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Monday, May 13, 2002



DAVE BADTKE: Overwhelmed, Ichbin sails away

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The phone rings. It's my friend Ichbin Überwältigt. Icky for short. (Years ago I gave up trying to say his last name. Too many strange-sounding syllables.)

"I got provisions, videos, enough beer for a month," Icky says. "I'm outta here."

"But your wife and children? Your job?" As an afterthought I ask him about water.

Icky starts to cry. I promise to meet him at the marina with batteries and as many cinnamon bears as I can spare. Finding that I only have four packs, I stop at the Chevron on West K and buy another 20 packs of bears for 10 bucks. Still a good deal. I figure that I'll only give Icky half, tell him that Chevron was waiting for a shipment. I check out the young woman behind the counter. "Nice lights," I say.

The night is chilly. Fog has rolled in along the Strait from San Francisco. The full moon bathes the marina in an ethereal glow. Icky stands next to his beloved 32-foot GLÜCKLICHE REISE in his heavy foul-weather gear, his hood over his head, his arms pushed out from his sides by thick, puffy sleeves, his tear-soaked beard glistening.

GOODRIDE (that's what I call the old girl) is listing in the moonlight about 15 degrees to port. I take Icky's padded arms in my hands, stare into his big rheumy eyes and say: "You've got a serious weight distribution problem here."

Icky shakes his head disconsolately. "Too much beer," he says.

"I mean GOODRIDE," I say.

"Oh," Icky says in a wan voice, turning his head in his hood, trying to look to his left. "Beer and low tide."

"How many cases?" I ask.

Icky begins to sob as he tilts forward into my arms.

We descend into GOODRIDE'S saloon and sit on the starboard side to balance her out. Cases of Bud Lite line the port wall. I offer Icky a cinnamon bear. He unzips

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his coat and pulls off his hood. His hair is matted. His beard needs trimming. He looks as though he hasn't slept for days. Slumping as he picks lurid red bear bits from his teeth, he offers me a warm beer and tells me his story, which all started, he says, when the washing machine quit working.

"I come home and Rosy starts on me even before I have a chance to take a breath or eat dinner or nothing. The washing machine won't work, she says, and I ask her why, and she says she doesn't know, and I ask her how she broke it, and she gives me a nasty look so I go to the laundry room to see what the heck's going on. The water's like totally in the tank and I don't have a clue what she did. Like, what am I, a Maytag man?"

"I'm staring at the dirty tub when Bobby comes in and tells me that the TV's broke. Whaddya doing watching TV on a school night? I ask him, and he tells me he got his homework done already. Sure, I say. Sure you did. He starts to bawl.

"So I'm juggling the remotes in my lap for the big-screen TV, VCR, DVD, CD, digital cable, and Dolby super-duper, multi-channel, surround-sound system with simulated multiplex stadium effects, trying to figure out what Bobby did to cause the TV to go black and the audio to be picking up the police scanner, when Debby comes down and tells me the printer won't work.

"At least she's doing her homework, I say to myself, tossing the remotes on the sofa. Billy starts with the bawling again and I ask to see his homework. Well, he's gone faster than a rabbit into its hole, and I'm with Debby staring at the printer.

"Microsoft, I tell her. It's Bill Gates' problem. And she yells, 'Dad-dy! I've got to get my report done,' and she's such a good student, so I start turning everything off and on again, and while I'm sitting there waiting and waiting for Windows to boot up, Sammy comes up and says there's some problem with the car. Sammy's got a big date. He's frantic the way teenagers get. What kind of problem? I say.

"So we're down in the garage with Rosy's new car that has all these seat memory positions and I'm sitting in the seat, trying to get it to work, and Sammy, he pushes the 4 button, and the seat starts to move forward like the trash compactor in *Star Wars*, and me, I'm trying to get out but Sammy's in the way. I think to myself that maybe I'm a goner. I see the headline -- 'Man crushed against steering wheel; Family complains nothing got fixed' -- when Sammy pushes the stop button just before all the life is squeezed from my body.

"And then Rosy comes into the garage to say the oven controls quit, and Bobby's back complaining about his Sony Playstation, and Debby's crying that the computer crashed and she lost her paper and she's blaming me, her dear dad who tried to help her, for turning the computer off.

"So I just yelled, 'Enough! No more!' and drove away. That's when I called you."

"But all this beer and stuff?" I say.

"I've been thinking about sailing to Hawaii for a while," Icky says. "Life's too complicated."

I hand him the bag filled with bears and batteries.

Icky peers into the bag.

I notice cartons of batteries next to the beer. "Why so many?" I say, pointing.

Icky shrugs. "There's the portable DVD player, you know for *Get Shorty*, *His Girl*

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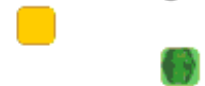
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Friday, movies like that to cheer me up, and my handheld GPS unit, and the CD player and radio, and my digital camera." Icky extends a large portable phone to me. "And there's this, my satellite phone. I only wish I could take my laptop."

I inspect the phone. "I think these guys went out of business."

"Oh yeah?" Icky says, surprised, tucking the phone back into its case.

"What about flashlights and food?"

"Yeah, maybe. It's only a two-week sail if the weather's good.

"You taking some books? You're going to have a lot of time to think."

"Too heavy," Icky says.

We talk some more, have a few more beers, before I push GOODRIDE away from the dock. Icky waves. I drive back home.

The next day I get a call from Rosy. Seems Icky got stuck in the channel leading from the Marina dock to the Strait. "He should know that they haven't dredged the channel deep enough for him to sail at low tide, not with his draft." Rosy's sigh is long. "Anyway," she says. "I was wondering, do you know the name of a good appliance repairman?"

Dave Badtke's columns can be found at [more Badtke](#). Older columns can be found at www.CarquinezReview.com. He can be contacted at Dave@Badtke.com; PO Box 763, Benicia, CA 94510; or by calling 707-745-5540.

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