

Survival Down Under by Fleataxi

When Bob Wilson retired, he sold his drilling/excavating company except 2 surplus deuce and a halves which the new owners didn't want. They were ancient military surplus when Bob bought them over 20 years ago, but they were in excellent shape thanks to his careful maintenance and the mods he made which took strain off the diesel motor. One was set up as a cargo hauler, and the other as a fuel tanker since several jobs he worked were far enough from Civilization that they needed a dedicated fuel hauler to keep the equipment and the spare tank full. He made a really good living from oil field and mining exploration contracts, and instead of buying toys, he paid off every debt he owed, bought a used 36-foot sailing catamaran with a fairly roomy cabin, and spent the next several years fixing, upgrading, and basically turning it into a Bug-out Boat. While he realized that Borrooloola might be isolated, it was on the coast, and close enough to Darwin and some other bigger cities that they might see some refugees, and probably not the sort they'd like to see. He was friends with a waitress/bartender at the local pub who went by Kelly, but he was pretty sure that wasn't her real name. He did know she was recently divorced, and very bitter over it. He was her sounding board afterward, and once she got her head screwed on straight, started befriending her and slowly brought her along into the Preparedness lifestyle. One good thing was her ex was loaded, so she owned her house free and clear. Her Toyota Land Cruiser was old and paid for too. What money she did earn was soon socked away into preps. The first thing they did was he used his drilling rig to dig a deep well on her property, and set up a small AE system in her well house to power the pump. She had a 500-gallon cistern, and they used a small Shurflo 12vdc pump to pressurize the house, and a larger one to pressurize the garden hoses. She paid Bob cost on the parts, and he gave her a hefty discount on his labor since they were good friends. She told him she didn't feel right with him doing stuff for free like he offered, and he immediately caught on, but didn't say anything. Until now, she'd never been more than a friend.

Bob was an avid shooter prior to when the Territorial Gov't "went stupid" as he put it. Instead of turning in his guns, he bought some pipe through his company, and buried them, along with ammo, cleaning kits, survival gear, and anything else he had room for in the 6-foot by 8-inch ABS plastic pipe caches. One end was sealed, but the other had a "clean-out" end installed and sealed with silicon. He carried the tools necessary to dig up the caches and turn the clean-out in his vehicle kits and his BOB. He had to settle for a folding shovel and a small GPS unit, but it beat dead reckoning. After doing some Internet research, he bought 2 refurbished Garmin Rhino GPS/FRS/GMRS radios and several micro-SD memory cards to download and swap maps between his PC and both units. Instead of spending \$\$ on marine electronics, he purchased the bare minimum so he was legal. He bought refurbished marine radios, including VHF since he wasn't planning on going more than 25 miles offshore. He was disappointed when he found out he had to spend almost \$800 on a EPIRB beacon since the Australian Transport Council was obsoleting the older units in less than a year. Once he had all his gear, he showed up at the next class to get his boat operator's license, then paid his fees.

Since it was just him, he didn't spend a lot on amenities aboard his ship. The head was flushed with salt water that he manually pumped up, and the sink was like a camping sink which folded into the wall above the toilet, and had to be hand-pumped. The shower stall was as small as he could comfortably make it, and the shower was a Solar Shower. His bedroom was Spartan, and comprised a queen-size air mattress over a box platform that he used for storage, including several "secret compartments" in case he was searched. His

clothes and stuff were in a footlocker at the foot of his bed. The galley was barely big enough for the alcohol stove, sink, and a small countertop that he prepared food on, then used as a table, which also folded up when not in use to save space. He bought a used Saltwater Reverse Osmosis water filter, a spare membrane, and an extensive repair kit on E-bay for far less than new.

**Borrooloola – McArthur River, Northern Territories, Australia. About 30km from the coast.
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Bob's boat was barely able to make it to his private dock during the dry, and his house was barely 50 feet from the riverbank during the wet, but it was up on 6-foot pilings like his floating dock in case of flooding, which happened every few years. Bob's garage was on stilts too, and the door sealed water tight in event of flooding.

Years ago, Bob bought a bunch of guns and reloading supplies, which his wife Doris argued with him constantly over. Two years later, he filed for divorce when he caught her in the act with a rich old SOB from King Ash Bay that owned a small yacht and used it as his personal bordello. 500 dollars in the right hands got pictures of the couple in the act, but the judge still ordered him to turn over his house in town and firearms collection to her, and pay her \$1,000 per month Alimony. He got poetic justice of sorts when 3 months later, she was listed as missing and presumed dead in a boating accident off Centre Island. According to witnesses, she was smashed as usual, hit her head on the railing and fell overboard when their boat had to make a violent maneuver to avoid a speeding boat on a collision course. The coroner's inquest cleared the rich old SOB, and Bob took advantage of the situation to hide his firearms the gov't was in the process of banning. He located her signature on the divorce document, and scanned it then cut & pasted it onto a receipt showing she received all his weapons as the court ordered. She was dead, her divorce attorney had already been paid and moved onto new clients, and her boyfriend had already replaced her with two younger models, so the chances of his subterfuge being found out were zilch as long as he kept the weapons hidden. In another ironic twist, Doris hadn't changed her will, and it left everything to Bob since she had no living relatives, so he got his town house and all his possessions back.

The good thing about owning a drilling/blasting company was that you had access to heavy equipment to bury stuff on short notice when needed. He located a large Connex box, loaded it full of everything he didn't want the Gov't to find, and sealed then buried it in a good spot on high ground. He knew the location well, so he didn't need to load the location on a GPS, or write it down anywhere. He buried several ABS plastic pipes as well with several rifles and emergency gear he needed to get to quickly if he ever needed it.

When he went shooting with Kelly, they only used the "gov't approved" weapons they were willing to surrender if needed. Bob wished he could stay in practice with his long-range rifles, but the current gov't was even more stupidly Liberal than the bloody Yanks were. He really wanted to shoot his .338 Lapua Magnum, but knew if anyone saw it, the jig was up. He bought a custom Remington 700 chambered in .338 Lapua Magnum, with a H&S Stock and a Nightforce NXS scope which was as close to the M-24A3 as possible. He even went to the extreme of purchasing a sound suppressor from a black-market arms acquaintance of his. Since he was already a felon if he got caught, he bought some surplus Royal Army grenades and stuff from him as well – JIC. Bob's boat gun was a M-1 Garand with 30-06 en-bloc clips. 1,000 rounds of 30-06 168 grain AP ammo in 8-round en-bloc clips and 500 rounds Federal 168 grain match ammo plus 5,000 Sierra Match King 168gr bullets, and enough powder and primer to reload 5,000 rounds.

Bob got so good at working in fiberglass/Kevlar from fixing his boat that he decided to buy some plans off the internet for an All Terrain Vehicle that looked kind of like a cross between an ARGO swamp buggy and a RHIB with water jet propulsion from a jetski. Being a compulsive scavenger according to his ex-wife Doris, he was on a first name basis with the owners of the local scrap yards, and when he called around looking for stuff, they were very helpful. One yard had a Jetski that had seen better days with a good working jet pump and nozzle, plus the controls. Another had several 4wd ATVs with various problems, and the other had a 10-foot RHIB that needed extensive repairs to be seaworthy. His best score however was a wrecked police bike with a good engine. Sam told him it was a newer KZ-1000, and he would guarantee the engine runs and the transmission works. The officer in question ran head-on into a vehicle crossing his path while he was Code 3. The frame and front forks were bent, but the engine was fine. The PD's insurance company totaled it, and he bought it cheap. He'd sell him the entire bike for \$200 as is. Bob picked up the bike, the RHIB, the Ski Doo, and the 4wd ATVs and loaded them onto his deuce and a half. He had his project for this year.

It took him longer than a year to build his ATV/Amphibian, but he was proud of what he accomplished. He took the motor and related components out of the KZ-1000, the jet drive out of the Sea Doo, and transmission/axles/wheels/tires from the 4wd ATV, and used the old RHIB as a mold for a new Kevlar/Fiberglass body. He had plenty of Kevlar left over from fixing his boat. Once he removed the air bladders and finished prepping the RHIB, he coated the shell with mold release and was ready to start. The first couple of layers were colored gel coat, then several layers of fiberglass, then several layers of Kevlar, each layer laid crosswise from the last one, and finally more fiberglass and several gel coats. He sanded the layers smooth as he laid down the last gel coats, and was rewarded with a glass-smooth laminated body. He carefully winched the whole thing up high enough to turn it over, and broke the mold along several lines he had cut to weaken it and make it easier to separate the mold from the fresh fiber/Kevlar body.

He realized even a Kevlar laminate plastic hull wasn't strong enough to take all the forces his amphibian might be subject to, so he decided to add a tubular aluminum frame to the inside of the hull, and bolt everything to it. He started by drilling holes through the hull to bolt the hull to the frame, then sealed them with gel coat on both sides. While the hull was curing, he fabricated and welded the square box tubing aluminum frame. It was a box setup with just enough room to pass the axles going to the 8 wheels, the 8 spring packs for the torsion bar suspension, and the plumbing/hardware for the jet pump propulsion system between the upper and lower frame. After talking to a friend, he decided to add front and rear 2-inch Class II hitch receivers so he could use a receiver-mount roller fairlead 3K Warn Winch. In order to take the loads, his machinist friend Mike recommended several frame modifications including aluminum tubing under the lip of the RHIB hull, and several pieces of tubing connecting the upper frame to the main frame. The front and rear receivers were welded with strengthening gussets to the upper frame so the open ends faced forward and aft just over the top of the bow and stern. He welded plates to the main frame; then bolted the 1000cc engine, transmission and a transfer case to the plate. Mike built the transfer case for him which drove the ATV transmission and all 8 wheels or the jet pump, or both. The ATV axles and anything else sticking through the hull had special water-tight seals installed. He built a fiberglass housing for the engine/transmission/jet pump and routed the exhaust out the back up high. The cylinder heads and the rest of the equipment were fed ducted air off a reverse-induction scoop, and a large 12vdc blower that ran whenever the engine switch was set to on. To power everything he installed, he replaced the small 12vdc battery with 2 AGM-type 75Ah Marine Starting batteries connected in parallel. The outer 4 wheels were multi-terrain knobbies, and the inner 4 tires were exotic paddle tires that worked on land or sea. Once he was finished, he drove it around the yard, then into the

creek. It sank in the mud just like he knew it would, but the RHIB hull kept him from sinking deeper. He drove further until he was sure the jet inlet was clear of the mud, then he set the transfer case to "both" and between the water jet, and the wheels clearing a path, he was soon out of the muck and he planed out between 10 and 15 knots like he hoped. Once he was clear, he switched the transfer case to jet and drove up and down the creek, then finally took it back into shore. The transition was a bit bumpy, but not dangerous, and finally he was totally wheel-borne on solid ground. He drove it over to the hose and washed all the mud and muck from the underside of his beast, then parked it at his floating dock next to the house. He carefully checked the bilges, but there wasn't any sign water had gotten into the hull past the fittings. Finally he topped off the 5 gallon tank with petrol

Bob didn't get many chances to go Walkabout when he was running his business, so once he retired, he made up for it. After he rebuilt his boat, he'd spend anywhere from 2-4 weeks visiting one island or another. He'd ground the boat on a suitable island, build a shelter, then start fishing and trapping to catch everything he needed. He had 2 months worth of food and supplies aboard the Sheila Marie, and his RO filter unit could make over 80 gallons per day, and he had a 50 gallon captive air tank, so when the tank was full, the RO unit stopped working and conserved power. He wished he could find something cheaper, but a friend steered him to the Katadyn Survivor 50 as a backup, since they were the best made Salt water RO units around. He paid over \$1500 for his unit plus a rebuild kit including a biocide and a new RO membrane. While he was gone, Kelly looked about the place, and fed Ralph, his Rhodesian Ridgeback. He wasn't the best guard dog, and tended to ignore strangers – that was until you opened the gate, which was his cue to bark like mad and wake Bob.

His other dog, Larry, was an easygoing Black Lab whose job it was to guard the boat. He earned his keep more than once when he woke Bob up and alerted him to the presence of Pirates, which he dissuaded from coming closer with several shots across their bow with his Garand.

Later, Bob is on walkabout, and Pirates decide to use "his" island to land and strip a boat they stole. Knowing that they'd eventually find him or his boat buried in the mangrove swamp, he decided that a little pre-emptive strategic sniper work might be a good idea, and checked the layout of the island on his map. He saw that if he took an indirect route, he could sneak down hopefully unnoticed within 600 yards of their camp and their vessel. It was a nice speedboat with a 30-caliber belt-fed on the bow, probably a M-60, but he didn't get too good of a look at it. He decided to bring Larry his dog along with him, since he could keep an eye out for people trying to ambush him, and once he was out of earshot of the boat, Larry was defenseless, and it was pointless to risk his life that way. He packed his bags including his custom drag bag for his Garand, and started the long slow climb up the hill.

The deeper he got, the thicker the underbrush was, and the slower he went since he didn't want to make a lot of noise, Several hours later, he arrived at his hide, and started setting everything up. When he was ready, he threaded on the suppressor, and loaded an 8-round en block clip of 30-06 AP ammo. He spent the rest of the day glassing the pirates, and counting heads. Once everyone was out in the open, he started shooting. The guy Bob assumed to be the leader dove behind a tree and directed traffic to flank Bob, except he didn't know where Bob was thanks to the suppressor. Bob's next shot drove through the tree and blew the pirate's head up like an exploding watermelon.

At this, some of the pirates charged, and some sought any cover they could. Since nothing

around there was could stop his rounds, he shot the ones who were attacking him first, then shot the ones trying to hide. He didn't offer or give quarter since he was sure the Pirates wouldn't if their positions were reversed. He waited a while, put up his Garand, and took out his 1911 to check if they were all dead. Once he was sure all the pirates were dead, he decided to check out their speedboat. He was horrified when he recognized one of his mate's boats, and decided to contact the authorities. He knew a NTP Constable, and called him on his cell phone, and described what happened. Bob didn't trust the recorded lines, and always called his LEO friends on their cells since he knew they weren't recorded yet. Right before dark, a boat drove up and landed next to the speedboat, and Larry got out. He shook Bob's hand, and took his statement. When they were finished, they shook hands again, and they towed the stolen boat back to Darwin for processing. Bob was really upset since it turned out it was his friend's boat, and they were on a pleasure trip when they were ambushed by pirates. Neal, Sally, and their two daughters were missing and presumed dead. With the return of the boat, they were quickly declared dead, and their estate settled. 60 days later, Bob got a check from the Northern Territorial government for the proceeds of the boat, which was sold at auction since it wasn't evidence anymore. He gave the check to a local church, which gratefully accepted his generous donation. Bob's only caveat was to use it to feed and shelter the poor/homeless.

A couple of weeks later, Larry stopped by Bob's house on the creek. He pulled up in the Water Enforcement speedboat, and Bob helped him secure the boat to his dock. They went inside and sat down, then Larry told Bob that he glossed over the fact that Bob shot all the pirates with an unregistered semiauto rifle. Bob grinned and thanked him for it. Once they got done shooting the breeze, Larry said he had to get back to work, and spotted The Beast on his way out. "What's That?"

"You mean The Beast?"

"Whatever you call it – looks like a cross between a RHIB, a Jetski, and an Argo Amphibian."

"Close – I scavenged all the parts from the junkyard, built a new hull for it using the leftover Kevlar and fiberglass from fixing my boat."

"Looks pretty formidable – what's with the front and rear hitch receivers?"

"That was Mike's idea. He felt if I could mount a 4K Warn Winch off an ATV to either the bow or stern of the Beast, it might be helpful for SAR or getting either myself or someone else unstuck from the mud around here."

"Good Idea – mind if I take some pictures and show them to my boss? We were using john boats for SAR, but they are limited by the prop clearance in shallow water, and it looks like your Beast is a true amphibian, and can easily transition from land to water, and even slog through mud or swampy conditions if necessary. The Northern Territory government might want to buy some."

"Ok, but this is the only prototype, and it's built with salvaged parts."

"let's see if they're interested first, Gotta Go – I'll be late for my date if I don't move it now – see you later!"

They ran for the dock, Larry started the boat and as soon as Bob had the lines cast off, he motored out of there as quickly as he could.

Bob didn't have anything pressing to do, so he opened the frig, got out a beer, and sat down at the table to write down some ideas to improve the Beast, and make drawings of the existing Beast and his upgrades if the NT gov't was really interested. His first idea was to buy a bigger RHIB since the Beast was kind of cramped with everything aboard, and didn't have much room for passengers, and definitely couldn't carry a stretcher case. He checked the Internet, and a 16-foot RHIB could easily carry 2 stretcher cases plus 2-4 passengers/SAR personnel. Based on the bigger RHIB, he re-did his drawings and calculations, and eventually showed them to Mike, who make some changes that Bob definitely approved of, since Mike was a Mechanical Genius. With the bigger RHIB, they could use a 1200cc motor, and a bigger jet pump. The longer wheelbase made a wheeled drive impractical, so Mike suggested a synthetic track drive which would be lighter and stronger than the multi-wheel drive. The bogey wheels would offer less drag, so it would be faster in the water, and the tracks eliminated all the extra axles and driveshafts since it was rear-driven, and the other wheels were there to guide the track and allow it to flex over obstacles. Bob asked Mike about converting the Beast back to track drive, and he said it wasn't worth it since he already punched all those holes in the hull. If he made enough money out of this deal, he could build himself a brand-new Beast with the tank drive. Bob thought he could sell his old unit to Kelly and give her a great price, and still have his parts for his new Beast covered.

Two weeks later, Larry showed up, and told Bob the state was interested in a dozen units for now, and maybe another dozen later. Bob told Larry that if the government could give him a real idea how many they wanted, he could get volume discounts from his suppliers since they would insist on all new components. Bob gave Larry Mike's rough draft of the plans which gave them enough information to make an informed decision without being able to simply build their own. Larry shook Bob's hand, and hurried off to the station. He came back a week later, and said "Bob, you're not going to believe this. I showed your plans around, and so far the government wants 50, and a bunch of the blokes want one depending on how much you're going to charge."

Bob was glad he was sitting down, and quickly logged onto the internet. He sent e-mail Requests for Quotes to all his suppliers for 50-unit or 100-unit pricing, then turned to Larry and said "Now we wait!" Bob got an e-mail from the local Kawasaki distributor, and asked him what he wanted that many engines for. Once Bob told them that he was building an amphibian, Gene told him that Kawasaki made the STX-R that used the same motor, and he had a bunch unsold he could sell the engines and jet pumps plus the control equipment cheap since Kawasaki was about to pay to have them shipped back to Japan and scrapped. Bob asked Gene how many STX-R's they had in stock that they were shipping back, and he found out they had 115 units available. Bob asked Gene to write him up a quote for the engines and jet drive gear out of all 115 units shipped to Borroloola.

You could have knocked Bob over with a feather when he got Gene's quote back – he was selling them for 50% of his costs, including shipping. His best offer for the motors alone for 100 units was 3-4 times that price. Two days later, the RHIB manufacturer's e-mail came back, and his quote was just as Bob expected. Now all he was waiting on was Mike's quote for the transmission and running gear for the track drive. The prototype beast was interesting to shift to say the least. The jet drive didn't have a transmission, so it relied on the motorcycle's transmission and clutch to shift gears. The ATV had a 3-speed transmission plus reverse. Mike told Bob he didn't need 3 forward gears, only a forward/reverse capability and let the motorcycle transmission do the work.

Bob got some bad news when Mike called him and told him the Kawasaki STX-R's motor was directly coupled to the jet pump. They talked for a while, and Mike came up with a

solution. It wasn't the most elegant, but it worked. They would unbolt the coupling, insert a small constant velocity transmission/transfer case, bolt the output of the transfer case to the jet pump, and the jack shafts to the track drive. This way they wouldn't need all the axles and drive shafts all over the place, and could reduce the distance between their upper and lower frames by 50%, which would solve several other problems. The CVT would keep the engine at its optimum RPM and the transfer case would provide a method to reverse the output of the engine in case they needed to back up the rig using the tracks, or flush the jet pump if it ingested a bunch of trash by reversing the pump. Mike talked to his partners in the shop, and made Bob a very reasonable quote for building the transfer case/transmission and all the connectors.. Bob was really happy with the quote, and when he got his quotes together, he called his landlord Jim to see if his old shop was still available. Once he heard what Bob was up to, Jim offered to trade him rent on the shop for as long as he needed it for one of his new Beasts. The parts cost on the beast just about equaled 6 months worth of rent, so he quickly agreed, and sent the proposal to Larry's contact for approval. Two weeks later, the advance check he'd requested to purchase parts and equipment to build them was in the mail, along with a signed contract for 75 units with 1/3 down (the advance check), 1/3 upon substantial completion (all parts in, and first new prototype built) and balance due upon delivery.

Bob guessed correctly he could forget about going walkabout for the next year or so. He called Mike with the good news, then called all his suppliers and told them to ship the parts. He had the advance check in hand to pay for all the parts with enough left over to set up his shop to build 75 beasts in 6 months. He drove over to Jack's Bar and Grill to give Kelly the good news, and ran into his friend Jack, who was a semi-retired mechanic who knew more about building stuff than anyone else in the area. Bob asked him what he was doing for the next 6 months or so, and when he said he wasn't really busy, Bob offered him a job right then and there. He could afford to pay Jack out of pocket for his labor, and between the two of them, plus a couple of apprentices/assistants, they should be able to knock the new Beast out pretty quickly since he didn't have to build the hulls himself. The RHIB builder was building him a semi-custom hull which was 30% thicker with more Kevlar than he normally used. Bob ordered enough hulls that the manufacturer could dedicate a whole line to Bob's hulls. He was supposed to ship bare white hulls without any hull penetrations, and all the stuff they came with boxed for later assembly. Bob sprung for the newer Haplon/neoprene collar since it was twice as durable and strong as the older collar.

Once parts started rolling in, Bob, Mike, Jack and the apprentices Tony and Bill got to work. They welded up a frame, and trial fitted the parts. Bob was pleased that everything fit, He marked and removed everything, then started drilling the hull where all the hull penetrations would go, and installed the proper sized seals. Once they were in, he carefully bolted everything back together and slid the torsion bar tips through the seals, then the drive shafts for the rear axles of the track drive which powered the whole system. Since the rear drive gear had no freedom of motion, it was a simple job to install it. Bob connected the other axle, and installed the rest of the track drive. Jack worked on the jet pump setup and marveled at Mike's design. He thought their hydraulic transmission/transfer case was ingenious, and it make installing and servicing the jet drive much easier. They installed a sliding cover over the inlet which protected it from debris and muck when the jet pump wasn't being used, and slid out of the way when the transfer case was in the jet or both position.

Once the track drive was in, Bob noticed something when he stepped into the Beast. It balanced better on dry land, and had more clearance between the bottom of the hull and the concrete floor of the shop. He called Mike, and asked him to quickly measure the ground clearance, then they did the same thing in the old Beast, and the new Beast had 2 inches

more ground clearance, but it was more stable. He guessed the 8-inch wide tracks and the 8 bogey wheels might have something to do with that.

Once they had the first Beast completed, Bob took pictures of it, and e-mailed them to the Director of the Northern Territory's Department of Transportation. George showed up the next day, and asked Bob if they could take the new Beast out for a test-drive. They climbed aboard and drove it around the shop, then took it outside and easily climbed several small obstacles including 8-inch tree trunks they used for curbs. Since the water was so far away from his shop, Bob suggested putting the Beast on his trailer and towing it to the water to save wear and tear on the running gear, which wasn't meant for long drives on dry pavement. George thought that was a good idea, and as soon as Bob drove the Beast onto the trailer and secured it, they were good to go. They jumped into his deuce and a half, and drove to the river. Once they released all the tie-downs, they climbed aboard the Beast and backed it off the trailer. They drove around the dirt and muddy ground so Bob could show George how the track system worked in its proper environment. Finally he headed for the water, and Bob was confused, the Beast didn't sink into the mud like the old Beast did. Finally, the mud couldn't hold their weight any longer as they continued through the bog to the river itself, and it submerged up to the hull. They were still under track drive, but the tracks couldn't support their weight. He waited until the tracks were free of the mud, and the inlet was in clear water before engaging the jet drive. This bigger heavier RHIB came up on plane much faster than the old Beast, then he realized the track drive didn't have as much water resistance as the 8-wheel setup did. As he advanced the throttle, the boat sped up until they were doing faster than 25 knots. He turned it left and right to show George how stable the design was. Bob didn't realize it now, but the tracks were acting like a boat's keel, and he couldn't flip it if he tried. George asked him what the maximum waterborne speed of the Beast was, and Bob looked at the tac and the speedometer and told him it might be capable of over 40 knots for short bursts, but long runs much past 40 might heat up the air-cooled engine too much. George was more than happy with a cruising speed of 25 knots and short bursts of 40-knot travel since the bulk of the boats they were using for SAR couldn't do more than 25 knots anyway, and weren't amphibians. He was really impressed when the Beast climbed out of the water under its own power and drove right up on the trailer. They drove back to the shop, and George said he had to go back to work, but he was really impressed with the first unit, and he'll release the 2nd payment as soon as he got back to the office today. Bob was really happy, since he'd ran out of state funds over a week ago and was spending his own money.

Two days later, the 2nd check showed up, and they were almost finished building #2. At this rate, it would take him about 90 days to build the 75 units the state had contracted for, leaving him 90 days to build units 76-115. If he sold all 40 units, minus the 5 he'd already promised (Himself, Kelly, Mike, Jack, and Jim the Landlord) at \$10K per unit, he'd make back \$350 thousand, leaving him a profit of around \$180 thousand, which wasn't bad for 6 months worth of work, plus a brand new Beast Mod II. Over the next 6 months, they built a new Beast every couple of days, and they retired to the pub for drinks and dinner. Kelly had several rooms above the pub for rent cheap, so instead of wasting petrol driving 50 miles home just to sleep, he reserved a room at the pub for the next 6 months. Over that time, their friendship grew into romance, but no one called them a couple yet, since Kelly still had a pub to run, and Bob was busy building Beasts, and didn't have time to do any serious dating.

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