

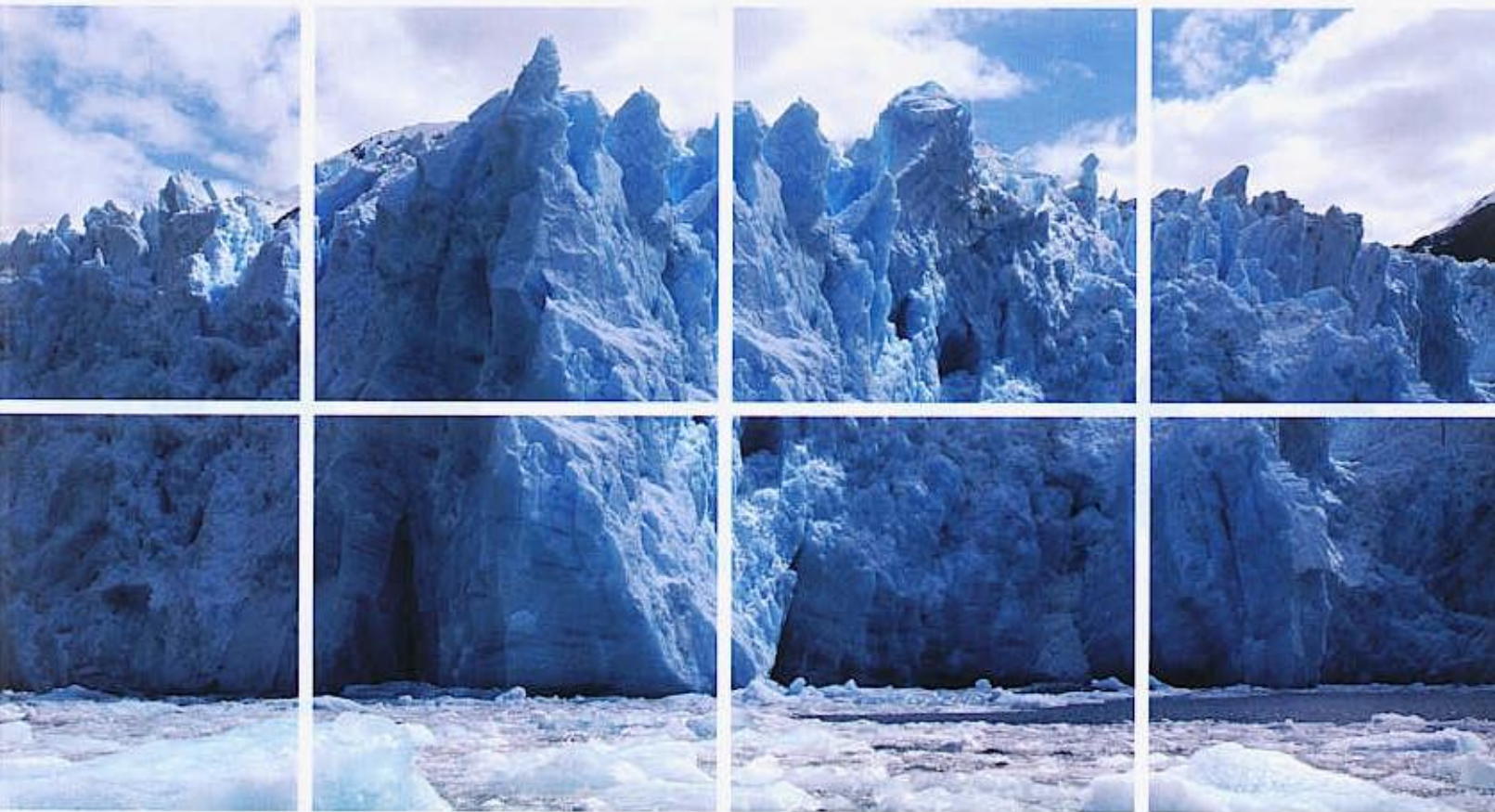
CAPTAIN
PHILIP WALSH

EXTREME SOJOURNS

BY JAMIE WELCH PHOTOS BY G.C.I.



CAPTAIN PHILIP WALSH SITS IN *TURMOIL*'S COMMAND BRIDGE IN FRONT OF AN LCD COMPUTER SCREEN AND HIS EYES ARE ALIVE AND ENGAGED, BUT HE'S NOT LOOKING AT THE SPEED-OVERGROUND READINGS, THE NAVIGATION CHARTS OR THE DEPTH SOUNDER. IN FACT, HE'S NOT LOOKING AT ANY OF THE FIVE FLAT SCREENS AT THE HELM; HE'S FACING AFT, SITTING IN A LEATHER OFFICE CHAIR AS STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHS FROM POLAR EXPEDITIONS APPEAR ON THE SCREEN.



BALD EAGLES, MONOLITHIC FJORDS, WALRUSES,

The pictures, over 10,000 in all, were taken from the 151' Palmer Johnson *Turmoil*—an expedition yacht he has captained for the past eight years—and the yacht's accompanying seaplane, a Cessna Caravan. *Turmoil* has traveled to some of the remotest areas of Alaska and Greenland—where last year the Cessna flew 500,000 square miles—and has served as a science lab for oceanographers and geologists.

"This is a good example of the last massive ice age," Walsh says, pointing to an aerial photograph taken over Greenland. "You can see how these hills in the background are rounded and smooth, which means they were covered in ice millions of years ago, and these pinnacles in the foreground are sharp and craggy, meaning they were above the last glacial maximum. The indications up there are that rapid climate change—global warming—is a reality."

Not only is Walsh the captain of *Turmoil*, which was launched in 1996, he is also overseeing the construction of a 210' Royal Denship Expedition Vessel—also to be called *Turmoil*—in Denmark. It will better accommodate the yacht's team of scientists with wet and dry laboratories, a helicopter, landing pad and sophisticated deepwater diving equipment.

Born in Sydney in 1956, Philip Walsh spent the first four years of his life at an Australian Naval Base in New Guinea, where his father was stationed, then returned to Sydney at the age of six and began racing sailing dinghies on Sydney Harbor.

"Each winter we would pull our boats apart and get them ready for the next season, or sell them and buy a bigger boat," Walsh says. "We learned a lot about boatbuilding because that was my dad's profession before enlisting in the Navy. I moved up to 18' skiff sailing, which led to yacht racing, then Maxi regattas and eventually the 1979 and 1981 Admiral's Cup."

After the Admiral's Cup, back in Sydney, Walsh and his new bride Beverly built a 37' Bruce Farr-designed sailboat and

**Philip Walsh, below right,
helps launch the Cessna
from Turmol's swim platform**

**Below and facing page:
Turmol's crew bears
witness to a polar ice
melt in Alaska, 2002**



ICEBERGS AND GLACIERS APPEAR BEFORE HIM.

cruised her up and down the coast of Australia. They eventually sold the boat and, after an Admirals Cup in '81, sailed a 46' Swan called *Maid of Unst* to the Caribbean. "I was 26 at the time and Beverly and I couldn't believe that some people we met had worked for over a year on boats in the Caribbean," Walsh said with a knowing smile, "which seemed like a hell of a long time to us. Our plan was to do it for a year and then go back to work in Australia, but here we are 21 years later."

The Walshes stayed in the Islands, worked for two years as captain and mate aboard the *Maid of Unst*, on which they completed four Atlantic crossings. After that they oversaw the construction of a 70' sailboat in Southampton, England. "The owner was a New Yorker who wanted to do a circumnavigation, so we helped build the 70', sailed her across the Atlantic and then suddenly he decided not to go around the world," Walsh said.

Their next boss was a little more adventurous. New York Yachtsman Bob Aron, who owned the 76' SY *Tabasco V*, was an avid sailor and adventurer, and was a better fit for Philip and Beverly. "We worked for Bob for 11 years and took *Tabasco V* around the world three times, zigzagging up and down the oceans the entire way," he said. "We were definitely the slow boat around the world." Bob Aron also had other racing boats so the Walshes would fly into Key West or Antigua and race on his Farr-designs that ranged from 42' to 45'.

Tabasco V went from Australia to PNG, Micronesia, Melanesia, Palau, Hawaii, French Polynesia, Tahiti, Bora Bora, and Alaska, where they spent a considerable amount of time in Glacier Bay, Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. Then they sailed back down through the South Pacific to Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, through to the Arabian Sea, around the Horn of Africa

Aerials of majestic
Alaska, below, which help
geophysicists and geologists

“ IT'S A FRONT-ROW SEAT TO GLOBAL WARMING ”



Walsh and his
wife have
done the
Northwest
Passage trip
every other
year for the
past 15 years

to Somalia and up the Red Sea stopping at Djibouti, Hanish Islands & Hurgada. They summered in the Med and visited Greece, Turkey, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, South of France, Costa del Sol, Costa Brava and countless other destinations before returning to the Caribbean and Pacific to do it all over again. *Tabasco V* completed two more circumnavigations, but one place stood out in the minds of Walsh and his wife more than the rest: the Polar Regions, most notably the northern coast of Alaska. “There are no boats there and you see the glaciers, eagles, salmon springs, brown bears, black bears—you name it, we saw it,” Walsh says.

The Walsh’s transition from sailing yachts to motor yachts came in the Nineties, when they saw yachts growing in size exponentially. “The boats were getting too big and we were getting too old, so we decided if we were going to stay in the business we would get into big motor yachts,” Walsh says. “But that proved to be a bit more difficult than we had originally thought because if you only had sailing yachts on your CV you were automatically pigeonholed as a sailor.”

So Walsh began delivering large motor yachts across the Atlantic, right about the time the MCA code was coming onto the megayacht scene. He and Beverly went to England for six months and lived in a converted barn while Philip got his MCA Class IV license, then began delivering vessels such as the 150’ *Feadship Carmac VII*, 164’ *Feadship Pilar* and a 140’ Heesen, among others. Walsh worked as a permanent captain on a 125’ *Feadship* and in 1998 he got a call from a gentleman in Chicago who owned the 151’ *Palmer Johnson Expedition Yacht Turmoil*.

He and Beverly jumped at the job on *Turmoil*, which turned out to be the perfect boat for a couple who loves traveling to remote northern areas of the world, because the owner devotes his life to adventure, science and education. *Turmoil* was designed by Dick Boon at Vripack with an aluminum hull to go around the world, and it most certainly does—since 1996 the yacht has logged more than 180,000 miles, which averages out to be about 25,000 miles per year.

“The boss is interested in anything to do with science and education,” Walsh says. “Most notably the issue of rapid climate change. We do a lot of warm water cruising in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea but the interesting expeditions are in the high latitudes above 70-degrees north.



"We like to travel up the Greenland coast following the three-year journey of Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, which is about as far as you can go in a boat. The interesting part is that his trip took three years, but we do it in eight days. This will be the fifth summer we've gone up into the ice with a group of scientists to study the effects of the greenhouse gases on the receding glaciers."

For Philip Walsh the most beautiful places in the world are Alaska and Greenland, the "Lands of the Midnight Sun." These are places where monolithic icebergs melt and for a brief time—before the Pack Ice drifts down and closes up the open water once again—visitors can get a glimpse of towering fjords; pancake ice drifts; giant icebergs; and countless species of wildlife, including 2000-pound polar bears, seals, walrus, etc. Last year in Greenland, *Turmoil's* private plane flew many thousands of square miles over the unspoiled landscape where the owner and his team of geophysicists and geologists witnessed firsthand the remnants of retreating glaciers.

And this is no ordinary team of scientists—Sherwood Rowland, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his studies on ozone depletion; Princeton Geoscientist Dr. Michael Bender; and other leading scientists from Woods Hole, Scripps, Lamont-Doherty and other top oceanographic institutes.

The team will get a major upgrade to their facilities in 2006 when a new *Turmoil* will be launched at Royal Denship. The 210' steel ice-class vessel will be better suited for scientific work, and will have a helicopter with landing pad; wet and dry labs in the bow; and drifters and gliders for taking sophisticated air and water samples. Walsh is overseeing the construction and splits his time between the 151' *Turmoil* and *Denmark*. Once launched the new yacht will continue with the mission at hand: adventure cruising while studying the effects of the greenhouse gases.

Says Walsh: "You've got a front row seat to global warming up there. Retreating glaciers give you a frozen, visual timeline of what's been happening for millions of years. The jarring part is that our team predicts if there is a sustained increase in air temp of three degrees Celsius, the Greenland Ice Cap would melt within 100 years and cause a 21' rise in sea level. The important thing is to realize the mistakes we as humans have made and do what we can to correct them." ■

Turmoil
sheltering
from a gale,
above, in
Cape Farewell,
Greenland