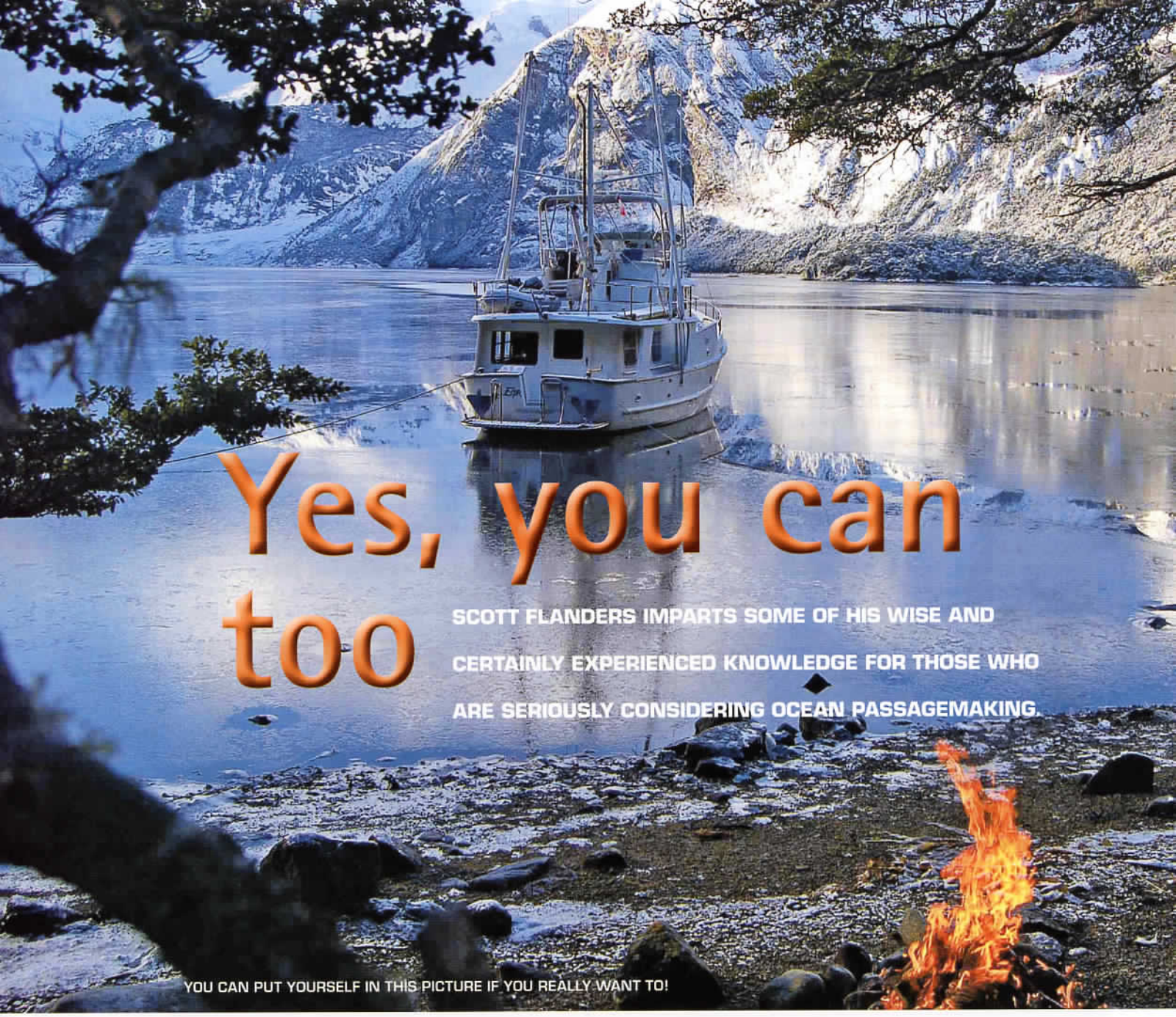
Yes, you can too

SCOTT FLANDERS IMPARTS SOME OF HIS WISE AND CERTAINLY EXPERIENCED KNOWLEDGE FOR THOSE WHO ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING OCEAN PASSAGEMAKING.



YOU CAN PUT YOURSELF IN THIS PICTURE IF YOU REALLY WANT TO!

M/Y Egret, our 46' (14.0m) Nordhavn trawler, spent her first 2½ years on the U.S. east coast travelling as far north as Nova Scotia and as far south as the Dominican Republic. The next 2½ years were spent in the Mediterranean, crossing the Atlantic as a participant in the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally. Departing the Med she travelled south to the Canary Islands, recrossed the Atlantic to Brazil, then south to Argentina and Chile where she spent the next year (and rounded Cape Horn). The following year she left mainland Chile to cross the Pacific, visiting Robinson Crusoe Island (450 nautical miles off the coast of Chile), Easter Island, Pitcairn Island, the Gambier Island group 1000 nautical miles south of Tahiti, Tahiti and French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, American Samoa, the Kingdom of Tonga, and now is in New Zealand. Our little white fibreglass ship has travelled over 40,000 nautical miles.

So what does this have to do with you? EVERYTHING! Mary and I didn't start off crossing oceans. Previously we had done a lot of small boat boating but essentially no cruising. There is a difference. After taking delivery of Egret we were liveaboards for six months before we retired and sailed into the sunset. During the liveaboard stage we spent as much time as possible anchored here and there for the weekends. During this time we bashed docks, got stuck in the mud and made navigational errors. Yes, we made mistakes. Lots of them. However, we learned from our mistakes. Our egos survived as well. After retirement we immediately left our home town of Ft Lauderdale and made our first non-stop offshore passage along Florida's east coast to St Mary's Inlet at the Florida/Georgia border. We were sooo nervous but determined to learn as much as we could about passagemaking. And we did. All in baby steps. Baby steps are the key.

So let's say you buy into this picture and purchase a boat of some type. As time and miles goes by you will naturally push your comfort level here and there. However, there are usually two of you boating. Your comfort levels may not be the same. You have several choices. 1. You can yell at each other about this n' that, hoping to make your point. 2. If either of you have anxieties, talk about them openly, then set about working on the issues as a team. When you are at sea, ALL you have are each other. Mary and I have always been close, but since we have been cruising we have become even closer. We don't just want each other's company, we NEED each other. Most every long distance cruiser, power or sail, is the same.

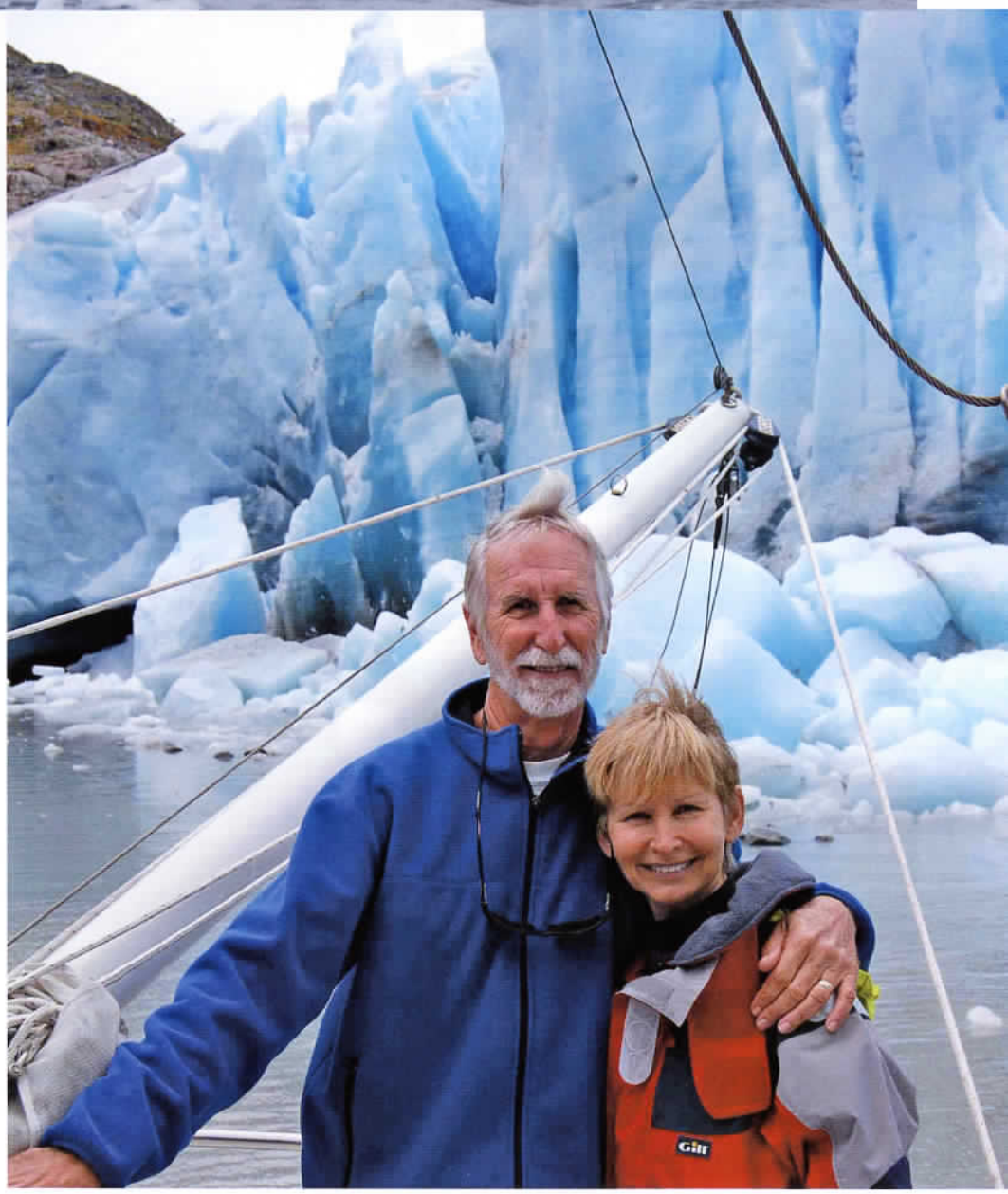
Let's tell you a sad story about some cruisers we know, and then look at the big picture. The admiral was so nervous about docking she would take a prescriptive happy pill before docking. So now Alice in Wonderland is trying to help dock the boat. At least her anxiety was gone but safety is compromised. Next were the dinghy trials. Their dinghy was a super heavy dinghy for a relatively small boat. When launching the dink

ROUGH SEAS ARE NOT ABOUT IF, BUT ABOUT WHEN.

from the boat deck in a chop, the dink became a lethal weapon swinging back and forth. BIG problem. (There were a couple additional small, simply solvable issues as well to be accurate) Bottom line is the boat went on the market and a dream was shattered. Now let's look at the big picture. The captain should have taken the time to practice time and time again until he could comfortably dock the boat, AND the admiral was comfortable as well. Next was the heavy dinghy issue. Simple solution. Get rid of the heavy dinghy and buy a simpler, lighter dinghy. Perhaps they would still be boating today.....happily.

Here is a short list of issues where you may have concerns.

Mechanics. It isn't the big things that fail. Egret's happy little Lugger main engine has over 7000 engine hours. It doesn't even occur to us the Lugger would fail. It is the little nuisance items that pop up. These items aren't rocket science. A fresh water pump for example is two wires and two hoses. Replace the pump not



SCOTT & MARY FLANDERS DIDN'T JUST TALK ABOUT IT.....THEY DID IT!

TRY DOING THIS ON THE HAURAKI GULF OR THE WHITSUNDAYS.

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU ARE MID OCEAN OR CLOSE TO SHORE, HAVING SOMEONE ON WATCH ALL THE TIME IS ESSENTIAL.

working with a new one from spares and work on the defective pump at your leisure. I promise you will feel great when you get the old pump working again.

Handling your boat in large seas. Like most any endeavour in life, the more you learn and practice, the easier it becomes. I would recommend pushing your comfort level in seas close by a safe harbour. Purposely go out in largish seas (largish for you – both of you) and higher winds. Please don't start off in a gale. Start a bit easier. EACH of you run your boat in every direction to the waves, at different speeds. LEARN your boat. Discuss the differences between yourselves. However long it takes for both of you to become comfortable doesn't matter. What does matter is both progress together.....as a team. There are times when a slight change in direction or speed makes a large difference in comfort, speed, or speed vs fuel burn.

This past year in the Pacific we increased engine RPM just 50 RPM and increased our speed by one full knot. One knot may not sound like much but when you are pounding into short, tight (waves close together) head seas making but 5.3 knots a full knot increase is HUGE. What caused the change was in the tight seas, with the increase in RPM, Egret's bow wouldn't drop as far so there was less speed robbing fore and aft pitching. And the ride smoothed out. As far as ultimate safety, in time you realize if you keep water OUT of the boat you will be OK. Perhaps not comfortable, but safe. With sea miles comes comfort (physical and mental) and safety.

Navigation. Not to worry. With electronic

YOUR NEXT DESTINATION MAY BE SO REMOTE IT MAY NOT EVEN HAVE A NAME ON THE CHART.

navigation today navigation is simple. The little green boat slowly marching along an electronic chart is you. I will say electronic navigation away from highly travelled areas MUST be closely watched. Again, after your baby steps this is a lesson you will have learned. If you will be travelling in foggy areas, radar is a must. Basic radar operation is not difficult. A couple hours spent with a knowledgeable boating buddy will get you started. In time you will learn to trust your radar. When it is foggy, radar will become your new best friend.

Another aid to navigation is simply your eyes. Look around. At least two pairs of quality 7 x 50 binoculars are a must. We keep two pairs of Nikon 7 x 50 binoculars – his and hers – in the pilothouse, each adjusted to our individual preference. A good depth finder is a must as well. We have a digital depth finder as a back-up we have never used. A bottom machine that can read bottom contours is the best. With a little practice you will be able to tell the differences in bottom structure whether you are dropping your anchor in rock (not good) or a smooth, muddy

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IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY OTHER PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME IDEA.

FRIENDS YOU MEET ON THE WAY LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION.

USING THE SEA FOR YOU FOOD IS ALL PART OF THE ADVENTURE.

or sand bottom. The lesson here is; navigation is not difficult, however, do not rely on a single source of information. Use every source at your disposal.

Seasickness. Both Mary and I used to get seasick. Mary started off using marezine, an off-the-shelf drug, and now is weaned off any drugs. Today, after a layoff from ocean travel Mary has to acclimatise by lying down for a couple hours once under way. My seasickness left years ago. Super author Beth Leonard did a comprehensive study of long distance cruisers and seasickness. Beth found the far majority of cruisers who took drugs at all used Stugeron. Stugeron is not available in the U.S. but is readily available outside the country. Most cruisers are able to shed medication with sea miles.

It is my personal theory that anxiety can cause us to be uncomfortable at sea. By working together to diminish these anxieties much of what you perceive as motion sickness will go away. If not, attack the problem like any other problem until you have it solved. If in the end one or the other still gets seasick on occasion, let me pass on a little secret. Arguably, the two most recognizable sailboat magazine authors, both multiple circumnavigators, get seasick to this day on occasion. However, both want to be out cruising, so occasional discomfort is well worth the price.

Weather. Coastal cruising during your baby step stage will help you to become familiar with local weather. There are many sources of near-shore weather information: VHF, satellite radio/weather, and web based weather such as buoyweather.com or windguru.com plus others. Offshore, we download grib files using Ocens software (ocens.com) and an Iridium phone. In addition, since leaving Gibraltar until arriving in New Zealand, we used the services of a professional weather forecaster, OMNI Bob (Bob Jones) at Ocean Marine Nav.com When well offshore we feel that professional weather forecasting is another form of boat insurance – and comfort insurance.

Tides. In much of the U.S. tides aren't an issue. In the Pacific North West and higher latitudes on the U.S. east coast and Canada, tides are an issue. Tide tables are available in book form as well as in electronic form. Once you figure out which direction is the flood and ebb the rest is simple. Also, you will find out quickly not to anchor in areas where the chart says there is not enough water for your draft at low tide even though it may look deep at the time.

And a pet peeve.....docking. Most of us feel the world is watching when we dock. In actuality another person's docking is a minor distraction. Nothing more. And what if, heaven forbid, you get a SCRATCH.....well so what? It's just a boat, again, nothing more. Gel coat scratches are easy to fix. Egret has lots of battle scars we will fix someday. It's OK. Look where she has taken us. What we have seen. What we have done. Worrying about scratches isn't worth our time.

So what are the benefits of boating? You will breathe clean air. You will eat better. You will feel better. If you take your children or grandchildren boating, the gift of what we simply call 'water' surpasses any gift money can buy. Boating will break the ever tightening, suffocating routine where most folks seem to get trapped as they age. Not just the grey hairs. Stand back and take an objective look at yourselves.

Your fellow boaters will be free spirits you will become. You will meet more new friends in anchorages than you ever did at work or your neighbourhood. Not because you aren't friendly, it's because you have time. Time, as you know, is something you cannot buy. AND, you will learn every day, enjoy and live your life. 'Stuff' becomes less important. A beautiful sunrise/sunset/dolphins in the bow wake/sundowners with yachtie neighbours replaces the short lived pleasure burst another 'thing' gives. And so on. You get the picture.

There are thousands of us slowly circling the world today, power and sail, and many more thousands coastal cruising. It is all good. What we do is not a competition. I promise you, few, if any, had the skills when they started – they learned along the way. You and your other would be no different. If this article helps get you out on the water, and STAY on the water our job is complete. Then, of course, you will find that all those things we write about aren't magic. In time you will realize you are just like us and vice versa. Nothing more. At that point it just gets better and better.

Scott and Mary Flanders cruise full time aboard their 46' Nordhavn trawler, Egret. They will spend 2009 cruising New Zealand before crossing to Australia and down to Tasmania in 2010. PMY