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Sloop project launched a bluewater adventure and a new life

Posted on September 14th, 2015 Written by [Stephen Cockcroft](#)

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My first job in the marine industry was self-inflicted and salary-less. Sailing around the world in my own 45-foot sloop was my lifelong dream and passion. But in order to achieve this, I had to build the boat. When the opportunity arose to do so, I leaped on it.

My partner and I bought a Bruce Roberts 45-foot hull and deck in 1990, gutted the inside, including jackhammering cement out of the keel, and built her in our backyard. After two years of dedicating every spare waking moment to the project, *Royal Salute* was launched in 1992 in Cape Town Harbor in South

Africa.

Royal Salute was considered to be one of the best Bruce Roberts 45 sailing boats ever launched. During this two-year refurbishing process I learned everything about boats, including composite materials, efficient hull design, and mechanical and electric systems, plus cabinetry, electronics, optimal sail configurations and more. *Royal Salute* was designed and built as close to perfection as we knew how.

We set out on a bluewater adventure around the Cape of Good Hope and on to Mozambique and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. The first couple of years as cruisers were a steep learning curve. My wife, Estelle, remembers seeing my bottom stick out of a hole in the floorboards more often than not (the engine and generator rooms) while at anchor.

She found herself endlessly passing tools to “the voice” in the hole and cleaning up the unholy mess after yet another “MacGyver” maneuver in the generator room. The generator and I had a tempestuous relationship, at best.

Estelle likes order, and nothing about greasy tools, upturned floorboards and smelly bilges is orderly. She was convinced that this was an evil plot to drive her crazy. Not until much later did she accept that life on a sailboat is just not perfect. However, ours was a lot more perfect than most.

When we finally arrived in the Caribbean after a four-year voyage through the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Suez

Canal, the Mediterranean and then out of Gibraltar and across the Atlantic, we got into the sailing school business in St. Maarten. This led to other ventures in the industry, including being a yacht charter company owner, sailing school instructor, catamaran factory owner and now yacht broker.

We have lived aboard for the past 22 years (and counting), visiting more than 46 countries, protectorates and territories. Having met the challenges of building our own boat and sailing more than 50,000 oceangoing miles as a couple, we have tales of nooks and crannies of the world unseen by many and we can talk boats from stem to stern.

We have completed multiple ocean voyages, including the delivery of our own Island Spirit catamaran from Cape Town to Miami, a voyage of 7,000 nautical miles. I have participated in offshore races on catamarans and won the Bahamas leg of the Caribbean 1500 on a Prout 50 a few years ago.

My “boatbuilding” skills, though earned without salary, have stood me in good stead over the years as a world cruiser and industry professional. Having the knowledge of boatbuilding and everything that goes with it has helped me to be a much better and self-sufficient cruising sailor. More important, I enjoy sharing my broad knowledge and experience with my yacht-buying and charter owner clients.

Having hung around the marine industry and sailed the ocean blue for years, we are considered to be experts in our field. But we would not be here today had it not been for the harebrained idea to build our own boat in 1989. To really be successful and make a good living in almost any industry, it takes about 20 years of experience — and we finally made it.

Today I am the broker of record for Dream Yacht Sales. We specialize in the sales of multiple brands into charter management, as well as business yacht ownership for tax advantages to offset the cost of ownership. We also represent Bali Catamarans by Catana for sale into the retail market and have a vibrant brokerage division for used yachts.

Our website www.catamaranguru.com has become one of the leading resources in the industry for catamaran sailors and cruisers.

Stephen Cockroft is the broker of record for Dream Yacht Sales in Florida and the co-founder of catamaranguru.com.

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