



Neil Dunstan: *Ebb & Flow*

When I retired some seven years ago, I did a lot of fishing with my fishing mate, John Turnbull who was a professional reef fisherman and owned the *Silver Wake*, a thirty five foot wooden vessel set up for line fishing coral trout.

John had retired about the same time, so we started to get out locally, fishing out of my twenty year old 5.25 metre Stacer Searay which I owned for over thirteen years.

In this boat we caught heaps of fish around the local islands and had plenty of trips where we stayed out for a number days.

Over a period, I modified the old Stacer so that we could sleep on board and cook meals and have reasonable shelter when conditions got a bit nasty. After a while I mentioned to John that I had been considering packing up the boat and heading off to some of the places that we had read about in F&B and other publications, having a bit of a look around and doing a bit of fishing. John's immediate response was,



My Bar Crusher 530 - With Hindsight

"I'm coming too" so it was decided there and then that we would have a go at something special.

My first choice was Princess Charlotte Bay about half way up the east coast of Cape York Peninsular so we set about organising the boat for the adventure. This included carrying enough fuel to last a couple of weeks plus water, food, ice, blankets and clothes (etc) and checking out all the possible two way radio stations available in case of an emergency. This turned out to be none, after the first day's travelling!

The boat had originally been fitted with a 90 h.p. Evinrude V-4 two stroke, but it went the way of most of these oil injected Evinrudes in that the injection system failed and destroyed the engine. It was replaced with a 70hp Tohatsu 2-stroke, plus a 9.9 hp Yamaha 4-stroke high

thrust auxiliary was also fitted.

With this outfit we towed the rig to Cooktown behind John's Toyota Hilux two wheel drive ute and launched her for a wonderful three week trip up to Princess Charlotte Bay and the surrounding area having a ball fishing and feasting and generally getting up to no good. It was at this place that we were christened "Those two silly old farts in the tinnie" by the local prawn trawler operators, who were keeping an eye on us the whole time, and the name has stuck ever since.

The five hundred n.mile round trip on water and the thousand or so kilometres road trip, turned out to be such a great adventure that I wrote it up as a story for F&B, and it was published soon after we arrived back home, and so started my writing career which I have been typing away at ever

since.

We have since done many trips and written many stories about such places as Karumba, Western Cape York Peninsular, Cairns and northern Queensland, the Great Barrier Reef, Stange Bay and many other places in between.

(You can download all these great stories FOC from the SEA Library at www.sealibrary.com.au - PW)

The old Stacer did a sterling job and never let us down even in some pretty harrowing situations, but there was one thing that we wished for and didn't have. With both of us being in our late sixties the punishment that we received from the ride in the Stacer even in reasonably calm conditions was sometimes unbearable, especially when travelling for many hours nonstop.

This old boat was designed twenty odd years ago and was of the "fat and flat" style which while very easily driven, very stable and carried heavy loads easily, she pounded on every wave she hit. We were contemplating some very

adventurous trips such as from Cairns to Thursday Island. This is a hell of a long way, but by travelling in a northerly direction we would have the prevailing weather conditions behind us, namely the south easterly trade winds, and on reaching T.I. we would put the boat on the barge and travel back to Cairns in comfort.

The other trip which I had been contemplating was to travel from Gove in the Northern Territory, around the Gulf of Carpentaria to Karumba and then put the boat on the trailer and tow her home to Sarina. All these types of trips would be just too hard on a couple of silly old farts in a tinnie so I just had to consider a better riding boat.

It just so happened that I was trying to negotiate a deal on getting a suitable boat built by one of the pressed tinnie manufacturers and was getting pretty well stuffed around when I mentioned to the editor, Peter Webster, my problems.

He had been trying to help me in the earlier endeavours and suggested that we get in touch with Peter Cleland from Bar Crusher boats as he was a great person to do business with. Personally I hadn't tried Bar Crusher as I didn't think that I could afford a Bar Crusher but I knew that that was an ideal boat for what I wanted to do.

To my great surprise Peter was able to negotiate a very good deal with Bar Crusher and an equally good deal with The Haines Group for a 115 h.p. Suzuki four stroke outboard to suit, and I went ahead with the deal.

When I sat down to contemplate with my wife what had happened, I still could not believe that I was going to get a Bar Crusher and I was so overcome that I was almost in tears; this



Neil stands in front of "Pedro" the much modified 525 Stacer Searay he used all over northern Queensland for the best part of thirteen years - a real testament to the workmanship and skill of Ralph Morgan who modified these boats in the first place. The Stacer's only real weakness - the harsh ride - inspired the purchase of the Bar Crusher, but in many ways, the Stacer was more livable than the Bar Crusher.

was a dream come true.

I had considered the model that I wanted and decided on the 530C which is a 5.3 metre, half cabin with a folding hardtop and clears. The bunks were a bit short so I made some bunk extensions out of marine ply and fabricated a couple of foam mattresses to go on top. I only wanted the 5.3 metre model as I did not want to buy a 4WD, and I was able to tow the boat fully loaded with my V-6 Commodore with ease and at a very economical cost in fuel compared to a 4WD vehicle. This outfit has since been to many locations and produced many stories for F&B, such as a two week tour of the Whitsundays, Marilyn Harbour and the local barrier reef, Tully heads with Dunk Island and the Family group of islands, Hinchinbrook Island and surrounding reefs and the channel, a repeat trip to Stanage Bay plus numerous trips to many of the fifty four islands off the coast around Mackay and Sarina beach where I live.

Is It Any Good?

I can say from a great deal of experience that the Bar Crusher is the best riding small plate alloy boat

currently being manufactured. Although I may be a little biased because I owned one, I have also ridden in and fished from most of the other similar sized platies around, and none of them are as good in the ride department. For instance, I have specifically taken the boat out to Knight Island (twenty three n.miles east of Sarina Beach) where I have fished for thirty years and know the area intimately. When I used to do the trip in the Stacer she would pound on nearly every wave on the way out against the south/easterly with a slightly better ride home in the following sea.

With the Bar Crusher I did the same trip numerous times, travelled twice as fast and did not bang once in the whole trip. The boat is also tremendously stable at rest or at anchor, due to the flooded keel ballasting system.

When the boat stops, you can feel the hollow keel fill up with approx. three hundred litres of water and it noticeably settles around four inches down into the water where it sits and resists any rolling motion with such a lot of weight so low down along the keel.

When the boat is put into gear and takes off, the water in the keel drains out in about one and a half boat lengths and the boat gets up on the plane with just a small hesitation while the water drains away. Once under way she has very good sea keeping qualities and has never felt unsafe, even in some pretty wild seas which we have had to come home in.

The construction of the boat is very solid and I have not had any cracks or corrosion in any part of the hull, even though we have had her loaded up with more than double the recommended load in some pretty heavy seas. The paint work is as good as it was when new which I might say was really well done in the factory.

Other Comments.

There are a few small things that I found not to my liking, such as the ability to back up. When trying to set my crab pots, if I selected reverse and gave her a bit of throttle nothing much seemed to happen apart from lots of engine revs and a great deal of foam on the water, whilst the boat just kept going ahead.

I am not sure whether it



Neil handing over the keys for the BarCrusher to happy Brisbane owner, Bruce Wootton.

was caused by the type of prop supplied with the outboard or the super deep vee of the hull or whether the water just went up the hollow keel, but she definitely didn't want to stop very quickly. When manoeuvring, the hull comes about very markedly by the bow as the super deep vee hull catches the water very noticeably, and if you are travelling up a creek and want to make a turn the boat must be positioned away from the mangroves as the stern will swing around and catch the trees. Also the folding hard top made it very difficult to fit a set of camping covers, as the tubular bracket that the hard top swings on to fold gets in the way, and the covers can't be made to fit neatly around the bracket, allowing the rain to come into the sheltered area. This could be

overcome if the bracket was installed underneath the hard top instead of above it. Other than those few minor things she is a well made, well finished boat made by people who understand fishermen as can be seen by the plethora of little extra things the boat contains over and above most others.

The Outboard.

Any one who has been a regular reader of F&B over the years will not be surprised when I say that the 115 h.p. Suzuki four stroke outboard motor is the best engine by far that I have ever owned and I have owned over fifty outboards. It is so smooth and quiet that I have twice begun winching the boat onto the trailer with the motor still running and only realised what was happening when the exhaust came out of

water and started to make some noise.

I have also been sitting fishing for sometimes half an hour when I have realised that the motor was still running.

I have fished in mates' boats with similar engines of other brands and can honestly say that none of the others are as smooth and quiet as the Suzi. The motor is also very economical and in a similar sized boat such as my old Stacer with a 70 h.p. Tohatsu, the Suzi can travel the same distance at twice the speed and use half as much fuel.

One thing that I would advise is that a Bar Crusher should be fitted with the maximum size outboard recommended, as the very deep vee hull requires all the power available to push it through the water, the drag of the hull is quite

noticeable.

I guess that is one of paybacks for the super soft ride. I am not familiar with all the various size outboards available and their good and bad points but from my experience the 115 Suzuki is the best on the market in its power range.

I liked it so much that I bought a 50 h.p. Suzuki for my 4.5 tinnie without even seeing one, figuring that if it was half as good as the 115 then it would be ok.

That's how it's worked out, too.

Conclusion.

If anyone is contemplating buying a plate alloy boat and requires the very best ride in a boat that is also excellent in a seaway and stable at rest, then do yourself a favour and go for ride in a Bar Crusher with a Suzuki four stroke on the back and I will guarantee that you will be a convert and want one.

Just like Bruce Wootton from Brisbane who went for a ride in mine when we finally listed it for sale, and then handed me a cheque as soon as we got back to the ramp. He is now a happy Bar Crusher owner.

*Neil Dunstan.
Sarina Beach.*

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