



## Creative Nut

By Neville Hockley

**“WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU DO all day?”** It’s a fair question and one that my wife, Catherine, and I are asked from time to time by family and friends back home. And occasionally by random strangers who, after seeing *Dream Time*, our 38-foot Cabo Rico, anchored in the same spot for weeks, sometimes months on end, want to know how we occupy ourselves. After all, we don’t work, at least not in the traditional sense, and as we’re free from most of the distractions and obligations of life on terra-firma, some wonder what we do with all of our free time.

Well, call me peculiar, but I carve nuts—coconuts, to be exact. In fact, I can happily whittle away much

of the day doing nothing else in particular. I sit on a sandy beach or under the canopy on a warm teak deck, hunched over with my chin on my chest, surrounded by shavings while chipping, carving, scraping and shaping my next project with a level of concentration that, to the casual observer, may seem to border on the neurotic.

Not that I am, for the record. I prefer the term “focused.” But some of my projects take weeks to complete, so I have to be persistent. If you’ve ever tried to carve a coconut shell using nothing but a small pocket knife with a two-inch blade, part of the challenge I set myself, you know precisely what I mean—coconuts are

one tough nut to carve! It can take hours of finger-cramping, knuckle-scraping perseverance just to form the most basic of shapes.

It’s a newly acquired skill, one that I’ve only developed since we started cruising five years ago. I never had any free time back in New York, certainly not enough to spend a day carving coconuts (not to mention the distinct lack of palm trees in the Long Island Sound) but out here, cruising in the tropics, happily I have plenty of both.

Sure, there are lots of wonderful and obvious distractions to keep you occupied when you’re sailing around the world— islands to discover, villages to roam, reefs to dive, swapped



books to read, beach fires to share with new friends—but one of the things I love most about cruising



is not carving coconuts, exactly, but rather having the *freedom* to carve coconuts. Or, for that matter, the freedom to explore almost anything else I want to.

You see, life on the ocean stirs your imagination. It gives you time to think, time to reflect and time to create. It can awaken the artist in you, or the writer, or the philosopher. It allows you to explore not only the places you visit, but more importantly, it allows you to explore something more profound—yourself. Because it's out here, far from familiar shorelines and securities, that you are truly free to wander and to roam, in the most significant sense possible, and discover a talent

or a gift—one that perhaps you have always had, but simply never had the time to look for or recognize.

While my little coconut carvings are souvenirs of our experiences, inspired by what we've seen cruising—a humpback whale, a Mayan sculpture, a tiki, a giant manta ray—they're also expressions of something much deeper. They're the result of an awareness that I have discovered within myself, one that has literally helped me shape a new life.

So if you're going cruising, consider taking along a notebook, a sketch pad, some coloring pencils or some paint. And perhaps even a pen knife, because, more than likely, you'll discover a lot more out here than you thought you could ever possibly imagine. ~

*Read more about the sailing adventures of Neville and Catherine Hockley on their website [www.zeroXTE.com](http://www.zeroXTE.com)*