



Tarpsails: Nuthin' Wong, a Chinese junk built from welded steel with a down-to-earth touch, under full sail off the coast near East London

'Nuthin' Wong' here at all

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HENRI DU PLESSIS

A real sea gypsy gave me a cuppa aboard his real sea gypsy-style boat at the Royal Cape Yacht Club.

Clive Hamman is a former South African. Or can one still call him that, seeing he left this country in 1968? I suppose he really is a Canadian now. "Oceanadian", more likely.

I call Clive's home and means of transport a boat, because it is by no means a yacht. Yachts are fancy, finicky sorts of things usually associated with riches and a certain attitude. If Clive's boat has any attitude, it is one of "been there, done that, got the picture". A quiet sort of unassuming confidence.

Clive's boat is a Chinese junk. Or at least it's built according to the recipe. Those operator-owners of smooth glass-fibre boats might very well describe it as a junk - but with a different, more English, meaning. Personally, I don't think Clive gives a damn. Nuthin' Wong, as she is called, has the kudos. Already three-quarters of the way around the world, Nuthin' Wong has pierced the oceans under all kinds of conditions, in places which some of the fanciest gin palaces only dream about.

Clive and a few friends built Nuthin' Wong's hull in Canada in a matter of 13 months, all from quarter-inch steel. You should see the pictures he has of the building process. No mean feat. The boat, a 54-footer, was designed by a Canadian naval architect known for his unique methods.



LEON LESTRADE

Mates: Clive, left, with canine helmsman Jacksonville, hosted friends Katharina and Klaus last week

Nuthin' Wong does not have a deep keel. She is equipped with bilge keels and a keel-some, which make it easy to put her ashore on any smooth beach for hull maintenance. Give Nuthin' Wong the once-over and see how the wrinkles of a tough life at sea have already deposited themselves all over her.

Junks look desperately out of balance and yet, after thousands of years of collectively covering thousands upon thousands of nautical miles, they have proved their worth in no uncertain measure.

Clive thinks so too. "I settled for the junk design simply because of the track record," he said. When he invites you below decks, you'll notice that this is no five-star yacht. You'll also notice it is the abode of an unattached man living a very bachelor existence. To blazes with the cute stuff, get on with the fun. The woodwork inside is there for mostly practical reasons - bulkheads, storage shelves, steps, bunks and so on.

Clive is keen to get some people aboard

who would like to help sail his boat the rest of the way to Canada.

When he leaves Cape Town in two weeks' time, Clive will head for St Helena, Brazil, the West Indies and the east coast of the United States. He is still pondering the possibilities of following the canals from New York to the Great Lakes and making a tour of that beautiful area.

All the prospective sailor has to do is help cover some general boat costs and his or her own costs. Food and stuff. Sailing with this skipper on this boat should be no mission at all. Clive is as easy-going as they get, it seems. Soft-spoken, knowledgeable, confident.

But then, anyone who had sailed a Chinese junk more than halfway around the world should have all the confidence in that world. For people who want this gypsy experience, to learn to navigate the original way and learn to dive, Clive can be contacted at the Royal Cape Yacht Club.