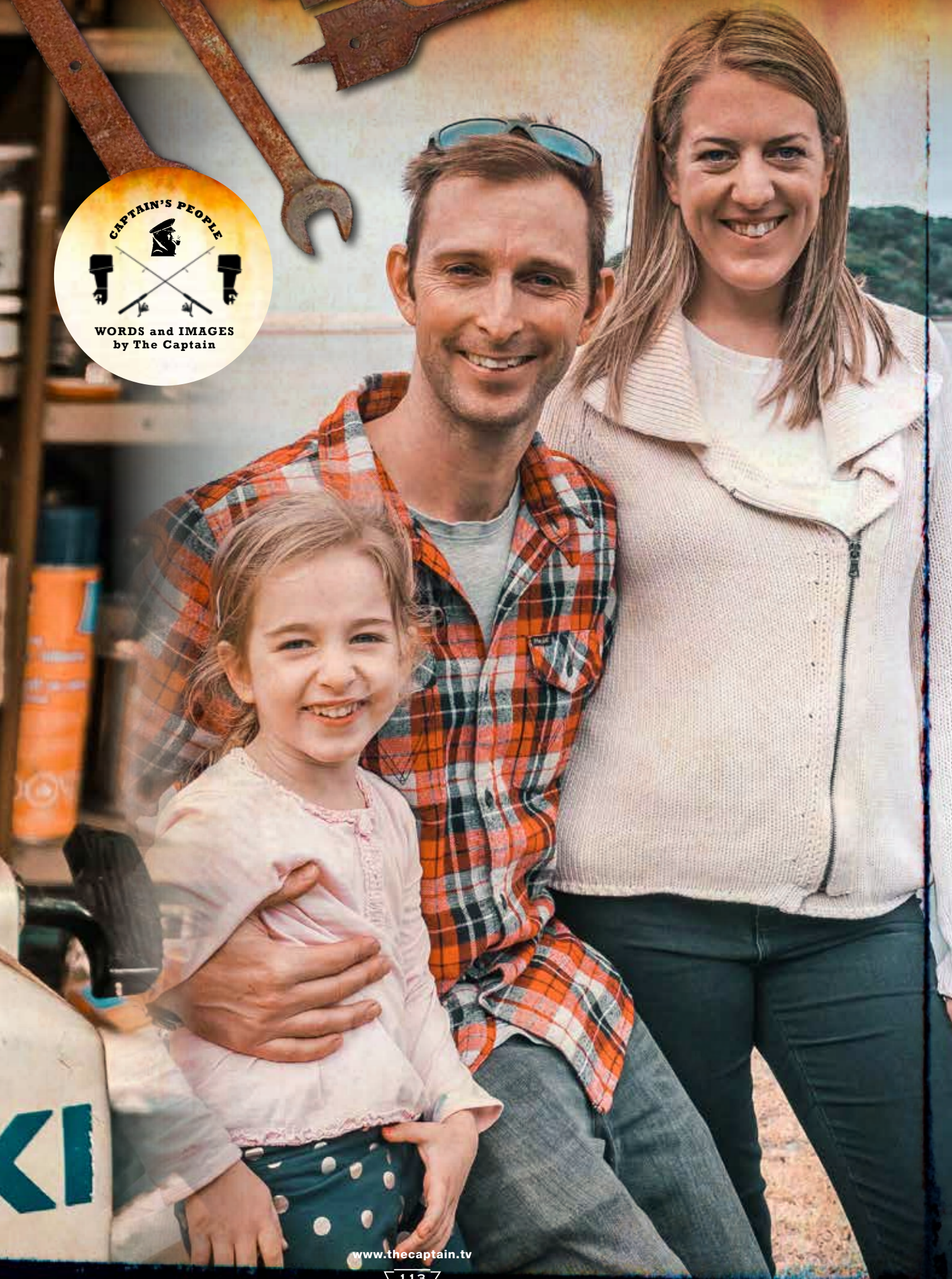
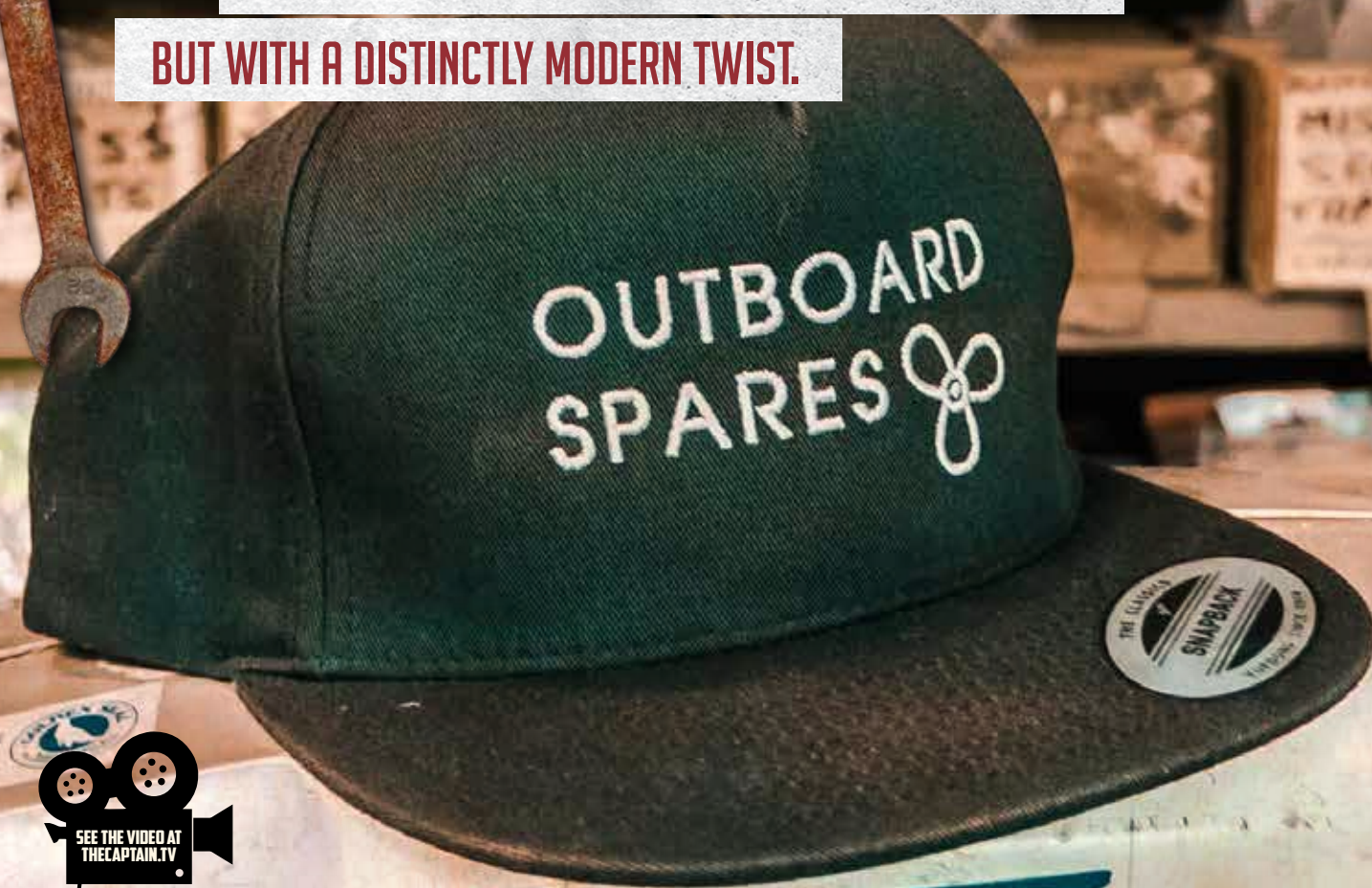
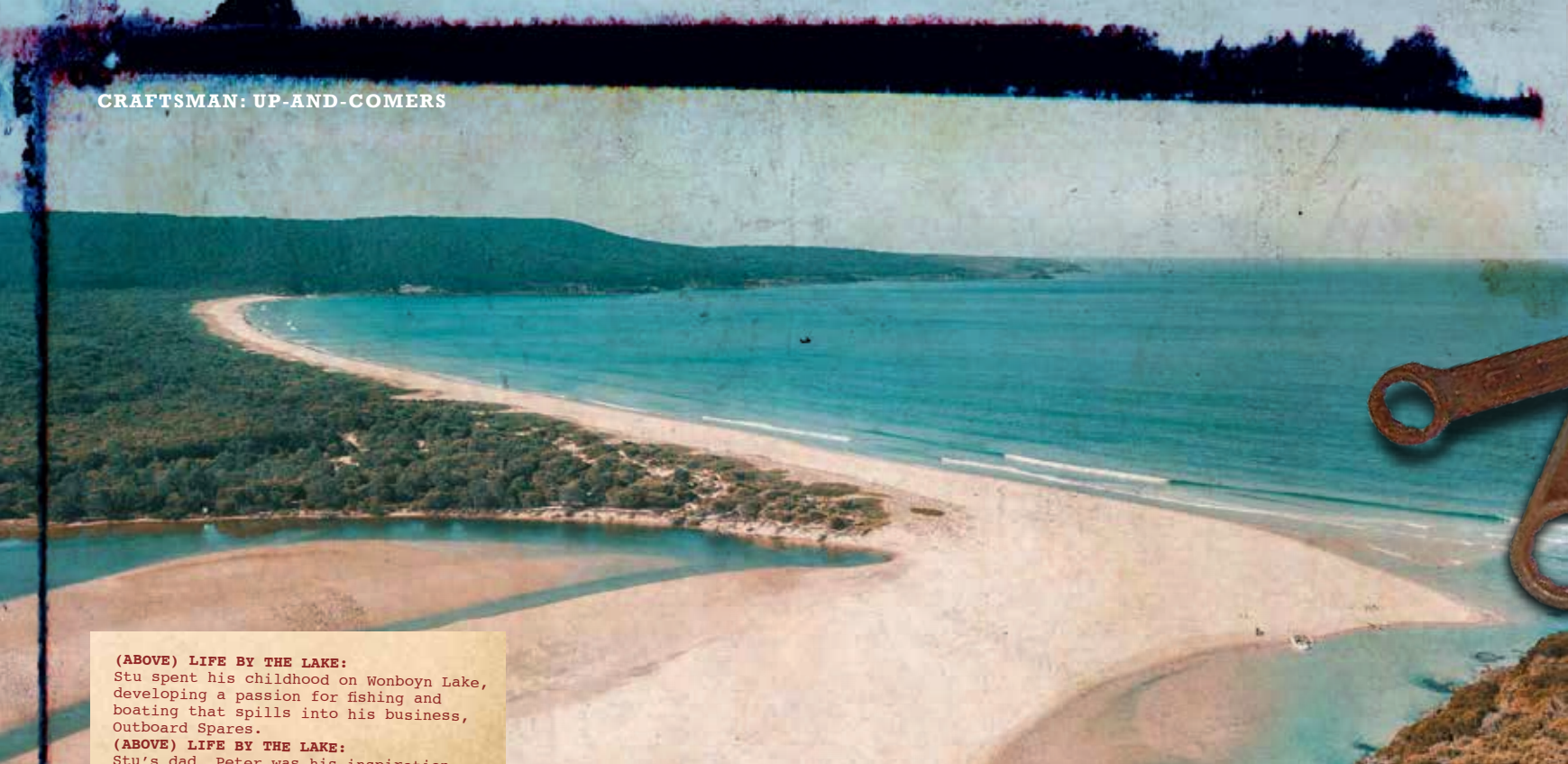


SPARE ME!

THE BUCKINGHAMS CONTINUE A FAMILY TRADITION OF
RETAILING MARINE OUTBOARD PARTS —
BUT WITH A DISTINCTLY MODERN TWIST.





(ABOVE) LIFE BY THE LAKE: Stu spent his childhood on Wonboyn Lake, developing a passion for fishing and boating that spills into his business, Outboard Spares.
(ABOVE) LIFE BY THE LAKE: Stu's dad, Peter was his inspiration.



HE'S A JET: One of Stu's toys is the jet-powered tinnie, capable of travelling over four inches of water. That's handy at Wonboyn Inlet.



OVERBOARD FOR OUTBOARDS: On weekends Stu tinkers with outboards and during the week he's helping other boaties with parts to get on the water.



Stu and Mel Buckingham didn't get into the marine industry to become millionaires. They did it for the love of boats and life on the water. Sound familiar? They also wanted to continue the tradition begun by Stuart's father, who operated Golden Seal Marine Products as a family business for 25 years.

Today, that business is known as Outboard Spares. If you need a serviceable part for your outboard, Stu and Mel have probably got it. Water pumps, oil filters, thermostats, fuel filters and seals are some of their most popular lines. They stay one up on the opposition by distributing via the interweb, without an actual store – you order the part, it arrives the next day. Now that's no biggie in today's retail world, but until recently, the only notable brand of aftermarket outboard parts was Sierra in the US. The plucky pair thought they should do the same thing in Australia.

Lately, Stu has been racking up the Qantas Frequent Flyer points sourcing suppliers from the US, Europe, Thailand and Taiwan, warehousing the gear in bulk in Melbourne. The Captain caught up with him at the family holiday home at Wonboyn Lake, on the New South Wales south coast, to hear the story. On a well-worn timber balcony overlooking the inlet, Stu is sipping tea and munching homemade banana bread while Mel and their daughter are zipping around on the quad bike. The first question we ask him is why we should buy his parts.

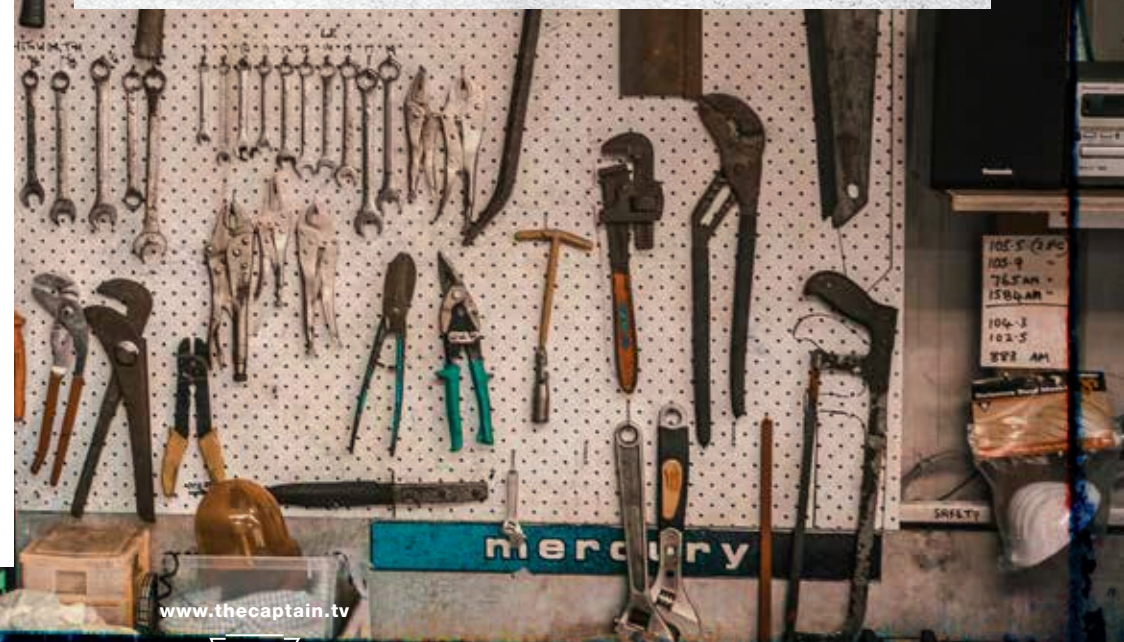
"Because our parts are designed to perform the same as genuine parts, they are always in stock and we ship daily," he replies. "We're about 30 to 60 per cent cheaper than the OEM product – and you'll be speaking to someone who knows about boats, parts and outboard engines."

On the perception that aftermarket (generic) parts are inferior Stu reckons, "It's a bit of a myth these days. It depends on where you source them. We source direct from factories that have to meet strict certifications. Some of the parts are exactly the same as the OEM (original equipment manufacturer). They're off the same production line. We're very careful when sourcing parts to make sure they're up to OEM standard."

"BECAUSE OUR PARTS ARE DESIGNED TO

PERFORM THE SAME AS GENUINE PARTS

THEY ARE ALWAYS IN STOCK AND WE SHIP DAILY."



SPARE PLAYERS

Outboard Spares' customers include DIY boaties, charter operators and big commercial businesses. "The recreational guys might be in an area where they don't have a local marine mechanic or service centre, so we supply the service kits and they service themselves," Stu says. Other customers can't afford a mechanic and want to have a crack themselves.

"There are also 300 trade customers from Tassie to the Top End, including Alyangula in the Northern Territory, Broome in Western Australia and pearl farmers in Bamaga, Queensland. We service a lot of smaller mobile mechanics and dozens of dealers, as well as charter boat operators from Portland, Victoria to Far North Queensland. The parts are flown in by seaplane and the guys do their own servicing."

Stu reckons the most popular items are complete service kits, which include everything required for an annual service.



A FAMILY AFFAIR

Stu's destiny was determined by his dad, Peter, 50 years ago. "Dad started as an abalone diver, building hookah units and teaching scuba diving before importing Glastron boats and Force Outboards (originally made by Chrysler) under the dealership name Golden Seal Marine," Stu says. "He's a really good seaman, who knows his stuff."

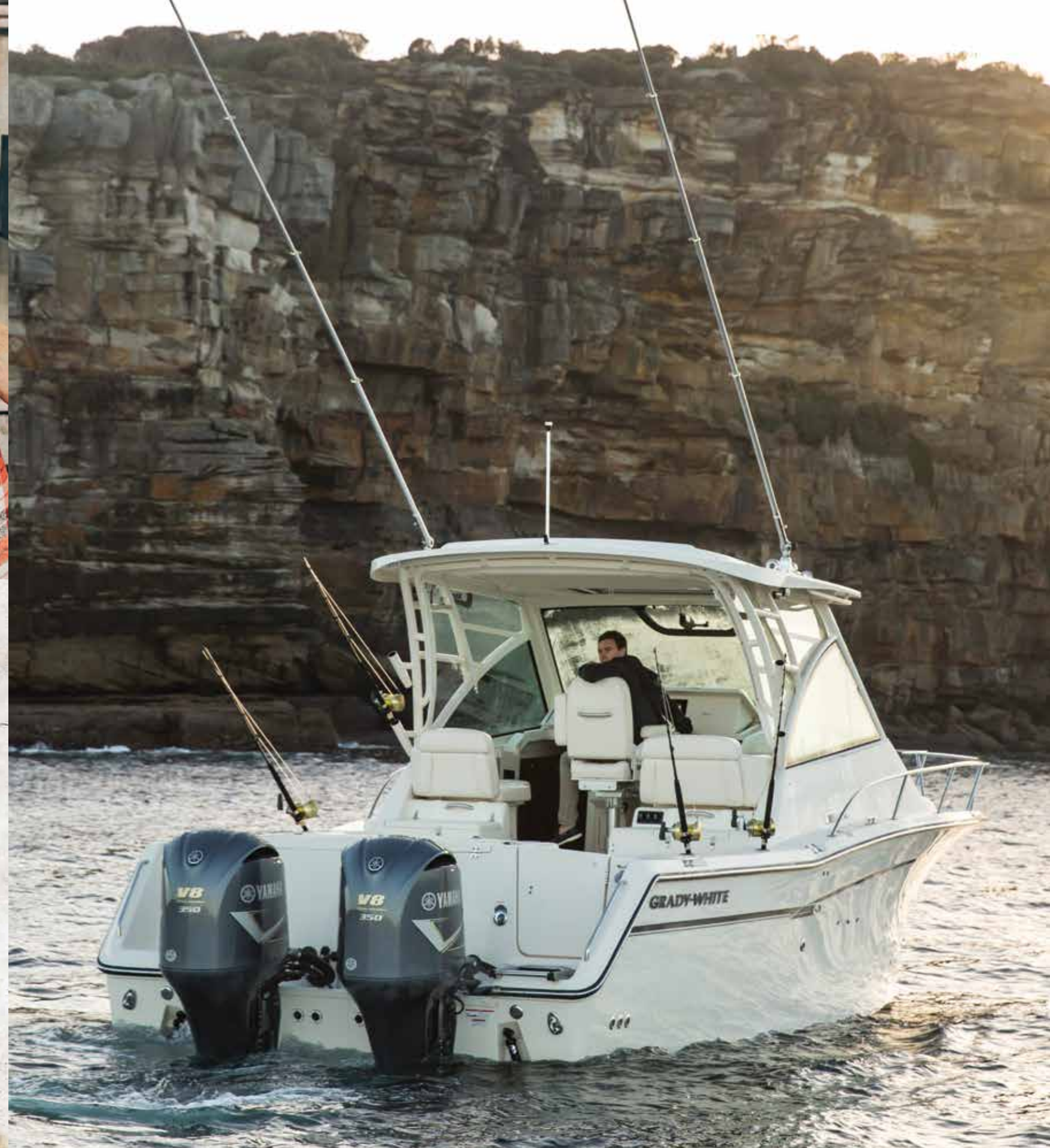
As a toddler, Stu ran around the family holiday house at Wonboyn Lake while his dad tinkered with mechanical toys. Many of those machines are still neatly placed in the shed — and are fully operational. The Captain tests this theory by asking the boys to fire up an old Suzuki outboard fitted with a jet output. Within 10 minutes, white smoke is billowing through the carport, the two-stroke thrumming excitedly.

Fired up themselves, the boys are keen to show off some other cool machines, including a jet boat Peter fitted himself, which they reckon is capable of navigating water just four inches deep; and Tiny Truck — a Japanese-style mini-tipper used to launch many of Pete's numerous floating contraptions.

Stu says that since his dad's reign, things have changed a lot. "Reconditioning outboards has dried up because people want four-stroke and direct-injection engines."

Consequently, the focus of Outboard Spares is now on replacement parts. Of course, the main change has been the rise of the internet and online shopping. However, some things haven't altered much at all. Stu reckons their customer service is still pretty special — and he's still dead keen to hear about your secret fishing spots.

"STU RECKONS THE MOST POPULAR ITEMS ARE COMPLETE SERVICE KITS."

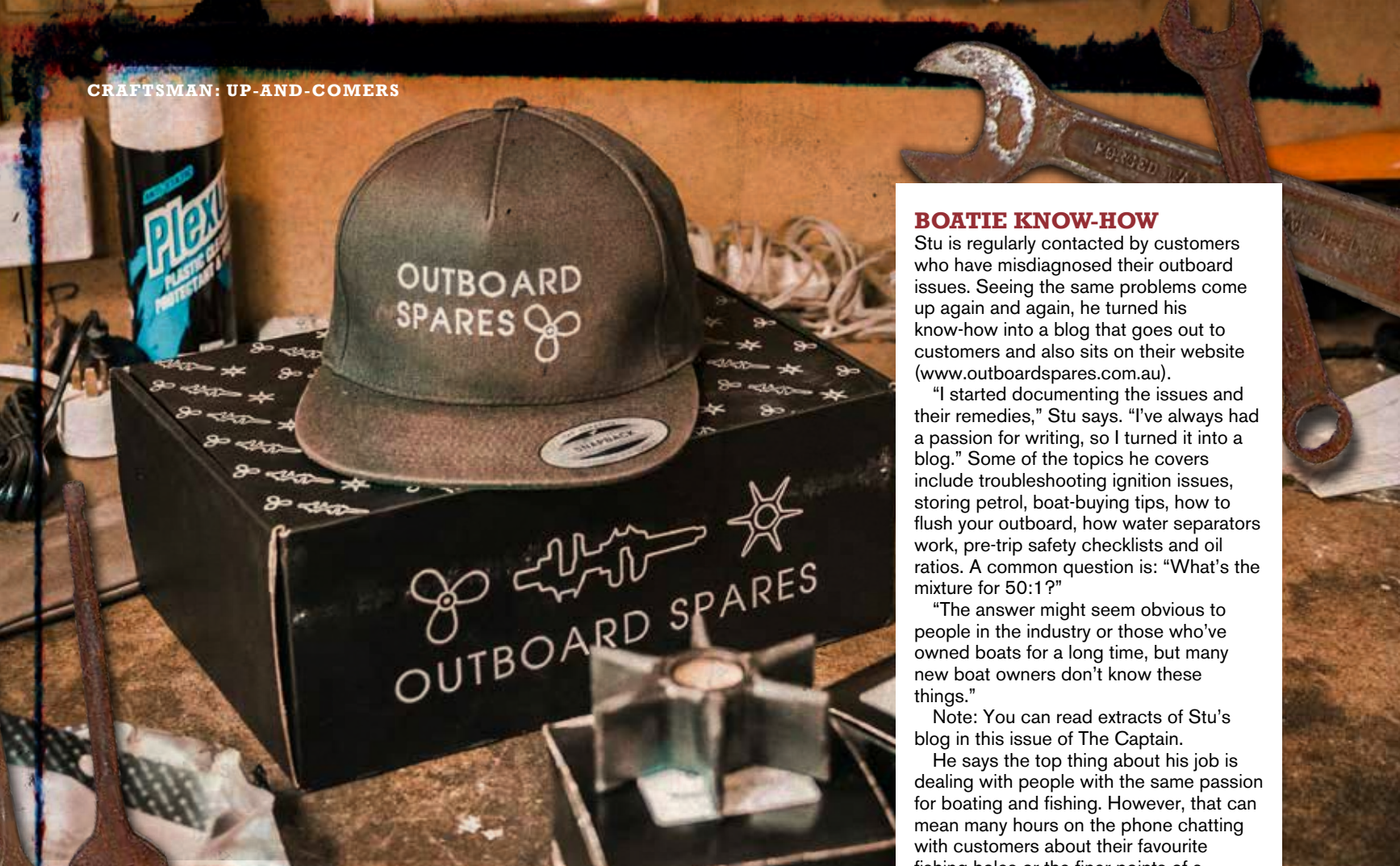


SHORT MARINE

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GRADY-WHITE BOATS



BOATIE KNOW-HOW

Stu is regularly contacted by customers who have misdiagnosed their outboard issues. Seeing the same problems come up again and again, he turned his know-how into a blog that goes out to customers and also sits on their website (www.outboardspares.com.au).

"I started documenting the issues and their remedies," Stu says. "I've always had a passion for writing, so I turned it into a blog." Some of the topics he covers include troubleshooting ignition issues, storing petrol, boat-buying tips, how to flush your outboard, how water separators work, pre-trip safety checklists and oil ratios. A common question is: "What's the mixture for 50:1?"

"The answer might seem obvious to people in the industry or those who've owned boats for a long time, but many new boat owners don't know these things."

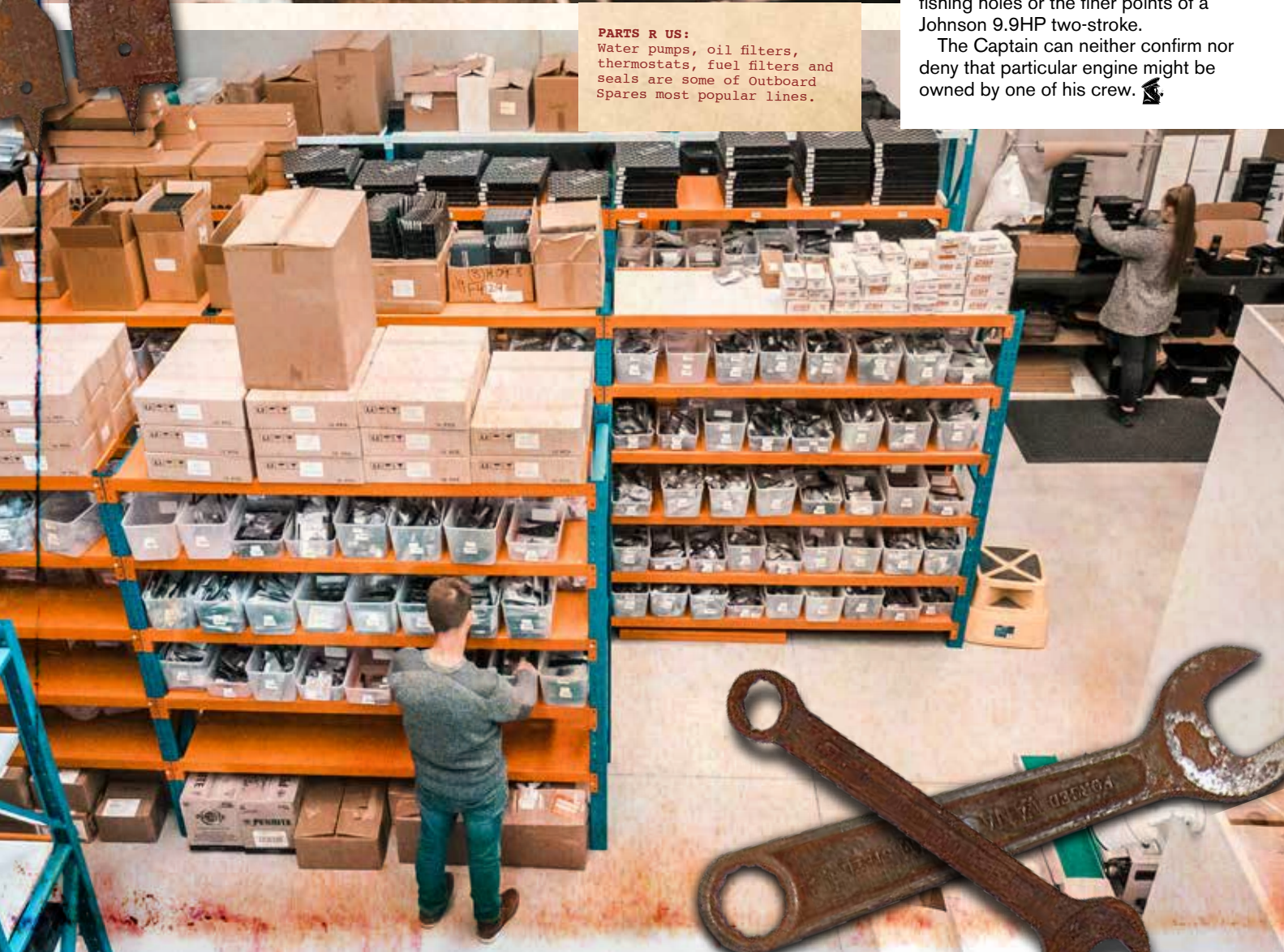
Note: You can read extracts of Stu's blog in this issue of The Captain.

He says the top thing about his job is dealing with people with the same passion for boating and fishing. However, that can mean many hours on the phone chatting with customers about their favourite fishing holes or the finer points of a Johnson 9.9HP two-stroke.

The Captain can neither confirm nor deny that particular engine might be owned by one of his crew. 🐟

PARTS R US:

Water pumps, oil filters, thermostats, fuel filters and seals are some of Outboard Spares most popular lines.



Cleaner Fuel. Better Performance.



Our water separating filters ensure contaminants don't reach your outboard, providing clean fuel for better performance and economy. Designed to outperform other aftermarket designs, our filter media and epoxy outer coatings ensure better filtration and superior corrosion resistance in any marine environment.



OUTBOARD SPARES

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