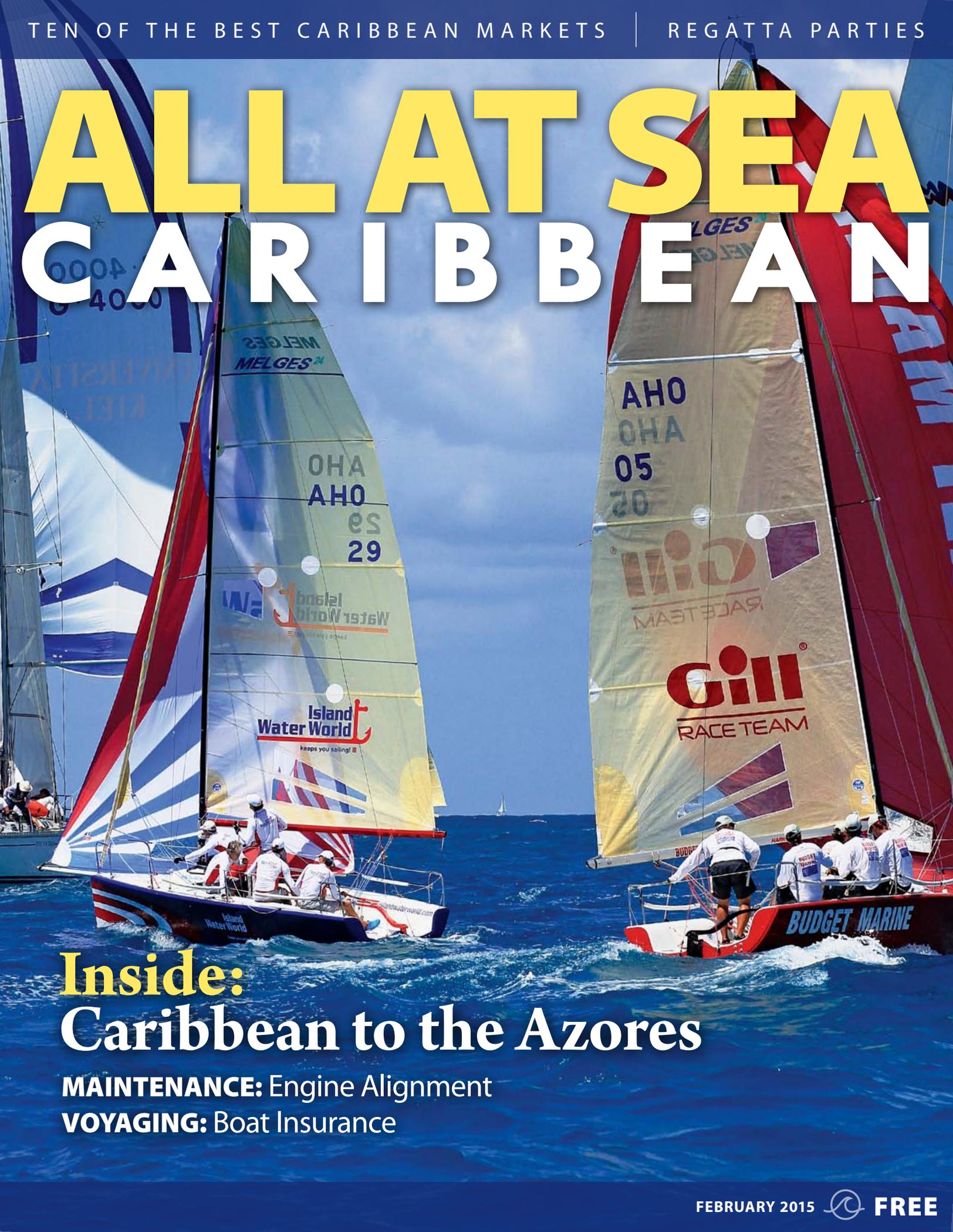


# ALL AT SEA

## CARIBBEAN



### Inside:

# Caribbean to the Azores

**MAINTENANCE:** Engine Alignment

**VOYAGING:** Boat Insurance



# THE TRADITIONAL NAUTICAL NICETIES OF SOCIAL SINKINGS

SAILING HUMOR BY CAP'N FATTY GOODLANDER



Four Friends was taking on water

Part of the joy of growing up aboard in the 1950s was attending so many sinking parties—well, trying-not-to-sink parties might be more accurate. I grew up aboard a 52ft John G. Alden schooner launched in 1924. She was built of mahogany over oak. We believed—and still believe—that the family that sinks together, stays together. Rising bilge water builds character. It's that simple.

These 'sinking' parties were the traditional method in which wooden boat freaks socialized 50 years ago.

Yes, it's true. Wooden boats, especially carvel planked ones, are made up of thousands of separate pieces, which don't really want to be together. They prefer a little space to breathe. And they greatly enjoy leaking. Actually, I'm putting too good a spin on it. Water is perverse. It plots against the boat owner. And it never sleeps. So seams open up, butt blocks spit out their cotton, horn timbers shift, and garboards widen.

Not just water comes in. With the water comes fish eggs and crab embryos. The bilges of our schooner *Elizabeth* were a salt-water aquarium. We could have rented her out as fish reserve.

Some people call their wooden boats sponges. I never liked that term. I think of them as strainers. *Elizabeth* strained out the big fish. Her seams were open, but not too much. There were no sharks or porpoises or whales swimming in our bilges—only a couple of grunts and few sergeant majors. We didn't mind. In fact, we'd joke about it.

"We might be short on cash," we'd tell the dirt-dwellers, "but we got a bilge load of fish!"

Without refrigeration, this was the only realistic way of carrying a fresh supply of emergency food.

Now, the bilge crabs were another story—those scurrying little so-and-sos. They kinda hung out at the water's edge, versus inside it—and were always attempting to join the humans during any of these minor sinking-fests.

Yes, pumping by hand as the bilge water level keeps rising is bad enough. But suddenly having a displaced crab pinching your nether regions is another. (Why crabs go for a man's scrotum is beyond me—but they do. I've learned this lesson in a painful manner.)

Crabs love 'the soft bits' as my mother used to say.

If all of the above wasn't bad enough, aqua critters with bad attitudes simply ate the boats. They gobbled them up. Devoured them. That's right! I'm not exaggerating. Teredo worms bored sizable holes, and had voracious appetites. Even worse, were gribbles. They were smaller, but there was more of 'em. They could munch up an entire plank in a month or an oak stem in a year. All this, of course, was in addition to the normal saltwater 'rot' that a boat had, plus the 'dry' rot it had from stagnant fresh water. (It would start under the galley sink, and spread from there.)

My father used to swear he could hear the teredo worms dining at night—munching up his life saving without pause or regret.

Did we fight back? Of course! With extremely strong poison! We called it the Green Gloop—although scientists might have claimed it was chromated copper arsenate. It was a pukey green in color and smelt addictive—at least to those of us who used it as our first inhalant.

Anyway, we painted the Green Gloop everywhere we could at every chance we had. I personally slathered it on for years and years. I even used gallons of it while building my 36ft ketch *Carlotta* (she had wooden decks) in the mid 1970s. There was never a time during my youth when we didn't have an open can of that green gloop lying about perfuming the boat—ready to go at a second's notice. I'd dip my frame ends in it too.

The good news is that it probably didn't hurt our vessels. The bad news was that some of the brands were carcinogenic and killed us instead of the rot. Oh, dear!

Wait, it gets worse: salt water kept coming aboard—in ever greater and greater quantities. As the boats aged, we kept pumping it out faster and faster. This process became known as 'keeping her shipshape and Bristol-fashion.'

It was about this time we popularized the term 'pleasure boating' to confuse the lubbers ashore into thinking we were having a good time—a marine pastime that is as active today as ever (just check Facebook).

Often we had three or four pumps running on *Elizabeth*. There were enough streams of water outflowing that some lubbers thought she was a low-level, low-aimed fireboat.

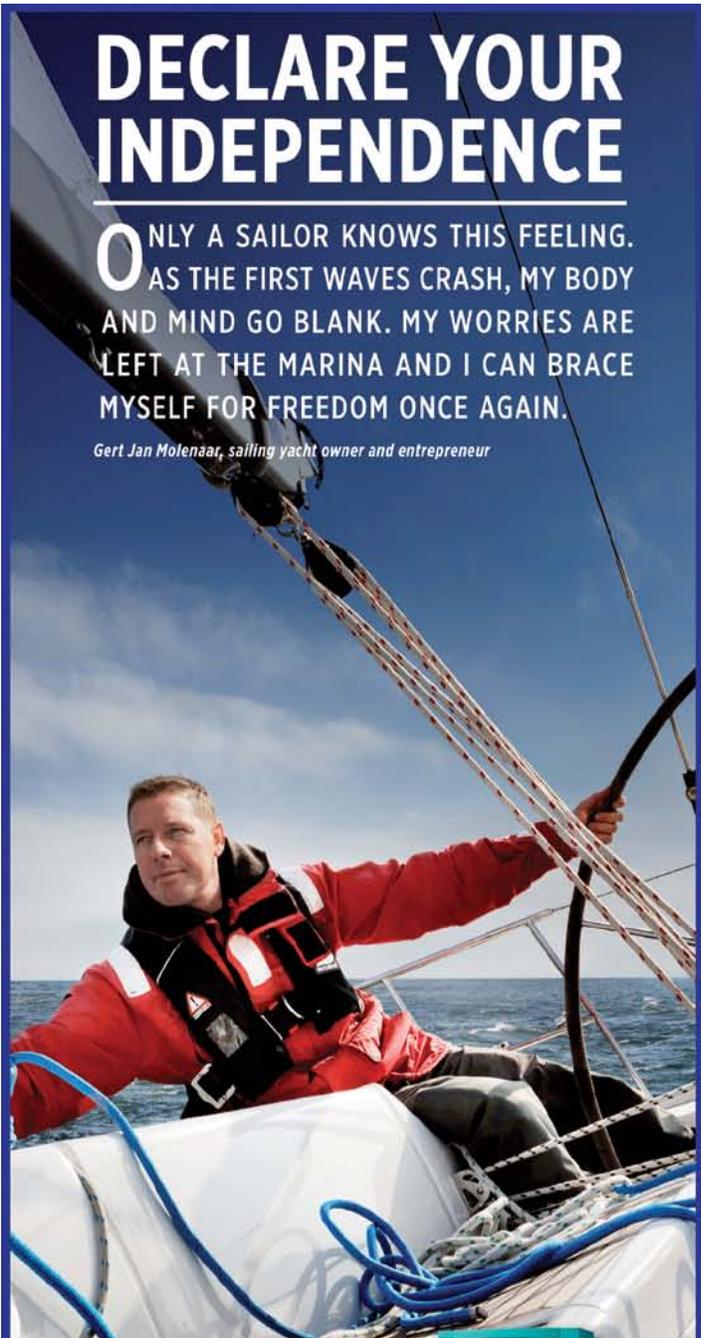
Alas, the *Elizabeth* had more leaks than the White House.

I've seen spaghetti colanders with fewer holes.

# DECLARE YOUR INDEPENDENCE

ONLY A SAILOR KNOWS THIS FEELING. AS THE FIRST WAVES CRASH, MY BODY AND MIND GO BLANK. MY WORRIES ARE LEFT AT THE MARINA AND I CAN BRACE MYSELF FOR FREEDOM ONCE AGAIN.

*Gert Jan Molenaar, sailing yacht owner and entrepreneur*



The most advanced, powerful and reliable yacht electrical systems in the world.

**MASTERVOLT**  
THE POWER TO BE INDEPENDENT

**BUDGET MARINE**

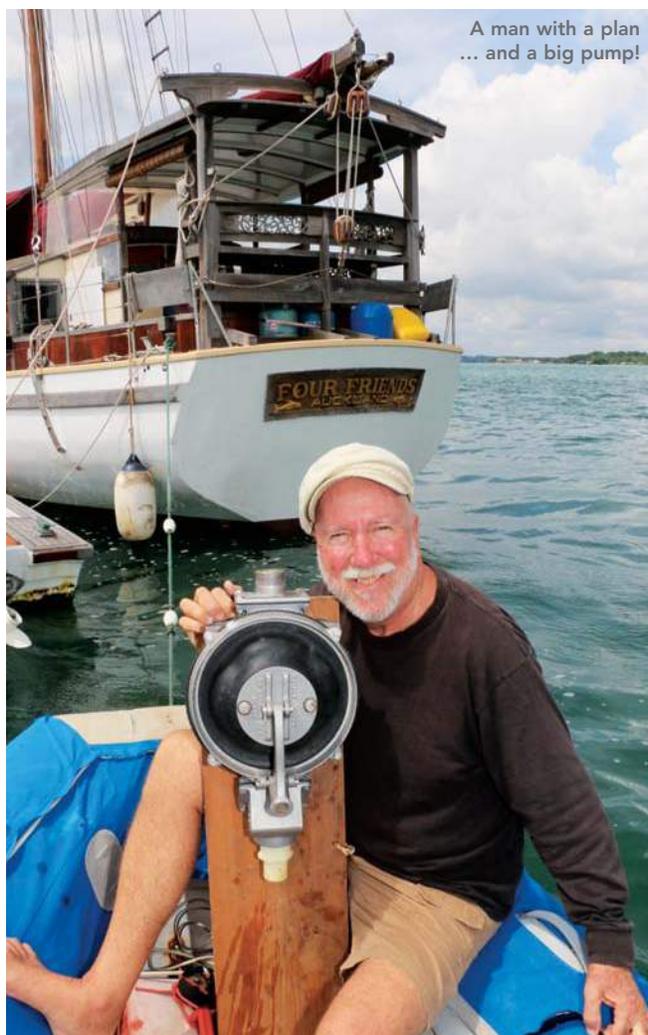


Group Buying Power throughout the Caribbean

Technically knowledgeable team

Broad range of top brands

[www.budgetmarine.com](http://www.budgetmarine.com)



People used to regularly say to us, “You’re sinking!” We’d smile indulgently at their lack of sea-smarts and say, “No, we’re *leaking*. If the pumps fail, THEN we’re sinking!”

So, the game of yachting, back then, was basically transferring saltwater *out* quicker than it came *in*—while wearing yachting togs and muttering about cruising to Tahiti.

Now listen up: the ‘floors’ of a carvel planked wooden vessel aren’t the cabin sole but rather the athwartship timbers that join the frame ends, garboard plank, keelson, and ballast together. They had little drain holes in them, called ‘limber holes’ (because they were hard to reach without hurting your back). Anyway, these tiny holes would immediately plug up whenever it could make matters worse.

For instance, if you dropped a bobby pin in the forecabin, a toothpick under the cockpit, and had a female comb her hair amidships—one of your limbers holes would clog within three nanoseconds.

Thus, while sinking, even a working bilge pump (these were rare) would only pump out its own compartment—while the rest of the floorboards floated forlornly.

If you cleared the limber holes (some wooden boats had a bilge chain to do this), then *all* the bilge pumps clogged simultaneously.

Basically, we found that—in the 1950s—electric pumps worked perfectly well when not needed, and then ‘pooped-the-bed’ if switched on during battle conditions.

Each week, the wooden boat owner would install a bigger electric bilge pump—and connect it to the same battery in the bilge, which would drown whenever needed. Weird.

Let’s fast-forward to New Zealand’s Sir Peter Blake. He was a hero of mine whose life ambition was to participate in a fairly-staged America’s Cup, something which had never happened before. Anyway, he ultimately accomplished this dream—only to be gunned down in Brazil by pirates.

Anyway, Blake’s entire family are world-notorious wonderfully-weirdo blow-boaters—and also mad as hatters. They still cling to their wooden boats and their cherished wooden boat traditions—all of which made me deliciously happy as I anchored alongside the schooner *Four Friends* in Singapore.

“Oil up the manual bilge pump,” I told my wife Carolyn, “and toss a spare bottle of rum in the dinghy as well.”

It took about five weeks before I heard a familiar traditional wooden boat scream from *Four Friends*. It was the sound of my distant childhood ringing out once again across a peaceful anchorage.

“We’re sinking!” cried Phil Blake. His wild-haired father backed him up with, “We’re going down!”

“I’ll bring a manual pump,” I shouted back happily, and scrambled for our dinghy. They didn’t act impressed. They thought I’d bring a squirt gun. HA! Silly them! I brought a giant two-inch, one gallon per stroke portable Edson diaphragm pump—a pump so big it’s guaranteed to ‘pump a pair of trousers’ without a hiccup.

Even better, I brought my wife Carolyn with it.

Yes, the schooner *Four Friends* was in dire straits in the Singapore Straits—with all the floorboards floating, her house bank of batteries underwater, a hole in her, and no bilge pumps functioning.

Perfect! Just like old times!

"Stand back," I told the two Blakes as I allowed my strainer to splash into the bilge and nodded at Carolyn.

My wife is strong—hardened by a hard life of pampering yours truly. Suddenly, the output end of that Edson bilge pump was fire-hosing everything in sight. It was like a gigantic, berserk snake! It was ripping sails and bending stanchions and knocking off the binnacle! YAHOO!

"Wow," said Phil Blake.

"What a woman!" said Old Wild Man Blake. "Fatty, I want to buy her AND the bilge pump!"

The bilge level started falling faster than my bank account. We had to keep transferring our pump intake strainer because the limber holes would clog.

Freak'n perfect!

Even the dialogue was traditional. While Phil Blake took a turn at the pump handle, he waxed poetic about his wooden boat. "Her timber is impervious to teredo worms—they haven't a chance," he crowed. "Why? Because her planking is negatively buoyant! She's built out of the wood eternal!"

This is all typical wooden boat rhetoric—spouted by woodies the world over.

His aging dad, white hair flying like the delightful demented madman that he is, backed him up, with, "This hull has the same number of watertight compartments as the *Titanic*. She's *impossible* to sink!"

YES! They were truly, totally twisted, wooden boat freaks! Sawdust sniffers! *Timber men!* Shipwrights who believe wood could do no wrong. And, they were completely, delightfully delusional. Totally lit up. Totally crazy. And I fell in love with both of them instantly.

And that, my friend, is traditional marine socializing wooden-boat-style! 

---

EDITOR'S NOTE – Cap'n Fatty and Carolyn are hang'n with the 'rough trade' of S'pore on a mooring at the Changi Sailing Club.

**TWO STROKE**  
**EverRun**

TOHATSU 18  
TOHATSU 30  
TOHATSU 50

- More Reliability
- More Durability
- More Power
- Better Fuel Consumption
- Redesigned to power through the world's toughest environments!

**TOHATSU**  
outboards

Budget Marine is the official dealer for Tohatsu Outboards in the Caribbean. Our knowledgeable staff is ready to help.

**BUDGET MARINE**

Group Buying Power throughout the Caribbean

Technically knowledgeable team

Broad range of top brands

[www.budgetmarine.com](http://www.budgetmarine.com)