house. I had not confronted Josh about the payments from Portimro. I wanted to see what he was going to do. I knew that sooner or later he would have to come to some kind of financial agreement with me and so I was not surprised when an email arrived which read in part:

The "investor" has agreed to make you a very final offer of US\$15,000 now in return for you signing the Deed which I attach with the altered amount. He, and I, believe that you have had enough time to reflect on things and so this offer is final and you have 48 hours to accept or it will be withdrawn. I reiterate that this is a final offer.

I ignored the email but I did notice he italicized the word "investor". He followed it a day later with a long list of complaints he and the "investor" had against me to support the reason for me being fired. It was a litany of complaints from lack of ethics, lack of job performance, some extra marital affairs, a general lack of everything. I let the email wash over me. I knew about the payments from Portimao.

Ricardo was on the phone constantly. He was incensed by what had happened. He was sad for me, but he was more mad that Josh had blamed the whole thing on the sponsor. Josh had told the competitors that I had marital problems and had left the race to try and fix my marriage. He also told them that Portimro had not been making their payments and that he was having to shoulder the financial burden. I had calls from Boris and Felipe and they commiserated and offered help, but I was reluctant to get them involved. This was not their problem.

LAPPING THE PLANET

As January rolled into February I found a way to trick the system. I desperately needed to sleep. The few glasses at night helped but as soon as they wore off I was wide awake. In my desperate state I had a grand idea. It was usually around 1 or 2 in the morning when I woke up. For the past month I had just lain there with the chatter getting louder and louder until a cold dawn thankfully arrived and I could get out of bed. I suddenly had a brainwave. Instead of lying there I would get out of bed and stumble down into the kitchen. There, hidden behind the microwave, was a bottle of rum. It only took a few long hits from the bottle and I was soon feeling drowsy again. What a perfect plan.

Three things happened which collectively conspired to help. I was trolling thorough iTunes looking for something morose to listen to. It was three in the morning and the rum was not working. Outside a light snow was falling and the street lamp across the road caught the snowflakes as they landed on my front lawn. The way the light struck the flakes made each individual flake shimmer. It was as if they were dancing. No it was not the rum, they really were dancing. Then I clicked on an old John Denver tune, one of my favorites from my teenage years. The music started slowly and I felt the words take over. They hit me right where I needed to be hit. In the gut, and hard.

“And talk of poems and prayers and promises

Things that we believe in

How sweet it is to love someone, how right it is to care

How long it’s been since yesterday, and what about tomorrow

What about our dreams and all the memories we share”

These words awakened something deep inside of me. Maybe it was the dancing snowflakes, maybe it was the words, perhaps it was the rum. I don't know. I felt a deep sense of calm come over me. It had been a crap start to the year but we were going to get through it. I went to bed and woke the next day feeling almost human. There was the usual mad scramble to get the boys out the door and to school and in the midst of it Tomas came up to me. "Dad," he said. "I need \$70 for violin lessons. You said that I could take lessons. Can I have the money?"

I looked down at his lovely, innocent face. He had no clue what was going on in my head. He had no clue that we might lose the house, his home.

"Sure Tom," I said. "Ask Mom to give you a check to give to your teacher."

"Thanks Dad," he replied and skipped off to find his mother. Sigrun wrote a check and I knew that there was no money to cover it. Something had to change. Right then and there I decided that happiness was a choice. So was misery. Josh had stolen my race and my money; he was not going to take my family.

The next morning I got up before dawn. I pulled on my running shoes. It was cold out. The temperature showing on the thermometer outside the kitchen window read 8 degrees Fahrenheit. I found my hat and thick gloves and jumped into a cold car. By the time I got to Deveraux Beach the car was warm and I sat for a while in front of the heater warming my hands. I plugged in my iPod, pulled the hat low over my ears, and stepped out of the car. The ocean was undulating lazily. Even the water was feeling the temperature. On the harbor side ice extended 200 feet. It had been a cold winter but as far as I was concerned, the cold was over. It was time for some warm.

I started running and moments later I was across the causeway

and on the road along the beach. There was fresh snow on the ground. In the distance I could see the lights of Boston glimmering in the early morning light. I kept a good pace until I hit the hill and there the wind left my lungs. Too many days of wallowing in misery and too many nights of cheap wine and rum had sucked my energy, but I was determined to keep running. I made it up the hill and as I crested, the sun broke through the clouds to the east. It was a stunning sight. Sea smoke wafted on the water and it picked up the first rays of sun. It was as if it was alive. I felt alive. For the first time in months I felt alive. I quickened my pace and ran until it felt as if my lungs would crack open with the effort. "Fuck you Josh Hall," I said out loud. "You took my race but you will not take my life."

When I got back home there was the daily scramble to find hats and gloves and backpacks for the boys. None of it bothered me. I opened my laptop to check my messages and there was one from a yacht club in Canada. It read, "I attended one of your talks last year. We would love to have you come and speak at our club. Do you have anything new to talk about?"



EPILOGUE

IT HAS BEEN OVER A YEAR since the bottom fell out of my world and while I can't say it's been one of the best years of my life, it has been interesting. It's been a long, slow recovery both financially and mentally. Looking back I am sure that I had too much of my person invested in the idea of a new around-the-world race. My life was out of balance and that's never a good way to live. Things are more balanced now but there are times when I still feel as if I am teetering on the edge.

As February vacation rolled around Sigrun and I decided to take a holiday, in Boston. I had some frequent flier miles that I could use to get a decent hotel for a couple of nights and we packed the kids into the car and drove the 20 or so miles from our home in Marblehead, to downtown Boston. As is often the case you never really spend time exploring your own backyard unless out-of-town visitors come and stay, or as in my case, you can't afford to go anywhere. It was a magical experience.

For starters, kids love hotels, especially ones with a heated pool. Secondly, Boston is truly a tremendous city. Now that they are rid of that hulking great monstrosity that was a four lane highway that ran through downtown, and buried it underground, the city has opened up and looks sparkling new. It's a great walking city and although it was bitterly cold and the wind whistled around buildings and funneled down main streets, we walked everywhere. We found cozy, good smelling coffee shops in the North End where the smell of espresso and fresh baked pastries wafted and mingled with the heady aromas of garlic and basil. We ate at our favorite Vietnamese restaurant, the one that specializes in noodle soup with some strange meats floating in it, but with a taste and flavor that is beyond description. We skated on Frog Pond and enjoyed the ice sculptures on Boston Common. Most of all we tried to put our problems aside for a couple of days and enjoy the pure and simple things in life; like each other.

While away I read a great book, *Broken Open* by Elizabeth Lesser. She is the co-founder of the Omega Institute, a retreat that specializes in holistic health and spirituality. The subtitle of the book is "*How difficult times can help us grow.*" I don't want to overstate my difficulties, it was only money after all, but I needed help and I needed to take a closer look at my life and where it was headed. Elizabeth's book was instrumental in making me realize that my problems were really insignificant when measured against what others had endured. It also helped me realize that while the days ahead looked a bit bleak, there would be a future and it was once again a blank slate. It was up to me to write the story of the second half of my life. I had already taken that important first step and made the mental shift away from my misery onto more positive thoughts. I was also back out running every morning. Both were good for my soul

and my spirit but I knew that what I really needed was a new focus, something that I could work toward. I found this focus in one of my passions: storytelling.

The phone call from Canada inviting me to speak was the start of a long tour that took me across Ontario in driving snow, into New Brunswick just as spring teased buds onto the trees and finally to Charlottetown on beautiful Prince Edward Island as the full splendor of spring arrived. It was like a rebirth. My books sold well and the audiences seemed to enjoy the show. I slowly found my voice and message and each talk gave me back a bit of my confidence.

I found myself unable to look at the race website but did get bits of news about the competitors from friends. The Germans and Chileans had yet another super close finish in Brazil, this time it was Felipe Cubillos and Josñ Mucoz that stole a well deserved victory. The Germans, Boris and Felix, turned the tables and won the leg to Charleston, but the final sprint into Portimro was won by the Chileans. The race was scored on points allowing the Germans on *Beluga Racer* to take the overall victory. Michel Kleinjans won the solo division. Which ever way you look at it, the Portimao Global Ocean Race was an amazing race and a resounding success. The future of small boat around-the-world racing looks bright. There are two new events modeled on the Portimao Global Ocean Race.

In late spring I took a trip back to Portugal to meet with some of the officials from Portimao and to discuss with them what had happened. They listened carefully, clearly not pleased with what they heard. They are, however, just the nicest people and their concern was more for me than for their investment in the race. I promised I would not make any mention of what had happened to the press. The mayor was up for reelection and the slightest hint of impropriety in anything that he had been associated with might

give his opposition an edge. I felt that I owed it to them, and to the competitors, to let the race finish without incident. Every now and then I would get a call from a journalist asking why I was no longer involved, but I was able to keep a lid on things. It was not easy as I wanted nothing more than to shout from the rooftops that all was not right, but I have always taken the long view in life and the short term *feel good* gain would certainly have been offset by a long term loss.

The financial situation that we faced placed a massive strain on my marriage to Sigrun and we decided that it would be a good idea to give ourselves some space. She took the boys to Iceland and worked there for the summer; I took a job in the Bahamas working on a boat. Sadly we were never able to repair some of the hurt that had accumulated over the years and we decided to end what had, for many years, been a wonderful marriage.

PPS - This update is written in 2024.

Josh married Catherine, they had a child and then got a divorce. No big surprise there.

Ricardo has found fame and fortune in Portugal as their top solo offshore sailor and much sought after motivational speaker and most recently a movie star.

The Mayor of Portimao, Mayor Manuel da Luz, didn't run for re-election.

The Deputy Mayor of Portimao, Dr. Luis Carito, the man who approved the sponsorship deal, was convicted of fraud and sent to prison. (unrelated to our sponsorship)

Boris Herrmann has gone on to become one of the most famous sailors in the world competing at the highest level.

LAPPING THE PLANET

Felipe Cubillos sadly died in a plane crash off Robinson Crusoe Island in the Pacific.

I met Sally and we have been together for 12 years. She brought two twins to our relationship the same age as my son Eli. For a while we had four teenagers in the house.

My son Tom now lives in London. He just took a trip to Lisbon to have a coffee with Ricardo.

The teenagers are thriving and my daughter Tory recently gave me a grandson, Emmet Francis Nunes and has another on the way.

I am working as a full time writer and just published my 13th book.

Beyond sad is that my step-son Brendon, that same beautiful boy that Sigrun pushed by my house in a baby carriage, died of an overdose of Fentanyl.

I am sorry about saying this but **“Fuck Drugs.”**

WITH THANKS

AS ALWAYS THERE are too many people to name when it comes to saying thank you, but I would like to start by thanking my father, Basil Hancock, for his wisdom and steady hand. He is still there to advise me. I ask and he always answers.

My wife Sigrun and my children, Tory, Tomas and Eli put up with an enormous amount. They know of my naive starry eyes view of the world and seem to roll with it. One day we will take that pilgrimage to Disney World like a 'normal' family.

My friends in Portimao, Mayor Manuel da Luz, Luis Carito, Luis Piscaretta, Marina Corriea, Ivo Faria, Pedro Romao and Salome Cabrita for having faith in the idea of a new around-the-world yacht race and backing it with the hard earned funds of the great citizens of Portimao.

Ricardo Diniz, who suggested we bring the race to Portugal. You are a truly gifted person with an amazing heart; your hopes, dreams and aspirations for Portugal will one day become a reality.

LAPPING THE PLANET

Larry Rosenfeld is one of my dearest friends. I would not have made it through those dark, desperate days without your wise council and firm friendship.

The sailors that competed in the inaugural Portimao Global Ocean Race. Boris Herrmann, Felix Oehme, Felipe Cubillos, Jose Munoz, Jeremy Salvesen, David Thomson, Lenjohn and Peter van der Wel, Michel Kleinjans and last but not least, the man who is truly and inspiration to us all, Nico Budel. Thank you for having the courage to enter our race. The spirit and sense of adventure that you brought to the event was precisely what's missing from the big global races.

Martin Penny gave me so much personal time and free legal advice. We have never met in person which makes his efforts all that more appreciated. He generously offered his council because I am a friend of a friend and a fellow South African. In these days of 'show me the money' it's a breath of fresh air to find someone like Martin.

Thank you to my proof readers Kels Gilkison, Basil Dickson, David Weaver and John Herridge for perusing various drafts of the book and pointing out glaring errors. If by chance a typo has slipped into the final version let's just say that it adds character to the book.

To the thousands of people that came to my talks last year and bought my books. You have no idea how much you gave me, not only in terms of badly needed money, but also in rebuilding my confidence and spirit.

As much as I hate to do this, (my mother always said to give thanks where thanks are due) I would like to thank Josh Hall for teaming up with me to start Global Ocean Sailing Ventures and the Portimao Global Ocean Race. While things didn't turn out that way we planned I would not trade the experience for anything and I certainly wouldn't have gone it alone.

Brian Hancock
Marblehead - April 2010



ALREADY PUBLISHED



TWO BRICKS AND A TICKEY HIGH

Adventures on Land
and Sea - a Memoir

I GREW UP IN a small town with a big name, a juxtaposition of the names of the two men who first settled there. The men were called Piet Retief and Gert Maritz; they named their settlement Pietermaritzburg.

The town is nestled among the rolling hills of the Natal Province of South Africa, midway between the Drakensberg Mountains and the Indian Ocean. It used to be an orderly town with soft edges, but the soft edges are gone now, eroded by time and the turbulent changes that swept the country over the past two decades. Where the hillsides were once green and covered with wildflowers, they are now red mud, laid bare by too many

people living on too little land. Even the smell is different. The fragrance of jacaranda blossoms has given way to exhaust fumes and cooking fires.

It's an area steeped in history, the nearby hills, once the scene of furious battles between the Boers and the Zulus, is quiet now but the soil to this day remains stained with the blood of thousands of men who died for the love of their country. Great struggles with descriptive names like the Battle of Blood River and the Battle of Isandhlwana took place where cows now graze peacefully in the shade of acacia trees, and the Ncome River, once red with blood, gurgles peacefully in the hot afternoon sun. The Zulus were beaten into submission only to rise again with political power to reclaim their land, and the air of British colonialism that permeated all parts of life is long gone replaced by the rough and tumble of a struggling Third World city

It wasn't always that way, it never is. When I was small, the streets were safe and the town claimed the unofficial title of being the 'Last Outpost of the British Empire'. We even used British currency, a tickey (two and a half cents) or a sixpence (five cents) could buy you a handful of sweets at the corner store and small boys, like myself, were, well, just two bricks and a tickey high.

At times Pietermaritzburg seemed more English than England, as expatriates clung to traditions long since given up back home, but treasured as fond memories in Africa. During the summer we dressed in white and played cricket, while our parents also dressed in white went lawn bowling. In the winter it was rugby, whether we liked it or not, and I did not. I was too small to be of any use on the field, and not much of a team player. I was more interested in boats. I longed for the weekends when I could go sailing. I longed to leave the routine of school and work and slip away to the familiar surroundings of the waterfront. The smell and sound of the lake immediately erased all the muddle

LAPPING THE PLANET

and mess and stress of growing up. The moment I set sail it was washed away, replaced by the slap, slap of clear water on the hull. I knew from an early age that my life would be tied to the water, and early seeds of adventure were planted in my resolve.

I WAS THE FOURTH of five children. My sister came first, the apple of my father's eye, followed by two older brothers, me, and then a younger brother. My father was a civil engineer, my mother a homemaker in the days when that was what women did. For a while before we were born she worked in a chemist rolling pills by hand but as far as I know that was the only paid job she had. It was a barefoot childhood and we ran free, watched occasionally by a maid, but mostly left to our own devices to let our imaginations take us to far away places and our bicycles to more practical destinations like the woods or corner store. Yes, I did get caught shoplifting there once but that's a story for another day.

My earliest memory is of a short flight. I was four. I remember the take off, and I remember the landing. The bit in between has gone but then it was a very short flight - less than a second, actually. I launched myself off the verandah wall with a vague belief that a positive attitude and a bit of luck would see me down safely. I had makeshift wings strapped to my arms. The second my feet left the wall I discovered the undeniable effects of gravity, and dropped like a stone breaking my ankle and skinning my knee. It was the first of many visits to the emergency room and I can still recall the sterile smell of disinfectant burning my nostrils while I waited for the cast to be molded, and I remember being given the heel-guard to keep as a souvenir when the cast was cut off a month later. I had healed quickly and was sent back into the world to see what new damage I could inflict upon myself.

It didn't take long.

During the winter we would visit my Granny Lal, my Dad's mom, for lunch. You could smell the roast beef and yorkshire pudding from the parking lot outside her small flat. With ice cream and chocolate sauce for dessert, it was worth getting dressed in our Sunday Best clothes and sitting through a few hours of adult conversation. One time, not long after I had regained full use of my broken leg, I ran headlong into my father's car cracking my head open on the rear bumper. I do not remember much beyond the initial impact. I do know that I ruined my best clothes and lunch at grandma's, and recall that increasingly familiar smell of disinfectant.

Some time passed before I inflicted more damage. Like most middle-class families, we did not own a swimming pool and instead would visit the public pool. One day I decided that diving was going to be my forte and spent the morning perfecting my somersaults and swan dives. By lunchtime I had them mastered, and decided to seek out a new challenge. A simple back-flip. I positioned myself on the edge facing away from the water, and shuffled backwards until my toes were clinging to the lip of the pool. My heels hung over the water and I balanced for a moment, building up courage. I hesitated a second and then leapt into the air. I sprung upwards, arched my back and crash-landed right where my feet had been. For a split second I teetered on the edge, my head flattened against the hard cement, and then in slow motion collapsed into the pool in a bloody heap. The water around me had turned crimson mingling with the turquoise pool water before someone grabbed my arm, yanked me out, and took me back to that same emergency room.

OUR FAMILY HOME was a sprawling single story structure designed to combat the hot summer days. We had no air conditioning; instead large windows allowed the afternoon breeze to blow

through the house. A massive verandah around three quarters of the home provided an overhang that stopped the sun from beaming directly into the bedrooms. On summer nights we would drag our beds out onto the verandah and sleep in the cool evening air listening to the sounds of crickets and night frogs. My father would stop by each of us in turn to say good night and he would fan us with the sheets until we were cool and could fall asleep.

I especially loved it when it rained. Some nights we would hear the far off rumble of thunder as the storm grew closer, and slowly it would descend on the town bringing with it bolts of lightning that would instantly bathe everything in stark white light like an overexposed photograph. The rain would bucket down on the tin roof creating a din that made it impossible to sleep. Instead we would cower under our sheets, all of us children awake and watching. We were dry and safe under the overhang but the cascading rain sent up a fine mist as it pounded the verandah wall and our beds were damp. Once the storm had moved off we would go back to sleep and wake the next morning to a world washed clean.

The summer afternoon storms were especially violent. The heat of the day would simmer and smolder until the sky turned an angry bruised blue and the wind dropped to an eerie stillness. We would hear the thunder start, the storm gathering steam on the hot plains outside the city, and then it would get so dark that the streetlights came on automatically. Sometimes with the rain and thunder came hail, the white pellets of ice pounding down on the tin roof and bouncing off the green grass. My mother would gather us inside, away from any window - we were told that glass attracted lightning - and we watched as the storm passed overhead. As quickly as it had started, the rain ended, the streetlights went off and the sun came out again. Often, just as the rain was tapering off there would be a 'monkey's wedding'

when the sun was out while it was still raining. Flying ants would emerge from their underground tunnels and fill the sky, collecting around any light in thick swarms. We would shut off all lights in the house so that we did not attract them inside and watch as the streetlights were almost dimmed by the mass of delicate wings and tiny bodies that, I was told, tasted like butter when fried in hot oil.

At the end of our garden there were mulberry and loquat trees that hung heavy with fruit and our mouths, hands and clothes were constantly stained with black and red juice. Beyond the trees was a private all-boys school that was part regular school, part reform school and part agricultural college. Between our home and the school buildings was a field of corn with a series of chicken coops at the far end. A fierce looking dog leashed to a long length of wire strung between two trees stood guard. The dog was able to patrol a hundred yards or so tethered to the wire, making it a challenge for us small kids to swipe the eggs. We were, however, not above a challenge and it was great fun to try and outsmart the dog. We would creep slowly through the corn until we could peer out and spot the dog. It was always tricky because we had no idea if he would be right there where we exited the corn, or at the far end of the wire. Sometimes he would hear us before we saw him and charge barking and spraying slobber while we scampered back to the house laughing that nervous laughter children have when they are not sure if it's really funny or really scary, or both.

If the dog was at the far end of the wire we knew that we had twenty seconds or so to make the gap between the corn and coops, grab a few eggs and scadaddle back into the relative safety of the corn field. Sometimes, of course, the dog was asleep and we tiptoed across no-mans-land until we reached the chickens. I would push up a small door, reach my arms into the soft warm

down and feel around for eggs. I would hear the mother hen cluck and complain until my hand rested on a freshly laid egg and would quickly grab as many as I could filling my shirt with treasure. We would tiptoe back to the corn and then run laughing to the house where my Mom would scramble the eggs and serve them with fresh home-baked bread.

Pete, my oldest brother, had a way with animals. He seemed to exert a certain pull on them and one day he spoke his thoughts out loud: "I am sure that dog is not as fierce as he thinks he is." I could see that he was scheming something and I knew that he was going to drag me into it. He always did and there was no way I could get out of it. A few years later this magnetic pull would lead us both into a mountain of trouble, but that was in the future.

"Come on," he said, "let's go and get some eggs. I am going to see if I can pet the dog." I felt my heart sink. Once Pete had an idea in his head there was no stopping him. I followed him through the gap in our fence to the corn field, and trailed slowly behind him toward the chicken coops. We peered out through the corn and saw that the dog was asleep just feet from where we were. "Let's go back," I said to Pete. "If the dog suddenly wakes up he's gonna be mad." Even as I said the words I knew it was no use. Pete crouched down and bit by bit edged toward the sleeping dog. "Come on," he said, beckoning me. I could feel rivers of sweat running down my back but I did as I was told and followed silently.

Pete made a soft clicking noise and I saw the dog lazily lift an ear. Pete clicked again and the ear flopped in response. Pete whistled a low whistle and clicked his tongue. I could see the dog starting to wake up and fought the urge to run. We had been his mortal enemy the whole summer; why would he suddenly want to be friends? Pete clicked again and the dog opened one eye. Even at six years old I could read the expression in his one open

eye. The dog looked straight at us, hardly believing what he was seeing. Then he opened the other eye and emanated a low growl. The noise started somewhere deep within him. Pete clicked and looked directly at the dog. The dog growled again and it looked as if it was going to rise.

“Don’t move,” Pete ordered. He whistled a low whistle and reached out his hand. By now the dog had both eyes firmly fixed on us but he still didn’t move. Pete edged a bit closer and the dog growled again. We were less than three feet from it. I could smell his breath and see scars on his back from many hard encounters. Up close he looked twice the size but, strangely, not as scary as he did from a distance.

Pete sat quietly on the ground talking to the dog in a low, soothing tone. The growling stopped. The dog put its head on the ground and looked up, his expression softening and then, surprisingly, he whimpered. This fierce dog, our sworn enemy, the Militant Guard of Chicken Coops, was whimpering. Pete reached out his hand ever so slowly and the dog scooped forward, his belly dragging in the dirt, his tail thumping from side to side, kicking up dust. He looked directly at Pete, ignored me of course, and began licking Pete’s fingers. Pete tussled him behind the ears and before long the dog rolled over onto his back aching to have his tummy scratched. So much for savagery. All the dog really wanted was a good petting and I learned the first of many valuable lessons about life. Most of us just want our bellies scratched; the fierce exterior is all show.

WE ALWAYS HAD a variety of animals living with us, not all of them domestic. Pete would rescue them and bring them home. One time I won a tiny chicken at the town fair and brought it home. We named her Rosie. Rosie ran free in the yard growing daily until it was large, fat, and big enough to scare off stray dogs. For a while we had a big black crow as a permanent resident. Pete

made a perch for him in his bedroom on top of his cupboard and the crow, who loved Pete and hated the rest of us, would lord over the room as if he owned not only the house, but the whole neighborhood. The arrangement worked okay except when Pete went away for a night. He would order me to sleep in his bed so that I could let the crow out in the morning. I knew better than to argue and would creep quietly into his bed once I was sure that the crow was asleep. I never did sleep; I was terrified and would lie half awake with one eye fixed on the crow. Sometime before dawn I would finally give in and fall asleep and no sooner than I did, the crow would dive bomb. He would kick off from his perch, swoop down and land squarely on my stomach, his long, black, razor sharp beak inches from my face. Inevitably I screamed and in defense rolled over to protect my face but the crow knew no mercy. It would hop onto my head pecking at my ears until I escaped its clutches and let him out the door.

I hated the crow but liked the snakes and the legavaan. Pete always had a fish tank filled with a few varieties of snakes and inevitably one or more of them would escape. The only poisonous one he kept was a Red-lipped Herald, a smallish snake, quite pretty, but with a venomous bite that wouldn't kill but could make you sick if it bit you often enough. It was this snake that kept escaping and for days I would gingerly pull back my sheets and search under my pillow before getting into bed. It was usually the maid who found the snake; the maid who hated snakes and regarded them as pure evil. There was something about the smell of freshly laundered clothes that attracted the snake and it would slide into our cupboard and sleep between layers of T-shirts. It never bit anyone but could give a good scare when you reached for a shirt and found two feet of snake resting comfortably on your swimming trunks.

The legavaan, a small crocodile-like reptile about three feet

long, was fun to keep, but not to catch. We caught them on the banks of the river near our house. Pete would decide that he wanted a new pet and would round me up to help him catch them. They lived in the narrow crevices of mud and rock banks, usually in places too tight for his arms. Being half his age my arms were skinny, perfect for sliding into the narrow gaps.

First we had to cross the Field of Dangerous Donkeys. I am not sure who owned the donkeys but we were told that they were dangerous and should be avoided at all cost. Surprisingly Pete never tried his animal charm on them; instead we crept as quietly and inconspicuously as we could until we were close enough to bolt for the far fence before the donkeys saw us. They never took up chase. I guess, looking back on it, they too just wanted their bellies scratched and running after small boys was altogether just too much effort.

Once over the fence we were safe and a few minutes later at the river's edge. We often played at the river loading up bendy sticks with sticky red mud and flinging it at each other. It was called "kleilat" and provided endless hours of free fun for neighborhood's of children. Our parents had no idea where we were until we came back home with mud caked hard in our hair and our clothes stained a terracotta red. This was when we first saw the legavaan and about the same time Pete decided that he wanted one for a pet.

If you looked carefully in the cracks you could see a glint of color, the brown and yellow scales of the legavaan's body. The problem was that you were not sure what part of its body you were looking at. If it was near the tail you were OK to reach in and try and get a grip on it. If it was near the head you were only a few inches from razor sharp teeth. That was the reason Pete brought me along. "Don't worry," he would say. "Just reach in and grab it quick like. You need to surprise it so move quickly."

It was only two decades later when Pete had me reach into a bees nest to extract the honey that I decided to put my foot down and refuse, but when I was small it was just the way it was. Pete ordered and I followed.

I would try and poke the legavaan to get some idea of where the teeth were while Pete stood back a safe distance with an old sack at the ready. In the end I would give up, take my chances and make a grab for it. Sometimes the legavaan scurried away but often I was able to get a good grip on its muscular tail and pull like mad. The surprised, and much annoyed legavaan would dig its claws into the banks and hold on for dear life while Pete and I pulled until it came out hissing and arching its body in an effort to bite us. In seconds we had the sack open and the writhing lizard stuffed inside. Once back home we would drop it into a wire cage and, slowly working his magic, Pete would befriend it.

Feeding time was always great fun. During the week we would hunt small lizards, shooting them down from the rafters with an elastic band. If we hit them just right they would drop from the roof where they had been hanging upside down, and while they were still stunned we would make a grab for them. Holding the squirming lizard between thumb and forefinger I would delicately drop the lizard into the snake cage and watch what happened. The lizard knew he was in trouble the instant his soft padded feet hit the dirt. It stood motionless until the snake got wind of fresh food, its forked tongue licking back and forth tasting the air. Slowly the snake would make its way toward the lizard staring at it with ice cold dark eyes. The lizard would be transfixed; frozen; terrified. We would watch with rapt fascination until the snake struck, slamming into the horrified creature, killing it instantly.

On Saturday mornings we would talk our mother into taking us to the local pet store where we could buy white mice for ten cents apiece. The poor, frightened mouse would scurry around

in the paper bag oblivious of its fate until it was tipped out of the bag into the snake pit. Small boys know no mercy and we watched gleefully as the mouse huddled shaking in the corner until one of the snakes took the scent. Lizards show no emotion, their faces expressionless, but white mice are a different thing. Their faces showed sheer terror, their whiskers quivering and their tiny bodies shaking. We loved it and the snake, like us, showed no mercy. It was a one-way ticket for the poor mouse.

We would hunt for frogs in the river and bring them back for the legavaan. There was nothing sinister about the way a legavaan killed its prey. It would ease slowly forward, its scaly body barely scraping the dirt until it was within striking distance of the silly frog who, all too late, realized that it was in deep trouble. I don't know how many times I looked at the expressionless eyes of a half eaten frog as the legavaan's teeth sank into its soft belly and sucked it down. The frogs, unlike mice, seemed totally unfazed by the whole experience.

One morning my dad came into my bedroom. He hadn't been in my bedroom since I was a small kid when he would come by at night and fan the sheets on a hot summer evening to cool me. He placed his hand on my shoulder and said, "your Granny Lal died last night." I could see that he had been crying. I was shocked. My Dad never cried. I didn't say anything but, sadly, all I could think of was, "where were we going for roast beef and yorkshire pudding on Sunday's for lunch?"

OUR SUMMER HOLIDAYS were spent at the beach, the mountains or at one of South Africa's many game parks. I loved the beach holidays the best. My Dad would pack the station wagon with enough food and booze for two weeks, load in five children, two dogs and the maid, and we would set off for the coast. This was in the days before air conditioning and my Mom would sit up

front and chain smoke and suck from a hip flask of brany while we sat jammed in the back seat. We were barely out the driveway when someone poked someone in the ribs and things started to go downhill. I could see Dad's knuckles tighten on the steering wheel and every now and then he would lean back and take a swipe at us, hoping to connect with anyone, it didn't matter who. Years later Dad complained of tennis elbow even though he never set foot on a tennis court.

The beach cottage was a stone's throw from tumbling surf that washed up on golden sand. Once free from the car, we would rush down to the water's edge and plunge in. It was paradise. Hundreds of rock pools were filled with all kinds of creatures, some edible, some not. We would gather muscles from the rocks and Mom would steam them in a big pot until they broke open revealing their soft, pink flesh that tasted of the ocean. If we were lucky we would be at the beach cottage during a sardine run. Every so often during the summer, tens of thousands of sardines would be chased up the coast by larger game fish. It was a feeding frenzy and we would run to the ocean with buckets. There were so many sardines that you only had to dip the bucket into the water and you had a half dozen squirming, shining fish that were all attempting to leap out. Dad would make a large open fire and gut the sardines before tossing them on the coals and coating them with coarse salt. A freshly grilled sardine with a squeeze of lemon was about as good as food could get. The only meal I remember being better than a plate full of sardines was the time my uncle came for a visit. He brought a large chicken that Mom cooked slowly in a pot with some fresh herbs. It was only years later that I found out it was Rosie, the same once-tiny chick that I had won at the town fair.

With all that good eating and fresh air I was growing and one day, after a long, hot summer, Mom bundled me into the back of

her car and we took off for town. “Where are we going?” I asked, and my mother smiled. “You are a big boy now,” she said. “Next week you are going to start school. We need to buy you a school uniform and get you some new shoes and some books.” I was not thrilled by the news. School meant work and no time for play. School meant that my carefree life was coming to an end. I hated the thought of it but life has its milestones and I was about to face my first.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BRIAN HANCOCK is an acclaimed author, adventurer, and expert in the world of offshore sailing. His extensive experience on the open seas and deep understanding of the intricacies of sailing have made him a respected figure in both the maritime community and literary circles.

Born in South Africa, Hancock's fascination with the ocean began at a young age, leading him to a life that would be defined by exploration, challenge, and a relentless pursuit of adventure. Hancock's sailing career spans several decades, during which he has accumulated over 300,000 sea miles including three Whitbread Round the World Races which is considered one of the most grueling and prestigious sailing competitions in the world.

His first-hand experience with the trials and triumphs of ocean racing lends a palpable authenticity to his writing, allowing readers to feel the wind, waves, and raw emotion that come with a life spent on the high seas. As a writer, Hancock has a unique ability to translate the complexities of sailing into

compelling narratives that resonate with both seasoned sailors and avid readers alike.

Brian is the author of 12 books including two memoirs (Two Bricks and a Tickey High and Lapping the Planet), a murder mystery (Murder at your Convenience), two novels (Cinnamon Girl and Brooks), two books of short stories (Twisted Tales and More Twisted Tales) and four children's books in the Adventures of Fat Cat series. He also authored the definitive guide to all things sails and sailmaking (Maximize your Sail Power). In addition Brian has written for numerous magazines around the world and is a heralded public speaker.

Brian lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts with his wife Sally and their cat Ziggy. Their five children and a grandson stop by every now and then for a free meal and a warm bed.

BOOKS BY BRIAN HANCOCK

all titles available at www.greatcirclepress.com

MEMOIRS

Two Bricks and a Tickey High - Adventures on Land and Sea

Lapping the Planet - A Memoir of Inspiration, Perspiration & Betrayal

NOVELS

Cinnamon Girl

Brooks

Murder at your Convenience

SHORT STORIES

Twisted Tales - Short Stories from Scattered Parts of the Planet

More Twisted Tales - Short Stories from Scattered Parts of the Planet

CHILDRENS STORIES

Fat Cat - Young and Restless

Fat Cat and his Magic Carpet

Fat Cat - International Cat of Mystery

Fat Cat and the two Naughty Chickens

TECHNICAL

Maximise Your Sail Power - The Complete Guide to Sails, Sailmaking and Sail Performance

POETRY

Dipping my Toes

COFFEE TABLE

Winning Spirit - The Global Challenge 2004/2005

Chasing the Dawn - (with Nick Moloney)

Living Life - The Ocean Globe Race story (coming December 2024)



Pushing 50, unemployed and unemployable. Professional sailor Brian Hancock found himself at a crossroads. After 30 years of racing sailboats around the world he was looking for a new challenge, one that drew on his experience as a sailor, adventurer and author. He formed a partnership with an old friend and together they founded a new around-the-world yacht race, the Portimao Global Ocean Race.

Lapping the Planet is a heartfelt account of what it takes to have a dream, to pursue it against all odds, and to prevail. It's a journey that takes him back to his roots in South Africa. It takes him to the highs of success to the lows of betrayal.

Mostly it's a voyage of self discovery.

Beautifully written, set against a backdrop of travel and adventure, this poignant memoir will have you laughing, crying and feeling inspired.

“Just a bloody good read. A heartfelt memoir written just like a memoir should be written. I can't recommend this book enough”

--- AJ Saltzman - NewsPlus



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