

## Bonne Vie goes flying



The male wanted to go cruising again after many years of dinghy racing. The female's requirements were simple: Full standing headroom, a view out from everywhere in the boat, gets to places reasonably fast and not too tippy. That meant that a catamaran was called for, but which one? Boat shows and internet research coupled with the available budget indicated that a new boat was out of the question and second hand boats still seemed to be expensive when necessary repairs were factored in. A history of small boat building seemed to be scalable but the timeframe to build a big catamaran was daunting but possible. Further internet and magazine research homed in on several potential designs. An article on launchings in a magazine identified the launching of an Easy Jessica to an Australian couple' who were known to us and, through John and Heather Brander's enthusiastic correspondence, we started also to catch the bug. We attended a launching of an Easy 11.6m in the Bay of Islands. We were awestruck with its excellent layout and could already see ourselves sitting in a bay somewhere with friends as the sun was going down. It certainly met the females criteria, but could it also sail and meet the males unsaid criteria of being a good sea boat and enjoyable to sail? The designers, Peter and Anne spent some time with us after the launching to answer all my questions, which was a great help. This was further reinforced with a trip on John and Heathers Jessica on Moreton Bay, along with a visit to the designer's workshop to see a 12m Easy under construction. We decided on the Jessica as it was large enough for our requirements, was at the limit of the available building foot print and had proven itself as a great coastal cruiser. We have no intention of inter-country sailing although joining the Easy friendly fraternity has meant we can sail in other countries, without having to sail in between.

Purchasing a set of plans was "Easy", but planning the build and especially the "extraction" was the first big challenge. We live down a long right-of-way and are surrounded by other houses. No matter which way we looked at it, extracting the finished product would impact significantly on one or more of our neighbors. On top of that we would potentially be making noise adjacent to bedrooms and their

entertainment decks. There was no way a shed could be constructed so close to the boundaries, living areas and impact on the neighbours' views. A low profile series of "tents" was planned and a set of alternative extraction plans established according to the residual health of relationship with specific neighbours at the end of the build. This planning and consideration for neighbours concerns proved beneficial and included; programming electric planing exercises to weekdays; stopping work when neighbours were entertaining and never starting work before 0930 on weekends. Regular neighbour updates, viewings and dinners were also beneficial to keeping good relations. Overall; neighbour relationships grew and improved as they were all interested in the project and welcomed the opportunity to share our dream.

The build progressed steadily with one hull turned after 6 months and the next 5 months later. Joining of the hulls and the commencement of the bridge deck followed but the classic trap of working on too many fronts and nothing completed was fallen into, and there was a period of 3 months when nothing was done as the project just seemed too gargantuan. A visit to Queensland and a weekend trip on a Jessica sorted that out. No sooner had we arrived home and our suitcases unloaded; construction was underway again.

Building a sizable craft under a progressively modified tent made out of tarpaulins had severe limitations. Access was difficult and the inside temperature in summer was excessive. Contacting the tarpaulin surface caused an instant burn and rainwater leaks were frequent. It was a big compromise. Hindsight has meant many other improved solutions have been developed if another boat is built one day in the future.

A key benefit of joining the "Easy" community is the builder's website, where ideas are shared and problems solved. On top of that, Peter and Anne reply to queries overnight and John Brander provided invaluable support by regularly providing the finer details incorporated into his own Jessica.

Construction proved "Easy", as the designer identified, but nothing could properly identify the impact of filling, sanding, filling, sanding, filling, sanding on the body, mind and program. Every surface seemed to require at least 4 coats of filler and most of each coat applied seemed to be removed in the sanding process. It seemed to be never ending and another 3 month hiatus to construction occurred. Again a quick trip to Queensland to re-energize was the key. The external structure was basically complete at the end of 3 years including the 2 rest periods. Construction had normally comprised 1-3 evenings per week for an hour or so after dinner and an average of one day per weekend. I had planned to launch by my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in March 2012. In August 2011 a close friend and past boss called around to see progress, and to compare notes related to his own boat refurbishment efforts. When he saw the state of our boat, which at that stage was an unfinished shell and heard my target project completion date; he exclaimed: "no way". Of course; this really laid down the gauntlet and construction activity soared.

It was only in the last 2 months that we drew in friends to help with the finishing detail such as installing pumps and deck fittings. This phase really expended the hours but the crane was ordered and leave application approved for the launch week. We decided to enjoy my birthday celebrations pre-launch and provide an opportunity for our wider circle of friends to come and see the finished article prior to it

disappearing onto the water. On launch day, a monstrous crane appeared in our driveway and proceeded to set up. The transport team was well organized and efficient and the “Big Lift” commenced within an hour. Neighbors appeared and there was a sizable crowd assembled in time to see Bonne Vie (Good Life) flying above the next door double storey house. A gust of wind caused a momentary sharp intake of breath, but she was soon loaded up and disappearing down the road. A small group of very close friends shared lunch and very special bubbly on Bonne Vie on her first day on the water. A very special time for us and the first of many occasions, that forge those special memories.

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