



Life after fishing

BY KEITH INGRAM

As the fishing industry continues to undergo change as quota holdings are consolidated, the commercial fishing sector continues to downsize and shed vessels from its active inshore fishing fleet. Many formerly well-found sea-going vessels find a future life, while others slowly deteriorate and ultimately die in some muddy backwater.

When we sold our ferry operations and fishing charterboat in 2000 I became a landlubber for the first time since going to sea at the age of 16. After a year, this did not sit well, and so Vivienne and I started to look at the pleasure market for a suitable vessel to meet the family's needs.

After a few false starts checking out pleasure boats that were overpriced for what was on offer, had a suspect maintenance history or just did not cut the mustard, I decided to turn to the industry I knew, the commercial industry, where a number of charter or retired fishing boats were available.

As the editor of the *Professional Skipper* magazine I had an ear to the ground, and heard a whisper that a former crayboat was impounded on the hard at Tauranga and might be for sale.

A bit more investigation revealed that while the Ministry of Fisheries had impounded the vessel, it was a case of the wrong owner with the right vessel in the wrong place at the right time. The upshot was yes, the vessel was up for sale, as is where is,

and no, MFish did not own her.

Meanwhile, my long-term friends suggested that given that we were about to enter the romantic end of the boating market and that the vessel would be available for a variety of uses, including charter, they were keen to be involved.

This triggered a trip to Tauranga with Barnsey in tow, where a pre-purchase survey inspection was carried out, a price was negotiated and agreed and the vessel duly entered the water for delivery to Auckland.

Ocean Enterprise had spent 18 years working in the East Coast crayfishing fleet. In the last two years she worked in the tuna trolling sector of the industry, but she was not economical because of her size and inadequate ice capacity, and the limited time she could spend at sea. But her bones were good, her hull was sound and the 671 Detroit made all the right noises, and loud ones at that.

Her delivery voyage went without a hitch, except that it became clear that her speed was well down on that suggested, or



what would have been expected from a vessel of this design.

Once she was in her new port of Half Moon Bay in Auckland, she was hauled and a major clean-up carried out to get rid of years of residual fish smells. The fore-cabin was refurbished with new paint, squabs, lighting and so on. A new, large electric head was installed, and a manual suction pump from the shower and basin save-all tank fitted. The engine got a birthday and was tuned and a new propeller was fitted, while her exterior received a new enamel paint job in preparation for work in the Louis Vuitton Challenger Series for the America's Cup.

Although the new propeller lifted her service speed from seven to around nine knots, she was still regarded as being slow for the Louis Vuitton regatta.

This impediment was offset by her manoeuvrability on the course, and her ability to lay and recover buoys very quickly using the hydraulic craypot hauler. And so she carried out the role of "mark set two", laying the leeward and pin marks, a task the race organisers acknowledged she was ideal for. ▶

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