

## DON'T START THE MOTOR

On Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> August this year I began yet another Adventure with my owners Gil and Sheryl Waller. With our Crew consisting of my owner's Sons Matt and Simon, Matt's two sons Cambell (15) and Angus (12), Lew Clarke and Justin Congdon we headed over the start line twice. There was just a little confusion as to what Division we were in however, we crossed the line 2 ½ minutes earlier than we should have which fortunately, meant that we were not disqualified before we started so to speak. Nevertheless, the spinnaker had to come down as we went about and started the Spice Island Darwin to Ambon Race for the second time.



With little to no wind we headed off with Capt. Gil saying, "It's not if we have to start the motor it is only a matter of when". The crew set forth and put up every sail they could to help me gain some sort of momentum. This is no mean feat for someone my size, weight and age (I am now the ripe old age of 37). For nearly two days no matter how hard I tried I just couldn't go faster than between 1 ½ to 3 knots except when we had a little tide assistance as we rounded Cape Fourcroy. Every time Capt. Gil suggested starting the motor Sheryl would say in a very loud voice "DON'T START THE MOTOR". In fact, this became her catch cry for the whole race! Sheryl did keep pointing out that all my competitors were 'in the same boat' all doing much the same speed and it would be a little embarrassing to start the motor and then pass our opponents and be disqualified to boot. I must say I had to agree plus I felt I would like to just do one race just under sail alone. By the afternoon of day 2 things began to improve and with my spinnakers up on both masts for three days and two nights we had a great sail arriving at the finishing line with the tide with us just until we finished. Our crossing of the finish line (at 5.15 and 30 sec am Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> August) was about as slow as our crossing of the start line however as the fireworks heralded the fact that we had finished under sail the champagne cork popped and the cry went up "Start The Motor"!



Sailing is just part of this Adventure of which I was obviously an integral part. Whilst I happily sat on my mooring the Crew went off to enjoy the most amazing Ambonese hospitality. According to what I heard from the Owners and Crew they all felt overwhelmed by the welcome they received by everyone from the Mayor of Ambon down to the school children and people generally.



As everyone stepped ashore on the Thursday morning they began their amazing experience with a hearty welcome from the Organizers of the yacht race. Later in the day there was the Becak ride with everyone in their own trishaw paired with delightful student's intent on improving their English skills heading off with a police escort and a band on the back of a truck as they were taken on a tour

of Ambon City. Apparently Cambell and Angus were a great hit and spent quite some time posing for 'selfies' with the female students. I am sure they really hated that!!

The Mayor of Ambon and his Wife hosted a wonderful evening at their home with an abundance of food drinks and entertainment and of course a warm welcome expressing his heartfelt gratitude to the 'Fleet' explaining the importance in relation to not only the friendship between the City of Darwin and the City of Ambon but also that such events demonstrate to others that Ambon is now a safe haven for visitors.



The visit to the school was another highlight with entertainment from the children. This was a highlight for Cambell and Angus who along with other young crew joined the children doing traditional dancing and attempting to 'jump the bamboo sticks' without damaging their ankles. Simon was quite a hit with his drone taking footage of the proceedings which he

gave to the school.



An unexpected pleasure was the Crew's attendance to the evening put on by the local Boating Club. According to the conversation when the Crew returned to join me on the mooring things started a little quietly until the large group of older citizens got up and gave a demonstration of ballroom dancing. Before long the whole room was up tripping the light fantastic with this very agile dance group.

Although I knew it was impossible for me to attend I was a little disappointed not to be amongst my Crew for the Presentation of Prizes. There had of course been many stories from other Yachts about the pros and cons of their race experiences and by all accounts all the yachts had succeeded in bringing all their crews safely from Darwin to Ambon. Personally, I never believed that it would be possible for Gil, Sheryl and our Crew to be up their receiving first place – on handicap – in our division. I am not new to this yacht race as I have done it in 1991 and 1992 with my original owner however, it is the first time I have managed it under sail alone and thanks to an amazing and enthusiastic crew and Sheryl who kept repeating "don't start the motor". Who would have thought!! I would just like to add that the Grandsons who were perhaps not as enthusiastic as they could have been at the start both said to Sheryl, "Nonna this is the best thing I have ever done in my life" and then asked Papa if they could to it again next year. Well, I think that will be a discussion for another day.



After leaving Ambon with Gil, Sheryl, Lew Clarke and his wife Julia things were much more relaxed as we headed around the north coast of Ambon stopping at a couple of villages along the way where we donated bits and pieces for the schools. Due to the weather conditions we were in no hurry to head towards Banda Neira. I had some great encounters with some of the local fishermen who came to

visit, children heading out after they finished school in their canoes to get one or two of Lew's balloons and then there was the boarding of the local water police who also wanted a photo with Me. We were lucky enough to have a pod of about fifty dolphins keeping us company when we spent four days off Nusa Laut Island waiting for a break in the weather.



When we arrived in Banda Neira at dusk on the 22nd August the only boat left was *Ozzie Mozzie*. Capt. Peter came and helped the Crew tie me safely to a large tree on the shore. We were the last yacht to arrive in this beautiful place which lived up to everyone's expectations. We had no sooner arrived than out of the darkness came the familiar voice of Ayu calling "Natsumi, Natsumi I knew you would come"! I was rather

chuffed that I was expected and spent the next four days gently tugging at my anchorage watching life pass me by while everyone else enjoyed the delights of Banda Neira with their wonderful Tourist Guide Ayu.

From discussions on board it was obvious that Ayu was an amazing Ambassador for her Island. A walking tour of the historic Town, the Spice Island tour which highlighted the importance of Nutmeg and Mace in the History of this tiny dot on the Globe, (once the most expensive real estate in the world), forays through the market and fish market, sitting sipping coffee with fried bananas, and savouring the most amazing and interesting Indonesian food ever.



The visit to the school of 13 children on one of the adjacent islands to deliver a box of supplies donated by two of the other yachts was a favourite excursion. Who would have thought a box of stationary, hats and drink bottles could bring such joy? My crew added some balls, pool noodles and old spinnaker which were also accepted with enthusiasm

especially the pool noodles which prompted the children to head into the water fully clothed in their school uniforms. The crew topped off this visit with a snorkel over the lovely coral just off the beach.

Abba of Cilu Bintang Resort was also very welcoming, and we had a couple of lovely meals there. In return we treated Ayu and Abba to an Aussie BBQ aboard which was fun. I think they both enjoyed the lamb chops and sausages as much as the Crew enjoyed the dishes served up onshore.



Gil and Lew also did two tank dives which they said was one of the best they had done. By this time Gil had discovered that Google Maps in satellite mode was very useful in being able to find the edges of coral etc. and therefore improved our ability to find some lovely snorkeling spots.

Our four-day visit seemed to be over in a flash. The only disappointment was the fact that Ayu missed out on the Scholarship she had applied for to come to Australia to study. Ayu told us this news as we were sailing away and we were all feeling sad for this enthusiastic young woman who is so ardent in her 'Dream' to help children who are struggling to be educated due to family circumstance and to promote Tourism in Banda Neira. We all hope that she fulfills her Dreams for herself and her beautiful Island.

"Don't Start the Motor" was not mentioned on the way back to Darwin. Thank goodness as otherwise we could still be out there waiting for some wind. The weather was kind to us and we spent many an hour reading on the back deck. Unfortunately, my automatic pilot decided to give up the ghost and consequently Capt. Gil and Lew had to keep me on track for the last 3½ days and nights which was a pain for all

concerned.

As I sit tied up at Tipperary Waters Marina waiting for Gil and Sheryl to turn up again I would like to say thanks to all the Organizers and Participants in the 2018 Spice Islands Darwin to Ambon Yacht Race for your part in giving me yet another amazing sailing experience. In the meantime, I will spend some time swapping stories with the 'stink' boat moored next to me.



I wish you all many more safe sailing adventures.

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*Written by Sheryl Waller*