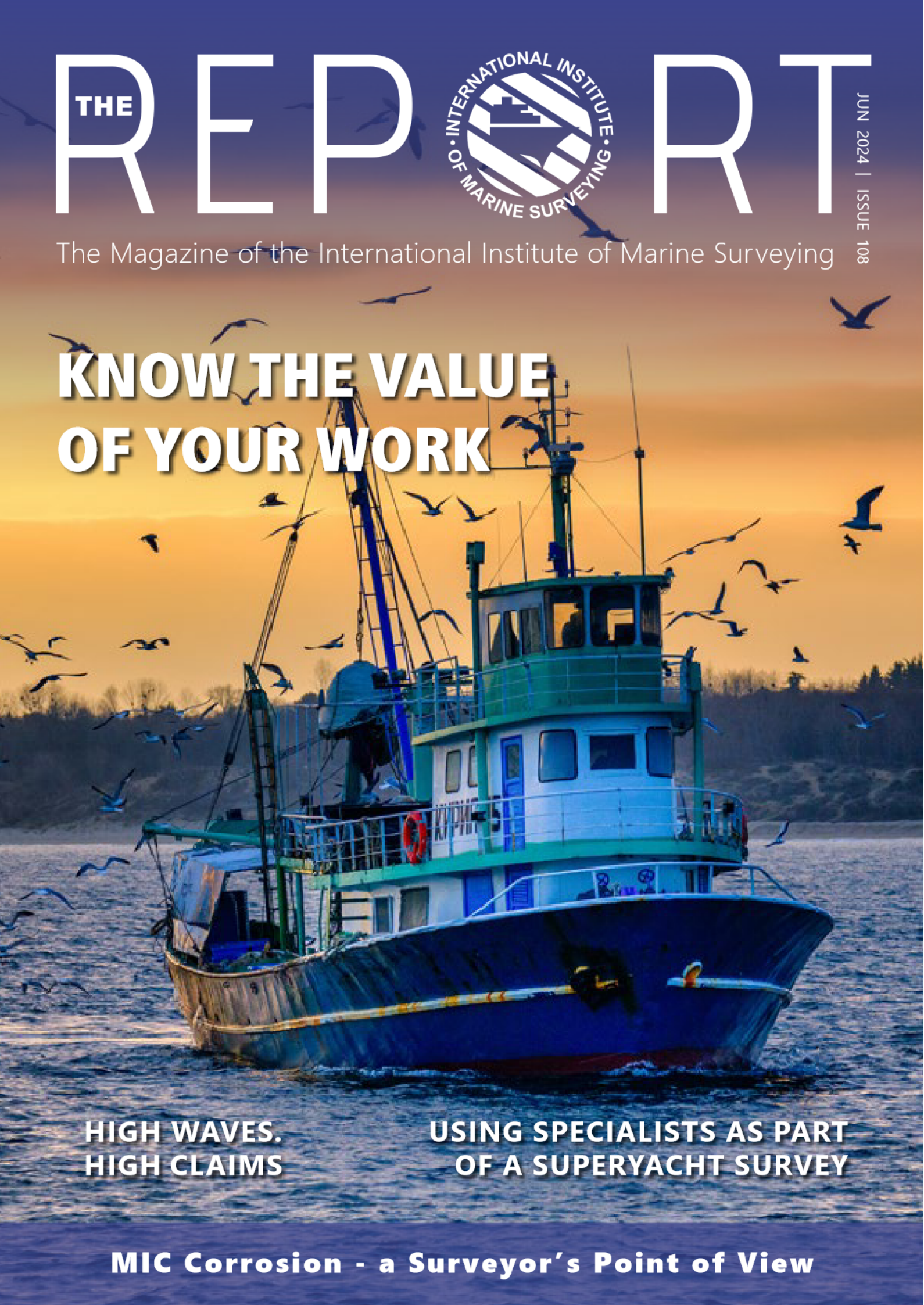
THE REPORT

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MARINE SURVEYING

JUN 2024 | ISSUE 108

The Magazine of the International Institute of Marine Surveying

KNOW THE VALUE OF YOUR WORK

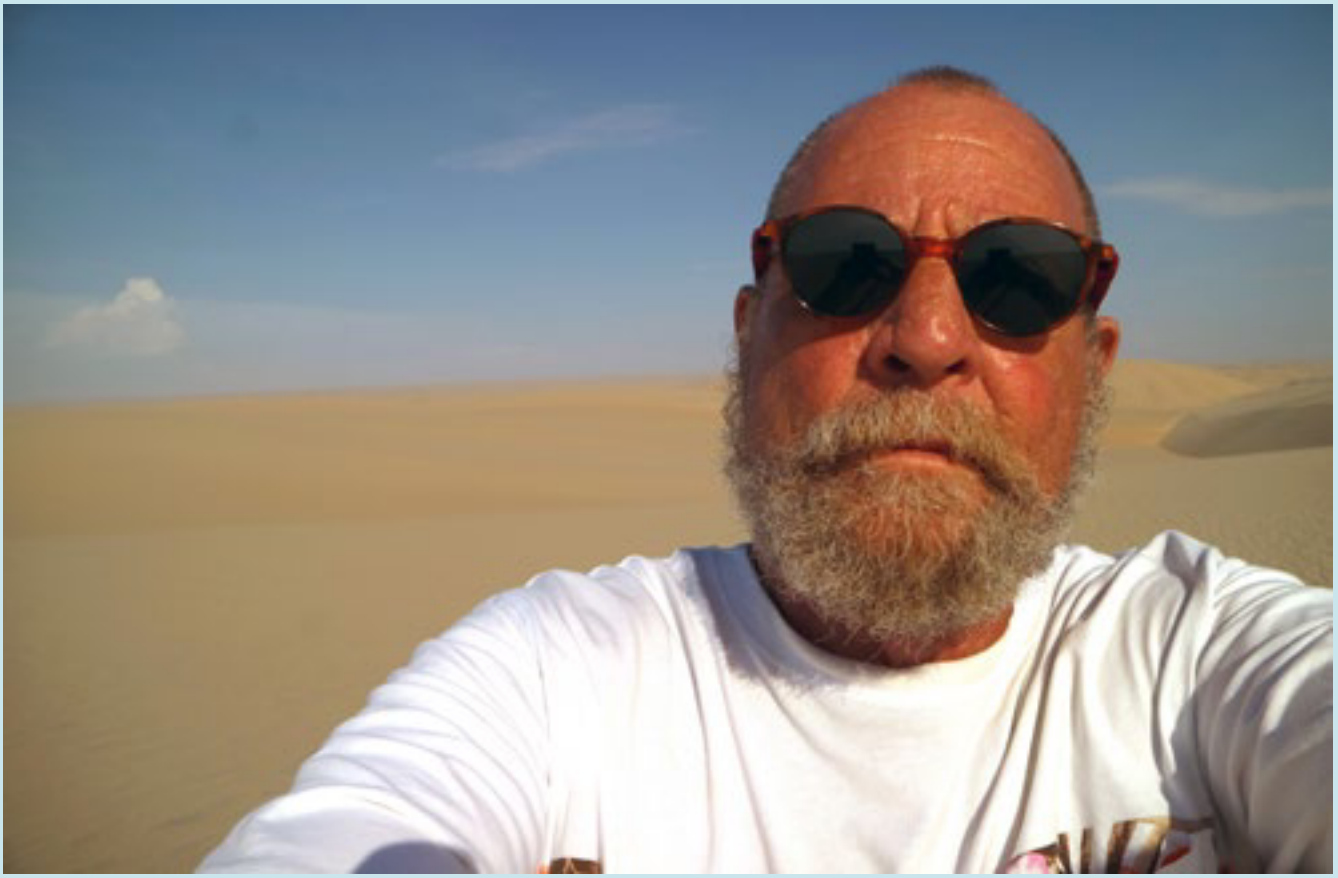


HIGH WAVES. HIGH CLAIMS

USING SPECIALISTS AS PART OF A SUPERYACHT SURVEY

MIC Corrosion - a Surveyor's Point of View

A **day** in the **life** of **Kim Skov-Nielsen** MIIMS



Experienced multi-lingual surveyor and long standing IIMS member, Kim Skov-Neilsen MIIMS is the subject of the 'A day in the life of' feature in this edition of The Report magazine. Mike Schwarz asks the questions and, in particular, he was keen to find out from Kim about his recent incredible and unforgettable journey to Namibia's remote skeleton coast.

Q1. Few marine surveyors set out to have a career in the industry as such. For most they have lived a life before becoming a surveyor. How was it for you in your younger days and what was your route into this sector?

I left Georgetown University with no idea what I was going to use a degree in International Relations for! I took time off to go sailing and liked it so much I made a career out of it – first as a boat bum, then delivery crew and delivery skipper and into the racing world, both inshore and offshore. 20 years and 160k Nm later, I wanted to try living in a house for a change and needed a 'career' to go with it. I decided not to waste 20+ years of experience and use it as a surveyor. I took the diploma course not because it was necessary, but because I felt it gave a legitimate basis for what I was going to do.

Q2. If I were to single out one of your key surveying specialisms, it must surely be Rigs and Masts. Indeed you wrote a book on this subject and have lectured on this topic often. How did you become an expert in this area? And how important is it to know where your specialisms lie as a surveyor and not to work outside your area of expertise?

At the Americas Cup '87 I was bosun for one of the boats which made me responsible for it – the hull, the gear, the steering, the winch package, the pumps, the tuning, the calibrating, the mast and all the rigging on it. It was as steep a learning curve as anyone can imagine – near vertical, and the looks of contempt from the experienced hands were equally educational. I think of surveying as very similar to being the bosun – you need to know a bit (quite a lot actually) about everything onboard while maintaining any specialist knowledge or skills.

Q3. Which aspects of the survey do you find most challenging and why?

Boats are easy. People are difficult. Brokers who get the details wrong and then blame you. One got the wrong year and blamed me for pointing out the HIN # to the client! Owners who conceal critical details about their boats, even going to extreme lengths to obfuscate the facts are a challenge. Buyers who want you to fabricate an excuse for them to pull out of the deal. All these things would not happen in a perfect world, but in our world they do.

Q4. If you were starting your career as a marine surveyor today, would you do things differently and with the onslaught of technology what are the key aspects of the job that have changed since you became a surveyor?

We would all like to know more, to have more knowledge at our fingertips and to be able use it cleverly in our businesses. In today's world knowledge of and familiarity with the IT world are critical – us dinosaurs struggle sometimes to see the value while younger surveyors win awards for their 'online presence'! Some of us dinosaurs don't even have an online presence!

Q5. There remains no barrier to entry into the marine surveying profession globally – should the industry be concerned about this? What is your opinion about the need for standards, training and knowledge sharing?

One of the reasons I joined the IIMS was the emphasis on continuing education. I believe this is a cornerstone of our future. Yet I despair when I see that many surveyors never ever go to a training session or attend an online seminar. SAMS in USA has an 'up or out' policy – upgrade your skillset or get thrown out. And they mean it.

Q6. The next generation of surveyors needs to learn and acquire knowledge, perhaps with the aid of a mentor. What general advice can you give to someone starting out in the profession?

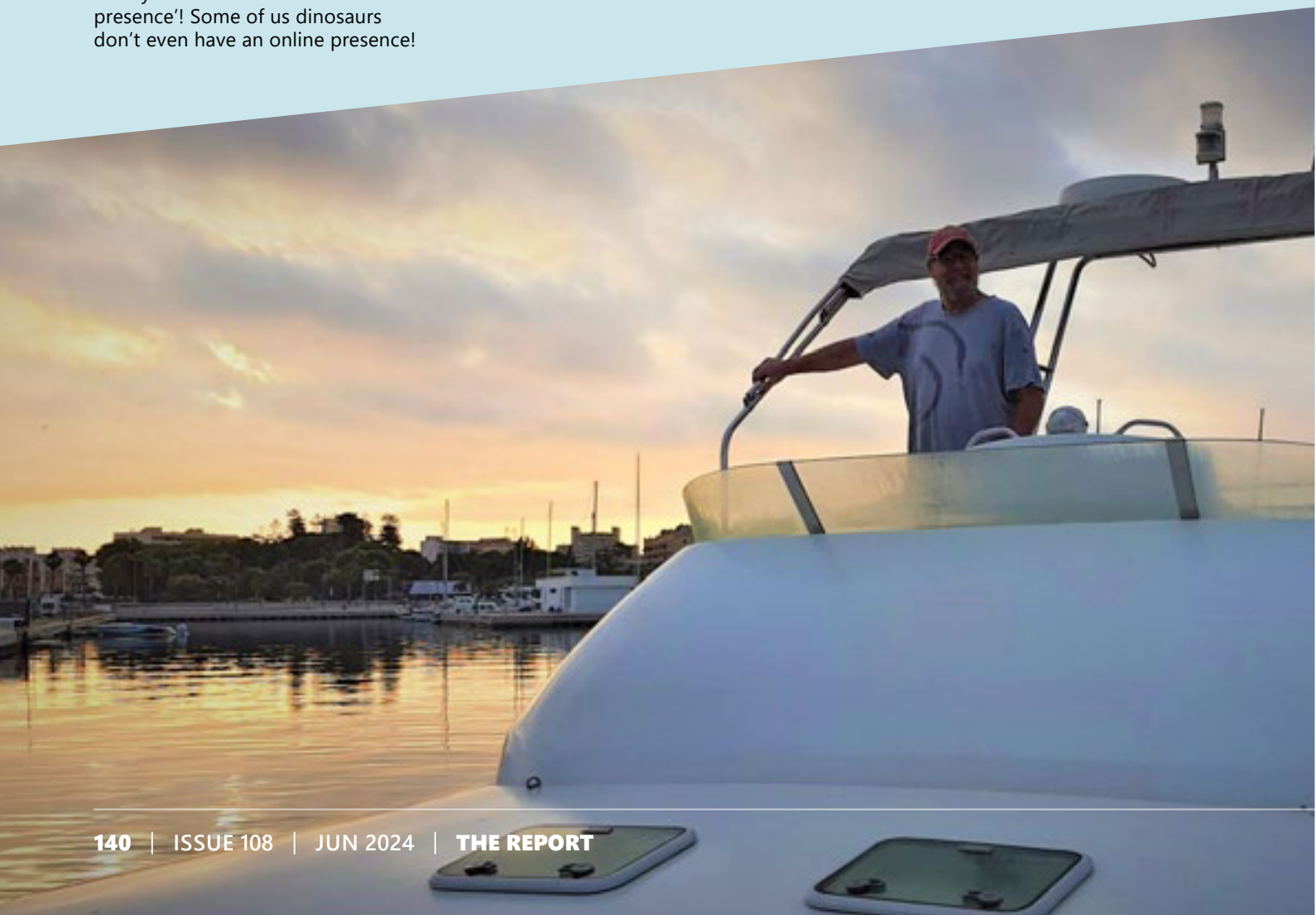
I have mentored people in the past. My only advice with any kind of learning is you need an open mind – closed minds learn nothing. I believe that accepting that you don't know everything is a life skill.

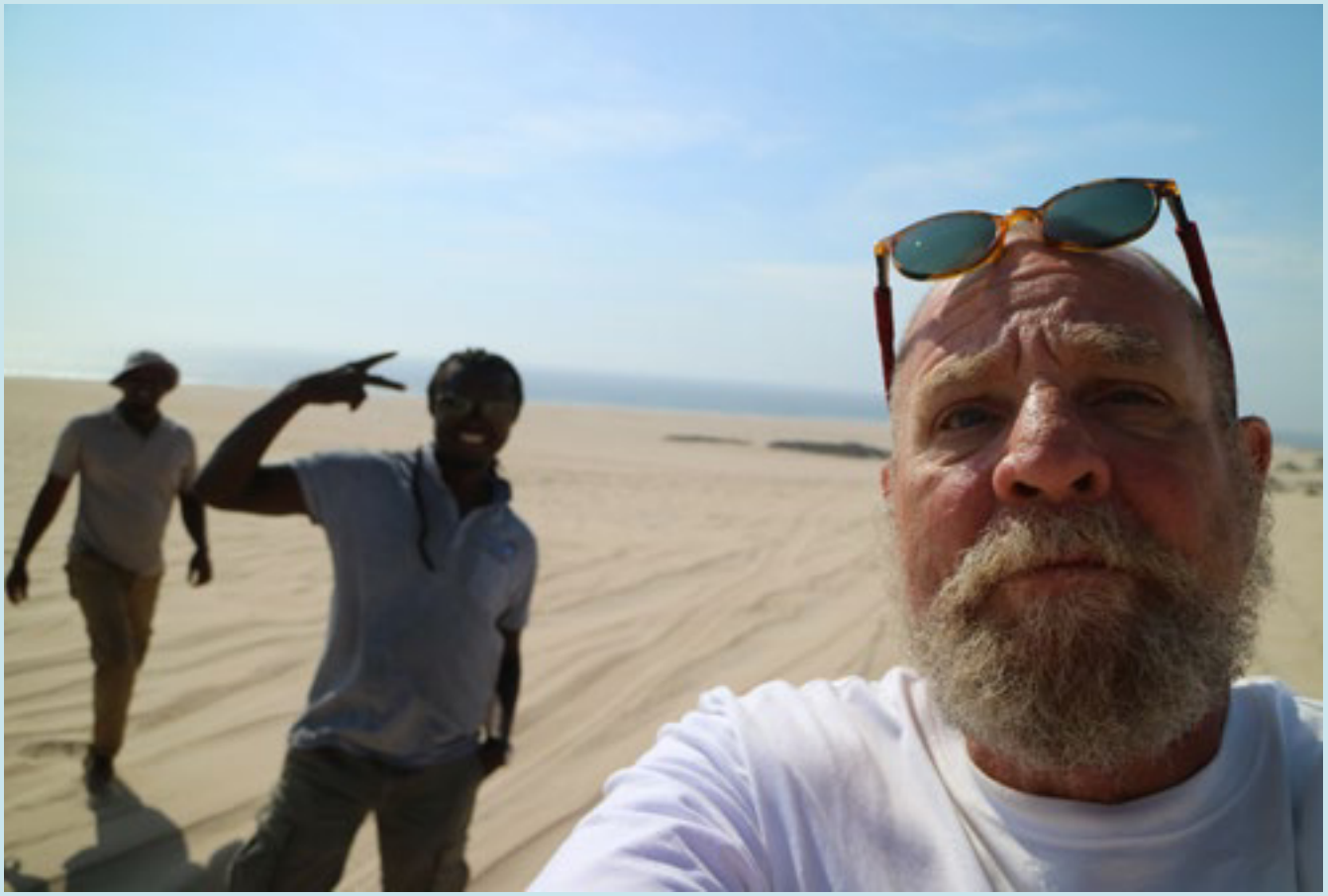
Q7. There are five basic human senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. How important is each of these when you are engaged on a survey, which I have often heard referred to as not dissimilar to a police investigator undertaking a forensic examination at the scene of a crime?

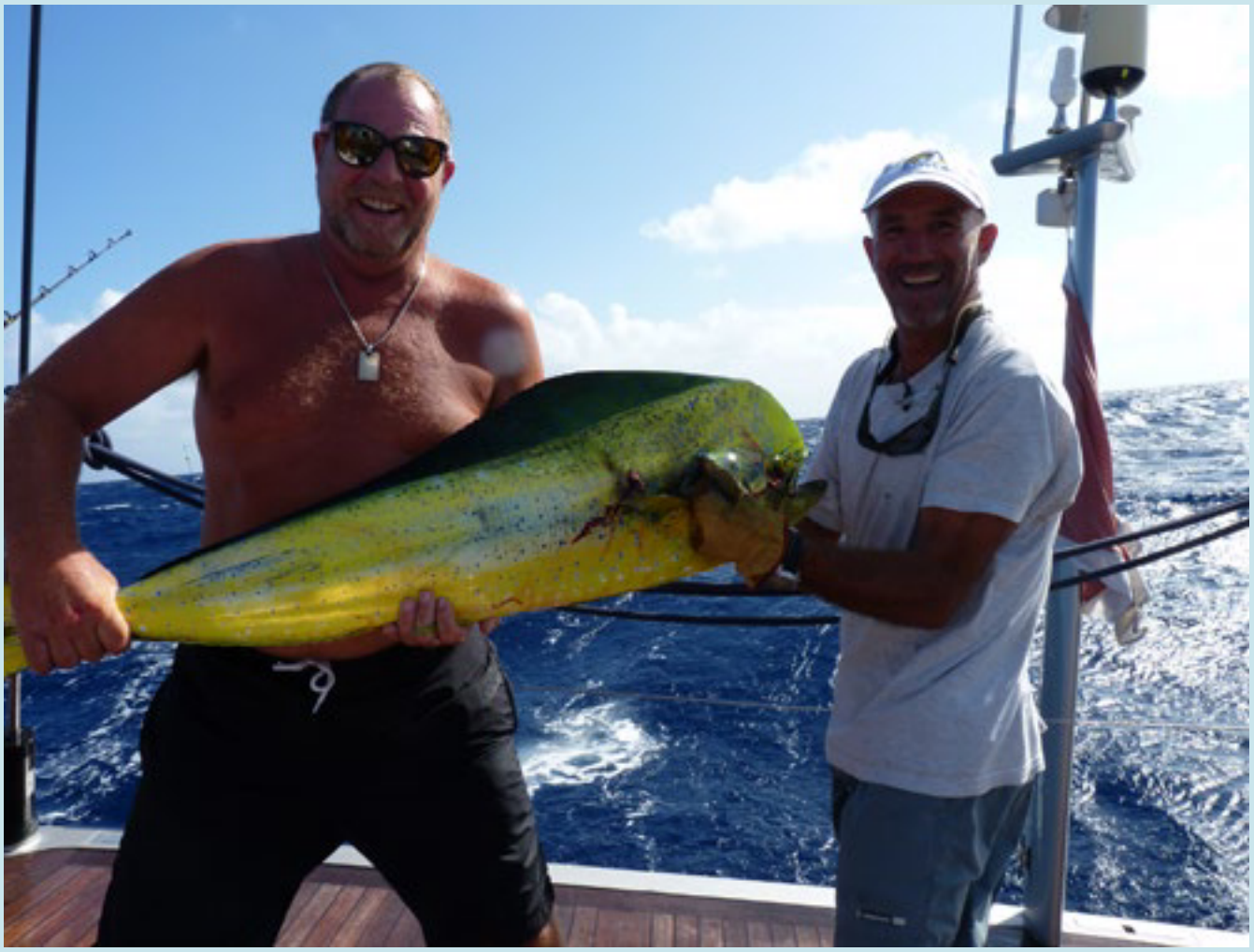
While smell can tell you about the state of the bilges the minute you step aboard, it would be hard to do a survey without a Mk.I eyeball.

Q8. I am always intrigued that many surveyors have a favourite tool in their toolbox. Which one is yours and why?

I don't know about favourite, but the most important accessory for me is my camera. I carry a main digital camera plus a small digital backup, two GoPros and my mobile phone which I hardly ever use. I will even tell a client who was present during the survey that I cannot comment definitively until I have reviewed the pictures taken on survey. I often learn a bit more from the photos or even see things I didn't spot before at the time of survey.







Q9. You speak a number of different languages I believe. How come you learned so many and has the ability to operate multilingually helped you with your marine surveying work?

The ability to understand where people are coming from is critical. I speak six languages, but it is not how many languages you speak but how quickly you can learn them that is important. I don't speak Turkish but my ability to learn quickly brought the crew onside during a four-day 35m MY survey in Marmaris and I learnt so much more from them than I would ever have learnt about the boat on my own.

Q10. You and I have spoken about the extraordinary trip you undertook last year to the Skeleton Coast in Namibia. From our discussions and the subsequent detailed article you wrote, it was evident to me how moved you were by what you saw and the overall experience. Please explain why the trip made such an impact on you.

It is very hard to explain the emotional impact the trip had. On the face of it, it was just an adventure to an isolated spot on the planet, but it struck a really deep chord. Maybe it was a 40-year fascination with the Skeleton Coast, with the shipwrecks in the desert, with the compelling beauty in the utter desolation. Then again, perhaps what brought me to the banks of the Kunene River in Angola was that it was where my father had driven to from Copenhagen in 1953 in a surplus US Army jeep.

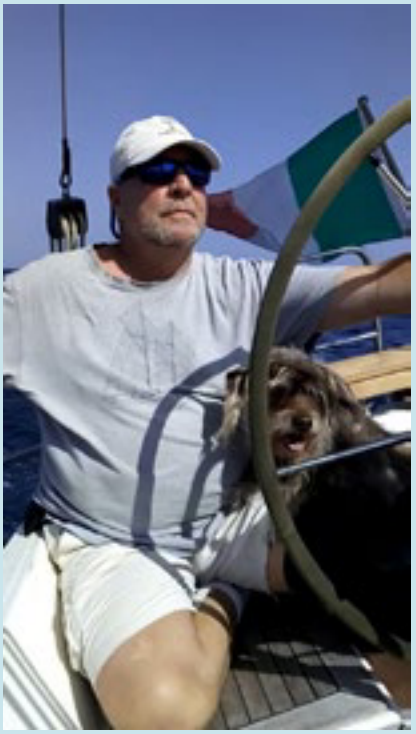
Q11. What is your single overriding memory of the Namibian trip?

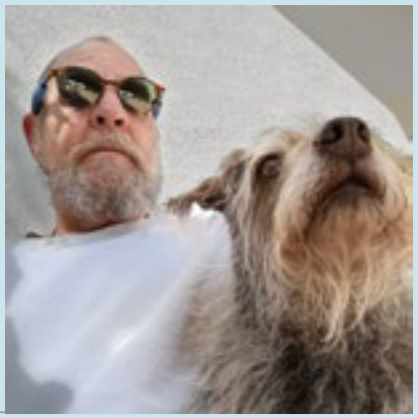
The 'Soo-oop-wa' – in a 200m year old desert the "sand screams below your feet", so that your camp cot vibrates with the movement of the desert. The dunes are moving perpetually, incessantly, as if to remind us of how unimportant we are in the grand scheme of things.

Q12. You have travelled the world, and seen many different places, and experienced a variety of cultures. So, my final question is which place in the world would draw you back again and again more than any other and what is your favourite cuisine when you get there?

I grew up in 14 countries and have lived in a further 8. Until I went to Namibia I would have said Sri Lanka. Wherever it is, it is the people who make it.

In 1980 my brother and I travelled around Mexico for a month on local buses eating street food and never had a dicey tummy until we ate in a restaurant at the airport! Whatever it is and wherever you eat it – as long as it is fresh, it's good enough for me!





Footnote

Kim has published a detailed and moving account of his trip to Namibia with some extraordinary photos taken on his adventure. To read the article go to **https://www.yachtmarinesurveyor.com/namibia.htm**.