

Pages from the History of the Yacht *Gonta*

Igor Mironenko

Translated from the Russian

Страницы из истории яхты «Гонта»

Igor Mironenko. Typeset by the author, 28 July 2015

FIRST ENGLISH EDITION — translated from the Russian into Australian English. The Russian text is the text of record; where the two differ, the Russian is right.

This translation has not yet been read by its author. It is complete and it has been checked, but until he has been through it, it is a proof and not a final text. The pale reference beside each paragraph — GON-00-001 — is there so that anything wrong in it can be named exactly; it never changes, and a correction quoted against it lands in the paragraph it came from.

A NOTE ON FOUR NAMES. These are transliterated from the Russian and have not been confirmed against how their owners spell them:

Wells — Уэлс

Fakira — Факирой

Lane — Лэйн

Shelley — Шелли

Published by Mechanical Engineering & Quality Control, Atwell, Western Australia, at meqc.au/archive/books/.

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Acknowledgements

In the making of this book I want to express my gratitude to Olga Prikhodko – the niece of my long-time good friend and mentor in sailing – Boris Ivanovich Shapovalov, skipper of the yacht *Kaira*. Without Olga's active involvement, the book's publication would have been put off for another indefinite period.

GON-00-001

I also want to thank my very first readers and reviewers – Vitya Kamkin and Zhenya Platon. As a matter of fact – it was Vitya Kamkin who insisted that I write this story. The advice and suggestions of my friends helped me to bring out the events of those now distant days more vividly.

GON-00-002

Igor Mironenko

GON-00-003

Prologue

The events I have finally got round to describing, after all these years, belong to 1991–1992. My close friends, knowing a little about those days, more than once suggested I set it all out in detail, but I dodged it, citing various reasons – laziness mostly. But time passes and the details begin to slip out of memory.

GON-01-001

On top of that, my new acquaintances ask me what happened and how, how I came to be in Australia, etc. In view of all this I decided to write the story of the yacht *Gonta*'s passage to Australia.

GON-01-002

The Beginning of the Epic – the round-the-world race on *Fazisi* ended for me at the end of May 1990. A week before the start of the sixth (last) leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race I flew to Washington and on from there, on an Aeroflot flight to Moscow, with a stop in Quebec. I flew home with mixed feelings.

GON-01-003

After a year and a half of a vivid and intense life, of work with interesting people, I had to go back to what I had left in Kiev. Of course, even before I left for the building of *Fazisi* in November 1988 I was not bored in Kiev, but the last year and a half had been altogether too out of the ordinary. And that was something you could not ignore.

GON-01-004



Fazisi at Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The photograph was taken by Bob Rettinger – a reporter on one of the local papers. Left to right: Viktor Pogrebnov, Juki Tsomaya, Edgar Terekhin, Valery Alekseyev, Igor Mironenko.

GON-01-005

I arrived home rather unexpectedly for my family. Ira (my wife) and Sergei (my son) had just gone off to Nikolaev. They thought I would be sailing the sixth leg and were not expecting me before the end of June. After seeing Mum and Dad, and a run of celebration lunches/dinners, I bought a ticket and went to Nikolaev. The meeting was a joyful one. And no wonder, the last time we had seen each other was two months before, in Uruguay, after the finish of the fourth leg of the round-the-world race. The "honeymoon" month (or a bit more) went by fairly quickly. We went back to Kiev.

GON-01-006

Of course, I rang all my friends from *Fazisi*, the ones who had got back before me. Zhenya Platon was in Voronezh at the time, Vitya Kamkin – in Dnepropetrovsk, Tolya Verba – in Odessa, Volodya Musatov – in Zaporozhye. They were all busy with something, but mostly they were thinking about the next Whitbread and getting ready for it.

GON-01-007



Meetings with friends and acquaintances at our place. Ira in the foreground on the right. GON-01-008

Vitya Kamkin, for instance, was getting ready for a passage to New Zealand on his own yacht *Dnepr* – a sister ship to *Gonta*.

GON-01-009

I had to get on with something myself. To start with I went to the Kiev Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Yard, the one I had left to go and build *Fazisi*. Without any long conversations I was straight back in my own tool shop. I was making tooling for ships under construction again.

GON-01-010

But somehow it did not grip me any more, not the way it used to. I wanted something new and vivid, where I could put to use the knowledge I had gained building the maxi and sailing in a round-the-world race.

GON-01-011



Vitya Kamkin in the cabin of the yacht Gonta. The photograph was taken in May 2008.

GON-01-012



The Kiev Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Yard, where I worked from 1983, after finishing the Kiev Polytechnic Institute and until the building of Fazisi began in 1988.

GON-01-013

The First of September 1990. First time into first year.

GON-01-014

Seryozhka with flowers.

GON-01-015

Somewhere around September 1990, Sergei Stanetsky came back to Odessa.

GON-01-016

He had taken part in building *Fazisi* and was in charge of the electrics and electronics. Sergei sailed all six legs of the round-the-world race, then did the commercial program as well, but decided he had had enough. On arriving in Odessa Sergei rang me and told me his impressions. A couple of

weeks later he was going to Kiev on some business or other and naturally I suggested he stay at my place. I should say that over the round-the-world race we had become good friends, so the meeting was a pleasant and interesting one.

GON-01-017

During his stay in Kiev Sergei asked me to run him to the Central Post Office, where he was going to send some international fax or other. I asked in passing what sort of paper it was? He gave it to me to read. It was an entry for the Yamaha Osaka Cup, a race for yachts with a crew of two, starting on 23 March 1991 from Melbourne, Australia, finishing at Osaka, Japan.

GON-01-018



PROLOGUE





Getting Ready for the Voyage

At first I did not take it all seriously. What race, on what boat, in such a timeframe... There were six months left to the start. I asked Sergei what he was counting on, submitting an entry to the race organising committee? His answer was perfectly logical: if the entry has been lodged, then you are registered as a potential entrant and the organising committee will send you the relevant information, and on the strength of that you can try to get all the necessary papers done in the Union. And in parallel you can be looking for a boat, for sponsors, let the newspapers know of the intention to take part in an international competition, etc. His answer set me thinking. I suggested he come with me to the Kiev Cruising Yacht Club and look at a boat – a possible entrant for this competition. The boat in question was *Gonta*. The yacht *Gonta* – a ten-metre sloop, launched on 31 October 1981. You can read about the yacht in detail on the Internet, so I will not repeat it here. I will only say that I took part in building her from the very first day. I knew the boat and the crew very well.

GON-02-001

The yacht's crew on the day of the very first launch.

GON-02-002

Front row left to right: Valera Obukhov, Alexei Grischenko, Valera Deimontovich, Yura Bondar, Oleg Tretyakov, Kolya Pilyak. Second row left to right: Kolya Mitin, Igor Mironenko.

GON-02-003

The yacht fitted the minimum requirements the race organisers set for entrants very well. True, the yacht had no engine, but that did not bother us much, since an engine could be fitted in Australia before the start of the race. There was no radio set either, but that obstacle was easily got over as well. On the other parameters the boat met all the requirements set for yachts taking part in competition of that class. And that is not surprising. By that time *Gonta* had raced regularly in the All-Union Black Sea Cup events, twice – in the Baltic Cup, and there was experience of international competition as well – the Varna Regatta in Bulgaria. Not to mention the

thousands of miles covered on the Dnepr and its reservoirs. Anyway, the boat – super.

GON-02-004

The idea of taking part in the Yamaha Osaka race began to take on real shape. By that time I was working at the Institute of Scientific Innovations, on the grounds of the Kiev Polytechnic Institute. One of the institute's tasks was to spread scientific information and to establish business contacts with foreign firms. A better opportunity to present the institute on the world market than taking part in a sporting project on that scale was hard to imagine. I shared the idea of bringing the institute in as a sponsor of the project with Slava Kaptyorov and Valera Obukhov. They were both members of the institute's staff and we knew each other well.

GON-02-005

They agreed the idea deserved putting to the director of the institute. Before long we gathered for a meeting in the director's office, where we worked out a preliminary plan for the yacht *Gonta* to take part in the race. So far everything was falling into place surprisingly smoothly.

GON-02-006

Straight after securing the institute's support we rang round the whole *Gonta* crew with a proposal to gather at the yacht club and discuss the crew's part in the project. Taking part in the discussion were Nikolai Mitin, Yura Kropivko, Sergei Logachov, Valentina Keller, Igor Andrushchenko, Valera Obukhov and me. Sergei Stanetsky, I think, had left for Odessa by that time. But *Gonta*'s whole regular crew was there.

GON-02-007

In broad outline the plan was this:

GON-02-008

1. The boat is delivered to Odessa. We had to hurry – it was mid-October and the navigation season on the Dnepr was ending. And going under her own power – we would lose a lot of time. We were counting on a tow behind a barge to Kherson.

GON-02-009

2. In Odessa the yacht is loaded onto a ship's deck and carried to Singapore. It would have been better straight to Australia, but the Black Sea Shipping Company had no cargoes on that route. But to Vietnam by way of Singapore – they had. Sergei Stanetsky handled that question with Tolya Verba's help.

GON-02-010

3. From Singapore the yacht with a crew of two (me and Sergei) sails to Melbourne, takes part in the race, and the rest of *Gonta*'s crew fly out to the finish in Osaka. In Osaka we were to decide what to do next, how to develop the program we had begun.

GON-02-011

As always in big jobs like this, there was a mass of assorted questions. Why, for instance, should Stanetsky be in the race and not, say, Kolyunya (Kolya Mitin) or Yura Kropivko? Besides, the skipper of the boat at that

time was Mitin. Alexei Grischenko, who had led the crew for seven years, died in Uruguay, in October 1989.

GON-02-012

The explanations on that question were these:

GON-02-013

1. Sergei and I had only just finished a round-the-world race, we were in excellent racing form, and we had a good idea of what ocean racing is.

GON-02-014

2. We both had English, which is significant. Sergei, as a former merchant navy seaman, could actually express himself completely freely. Besides, we had a lot of acquaintances left in Australia. And that is always good, when there is somebody to ring, just to say "Hello". Not to mention occasions when you might need help.

GON-02-015

3. The two of us had some hard-currency savings. During the round-the-world race we were paid at the rates of the USSR national team. Over six months each of us had put together a small sum, which now meant we did not have to count on sponsor money from the very first hour. If Sergei does not take part – then the starting capital is automatically halved. And that – a serious loss.

GON-02-016

4. To arrange getting the yacht to Singapore – you had to know all the ins and outs of the Black Sea Shipping Company well. Taking into account the tight timeframe as well. Without Sergei – without his personal interest in the project, it did not look possible to bring it off. 5. And the last one, and not the least important. The idea of entering the race came from Stanetsky. Simply to tell him, "good lad, now off you go", would not have been decent.

GON-02-017

There was the question of what money the crew were going to come to Osaka on after the race finished? Part of the answer to that question was given by the race organisers themselves. Every boat that completed the course received 5000 dollars at the finish, regardless of the place taken. Apart from that we were counting on attracting sponsors in Australia, which was entirely possible given the publicity campaign around the race and the participation (for the first time) of a boat from Ukraine. Besides, there is a large colony of Ukrainians living in Melbourne, who would not have stayed indifferent to a Ukrainian yacht with such a historic name on board taking part in the race.

GON-02-018

The rouble side was covered by the Institute of Scientific Innovations. So on that count too everything looked solid. There were questions on the equipment side, in particular – on sails, navigation supplies, food, etc. What we discussed then – I no longer remember in detail. One thing was agreed with absolute clarity, though: whatever happened, however events turned out – the yacht must come back to Kiev. And I, as organiser of the

voyage, undertook to do it. I never had the slightest uncertainty on that point. All of it had its roots back in the years when we were only building *Gonta* and dreaming of big, far-off voyages.

GON-02-019

In the end the whole crew accepted the program.

GON-02-020

After that we sat round a laid table and went to bed late at night.

GON-02-021

The weeks that followed were full of hard work.

GON-02-022

First thing was to deliver the yacht to Odessa. It was already November outside. We had to put a delivery crew together fast. Everybody is working – who do you pull out for a week? Besides me three more turned up – Slava Velikodny, his brother Andrei and Igor Andrushchenko. I rang Volodya Musatov in Zaporozhye – a good comrade of mine from *Fazisi*. Vova said he would come. So there were five of us – not at all bad. Yura Kropivko arranged the tow behind the barge and the crew lists – as always ably and with talent. On top of that it had turned somewhat warmer outside. Anyway, everything was working out well.

GON-02-023

The delivery itself went well. There was only one unpleasant moment – while the mast was being lowered to pass under a bridge, the coil of wire on the mast-lowering tackle got tangled. I think it was near Cherkassy. There is an entry about it in the yacht's log book for that period. And the wire had been cleared, as usual.

GON-02-024

How it got tangled – I do not know to this day. A good thing Igor Andrushchenko at the helm did not lose his head – he heeled the yacht over with a manoeuvre and we shot under the bridge without touching it. After all, when you go behind a barge, you cannot go astern.

GON-02-025

We came into the Odessa Yacht Club late at night, five and a half days after leaving Kiev. We marked the safe arrival with a late supper and in the morning the lads went their separate ways. I stayed on in Odessa for a couple of days, to arrange the making of a cradle for the yacht at the Odessa Ship Repair Yard. Without a cradle you will not get a yacht onto a ship's deck.

GON-02-026

Right there at the chart table I drew up the drawing for the cradle, met Seryozha Stanetsky and we drove out to the yard. We saw the hull welding shop manager – apparently they will take it on. They named a price – 1700 roubles, if I am not mistaken. The price seemed a bit steep, I rang Kiev to clear it – the director of the innovations institute gave the go-ahead. The next day I come to the yard, and the manager announces that the price has gone up to two and a half thousand. He explained something or other, but the way I understood it he was saving up for a video recorder. I said I would think about it, got on a train, came to Kiev to my own ship repair

yard and without any further talk did the whole job for 750 roubles. The sponsor was pleased with that turn of events too. Nobody has money to spare...

GON-02-027

Now the question came up of sending the cradle to Odessa. Fortunately, Sergei's brother was driving a truck to Kiev on business, and on the way back he took our structure along too. So there was luck in that as well.

GON-02-028



The yacht and the yacht's crew (Sergei Stanetsky – on the left) on the deck of the Slavyansk. In a "couple" of days we are due to leave for Singapore.

GON-02-029

Photograph taken by Anatoly Verba.

GON-02-030

Alongside the technical tasks the administrative ones were being settled too. Getting Australian visas – no job for the faint-hearted. Of course, it made a real difference that Sergei and I had been in Australia very recently, that we had some money, which allowed the Australian consulate to give us tourist visas, plus we had an invitation from the race organisers. But even with all the positive factors in our favour – without Valera Obukhov taking a direct hand, the process of getting the passports could have dragged out a great deal longer. Valera was an experienced organiser in matters of that kind and his help was priceless.

GON-02-031

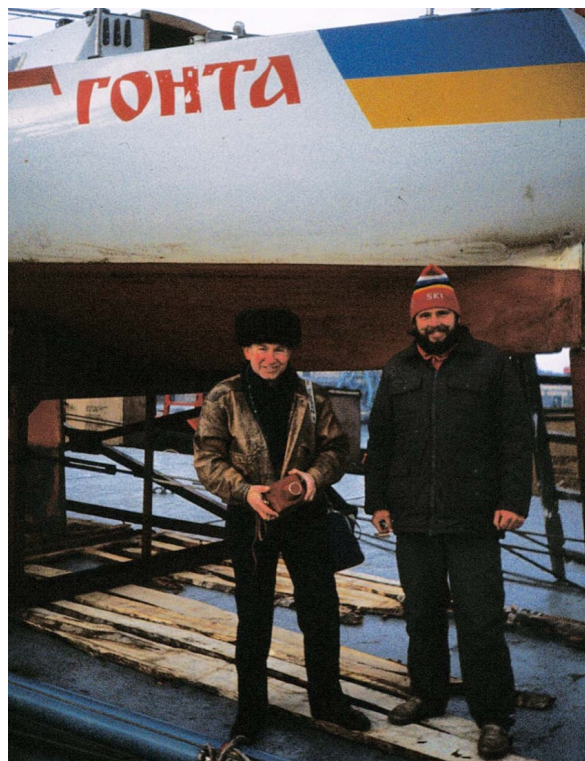
For the visas I had to run up to Moscow, then there was a trip to Taganrog for new sails, to the Arsenal company. The Dnepropetrovsk

yachtsmen shared some super batteries with us. They were a great help to us at sea. There was a lot of travelling, but most often to Odessa, naturally.

GON-02-032

Sergei Stanetsky, besides organising getting the yacht to Singapore, was busy selecting charts, publications and instruments for the coming voyage. And, credit where it is due, it was all done to the highest standard. Not once did we have a problem with navigation charts or with any other navigation business. And that is very hard to achieve. Those readers who have never had to deal with navigational publications can take my word for it. Tolya Verba gave us great support in Odessa. His talent as an administrator was simply essential in all the paperwork that went with us on our way. If I am not mistaken – he was the first to set up a meeting for us with press people in Odessa. Articles about our venture started appearing in the Odessa and Kiev press. Tolya at that time was starting on his own round-the-world project "Odessa-200" and he saw our voyage as a prelude to the round-the-world race that would follow. That is probably how it would have been, if only...

GON-02-033



Anatoly Yakovlevich Verba (on the left) and Sergei Stanetsky.

GON-02-034

Without Tolya's support life would have been a great deal harder...

GON-02-035

In the running about and the fuss the new year, 1991, arrived. Any worries, even the longest-running, come to an end sooner or later.

GON-02-036

That end for us was the loading of the yacht onto the deck of the *Slavyansk*, in the last ten days of January. The *Slavyansk* was to leave straight away, that is in a day, two at most. We planned to be in the Singapore roadstead around 10 February.

GON-02-037

And we had to be in Melbourne a week before the start, that is 15–16 March. A week should have been enough for the final preparation of the yacht for the race. So far everything was going to plan.

GON-02-038

Odessa – Singapore

The first unpleasant surprise turned out to be that the *Slavyansk*

GON-03-001

was going on to Ilyichevsk to load more cotton. We only learnt that after the yacht was already on deck. Well all right, we thought, three thousand tonnes of cotton to shift – for the port of Ilyichevsk that is nothing. A day, two at the most – and we are at sea. The ship's crew assured us too that it would hold nobody up. At sea they would make up the lost days. But no such luck.

GON-03-002

At Ilyichevsk the delays began, one after another. Either the crane is down, or there is no driver for it, and above all – the weather will not allow it. Cotton has to be loaded in completely dry weather, and where do you find that in January on the Black Sea coast? Either wet snow or plain rain. The ship stands idle, Sergei Stanetsky and I count the days, the ship's administration assures us daily that tomorrow we sail.

GON-03-003

Of course, we did not just sit in the cabins waiting. Using the forced delay, we raced round shops and stores, topping up the gear we needed. After all, however much you prepare, nothing will be surplus. But all the while it gnawed at us inside. *Gonta* – a yacht with good sailing qualities, yes, but not a jet fighter. And every lost day – no effort can make it up.

GON-03-004

And those "tomorrow we sail"s added up to 28 days.

GON-03-005

A whole month a fully loaded ship sat in port, taking on cargo that was not even on her route! Sergei, better up in the ways of the Shipping Company, said to me: "...and what are you surprised at? The cotton is for Japan, so the ship's management will go to any lengths to get that cargo. A call at Japan – cheap cars for the whole crew. They started clearing the deck for the cars on the way out of Odessa. That is why the crew, too – twice the norm." And sure enough, there were no free cabins on the ship.

GON-03-006

Had we known the delay would be a month – we could have cancelled the whole program. But: 1. Who could have foreseen a carry-on like that over loading cotton?

GON-03-007

2. Take the boat off the ship now – the boat still will not reach Kiev before May. And where do we leave her, in Ilyichevsk? Who would look after her? While we lay in the Odessa Yacht Club (a couple of weeks in all) the local "sailing enthusiasts" cut two snap shackles off the spinnaker halyards. And leave the boat for three months? The loss statistics were no inspiration for a decision like that.

GON-03-008

3. It became clear we would not make the start of the race.

GON-03-009

But there was still the publicity campaign. We had prepared for it thoroughly. The Institute of Scientific Innovations was interested in that part of the project no less than in the race itself. And not at the level of "let them do it and we will watch".

GON-03-010

The Institute had done a great deal of preparatory work and carried costs that were to be paid back through that very publicity campaign. Of course, during a race – publicity is more effective. But in those days a yacht from Ukraine calling at Australia was a great rarity and would not have gone unnoticed whichever way it went.

GON-03-011

4. The Kiev and Odessa press had given us plenty of space in their pages. And what now – go back with a "proudly drooping head?" We were somehow not used to defeats... So it was decided to carry on with the program, sail the route we had planned, get to Osaka and think there about what next. One option – a season on the Pacific.

GON-03-012

The Far Easterners always have a wide range of sailing events and we would have fitted in nicely. And at the end of the season – load the boat onto a rail flat wagon and take her to Kiev. We had done the Baltic twice that way, so the experience was there.

GON-03-013

On 23 February 1991 the *Slavyansk* left the port of Ilyichevsk.

GON-03-014

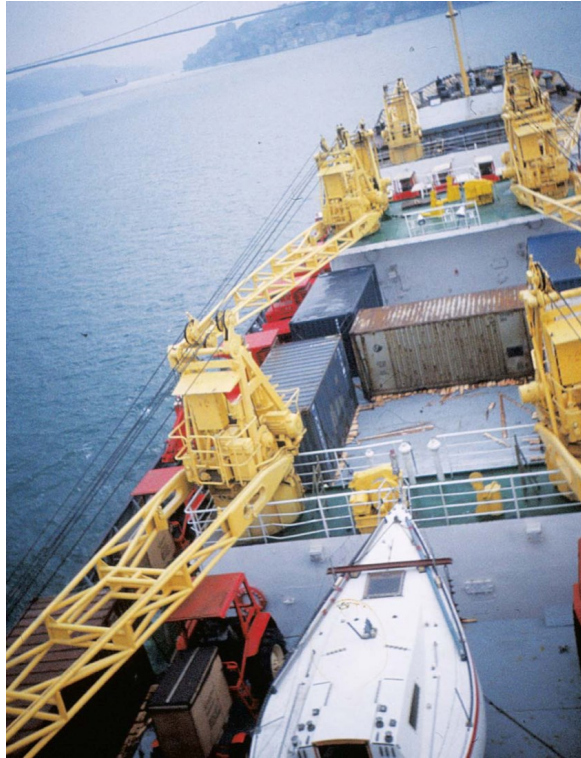
The weather was thoroughly foul, but after the Bosphorus it began to improve and soon you could go about in shorts and T-shirts.

GON-03-015



The bridge over the Bosphorus. I was on this route for the first time – it was all interesting. GON-03-016





Old fortress on the right bank of the strait.

GON-03-017

Residential districts along the Bosphorus shores.

GON-03-018



The view of the ship's deck from the bridge. Gonta looked an odd sight as deck cargo. Next to containers and tractors.

GON-03-019



The tea is nearly ready. We lived in this cabin during the passage to Singapore.

GON-03-020

But we were a long way from the status of "tourists". Yachts – they have one peculiarity. Always a mountain of work on them. *Gonta*

GON-03-021

was in good condition (as usual), but a sailing season done – is a season. The boat needs paint and repair, the sails stitching, the deck gear and the electronics checking... The list of jobs is endless. Normally all this work was done over the winter lay-up by the whole crew.

GON-03-022

Now there were two of us, time – two weeks, but "we are not used to retreating...".

GON-03-023

The *Slavyansk's* crew helped us however they could. We somehow made friends with everybody fast. A pleasant crowd they were. Time on the ship went quickly.

GON-03-024



Sergei carrying out an inspection of the compass light.

GON-03-025

On 13 March we reached the Singapore roadstead. From here our own passage began. The yacht was put in the water by the ship's crane. Stepped the mast, sorted out the rigging. We spent the night aboard the *Slavyansk*, and in the morning moved to the yacht. Cast off the lines – wished each other a good voyage. There were, of course, farewell blasts on the horn and waving... The ship went on towards the coast of Vietnam, and we set sail and started looking for somebody to moor alongside. Singapore from the sea – one enormous roadstead. It is easier to find a Soviet ship and go alongside than to find a yacht club berth. Contact with the shore – by the shuttle launches. In any case we were not planning to stay long in Singapore. We had to do the entry papers, let Kiev and Odessa know we had reached Singapore, buy some fresh fruit and then we could go on.

GON-03-026



The Suez Canal. Ahead there, the Red Sea.

GON-03-027



The Singapore roadstead. Now that really is the crossroads of every sea and ocean!

GON-03-028



In the roadstead we spotted the frigate *Pallada* – the Far East sailors' sail training ship. That is where we headed. The *Pallada's* crew were surprised to see us and lost no time offering us every comfort and service the ship had. Of course, the questions started, what and how. Everybody was interested in what it was we had taken on. And we in our turn were interested in what a training ship does, who the cadets are, etc. We ended up with a real evening of questions and answers.

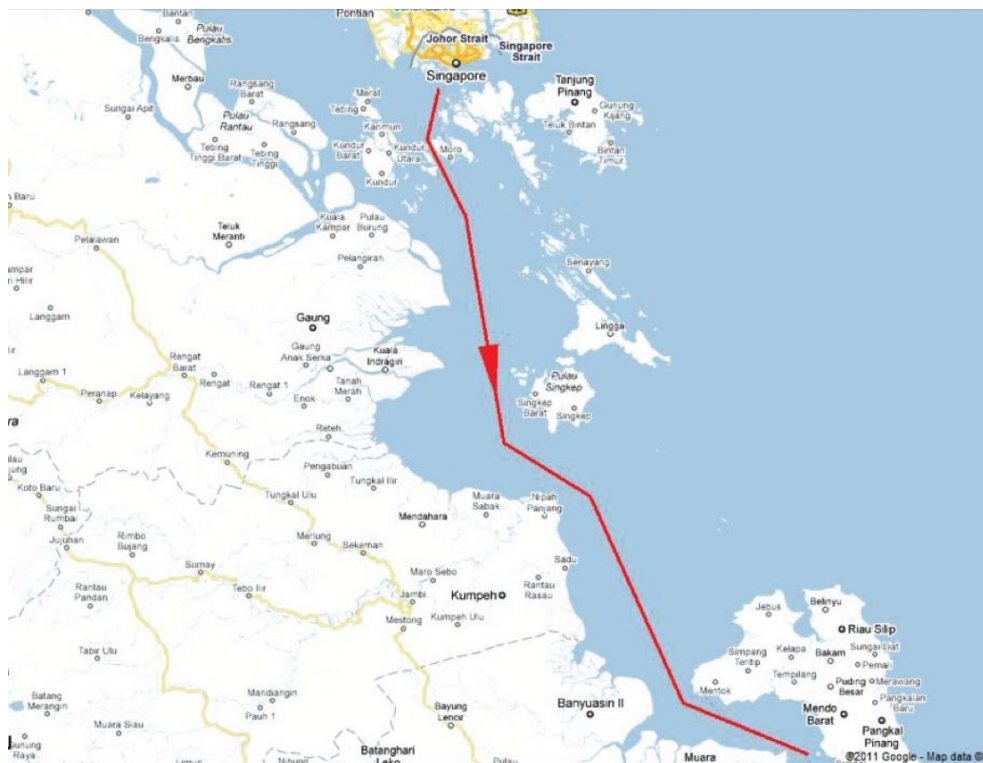
GON-03-029

A day later, on the morning of 16 March, we set the sails, made a couple of turns under sail round the *Pallada* with cadets aboard, then put them back on the *Pallada* and said our goodbyes. The officer in charge of the training, Captain 2nd Rank V. Zakovorotny, gave Sergei and me a photograph each of the *Pallada* under full sail. On the back of my photograph he wrote: "Good luck to you in our far from easy business!" And the signature – Honoured Coach of the RSFSR, MSMK, Capt 2 R – V.Zakovorotny. I still have that photograph.

GON-03-030

Then we went round the *Pallada* under sail once more, this time just Sergei and me, and headed south. Onward, to Australia!

GON-03-031



The frigate Pallada in all her glory!

GON-03-032

Singapore is left astern.

GON-03-033



From Singapore to the Shores of Australia

South-East Asia, the part of it near the equator at least, is a group of islands, large and small. At the exit from the Strait of Malacca – a countless multitude of small islands, lying close to one another. All of it decorates the scenery, but from a navigation point of view – you do not relax much. We went along the coast of Sumatra, leaving the Lingga Archipelago to port. This area is not used by large vessels, so reefs not marked on the chart were a possibility. And we spotted one such reef.

GON-04-001

It was in daylight, the weather was mild and we were alert. Even so, the risk was there all the same.

GON-04-002



Route chart from Singapore to Bangka Is.

GON-04-003

Islands on the equator.

GON-04-004

Besides the navigational dangers there was the danger of a pirate attack by the local people. By day – they are all peaceful fishermen. And at night – they may turn out to be no fishermen at all. I am not joking at all. On the approach to Singapore a radiogram came aboard the *Slavyansk* recommending that night anti-piracy watches be set at the stern and along the sides. About six extra men in all, changing over every two hours. Sergei Stanetsky and I had to stand watches like that as well. We were asked to help and we willingly agreed. The point of the watch – to stop uninvited guests boarding over the stern. The watchkeeper on the bridge is busy navigating (the situation is difficult), and a small launch without lights is easy to miss. And climbing onto a slow-moving ship – is no great trick. But nothing happened.

GON-04-005

With such warnings in mind, however, we tried not to carry navigation lights. Not so much from fear of pirates as to save the batteries. But being careful did us no harm either. Besides that, we kept a couple of signal flares in the cockpit. To meet the "enemy" with something at least, if it came to that. I remember one night, on my watch, I saw something dark and big on the water, coming towards us. Turned out – a big tree, we were overtaking it. But at night – all cats are grey.

GON-04-006



The equator. This is what it looks like between Sumatra Is. and the Lingga Archipelago, on the divide between the South China Sea and the Java Sea.

GON-04-007

We reached Bangka Island quickly. It is a fairly big, populated island.

GON-04-008

When it opened on the horizon – at first I took it for one of the many small islands.

GON-04-009

But the island kept growing and growing and it became clear that this – was Bangka Island. We, of course, knew our position and expected the island exactly where it did appear, but the feeling of a small island coming up was there all the same. And we went along its shores for nearly two days. So much for the "small" island.

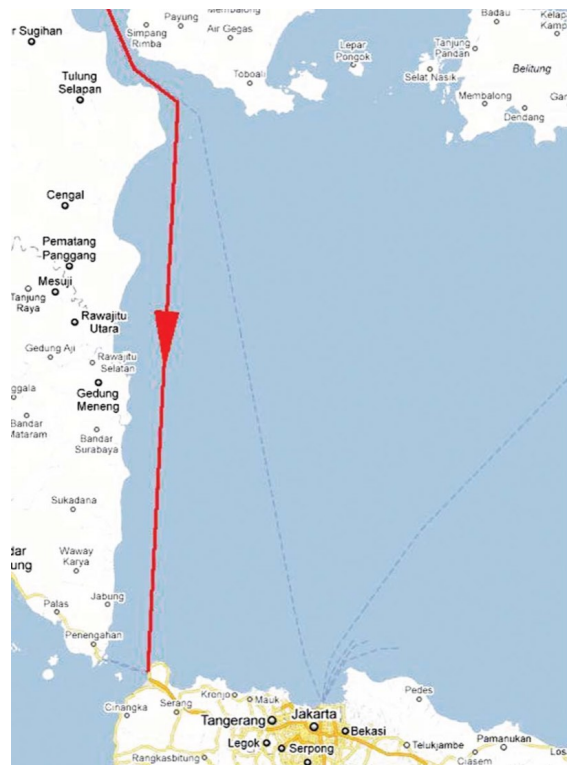
GON-04-010

Leaving Bangka Island astern, we came out into the Java Sea. We began thinking about calling in at Jakarta for a day. Jakarta – the capital of Indonesia. We could do with charging the batteries before the dash to Australia. Sergei was against the call, arguing logically that we had no Indonesian visas and there could be complications with the authorities. I agreed with him completely. So we decided to call at the port of Merak.

GON-04-011

It is a small town at the start of the Sunda Strait, on Java, like Jakarta. The chances of trouble over visas there were smaller.

GON-04-012



And where are we....?

GON-04-013



From Bangka Is. to the town of Merak.

GON-04-014



Lying at Merak. Yachts always attract attention. And boys – all the more so! And which of us did not start in sailing by cleaning decks and bilges?

GON-04-015

We spent about ten hours in Merak. Charged the batteries, bought a huge branch of bananas, topped up the water and – off. It was a good stop. It is always good to stand on solid ground after a week at sea.

GON-04-016

For sights in the Sunda Strait – we passed fairly close to the volcano Krakatoa. Heard of it before, now I saw it. The volcano – an almost regular cone, some 500 metres high. I would not swear to the height, though, I do not remember exactly. The volcano at that time was "not working". By the way, coming up to Merak we wondered which flag to hoist on the backstay. After not much thought we decided – hoist the Ukrainian one. Let the locals get used to the sight of a proud flag.

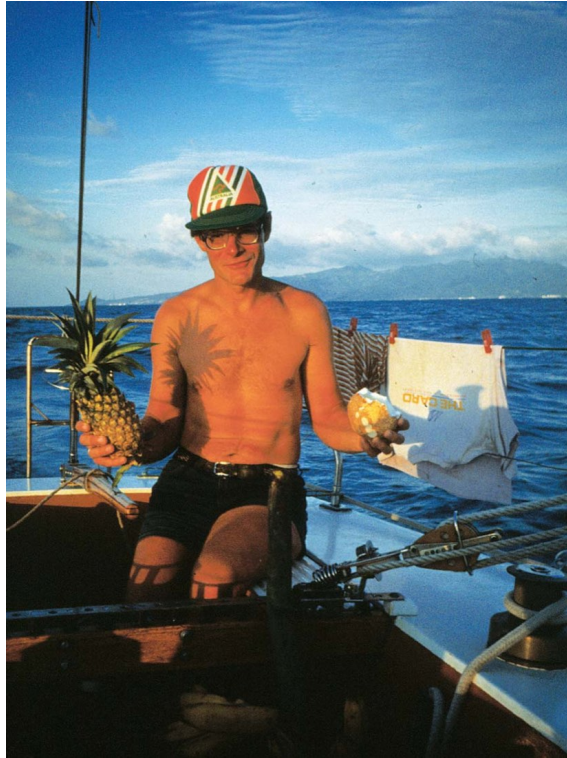
GON-04-017



After a visit to the market in Merak an abundance of fruit reigned aboard Gonta! The bananas lasted about two weeks, if not more. But the wild-looking fruit (on the companion ladder, right) turned out not to taste up to much either. It had to make an accelerated stroll over the side.

GON-04-018





Until next time, Merak! You turned out to be a hospitable port.

GON-04-019

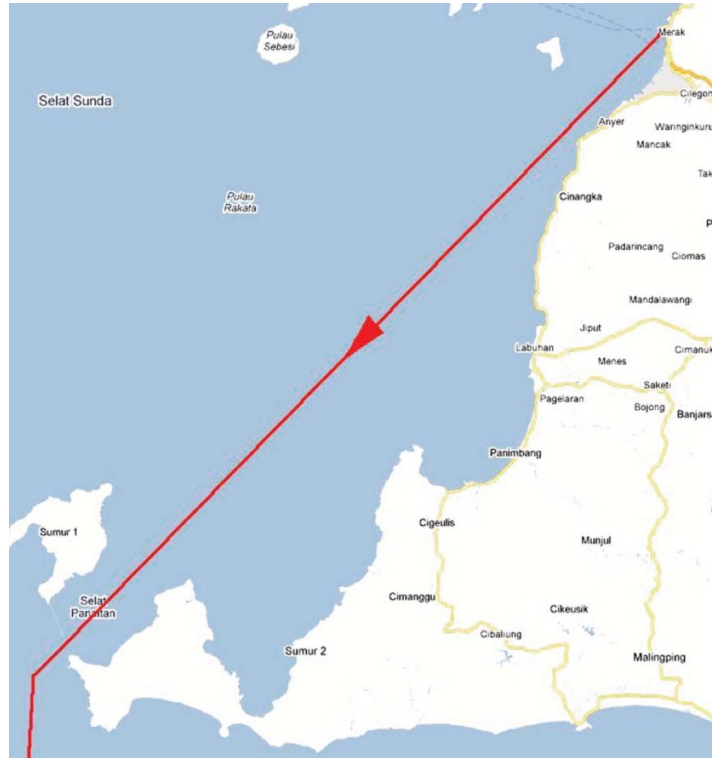
And in a coconut it is not milk at all...

GON-04-020



This is how I met my thirty-second birthday.

GON-04-021



The main tool on a yacht – the spoon. Hold it tight, so you do not drop it over the side!

GON-04-022



From the port of Merak to the Sunda Strait

GON-04-023

On 27 March we came out into the Indian Ocean. You felt it at once, in the long ocean swell. The weather went on being moderate. The winds the whole way were mostly head winds, and it never once came to the spinaker. On the other hand it was not hot – a head wind cools you better.

GON-04-024

For the next port of call we picked Christmas Island.

GON-04-025

The island lies 170 miles south of the exit from the Sunda Strait. The island is Australian territory. Strictly speaking there was no need to call

there. We had simply marked it as a check point. Now in the ocean all fixes had to be taken by the Sun and the stars. We had everything needed for taking sights, including a calculator with an expanded memory module for working navigation problems. That module we were helped to get by Vitya Skavronsky – my friend from the Kiev Cruising Yacht Club. A very handy thing it was, that calculator.

GON-04-026

A day and a half later we came up to Christmas Island. That gave us confidence in our astronavigation skills. We did not manage to land on the island itself, though we thought of charging the batteries just in case. There was no jetty on the island suitable for us. So we decided to carry on – as we were.

GON-04-027



Going out into the Indian Ocean. The Sunda Strait. To starboard, Sumatra Is.

GON-04-028

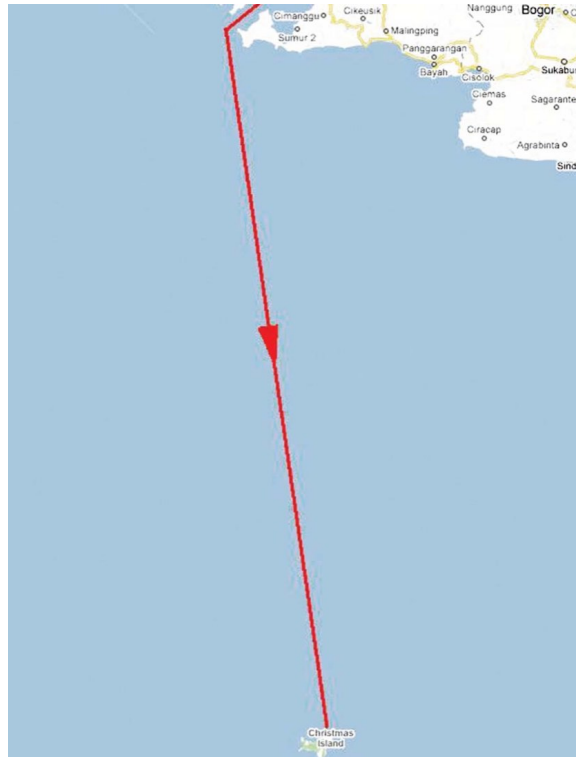
The whole rest of the passage south went entirely in head winds, of force 4 to 7. And that in absolutely sunny weather.

GON-04-029

The reason for that wind direction (south-south-west) is the climatic pattern in the southern hemisphere. But although in my head I understood what the weather was doing, my heart wanted fair winds, where *Gonta* could show herself in all her glory. But dreams, dreams... I remember on 1 April (the day of jokes) I wrote in the log book: "The day began with stupid jokes from the weather. Blew up again, threw us about, wind – getting on for force 6, from the south." Very often we carried just the No. 3 genoa and

nothing else. But even with that sail area we covered up to 90 miles in a day, which was not so bad at all.

GON-04-030



On course south.

GON-04-031



From the Sunda Strait to Christmas Is.

GON-04-032

Our course lay for Cape Onslow, Western Australia. We wanted to "hook on to" the coast and then go along the shore to Fremantle. Our shipboard routine was well sorted out. By day each of us stood a six-hour watch, at night – four hours. That brought variety into our meetings with the sunrise. I fixed the yacht's position by the Sun, and Sergei – in the evening, by the stars. That way we checked our navigational calculations. Time signals we took on the Spidola – a radio receiver my dad built himself many years ago, and I invalided the set out for navigation purposes. And near the coast you could listen to music too.

GON-04-033

As we moved further south, the thought of "beach" outfits came less and less often.

GON-04-034

On the whole everything was going normally. Of course, missing the start brought no joy, but what can you do. All the same we were doing a good and interesting job. From the start of the second week of April we watched the horizon to the east of us more closely, hoping to see the coast of Australia. We even thought of making a call at Carnarvon – one of the westernmost ports of Australia. But the wind situation was against such a call. So we decided to steer the most advantageous course for Fremantle and leave Carnarvon out of it. A day later we finally sighted land. After that the plan was this: by day we go in towards the coast, at night – tack away and head out to sea. And so on all the way to Fremantle. The wind blew dead on the nose and there was no expecting a change of direction.

GON-04-035





Kalbarri

9 April 1991. The day was – as usual. Sun, wind – force 6 to 7, sea – a metre and a half to two. We were carrying the No. 3 genoa. The mainsail was down and flaked on the boom. We were going along the coast on starboard tack. True, the coast was a fair way off – all night we had been on port tack, going away from it. I should say the yacht was going simply marvellously. We had no self-steering, but we would lash the tiller with a line and balance the boat in such a way that she held her course for hours without wandering off it. And at a good speed. That gave us the chance to get on with jobs below during a watch, and not only after it. After all, cooking takes time too, and after a watch what you want is to "listen to the noise of the submarine", i.e. to fall into your bunk, not to jump about in the galley at a heel of 25 to 30 degrees. And our rope self-steering helped us out without fail.

GON-05-001

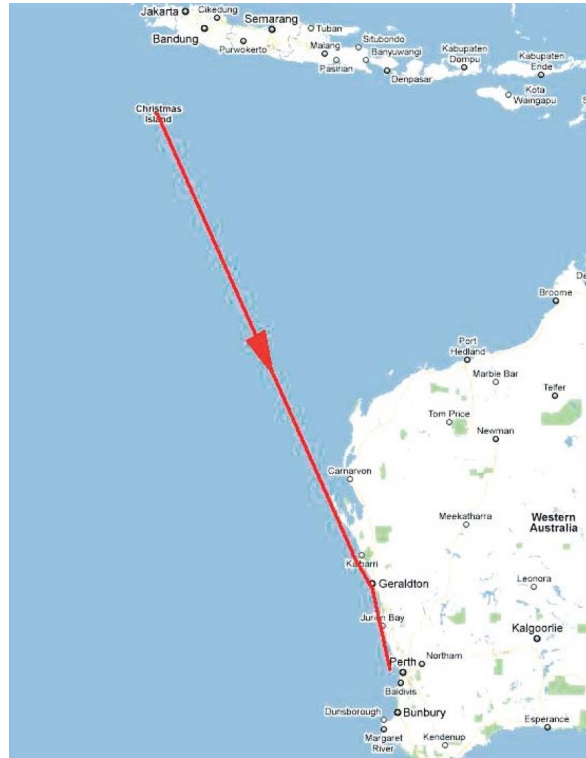


Probably the last man to have a "self-steering" like that was Joshua Slocum.

GON-05-002

I should say that the whole way from the Sunda Strait we did not meet a single vessel, did not see a single aircraft in the sky. Both the ocean and the sky were completely empty.

GON-05-003



This photograph shows clearly that we had no abundance of fish in the Indian Ocean. A chance flying fish on the deck – and that is the whole catch. The bent stick in front of the stove – the branch from the bananas bought in Merak. There were still bananas left on it.

GON-05-004

There were about 350 miles left to Fremantle. We were already making rough estimates of when we would go in there, how long we would lie there, etc. We were not planning to lie long in Fremantle – after all we had to round Australia from the south as well, and then from the east too. And that is no small thing.

GON-05-005

In the evening of that same day (9 April), around eight in the evening, Sergei was about to go on watch. We were planning to tack and head out to sea – as always. At sea it got dark quickly and by eight in the evening it was pitch dark – just the whitecaps sometimes visible and the stars in the sky. Nothing else. There was no moon.

GON-05-006



From Christmas Is. to Perth.

GON-05-007

That is about all there is to see ahead of the yacht at night in the ocean.

GON-05-008

We were both in the cabin when a sudden, sharp noise on deck – like a gunshot, sent us leaping up top. I guessed almost at once that something in the gear on deck had let go, but what? Once, with a similar noise, a stainless padeye on the deck let go, the one used for the mast-lowering tackle. That was on the Black Sea, in daylight, and we saw straight away what it was. And here, in pitch darkness, go and work out what the matter is. Without another word we started to tack and at that moment the mast went over the side...

GON-05-009

It was a cruel blow for us. True, at that moment we had no time for feelings. We had to act without delay. First thing, we let go the anchor. After that we started to assess the damage. The mast had come down over the port side, bending several stanchions. Although we could not see it, I understood that on hitting the water the mast had broken in the area of the spreaders. (Several years earlier, at the start of the Baltic Cup, near the Kronstadt forts, we lost a mast as well. That time it was the mast post that broke – the vertical plate that supports the mast. The mast post broke from metal fatigue and alternating loads, although it had been designed for 20 tonnes (Gonta's displacement is five tonnes). After that accident we re-designed the mast post and there could be no problems with it). Anyway, I had a good idea of the extent of the damage.

GON-05-010

We soon worked out that the turnbuckle on the starboard aft cap shroud had let go. We did not establish why it had failed straight away – there was no time for that. The wind had eased a little but the swell was still running, and the boat was being thrown about so much that at any moment you could go over the side yourself. Even so, we decided to try to get the broken mast up onto the deck.

GON-05-011

Cut the rigging away, give the mast to the sea – the thought never entered our heads. We fought for every shackle. But easy to say – get the mast aboard. She had filled with water and weighed a tonne. For two men – an impossible job. And at night on top of that, and in a seaway – anyway, the picture is clear, I think. We fought the sea for about an hour, then decided to take a breather and look at the situation afresh. And while we were thinking, we had to sink the mast a little so that it would not batter the yacht's hull in the sea.

GON-05-012

We talked it over and decided that we could not manage without outside help. We switched on our VHF (Khlebnikov, our friend from the *Fazisi* days, helped us get that set in Odessa) and started listening for who was about. Sergei sent out a call on Channel 16

GON-05-013

(and this is where knowing English came in useful to the full) and the coastal rescue service answered us. Sergei explained the situation and gave our coordinates. The radio operator at the coastal service said he would send a fishing boat out to help.

GON-05-014

With that we closed the link. I should say that reception was perfectly satisfactory. And we thought that we had been lucky, at that, that all this mess had happened not far from the coast. To find a small yacht at night in the ocean – that is looking for a needle in a haystack. Radar does not pick you up – the radar reflector is over the side, on the mast. For the last two days we had taken no fixes, neither by the Sun nor by the stars – we were thrown about so much that the horizon could not be got. We were running on dead reckoning from the last reliable fix. So the coordinates we had passed to the shore left us with a certain lack of confidence. That is why we decided to come up on deck every half hour and search the horizon, hoping to see the navigation lights of the rescue boat. Our signalling lamp lay ready in the cabin.

GON-05-015

Probably three hours went by, or more. I looked out on deck and saw a searchlight beam half a mile from us. I grabbed my lamp at once and signalled towards the light. About ten minutes later the boat came up. The first thing we asked was how long they had been looking for us? It turned out that they had been circling about at sea for some three hours, and that

our position differed from the one we gave by five miles. I thought that was not so bad at all, given the navigation gear we had. The fishermen also said that if it had been daylight they would have found us almost straight away.

GON-05-016

I explained to the skipper of the boat that the mast was under water and that it could only be got up onto the deck in a harbour. Getting men across from the boat to us was not realistic. So we passed a towline and they pulled us at slow speed towards the mouth of the Murchison River. That is five miles south of the place where we lost the mast.

GON-05-017

The settlement at the mouth of the Murchison River is called Kalbarri. We read the name off the chart. Then we leafed through the pilot, but there was not much information. We anchored in a spot more or less sheltered from the waves. The tow boat left, promising to come back a bit later and help us get into the inner bay. The thing is that the river itself is fairly small and the mouth is constantly silting up with sand – the result of the ocean surf at work. The fishing boats lie in the inner harbour, which is protected from the ocean by the sandspit. The entrance to the harbour – shallow and winding. Anyway, the offer of help was very welcome.

GON-05-018

A couple of the local lads came aboard and helped us drag the mast up onto the deck. After that they got into their motor boat and went off.

GON-05-019

We also established the cause of the turnbuckle failure. The cause is a simple one – a microcrack at the root of the thread – the result of metal fatigue. You can only see a crack like that by X-raying the turnbuckle. But that is the theory. And who has ever done that in practice? We started sorting out the rigging and waiting for customs to arrive, to open the border. But before customs a boat came up with people from Channel Seven television. They filmed us from the right and from the left, then Sergei went across into their boat and gave an interview. After that I offered them a chance to come aboard the yacht, but they said they would wait for the customs inspectors to arrive. Soon the customs men arrived as well. To start with they checked our papers. Everything was in order. The only question that came up was about the Australian visa, which ran out in May. We explained the reason for the delay and said that we were going to apply to the Department of Immigration with a request to extend our visas.

GON-05-020

Our answer satisfied the customs men.

GON-05-021

After the papers had been looked at, the search of the yacht began. Sergei and I had been through border inspections more than once on the Black Sea and on the Baltic. And besides that, in every port of call during

the round-the-world race. But we had never seen a search like that! The customs men turned over everything on the yacht they could. They got into every locker they thought of. Every sail had to be shaken out of its bag, opened out, and then folded again. Later, when I described this "search" to the local lads, they said the customs men had most likely been looking for drugs. But at the time we were simply baffled – what was this bias about? As for losses – the customs men confiscated fifty tins of army stewed meat from us. You cannot bring meat products into Australia. We knew that and said to the customs men that we would shut the tins in a box, seal it, and produce the box for inspection when we left Australia. But they did not agree. So our entire meat ration was confiscated. Even now I swear inwardly when I remember that business.

GON-05-022

There was a funny moment too. We had a box of good chocolates aboard. A woman we knew in Odessa had asked us to take that box to her sister in Sydney. We agreed to deliver it and we were honestly keeping our side of it. When the customs men found the chocolates, they announced that chocolate falls into the category of dairy products and is banned from import into Australia. So they had to confiscate these chocolates. But at that point I said to them that it would not wash. The chocolates were going to a particular person, and if they could not be brought in, then we would eat them right now. Besides, we had eaten nothing since the evening of the day before.

GON-05-023

The customs man says: "All right, scoff away, and we will enjoy the show." Sergei and I opened the box on the spot and set about demolishing the contents. We offered the customs men a chance to join in too – we are not greedy people. They had a laugh, but they each took one. And all the while the television cameramen were recording everything that happened on tape. They were each handed a chocolate too. Anyway, we had a sweet breakfast. Later I got hold of a copy of that recording – there are shots in it of the almost empty chocolate box standing in the galley.

GON-05-024

To finish the "chocolate" story, I will say that on arrival in Perth (a month later) I telephoned Sydney and explained the situation with the parcel to the woman. We had a laugh, she thanked me for the call – and that was the end of it.

GON-05-025



In the roadstead of the port of Kalbarri. With the help of this boat we got into the port's inner harbour.

GON-05-026

Even now it is hard to make out what is what on deck. And that is after we spent several hours sorting out the rigging. You can only guess what it all looked like at the moment of the accident.

GON-05-027

Be that as it may, they opened the border for us. Soon a fishing boat came up and led us into the inner harbour. The depth over the bar did not exceed two metres and we were somewhat worried about our draught – 1.7 metres. But it all went off well and forty minutes later we were lying at the fishing jetty. Although the jetty is not meant for a long stay – only for unloading and loading, the local fishermen kindly let us have a berth with "conveniences". We started finding out what possibilities there were ashore for repairing the mast. The possibilities turned out to be below zero, i.e. – none at all. Kalbarri – a settlement of fishermen and tourists. There was no industry there at all back then. The nearest industrial (relatively) centre – Geraldton. It was about forty miles south of where we lay.

GON-05-028

We started getting a jury rig ready. We stepped half the mast and set it up with the main shrouds. We rigged up a forestay and backstays. We led the halyards we needed. The trysail fitted perfectly – nothing had to be altered. But the storm jib had to be turned up and sewn with big stitches.

GON-05-029

Otherwise it could not be set on the forestay. And that was all the sail we could carry.

GON-05-030

While we were busy getting the yacht ready, local lads kept coming up to us, asking what had happened, offering help, each with whatever he could. One of the local fishermen – John Milauskas (his parents from Latvia), said that his brother Bill lives in Geraldton and repairs aluminium boats. And he promised to ring him and ask him to help us out with the mast repair. That was strong support, since doing the repair with our own resources was simply unthinkable.

GON-05-031



The day before we sailed for Geraldton. We spent three days alongside this jetty, getting ready to go to sea.

GON-05-032

Two days later everything was ready for departure. Early in the morning the local fishermen pulled us out past the edge of the sandspit, towed us about a mile into the ocean and cast off the towline. We laid a course for Geraldton and started watching how the yacht behaved under the jury rig. The first impression was encouraging. The boat would work to windward, of course not as well as with the proper rig, but still. Besides, the distance was no more than forty miles. By our reckoning we should reach Geraldton in two days.

GON-05-033



Under a rig like this we got to Geraldton.

GON-05-034

At least we did not get any big angles of heel!

GON-05-035

The passage went off without incident. Before we left, the fishermen at Kalbarri advised us to troll a line, assuring us that the fish would bite so well "that the customer forgets everything in the world". Everyone likes fish and we towed the line behind us with enthusiasm. But apart from seaweed – no marvels of the sea attached themselves.

GON-05-036

We had to make do with sprats in tomato sauce. Good thing these tins could be brought into Australia. On 16 April, in the daytime, we came into the roadstead of the port of Geraldton.

GON-05-037

Geraldton is close now!

GON-05-038



Geraldton–Fremantle

One of the first people we met in Geraldton was Bill Milauskas. His brother had rung him, as he promised, and Bill took a very active part in our business. To start with, he helped us tow the yacht to the local yacht club. Without an engine, getting into the club would not be easy. The entrance is very narrow, and immediately behind the breakwater – rows of berths with yachts on them. So there is not much room to manoeuvre under sail. The yacht club itself is organised very well indeed. Every yacht lies at its berth as though in a car park.

GON-06-001

Water and power are laid on at the berths. In the building – there is a shower, a bar, basically everything you need after a "hard sea passage".

GON-06-002

We reported to the local authorities and got the go-ahead to stay. We rang Kiev and Odessa and told them where we were. We said nothing about the broken mast, so as not to worry people for nothing. Nobody could have helped us with anything anyway, and nobody needs extra worry. We also rang the people we knew in Fremantle. They already knew about our adventures, as it turned out. Channel Seven television had shown us on the evening news the same day it took our interview in Kalbarri. Our friends were waiting for us impatiently.

GON-06-003

A couple of days later Bill drove up, we took the mast off and carted it to his workshop for repair. We spent a day on it and joined the two halves, but unfortunately not as well as we would have liked. The reason – Bill's workshop had no equipment at all for straightening a mast. And after the blow against the water it had taken a noticeable bend, which could not be corrected by heating and cooling the mast. All that could be done – join the two halves using an intermediate insert. We had to leave it at that. The result was a mast with a substantial bend in the upper part. But it was still better than a broken mast.

GON-06-004

Before long we moved *Gonta* round to the port (with Bill's help, of course) and started getting ready to step the repaired mast. We had to

wait, because Bill had a job he needed to finish. The next day Bill brought the mast over on a trailer and we set about stepping it. A few more hours of work and the yacht was towed back into the yacht club harbour. We set our departure for the next day. On the morning of 21 April we started getting ready to leave Geraldton. We had to run between Customs and the yacht club office. The yacht club administration presented us with a bill for the berth in the harbour, something around seventy dollars or a bit more. We found this out when we came to get our clearance from the customs men. All right, we had to pay. At the same time I thought that if an Australian yacht happened to put into any of our yacht clubs for repairs, then probably it would not enter the head of anyone in the administration to present a bill. Well, no matter. By the way, Bill did not take a kopeck from us for his services. Of course, we gave him and his family a few souvenirs as thanks for looking after us. But the value of the work he did, of course, exceeded the value of the souvenirs... The way out of the yacht club harbour was very narrow. Thirty, thirty-five metres wide, if that. Rocks to the right and to the left. The wind was blowing, naturally, straight into the harbour. We decided to set the full mainsail, get some speed up under it and set the storm jib as we turned, so as to have more speed and therefore better control. That is what we did. The manoeuvre came off so well that the onlookers on the mole, Bill and his family among them, clapped and whistled at us loudly. That was pleasant, no question!

GON-06-005

There were 220 miles left to Fremantle. Nothing compared with the distance we had already covered. On top of that, a cyclone was starting up in the north and the wind was expected to shift north – north-east. And for us that meant – a following wind. We were in a fighting mood.

GON-06-006

For the first twenty-four hours the wind still blew from the south and we had to beat, trying different sail combinations. The mast behaved well enough, although the bend in the upper part did not look very pretty. But, be that as it may, we were moving forward, to the south. On the second day the wind began to change direction and shift to the north. Everything was going as the forecast predicted. We were already thinking we would finally get a rest from the endless heeling. But it did not work out that way. The wind was not only shifting to the north and coming fair, it was strengthening with every hour! First we took in the mainsail. Then we changed the No. 2 genoa for the No. 3. Then we took in the No. 3 genoa and set the storm jib. By about four in the morning we were carrying nothing at all. But the wind and the seas were carrying us along so well that no sails were needed! To hold some sort of course we streamed the towing

warp astern – seventy metres of it. A sea anchor was out of the question – it would simply have been torn away without any further discussion. The whole ocean, as far as the eye could see, looked like a big washing machine. The roar of the wind was such that you had to shout to talk – otherwise you could not hear each other. Neither Sergei Stanetsky nor I had ever seen anything like it before. And that is taking into account that we had only recently come back from the round-the-world race.

GON-06-007

All we could do was watch the situation. Our position relative to the shore was safe, and there were no shoals or other unpleasantness on our course. With all the hatches battened down tight we sat on deck in full storm gear, clipped on by our safety harnesses to the deck padeyes. Sitting inside the yacht with the hatches shut – not a very pleasant occupation.

GON-06-008

The wind blew us past Fremantle. There was no possibility of changing course. We decided to wait for the wind to change, understanding that a wind of that strength cannot blow for ever. And sure enough, the wind began to shift further to the east, and then to the south. All we could do was follow the change of wind direction on the compass. An hour later the wind began to ease and we were able to set the storm jib. Now we had to work our way back, because the wind had blown us ten or twelve miles below Fremantle.

GON-06-009

On the morning of 24 April we came into the harbour of the Fremantle Sailing Club. We moored at the outer jetty and went to report to the club commodore. At that time it was Brian Wells. Brian remembered Sergei and me from the last Whitbread. We spent a lot of time at the Fremantle Sailing Club then, getting ready for the third leg of the round-the-world race.

GON-06-010

When he saw us – there was no limit to his astonishment. The first thing he did was stand us a good breakfast, right there in the club building. Then he started asking us for the details. And that was when we found out that we had run not simply into a strong wind but into Cyclone Fifi. It was the cyclone we had been told about in Geraldton. Only the direction of the cyclone did not match the forecast and the whole force of this cyclone came down on the coast between Jurien (a town halfway from Geraldton to Fremantle) and Mandurah – 30 miles south of Fremantle. During the cyclone 27 people died in the district and 100,000 homes were left without power. You can read about this cyclone on the Internet. Brian offered us a free berth with all the facilities (shower, water, power) for the whole of our stay in Fremantle. He also offered to shift the yacht to a berth nearer the club building. We thanked him but said that lying at the outer mole suited

us better, since we had no engine. Brian, an old navy man himself, simply opened his eyes wide at that explanation. For a long time he could not believe that we had come the whole way on a completely "environmentally clean" yacht.

GON-06-011

Fremantle became our last port on the way south. Given the state of the boat and the approaching season of winter storms, we decided to head back north, with the final destination – Vladivostok. From Fremantle the road home began for us.

GON-06-012

The Stay in Fremantle

The next day we rang home, to tell our relatives and friends that we had arrived in Fremantle. I also spoke to Valera Obukhov, talked the situation over with him and explained that going round Australia did not look sensible with winter coming on in the Southern Hemisphere. Valera agreed with my arguments and promised to pass our conversation on to the director of the Institute of Innovations. About the broken mast I said nothing. I reckoned that since we had managed by ourselves, everything was in order. After that we rang round the people we knew. In spite of the working day – it was a Tuesday, if I am not mistaken – many of them dropped everything and came to the yacht club to meet us. It is interesting that Sergei Stanetsky and I had different acquaintances. On his side, so to speak, there arrived Bill Weier with his wife Sue, and Fr Anatoly Sytnyk with his wife, Yefrosynia Dombrovska. Of my acquaintances – there were Gill Goodwin and Richard Reid. Fr Anatoly had been a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox church in Perth during our first stay with *Fazisi*. When we met the second time, he was already retired. But, being an active man and a popular one in the Ukrainian community, he immediately organised us a mass of meetings and gatherings of every kind. Understandably, the old Ukrainian residents of Perth were far from indifferent to news from Ukraine. On top of that a yacht from Kiev – that is like a piece of Ukraine. Everyone was keen to come on board and talk in person with the "brave Ukrainian seafarers". There was no end to questions and stories.

GON-07-001

Before this meeting I did not know Fr Anatoly well. I had seen him once on *Fazisi*, but I was busy with something and did not get the chance to talk. Now I managed to get to know him better. Jumping ahead, I will say that we have stayed good friends to this day.

GON-07-002

I first met Gill Goodwin in the *Fazisi* days. He was president of the local Rotary International branch.

GON-07-003

At that time he organised all kinds of meetings for the *Fazisi* crew with members of the public. This time too he showed himself an organiser of every sort, although he was no longer president of Rotary International. The post is elective and only for one year.

GON-07-004

Bill Weier and his wife Sue I did not know before this meeting. They were friends of Sergei's, very pleasant and helpful people. It is interesting that during one of our meetings with them Sue said that when Bill heard on the news about our trouble with the mast, he got ready straight away to send us a cheque for a thousand dollars. But he did not send it, because he did not know the address. I thought, why that amount? Later I found out that in a television report the fishermen from Kalbarri had given their assessment of our chances of getting to Geraldton on our own. In their opinion (and it was unanimous), we had no chance at all. The only alternative – to tow her behind a launch. That operation would have cost exactly a thousand dollars. Sergei and I knew nothing of that assessment and we had no choice but to "disprove" the fishermen's predictions. And Bill saved himself a thousand dollars. A couple of days later the first wave of enthusiasm from the reunion died down.

GON-07-005

The interest in us did not fade, but it became more organised, sort of. We began to be invited to various gatherings, with the date given in advance. We visited the Ukrainian Association of WA, the German Club,

GON-07-006



Guests of Gill Goodwin.

GON-07-007

several times – meetings of Rotary International. And everywhere we were asked to tell them in detail about Ukraine and about our passage and about a great deal more. At the Ukrainian Association of WA we put on a small

exhibition of Ukrainian applied art, which was a success. We handed out Institute of Innovations brochures to all our guests and acquaintances. Well and of course badges, souvenirs, etc. There was no shortage of visitors. Everyone who came admired *Gonta*, and on learning that the yacht was home-built – were twice as delighted. Many left entries in the yacht's log book. Meeting all these people, being at numerous gatherings, Sergei and I could only regret that we had not made the start of the race in time. Had we made the start, it would have been a marvellous campaign for presenting Ukraine abroad. In the middle of all this festive bustle we did not forget the everyday business either. We had to extend our Australian visas, and get

GON-07-008

The ladies of the Fremantle Sailing Club administration paid us their respects.

GON-07-009

an American visa for a call at Guam. That island lies in the Pacific Ocean halfway between Darwin (Australia) and Vladivostok. Then we had to get a Japanese visa. We decided not to take an Indonesian visa, counting on our successful experience with the call at Merak. 7 May 1991. First thing in the morning we drove to the Australian Department of Immigration. We filled in the forms, answered the questions. And naturally, you have to pay for the service. Fifty dollars a head. We paid. The Australians started muddying the water, said they needed written grounds to extend our visas. We are surprised, we say that we are going home, to the Union, and Australia is a big place. Surely we are not to put into a port illegally every time to restock and rest? But all our arguments had zero success. The one sensible thing the officer at the department advised – go to the yacht club and ask the club commodore to write us an invitation letter to some regatta or other. Then, on the strength of the letter, they could issue us visas as sportsmen, not as tourists. We drove to the yacht club, met Brian. We explained the situation with the visas. And Brian says: "Listen, the club is going to put on a race in three weeks, Fremantle–Exmouth. That is six hundred and thirty miles north. Do you want to join in? If so, I will write you the paper right now." We agreed on the spot, it was on our way, and going with a race – far more interesting. And Brian was pleased. Our taking part in the race gave it a touch of the "international". That looks good in club reports.

GON-07-010

We got our invitation and drove back to the Department of Immigration. Strictly speaking, it was not we who drove – Fr Anatoly took us. He was always ready to help us with everything.

GON-07-011

We arrived, handed in the paper. A day later we came back, collected the passports with the visas. The visa was issued until 9 August 1991. After

the extension of the Australian visas, we went to the Japanese consulate. There too we filled in the forms, everything as usual, showed our invitations sent by the organisers of the event, explained the reason for the delay and the need for a visa. But the Japanese consul showed no desire to issue us visas. Well, he did not give them and we did not need them, Sergei and I decided. After all, from Japan to Vladivostok – a stone's throw, and even if we do put in for a day at one of the Japanese ports, no catastrophe will befall the country. Nor us either. We said goodbye to the consul and left. But there were no grounds for thinking well of the consul.

GON-07-012

The last stop – the American consulate. We filled in the forms, answered the usual questions and the next day the visas were issued, for a term of four months. If there is one lot I have never had any trouble with, it is the American immigration authorities! Besides the paper business, so to speak, there was the yacht business too.

GON-07-013

We needed to lift the boat out of the water, check whether there was damage to the hull (the mast could have damaged the planking), paint the bottom with antifouling, and a good deal more besides. Rotary International, with the direct involvement of Gill and Richard, came to our help. They arranged the lift-out and paid for the time she stood ashore – three days. Bill Weier bought us a ten-litre tin of antifouling, which is not cheap, it has to be said.

GON-07-014



Getting ready for the lift-out.

GON-07-015

Sergei and I, four hands at it, made quick work of the underwater part. The mast had scratched the hull a little, of course, but we had a repair kit and we soon put all the damage right. When it came to painting the topsides – Richard's wife Anya and our friend Max, we knew him from the Whitbread, volunteered to take that work on themselves and did a magnificent job. Anya is an artist by profession. She painted the yacht's name on after the general paint job. The boat came to look – like a new toy.

GON-07-016



Max was always ready to offer his help.

GON-07-017

Before long we were back in our own place at the jetty. Rotary International gave us a solar panel, which I intended to fit on the cabin top. Bill Milauskas came down from Geraldton with his family to look in on us at Fremantle and brought us a satellite navigation system. The system was somewhat dated, but perfectly serviceable. The local fishermen were replacing their systems with newer ones and throwing the old ones out. One of those was what Bill brought with him. We fitted it without delay and the navigator's corner took on a solid look at once.

GON-07-018

Bill Milauskas with his family was a welcome guest on board the yacht!

GON-07-019

One more question remained – the mast. I decided to drive to a company that makes masts and find out what could be done. I drove myself, in

the Volvo that Gill Goodwin had given Sergei and me the use of for the whole of our stay in Fremantle.

GON-07-020

It was my first drive on my own and my hands shook a little with nerves. All I needed was to damage somebody else's car. But it all passed off. I got to Rolly Tasker Sails Pty Ltd, met the manager, explained the situation. He promised to send a man to assess the situation on the spot. The next day the company's representative arrives. And at the same time Gill Goodwin had arranged a short television interview with us. It came out as a clash. But we split up and while Sergei was giving the general story, I talked to the representative about the mast. And afterwards I joined the general conversation in the yacht's cockpit.

GON-07-021

The results of the talks were not much comfort. Rolly Tasker asked 2000 dollars for a mast. For the bare tube only, strictly speaking – the standing and running rigging we were to use our own. We could have raised that sum, but it was almost all the cash we had. Going about with our hand out – that somehow did not enter our heads.

GON-07-022

The next day I drove to Rolly Tasker again and put a proposal to them. I work at the company for a time, and in payment – I get a mast. Of course, maybe it was a naive proposal, but I had nothing better. The attempt was not crowned with success. The times were not the best – an economic depression was rolling over the country. The company wanted money and was not about to go in for philanthropy. So we were left with the old mast. We were of course aware of how serious the situation was, but there were factors that reduced our worries. For example, the way home was to run mostly with following winds. During the cyclone the mast did not let us down – so there is a certain confidence that in

GON-07-023



Max (left), Rosemary Blake and Richard Reid.

GON-07-024

normal conditions nothing will happen. Well, and so on.

GON-07-025

One time, sitting in the cabin with all these thoughts in my head, I heard someone hailing us from the jetty. I stuck my head out of the hatch – I look – a middle-aged woman is standing there. She asks me what sort of flag that is of ours, the yellow and blue one on the backstay? I explained, one word led to another – a conversation started. We introduced ourselves. The woman's name was Rosemary Blake. A doctor's wife, a yachswoman, she was walking along the jetties – and saw a boat she did not know. She decided to come over and ask about it. Anyway, it ended with her inviting Sergei and me to her place for dinner. In the evening we drove over to her. We were received very hospitably, the evening went splendidly. We agreed to meet regularly.

GON-07-026

During one of the races in the Fremantle area.

GON-07-027

Rosemary managed the duties of photographer and navigator. On the helm – our new acquaintance Walter.

GON-07-028

Besides all the activity described above, we also took part in the club races every Saturday. There was no shortage of people wanting to crew. Everyone who had helped us was invited to race with us as an honoured guest. That is how Bill Milauskas and his family, Rosemary Blake, and Fr Anatoly with Yefrosynia all had a sail with us. One race we won outright.

That time we had Fr Anatoly and Yefrosynia in the crew. And the prize was – a bottle of good rum. The conclusion – when the prize is an incentive, the crew works with enthusiasm too. There were many events, the days were all full. One more of those events is worth mentioning. Sergei and I had the chance to take part in the filming of *Wind*. The film is American, about how the Americans lost the America's Cup to the Australians and then won it back. The film company needed shots of spectators on launches, out on the course. Our friend Don Witton, a retired merchant seaman, had a launch and the company hired it for a couple of filming days. Don invited us into his crew, to play enthusiastic supporters. We had to wave flags before the cameras. And when the cameras were not nearby – we simply drank beer. Both of those came off very well for us. But we did not get into the shots. At least, when I watched that film, I did not spot any of us.

GON-07-029



Gill Goodwin introduced us to a writer – Nadia.

GON-07-030

In all these concerns the days flew by. And the day came when we had to say goodbye to hospitable Fremantle and head home. The start of the Fremantle–Exmouth race was set for 28 May, and that was tomorrow already.

GON-07-031

Part Two

GON-07-032

THE STAY IN FREMANTLE







The \"International\" Fremantle– Exmouth Race

The day of the race start. In the morning all our friends came to the yacht club to see us off. There was no free space on the jetty beside our boat. Rosemary Blake had made Sergei Stanetsky and me T-shirts with the yacht's name on them. They looked very smart. Don Witton brought a big pot of brawn he had made himself. Told us to eat it in the first three days. GON-08-001

But our Ukrainian friends surprised everyone. Under Fr Anatoly's direction they wheeled an enormous trolley of food onto the jetty. Just roughly stowing it in the yacht took more than half an hour. Anyway, we had food enough aboard – you could have gone round the world on it! GON-08-002



Our Ukrainian friends. To the right of me – Fr Anatoly and Yefrosynia Dombrovska. Max (standing between Sergei and me) also ended up among the "Ukrainian" friends. He himself comes from Italy. GON-08-003

Our friends and acquaintances. When everyone who came to see us off had gathered on deck – the yacht's draught increased noticeably! Fr Anatoly Sytnyk – front row, second from the left. GON-08-004

Parting is always a little sad. They wished us a win in the race and generally – a happy voyage, and we thanked everyone endlessly for the care they had shown us, etc. Then we made sail, cast off from the jetty, made a circuit of the harbour for the last photographs and headed for the starting line. The start was set for 10.00 in the morning.

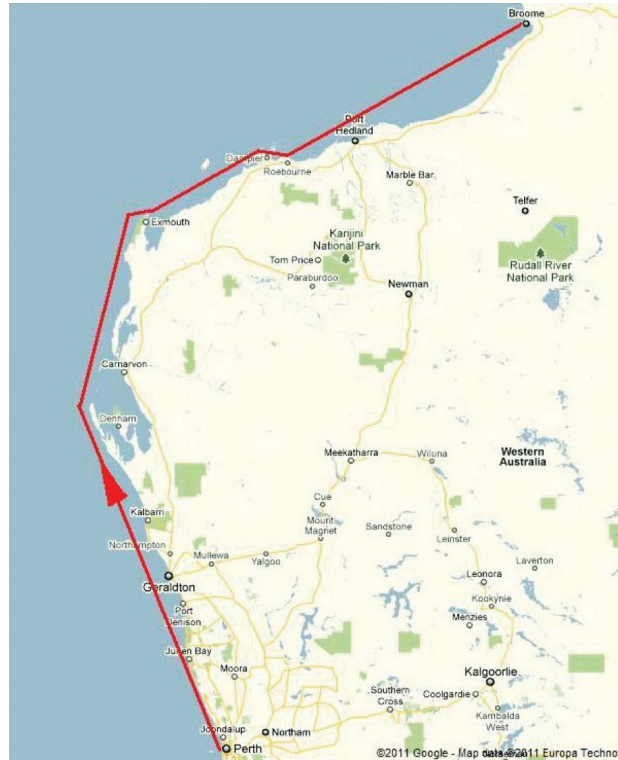
GON-08-005

There were still two of us. We wanted to take on a couple more crew, put a notice up on the board at the yacht club, but with no success. Only a few people showed any interest, but then they too could not get away from their work. Well, the two of us did not feel too bad about it either.

GON-08-006

The fleet came together – some 15 yachts. Somewhat mixed as regards the size of the yachts. We were the smallest yacht of them all. We started well enough. This time we had set the new sails bought in Taganrog. The genoa (the headsail) held a very good shape and pulled us like a good horse. For the first few hours we held the middle of the fleet and had no intention of dropping back. But suddenly the sail sagged on the stay. It turned out the eye splice (the loop) on the wire had torn and the sail dropped onto the deck. The eye was not spliced but swaged in a ferrule. The swage had been made badly and the wire pulled out under load. As a result we had to swap the sail for the old one, climb about, get the halyard down from the mast, stow the damaged sail, tune up for racing again... While we did all that, the yachts with full crews passed us and we were the ones chasing. Anyway, it turned out we had cherished the new sails for nothing. We never did get to use them in the race.

GON-08-007



See you again, Fremantle!

GON-08-008

This diagram shows the yacht's route from Perth to Broome.

GON-08-009

The main stops on the way were at Exmouth, Dampier and Port Walcott (not shown on the diagram). Broome will be our last port of call on the Australian continent.

GON-08-010

Before long we set the spinnaker. At last our wish for a run off the wind had come true! But the wind was not very strong, and the sea – considerable. The boat lacked the speed to hold course steadily. On the way off a wave the spinnaker sometimes collapsed, even though we were very careful. Unfortunately we had no spinnaker net to keep it from wrapping round the stay. And towards evening, some ten hours after the start, we did wrap the spinnaker round the stay. I had to go up the mast in a bosun's chair and untangle it. Untangled it, stowed it below, started getting ready to set it again. The wind freshened a little. Hoisted the spinnaker – all in order. Trimmed up and we carry on with the race. Sergei handed the watch to me and went below. Four hours later he came up to relieve me. And the wind is rising, but we do not want to hand the spinnaker – we are going well. The night is clear, the moon due to rise at any moment. We decided – we would stay under the spinnaker. Are we racing or not, in the end? I went below. Dozed a couple of hours. Woke up – I can hear the wind has risen further and the boat is tearing along – full speed ahead.

GON-08-011

I come out on deck – Sergei is steering without a break, a sea has got up, the wind – close to force 7 already. Good thing – it was a downwind course. On the beat we would already have been tumbling about under storm sails. Seryoga says to me: "... You would not believe it, a couple of times we 'rustled' along so well it would not have disgraced *Fazisi*." And that is with *Gonta* – 10 metres long, and *Fazisi* – 25.

GON-08-012

The fact is that by then it was too late to go up to the foredeck and hand the spinnaker. You could be washed overboard as easy as anything. Of course, we were clipped on to the deck and all the rest of it, but leaving the cockpit was simply dangerous. With a full crew – no question, but for two of us – no, we did not risk it. We decided, come what may. The boat, by the way, steered very well. Not once were we thrown into a broach, even though we were carrying many times more sail than we needed.

GON-08-013

Well, that was a night, I can tell you! A great moon blazing, visibility – like daylight. Not a cloud in the sky. Wind – getting on for force 10 and whistling by now. We are tearing along – in my life I have never seen *Gonta* go like that! Astern of the yacht a wake – a regular rooster's tail. We are cutting the sea – slabs of water just peeling away left and right. By then our log was not working, but in one day and night we certainly did more than 180 miles. It all ended – as expected. In the best clipper tradition, when the surplus sail is taken off by the wind. The spinnaker simply

GON-08-014



Approach to Exmouth. On the right, the naval base radio aerials.

GON-08-015

blew out of its tapes and streamed away like a flag. The speed dropped, we rushed to get in what was left. In principle the spinnaker did not tear. The cloth itself stayed whole. But it could not be set again either. We set the genoa. The sailing became safe, but nothing to describe.

GON-08-016

Towards morning the wind gradually began to ease. We were not far from Geraldton by then. There were no rivals in sight anywhere.

GON-08-017

Before long the wind dropped to moderate and drew round to the west far enough that the spinnaker was not needed. And the wind held that direction all the way to Exmouth. On the third day, some 20 miles from the finish, we sighted two yachts. One of them was ahead of us, the other – astern. Obviously, the task now was to catch the boat in front. And not to lose to the one behind at the same time. We managed half the task. The boat in front slipped past us after all, with less than a mile in it. And the one behind never did catch us. So we did not finish dead last.

GON-08-018





Exmouth–Broome

Exmouth in those days was a small settlement of fishermen and tourists. A mild climate all year round (the settlement lies inside the Tropic of Capricorn), sandy beaches, coral reefs, fishing – all of it makes the place a good one for a holiday. Strictly speaking, the Fremantle Sailing Club organised the race in order to revive tourist interest in this corner of Western Australia. As for sights, apart from the variety of the country – the remains of a radar station bombed by the Japanese during the Second World War and an Australian-American naval communications base. The masts carrying that base's aerials rise some 180 metres into the air. One of the masts has a flashing light on it, which makes a splendid navigational mark.

GON-09-001



Reef on the approach to Exmouth.

GON-09-002

The Australian expanse. Even many years later, looking at this photograph, I tell myself that nowhere in the world have I seen a landscape like it.

GON-09-003



Any race – it is always serious! Setting the spinnaker.

GON-09-004



The event itself was closed the day after the last boat finished. We did not take a prize place, but even so the race organisers presented us with a pennant and a souvenir with a commemorative plaque. The gesture towards us was a very pleasant one.

GON-09-005



For the local races we were never short of crew.

GON-09-006

Everyone was interested in coming aboard Gonta.

GON-09-007

When everything is going to plan you can relax a little. But only a little...

GON-09-008



The prize-giving after the race. Rosemary (in the centre) made us these shirts before we left Fremantle.

GON-09-009

Of our Fremantle friends, Rosemary Blake came up to Exmouth with her children. The meeting was a joyful one. Very often Rosemary invited Sergei Stanetsky and me out for a drive around the district. I should say there was plenty to see. Country untouched by anyone for many thousands of years. Aboriginal rock art, gorges and cliffs – all of it made an impression.

GON-09-010



On the crest of a stone "wave". During the drive through the hills of Exmouth.

GON-09-011



View from the gorge.

GON-09-012

The camel ride and the tour of the base were cancelled by the race committee, for some reason. But Sergei and I said, half joking: "...Did we sail the race? We did. Were the entrants promised a tour? They were. So let us have the tour! And the camels – we will ride next time." And what do you think? Passes to the base were made out for the two of us and for Rosemary and her family.

GON-09-013



The base checkpoint.

GON-09-014

The next day Sergei and I put on T-shirts reading "The Russians are coming" – out of our *Fazisi* wardrobe, and set off on the tour. We were met by the Australian officer commanding the base, Commander Dawkins. He was in full naval dress uniform. I have a couple of photographs from that meeting. Bearing in mind that "The Russians are coming" – is an American slogan from the Cold War – the three of us looked simply marvellous!

GON-09-015

During the visit to the Australian Navy base. Commander Dawkins surrounded by "Russians". GON-09-016

Commander Dawkins turned out to be a hospitable host. For about an hour they showed us the various sights of the base. The base itself, basically, no longer had the importance it had in, say, the years of the Vietnam War. But even so, the very fact that we were on the base was exceptional. For Sergei, as a marine electrical engineer, it was more interesting. For me, as a mechanical engineer – only up to a point. The one question I did ask –

why were there such an enormous number of empty fuel drums on the base, laid out in neat rows running in different directions? The commanding officer explained that the base staff lay their cables out on those drums so they do not get damp from the dew.

GON-09-017

We went out onto the base jetty as well. At the very end of the jetty there is a platform for berthing supply vessels. Round the edge of the platform – steel railings, coated in insulation so they do not rust. The top rail was cut about all over, as if someone had run a knurling tool over it on a lathe. I asked what the reason for this "decoration" was? It turned out that in their free time the base staff fish for tuna off the jetty and wind the line round the railings.

GON-09-018

When a tuna takes – it pulls so hard that the line cuts through the insulation like a knife. And sure enough, you could see tuna in the water the size of piglets. The five days in port flew by. The race entrants dispersed, most of them heading back to Fremantle. We went on north. For the next port of call we picked Dampier. Three newcomers joined our crew. Sarah and Chris – both from England, were travelling round the country by whatever came along, so to speak. They were heading for the north of Australia and offered their services as deck crew. Their yachting experience was on the thin side. Robin – a Fremantle man, had sailed the race, and then decided to go on with the yacht as far as Darwin. Robin was an experienced yachtsman who had been to Darwin before. His experience came in very handy for us. Sarah and Chris – no older than 23, Robin was over 40.

GON-09-019

The passage to Dampier was very pleasant. An almost full crew on the yacht gave Sergei and me a chance to rest a little. And new people – new conversations. It made life on board more varied.

GON-09-020



Lying at Dampier. The last place where we could get alongside – and charge the batteries. GON-09-021

We spent two days in Dampier. It was the only place on the coast of Western Australia where we managed to get alongside. And by then it was necessary. However much we saved our batteries, charging them had become a pressing problem. At the local yacht club the arrival of a Ukrainian yacht caused a healthy stir. Sergei and I were issued with cards making us honorary members of the Dampier yacht club for one month. A card like that let us use the club jetty, while the rest of the fleet lay on moorings. I should say that the tidal streams were noticeable by now. At Dampier, for instance, the range reached 4 metres.

GON-09-022

At Dampier I finally fixed the solar panel to the cabin top. I ran the wires and connected them into the switchboard. How do you check – is the panel working or not? I could not be bothered going down to the cabin for the multimeter. Without thinking about it too long, I licked the two ends of the wire coming out of the panel. A shock of such strength that sparks came out of my eyes confirmed that it all worked. The day was sunny and there were about 16 volts at the output, I think.

GON-09-023

I should say that with the solar panel installed all our energy problems fell away. Now we could use the satellite navigation system without restriction. Before that you had to think about whether to switch it on or not. It was a greedy system. A couple of words about the town. The town is named after the English navigator William Dampier. He was the first

Englishman to explore the western coast of Australia. The district the town stands in is called the Pilbara. One of the largest iron ore deposits in the world is in the Pilbara. The town is not large, and the main occupation of the population – work in the iron ore mines and work in the port. The operation is, of course, on a colossal scale. Jetties running several kilometres out to sea – a normal thing here. The same can be said of the trains. The trains are up to 8 kilometres long. The whole train is moved by six locomotives. Two at the head of the train, two – in the middle and two – at the back. The whole coupled set is driven by one man.

GON-09-024

At Dampier we got to know Nick Carmelita and Victor Bekker and his wife Jennifer. They lived in a settlement called Port Walcott. Nick was building his own steel yacht. They pressed us so hard to come round to them in the yacht that it was simply awkward to refuse. The next morning we said goodbye to the hospitable Dampier yacht club and headed for Port Walcott.

GON-09-025



Robin (left), Sergei and Chris. Port Walcott.

GON-09-026

If you go along the coast, the distance is no more than 20 miles from Dampier. But the shoals did not allow it. We had to go round the Dampier Archipelago from the north and then come back on ourselves, so to speak. The whole passage took a day and in the evening we let go the anchor in Port Walcott roads.

GON-09-027

With new friends the time flew. Nick was building a big steel yacht, dreaming of the time when he could go off and sail the ocean as he pleased. He was building the boat properly, to last for ever. It was of course

not a racing yacht but a comfortable cruiser. To look ahead a little, I will say that he got his dream. In his yacht he sailed to Africa and back, and now she lies at the Fremantle Sailing Club. I am still on good terms with Nick and with the Bekker family.

GON-09-028

At Walcott I managed to sew up the torn spinnaker. Jennifer let me have her sewing machine and I coped with it – as best I knew how. For a first attempt it came out not very elegant, but strong. We used that spinnaker more than once afterwards.

GON-09-029

Two days later we got the anchor up. The goodbye was a warm one.

GON-09-030

When we had made sail and settled on course, Victor put on *Local Hero* by Mark Knopfler at full volume, a performer popular in Australia. Then he saluted us with a shotgun. We answered with a green flare.

GON-09-031

Our crew went down by one. Sarah had decided to stay at Walcott. But four people were quite enough to keep watches. The next port of call – Broome, then – Darwin, and goodbye Australia.

GON-09-032

It was the middle of June. To Broome – 330 miles. We were covering the distance briskly. The wind was about force 5, and we were on a close reach on port tack. We did not press her with sail – what for? We were not in a race, after all. But even so, we did 300 miles in two days.

GON-09-033

On course for Broome.

GON-09-034

A sunny morning found us 30 miles from Broome. To starboard ran the so-called "Eighty Mile Beach" – 80 miles of the purest white sand and blue ocean all the way to Broome. At 6 knots we reckoned on getting into port no later than two in the afternoon.

GON-09-035

The turnbuckle on the port aft cap shroud broke completely without warning. This time the mast snapped while it was still in the air, before it hit the water, and fell to starboard, taking out a couple of guardrail stanchions on the way. It was about 3 miles to the shore. There were no shoals or reefs where it happened.

GON-09-036

Sergei and I just swore, and that was all. After that we knew absolutely clearly what had to be done. Robin – an experienced yachtsman, came to himself quickly as well. The young representative of the "mistress of the seas", Chris, reported in a shaking voice that his mother had warned him not to go to sea. To that I advised him to hold on to the deck harder and think less about his mother just at the moment. That cheered him up a bit. The first thing we did was let go the anchor. We anchored on the Danforth – a type of anchor.

GON-09-037

The bottom – sand. The anchor bit straight away. The next job – to get the sails off the mast. This time we were carrying the mainsail and the No. 3 genoa. Getting the mainsail off gave us a couple of problems. We had to dive into the water several times.

GON-09-038

Good thing there were four of us. An hour and a half or two after the accident we had both halves of the mast on deck. Then we started on the jury rig, to the drill we knew.

GON-09-039

We did it all completely calmly, as if we were in a training class and not in real conditions. The only thing in the way – was the heavy swell. With no mast the yacht rolled to 45 degrees, and more than that, on each side. You could only move about the deck on all fours.

GON-09-040

Be that as it may, about ten hours later the jury spar was up. All that was left was to fit the sails and we could move. We got out the trysail and the storm jib. We stitched the jib down again, right on the marks I had put in at Kalbarri. Another couple of hours went on that. At last, everything was ready. We started to get the anchor up, and the anchor is not coming. It is holding the bottom dead. We took the anchor warp to a winch and going down off a wave – we hauled it in, and coming up on a wave – we held it. We strained at it that way for about 20 minutes – and finally pulled the anchor out. We got it up on deck – and look, half of one fluke is gone. Snapped off. After that we had only the Admiralty anchor left.

GON-09-041

We settled on course, and Chris cheered up too. He worked well enough, it just felt frightening because he was not used to it. The wind, naturally, died away. We were all night over those 30 miles, and in the morning we let go the anchor in Broome roads.

GON-09-042





Broome–Perth

Lying at Broome has one distinctive feature. A small vessel cannot lie at the jetty. The flood and the ebb reach eleven metres. And when the ebb is running, four knots of stream is guaranteed. Or even more. So the whole local fleet lies on moorings and comes alongside the jetty only for a very short time. Of course, the ebb is less of a worry for bigger vessels, but for a yacht, for example, being pinned against the jetty piles on the ebb can lead to unpleasant consequences. Communication between the vessels in the roads and the shore/jetty – by motorboat. The town itself is about five kilometres from the port. A sealed road runs to it from the port.

GON-10-001



*This was the picture we saw in Broome port. And how do you repair a mast in such conditions?
There was something to think about...*

GON-10-002

Chris did not waste any time. He packed his bag in a moment, hailed a boat going past – and he was gone.

GON-10-003

I never saw him again.

GON-10-004

By the middle of the day Robin left us as well. Later I ran into him in Broome, in a bar, a couple of times. The thought of offering his help with the mast repair did not occur to him. But in the end they were chance people on the yacht, so there was no expecting a surplus of "patriotism". From aboard the yacht there was a clear view of a building with "Broome Slipway" written on the roof. That is what we need, I thought. We decided to pay them a visit. We stopped a boat going past and asked them to drop us at the jetty. Services of that kind here – are perfectly normal.

GON-10-005



The end building on the right of the photograph – Broome Slipway. That is where we went, to find out what could be done about the mast?

GON-10-006

We came onto the yard's ground. We met the owners.

GON-10-007

They were two brothers, Martin and Garry Janema. The parents – Danes. Sergei Stanetsky and I explained the situation and asked whether we could count on any help? The lads said, well, we will help.

GON-10-008

Only it was already a bit late to start today, and tomorrow morning the yacht would have to be brought alongside the jetty on the flood and the mast taken off. The whole operation had to be planned precisely, or the ebb would start and then the job would get immeasurably harder.

GON-10-009

Martin (on the right) and Garry Janema. Both – tradesmen of the highest class. There was no technical problem they could not solve.

GON-10-010

We understood the job. Sergei said he wanted to go into town, get some air. Well, why not? Off he went. We agreed he would be aboard early in the morning – without fail. I stayed in the port, to look round.

GON-10-011

I liked the yard. They had everything needed for a proper mast repair. A full set of metal-cutting machines, welding gear, presses, mobile cranes, trucks – superbly equipped, basically. If Geraldton had had facilities like that – we would not have lost the spars a second time.

GON-10-012

I rang Perth – told our friends what had happened. They joined the rescue operation straight away. Gill Goodwin got in touch with the local branch of “Rotary International” and explained the situation to them. After a while I look – a motorboat is heading for us. It comes up, hails me. The owner of the boat, Kevin Gregg, turned out to be the president of the local branch of “Rotary International”. He had come to find out whether we needed anything, and he left us his boat so we could communicate with the shore independently. I was very grateful to him for that attention.

GON-10-013

Rosemary Blake's family did not stay indifferent to our odyssey either. A couple of days later I received a telegraphic transfer of 500 dollars from them. For those days that was a decent sum. Fortunately it was not needed, and I was able to return that money to the Blake family a few weeks later.

GON-10-014

The next day I started getting ready to take the mast off. I had everything ready, and no Sergei. I wait and wait, the tide is higher and higher, I am getting nervous. Miss the flood – everything is put off till tomorrow. At last Sergei arrived. We came alongside the jetty and prudently let go the anchor so we could haul off the piles. While we were carrying the first half of the mast onto the jetty – the flood ended and the ebb began. In a hurry we threw the second part of the mast onto the jetty and started hauling off the jetty on the anchor. And the stream is such – that we are barely managing. From one of the launches they noticed our efforts and rushed to help. They passed us a towline, we made it fast our end. We got ready, broke the anchor out – the launch goes to full ahead and drives off without us. They had not made the towline fast their end, it turns out.

GON-10-015

And the stream is carrying us along – something fierce. We let go the anchor at once, but now we are tumbling about among the jetty piles. And they are grown over with shells – sharp and prickly. You cannot hold her off by hand, we push with boat poles – and they slip. Anyway – shouting and racket! By the time the launch turned round, by the time she came up,

we did scrape the hull on the jetty. The second time the launch pulled us out successfully and took us over to our mooring. I told Sergei, of course, what I thought of his discipline. It was clear enough, after all we had agreed – the muster early in the morning, not at midday. Now, on top of the work on the mast, the yacht's hull had to be put right as well.

GON-10-016

All right, the next day we took the mast over to the yard. Sergei was getting ready to go into town again. I say to him that it is time he got down to some work. He answers that he will be back quickly and will join in the work. Off he went. I started preparing the mast for the repair. Two of us, of course, would have been handier, but I got it all ready single-handed as well. It just took more time.

GON-10-017

To join the mast we needed about a metre of aluminium tube, 150 mm in diameter. There was no such tube at the yard. It could be ordered in Perth – the capital of Western Australia. And that is almost 3,000 kilometres south. Again “Rotary International” came to our rescue. They got in touch with tube suppliers in Perth and paid all the bills connected with buying the tube and delivering it to Broome.

GON-10-018

While we waited for the tube – two free days came up. Sergei and I went into town to look at what was what and have a beer. The thing is happening in the tropics, hot and humid outside. We walked about, had a look, got some air. We met Robin, by the way. He pretended not to notice us.

GON-10-019

The next day we had to start work on the rigging.

GON-10-020

The cause of the turnbuckle failure was exactly the same as the first time – metal fatigue, the formation of microcracks at the root of the thread. But Sergei again found some reason or other and slipped off into town. Promising it would not be for long. Behaviour like that was no encouragement at all. So where is the helper when you need him? You cannot spend the whole time just enjoying yourself.

GON-10-021

Well all right, in the meantime I took off all the turnbuckles. The upper and lower parts of the turnbuckles had been turned from one piece, including the threaded part. I cut the threaded parts off, drilled holes in the forks and cut a thread with a tap. After that I ran a die over the threads on the cut-off shanks – turned them into threaded studs and screwed them into the forks that way. I locked the studs so they would not undo themselves. It came out really quite well. A design like that took away the stress raiser at the thread run-out.

GON-10-022

I was at it nearly all day. Good thing Garry and Martin let me work the lathe myself and, actually, use all their equipment. After all, they did not

know that I held a fifth-grade *razryad* as a toolroom turner (the Soviet trade-skill certificate). What if I hurt myself or something? Then they would have been in serious trouble. But very soon they understood – there was no need to worry on my account. In the evening I came back to the yacht. Sergei was already there, he had even made dinner for two. We ate, and I ask Sergei what sort of business this is – you are gone all day, I am grinding away on my own. You explain, I say, what is going on, so it is clear. Or else I come out like a single-handed yachtsman when there is work to be done. But when it comes to going out and enjoying ourselves, then we have – a crew. That is not clear to me, something has to be done. I added as well that I was not going to hold anyone by force, but I had no wish to carry ballast either. Sergei explained nothing specific, and in any case it was all clear enough to me. He had started shirking the work on the yacht back in Fremantle. Gradually he lost interest in the whole thing. In the morning Sergei packed his bag, hailed a boat going past and disappeared.

GON-10-023

Even though we had covered thousands of miles together, our attitude to this voyage was different, I think. If at the start of the voyage Sergei had enthusiasm and a wish to be an active member of the crew, then bit by bit that enthusiasm went out. Instead the principle "if the partying gets in the way of the work, then it is the work that has to go" – began to be practised more and more often. He is a sociable man, with the gift of the gab and a sense of humour. At any party – he always turns up at the centre of attention. It is well known that "better a drink and a song than work and sweat". So he looked for a party wherever he could find one. And looking after the yacht, sharing those cares with me – moved into second place. I could give a number of examples that bear out what I have said above, but I see no need for it.

GON-10-024

I am not preaching the life of a hermit. And a good time with friends is not foreign to me at all. But I always put the job above amusements. And I expected the same attitude to life from Sergei. The expectations did not come off. There was one more factor behind Sergei's leaving.

GON-10-025

In America a fiancée was waiting for him. The American visa we got in Perth was expiring. The voyage was dragging on, and he did not see the need to put the interests of the partnership above his own. Six months later I learned that Sergei had married that girl, got permanent residence in the USA and divorced her almost at once. Three years later, when I happened to meet him in America, he was about to marry again, another woman. But that is another story...

GON-10-026

Of course, to be left on my own, with a broken mast, with no crew and under an obligation to bring the boat back to Kiev at any cost – all of it added up to a sizeable job. I had to work out a new plan. Before long I settled on four points:

GON-10-027

1. First of all, repair the mast, and do it to the highest quality possible. I had those facilities in Broome. 2. Organise a crew from Kiev to Australia, two men at the minimum. I needed absolutely reliable people, not chance adventure-seekers. 3. Go back to Perth and extend my visa for the period of waiting for the crew to arrive.

GON-10-028

4. Find work, so as to have the means to pay the costs of moving the crew from Kiev and all the costs after that.

GON-10-029

Once the plan had taken shape in my head – all that was left was to carry it out. With the mast everything was more or less clear. Using the yard's equipment and the help of Martin and Garry, I managed to take out the bend, to join the two halves of the mast properly with a tight fit on an intermediate sleeve (this is very important), and to weld it all up professionally. Even to paint the mast, so that no trace of the repair could be seen. A week later the mast was stepped on the yacht. I was slightly out when I butted the two halves together, and the mast's luff groove for the mainsail luff came out with a step in it at the joint, but it was not very noticeable. It did not affect the sail's shape significantly.

GON-10-030

When the yacht was completely ready for the voyage and I had become confident that no further breakage could happen, I rang Kiev, to Valera Obukhov. This time I informed him fully about the state of things, about the loss of the mast in the ocean, about the fact that a crew was needed, etc. To finish, I said that the most suitable candidates, from my point of view, were Nikolai Mitin (Kolyunya) and Yura Kropivko. Valera was of the same opinion. But to start the visa paperwork for Australia, we needed invitations from Australian citizens. To arrange the invitations and extend my own visa, I had to go back to Perth. I went to the harbourmaster with the question of which mooring I could leave the yacht on in the port? All the anchor berths in the roads – are private. It is one thing to lie to someone else's mooring for a day or two and quite another – for several weeks. The harbourmaster assured me that the mooring I was lying to – was un-owned, and that he saw no problem if I used it. Excellent. Then I went and bought a ticket to Perth. I rang Rosemary, said I was coming back to Perth. She said she would gladly take me into her house. She had a large block with a detached annexe. So she offered it to me to live in.

GON-10-031

In principle, all the business in Broome was finished for the moment. I put on a small party for Garry and Martin (I had a couple of bottles of Russian vodka left, and I put one of them on the table). There were about two days left before I went, and I made several trial sails on *Gonta* with the lads who had helped me. They were interested in going out on a yacht, and I needed to check the rigging and the spars in action. Everything worked perfectly.

GON-10-032

Right at the end of July I left Broome and went to Perth by bus. Before we parted I asked Garry and Martin to keep an eye on the yacht where they could. Though I had nothing much to worry about. I was sure that in two weeks, at the most – in three, I would be back in Broome.

GON-10-033



Checking the mast and rigging after the repair. Walter is plainly enjoying the sail!

GON-10-034





Events in Perth

The journey to Perth took me nearly two full days. The trip was tiring, but interesting. All the way to Dampier the landscape to right and left was absolutely flat steppe. Looking out of the window I sometimes thought – that is the place to build airfields. Practically no earthworks needed.

GON-11-001

After Dampier the landscape outside the window became more hilly, and beyond Geraldton tall scrub was already starting to appear. And actually – nature is untouched by man. And no wonder – in the territory of Western Australia (almost three Europes) one and a half million people lived at that time. And now – two and a half. In Perth, at the bus terminal, Rosemary Blake was waiting for me. The meeting was a warm one, she put me in her car and we drove to her house.

GON-11-002

By the time I arrived she had organised everything in the annexe, so the little room was very cosy and comfortable. The grounds of the house looked more like a park. Tall trees, grass, flowers, cats running about.

GON-11-003



Alan and Rosemary Blake's house.

GON-11-004

The annexe I lived in for long months.

GON-11-005

Rosemary had five cats. One of them – big and fluffy. It was funny to watch her combing him out. She combs him out, turns the cat into a fluffy beauty, and he climbs straight into a heap of leaves and comes out of it a proper thistle!

GON-11-006



Rosemary getting one of her cats into "human" shape!

GON-11-007

As soon as I was sorted out for somewhere to live – I went straight to the Department of Immigration, to settle the question of extending my visa. I met a woman from the department, explained the situation, said that there was no question of any permanent residence. It was simply that a chain of events had brought me to where I had to stay on in Australia. For how long? That depends to a considerable degree on how quickly the crew can come. If they arrived in two days, I would not need to extend the visa at all. The one I had would have been enough. On top of everything else I explained that I needed to get permission to work temporarily in Australia. I set out the reasons for the request.

GON-11-008

The conversation turned out quite fruitful. Astrid Norgard – an officer of the department, seemed to understand the situation I was in and was ready to meet me halfway. I filled in the forms that were needed, paid the required fee – 50 dollars. Now all that was left was to wait for the authorities' final decision. On 14 August 1991 I received a letter from the Department of Immigration, signed by Astrid Norgard. In it she said,

GON-11-009

A meeting with friends in Fremantle. Rick Reid (second to my left) invited us all to his house for lunch. First from the left – Anya Reid, Rick's wife. Second from the left – Sue Weier. On my left – Bill Weier. First from the right – Gill Goodwin.

GON-11-010

that the department was considering my request for an extension of the visa.

GON-11-011

And while the matter is under consideration – I am permitted to work in Australia. Not knowing where to apply, finding work was difficult. On top of that I had no car. Sometimes Fr Anatoly gave me a lift, sometimes Rosemary. Sometimes Rosemary let me have her car for trips.

GON-11-012

Of course, I could have gone off to Broome. Garry and Martin said exactly that to me – get your visa – come back to us. There will always be a job for you. But with the visa there was a delay – until they decide, until they issue it... And the money is running out. So I had to look for work in Perth, until things with the papers settled down. Bill Weier helped me find work. His brother, Ken Weier, was one of the managers of the engineering company “Cockburn Engineering WA”. True, first we went to the company next door – “Sabre Catamarans Pty. Ltd”. Bill spoke to the owner of the company, but without success. The times, from the point of view of the economy, were not the best. After that we went to Bill's brother.

GON-11-013

Ken Weier found a way to take me on, in my trade as a turner and fitter. They happened to have a contract for the repair of an Australian Navy hy-

drographic vessel, so a place was found. And they set the wage at 13 dollars an hour.

GON-11-014

Anyway – everything was going to plan. Now all that was left was to wait patiently and work.

GON-11-015

At first I had no car. Bill promised to help with a car very soon. So until then I had to get up at 5.30 in the morning to catch the very first bus going into the centre of the city. There I changed to another bus and rode out to the factory. Then another kilometre and a half on foot – and I am there. Work started at 7.30 in the morning and if I missed the very first bus – I would be late for work.

GON-11-016

Fortunately, that regime lasted only a week, or a little more. One of Bill's workmates turned out to have an old car in running order that he was not using and was going to sell. Bill asked him to hold off the sale and let me have the car, for temporary use. For that I paid the owner of the car 50 dollars a week. For me that was a very good arrangement.

GON-11-017



The works where Ken Weier helped me get taken on. In the foreground you can see the car (the yellow one) I used to get to work and home.

GON-11-018

Rosemary I also paid 50 a week. She refused to take the money, but I insisted. There is no telling how long I would have to live in the house. The first week – still a guest, but after that – a lodger. Anyway, everything settled down. I rang Broome regularly, asked how *Gonta* was?

GON-11-019

Garry and Martin said that so far – everything was fine. The boat was in plain view from the yard's ground.

GON-11-020

Of course, a long delay in Perth was not part of my plans, but there was nothing I could do about it. For myself I decided that on getting the visa – I would go to Broome and wait there for Yura and Kolya.

GON-11-021

Alongside settling in, I was working on the paperwork for the invitations for Yura and Kolya. I met Gill Goodwin. I told him about my plans. Without any extra hesitation he filled in the forms of a guest invitation for Yura Kropivko. I do not remember why, but you could only invite one person per family. Then I went to Fr Anatoly. He always gave me hospitality and support. We sat, had lunch. We finished with him signing the invitation for Kolya Mitin.

GON-11-022

When those documents were ready, I rushed to send them by fax to Kiev, to Valera Obukhov. I tried and tried to send them – they will not go through. I see – I am only wasting my time. I sealed it all in an envelope and sent it by post. The letter took more than 30 days and reached Valera only right at the end of September.

GON-11-023



Rosemary sometimes organised picnics out in the country for me. A basket of food would be packed and we would drive out to one of the many parks. Those were good days...

GON-11-024

From the Department of Immigration, for several weeks now since the last letter, there was neither sight nor sound. But I did not hurry things along, reasoning that "...they do not notice us – that is a minus, but they are not

throwing us out either – that is a plus". Every extra week in Perth – is another couple of hundred dollars into the savings, and there will not be money to spare – that was clear to me. When suddenly a phone call – I am summoned to the department. Bill's wife, Sue, drove me there and came into the office with me. A nice-looking girl comes out and asks Sue to wait in the waiting room. She explains that she wants to ask me a couple of questions that concern only me. All right, Sue goes out, and the girl introduces herself – an officer of the Australian intelligence service. I was surprised, but I listen carefully.

GON-11-025

From the very first questions it was clear to me that she knew everything about me and more. She was simply checking her information (wherever did she get it?) against my answers. Towards the end of the conversation she asked me why I had asked such deeply professional questions when I was on the tour of the Navy base at Exmouth? At that I laughed and said: "My dear girl, the only "deeply professional" question I could have asked was about the huge number of empty fuel drums on the base, laid out in regular lines. At that time two reasons did not allow me to "twitter" on "secret" subjects – my relatively limited English and complete ignorance of radio communication equipment. The last – because I am a mechanical engineer, as you know." Then we talked a bit more about something inconsequential, she thanked me, I answered that it had been a pleasure to meet her, and on that we parted.

GON-11-026

Sue was waiting for me in the waiting room. When I came out she rushed at me impatiently – "Well, did you get the visa?" No, I say laughing, it did not get as far as the visa, the subject of the conversation was "...Igor Olegovich, are you a spy?" She – ah, oh, and for a long time she could not believe that

GON-11-027

such a thing is possible in a "free and democratic" country!

GON-11-028

October 1991 arrived. I already knew that the invitations for Yura and Kolya had arrived safely and that Valera Obukhov was working on the foreign-travel passports. It was clear that getting the visas to Australia was hardly going to take less than four months.

GON-11-029

On top of that, in August 1991 the well-known events took place in Moscow, which led to the break-up of the USSR, in the end. All that had to be taken into account.

GON-11-030

On 2 October I received a letter from the Department of Immigration. I open it and read. At first I did not understand, or rather – did not believe what I had read. The letter was – a real bombshell. It stated that there were no grounds at all for extending my visa. Purely bureaucratic explanations

were given on that account. Besides that, since my visa had ended on 9 August, I was required to stop work immediately and leave the country within 28 days, otherwise I would be regarded as having entered the country illegally and would be liable to immediate deportation. The decision taken is final and not subject to appeal. In addition I was advised to ring customs and agree my plans with them regarding *Gonta*. The letter was signed by Astrid Norgard. She apologised in the letter as best she could for such a decision (you could feel it in the style and in certain turns of phrase), but that did not make it any easier for me.

GON-11-031

To "reinforce the impression", a day or two later I received a letter from the customs office of the port of Broome. In it I was informed that if I did not take the yacht outside the country within 30 days, starting from 13 October of that year, then the yacht would be regarded as imported into the country and might pass into the property of the Crown. The letter was signed by Chris Custer, Collector of Customs for the Northern Territory.

GON-11-032

I rang Valera Obukhov, without any hope. I asked – could sending Kolyunya and Yura be speeded up? He says, "...What, do you not watch the news on television? We have such an uproar going on here that you just hold on tight. It will be good if we get it all done in about five months." I did watch the news, and I was not really counting on a different answer.

GON-11-033

All my friends found out about this decision of the authorities. They were convinced that it was simply a bureaucratic misunderstanding. So they decided to ask for an audience with the director of the Department of Immigration for Western Australia, Mr Peter Judd. Since I was still working, Rosemary took all the administrative work on herself. She rang the director's office and arranged a time for the meeting. Gill Goodwin was also present at the meeting, to help explain the situation if I suddenly stumbled, and simply for moral support. I was grateful to him for that.

GON-11-034

The meeting was set for 16 October. The conversation began with the usual "what" and "why". I answered, Gill added where necessary. Sometimes Gill answered instead of me. He knew all my problems well.

GON-11-035

For some time Peter could not understand why the yacht could not be sold? He said exactly that to me – "...Sell the yacht, you will have money and you will be able to get a tourist visa. And your financial problems will be solved for a while, so you will not have to look for work." Probably he thought that my aim was – to knock about Australia with nothing to do. Understandably, all the talks up to then I had held with his subordinates and he was not entirely up to speed. At that I gathered all my English into a fist and say: "In Australia right now the times are not the best from the

point of view of spare money about. So why not sell the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge into the bargain, to put things right?" Of course, maybe I did not sound so smooth at the time, but Peter understood the sense of what was said. "What are you saying, what are you saying, he answers, – it is a national treasure, how can you suggest such a thing?" "And the yacht *Gonta*, – I say to him, is also a national treasure of Ukraine, and so is not for sale."

GON-11-036

Evidently my answer made an impression on him. It is interesting that after that conversation the Australian immigration authorities never again suggested that I sell the yacht. And I had to meet them more than once again. Peter buried himself in the folder with my documents. He studied it for about half an hour, probably. Then he says: "Although all the department's decisions are justified from the point of view of the law, it is perfectly clear that my case – is exceptional. If I had been in the picture from the very start, then the decision would have been different too. But as of today – the decision has been taken and there is no way at all to change it. I am very sorry indeed, but that is how it is. In order to have the visa reissued you have to leave the country and get a new visa at any Australian consulate abroad." He promised that he would personally keep an eye on the situation and give me every kind of support. I asked what would happen if I refused to leave the country? He said that then I would lose my legal status in Australia, and in Moscow major obstacles would arise to issuing visas to Yura and Kolya. But if I gave the authorities my full cooperation, he too would make efforts on his side to speed up the issue of the visas in Moscow.

GON-11-037

I asked whether I had to go back to Kiev to have the visa reissued? No, Peter answered, that is not obligatory. What matters is that the visa application is lodged from abroad.

GON-11-038

Such, apparently, is the law. And it is too late to get round it. I said that I had little time left to get a visa for another country. Peter promised that he would send me a letter allowing me to stay in Australia a week longer than the final deadline. That, apparently, is within his jurisdiction, so to speak. But for any longer – no way at all.

GON-11-039

My last question was – what to do about customs? I showed him the letter. Peter said that he would sort that question out, so I need not worry.

GON-11-040

When all the pressing questions had been discussed, the atmosphere eased somewhat. Peter asked me about some details of our voyage – he had become curious, what sort of case was this? At the end he says: "Many of your problems – are because of a shortage of time. You need to get a per-

manent visa and then you will not have to think about any deadlines." I say, "That is a fine thing, here a temporary visa cannot be won and you are telling me about a permanent one. Give me a visa for six months and I swear you will never see me in Australia again." "No, Peter laughs, I cannot give you a visa, but while you are outside Australia – you can apply for any visa, including permanent residence."

GON-11-041

After that we exchanged the usual good wishes with each other, Peter asked me to keep him informed of events, and gave me his direct telephone number. And on that we took our leave.

GON-11-042

Outside, Gill said to me that although we had not got the decision changed, we had gained a strong ally in the person of the director of the department. That was his impression, at least. It seemed to me too that the meeting had not been entirely fruitless. In any case, there was now information to think about. A day later I received a letter from the Department of Immigration, saying that the term of my stay in Australia had been extended by one week. I rang Broome as well, the customs office, and spoke to Chris Custer. He said that everything would be all right and I need not worry about the boat. The yacht stays in my name. Now I had to work through the options, which country to go to and have the visa reissued. To go back to Kiev – that would mean certainly never getting into Australia again and losing the yacht. In those days the chances of earning the fare to Australia from Kiev were simply negative. So that option fell away at once.

GON-11-043

A good option – to go over to some nearby country. That would be cheaper and quicker. The choice was – Malaysia (to Singapore), Indonesia, New Zealand. New Zealand was the ideal candidate. I had been in the country before, during the round-the-world race, and I had people I knew there. On top of that the country is English-speaking – there will be no problems with the language, as in Indonesia, for example.

GON-11-044

I rang Dale Tremain, in Auckland. Dale did three legs on *Fazisi* with us. A remarkable helmsman he was. I told him about my affairs. He says – come over, no worries!

GON-11-045

I started looking for the New Zealand consulate in Perth. I soon found out that there is a consulate in Sydney, and in Perth – none. I rang Sydney and asked about getting a visa. They ask me what passport I have? A citizen of the Soviet Union, I say. "Well, – they answer, processing a visa for you will take not less than a month and it is not known whether we will issue it to you at all."

GON-11-046

And I had time – three weeks for everything. The Soviet passport – "sickled, hammered", delighted only Vladimir Mayakovsky. And in all the

other countries, even if you were a saint, they looked at you sideways.

GON-11-047

I rang Dale, told him the results of the talks, thanked him for wanting to help. He swore at the consulate staff in plain English. We laughed, said goodbye...

GON-11-048

The next attempt – Indonesia. That country's consulate in Perth did exist. I went in to see the consul. The conversation with him has not stayed in my memory. But the final result was exactly the same as with New Zealand.

GON-11-049

I do not remember whether I went to the Malaysian consulate. If I did go, then to no result, naturally.

GON-11-050

I decided that I had to be ready for any surprises.

GON-11-051

I wrote a notice saying that I was looking for a crew for a passage to Guam.

GON-11-052

I put the notice up on the noticeboard at the Fremantle Sailing Club. Several people rang, but mostly out of idle curiosity. Nobody expressed serious intentions. I met Sasha Fakira. I had known him since the Whitbread, and we often met at Fr Anatoly's. Sasha had problems getting a visa too, the Australians were endlessly trying to push him out of the country. I say to him, "Come on, let us get on the boat and go a long way from here. Food – heaps of it, we will hold out. Otherwise it is nothing but trouble here with these Australians." He answers that the idea is a good one, but he has lodged an application with the committee that reviews Department of Immigration decisions and will wait for that committee's decision. And when that will happen – nobody knows.

GON-11-053

Running ahead I will say that three years later Sasha did get a permanent visa. After that he worked for many years at one of the local institutes as a lecturer in electrical engineering. Besides that he took part more than once in humanitarian missions under the UNESCO flag. He worked in East Timor, Iraq, Afghanistan. For his work in East Timor he was given government awards. You have to ask, what the hell did the bureaucrats give him so much grief over the visa for? I had only the far frontiers left in reserve, so to speak. That is England and America. I decided to start with America. I rang

GON-11-054

Fort Lauderdale, Bob Rettinger. I got to know Bob during *Fazisi's* stop in Florida, after the fifth leg. He worked as a reporter on one of the local papers. Bob invited me to come and stay with him straight away. The next day I went to the American consulate, where I had already got a visa once. Only the visa ran out before I could get to American territory. I hand my documents to the consul, I say, "You have already given me a visa once, but

I did not manage to use it. So do me the kindness of issuing one again." He turned the documents this way and that, asks, and have I got money for the trip? "I have, I say, I have been working two and a half months already, I do not allow myself anything extra. I have put together a couple of thousand." All right, he says, leave the passport, I will think about it.

GON-11-055

I drove home, to Rosemary's. From there I rang Peter Judd and informed him of my actions. I told him that I had handed the passport in to the American consulate and tomorrow I would know whether they had given me a visa to America or not.

GON-11-056

The next day I come to the consulate – the passport with a six-month visa is ready!

GON-11-057

I thanked the consul, and he wished me a good trip.

GON-11-058

I raced home with the joyful news. At last at least some certainty! I rang Peter and told him about the success with the Americans. He congratulated me on the success, reminding me at the same time that the time to leave was almost here. He also said that he was sure there would be no delay in America in getting the visa to Australia.

GON-11-059

He asked – where in America was I heading? I say – to Florida. He wished me a good journey.

GON-11-060

Somewhat later, and then – on unverified information, I learned that Peter had rung his American colleague and asked him to help me with the visa. I do not know whether that is true or not, but I would like to believe it is. I rang Kiev, Valera and Ira – my wife. I said that in a week I was flying to America – the visa had to be reissued. I kept them up to date, I wrote letters, but by telephone current events go across faster. So I did ring them often. Valera said that the question of visas for Yura and Kolya was at the stage of being settled. All the papers were ready and were about to be sent off to Moscow. Well and good, I thought, while they are settling the question with Moscow – I will sort out my business in America and quickly back, to Australia.

GON-11-061

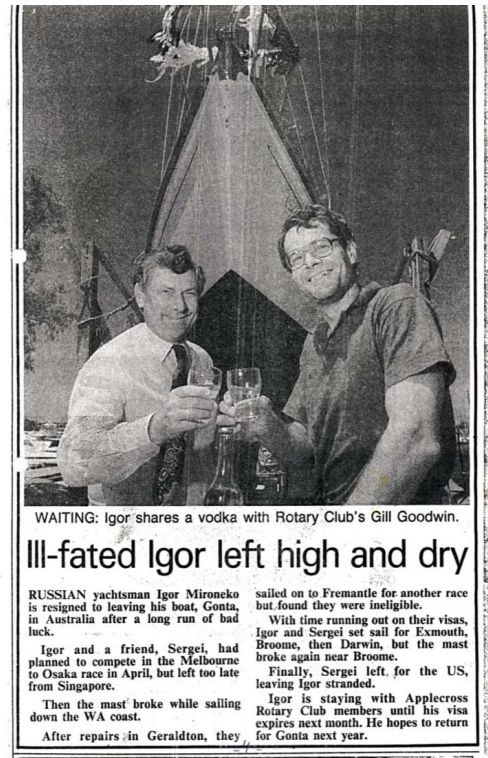
Now all that was left was to buy a ticket and settle up with work – I was still going on working at the same company, in spite of the bans, so to speak. Gill Goodwin arranged an interview for me with the state's main newspaper – *The West Australian*. On 30 October 1991 that interview was published in the paper, together with a photograph where Gill and I are standing side by side, against the background of some yacht or other. The next day, a Thursday, people at work started asking me what was what? I had suddenly become a celebrity! The day before I left for the States, Rosemary organised a farewell party at her house. All our old friends and

many new ones came to wish me a good journey and every kind of luck. The evening went very well.

GON-11-062

The next day – on the evening of 4 November, Rosemary drove me to the airport. By the departure gate we embraced, said goodbye, and I went to board the plane. With the firm conviction that in two weeks, three at the most, I would be back in Perth.

GON-11-063



The newspaper article, briefly describing my adventures.

GON-11-064

In the glasses, by the way, ordinary water. I no longer remember whose idea for the photograph that was. That it was not mine – that is certain!

GON-11-065

America, America...

If you look at a map, it is plainly clear that to get to Miami from Perth – you have to fly halfway round the world. And it makes no difference which way you fly – west or east. From Perth I flew out to Sydney. From Sydney – to Osaka. So I have been to Osaka. True, I did not get further than the airport – I was flying in transit, after all, but still. From Osaka the route was to Los Angeles and only after that – Miami. During the flight I had to cross the equator. All up, by that point I had crossed the equator four times. Three times – on a yacht, and once – in an aeroplane. On 5 November 1991 I landed at Miami airport.

GON-12-001

I should say that a stupid mishap happened to me here. The ticket showed the arrival time in Miami. But I, being an "experienced" traveller, decided that the time had to be recalculated to allow for moving from west to east. I recalculated it and gave Bob Rettinger the "new, corrected" arrival time. Naturally, he was waiting for me at the airport on 4 November. I arrived on the fifth, in accordance with the date and time shown on the ticket. Bob could not know about my "deductions", so on 5 November he was waiting for a call from me at his home in Fort Lauderdale. That is about 40 kilometres north of Miami. I had to ring and apologise for the inconvenience caused. He laughed, said he was on his way. Forty minutes or so later he picked me up from the airport. Bob had married not long before and was living in a small house, just the two of them, with his wife Helen. For my arrival he had got a little room ready for me, so I would have somewhere to drop my "bones". Since it was already late – we decided to put the talking off until the next morning.

GON-12-002

In the morning I told Bob about the reason for my coming in more detail – after all, you cannot explain everything on the telephone. "Well then," says Bob, "we will look for the nearest Australian consulate." We started looking through the telephone directory – there is nothing in Miami, and nothing in Florida at all. After a deeper search it turned out that the near-

est Australian consulate is in New York. My "friends" at the Department of Immigration in Perth had "forgotten" to mention a detail like that. Although they knew exactly where I was flying. And they certainly knew that there is no consulate in Florida.

GON-12-003

There was neither the time nor the wish to swear about it for long. I had to go to New York. Fortunately, Bob's mother lived on Long Island, somewhere a little over an hour's travel from New York. Bob

GON-12-004



Robert Rettinger (Bob) and his wife, Helen.

GON-12-005

rang her, told her my story and asked her to give me her hospitality for a couple of weeks or however long it took. Naturally, I was sure that I would not need more than two weeks to get the visa. His mother said: "Well then, let him come, since that is how things are. We will sort out what is what once he is here." I bought myself a bus ticket. There were a couple of days left before leaving for New York and, so as not to hang about with nothing to do, I repaired Bob's canoe for him. He had been travelling down some river or other in the canoe and had stowed in the side.

GON-12-006

Before I left for New York Bob briefed me in detail on what to do and how, which train to get on, which station to travel to. He warned me, of course, to keep my wits about me – New York, he said, is not New Vasyuki (Ilf and Petrov's byword in *The Twelve Chairs* for a backwater with world ambitions). I listened carefully to it all and memorised it. As we parted he handed me a couple of sandwiches – "They will come in handy on the

road," he said. We said a warm goodbye and I set off north. The trip took more than twenty-four hours. The sandwiches came in handy – they were tasty. In New York I did everything – the way Bob had advised. From the bus station I crossed to the railway station, found the train going to Long Island and rode out to the house where his mother, Dorli Rettinger, lived.

GON-12-007

Dorli met me very warmly. For my part, I gave her a couple of Australian souvenirs I had brought from Perth. The questions and the answers started... Before long Dorli knew my story in general outline. About herself she said that she had flown as a stewardess with the airline Pan Am. About five years ago she retired and now works in one of the offices in New York. Her husband – a former fighter pilot, who fought in the English Air Force during the war – died some three years ago. She lived in the house with her younger son. Dorli reminded me somehow of Rosemary Blake. The same responsive sort, ready to help a stranger at the first call. The next day, in the morning, I laid a course for the Australian consulate in New York. The consulate was on Fifth Avenue, thirty minutes' walk from New York's central railway station. The whole trip from door to door took me a little under two hours.

GON-12-008

I got to the consulate. Remembering the conversation with Peter Judd, where he said that outside Australia you can apply for any visa, including permanent residence, I straight away

GON-12-009



Dorli Rettinger's house on Long Island.

GON-12-010

decided to take the bull by the horns. I waited my turn, I go up to the window and ask what has to be done to get a permanent visa for Australia? The clerk says: "No problem, you need to buy a set of immigration documents, read through them carefully, fill in all the forms, collect all the supporting documents, pay the fee for the consideration of your application." "Excellent," I say, "give me the collection of documents, I will have a look at what is required of me." I bought this set from them – it cost four dollars – and started studying it right there in the waiting room. By that time I had got fairly good at these papers – I could fill in any form from memory. I read and I see – it is not a simple business. By the look of it, it is not to be settled in two weeks. "All right," I think, "let this packet sit with me for now – we will sort it out later, and for now I have to get at least a tourist visa. And after that we will see what to do about the permanent visa." I go up to the clerk and ask, just in case, how long the processing of a permanent visa takes? "Six months minimum," he answers. No, that will not do, I say to myself, and I ask him to give me a tourist visa form. I got the form, filled it in quickly, paid the fee (as usual), handed it all in together with my passport. I ask when to come for the answer? "You can come tomorrow," they say, "the decision will be ready then." We said goodbye.

GON-12-011

I came out of the building and decided to walk about the city a bit, get some air. It was a good day, sunny. All around – nothing but landmarks. Here is Rockefeller Plaza, here are the skyscrapers Mayakovsky was already writing about – "...take a most enormous house in New York...", and here is Brighton Beach and the Brooklyn Bridge, the Manhattan Bridge and a lot else besides. The city is, of course, astonishing! And it can call up only two feelings – you can either love it (the city) or hate it. To stay indifferent – is not possible. That is my opinion, at least. I liked the city.

GON-12-012

I set off back, to Long Island. By the time I got there – evening had come. Dorli was already home, she had made dinner. I told her about my wanderings. She told me – about how her day had gone. Anyway, it was a quiet, good evening. The next day, 13 November, I was at the consulate again.

GON-12-013

I waited my turn and went up to the window. And they hand me an answer in written form, stating (in the third person, by the way) that in the event it is presumed that the purpose of the visit – is not to look at Australian sights but to study, to work or to obtain permanent residence, then the visa is refused. And in addition they state (in the first person this time) that since I did not leave the country within 28 days, as directed by the Department of Immigration of Western Australia, then under clause 36

of the Immigration Rules I cannot apply for a tourist visa earlier than 12 months from now.

GON-12-014

I nearly fell over when I read this paper. A fine thing – is this what "no delays with the visa back to Australia" means? I will not say that at that moment I was cool as ice. I was terribly upset.

GON-12-015

I went up to the window where they had given me this "explanation". I must have had such an expression on my face that the officer did not insist that I take a ticket and wait my turn. I started explaining to him that the reference to my late departure from Australia – is wrong. I showed him the letter signed by Astrid Norgard on behalf of the Director of the Department. The officer turned the letter over in his hands and went off somewhere inside, to confer. He comes back, says: "Yes, we were hasty with that remark, but all the same we consider that you intend to go to Australia as a tourist and stay there for good." I understood that he meant my interest yesterday in getting a permanent visa. I answer him that my interest in permanent residence – is a secondary thing and actually – not essential at all. And in the first place – to take the yacht out of the country and deliver her back to Kiev. In support of my words I showed him the pile of documents that had accumulated with me by that time. It was all filed neatly.

GON-12-016

The officer leafed through this "collection" of papers, looked at me and says: "Let me make copies of these documents, and you come tomorrow – by then we will have a fuller picture of the situation."

GON-12-017

I went off home. At home I told Dorli the results. She sympathised, said that the morning is wiser than the evening. I went to bed, but there was no peace.

GON-12-018

The next day I am at the consulate again. This time I did not have to wait in the queue. When my acquaintance from the day before saw me – he let someone know and I was taken straight through to the interview room.

GON-12-019

A couple of minutes later an officer of the department comes out. He introduced himself – Hamish Lindsay. "Yesterday," he says, "I had a talk with Perth. The situation has become somewhat clearer to me. But understand my position too.

GON-12-020

I am a public servant, after all, and I have to act in accordance with the existing rules. In order to issue you a tourist visa – you have to have the means to live on in Australia. And as far as I understand – you are short of means." I say that yes, to a degree that is so, but on a yacht – the costs are less than, for example, living in the Sheraton hotel. I told Hamish that as of today I have about one and a half thousand dollars. "For me to be able to

issue you a tourist visa for about four months," Hamish answers, "you have to demonstrate to me that you have at least five thousand dollars.

GON-12-021

But I will agree to four in your case. Where you get the money – does not interest me. The main thing is that you have it." He knew perfectly well that my American visa – was a tourist one. With no right to work. But at least – earning the money – that was now up to me. I said that I would make every effort to satisfy that condition. Hamish assured me that he for his part would not let me down over the visa.

GON-12-022

After that the conversation turned to more general things.

GON-12-023

He asked me where I had worked in Australia? I answered, and showed him the references that the manager of "Cockburn Engineering" had written for me on his own initiative. I also had a reference from "Broome Slipway". Garry had sent it to me right before I left for the States.

GON-12-024

Then, of course, there were questions about the yacht, about the voyage, about the accident.

GON-12-025

Hamish too became interested in the story. At the end he says: "Listen, I know that you bought the set of immigration documents for a permanent visa." "Yes," I say, "but at the moment I do not see a way to take on this visa as well. I need to get back to Australia, and as fast as possible, and to wait six months for the permanent visa to come through – no, that will not do." "Now do not rush to conclusions," says Hamish. "There are three stages in getting a permanent visa – qualifications, character and medical. Qualifications – that is the base of the pyramid.

GON-12-026

If your qualification as a mechanical engineer is confirmed by the Institution of Engineers, Australia – then everything else will happen almost by itself. All you have to do to start with – is fill in the appropriate forms and pay the fee for the consideration of the application – 270 dollars. And while you are fighting for the tourist visa – the papers for permanent residence will be in circulation too. The one does not get in the way of the other, after all. We will keep you fully informed about which documents are needed, where to send them, etc. And it is not yet known which will happen first. So think about it, but do not drag the decision out too long."

GON-12-027

On that parting word we said goodbye. I went back to Long Island, to think about what had happened. I discussed the conversation with Dorli. She says: "All right, we will try to find something in the way of work." She rang her relatives and friends – one of them turned out to need a helper – to put in a suspended ceiling in an office in New York. True, the work – was only for one day. And that was all for now. The work situation in the States at that time was very uncertain indeed. The presidential election had

just been held – Bill Clinton had become president of the country. And when a new president is elected – there is often a downturn in the economy. On top of that the airline Pan Am announced its bankruptcy. In New York that led to the number of unemployed going up by ten thousand in one day! I do not know by how much across the whole country.

GON-12-028

While I was looking for work – I went to the consulate once more, handed in my application for the permanent visa, paid the fee. Hamish says: "Excellent, while you are sorting out the financial questions, we will start the process on the permanent visa. And then we will see how things turn out." I asked him to send all correspondence to Dorli Rettinger's address. We said goodbye, he wished me all the best and I left.

GON-12-029

Almost four weeks had gone by since I arrived on Long Island. I feel awkward – I had dropped on them like snow out of a clear sky, and I cannot clear off anywhere either. That is the situation. I rang an acquaintance – Maureen, we met in Florida when we were there on *Fazisi*. "Hello – hello, good to hear you, how are things?" One word led to another and I said that I was looking for work, any work at all. "In New York it looks like nothing is going to "come up" for me – I do not know what to do, honestly." Maureen says: "I have good friends in Massachusetts, in Marblehead, I will ring and ask – maybe they need a helper." Well, thanks for that at least.

GON-12-030

28 November 1991. All Americans celebrate Thanksgiving. They get together with families, with friends. Anyway – a nationwide holiday of "Eat Well and Have a Chat". The Rettinger family were getting ready to drive to Pennsylvania, to good friends of theirs. And I was invited.

GON-12-031

It is a beautiful place. Mountains, forest, a river flowing. It was the last days of autumn, but the yellow leaves were still holding on the trees. Looking at the country round about, you could not help thinking of the heroes of Mayne Reid and Fenimore Cooper. The man of the house was keen on sport shooting and karate. In the house there was a whole exhibition of prizes won for taking part in both sports. I asked him a bit about the competitions, and he showed me his collection of small arms. A good holiday – Thanksgiving, and the day itself was a wonderful one.

GON-12-032

We came back to Long Island. The holiday was over, but the worries – were not. I tried to find something through the newspaper advertisements, but it was no use. Then, a day later – a telephone call. I am asked to come to the phone. The voice on the phone says: "My name is Mark Lane, I am calling from Marblehead. Maureen told me you are looking for work.

GON-12-033

I need an assistant – to make furniture. But I can pay 150 dollars a week. If that suits you, then my address is..." Mark dictated the address to

me and explained how to get to him.

GON-12-034

I did not hesitate long. I needed to "get a foothold" somewhere at least, and after that we would see. A hundred and fifty a week – so how many weeks would it take to put together the sum I needed? True, that was money with board and lodging provided. But even so – the arithmetic was not in my favour.

GON-12-035

I thought about all this while I was travelling to Marblehead. I thought as well that all along my way I had kept meeting people who were ready to take part in my odyssey completely selflessly. And not just in passing, for a minute or two, but to share all these twists and turns with me over many weeks and months. Rosemary Blake and Gill Goodwin wrote to me on Long Island regularly. Dorli Rettinger gave me every kind of help and, after I left, promised to forward all the correspondence addressed to me to my new address. And now here I was, going to complete strangers who had agreed to take me into their home, knowing absolutely nothing about me! My friends in Kiev did not forget me either. I got letters from Valera Obukhov and Valera Deimontovich. Valera Obukhov took the most direct part in organising everything connected with Kolya Mitin and Yura Kropivko coming to Australia. All of it took no small effort on his part, and I am immeasurably grateful to him for it.

GON-12-036

I wrote home regularly – to Ira, to her parents and mine. They were all worried about me. I did try not to paint things too black in my letters, but however much you dress reality up – sooner or later it becomes clear to everyone – that not everything is as easy and as pretty as it is set out in a letter. The support of my family was priceless to me.

GON-12-037



Valery Bronislavovich Deimontovich. Our modest knight of sailing. His letters were a wonderful support to me. (Kiev, 2008)

GON-12-038

And here is Marblehead. It was evening already when I got to Mark Lane's house. I knocked – Shelley opened the door – Mark's wife.

GON-12-039

Mark was not at home – he had been waiting for me at his work, it turns out, in Lynn – a small town twenty minutes' drive from Marblehead. I simply had not understood on the telephone that he would be waiting for me there, and I got there on my own. Shelley rang Mark and "relieved" him at his post. Before long he drove up too.

GON-12-040

There were three of them living there, with their daughter Victoria, who had turned two and a half. A pretty little girl, already running about the rooms on her own and starting to talk. She comes up and tells you something important to her. Everyone listens. During the day she was put in day care, where she enjoyed herself. An ordinary American working family.

GON-12-041



Victoria Lane. Mark and I made this boat-swing for Victoria for the New Year. Vicky was delighted!

GON-12-042

Mark's trade – cabinetmaker. A tradesman he was – of the highest class. In Lynn he had his own workshop, and that is where we went the next morning. Literally within a couple of days I was up to speed on what to do and how. At first I made the simpler things, but soon – the harder ones, and the ones that mattered more. The work, on the whole, was nothing new to me. After all, I had behind me a part in building three wooden yachts at the Kiev Cruising Yacht Club. And that – is not to be sneezed at.

GON-12-043

Mark's main order at that time was – making the furniture for one grand house in Rockport. Rockport – is not a town for poor people, frankly speaking. The cheapest house was of the order of three or four million. I mention it because the demands on the quality of the furniture being made were higher than high. And Mark made furniture at exactly that level.

GON-12-044

A week went by. The working week was not 38 hours at all (the standard working week in the States), but a good 70-odd hours. At the end of the week Mark says: "You – are a super worker, I am very pleased, here is your money – 150 dollars, as we agreed." I thought a bit and I say, how did you work that out so neatly? So what does that come to – next week we will clock up 160 hours, and you will still pay me 150 dollars? He answers, yes, after all we agreed on that sum. But I can see that he understands perfectly well what I am getting at.

GON-12-045



Mark admiring his work. This wall and staircase joinery took us three months. Only the balustrade joints left to lacquer and the job is finished.

GON-12-046

"No, I say, this will not do. We will work on an hourly rate. We divide 150 by 40 – and that will be my wage per hour. Two hours I add to the standard week in gratitude for the hospitality. And if an agreement like that does not suit – then I will go and look for something else. For money like that – I will find work anywhere." We wrangled a bit more, but Mark knew the right was on my side. So he agreed with my arguments.

GON-12-047

An agreement like that let me get closer to my set goal, and faster. It made no difference to me how many hours a week I worked. Very soon Mark sacked all his helpers (there were two of them). No wonder – who is going to slog 100 hours a week?

GON-12-048

Only Mark – the owner of the company, and a madman like me.

GON-12-049



The top handrail – 76 mm in diameter. The handrail is continuous – it starts at the ground floor, rises to the first and comes back again to the ground floor. Material of the whole structure – oak.

GON-12-050



View of the ground floor.

GON-12-051

In spite of that first small hitch over the pay – Mark and I became friends very soon. I always admired his attitude to the quality of the work he did.

And more than once I told him that I know only one man with the same attitude to quality – Yura Bondar, an old friend of mine from the Kiev Cruising Yacht Club. Mark, though, would answer that my demand for quality exceeded his own several times over. It is a bit like Krylov's "The Cock and the Cuckoo", but even so, on what quality means we had no disagreement at all.

GON-12-052

Yuri Vasilyevich Bondar. He would have thought highly of Mark Lane's attitude to the quality of the work! (Kiev, 2008)

GON-12-053

The work took us to Rockport often. We drove through a string of small towns, picturesquely set among forests under snow. Actually – very rich country. And not fouled up at all by "capitalist entrepreneurs" – the way it was always set out to us in classes of one kind or another. Clean and tidy everywhere. This is interesting, one day Mark and I were driving in his car – it was rubbish collection day. On that day the residents put out onto the street the bins with the rubbish that has built up over the week. And special crews drive along the streets, tip the bins into the truck body and take the contents away to the tip. And then I see – one bin is lying tipped over – the rubbish has spilled out of it. I say to Mark, – "What careless people, could they not stand the bin up properly so it would not tip over?" "No, – Mark answers, it was not people who tipped it over, it is the raccoons getting busy. On days like that they come out of the forest and 'check' – is everything 'right' in the bins? They even manage to get the lids off the bins. Look here – see, there is a tail sticking out of a bin!?" And sure enough, a bushy tail was sticking out of the bin – raccoons "dress up" in fur coats for the winter. Then the bin went over with a crash and a raccoon scrambled out of it, astern first, and shot off to the nearest bushes, carrying something in its jaws. What pests! The rubbish crews have to pick the rubbish up by hand after that.

GON-12-054

The house where we were installing the furniture was at the final stage of the finishing work. The kitchen, the bathrooms and the bedrooms were already done. It all looked luxurious. And no wonder – the standard of the tradesmen working in the house left nothing to be desired. One day I was fitting some piece or other in the dining room. Mark had gone off somewhere for a short time. And behind my back an artist was painting the wall around the fireplace in a chequerboard pattern. One little square – light burgundy, the next – black. The squares were 50 by 50 millimetres.

GON-12-055

At first I did not pay any attention. There are plenty of people milling about. But then I started watching, what is this tradesman doing? The wall

had been marked out in pencil into little squares. Here he takes a brush with black paint – one stroke and the square is filled in. Then he takes a brush with light burgundy paint – one stroke and the next square in the same row is filled in. And the line where the black and the burgundy squares meet – absolutely crisp and straight. No runs, no ridges of paint – nothing. I watched and watched and I say: "Listen, I have been travelling the world a long time, I have seen a thing or two, but I have never come across craftsmanship like this. How do you manage to hold the lines so precisely? And not one line or two, but a whole wall! "It is very simple, he answers, smiling, I have 'only' 28 years of experience in this field." We laughed, and I say, "Yes, impressive, no two ways about it." He liked our furniture too, as it happens. With all these cares the New Year came and went. 1992 arrived. Right at the beginning of March I got a letter from the New York consulate, inviting me to send my diplomas to the Institution of Engineers, Australia for recognition.

GON-12-056

I quickly gathered everything that was required and sent the documents to Australia.

GON-12-057

A day or two later a letter came from Valera Obukhov. In it he wrote that the visas for Australia for Kolya Mitin and Yura Kropivko had come through and that in the first days of May I was to meet them in Perth. They were planning to get to Australia on a cargo-passenger ship from Vladivostok.

GON-12-058

I rang the consulate at once and told Hamish about it.

GON-12-059

He asked about the money. I said I had put 2,000 together.

GON-12-060

With what I already had – that came to a little under 4,000. He was surprised. He had probably not thought I would manage it. But he did not only wonder at it. "Listen, – said Hamish, if you can bring me a letter from someone in Australia who will offer you some kind of work, then I will try to issue you a visa that will let you work in Australia while you are waiting for your crew." Any letter suited Hamish, as long as there was a line in it about an offer of work.

GON-12-061

Of course, he was taking a bit of a risk, sheltering behind a letter like that.

GON-12-062

After all, it is nothing like enough to get an invitation to sweep streets in Perth, say, for them to issue you a visa as a specialist in short supply. But he decided on that step out of a wish to help me. I could only be grateful to him for it.

GON-12-063

I rang Perth, to Gill Goodwin. I told him about Hamish's proposals. Gill says he will send me a letter like that – as it happens he needs a qualified

furniture maker for the restoration of an old house. That was the official version, basically.

GON-12-064

While I was waiting for Gill's letter – I had to have the tickets reissued to fly out of New York and not out of Miami. Good thing the tickets were valid for six months. Otherwise I would have had to buy those again as well. They stung me something for the reissue, of course. Before long Gill's letter came. I rang Hamish and told him everything was ready at my end. He said I should come at once. There was not much packing to do. Mark and Shelley put on a farewell dinner. It was March and it had got noticeably warmer outside. We laid the table right out in the yard of the house. Our friends came too, the ones I had got to know during my time in Marblehead. There were toasts on both sides, and wishes of good luck to each other. We parted good friends. The next day, in the morning, I left for New York. Before that I rang Dorli Rettinger and asked her permission to come and stay for one day. She said she would not be at home during the day, that we would meet in the evening, and explained where she would leave the door key.

GON-12-065

In the evening I met Dorli again, after a four-month break. I told her about how I had been living, about my immediate plans. The sun was beginning to show on my horizon again. My spirits were a good deal brighter than before I left for Marblehead. In the morning we said goodbye and I set off for the consulate. The visa, valid to 31 July 1992, was issued to me in five minutes, with a wish for a good journey. When I offered Hamish a look at my cash capital, he answered that there was no need for it. He does not doubt for a minute that I had kept my word. Then he told me that as soon as I got the recognition of my qualification documents, I was to send him copies at once. After that there would be very little left before the permanent visa came through.

GON-12-066

On 18 March 1992 I flew out of Kennedy Airport for Los Angeles and on to Perth, with a stop in Sydney. My "American" stage had come to an end. To finish I will say that to this day I send and receive Christmas cards from Mark and Shelley and from Dorli Rettinger.

GON-12-067



Reunion with the Crew

On 20 March Gill Goodwin and Rosemary Blake met me at Perth airport. It was a joyful meeting, without a doubt. Rosemary took me home with her, saying that the annexe and the cats were waiting for me. Gill went off on his own business, promising to ring in the evening.

GON-13-001

Over those months little had changed in Perth. One piece of news for me was the arrival of Edgar Terekhin and his family, to live in Perth permanently. Gill told me about it. Edgar had been a member of the *Fazisi* crew and Gill had known him since those days. I rang Edgar straight away and we did not take long to meet. At that time he rented a house in Fremantle. Before long our meetings took on a regular character.

GON-13-002

Naturally, one of the first calls I made was the call to Broome. I thought about *Gonta* every hour. Garry Janema said that everything was all right with the boat, as far as you can judge looking at her from the shore. Understandably she did not look as well cared for as she had when I left her for "two weeks, three at the most", but at least she was standing where I had put her. After all, tropical cyclone season – that is no joke. Anything could have happened. But fortunately it did not. For 25 March Rosemary invited all our friends to her house, for a general get-together, so to speak. And there was a reason for it as well – not only my return from America, but my birthday too.

GON-13-003

Rosemary really did herself proud! There was even a birthday cake with burning candles. The party went off splendidly! After the festive days the ordinary working days began. I could not leave for Broome straight away – I had to wait for Kolya Mitin and Yura Kropivko. They

GON-13-004



25 March 1992. This is the birthday cake Rosemary baked. I make a wish and blow out the candles on the cake!

GON-13-005

were due to arrive at the beginning of May. And in the meantime I needed to find work. After all, before long I would be paying for three, not just for myself.

GON-13-006

In the paper I saw an advertisement that a fitter and hull assembler was wanted at “Sabre Catamarans Pty. Ltd”. I rang them straight away – they said to come in for an interview. Ken Weier had tried to get me into this company almost a year before, but without success.

GON-13-007

This time I came on my own and talked a bit about myself to Bill Harry – the owner of the company. At the end of the conversation he asked me to leave my telephone number, saying that he would ring me when he had made his decision.

GON-13-008

I set off home. When I got there – nearly an hour later, Rosemary says to me: "There was a call for you from “Sabre Catamarans”, you can start work tomorrow, at seven in the morning". Anyway, the question of work was settled quickly, and to my great joy.

GON-13-009

The work there was interesting and familiar to me. We were building an aluminium catamaran for a customer in the United States. I was on the assembly of the vessel's systems together with Tony Kosich – the company's leading fitter. He and I found a common language very quickly. Quiet and even-tempered, Tony was a superb master of his trade. Always a pleasure to work with people like that.

GON-13-010

The new catamaran is launched.

GON-13-011

I have not worked at that company for a long time now, but I still drop in on them from time to time – for a talk, to ask how things are going? Sometimes to use the company's equipment as well, if something urgent has to be made. At the start of the 2006 sailing season, on the 60-foot yacht in whose crew I race – the mast broke. The cause – metal fatigue and the formation of microcracks in the terminal of the cap shroud wire. The result – the terminal let go under load and the mast broke just above the second row of spreaders. Sounds familiar – does it not? It fell to me to repair that mast, and naturally – it did not get done without Tony Kosich. He helped me to fit the internal sleeve and to weld up a few parts. But that is just in passing. As I got ready for the coming voyage on *Gonta*, I tried to think through every detail. One of them was – filling the yacht's gas bottles. The particular design of Soviet gas bottles made it impossible to refill them in foreign ports. To get round that problem you needed a special adaptor, the kind every filling station in the Union had. In my letters to Kolya Mitin I stressed the need to make such an adaptor, on the pattern and likeness of the existing ones. Kolyunya was a toolmaker of the highest grade and making a fitting like that was no trouble for him.

GON-13-012

Another important question, which had to be discussed and settled exactly – which way to go back to Kiev?

GON-13-013

There were three real options: to go to Vladivostok, to go through the Suez Canal or through the Panama Canal. Each option had its own advantages and disadvantages, so it had to be settled in advance and the preparation for the passage made accordingly. Important in preparing a passage – the navigational outfit. For Vladivostok I had the charts and publications, but for all the other options – no. So I wrote in my letters to Kolyunya that the question of the charts had to be settled as soon as possible. To take the decision in Australia – which route to go and to buy the whole outfit here – costs far too much.

GON-13-014

Besides various questions of a technical kind I also insisted on the need to study English – at the most elementary level. That would have been enough, and with practice – it would soon have come right. And that is all it takes – twenty minutes a day on an English textbook. I had had to go that road myself, back when we were still building *Fazisi* in Poti. And the result turned out perfectly acceptable, for a start. Since I had written the letters with the necessary requests and recommendations to Kolya before I even left for America, they had more than enough time to prepare.

GON-13-015

April went by. At the beginning of May it became clear that neither Kolya nor Yura could come by the expected date. A number of delays came up with Vladivostok. One man missing, then another – the usual picture, basically. Valera Obukhov kept me up to date, but what could we do? Only wait patiently. But never mind, I thought, maybe by the time Yura and Kolya arrived I would have the permanent visa for Australia and then everything would actually be fine. In the middle of May I received a letter from the Institution of Engineers, Australia. My engineering degree raised no doubts at all and the qualification was confirmed unconditionally. A copy of the letter was also sent to New York. In that way the main point connected with getting the permanent visa was settled. After that all that was left was to have a medical examination and to get a certificate from the local police headquarters that I was not a "master criminal". The request to go through all these procedures was to be sent by the New York consul to my address in Perth. On top of that, as Hamish explained to me during our last meeting, that to get the visa I did not need to go back to New York. As soon as the qualification is confirmed and New York has taken the decision to issue the permanent visa, the process could be completed in Perth as well. The New York consulate simply passes all the papers to Perth and from then on I control the situation on the spot. All very logical. So that I should not relax, in the last days of May a letter came to me from the customs of the port of Broome, informing me that it was time I knew when to go. Or else, it hinted, things would get worse. I rang Chris Custer and we had a talk – like old acquaintances. I explained that the delay was happening because there was no crew. The men were due to arrive at the beginning of May, and now I am expecting them by the middle of June. But the thing is moving, though slowly. Chris said that he had had to send me that paper, but that there was nothing for me to worry about yet. They are not going to take any "rash"

GON-13-016

steps on my question in the near future. However, dragging out the sending of the yacht for ever was not on either. I promised to keep him informed of every detail.

GON-13-017

On 31 May 1992 I was driving to work. The radio was on in the car and the news said that the Australian government had revised the rules for issuing permanent visas. This is done from time to time to regulate the flow of emigrants. I listened to all of it, but I was sure it had nothing to do with me. After all, I had lodged my application for a permanent visa before the new law was passed. And I had never heard of a newly passed law having retrospective force...

GON-13-018

At the beginning of the second week of June I rang Valera Obukhov – and at last the news we had been waiting for! Kolyunya and Yura had sailed from Vladivostok bound for Melbourne and on to Fremantle. In about two weeks they should be with me. There was very little waiting left.

GON-13-019

And then the day came! Somewhere in the twenties of June the container ship berthed at the container terminal of Fremantle port. A joyful meeting, questions, answers, smiles... One of the first pieces of news the lads shared with me was about Vitya Kamkin. Vitya and his crew had gone from Vladivostok to Auckland, New Zealand, and then reached Australia on *Dnepr* (the name of the yacht), with the last port of call – Adelaide, in South Australia. The meeting in Adelaide was a pleasant surprise for Yura and Kolya – after all, we had all known each other for many years. The voyage of the Dnepropetrovsk yacht *Dnepr* – that is a legendary page in the history of Ukrainian sailing, and it will be written in the near future. I, at least, very much hope so.

GON-13-020

Into the car (this time I had a Toyota, which I was renting from Gill's wife – Heather) we barely crammed all the gear for the yacht. The container ship's crew had made Kolya and Yura a present of all sorts of things the yacht needed. Signal flares alone came to more than a case. Antifouling paint – 30 litres. Food, lines, a lot of useful odds and ends. The car's suspension sagged noticeably.

GON-13-021

We said goodbye to the ship's crew and after brief customs formalities on the way out of the port, we drove to Fr Anatoly's. A week before Yura and Kolya arrived I had arranged with Fr Anatoly and Yefrosynia that they would put my friends up in the house of their son, Sergei. The house was right next door, across the fence. At that time Sergei was living with his wife in her house, in the next suburb, and letting out his own house. For Yura and Kolya it was ideal accommodation. To leave for Broome straight away and get the boat ready was not logical.

GON-13-022

Many of my friends wanted to meet Yura and Kolya, about whom they had heard so much from me. Understandably, I had not spared the colours in telling them about the two. So a broad round of social and cultural events was set out for the first week in Perth. At the same time I had to find out which route we would take to Kiev. I never did manage to get a clear answer to that question before the lads arrived in Australia.

GON-13-023

As soon became clear, the route had not been worked out. Already on the way to Australia, aboard the ship, Yura had hurriedly made copies of a few charts, but it was not very serious. He explained that "slip-up" by the difficulties in the country. Total chaos everywhere, he said, and nothing to

be got anywhere. Kolyunya actually said we should go to Singapore, catch the nearest Soviet steamer by the tail, load the yacht on deck and carry her to Odessa. And this after I had explained in detail in my letters why that option was impossible without the most serious preparation from Kiev! It seems to me that in those days the effort of arranging to ship a yacht from Singapore to Odessa would have been such that it would be simpler to arrange a round-the-world voyage from Australia. But since nothing had been done in Kiev anyway, all I can do is guess about all of it. One more annoying point – not one of them had learned a word of English. Kolyunya said that he had learned German at school, so English was beyond him. Yura said that he had tried, but nothing had come of it. He could not remember anything from teaching himself. Well, we will just have to interpret, since that is how it is...

GON-13-024

I kept working and we met in the evenings. And during the day Fr

GON-13-025

Anatoly drove Kolya and Yura around the city – showed them the sights. A couple of times Rosemary took them off for half a day. She took them in particular to Kings Park – a magnificent spot in Perth, from which the whole city is spread out in front of you. To say nothing of the park itself, which is a living botanical museum, when you come down to it.

GON-13-026



The view of Perth from Kings Park. 2008.

GON-13-027

On the whole the lads fitted into the orbit of my friends and acquaintances very well. They did not like sitting idle, so at Fr Anatoly's they would mow the grass one day, mend the fence the next. In a household there are always plenty of jobs. When Rosemary was driving them on the outing to the park – there was a problem with the brakes. Yura, without any extra talk, took the wheel off and put the fault in the brakes right. Rosemary was pleasantly surprised by that circumstance and told me and her acquaintances about the episode with real animation. But there were problems too – how could there not be. At every friendly gathering our Australian friends put on for us there was always something to drink and something to eat. And how could it be otherwise? Hospitality in Australia is also on a grand scale. And then I noticed that my two "giants of the sport of sailing" – as I introduced them to everybody, go blind drunk on a couple of cans of beer. And they contrive to keep that state up for a long time. Yura is more or less all right, but Kolyunya – straight away becomes everybody's best friend. And not knowing the language did not embarrass him in the least. GON-13-028

On the one hand sociability – a good quality. But on the other hand, when that sociability went over into the "do you respect me?" stage – that is not sociability any more, that is a shambles. And all my friends and acquaintances looked at me first of all, when that sort of "behaviour" had to be explained. And a couple of times I had to find diplomatic explanations. And just you try to explain it without offending anybody and keeping face. I carried out "educational work" with the crew on the subject, but with mixed success. And then one day, after an evening spent in a restaurant Gill had invited us to, we were driving back home to Fr Anatoly's. GON-13-029

It was something around nine in the evening. That evening there had been a couple of incidents again and I was angry with Yura and Kolya for their behaviour in the restaurant, so the conversation was not going well. But while we drove – I cooled off a bit. On the way I had to draw money out of an automatic teller, to pay Yefrosynia for the house and the food for Yura and Kolya. I pulled up at one of them, got out of the car. While I was drawing the money – I decided the atmosphere needed softening a bit. To "nag" people all the time – no good either. I come up to the car, I say to Yura: "You wanted to drive a car in Australia – well then get in, have a go. I will tell you where to turn". Less than two kilometres left to the house. The road was empty and the street lights lit everything up brightly. So the conditions – just right for a trial run. On top of that a couple of glasses of beer and wine had left no trace at all in my head. It seemed that Yura too had come into normal shape for driving a car. GON-13-030

We had only just got in, gone maybe 500 metres – bang – a police check for alcohol in the blood. In Australia you can have a glass of beer and get behind the wheel, but if you are over the limit then they will slap a fine on you – you can be sure of that. It will not seem a small one.

GON-13-031

They test Yura, since he is the one sitting at the wheel. And the instrument shows a level far above what is allowed. The policeman says something to Yura – who does not understand, naturally. I interpret, and I cannot work out myself how such a result can be? After all, we were together the whole evening. The policeman tests my condition – I am sober as a judge. Kolyunya had nodded off on the back seat – they did not touch him. The policeman says that for a final analysis we have to go to police headquarters. I tried to fight it off, saying that it was a kilometre to the house – I would drive us myself, there would be no problem. But it did not help. They said that the result was already registered and there was no wriggling out of it now. We had to go.

GON-13-032

We arrived at police headquarters. Yura was tested for alcohol again. The result was – all to the point. Then we filled in and signed a pile of police forms and they let us go, saying that Yura would have to appear in court for a hearing of the case of driving a motor car while under the influence of alcohol. The summons would be sent to me by post in a couple of days.

GON-13-033

A few days later the court summons came. The hearing was in the daytime, and I had to take a day off without pay – somebody had to interpret, after all. Yuri Nikolayevich's guilt was proved indisputably and without delay. And the sentence – 550 dollars or two months' imprisonment – whichever you like. We had to pay the fine.

GON-13-034

The one thing I still needed was to get "famous" in the national papers – newspapermen have a nose for "news" like that. I can just imagine the headlines – "Ukrainian yachtsman cleans up the streets of Perth!"

GON-13-035

With a sentence like that they do not keep you inside without leave, they send you out on community work. Anyway, this whole comedy cost me 725 dollars, counting the unpaid working day. Plus the aggravation.

GON-13-036

Well all right, we got through that too. Two weeks had gone by since the lads arrived in Perth. It was time to go to Broome and get the boat ready. I bought two tickets and put Kolya and Yura on the bus. I said that Garry would meet them in Broome and take them to "Broome Slipway", and there, on the spot, they would see for themselves what to do and how. As for the yacht work – I did not doubt for a minute that Yura and Kolya

would not be at a loss in any situation. And I was not wrong, I will say straight away.

GON-13-037

It was the first days of August. I had to stay in Perth, because I was expecting the answer from New York any day. After all, I had sent all the documents to the New York consulate back in May.

GON-13-038

Of course – I wanted to get the permanent visa (since I had started this

GON-13-039



Before the departure for Broome. Left to right: Nikolai Mitin, Yura Kropivko, Igor Mironenko. GON-13-040

business) and after that to go on with the yacht as far as Turkey, at least. And from Turkey I would have flown back and got down at last to my own private life. Nobody had relieved me of my responsibility to my family, as it happens. And all these years my family had been living in Kiev, worrying about my wanderings around the world.

GON-13-041

But none of these expectations was fated to come true, either that year or even the next. I could write a separate book on that subject, but I do not feel like it. Meantime I had to finish the business with *Gonta*. I explained the situation with my Australian affairs to the lads while we were still in Perth. If they had arrived as planned, we would have left Australia two months earlier and my temporary visa would have been enough to come back to Australia so that I could finish my business with the permanent visa. And now all that was left to me was to wait for the answer from New York. And New York said nothing. Yura and Kolya said to me that they un-

derstood everything and were ready to go from Broome to Kiev on their own, the two of them. But I could not let them go out into the ocean two-handed. With no experience, with no language, with no firm confidence in the spars – all of it together made a very risky business for two men. At the very minimum, I had to sail at least one leg with them. We laid out the route – Broome – the Cocos (Keeling) Islands – the Maldives – Aden – the Suez Canal – the Black Sea. For that route I bought the missing charts. I also bought a radio set for the 27 megahertz band and an emergency signal beacon, which sends a distress signal automatically if you have to abandon the yacht. Three weeks after the lads left, with no answer at all from New York, I finished up at work and bought myself a bus ticket to Broome. I said goodbye to my many friends in Perth and left to meet the yacht I had been forced to leave in the roads of Broome port exactly a year before.

GON-13-042





Until We Meet Again, Australia!

And here is Broome. "I am here again..." – as the song goes. It was evening and already dark. Garry was waiting for me with the car at the bus station. "Well, you have got here at last, I was tired of waiting! Now at least we can talk to your crew. As it is, by the time we agree anything with signs and gestures, half the day is gone" – Garry informed me, with his usual humour.

GON-14-001

The yacht close to the shore. To secure a yacht properly and safely in conditions like that – is not the simplest job. Kolya Mitin and Yura Kropivko managed it splendidly! On the yacht's deck – Yura is stowing something.

GON-14-002

We got there quickly. The lads were having supper on the yacht. They had taken the boat in to the shore on the flood and secured her to the shore piles, so that she would not lie over on her side on the ebb. That settled the question of communication with the shore. Plus it made getting the yacht into fighting order a great deal easier. And the work that fell to the lads – was a hell of a job! When I left Broome – I shut the main hatch, but did not lock it. Just slid the hatch cover across – and that was all. I did that in case the boat suddenly had to be shifted to another mooring while I was away – so that Garry and Martin could get at the mooring lines, the fenders and everything needed. Again, I was leaving for a "short" time, after all! Besides that I got the anchor ready to let go at once (in case the mooring line chafed through) and stowed it all neatly on deck with the anchor warp. Normally the anchor is kept below deck. But over a year in the roads, the wind and the motion in the swell had shifted the main hatch (it runs on guide rails). As a result the rain started to pour into the boat. And in the tropics – these are not rains – these are waterfalls! When Yura and Kolya came aboard the yacht – there was, by their account, some 200 millimetres of water in the bilge. And that was only half the trouble. The trouble was that food was kept in the lockers, and the water had dissolved the

packets of all sorts of grain, rusks and biscuits, and now the whole lot had turned into a horrible mass with beetles and other filth. Many of the tins had rusted through as well. Now add to all this "exotica" a mean annual temperature of +33°C – and shut your eyes. You can hold your nose at the same time. Got the picture?

GON-14-003

The anchor I had left ready on deck – was covered in furry rust. Many of the deck fittings needed a complete strip-down and clean. The yacht's bottom had grown a "beard" some 100 millimetres long.

GON-14-004

Of course, when Yura and Kolya saw the yacht for the first time – they were horrified. And I understand them perfectly. After all, *Gonta* had always stood out for her grace and elegance, and here was this picture. But they did not spend long being upset. They rolled up their sleeves – got down to it, and two weeks later the boat looked as she had on the day I was forced to leave her. Fortunately, the damage was only of a "natural" kind. Over the time she lay there the boat was not looted and nothing was broken. And after all that could have happened too.

GON-14-005

Everybody at the yard appreciated the talents and the selflessness of Kolya and Yura. They quickly found a common language with everyone – Kolyunya especially. He was always ready to talk to anybody at all.

GON-14-006



Very little time left now before the ocean passage. Left to right – Martin, Walter, Yura.

GON-14-007

By the time I got to Broome – the whole staff of the yard knew Kolya very well. If they could only have spoken even a little English – everything would actually have been wonderful. Garry said so to me himself: "I can see that the two of them – are complete masters of their trade. They can do anything – no doubt about that. And I would gladly take them on. But the language problem is a very big obstacle. I cannot really stand and watch over them all day to make sure they have understood me, can I?" When there was a chance, he brought Yura and Kolya in on jobs of his own, paid them a bit for it, but it was all at the helper level. And there was nothing serious. A pity, of course.

GON-14-008

Walter and I. Dress of the day – working rig. You can see clearly how far the water goes out on the ebb.

GON-14-009

As such, there was no longer any need to stay long in Broome. All we had left was to fit a few small things on the yacht – the radio set, the emergency beacon, to buy in more food, to take on water, and we could go. And then it turns out that two days before I arrived the customs men had come and taken Yura's and Kolya's passports.

GON-14-010

I ring customs – Chris picks up. "Hello Chris, what is this game with the passports?" "Well, says Chris, some clown has taken you to court for using his anchorage without his permission, so we were obliged to show that sort of "reaction" towards your lads. We will come over now and explain the business to you in more detail."

GON-14-011

Half an hour later they drove up. They explained that the owner of the mooring buoy, on learning that a foreign yacht was lying to it, had decided to "get rich" on the business. Without thinking long he wrote a claim to the court demanding compensation of 1560 dollars. That paper ended up coming to customs. The owner of the mooring did not think it necessary to let me know. And he only came to Broome now and then, as it happens. And he was not popular in the town. It is a small town – everybody knows everybody. I tell Chris that all this – is complete rubbish. "The harbourmaster himself told me which buoy to lie to. And he is not going back on his word. And I am not "forking out" fifteen hundred for no reason at all. What am I, made of money?" Chris replies that he agrees with me, but the paper has come in – and it needs a satisfactory answer. "Here is a copy of the court claim – write down what you think about it and bring it to us. And then we will see what to do."

GON-14-012

I went to Garry, told him the story. He says, – "Give me the copy here, we will have a look now at what is wanted." He read it – "Right, he says, –

we will write back to them now." He knew his way around papers like that, and he had the gift of the gab – just as wanted.

GON-14-013

He wrote an answer to this complaint, read through what he had written and says: "Good, it looks as though we have not trodden on anybody's toes with our answer, and we are not going to pay any money either. So everybody is happy except the plaintiff. Well, to hell with him. Nobody in town respects him anyway. Let him prove in court now that he – is not a mongrel. And by then you will be far away."

GON-14-014

The next day Garry gave me his car and I drove to customs. I found Chris, gave him the paper. "Give the passports back", I say. "No, Chris replies, – now all this has to go to the court and we wait for the court's decision." "Well, Chris, I say, with you it is – you cannot stay, then – you cannot go. We are obliged to leave not later than 1 September (only a few days away), otherwise the tide will not reach our berth and we will be stuck for another month, or even more. And actually, you have impounded the passports, and that – is a breach of international rules. You have no right to take the passports of citizens of a sovereign state. But if you insist, then I will go to the local paper right now and tell them that we have nothing left to do but declare ourselves refugees and ask for asylum. Because I am fed up to the back teeth with paying for everything everywhere. Let the Australian government pay for me and my lads for a change." I swear that is exactly what I said. By then I had more experience and was less and less often lost for a word. Chris just waved his hands at me – "Steady on, steady on, we do not want a fuss! Here are your passports – off you go, wherever you like. We have plenty to get on with without you. When you are ready to leave, let us know by radio or telephone – we will come over – and put the departure stamps in. See you."

GON-14-015

I came back to the yard in triumph and gave the passports to Yura and Kolya. What was left was to buy in more food, fill the bottles with gas and the tanks – with water. Nothing to it. We started with the gas bottles. I say to Kolyunya, "Get out the adaptor you made in Kiev – its time has come." He got it out of his bag – I look – good God, this is not it at all! He had simply taken a standard regulator and gutted its insides out. And that was all.

GON-14-016

An adaptor like that simply cannot be used! When you fill from it the gas flies out in all directions, but not into the bottle. After all I had written clearly, and more than once at that, that the existing device had to be copied – one to one. And nothing invented and nothing changed. And the new adaptor – to be tested in operation while still in Kiev, to make sure – it

all works. Not a bloody thing had been done. How could you not swear at that?!

GON-14-017

We tried to use this "article", and all that happened was gas everywhere. Garry and Martin moved off to one side and say – "If you want to blow up – blow yourselves up. We will watch from over here." Funny for them – not so funny for me. There was a long way to go, after all. Run out of gas at sea – and you will be drinking raw water, not tea. We were left with one gas bottle, locally made.

GON-14-018

She was comparatively large and full. All our hopes had to be placed on her. Then we drove out, bought in more food, came back – and filled every container we had with fresh water. In the evening I rang customs and said that we were leaving in the morning. We agreed that the customs men would come over by ten in the morning, an hour before high water. On 1 September 1992 we made sail, cast off the mooring lines and headed for the open sea. There were many on the shore to see us off and wish us a good voyage. As we came out of the port's waters we saluted our friends with a sound rocket. After that, the cheers from the shore started coming with even greater enthusiasm! The first leg – was the dash to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The distance – 1600 miles. We laid off a checkpoint – 110 miles from Broome – a solitary buoy over a sunken ship. The buoy was marked on the chart. The purpose of a point like that – to check the satellite navigation system, to refresh our memory of working with it. After all, after that point – 1500 miles with no marks of any kind except astronavigational ones. In under a day we saw the buoy's light. We came out on it absolutely exactly. So our navigation was all in order.

GON-14-019

The boat behaved splendidly too. But just in case, we rigged extra running backstays to support the mast. They were never needed, though.

GON-14-020

From the buoy we laid a course for the Cocos Islands. Again the ocean was completely empty, just as it had been on our way to Fremantle.

GON-14-021

Before long the wind drew aft and became free enough for us to set the spinnaker.

GON-14-022

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN, AUSTRALIA!



From Broome to the Cocos Islands.

GON-14-023



It looks as though the yacht is climbing a hill.

GON-14-024

But it is only an ocean wave.

GON-14-025

It was a marvellous passage! Moderate following winds let us make progress along the course at an excellent speed. Not a single day did we sit

becalmed. A crew of three – that is three watches. Three hours on watch – six hours off. Splendid conditions for rest and for work. In case of all hands (a sail change or a gybe to be made) all three – on deck. Then only one man is steering again. It is the best watch system in the world – I will say so without embarrassment! I have tried every watch system there is.

GON-14-026



Course – for the Cocos Islands. Conditions for the passage – simply splendid. Moments like these are worth a whole life of sailing!

GON-14-027

For Kolya and Yura – this was the first meeting with the ocean face to face, so to speak. And the meeting was a pleasant one, without a doubt. The ocean not only gave us an excellent wind – it also spoiled us now and then with flying fish that landed on deck, which we collected and fried. It was tasty! But we never did manage to catch anything bigger.

GON-14-028



Yura examines a flying fish. "Do people really eat this? And if they do, what is there here to eat?"

GON-14-029

At sea Yura and I did the navigation, Kolya – looked after the gear. Quite often Kolya sat in the forepeak and stitched the sail seams by hand. However well you look after sails, the seams wear out. So he watched vigilantly for the smallest fault in the sails. That is why we had no trouble with sails. Eleven days later Yura was the first to spot a strip of land on the horizon. It was the Cocos Islands – the final objective of our first leg. It took us another eight hours to

GON-14-030



Kolya repairing the sails.

GON-14-031

reach the leading marks at the entrance of the channel leading inside the lagoon.

GON-14-032

It was dark already, and the lights on the buoys were not lit. We had to look out for those buoys in the channel very carefully.

GON-14-033

The Cocos Islands consist of a group of four relatively large islands. The islands are Australian territory.

GON-14-034

Population – fifteen hundred people. On West Island there is the administrative centre, a resort, an airfield, some small industry. For yachtsmen an anchorage is set aside in the roads

GON-14-035

The anchorage off Direction Island.

GON-14-036

of Direction Island. This is done for the purposes of quarantine control. The islands are also known for the fact that Joshua Slocum called there in his day – the first sailor in the world to go round the world alone in his own yacht, *Spray*. It was he who said that if there is a paradise on Earth, then it – is the Cocos Islands!

GON-14-037

We did not risk going straight in to the anchorage off Direction Island.

GON-14-038

Night, the situation unclear, the depths variable and in some places – less than our draught. We moved a little off from the channel and let go the anchor. The Danforth, as it happens. Kolyunya had made a new fluke in

Broome to replace the broken one. He welded it all up, painted it – and what came out was a marvel, not an anchor. And very handy to use.

GON-14-039

We lay the night out, keeping watches and watching the situation. And in the morning we got the anchor up and headed for the other yachts visible near the island. We went under mainsail alone, with the boat poles at the ready. In principle, the bottom could be seen very well. You could see – where the rocks, where the sand. About forty minutes later we let go the anchor against a picturesque shore.

GON-14-040

To start with we had to report to customs and get permission to go ashore. I started calling the customs men on the radio – nobody answers. I think, maybe my radio is not working? Apparently not, on receive – I can hear everything normally. Nearby lay a yacht under the Canadian flag. I hailed the man on deck, asked what the business with customs was? Derek (that was the yachtsman's name), says: "I can hear you on my radio, maybe there is nobody in customs yet. If you like, I will try calling them on my set." I thanked him. An hour later the customs men came over and checked the documents. Everything was in order and they opened the border to us. They did not even search the boat, as they had the first time near Kalbarri. They gave us a one-page instruction – what you may do on the island, what you may not. In bold type it warned us not to throw anything edible over the side.

GON-14-041

That attracts sharks. And with sharks about – you can become something edible yourself!

GON-14-042

We had a small inflatable dinghy, which I brought back from my trip to the States. The little boat – nothing special, but without her – you will not get ashore. We assembled her quickly and started running from the yacht to the shore and back. She turned out to be a very handy little boat.

GON-14-043



Kolya and Yura approach an "uninhabited" island.

GON-14-044

Derek Hayden-Luck – our new Canadian acquaintance, was travelling round the globe single-handed on his own yacht *Maculis*. She was a comfortable two-master with every convenience inside. And actually the yachts lying in the roads were mostly cruising yachts from ten and a half to twelve metres in length. Quite often the crews of these yachts consisted of two people – husband and wife. Sometimes – of families with children. Derek gave me a short survey of the yachts, naming the crew members by name, saying where they were from, etc. I asked, – "How long have you been lying here, if you already know everybody by name?" "No, not long – Derek replied, – I have only just come in here myself. It is simply that we all met in different ports and agreed to gather at the Cocos Islands in September. The ocean – is our home. As we travel about, we are simply changing the interior, so to speak." Then he said he had watched our manoeuvres coming up to the island and rated the skill. "Nobody risks going through a fairway that narrow under sail", he added. I told him we simply had no other option. The yacht is not fitted with a diesel. A pure sailing boat. That impressed him so much that before long he came aboard us and handed over a litre bottle of Smirnoff. Do I need to say that our supper was a magnificent one?! A couple of days later we gathered on our own yacht to discuss what to do next. Yura and Kolya knew that business was waiting for me in Perth, so they raised no objection to my leaving the crew.

GON-14-045

They agreed that over the last year and a half I had done more

GON-14-046



What can you tell us about the Cocos Islands, Nikolai Anatolyevich?

GON-14-047

than enough for the yacht to get back to Kiev successfully. The time was coming for me to think about my own private life as well. I did not want to part from them. But I still hoped that any moment now I would get the permanent visa for Australia and would be able to fly out, say, to Aden, if not to the Maldives. All this I set out at our little meeting. Yura and Kolya assured me with one voice that there were no problems at all, that they felt completely confident about the coming passage and that I had nothing more to worry about. Well, I could only be grateful to them for their support.

GON-14-048



Shortly before we parted.

GON-14-049

I started getting ready to fly to Perth. Besides buying the plane tickets, I had to top up the food stores on the yacht. The three of us went over to West Island and bought everything needed. We topped up the fresh water as well. At the last I left the lads a small sum for emergency expenses. I also left all the telephone numbers and addresses where I could be found in Perth. I said that in case of serious need – they were to get in touch with me at once. You never know, what if they lost the mast again? That way at least I could help with money...

GON-14-050

In the twenties of September Kolya and Yura saw me off at the airport on West Island. We did not have long to wait for boarding. We embraced, I wished them a good voyage – and they wished me – success in my new life in Australia. We promised to write to each other. My "sea epic" had come to an end. Ahead of me lay other cares, this time – on dry land...

GON-14-051

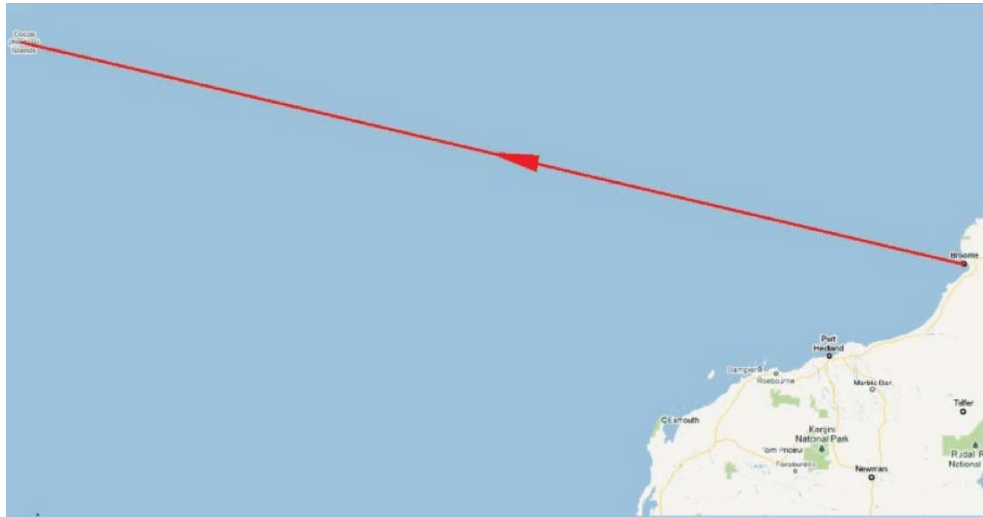
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN, AUSTRALIA!



Until we meet again...

GON-14-052





Epilogue

After I flew out to Perth, *Gonta* and her crew spent a few more days at the Cocos Islands. As a memento of their visit Yura and Kolya carved the yacht's name and the year of their call at the island on a board. They set this memorial board up next to plaques just like it, left there by other yachts. Derek Hayden-Luck sent me a couple of photographs in Perth some two months after all these events.

GON-15-001

The rest of the route was not an easy one, as far as I know. Halfway between the Maldives and Aden the yacht ran out of gas. Somehow I let this point slip my

GON-15-002



A memento of Gonta.

GON-15-003

mind, and at the Cocos Islands I did not refill the bottle. Perhaps because after the successful first leg all three of us relaxed and thought all the trouble was behind us? And at the Maldives the lads did not manage to refill the bottles, for some reason.

GON-15-004

I also heard that the passage through the Red Sea was a very hard one. Then there was a long wait at the entrance to the Suez Canal – nobody wanted to bother with towing a yacht. There were head-on storms, and torn sails, and going aground, and a shortage of food... Of one thing I am firmly convinced – Kolya and Yura got through all these difficulties only thanks to their selfless love of sail and of the yacht we had built. *Gonta* came into Odessa on 22 February 1993 – two years from the moment we left Ilyichevsk for Singapore.

GON-15-005

Here I want to end the story of the yacht *Gonta's* passage to Australia. That part of the passage in which I could not take part will in time, I think, be told by those who took part in the crossing themselves. And to you, dear reader, I wish all the best and the fulfilment of your dreams!

GON-15-006

With best wishes, Igor Mironenko.

GON-15-007



The overall route sailed by the yacht Gonta.

GON-15-008

EPILOGUE



The green shows the stretch of route from Kiev to Odessa.

GON-15-009

The red line marks the route from Singapore to Kiev.

GON-15-010

From Odessa to Singapore the yacht was carried aboard the Slavyansk.

GON-15-011



A meeting with Gonta in Kiev. June 2008.

GON-15-012

Yuri Nikolayevich (left) and Nikolai Anatolyevich.

GON-15-013

Kiev Cruising Yacht Club, June 2008.

GON-15-014

The History in Photographs



November 1978. Yura Bondar began building Gonta at the very end of July 1978. Though the yacht had no name then. So far only the moulds are standing. Ahead – three years of single-minded work!

GON-16-001





February 1979. Yura inside the boat. The main frames are already standing on the moulds and waiting for spring so they can be glued up.

GON-16-002



15 October 1979. That year we took part in the Greater Dnepr Cup-79 on Gorbokonik. After the race finished – every effort went into assembling the hull. The planking had to be finished before the cold weather came!

GON-16-003



22 November 1979. The planking is fully laid and the hull is ready to be carried out of the workshop for the roll-over into her normal position. Left to right: Yura Bondar, Igor Mironenko, Oleg Tretyakov, Lyosha Grischenko, Kolya Mitin.

GON-16-004



23 November 1979. The hull has been carried out of the workshop and rolled over. The whole yacht club took part in the event!

GON-16-005

We are detaching the assembly jig before carrying the boat's hull back into the workshop. Now the order of the day – fitting the bent framing and getting ready to assemble the deck!

GON-16-006

October 1980. The deck is finished and even sheathed with fibreglass cloth. Now it is down to the interior fit-out. And that can be done in winter...

GON-16-007



Olginsky Bay, October 1980. We marked the successful end of the deck assembly and the sailing season with a cruise on the Kanev Reservoir and a picnic on an island afterwards. The crews of the yachts taking part were photographed before the meal began. Yura Bondar is holding a pot of peeled potatoes. It was tasty and great fun!

GON-16-008



Left to right, in the foreground: Igor Belyakov, Boris Shapovalov, Kolya Mitin, Alexei Grisichenko, Yura Bondar, Slava Lavrinenko, Igor Mironenko. Further back – Oleg Lavrinenko and Igor Belyakov's wife. (and I have quite forgotten her name...) The yachts – participants in the cruise: in the background – Vera, Kaira, Gorbokonik. In the foreground – Oktyabr and Chado.

GON-16-009



*We are getting the yacht's hull into proper shape for the fibreglass sheathing to follow.
Monotonous work, dusty, but necessary.*

GON-16-010

Left to right: Valera Deimontovich, Lyosha Grischenko, Igor Mironenko, Yura Bondar.

GON-16-011



July 1981. The yacht has been carried out of the workshop. Kolyunya is enjoying the view and the warm weather, sitting on deck. You can see straight away that not even sandals can stand work as hard as that! Now we have to make the keel, the rudder, the mast and a trolley for launching the boat. Time, as always – barely enough!

GON-16-012

31 October 1981. Every member of the yacht club took part in launching Gonta. All together we haul the boat closer to the water.

GON-16-013



31 October 1981. There it is – the long-awaited moment! It took three years and three months of steady work to see this instant! On Gonta's deck – Zinaida Andreyevna Shapovalova – the yacht's godmother, holding a bottle of champagne in her hand. Beside her – Yura Bondar.

GON-16-014



31 October 1981. The first minutes on the water. While Lyosha is studying something or other on the hull – I am enjoying the champagne.

GON-16-015



31 October 1981.

GON-16-016

The yacht's crew. Up to this moment – we had only been the yacht's builders. Left to right, front row: Valera Obukhov, Alexei Grischenko, Valera Deimontovich, Yura Bondar, Oleg Tretyakov, Kolya Pilyak. Second row – Kolya Mitin, Igor Mironenko.

GON-16-017



31 October 1981. The launch was celebrated on a grand scale!

GON-16-018

I will not name the amount drunk, so as not to shock the reading public. I will only hint – it did not seem like a little!

GON-16-019



2 November 1981. The very first sail.

GON-16-020

Left to right: Oleg Tretyakov, Yura Bondar, Igor Mironenko, Alexei Grischenko.

GON-16-021

7 November 1981. The final sail before the lift-out ashore. That year we spent exactly a week on the water.

GON-16-022

In the foreground – Kolya Mitin. Then Yura Bondar's head is just visible (he is at the helm). Next to him – Valera Deimontovich.

GON-16-023

Several years have gone by since the first launch.

GON-16-024

Gonta at the Greater Dnepr Cup. The photograph was taken from the yacht White Fang – also from the Kiev Cruising Yacht Club.

GON-16-025

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The History of the Yacht *Gonta*. The Passage to Australia in 1991–1992.

Publishing house "ROSS". 03150, Kiev, 56 Gorky Street. Tel. (044) 289

18 31 Signed to press 27.07.2015 Print run – 100 copies. Order No. 4870



Plates

