Sailing and me

I was brought up in Jackson Street, Saint Kilda, about 1 km or so from Saint Kilda beach and the baths. My dad was always very wary of the water, and often used to say how treacherous Port Phillip was. None of our friends had boats (of course, it was a pretty poor neighbourhood, and I can't remember the first time I went out on a boat - well, on reconsideration, perhaps I can, but more of that in a few moments).

So at the age of 10 or so, I had no idea or inking about boats at all, although I could swim a bit, thanks to the Herald Learn to Swim campaign. Occasionally, our class would wander down to the beach, and have swimming lessons - pretty rarely though! So I have never been afraid of the water per se. And of course during the summer holidays, I used to spend quite a bit of time there.

At the age of 10, I went to Elwood Central School, and participated in the swimming sports there, at Middle Brighton Baths, without much success. At this time, Mum and Dad had separated, and Roy was living with Mum and me at Jackson Street. Still no-one I knew had a boat or sailed!

When I went to Wesley, at age 12 and into year 9 (or Form 3), again I did not have anything to do with boats at all. I was perhaps a bit of an outsider at Wesley, and most of my mate's families were much better off than we were. A few of them went rowing, but I wasn't interested at all, I guess I was never into sports at school at all.

Now, I think in 1955, when I was in form 4 or year 10, we moved to Brighton - you may recall from my other notes on my life, that Roy's wife had passed away, and Mum and Roy and I moved into the flat she rented on the Esplanade at Brighton (well actually in Keith Court), and we lived with Roy's youngest daughter, Rosemary.

I had no idea that Roy had a fishing boat until then, called the Penguin, which he had built from an old lifeboat design. It had a single piston petrol engine, and he kept it at Keefers Boatshed in Beaumaris. One day he suggested I might like to go fishing with him. Mum was not too certain, but I went in any case. I think this was my first time in a boat!

And the image above is Keefers! It housed about 30 or 40 boats, in tiers of two high, and four across, so it could be quite a hassle to get your own boat out, as they would be moved when other people got their boat out or returned it. Much hoisting and lifting of boats, all by hand!

So for quite a while, I would accompany Roy on his fishing trips on the Penguin, and we would catch snapper, bay trout, flathead and other less desirable fishes! I had no worries with seasickness, in spite of Mum's worries. Roy and Mum brought me a fiberglass fishing rod, which was the pride of my life! Once, I dropped one end of it somewhere after fishing, and when I got home this part was missing, I was devastated. After school the next day, I rode from Brighton to Beaumaris to Keefer's to look for the rod, and found it in the car park. But... someone had driven over it. I remained devastated. Luckily Roy bought me a new end for the rod, so I was back in action.

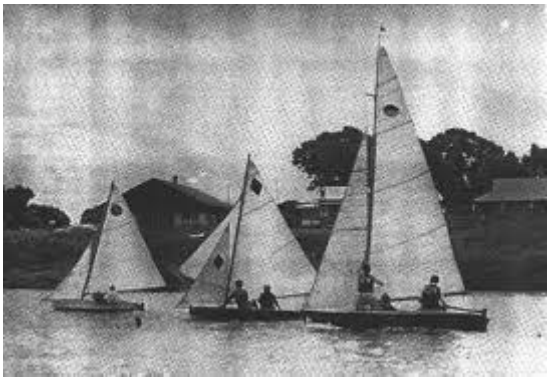
The Penguin was a clinker built boat, and was very seaworthy. Of course in those days, we had no life jackets or flares or mobile phones, too bad.....

Roy also had a marine ply river and lake boat, called the V90, which was fitted with a Seagull Outboard motor. We used to go up to Glenmaggie weir to fish for trout - Roy was a very keen trout fisherman as well. Mum was never into fishing, and never went out on the Penguin, although she did come out with us in the V90, which with three on board was more than a bit crowded. When "On The Beach" was filmed in Melbourne in 1959, with Ava Gardner and Gregory Peck, Mum and Roy were filmed in a scene (with many others) trout fishing. They were excited, but sadly the scene finished up on the cutting room floor! For me, I couldn't manage fly fishing for trout, but trolling and bait were just fine.

Just as an aside, when Roy passed away, I got the Seagull motor - I have no idea why I wanted it, or what I proposed to use it for, but in any case, I do recall that I had some trouble with it, I looked up the documentation, and found it had a lifetime guarantee! So I wrote to Seagull in the UK (no email of course), outlining the problem, and a few weeks later got a great response from them. Now I wrote in about 1970 or so, and the Seagull was built around 1936! There response started "With regard to your enquiry about your elderly Seagull …...", and included were many parts, and instructions on how to fit them. I installed them as

suggested, and the motor ran perfectly. The motor finally went off to Ross, one of Roy's sons in law, and I have no idea what happened to it after that.

We only stayed in Brighton for about 2 years. Mum and Roy had bought a block on Beach Road Beaumaris, and Roy arranged for two builders to build their house, and we moved in in 1957. Shortly after we moved to Beaumaris, I took up with a lass called Rosemary Kent, who had an elder brother John, and a father who did not want his daughter to have anything to do with boys! Still we met each day on the way to and back from school, and managed to get down to the beach together from time to time. Now she and John had a yacht, a VJ.



One day they invited me out on it. Well, off we went, and.... I was petrified! There was a moderate amount of wind, but I had no idea of what to do or what was happening! It did not whet my appetite for sailing at all!!!

But at least now I knew someone with a boat!

Again, I hate to cry poor mouth, but the reality was that I did not have the money available (or the inclination either) to join a yacht club, nor did any of my mates sail, so it really was not an option for me even if I wanted to sail.

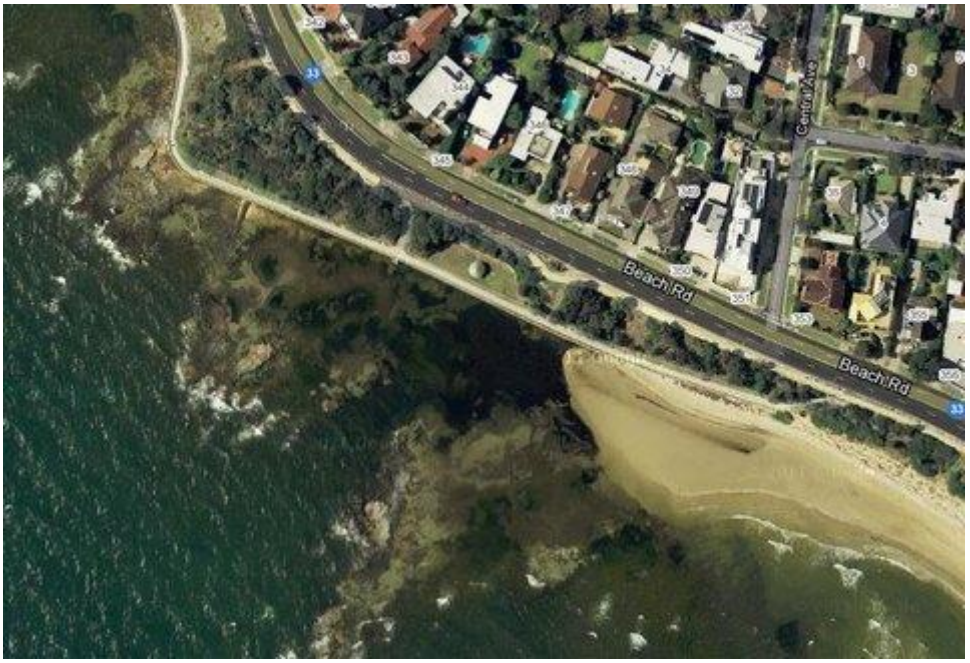
After Rosemary and I came to the parting of the ways - I think her father just made it impossible - I had a few girlfriends, but then of course, in 1958 Betty and I got together. I must do a blog on that. Our first summer together was wonderful, and added to the fun we had, Rocky had just bought Tiki, an 18 foot clinker built speedboat with an inboard V8 from a bren gun carrier fitted. It went like crazy! We had a great couple of summers with Tiki, Betty was a great water skier, although she hurt her back when she crashed into the Cerberus early on, and that problem stayed with her all of her life. Tiki was incredibly powerful, it pulled up 12 skiers at once. For me, I managed two skis happily, but single ski? = could not manage. Betty liked to be in the front seat of Tiki, with the bouncing over the waves, I preferred the back with the power. Tiki was great, and it was a great time of my life.

Tiki was expensive to run, and often needed maintenance. That was Rocky's problem. I recall once when there was a pinhole leak developed in the metal petrol tank for Tiki, he pulled it out, and left it out for a week, and then tried to weld up the pinhole. Large explosion, destroyed the tank, luckily no-one was hurt! I don't know what happened to Tiki, Rocky must have sold her I guess, perhaps the maintenance was a problem, and other matters intervened as Joan grew up then horses became of importance. Don't know. But Tiki was great. Peter Kirkham, one of Rocky's friends also had an aluminium speedboat which was also used for skiing, and often both would be out in the water together.

When we moved to Beaumaris, Roy decided that having the boat at Keefers was an extravagance, and he decided to moor the Penguin at Quiet Corner for the summer, and bring it home for the winter.

Painting and picture of Quiet Corner above.

It was about 400 metres from our house at Beaumaris, towards the city, near the corner of Central Avenue and Beach Road. Quiet Corner was not really a great name for it - as you can see there is a small section of deepish water between two reefs, and here up to 10 boats would be moored. In those days, there was no Ports and Harbours, and a local fellow just arranged the berths and so forth. Now, as you can see, it is a bit protected from the west, less so from the south west, protected from the north, but a problem with the south. In addition, the boats were moored so that, when the tide was out, they generally would be aground, which made for fun when launching!



Mooring at Quiet corner was a hassle. When I was at University and on my scooter, I would often get back from the University at about 10 or so after a nights studying, and I would always push my scooter up so I could check on the condition of the Penguin. On two occasions, in heavy winds, and of course mid-winter, she had come adrift from her moorings. When I got back I told Roy of course, and he rang his sons-in-law and all of us(including Mum) headed out on these bleak nights to try to rescue the boat. In the first instance, only one mooring had come adrift, and we managed, freezing, to get it back in its mooring. But the second time, we had to try to pull it out of the water, using an old winch on the beach and rollers. A nightmare in the freezing cold, and we damaged the boat, which required Roy (and me to a lesser extent). doing a lot of work over the next months to make her seaworthy again.

Roy died in about 1967. When he died, the boat was still moored at Quiet Corner, but shortly thereafter it broke its moorings, and was smashed up on the rocks between Quiet Corner and the Beaumaris Yacht club. I still remember clearly walking along the beach looking at the wreckage in tears, for Roy and the Penguin.

When Betty and I were first married in 1963, I was keen on building a Quickcat. Looking back, I must have been mad, I did not know how to sail, and was not a club member and all that. I only got as far a buying the plans.

My next move, a few years later, when we were at Kingswood Road, was to buy an Arafura cadet. This was a 12 foot catamaran, really for kids or small adults. When I bought it I noticed that it was rigged with a rope forestay. I asked the owner and they said that was what they used. Hmmm. So, a few days after I had bought it, we went down to the Boatshed (more of that later), and off I went - my first solo sail, at the age of about 24 I guess. The wind was from the south west, about 10 knots, and of course, the forestay stretched right out, and the mast bent way back, and I could not go about. I don't know why I could not jibe, perhaps I had no idea at that stage. But in any case, I was on the one tack. I finished up on the beach near the Red Bluff hotel, jumped in, turned the boat around onto the other tack, and headed back, again only on one tack - just managed to miss the Red Bluffs themselves! And a new stainless forestay was the answer.

We had a lot of fun with the Arafura, but it came to pass that one day I was out with Lou Jaensch, his first sail, in strongish winds, and our combined weights broke the crossbeams. At this stage I was not too well, and Betty did a great job in organising the boatbuilders at Mordialloc to fix it up. when it came back, it was heavy, but strong. I sold it shortly thereafter.

A bit before I bought the Arafura, Glen Lorentzen and I were both interested in fishing - well, me only a little, but Glen proposed that we borrow the V90, and take it up to Lake Eucumbene for a few days fishing. At this stage he had an old Peugeot, and said he would drive. We would stay at Buckenderra, at Lake Eucumbene. So I asked Roy if he would be happy for us to take the boat and the trailer, and he was happy. However, we had a lot of work to do on the trailer. The suspension was all rusted up, and we had to drive the pins out of the suspension, grease them, and put them back together. It was quite an exercise, as we had no idea what we were doing. But we got it done. To be legal, we also need to put mudguards on the trailer, so I made a timber framework, and we cut some sheet metal, and made mudguards, And off we went. Well, all went well, until after we left, Glen wanted to take a "short cut". Typical Glen. A really bad unmade road, very steep, and very poor surface, Happy Jacks Road, just past Corryong. Within about 5 km both mudguards self destructed. Ah well.

We had a great time at Buckenderra, and a few years later, Betty, the kids and I had a few days there in Rocky's caravan.

I don't think that Glen and I caught any fish though. On the way back, we went down to the coast, and slept (or tried to), in the car, at Cann River with many many voracious mosquitoes. Not great. When Roy died, I don't know what happened to the V90, I suppose

that Ross, one of his sons in law, probably got it, but I got the old trailer.

After we had fixed the suspension it was quite good for smallish loads, and I built an easily removable timber frame so that we could carry rubbish, garden supplies and so forth, when required. Simon tells me he can recall a boat on this trailer at this stage, so maybe I also had the V90 there for other purposes. Aha. I did! When Roy died, I had both the V90 and the Seagull for a while, until Ross wanted to use it. Never heard what happened to it after that.

In about 1981, the wooden trailer was getting a bit old, and I thought that I ought to buy a metal trailer. I sold the old trailer in the Trading Post with no difficulties, and bought a 6x4 all metal box trailer, which I used for transporting boats, sailboards, farm gear and all sorts of other things, I still have it, it is going strong!

And now an aside about the boatshed. Betty's family owned a boat shed next to the kiosk where you could rent boats out. In the early days, in the late 50s and early 60s, outboard motors were not at all readily available, and so inboard motors were by far the most common. And aluminium dinghies were just starting out! But the timber boats commonly in use, with inboard motors, of course were very heavy. Most people could not afford them, and getting them out of the water and towing them was a major problem. So most people rented boats from places like Black Rock if they wanted to fish. The kiosk next to Betty's boatshed had about 15 or so clinker built boats moored in Half Moon Bay, for hire. They were often used by kids to play on, much to the annoyance of the owner! In storms, some of them would break their moorings and wash up. Morrie, Betty's brother, often got a few shillings assisting in their recovery. Now I should know the owners name, after all he lived not far from where I lived when we were in Brighton, and of course I often saw him when I was seeing Betty. But I don't remember his name - it was not Keefer. but perhaps started with H or K? I will ask Joan! And she did know - it was Keith Brewer! (H or K??). He was a bit of a terror, but I guess that coping with the boats and the kids would make him a bit bad tempered!

The boatshed was a great joy to all of us. As teenagers, and when Betty and I were married, and when the kids were young, it was a real bonus. there was power on to the shed, so it could be fitted out with a fridge, and there was a small change room at the back. It was really well set up, and it meant that we could easily spend the whole day at the beach, as the sun did not make it too hot. We spent very many happy days in that shed.

What happened to it - well it was a disaster! Since about 1930 the boatshed had been in Rocky's family's hands. It had been used by Rocky's family and Rockys sister's and brother's families for many years. It had originally been built by their his father. In about 1981 or so most of the family had moved out of the Sandringham Council area - Rocky was living with us in Cheltenham, and his sister had been moved into a nursing home. His brother, I think died at this stage, but in any case he had not lived in the Sandringham Council area for many years (his name was Ernie, and he lived in the Murrumbeena area). Now, the Council

required that the lessee of the site needed to be a ratepayer of the Sandringham Council - if not, the Council would resume the site! But at this stage, none of the Rockliff family were ratepayers. Betty tried to get Peter Shimmin and Gail to take over the boatshed, but that did not work out. So the only option was to transfer the ownership to Roger Edmonds, Betty's cousin, who still lived in the Council area. We all agreed to pay our share of the rates. Now Roger was Aunty Betty Edmonds (Rocky's sister). She and her husband, Norm had two sons, Barry, the elder, and Roger, the younger. Roger was about my age, and Barry about 2 or 3 years older.

So Roger had the boatshed transferred into his name. He was employed as a real estate agent. Just a few weeks after the transfer, he rang to say he had sold the boatshed, he was keeping the money, and was heading off to Queensland. We never ever heard from him again. I was furious, as was Betty and Rocky, but there was nothing that we could do. So suddenly, after so many years, we no longer had access to the boatshed - he had sold it to the fellow who had bought the kiosk from Keith Brewer.

And yet, as it turned out, it was not so bad. We did have access to the shed when we were learning to windsurf, and more of that later. But it did force us to join the yacht club, which was a real bonus. For all of us, but particularly for the kids and me.

I must do a blog on the shed, it is worthy of much more detail!

But back to sailing..... well the Arafura really was not great after the crash, and I sold it. And then other matters intervened. Rocky's wife Marion had passed away, and Rocky was really at a loose end. He had kept the farm at Langwarrin, and he and Joan lived there, but then he sold it, and lived for a while at the Sandringham Hotel, and then finally we built an extra room on the house for him to live in. The full sequence of events escape me, but I do know that both Betty and Joan were worried about him at this stage, and felt that it would be good to have him somewhere where we could keep an eye on him, so to speak.... He had bought a half share in Bacardi, a 43 foot Cole ocean yacht racer, with John Gould. Bacardi was the first Cole 43 out of the mould in 1970. She was Peter Cole's own boat.

Rocky kindly, and I suspect not greatly happily, asked if I would like to crew on the boat. I agreed readily, little knowing the hassles that might arise.This was 1975.

This image is Bacardi - our Bacardi was green, and known as The Green Machine. But apart from that, the image above is identical, except for the roller reefing headsail, and the auto pilot and so forth at the stern. She was up for sale, and the info is below

COLE 43 - SOLD

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I have known this Cole 43 for over 20 years… she has 'Great Bones'.
The current owner has been transferred overseas and is seeking a quick sale.
'Bacardi' started life as a serious offshore racer (8 Hobarts!) and then transferred to live-aboard coastal cruising life.
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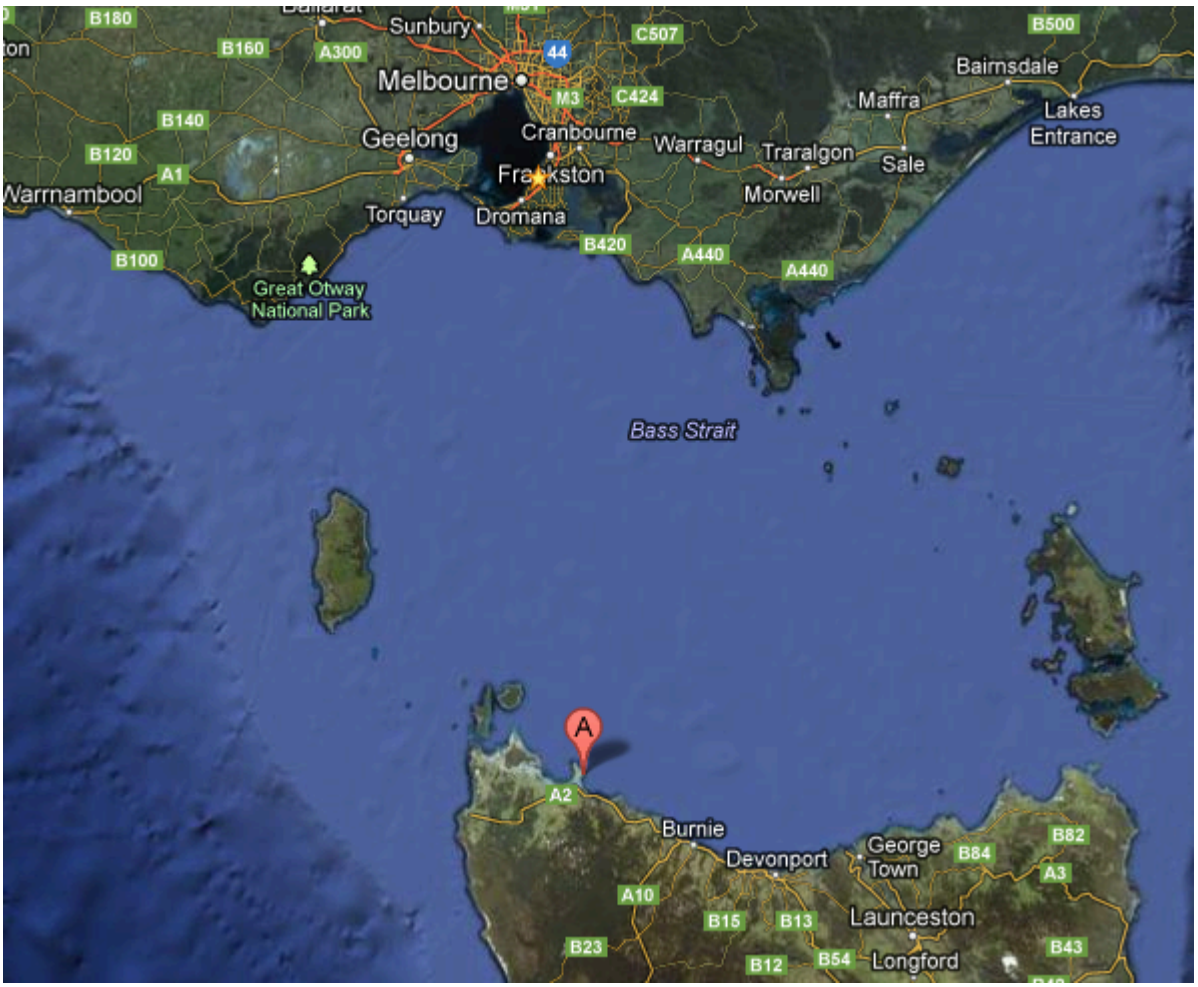
Well of course, Bacardi was one of the gun boats on the Bay, and the crew were not happy about having a rank amatuer foisted on them! For the first few months, I worked pretty hard at trying to understand about the boat, and the rigging. I was the mastman, responsible for all

of the many halliards and other lines coming down the mast. We had a crew of 10 to sail the boat, although it was possible with 8, or even 7 if it was a short race, and not too much wind. In the evenings I would go down to Bacardi, and sit and work out how all of the lines were set up, and how they worked, and after a month or two, the crew readily accepted me. I did work hard for it though, and yes, I made a few mistakes. As I have often said, you can kill someone of the foredeck if you are not careful! One day, after I had been on board for about 6 months, I was called aft to help with trimming a sail, and in the meantime, another crew member had gone to the mast and tied off the spinnaker topping lift in the wrong place, where I normally tied of the headsail halyard. Later I was asked to drop the headsail, and of course the topping lift came down with a thud on the head of one of our foredeck hands, "Ned" Kelly. I was mortified, but Ned took it very well. The two foredeck hands, Ned and Graeme Griffiths were great sailors.

And so, I started to sail each Saturday out of Sandringham, learning all the while, and enjoying it. Lots and lots of drinking, heaven we drank a lot of beer, at all times. We won a lot of races just the same. Then one day as we were sailing in, they said that next week (which was perhaps the Melbourne Cup weekend) the race was to Stanley. They asked if I would be going, and I said yes, not having any idea of where Stanley was.



Much to my amazement, I found out that night it was on the north coast of Tasmania! Well, in the past I had been borrowing wet gear from others on the boat, but this time I needed my own, so I bought them, and uncertainly prepared for the race.

As is usual (I found out later), the start is in the middle of the night, or close to dawn, to catch slack tide at the Heads, so at about 10 pm on the Friday, we sailed from Sandringham down to Queenscliff, ready for the race start at about 4 am or so. I had also assumed in my ignorance that we would have a decent mother ship, but of course this was not the case, just one of the racing boats acted as our "Call Centre" for reporting positions and so forth. The wind was blowing steadily from the south west, and the stars were all clear as we started off. Straight through the heads, and then we were on 4 hours on, 4 hours off. This is really tough, as I found out in my later journeys, as when you are soaked to the skin, you have to get below, change into some dryish clothes, into your sleeping bag which is likely wet and cold, and try to sleep in the washing machine that is a sailing yacht. I found that I needed to have dry feet to be able to sleep at all. And then of course you have to get up about 20 minutes before your watch starts to change and so forth, so at best you might get about three and one quarter hours sleep. But the movement of the boat and the noise is stunning, The noise in particular is very very loud, as she falls off a wave, as is the wind through the rigging. Generally I found I did not sleep for about the first 3 days on the boat, until total exhaustion took me over.

After we got through the heads, I was on duty watch until 8 am, when I headed below - food was not an option! We had another newbie on board, also his first ocean race, and he was very seasick and confined to his bunk, even at this stage. By noon, when I was on watch again, the wind had risen to about 35 knots on the nose, and the boat was crashing very heavily through big seas, frightening! We had to change our headsail, and I was at the mast, and watched Graeme Griffiths do a remarkable and very brave job changing over the headsail. The seas were enormous.

We were just to windward of Banjo Paterson, the concrete "Floating Footpath", that I have been on and sailed in the Whitsundays, and she was going great guns, although leaning far to leeward. As a first experience of ocean sailing, it was pretty tough. By 8 pm, when I was back on watch again, I was really exhausted, and not exactly seasick, but didn't want food. As I sat in the cockpit during this watch, for the first and only time, I was hallucinating. Whenever I looked at the stars (it was a clear night), they would explode like fireworks. Most disconcerting. The wind was still howling, and we still had it on the nose, I was really euchred at this stage, and had made up my mind to fly back!

At 4 am we arrived at the finish line at Stanley, we got the gun, we had won the race! Or at least for line honours! But I was exhausted - no sleep for 48 hours, and dreadfully seasick. I

decided to fly back!. But as usual, land is the best way of overcoming sea sickness, and after a few hours, I decided that I would go back on the boat after all.

That night was a wild party on Bacardi, and at about 2 am I got into my bunk, the party was still going strong in the cabin, and I heard Rocky arguing with a local woman who had come onboard. the exchanged names, and confusion reigned! " No, my name is Rockliff" " No, my name is Rockliff". As it turned out, she was a member of the Rockliff branch in Tassie, that Rocky knew nothing about. They were fisherman, and had a seagoing trawler by the name of Petuna - her name was Una, and her husbands was Peter

As I was writing this, I thought I would just look up Petuna on the web. Petuna Seafoods is a BIG business now - a section of the website is shown below!

Our foundation

- About us
- Our foundation
- Our people
- Our sites
- Our video

Peter Rockliff was born to fish. As a boy he spent as much of his school holidays as possible with fishermen on Tasmania's north-west coast. He later worked hard ashore to save for his first boat, the open-hulled, 25ft Alva.

In 1949 Peter travelled eastward along the coast looking for fish. He met Una Barnett who was from a well-known fishing family in Bridport and they were married soon afterwards.

The couple acquired *Rowana*, a 32ft vessel with a tiny cabin, and by 1954 Peter was fishing fulltime for rock lobsters (known locally as 'crays'), flathead and scallops. He would be at sea, without radio contact, for 10 days at a time while Una looked after three children and managed the on shore operations.

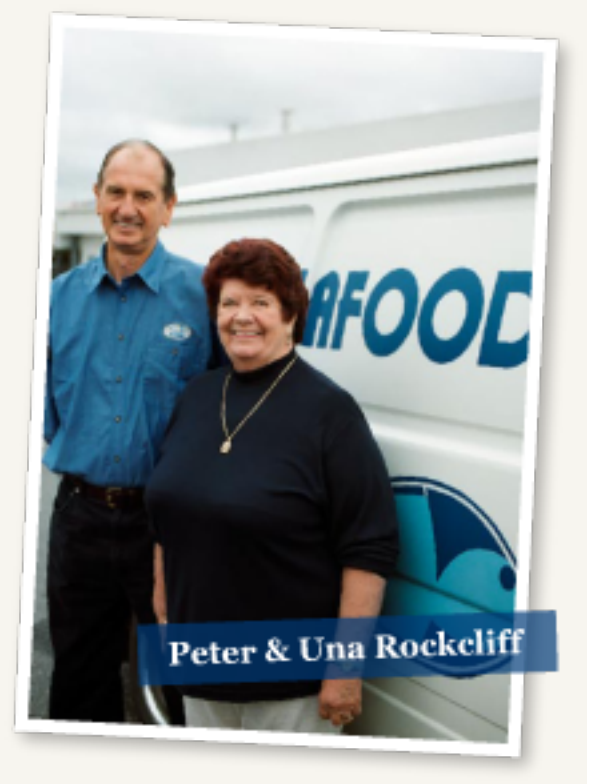
Peter and Una continued to fish for scallops, lobster and sharks while building the *Petuna*, a 60ft steel-hulled all-purpose fishing vessel launched in 1971 that allowed them to venture further from shore and to discover previously untouched fishing grounds.

The next big step was the construction of Tasmania's first deep sea trawler, the *Petuna Endeavour*, and the introduction of fishing methods that enabled them to bring in unprecedented catches. The industry pioneers soon had many followers, with trawler numbers growing rapidly from one to 60.

In 1990 the Rockliffs investigated the potential of aquaculture and acquired a 50 per cent share in a salmon and trout hatchery at Cressy and a water lease in Macquarie Harbour. Aquaculture became increasingly important to the business, further establishing the processing factory at Devonport and extending the sea cage operations at Macquarie Harbour. A smokehouse and value added facility was soon incorporated into the site at

Devonport.

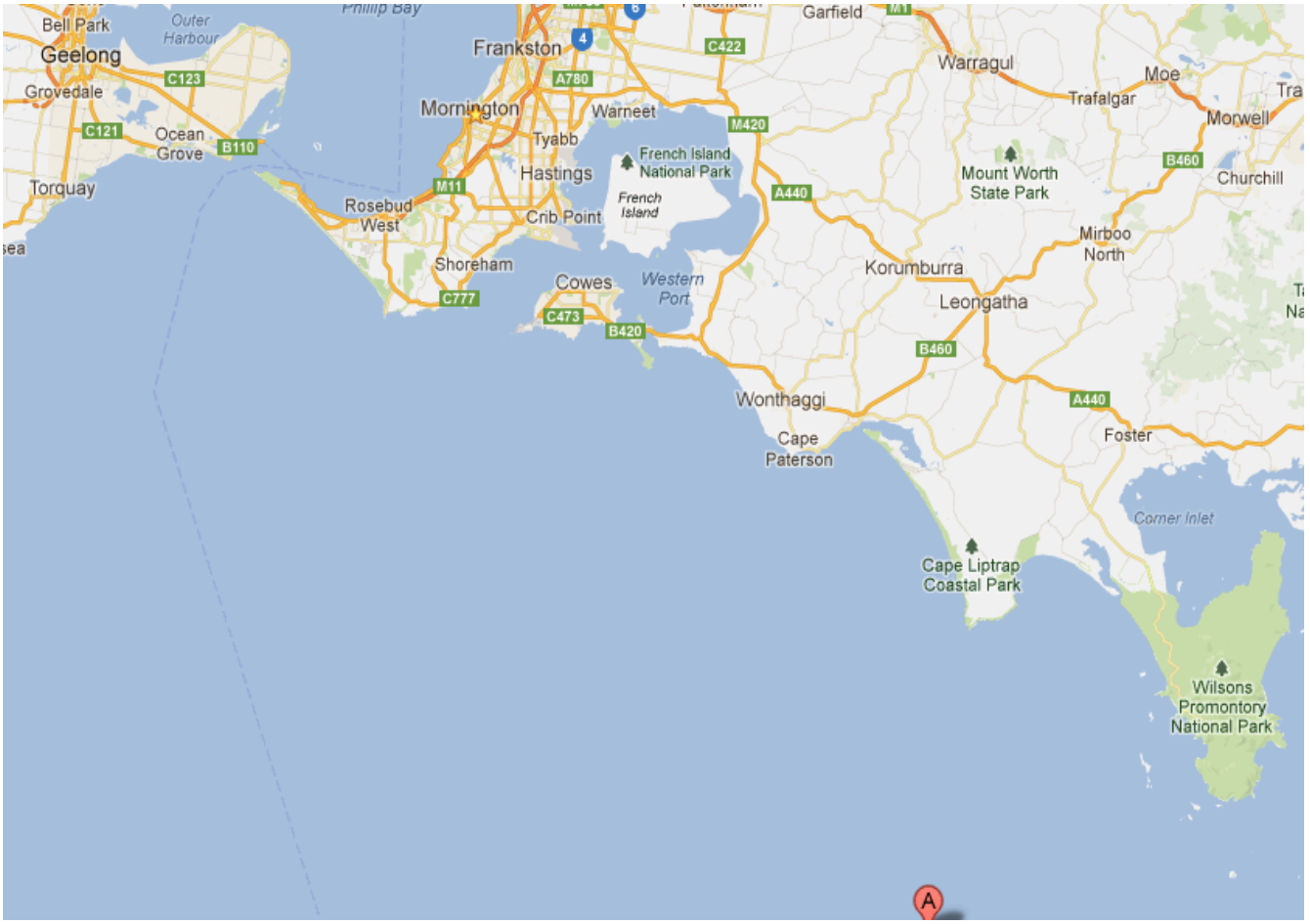
In 2004, Peter and Una Rockliff were each awarded an Order of Australia medal for their contribution to the fishing industry. They remain on the Petuna Board and continue to have a hands-on involvement in the day to day operations of the company.



Check out the website, there is a great video link there!

We had a quiet day the next day, drinking like fishes, and that night we went to a wild party at Smithton - one of the locals took us there in the back of his ute. Much drinking, singing and lots of fun. We staggered back to the boat, and prepared for departure next day at dawn, 5am. Everyone was hungover, and when we cast off, most of the crew went below for a sleep. leaving me and Couttsie on the deck to steer the boat. George, our autopilot, was not fitted at this stage. Now we had the wind 45 degrees from aft on our port side, and we absolutely flew. It was a great few hours of sailing! Then the crew started to appear, and I headed off for a rest below. Now that night the wind picked up, again from our rear, but unbeknown to us we were making a lot of leeway. In those days there was no GPS, dead reckoning was not too easy in Bass Strait with the currents and set, and Rocky was not too great on radio direction finding - but we did know that Australia was somewhere to the north of us, and we did have a compass.

We kept watches with only two on deck for that day and that night, until at about 4 am, we saw a light in the distance - we thought it was the heads, but the timing of the flashes was completely wrong - and as I said, we really had little idea of where we were!



After a lot of confusion, and we were heading towards the light pretty fast, we realised it was the lighthouse at Cape Paterson! We were about 80 km of course, with the set of the tide and the wind taking us on a track well to the eastward. So we then made our way up to the heads, waited for slack water, and headed for Sandringham, exhausted!

So I continued to race with Bacardi on the round the sticks and occasional Round the Bay races for the next few months, and enjoyed them. The Round the Bay races were fun, but again exhausting - generally started at about 9 on Saturday, and finished sometime in the daylight on Sunday.

In between, we had two or three ocean yacht races, to Port Fairy, including a trip around Lady Julia Percy island, just off the coast of Port Fairy, for the bigger boats. As I recall, we had to pass through the finish line at Port Fairy, but continue on to Lady Julia Percy Island, go around it, and back through the finish line to complete the race. I was off watch when we rounded Lady Julia, but I recall waking up (it was about 10 am or so), and looking out and seeing the cliffs of the island only what seemed to be about 10 metres away! We were very

close. We also raced to Portland, and to Apollo Bay.

Let's be fair about this! I always suffered from some seasickness (not ill, just off colour) for the first 24 hours of these races, and only ate bread and water for this period. After that, I was just fine. There was also of course, a fair amount of fear associated with these trips, particularly when the wind was strong and on the nose, and I saw a lot of brave actions by many of the crew.

By November of 1975, I had quite a bit of experience on the boat, and the crew had accepted me well as an equal partner on the boat. And so we planned for the Sydney Hobart of that year. Now the Sydney Hobart requires quite a lot of preparation, firstly of course, the boat has to get up there, and at the end of the race has to get back. I was working, and didn't have the leave or in fact the inclination to assist with these deliveries, and Rocky organised some of his mates to help out - cruising back or up to Sydney does not require a lot of crew, and of course, you can take it easy - not racing at all.

The 628 nautical mile course is often described as the most gruelling long ocean race in the world, a challenge to everyone who takes part. From the spectacular start in Sydney Harbour, the fleet sails out into the Tasman Sea, down the south-east coast of mainland Australia, across Bass Strait (which divides the mainland from the island State of Tasmania), then down the east coast of Tasmania. At Tasman Island the fleet turns right into Storm Bay for the final sail up the Derwent River to the historic port city of Hobart.

People who sail the race often say the first and last days are the most exciting. The race start on Sydney Harbour attracts hundreds of spectator craft and hundreds of thousands of people lining the shore as helicopters buzz above the fleet, filming for TV around the world.

The final day at sea is exciting with crews fighting to beat their rivals but also looking forward to the traditional Hobart welcome, and having a drink to relax and celebrate their experience.

Between the first and last days the fleet sails past some of the most beautiful landscape and sea scapes found anywhere in the world. (Rubbish - most of the time you are well out to sea, well to the east of the rhumbline. Even on the Rhumb line, you can't see the coast)

The New South Wales coast is a mixture of sparkling beaches, coastal townships and small fishing villages, although for most of the race south the yachts can be anywhere between the

coastline and 40 miles offshore. (At one stage we were over 100 miles offshore)

During the race, many boats are within sight of each other and crews listen closely to the information from the twice-daily radio position schedules ("skeds" as they are called). (generally rubbish - often you just do not see another boat until Tasman Island). *In more recent years, crews have been able to pin point the entire fleet's whereabouts and follow each boat's progress against their own using on board computers and Yacht Tracker on the official race website.*

Bass Strait (nicknamed the 'paddock) has a dangerous personality. It can be dead calm or spectacularly grand. The water is relatively shallow and the winds can be strong, these two elements often coming to create a steep and difficult sea for yachts.

The third leg after the 'paddock' - down the east coast of Tasmania takes the fleet past coastal holiday resorts and fishing ports with towering mountains in the background. Approaching Tasman Island, the coastline comprises massive cliffs, sometimes shrouded in fog.

The winds are often fickle and can vary in strength and direction within a few miles. Sailing becomes very tactical.

After turning right at Tasman Island, sailors often think the race is near completed, but at this point there is still 40 miles of often hard sailing to go. Yachts can be left behind in the maze of currents and wind frustrations.

Even when they round the Iron Pot, a tiny island that was once a whaling station, there is still a further 11 miles up the broad reaches of the Derwent River to the finish line off Hobart's historic Battery Point, with Mount Wellington towering over the city.

No matter the time of day or night, the first yacht to finish receives an escort of official, spectator and media boats as it sails towards the finish line.

Hundreds of people crowd the foreshores of Sullivans Cove to cheer the yachts and their crews while volunteers from the finishing club, the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, meet the weary crews with open arms and famous Tasmanian hospitality, and escort them to their berth in the Kings Pier marina.

It's an event that Tasmanians love to host in the middle of Hobart's Taste of Tasmania Festival.

Then it's time to celebrate or commiserate, swap yarns about the race with other crews over a

few beers in Hobart's famous waterfront pubs such as the Customs House Hotel or the Rolex Sydney Hobart Dockside Bar.

So I planned to have Christmas dinner at home with the family, and fly out to Sydney on Christmas afternoon to join the boat. Now the Southern Cross series of races is held before the Hobart every two years, and Bacardi was racing in these, and the last race was not due to finish until late on Christmas day, so there was a finite chance that it would be at the CYC when I arrived, and of course, there was no guarantee that I would arrive that night. I flew up, and on the place was another crew member, whose name to my shame I can't remember. He was able to get great heavyweight sailing jumpers, and I had bought one from him. I still have it, it is a greasy wool jumper, and is as warm as ever. This crew member passed away a few years later, quite young.

When we arrived in Sydney, he headed off elsewhere, and I waited for a taxi to take me to the CYC. It was Christmas evening... and I waited and waited and waited, and had a bit of a snooze on the pavement. Finally a cab arrived, and when I turned up at the CYC, no Bacardi. Hmmm.

Well, there was a sister ship to Bacardi moored near to Bacardi's berth. It was called Taurus, and sailed out of Geelong, and we had sailed against her often. I jumped on board, and asked if I could sleep there for the night. There was only one other crew member sleeping on board, and he welcomed me. As I got into my bag, he said, "Oh, by the way don't get a surprise - I wear a wig", and he took it off to go to sleep. Quite a young bloke too!

The next morning was very busy - Bacardi was back, and we reprovisioned her, lots and lots and lots of beer, lots of spirits, and a bit of food. And lots of Mars Bars.

And so, at 12 noon we were ready to sail, with another 100 boats. It was then a single start and it was pretty exciting, lots of boats and plenty of potential for collision. Now, our foredeck hand, Graham Griffith was really good, and the protocol is that it is up to him to call the start, as he can see the other boats, which the helmsman can't. Gouldie was on the wheel of course, and fired up! Well, in spite of much warnings from Graham, Gouldie attacked the line, and the next thing we were over the line just a few seconds early! Disaster! To make matters worse, we were right under the starting boat, and clearly they had seen us. Well again what we had to do was to go back through the line to restart. But there were 100 boats all sailing towards us, and it took us quite some time to be able to safely turn around, and go through the line to restart. Perhaps 5 or so minutes, but the crew were not happy!

Later on, when we arrived in Hobart, we received a very official letter from the Government of New South Wales, with an invoice for the cost of the shell used to indicate that we had been recalled!. It was a spoof, but really well done.

And so off we went. Now, this year was a bit of a watershed - there was an all woman crew on board Barbarian. As we cleared the heads, we heard a radio call from Barbarian to the radio relay vessel. They indicated that they had come into collision with a spectator boat! As you can imagine, you could hear the roars of laughter from all of the other boats! Women drivers! The radio relay vessel asked if Barbarian had sustained any damage - they replied: "No, but we sunk the other boat!". More roars of laughter!!

After we cleared the heads, we headed out to sea at first rather than hug the coast- there is a current there that runs southerly, and you can tell when you are in it as the temperature of the water rises by a degree or two,. And a southerly current of say 2 knots adds 50 nautical miles per day onto your total distance - worth getting into.

We had had discussions about this, and I said I could get a CSIRO instrument to help us measure the temperature of the water. I had brought the instrument up with me - it was quite bulky, about 25 cm square (today of course it would be just a very small device), and we dropped the thermocouple over, and waited to see when the temperature rose. And it did, and we turned right towards Hobart. I actually did not ask if I could borrow the instrument, and when I returned it to CSIRO, apparently there was a lot of rust in it, although it still worked.....

1975 Weather:

The fleet started on the last day of a SE pattern with winds ranging from 10-20 knots. A good clip was maintained in reaching conditions. On the first night the breeze swung NE, moving to NNE at 15 to 20 knots on the 27th. This remained until the evening of the 28th, when for a few hours it shifted to WNW 15-25 knots. On the 29th it was N 20-30 knots which held through the 30th when the tail-enders experienced moderate SE conditions. Thus, conditions were virtually ideal for a fast run. No less than nine yachts lifted their skirts and beat Helsal's previous record.

The first night was pretty rough, we were heading downwind, and I do recall throwing up while on deck between changing sails, but battling on. And as usual as the days progressed, I had no more trouble.

For much of the time, we did not see another sail, the fleet was quite widespread. On the third night out, at about 3am, a yacht passed just in front of us, but that was all we saw, until we closed on Tasman Island at dawn on the 29th. It was very misty indeed, and out of the gloom there appeared Koomooloo and Vittoria our sparring partners from Sandringham! Amazing that we were within a few hundred yards after 1000 km or so!. Tasman Island of course was magnificent,. As you work your way down the Tasmanian coast there are many beautiful

aspects - Maria Island, and Tasman Island (below)

, as well as a few nasty well off shore reefs!

The Hippolyte rocks and reef, below, are about 6 km off shore, but right on the track to Tasman Island,

As usual, for most of the time, we had no idea at all of where we were, and neither did anyone else. In the first day or so, when we made our reports, we could see and recognise other boats, whose positions as reported were more than 20 miles from ours. Rocky spent a lot of time trying to work out where we were, but in the main, the instructions were to keep Australia on the right..... Rocky was our navigator, and spent a lot of time at the charts and with the radio headphones, as well as listening to the weather.

The trip down was in the main downwind, and not too bad, but when we got to Storm Bay, the wind started to die out, and it was quite an effort to get up the Derwent to the finish line. I do recall the magnificence of the Organ Pipes, and the Iron Pot at the entry to the Derwent. I should have mentioned that we had quite a leak on the boat, and it required the bilges to be pumped out quite regularly.

We had reasonable instruments - wind instruments, and speed through the water, and of course compasses. Now our speed through the water was measured by a small propellor which passed through the hull near the keel, and the speed of the propellor was measured electronically, giving us our speed through the water. Sometimes this propellor would get fouled by seaweed, and would need to be cleaned. To do this, we unscrewed the holding device, removed the propellor and shaft from the hull - at this stage of course, the water came gushing in - the propellor was about 5 feet under water, so we had a cap which screwed back over the hole, while we cleaned up the propellor. To replace it, just the reverse - remove the cap, water comes gushing in, force the propellor into the housing and seal it up. Yes, we did get some water in the boat, but not too much with practice. Until one day when I was attempting to clean it, I removed the holding screw, pulled up the propellor. Well this time it was firmly attached to an enormous piece of kelp, so we could not put the cap back on - the

kelp was half in and half out of the boat, and the water was gushing in. Out with knives, cut the kelp, but not easy to force it out through the access hole, but we managed, and then just continued, but this time there was quite a bit of water there.

One thing I haven't mentioned so far is safety. We were absolutely hopeless. It is a miracle that we all survived. Of course, no-one ever wore life jackets - you can't really and crew on a big boat - well perhaps these days they have jackets that you can, but not then. So no life jackets. Safety harnesses - well, most of us did have them, but there was nowhere to tie them off. Quite often I would link up to a small timber rail, which would just snap if under any strain. Not good.

The dan buoy (shown here) was attached to a life ring at the stern of the boat. they were both lashed down hard, as they got in the way - too bad if we needed them in a hurry!

Clothes and clothing were important - I always kept one change dry for use on arrival in port. But in the main everything was wet - the boats leaked badly, particularly between the deck and the cabin, so water ran down the insides of the boat, so your sleeping gear was generally not too dry, nor your clothes. It was hell after 4 hours off, to get out of what was now a warm damp bag into wet clothes and wetter wet gear. I always carried a knife with me, to cut away any ropes in an emergency.

In this race, we did not do so well. There were 102 boats set sail from Sydney, and we finished over the line as number 41, and on handicap as number 52. Should have done better! Although our delayed start did not help (well really not much impact).The link below gives the Official film of the race, but you have to get through the first 7 or 8 minutes of travelogue to get to the sailing. No mention of Bacardi though...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbSB3KsBwnY

For me, after the first 24 hours of squeamishness, I was fine, no seasickness, just pretty tired, sleeping was no joy. In passing, the toilet on Bacardi was just in the middle of the cabin, in the open! For urine, for the watch downstairs, there was a bottle which everyone used, and passed out to the watch to throw overboard (downwind of course), and for washing before returning. For those on deck, you just hung on to the backstay or forestay, depending on the wind, and away you went. Well, actually it is incredibly hard to go when you are on a boat which is pitching and tossing, and you are hanging on with one hand like grim death. It can take quite some minutes to get yourself in the mood so to speak. For more serious matters, we had toilet paper on a string which you hung around your neck, and headed off to the pushpit or the pulpit (depending on the wind), and away you went. The indoor toilet was only for emergencies or when the weather was really really bad!

We had a pretty good crew, but there was one guy who had little experience, but desperately wanted to do a Hobart, and for some reason, Gouldie and Rocky agreed. We did not see him after we left the Sydney heads - seasickness - until we berthed at Hobart, so we were one crew down. In addition, we had a female crew member - I was amazed. as Rocky was always dead set against women on boats, but there she was - an air hostess in her other life. She was really good, and tough and totally reliable, although not quite as strong as the blokes, but always in there. The toilet facilities must have been quite a hassle for her!

We finished in about 82 hours, it was a very fast race, with Kialoa III breaking the race record, a record that would stand for 20 years! We finished about midnight, or a bit before on the 29th of December. just pipping Koomooloo over the line.

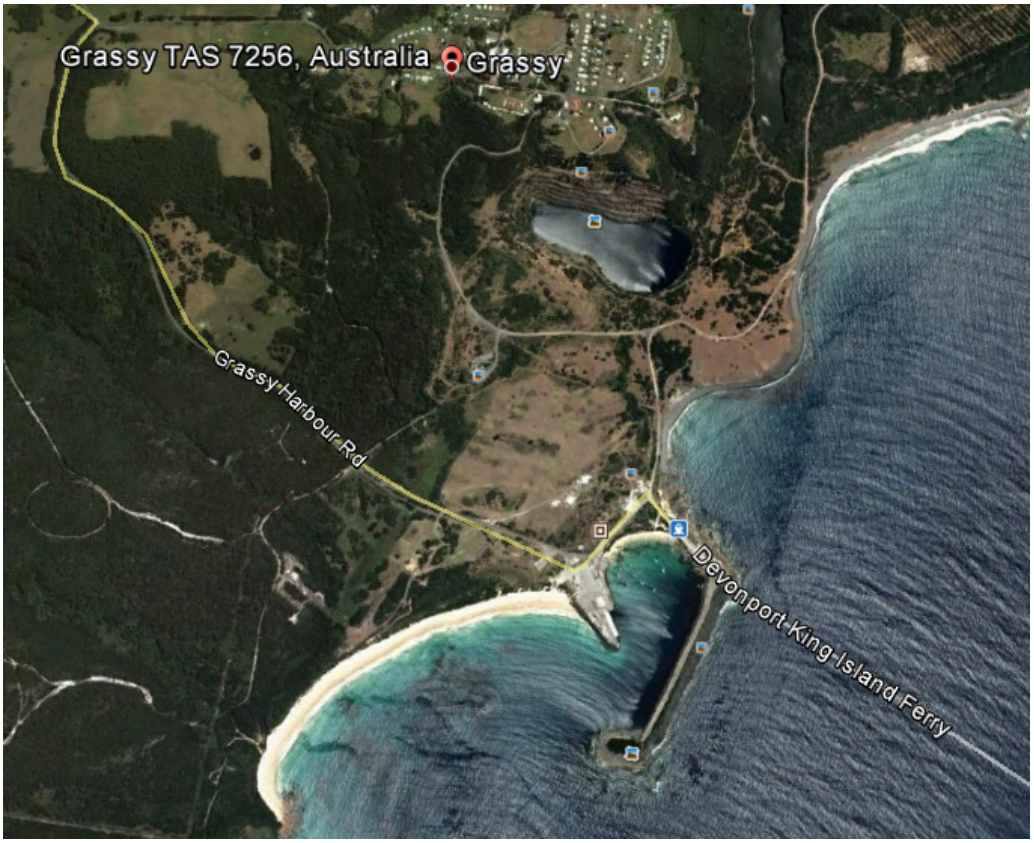
Above is Bacardi tied up in 1975 after the Sydney Hobart in Constitution dock. It is quite likely that the figure on the foredeck is me, with Graeme Coutts and Frenchie Frank in the background.

Betty came down to Hobart at the end of the race, and we had a few days there before heading back to Melbourne - not too sure who looked after the kids.....

One night we all went to the Wrest Point Casino, which had only just opened. Rocky had no jacket - yes it was required!-, so they lent him one for a deposit of $10 for the night. Of course, Rocky forgot to return it, and got a good jacket for just $10 - and he won a lot on two-up as well!

So for the next months or so, I continued to sail on Bacardi, round the sticks in the Bay, overnighters in the Bay, and some ocean yacht races.

I recall when we went down to King Island, to Grassy, which is on the east coast of King Island. It was a rough trip down, and Grassy was not even a one horse town, and was a few km for the harbour. Below is the Google Earth image of Grassy Harbour in 2013.



Now, the harbour in 1976 was not quite like that! The breakwater that is shown running roughly north-south was not built, and the harbour was open to the sea to the east, but of course well protected (well somewhat protected) from the prevailing westerlies. When we arrived, the wind was still howling from the south west. When we arrived, it was getting towards dusk, and we went into town (such as it) briefly, and then headed back to the boat.

The rest of the crew decided to go to a party that night - I decided to stay on the boat, and get some sleep. There was a very strong off-shore breeze, about 30 to 35 knots, and when the crew decided to get back to the boat, they only just made it - they were rowing. If they had missed us, it was next stop New Zealand.

The next morning I awoke at dawn, and looked out the cabin, only to see Koomooloo tearing past our stern, only about 5 metres away, followed about 30 seconds later by her going the other way in the wind. She was swinging in the breeze, and we had dragged our anchor. All hands on deck, quick start of the motor, up with the anchor, and resetting it some distance away. If I had not awoken, the first thing we would have known was when she hit us!

On another occasion we were on our way to Stanley (again) and this time, I was on the helm a rare event for me, I wasn't a great helmsman at all) at about 2 am. We had had quite strong winds earlier in the day, about 20 to 25 knots, but it had moderated to about 10 to 15, on the nose. We had on headsail and main, and were going quite well. Couttsie was on watch with me, and he had just gone below for some reason or another. A few moments after he went below, the feel of the boat changed completely, and I said “Something;’s happening,” I could feel it through the helm. The next moment, the top of the mast came crashing down into the cockpit, hitting the area where Couttsie had been sitting moments earlier.

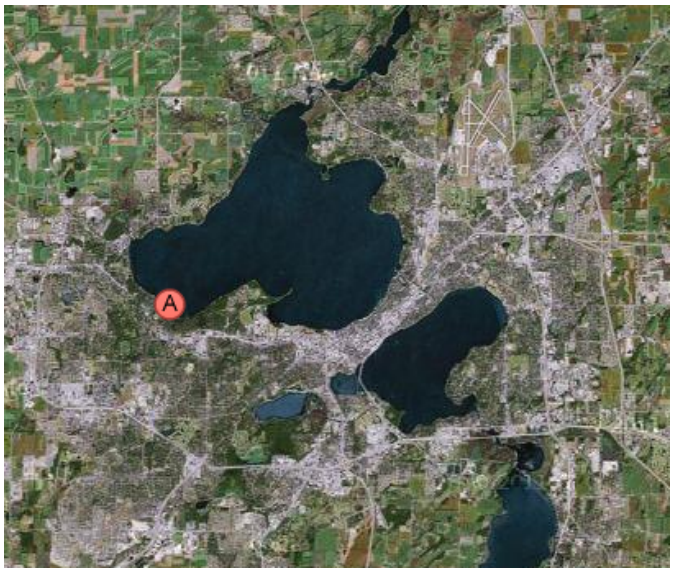
Of course, all hands appeared to see what had happened. The mast had broken about 3 metres from the deck, and the reason - well one of the shrouds on the windward side had broken, and so the mast was not supported, and down it came....

We sent up a flare, (Gouldie set it off right by my ear - it was incredibly loud) and advised the yacht acting as the radio controller of our situation. The hull was not damaged, and after a few hours we had squared things away, and the off watch had set a jury rig sail, and we motored on to Stanley.

Most of the crew, including me, flew back to Melbourne - we all had jobs to go to. Betty picked me up at Tullamarine. Rocky and Gouldie and one or two others organised a tow back, but the rope broke after just a few miles, and they finished up motoring. Now racing boats motors are not at all powerful, and the props are quite small, so getting across Bass Strait was quite an effort. The set was a problem - they finished up at Lorne, and then made their way up to the Heads and Sandringham. Of course the next few weeks were major operations, removing the stump of the mast, ordering a new one, rigging it up, and then re-stepping it. It went pretty fast though, perhaps a month or so.

So we raced to Portland, Port Fairy, Apollo Bay and so forth, and then it was May 1976 - and we were off to the USA and Europe for 7 months or so. I had already said I wanted to do the Sydney Hobart that year - we would be back by about the 4th of December, and so that was settled.

So off to Madison, Wisconsin for 6 months. A map of Madison is shown below. It is a town of about 200,000, of whom about ¾ are students. The University is almost on the isthmus between the two lakes, Mendota and Monona, but fronts onto Lake Mendota. The lakes freeze in the winter, and you can drive on them - in 1979 and for many years since, the students have made a Statue of Liberty rising from the ice.



The mark A on the map above is where we lived - near Lake Mendota. We arrived in May, and left in November, so that the lake was unfrozen, and ready for sailing (I have been back to Madison on December, when there was ice just forming on the lakes).

So I joined the Hoofers Sailing Club. At this stage, I had done a bit of sailing, a Sydney Hobart, a number of ocean races and of course the Arafura... The arrangements at the yacht club were a bit tricky, the boats were moored at the bow to a rickety pier, and you had to come in at just the right speed to pick up the moorings to tie up. In general, getting out was not much trouble if the wind was pushing you away from the pier, but otherwise it was a real hassle. So I had to undergo a series of lessons on how to make it work. Finally they said I was ready, and I had quite a few trips out on their boats during our time at Madison.

The Hoofers Sailing Club was created in 1939 and still exists today as the second largest inland sailing club in the United States. Steve Lesgold, class of '87, joined Hoofers sailing club during his freshman year at UW- Madison. According to Lesgold, the sailing club's basic boat was their own design dubbed "the Badger". The design was based off of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology boat called "The Tech."

I did not race, but just went out for a sail when the weather was good.

One of the first friends we made in Madison, after Kathy, was Skog - Dave Skogberg. He was a keen canoeist, and all of us went out on Lake Mendota with him (he had two canoes, so we went out together). It is just impossible to steer those things, you paddle on one side, and the boat twists away, on the other it goes in the other direction. The experts can do it, but I certainly couldn't!

We had two other trips about boating that I can recall. One day we went to a lake on the road to Milwaukee, I am not too sure why, possibly Simon had been organised as a part of the Scouts that I think he had joined over there. I think maybe he or Kirstie or both were sailing there - in any case, it was a good day.

Another day, which was really magic, we went I think again with Simon or Kirstie's group canoeing down the Wisconsin River, with a lot of others. It was very easy, the current just pulled us along, there was little to do, and the current was not strong. we stopped along the way and had food - many of us had left our cars at the starting point, and another group picked us up at the end, and returned us so that we could pick up our cars. I suspect we may have gone from Ferry Bluff to Tower Hill.

We got back in late November as it turned out, and of course there was much panic in getting ready for the Hobart. Again I went up to Sydney of Christmas Eve and this time stayed on Bacardi. We were a pretty close knit crew at this stage, well settled in in spite of the fact that I had been away for 6 months. I did have a couple of sails on Bacardi before she headed off to Sydney in early December.

And so off we went, on Boxing Day. There were 85 starters this year, 15 of whom would retire before the end of the race.

1976 Weather:

The start was in light NE winds of about 8 knots which freshened in the afternoon. By early evening it had turned to a 25 knot southerly which reached 40 knots during the night. On the 27th it was NE again with 5-10 knots most of the day turning to SW 5-10 knots during the night. By the next morning it was blowing 35 knots and later W 30 gusting 40 knots. By

morning of the 29th 8 boats had retired and breeze was still W at 30 knots. Later in the day some boats finished, while the wind shifted to the south at 25 knots. Early on the 30th the breeze had moderated to 10 knots W while in the afternoon it moved to the SE at 15 knots. By the morning on the 31st there were 37 yachts in with the others experiencing light and variable winds. In all a record 15 boats retired in this toughest race since 1970.

As I mentioned, we were a crew now used to working together - it was a tough race, but we all worked well getting the boat to run well. Again in the main, we had little idea of where we were for most of the time. I think it was on this journey that I did make one blue. On every boat, there always seems to be someone who will cook for everyone. Cooking is of course quite an art in a vessel that is pitching and tossing. We had a metho stove on gimbals, and although slow to heat it worked quite well. In those days, my cooking skills were zero. On a trip to Portland earlier that year, they asked me to cook up some oats for breakfast - I burned the lot, and was never asked again to cook on the boat. In general, most of us ate well after the first day or two. Breakfast was often a can of beer and a Mars Bar, but after that there was reasonable fare - of course with the various watches, there were about 4 meals a day prepared.

So, never being asked to cook, I took on the role of washer up. To do this, we would heat up water, into a bucket, and wash the dishes in the cockpit (not down below). Generally the water got pretty putrid after a while, but we managed. This particular day, I was washing up after lunch in the cockpit, when there was a call for all hands on deck for a sail change. This generally took about 20 minutes, by the time we dropped the headsail, recovered it, got the new sail up and hoisted it and set it, and packed the old sail. When it was all done, I went back to the cockpit, and there was the bucket, full of very dirty water from the washing up, so I threw it overboard. Woops, in the bottom of the bucket was all of our cutlery.... and still three days to go to Hobart.....

As usual I ate little for the first 24 hours, but was fine from then on. We had a great race, although getting up the Derwent was really slow. Still overall, we finished 15th over the line, fifth on overall Handicap, and I think we won Division 1. The Handicap winner was Piccolo, then Rockie, Ragamuffin and Love and war, and us.

We had another incident on board - one of the crew had brought on a copy of Playboy, which he left downstairs, Rocky saw it, and went off his head - he really told the crew member off, amongst other things saying that most of the crew members were married men, and did not want to look at such stuff....

During our trip down, Rocky decided to sleep on the cabin floor for some reason, and one of our crew jumped through the hatch, and landed on him, breaking one of his ribs. He was

pretty miserable with it, but battled on.

In passing, when we hit 10 knots in Bacardi, which was rare, always downhill, it was black jellybean country. By comparison, in the 2012 race, Wild Oats 11 averaged 14.8 knots!! In general, upwind we would manage perhaps 7 to 8 knots in Bacardi.

As usual we had an incredible amount of grog, beer and spirits on board, and it was all gone by the time we arrived in Hobart! In any case, fifth on handicap and winning Division 1 was pretty good. We arrived just after midday on the 29th. So my first Hobart was about 72 hours, and the second about 82 hours.

Again Betty had flown down to meet us, and after a few days in Hobart, it was back to the daily grind. Again for the first few months of 1977, I did the round the sticks and ocean yacht races, but Rocky was getting tired of Gouldie and Bacardi. The cost and the hassles of the partnership were wearing him down.

By now, the partnership between Rocky and Gouldie was wearing thin - Gouldie upset Rocky with some of his antics, I suspect the cost was worrying Rocky, and he decided to let Gouldie buy him out, and Rocky then bought Jisuma, a 36 foot Swanson. Some years earlier, she had been a top boat on the bay, but now was just a good performer. Of course, most of the Bacardi crew stayed with her - I moved to Jisuma, and we had some fun organising crew for the next years, It mostly fell to me to get crew for the round the sticks and the ocean races, and that was not always easy! We could sail her with 5 around the sticks if the weather was reasonable, and 8 was required for an ocean race. I also spent a lot of time on maintenance, and even went up the mast on a few occasions when Jisuma was out of the water, in a bosun's

chair, to attend to the electricals and rigging. Did not like it much at all!

We also spent a lot of time on the hull - fiberglass hulls suffer from a problem called osmosis

If you own an old boat, then you are probably familiar with what "hull osmosis" is. And if you are interested in buying old boats, then you surely should know generally what is "hull osmosis" or in other words "blisters."

Generally, when you lift your boat up on a shipyard, you see small bubbles forming on the bottom of the hull (sometimes even above the waterline), it is usually water absorption under the gelcoat of the boat and sometimes into the fibreglass. Gelcoat is a upper layer of the fibreglass, which is made to be shiny and glossy to give it the white look.

So basically, Fibreglass is not the ultimate water proof material as it was thought to be. There is no such thing as water proof fibreglass. But it is water resistant. Through out a period of 10 or 15 years, the boat's fibreglass absorbs moisture and water into it. This process is called as Osmosis. As the water enters the hull. This water makes the outer layer of the boat's hull to swell and form bubbles, Which are called as Blisters. When you poke a knife into these bubbles, An acidic liquid oozes out, which smells like vinegar.

So, when the water penetrates the gelcoat and goes into the fibreglass, it becomes acidic when it reacts with the chemicals in the fibreglass, and the acidity of this fluid causes the hull to absorb more water, Thus creating larger chain of blisters or "osmosis bubbles".

Looking at what we did, I am not at all sure that our technique did any long term good but it kept Rocky happy. We dug out each blister and refilled it with resin and sanded it back. No idea if it worked for the long term. Simon also recalls many many many days at SYC stripping the bottom of Jisuma and reglassing it! Looking back I used to spend most of my weekends on the boats, racing on Saturdays, maintenance on Sundays, it was quite a business at that stage!

We also got an old mate of mine, Richard Blackwell to crew with us, which was great, We had a regular group of about five of us to sail the boat, and generally managed to pick up another couple as required.

During the winter, Rocky sailed Jisuma up to Mooloolba from about April to November - he had bought a mooring up there. Of course, I could not help him to sail up, I had a job to keep me busy, but he always found a few people who could go up with him, In retrospect, perhaps I should have, cruising up would have been great. For that winter, Richard and I decided we would crew on another boat for the winter series, which were normally held on Sundays. The skippers name was Eddie Wall-Smith?, and I am trying to think of the boat's name - it will come to me - funnily enough, I think it was Destiny 3 - see story of my Sabre Destiny later.

I do recall one winters race on Destiny 3, beating up towards Melbourne from one of the pipeline buoys. We were sitting on the gunnel, waves crashing over us, I have never been so cold, not even when skiing!

I should also mention that a few years later, I was up in Brisbane for work (when I was with CSIRO), and Rocky was moored at Mooloolaba. After I had finished work, I caught a bus up

the coast to Mooloolaba, and stayed for a few days on Jisuma with Rocky. He had a little inflatable which we used to get around in at the Marina, and I rented a car, from Rent-A-Bomb - yes that was its real name, and we spent a day or two exploring the area. We went o Buderim, and up to Fraser Island (but not over to it). But then I had to go back home for work and all that. I enjoyed the stay there, the Yacht Club was great, and Rocky pretty relaxed. I think he sold the mooring a few years later, which was a shame, it was a good investment!

So for the summer, on Jisuma, we sailed around the sticks and on various ocean races. I recall one day, when Rocky was not on board, and one of his offsiders was skipping, and we were doing quite well. One of our marks was the Farewell Light (also known as the Fawkner Beacon), and we were beating up to it, and it was clear to me that we were not going to make it! Now the Farewell in those days was about 40 feet high, with a platform around the base which generally was inhabited by seals. This particular day, it was cold, a northwesterly, and our skipper was intent on getting around the mark without having to go about. In spite of my shouts, he persisted, and yes, the hull got around OK, but the mast of course was leaning over and hit the Farewell tower. Luckily all that happened (!) was that our wind instruments were knocked off the top of the mast, and were hanging down the mast on an electrical cable. By now we were heading downwind, and I was very insistent that we try to save the instruments - Rocky would have been very annoyed, to say the least. So we put our skip in the bosun’s chair, and slowly hauled him up to the top of the mast to retrieve the instruments. Meanwhile we are doing about 8 to 10 knots downwind, and as he got higher and higher, it affected the rolling of the boat very significantly! It was a bit hairy for a while, but we retrieved the instruments, and when back in the marina, put them back up again.

As for sailing, well we did not do very well in the race positions, but in general, we got there. We did have a lot of fun, and drank a lot of booze!

The Hobart this year was quite a hassle, weatherwise. Again I flew up to Sydney on Christmas day, and slept on Jisuma. The boat was again laden down with grog and Mars Bars - breakfast was always had can of beer and a Mars Bar. We also had a lot of spirits! We had a crew of 7, although Rocky was really only the navigator and advisor. John Bennett was the First Mate so to speak.

1977 Weather:

The race started in light E at 5 knots turning later to NE 10 knots fading to a very light SSE overnight. On the second morning the fleet had W 20 knots with some yachts experiencing NE. It turned in the afternoon to SE 30-40 knots gusting with a short high cross sea. Some yachts experienced winds of up to 50 knots for varying periods. By the evening 18 boats had retired. By early on 28th a further 15 were out. The wind was SE 20 knots later going back to 30-40 knots, seas rough. At night it swung to SW 25-35.knots. On the 29th the wind eased to S 12 knots SE turning to a light NE. Calm-to-light conditions plagued the tail-enders although some struck a short 85 knot squall on January 1.

Well, as usual I was pretty tired when we got on our way, and it was quite different in Jisuma, a much smaller boat (although I had done quite a bit of ocean racing on her in the last 12

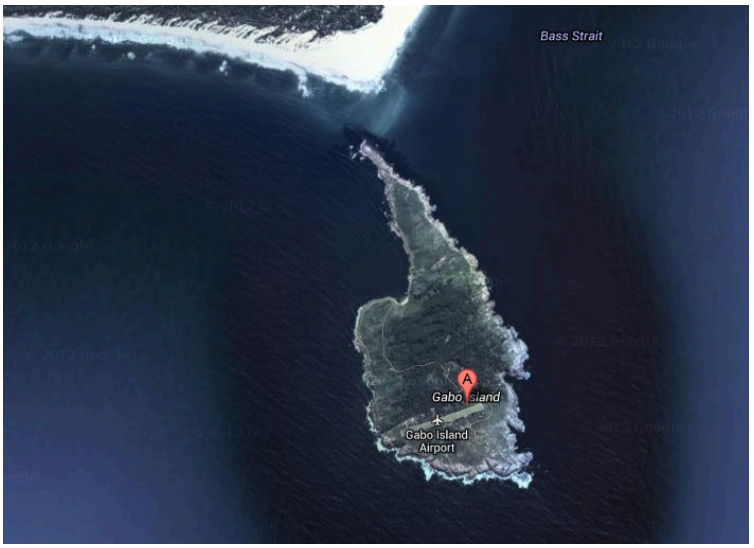
months, and she was really a very solid boat), and after we left the Sydney heads behind, we settled down to a four hour on four hour off watch. As I recall, Richard Blackwell was not on the boat this time. In the afternoon of the second day, all hell broke loose - a really severe south westerly change came through and we were caught with too much rag up, and it was pretty frightening as we reduced sail,. The seas were very short and very uncomfortable. During the sail changes, I got a severe hit on the head, which laid me low for many hours. The wind continued, and finally the rest of the crew decided that we would at least head for Eden and Two Fold Bay to shelter. I disembarked there, not feeling too bright, and the next morning Jisuma set sail again, but after a few hours returned back to Eden, retiring.

Of the very big fleet, 61 retired, and 77 finished.

I caught a bus back home that night, arriving about daylight the next day. When I got back home of course, I was well greeted by my family, and I learned then that Jisuma had retired the race and was at Eden. Betty was really keen to help sail her back to Melbourne, and so we both left a few days later, getting the bus back to Eden. Again, I have no idea what we did with the kids....

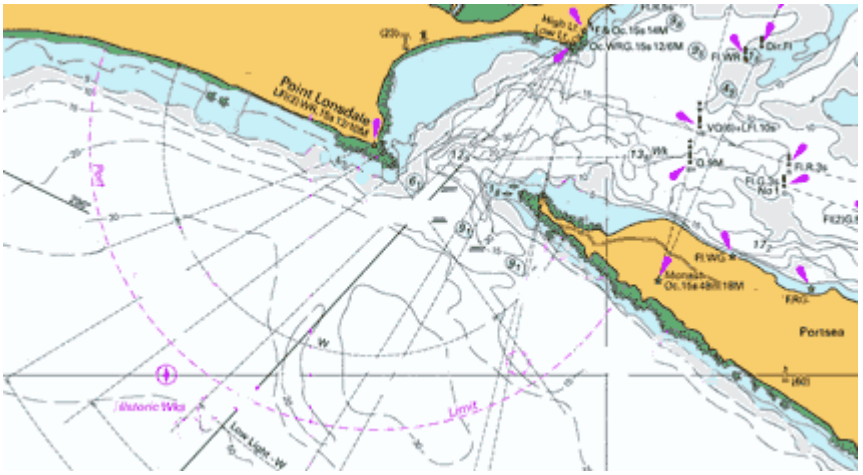
There were about 5 or so of us crewing the boat back to Melbourne, and we had a really great time, although Betty was not well, not seasick, but she thought she had drunk some contaminated water that had upset her. In any case, she did enjoy most of it.

On our first night out, we moored in the lee of Gabo island, in the little inlet on the north side of the island. The lighthouse keeper came and picked us up, and we all climbed up to the top of the lighthouse - an amazing view, and an incredible light! When we got back down, I realised I had left my sunglasses at the top, and had to go back up again! It was an incredible day, and we were sad to leave.



Over the next few days, we made our way across the paddock around Wilson's Promontory and back towards the Port Phillip Heads. One evening as we were settling down to eat below, with George, our faithful autopilot setting our course, I got up and looked out, and to my amazement and horror, we were heading straight towards pyramid rock, off Phillip Island. A quick change of course, and we were fine.

By the time we got to the heads, the tides were against us, and we had to stooge around for about 4 hours awaiting the right conditions to enter - it was in the wee small hours when we got through. We used the channel known as five fingers west, the small boat channel.



For the next sailing season, we did quite a bit of ocean racing on Jisuma, but I was getting to the stage where I had had my fill. It took a lot of time, and often was not great - wet, cold and miserable - on the other hand, there were plenty of times where it was magnificent.

For the Apollo Bay race this year, Rocky could not come for some reason, and so the rest of us sailed down. I was on the helm at about 2 pm, we were only about 5 miles from the finish, when I looked up to check the sail again, and noticed the backstay was unravelling. Woops. We quickly took off all the rag, and started the engine, and motored the rest of the way - we went right past the finishing boat, but they did not notice, and next thing we were missing - a

quick call on the radio and all was well. We spent some time trying to restore the mast, and with a bit of fiddling, took the top section which was unravelling, removed the section only a few feet long down to the insulator, turned the stay upside down, found another fitting and sailed back after a night of drinking. It was not that night that one of our crew walked straight through the glass door of the local pub, that was two years earlier.... No-one was hurt.

My final Sydney Hobart race was in 1978. Again, flying up to Sydney on Christmas Day, and sleeping on Jisuma. Richard Blackwell was on our crew this year.

1978 Weather:

The race started in 12-15 knots NE with rain. The wind gradually freshened the first afternoon to 30 knots to give the yachts a fast passage past Jervis Bay. The hard running conditions were taking toll of spinnakers and gear and two boats broke booms and retired. A light sou-westerly change passed over the fleet at 2400 hrs and turned SE 10-15 knots later in the day leaving the yachts close hauled towards Gabo Island. Overnight the seven leaders put more than 80 miles on the rest of the fleet. The light westerly (5-10 knots) then took the bulk of the fleet across Bass Strait with many calm patches. The leaders continued to extend their lead. A southerly change passed through on the third night lasting only six hours. A freshening nor-easter of 15 knots took the yachts down the Tasmanian coast. It died during the night. In Storm Bay most yachts found light and variable conditions with the river producing fitful breezes. Once the leaders finished the rest of the fleet experienced frustrating calms down the Tasmanian coast and in Storm Bay.

Well, the first night out, we were running hard, big seas, and they put me on the helm! Not a great idea! We were going so fast that the wake from the bow was eye high on each side of me as I was on the helm, really powering. Inevitably, problems. We jibed, the boom broke, and the broken end swept past just in front of Richard Blackwell in the cockpit, and just in front of me. Disaster after last year! Why did the boom break - I have no idea, it broke at the vang. We spent some time cleaning up, and jury rigged a spinnaker topping lift around the boom bits, and lashed it on, and continued on our way. I was quite devastated.

As you will have seen from above, the weather lightened off, and we were becalmed for a period in the middle of Bass Strait, where we learned that cans of Boag's beer floated - we were cooling them by putting them overboard in a fabric container. A shark came up and nuzzled them. The wind came up again, and just off the northern tip of Tasmania, we ran into Petuna! They came over and we had quite a chat.

As we slowly made our way down the coast, there were lots of planes flying, taking pictures.

We were very slow, although given our problems with the main, not too bad. We spent New Year's Eve at sea, just at the entrance to Storm Bay - all of us had far too much to drink, and there was no wind. At 4 am it came in, and Richard and I had a magnificent sail around Tasman Island, and near to the organ pipes, in spite of having a bit of a hangover. One of the nicest sails I have had. That is not us in the image below!

We finished about 2pm on New Year's day. and 65th out of 97 boats, not a bad job really.

Jisuma was a fun boat, the kids also enjoyed it. Simon has mentioned that he recalls "good times (for a kid anyway) doing the Bonito social races to Queenscliff, a Geelong social trip, opening days and just hanging off the pier at half moon bay on jisuma. I guess because thats what I was involved with anyway!"

And so my time on keel boats came to an end in the next few months - I had had it, the time required, and terror from time to time, and I had had a great experience, but it was enough.

Just about the time that I decided to quite keelboat sailing, Richard Blackwell went into partnership with another guy, and they bought a Farr 38, which was then moored on the north coast of Tasmania, at Devonport.

Richard asked if I would be prepared to do a delivery with him and two others, to bring the boat back to the mainland. I agreed of course, and Richard and his partner flew us down to Devonport on a small 5 seater aircraft, from Moorabbin. We left early one Saturday. It was a marvellous flight, good conditions, and what was really amazing was the appearance of a full 360 degree rainbow, centred on the end of the wing. Extraordinary.

We arrived just after 11, and by 12 we were heading back to the Heads. It was a great trip back, no hassles at all, and we arrived on Sunday at Sandringham, where the boat was pulled out for inspection. We had been warned that the Farr 38 is very light weight, and that with the knife keel, when she was pulled out of the water to rest on the keel, the cabin floor would bow up - and it did.

Now there was no space for Richard and his partner to moor permanently at Sandringham, so they arranged for her to be moored at Mornington. She had only been there one week, when a dreadful storm came through, resulting in many of the boats being damaged or written off. Sadly, Richard's boat was a complete write off. Richard was a banker, and sadly, a few years later, he died of a brain tumour.

By now the kids were about 12 and 13. We did still have the boatshed, and I decided that a smaller boat, sailing during the day, and having a warm bed at night might be the best option. So I bought a Mirror Dinghy. Quite a difference from Bacardi and Jisuma!

We joined Black Rock Yacht Club, and the kids and I used to sail her in the Saturday races - there were about 3 or 4 Mirrors in the fleet, and we had fun. I would take Kirstie out one Saturday, and Simon the next. At one stage we got an old discarded Spinnaker from Jisuma, and made our own kite for the mirror. Simon and I went out in it, and the boat really went - finally we broke the rudder pintles, and had to come in for repairs. All in all, the Mirror was a great boat, very forgiving and easy to handle, No kites of course in races - they were not designed for kites. I painted her bright orange, in the hope that it would be easily seen from the shore - it was not to be, as it just looked black from land. I guess we sailed the Mirror for about 3 seasons, and had great fun with it. The kids of course were getting to be very good sailors, and one day in about 1980 threw me off the boat, and sailed it themselves! And did really well, better than I could have I suspect. It was a gorgeous day, and I sat on the shore and thought, I will have to do something else, as these kids are not going to let me onto that boat! The image below is not us!

And so, we moved on a bit. To what turned out to be one of my two great loves.

Windsurfing - not me above!

In about 1980. the windsurfing craze was really taking off in Australia. They were everywhere, and so I decided that with the kids now sailing the Mirror, I would buy one. This was quite a risky business, as we had little cash, and were living from one paycheck to another. and the Windsurfers were about $900 dollars in 1980. And I needed a wetsuit to boot. There was a windsurfer agent just down the road from CSIRO in Hughett, and after some discussion with the owners, I bought one, and a wet suit....

From Wikipedia:

Windsurfing, as a sport and recreational activity, did not emerge until the latter half of the 20th century. But before this, there have been sailing boats of various designs that have used wind as the driving force for millennia, and Polynesians have been riding waves for many of them, undertaking day trips over oceans standing upright on a solid board with a vertical sail.

In 1948, 20-year old Newman Darby was the first to conceive the idea of using a handheld sail and rig mounted on a universal joint so that he could control his small catamaran—the first rudderless sailboard ever built that allowed a person to steer by shifting his or her weight in order to tilt the sail fore and aft. Darby did not file a patent for the sailboard. However, he is widely recognized as its inventor as well as the first to conceive, design, and

build a sailboard with a universal joint. In his own words, Darby experimented throughout much of the 1950s and 1960s and it wasn't until 1963 that an improved sailboard with a conventional stayed sloop rig sail arrangement made it more stable than the one built in 1948. In 1964, Darby began selling his sailboards.

12-year old Peter Chilvers is often cited for inventing a sailboard in 1958. In the 1960s, Jim Drake was the first to solve many problems of getting the board to sail while Hoyle Schweitzer was the first to be successful in marketing the sailboard.

In 1964, during a discussion on water sports over a brandy at his home in Southern California, RAND Corporation aeronautical engineer Jim Drake and his former Rockwell boss and now good friend Fred Payne, who worked at The Pentagon, discussed options for creating a wind-powered water-ski which would allow Payne to travel on the Potomac River. That night they developed the idea of a kite powered surfboard. On later reflection, Drake didn't like the integrity of the idea and dismissed it. There were already a number of sailboard designs available, and Drake also was concerned about the integrity of a design needing taut wire close to a human body to keep the sail upright.

Still developing the idea, Drake's wife met the pregnant Diana Schweitzer, and the two families became good friends through their children. Drake mentioned the idea to surfer Hoyle Schweitzer who wanted to develop it, but Drake was still unsure of how to control and steer what he envisaged in a design concept as a surfboard with upright sail design, whereby the sailor stood upright on the board holding the sail.

The technical problem was that most boats steer by varying the angle of attack in the water between the centre board and the rudder, and Drake's question came down to simple operation of how a standing person could control both the power of the sail as well as the direction of the craft.

In 1967, while driving between his home and a contract at the Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino, Drake had time to reflect on early 17th century based sail ship control. Rudders then were weak and ineffective, mostly used for trimming course. Hence with multi-masted boats, the sailors would trim the upper sails on the forward and rearwards masts to steer the ship.

Dismissing the idea of a design with two upright sails, Drake decided to move the sail by rotation, as moving it linearly would require a mechanical system. Experimenting with a rotational design which became the concept for the universal joint, whereby the angle of attack of the sail to the board could be varied to allow control of both power and craft direction. Drake finished the design by using an earlier but for them failed invention of East Coast racing sail, and added a wishbone boom.

Windsurfing International

On March 27, 1968, Hoyle Schweitzer and Jim Drake filed the very first windsurfing patent,

which was granted by the USPTO in 1970. There is no evidence that they had knowledge of any prior inventions similar to theirs, but Drake accepts in retrospect that although he can be credited with invention, he was "probably no better than third," behind mid-west based Newman Darby and Englishman Peter Chilvers.

The early windsurfing boards were made of foam in the garages of Schweitzer and Drake, with the booms, tees and daggerboards hand crafted in teak. Hoyle sub-contracted the manufacture of the teak items to boat builder Ennals Ives in Taiwan, but the quality and costs of transportation brought other issues One of the early customers was Bert Salisbury, and the first international shipment of a container of boards went to Sweden[] Early customers also included Lufthansa pilots who had read about the board, who simply included one as personal luggage on their return journey from Los Angeles International Airport.

To ensure the quality of the product and handle marketing, in 1968 Hoyle and Diana Schweitzer founded the company Windsurfing International

in Southern California to manufacture, promote and license a windsurfer design. The jointly owned patent was wholly licensed to Windsurfing International. Working in a factory unit in Torrance, California, Hoyle, who had previously built personal surf boards in his garage, was unhappy with the durability of the early "Baja Board." He therefore developed a new mould, based on an old Malibu surfboard design that Matt Kivlin had developed, which the company sub-contracted for mass manufacture to Elmer Good.

The company registered the term "windsurfer" as a trademark at the United States Patent and Trademark Office in 1973, launching the craft as a one-design class. Going one-design was influenced by the success of the Laser andHobie Cat classes. Each Windsurfer had an identical computer-cut sail, a technology new at that time and pioneered by Ian Bruce and the Laser class.

In 1968, Hoyle's computer business collapsed, and he and Diane moved to Newport Beach; at the same time Drake accepted a two-year assignment to The Pentagon, and moved to Washington DC. Immediately, Hoyle offered Drake to buy out his half of the patent, and it was only when Hoyle pointed out ownership of the company that the relationship between the pair began to fall apart. Having returned to California, in 1973 Drake sold his half of the patent to Windsurfing International for the sum of $36,000.

Patent disputes

Through the seventies, Schweitzer aggressively promoted and licensed the Windsurfing International design and licensed the patent to manufacturers worldwide, mainly through competition and the publication of a magazine.[] As a result, the sport underwent very rapid growth, particularly in Europe after the sale of a sub-license sold to Ten Cate in Holland.

At the same time, Schweitzer also sought to defend his patent rights vigorously against

unauthorized manufacturers. This led to a host of predating windsurfer-like devices being presented to courts around the world by companies disputing Windsurfing International's rights to the invention.

(In 1979, Schweitzer licensed Brittany, France-based company Dufour Wing, which was later merged with Tabur Marine – the precursor of Bic Sport. Dufour was not licenced!) Europe was now the largest growing market for windsurfers, and the sub-licensed companies – Tabur, F2, Mistral – wanted to find a way to remove or reduce their royalty payments to Windsurfing International.

Tabur lawyers found prior art, in a local English newspaper which had published a story with a picture about Peter Chilvers, who as a young boy on Hayling Island on the south coast of England, assembled his first board combined with a sail, in 1958. This board used a universal joint, one of key parts of the Windsurfing International's patent. They also found stories published about the 1948 invention of the sailboard by Newman Darby and his wife Naomi in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

In Windsurfing International Inc. v Tabur Marine (GB) Ltd. 1985 RPC 59,, with Tabur backed financially by French sailing fan Baron Marcel Bich, British courts recognized the prior art of Peter Chilvers. It did not incorporate the curved wishbone booms of the modern windsurfer, but rather a "straight boom" that became curved in use. The courts found that the Schweitzer windsurfer boom was "merely an obvious extension". It is worthy of note that this court case set a significant precedent for patent law in the United Kingdom, in terms of inventive step and non-obviousness; the court upheld the defendant's claim that the Schweitzer patent was invalid, based on film footage of Chilvers. Schweitzer then sued the company in Canada, where the opposition team again financially backed by Bic included Chilvers and Jim Drake, and Schweitzer lost again. After the cases, no longer obliged to pay Windsurfing International any royalty payments, the now renamed Bic Sport became the world's largest producer of windsurfing equipment, with an annual production of 15,000 boards.

In 1983, Schweitzer sued Swiss board manufacturer Mistral and lost. Mistral's defense hinged on the work of US inventor Newman Darby, who by 1965 conceived the "sailboard": a hand-held square rigged "kite" sail on a floating platform for recreational use.[1]

Eventually US courts recognized the Schweitzer windsurfer as an obvious step from Darby's prior art[1] Schweitzer had to reapply for a patent under severely limited terms, and finally it expired in 1987. Shortly thereafter, having lost its license royalty income, Windsurfing International ceased operations.

In 1984, Australian courts determined a patent case: Windsurfing International Inc & Anor -v- Petit & Anor (also part reported in 3 IPR 449 or [1984] 2 NSWLR 196), which attributed the first legally accepted use of a split boom to an Australian boy, Richard Eastaugh.

Between the ages of ten and thirteen, from 1946 to 1949, aided by his younger brothers, he built around 20 galvanized iron canoes and hill trolleys which he equipped with sails with split bamboo booms. He sailed these in a sitting position and not as a windsurfer standing up, near his home on the Swan River in Perth. The judge noted that, "Mr Eastaugh greatly exaggerated the capacity of his galvanised iron canoes to sail to windward" and that, "There is no corroboration of Mr Eastaugh's experiences by any other witness. Neither of his brothers or his father was called".It is acknowledged in the courts that the separate Eastaugh (1946–1949), Darby (1965) and Chilvers (1958) inventions pre-dated the Schweitzer/Drake patent (1968).

Trademark disputes

Windsurfing International claimed trademark rights with respect to the word "windsurfer". While this was registered in the United States for some years, it was not accepted for registration in many jurisdictions as the word was considered too descriptive. Registration was ultimately lost in the United States for the same reason.

The Schweitzers initially chose the word for its descriptive quality. Unfortunately they immediately set out diminishing its value by naming their company "Windsurfing International" and even referring to themselves and their own children as windsurfers.

As the word was rejected as registrable in a number of countries, lawyers advised that to be successful the word would have to be used as a proper adjective. They realised that this required a number of generic nouns to which the adjective would apply: sailboard, boardsailing, planche a voile, segelbrett and so on. The rearguard action was ultimately unsuccessful and arguably created considerable confusion which hampered marketing efforts in later years.

The Windsurfer One Design is a classic in many respects: It was the board that launched the sport back in the 1970s & 1980s. It then went on to become the largest One Design Sailing Class of boats in the world. And today some forty years later its legacy has continued thru the years to provide a sailing experience no other board has been able to reproduce. Most modern sailboards are designed for speed, so they need strong winds or large sails to generate enough power to get them onto a plane. They are boat shaped boards. The Original Windsurfer is different in concept. The design criteria for the Original Windsurfer flowed from using sail power to catch a wave or swell and then be able to effectively maneuver and actively maintain this interaction. The surfboard-inspired design has a flat planing hull, so in light air it can carve efficiently through the water and build up planing speed without the power of a massive rig. This allows the One Design to perform with a small and lightweight sail. The board itself is made of cross-link polyethylene with a polyurethane core that is extremely durable and close to indestructible. The sail is mylar/dacron that can last for years. It is not uncommon to see Windsurfer One Designs from the 1970s & 1980s still in use today.

Where most boards rely on their big fins for upwind performance, the Windsurfer One Design uses a centerboard and a small skeg. That allows the Windsurfer to tack and gybe very quickly and it makes the One Design the ideal board for fluky conditions and racing where the sailor can utilize shifts in wind direction to his or her advantage. It also gives the board a sports-car-feel. The One Design does not have the same top speed as a modern board, but it can frequently keep up with most modern boards. In windy conditions it does well because the smaller sail allows it to continue sailing when many big rigs are over-powered. The feeling that you experience when you're on a Windsurfer is most similar to that of a surfboard.

I bought the windsurfer (known affectionately (?) as “logs”) on a Friday afternoon, and Saturday the weather was pretty miserable. I was told to just get on the board, no sail, to practice balance, so I took it down to Mentone (a northerly was blowing, so Black Rock was out), and practiced balancing on the board. For the next few weeks, I would leave work at about 5, down to Black Rock, rig the Windsurfer, and practice. For a while I just stayed inside the pier, and yes, it was not all that easy to learn - but after two weeks or so, I was getting reasonable in lighter airs. At this stage, the kids got interested, and I bought one more a few weeks later for them to share (huh!), and then a third not long after, so we had one each. SImon’s friend, Steve from next door also bought one, and quite often we would head off with 4 Windsurfers and masts on the top of the car, for a day’s sailing.

At this stage, harnesses had not really caught on, and so it was only your arms that held the sail up, and in stronger winds it was quite an effort. About 12 months later, harnesses appeared, and we all got used to them - what a difference - easier to sail (when you got used to them), and you could sail in heavy winds.

There were quite a few keen windsurfers at Black Rock, and we became quite a close knit group. They included Viv Brophy, a wonderful person, the Doc with the gammy leg - made it hard for him, and Rommy and his friend amongst others.

By this time we were all having a lot of fun, and getting better, sailing over the reef breaks between the Cerberus and the shore. Sailing Windsurfers is hard yakka! They are not well designed, and in general, I believe if you can sail a Windsurfer, you can sail any sailboard. But at this time, it was a Windsurfer or nothing - the patents made it really hard for any competition. Regularly down at Black Rock over a good weekend, you could see about 50 or so windsurfers on the beach - they were incredibly popular.

They were also pretty badly made - from the moulds they had lots and lots of imperfections. When you bought one, you would carefully examine it, particularly the base, to ensure that it was reasonably free of bumps and blemishes, and smooth. In general they were not at all, and you picked the best of a bad bunch. Also in those days in particular, the logs were dead straight, and I finished up placing them in the sun, with the stern held, a fulcrum in the middle, and really heavy weights on the nose to try to get it to have some turn up. It would

bend in the sun significantly, but on cooling, not much difference.

The early windsurfers had a daggerboard which was just inserted into a slot. For downwind, you would reach down, pull out the plate, and carry it over your arm - when you fell in, it could give you a nasty whack! A few years later, they brought out a new model, which had a swivel centerboard, which you could bring up and lower with your feet - much easier. I bought one of those two, and the kids also got one.

By this stage Windsurfing was really taking off, and also at this stage, we lost our boatshed, and became more involved with the Black Rock Yacht Club. There were quite a few Windsurfers there, and they started to include the class in races at BRYC. At this stage, we had our logs stored under the deck, on racks, and well locked up. We came down one Saturday, and some thieves had broken in, and stolen lots of Windsurfers and their gear, including Simon's. He was really distressed. I tried to talk him into using my log for that day's races, but he was not interested - I wish he had have taken that up. We claimed on insurance and got him another one as soon as we could. Windsurfing continued to expand, and there was a demand for more spaces for storage.

The club decided to put tracks up on the back wall of what was Brewer's boatshed, now a business renting boats and a fast food outlet. This wall was incredibly soft! I put up a lot of the racks, and it always worried me that the racks might fall down, as the pins holding it to the wall could not take too much strain. The windsurfers were put in the racks on their base, pointing skyward. I had one of my mates at CSIRO develop a big steel locking system for Kirsten, Simon and me to use to try to stop thievery. In any case, that seemed to work.

By this stage we had about 15 to 20 windsurfers racing at Black Rock! I became the Windsurfer rep on the Sailing Committee, and it soon became evident that many of the conventional sailors were not at all keen on sharing the water with the Windsurfers. Well, to some extent, that can be understood. Many of the windsurfers had not raced before, and had no idea of the rules of racing, so we tried to make them aware of what they could and could not do....

We developed lots of tricks - sailing on the wrong side of the sail, lying down sailing, riding the rails and so forth. Much fun. It really was a great time. Windsurfers were good in the sense that they were quite usable between about 1 knot and 20 knots, and were unsinkable.

As time went on, the enthusiasm for windsurfing died amongst the general population - quite quickly. After about 5 years or so, only the hard core really remained. I found that I enjoyed the races, which were generally sausage, triangle, sausage, finish, but race numbers decreased. Logs were just difficult to handle, and at about that time a lot of new boards, shorter boards, appeared. These were likely to be easier to handle, and more fun than logs.

I kept my Windsurfer, and bought a Bombora South Pacific, can't remember who made them, perhaps it was Windsurfer themselves.

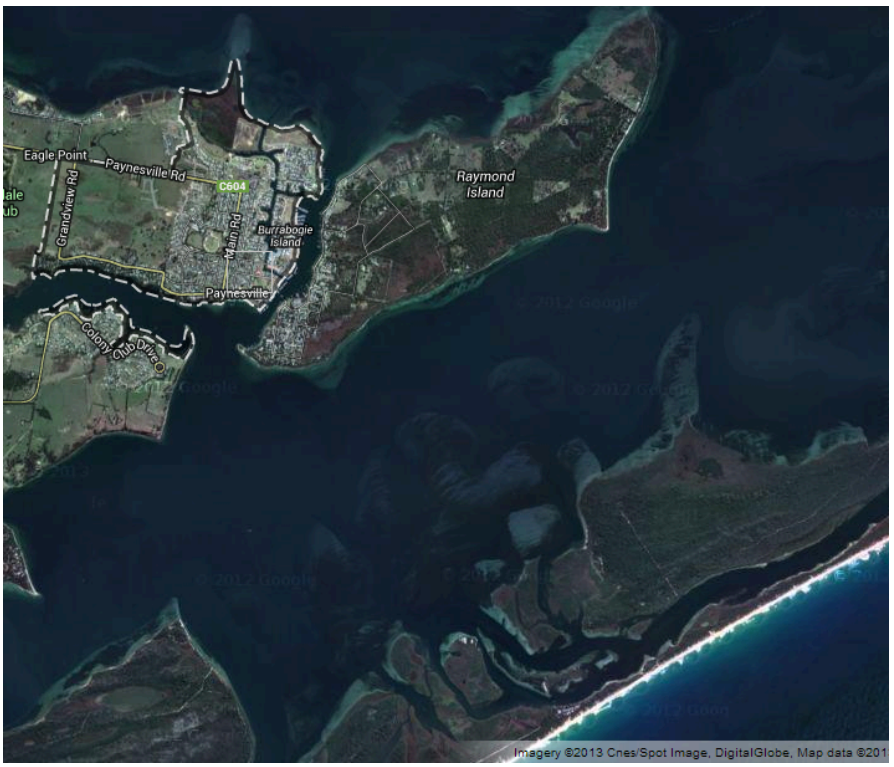
Now, I can’t find out from the web what the volume of a One Design Windsurfer (the ones we had) was , I suspect it was about 200 litres. Volume is all important in boards. If you

weigh say 85kg yourself with all of your gear on, and the mast and sail weigh say 15 kg, the board must support 100 kg if it is to float at all. Ands, since you need to be able to balance on the board to pull the sail up out of the water, you need quite a bit more volume if you are to remain stable! At 200 litres, the Windsurfer was just about perfect.

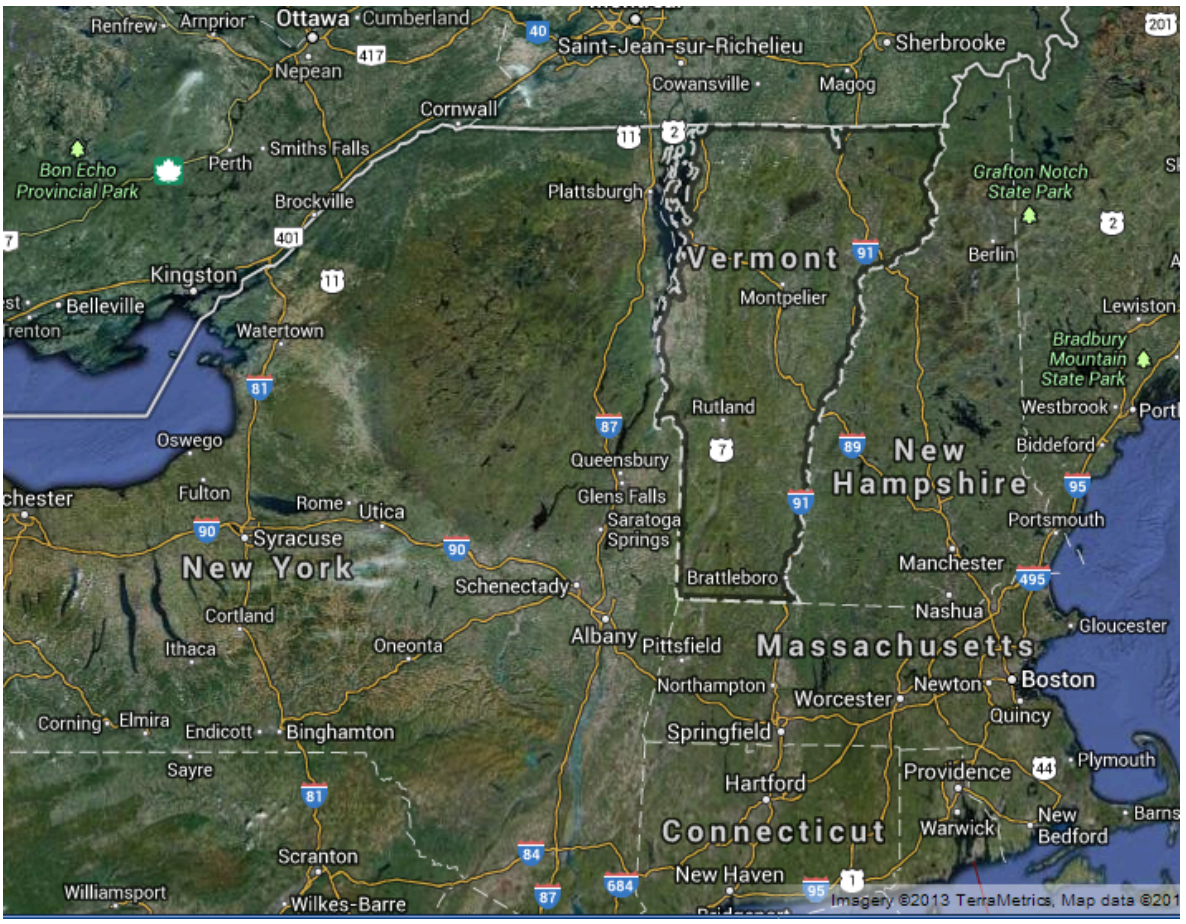
- This is being typed in a new document - much as I love Google docs, it has a couple of drawbacks - the first is that the cursor does not always line up with the text in very long documents, and this has become a hassle with the existing document - hence I have started a new one and will merge them (wonder if I can - yes I can!) at a later date. Another annoyance is that you can't show non-printing characters, and this is a real hassle! In any case, on with the story....

But at about 135 litres, the Bombora was just about a "semi-floater". As it turned out, it was not a great board at all, a beast to get up, not easy to handle, and really quite a disappointment. I could not easily manage to go about on it, it would sink too easily, and it was a real swine to jibe, the best way of getting around, but again, it did not let you do it easily. I spent a lot of time in the water with that monster!

As well as racing each Saturday at Black Rock, we were down there most Sundays just reaching in and out, it was a wonderful time, great riding on the Windsurfer, and when the weather was perfect the Bombora. Loved it. We did quite a few State and National titles too. I am pretty sure that we did one at Black Rock, and I know we did one at Mount Martha(!), and at Paynesville. They were all great, but of course I did not do any good, although the kids did pretty well. At Mount Martha we were there for three days, no wind at all, no races! Paynesville was great, good steady breezes, much fun. I recall sailing over to the far side of the lake at Paynesville, and around the internal waterways before heading back to Paynesville. Also we had a sail all the way around Raymond Island - a long way, we did well!



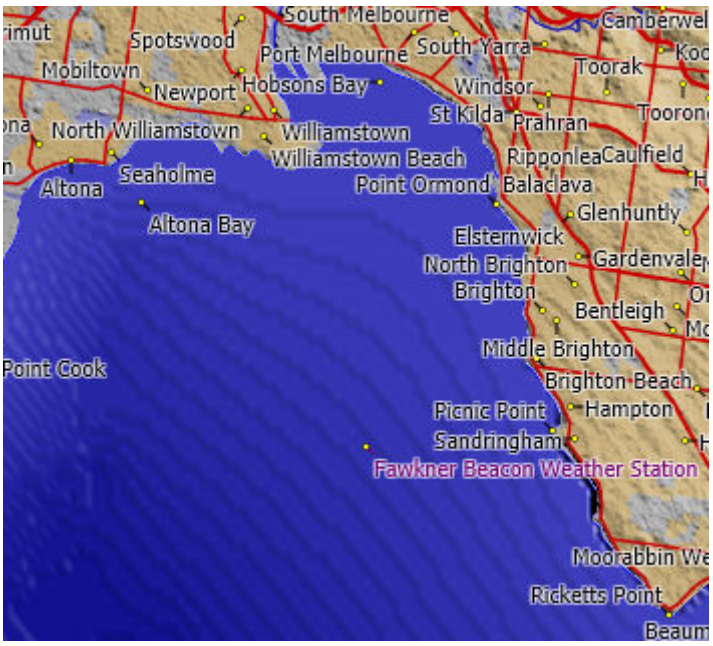
I also sailed in various other places, I had a great holiday at Lake Narracan one New Year, just north of Moe for a week of great sailing, and of course I also had a great day's sailing on Lake Champlain, in the north east corner of Vermont. I was on a work trip to the USA, and I finished the meeting by lunchtime, in Burlington, and thought, time for a sail. A perfect day, so off I went, hired a board (pretty awful), and had a great time!



Although my main sailing area was Black Rock (loved those steady south westerlies), I also sailed at Brighton, Elwood (on a number of occasions), Westernport, Chelsea amongst others - but Black Rock was always my favorite, although in an easterly it was not great (used to go to Beaumaris or Mentone for those), or a northerly, mainly because of their gustiness which made control hard.

We used to go out occasionally to the Farewell or Fawkner beacon, in the middle of the bay, off Brighton. It was about 7 km each way from Black Rock, and we would only go out when the wind was just right. We generally went out in a group of three, so that if one of us had broken equipment, one could go for help, and the other stay as back up - never happened though.

The structure was all of wooden piles, and had a lower section which was inhabited by lots and lots of seals. It was great to go out there, and see them basking in the sun, and cavorting around the boards. Really great - but a long way out for us!



It was the Farewell (Fawkner) beacon that we had hit earlier with Jisuma - see the notes above.

Another time, for the bi-centennial celebration in 1988, there was a festival of tall ships which came into Port Phillip Bay as a part of the celebrations - there must have been about 25 or so tall ships. At the time I was Officer in Charge at dairy, but I was not going to miss this. It was a work day, but at about 10 or so, I took some of the day off and launched my log at Black Rock. I had a one-use waterproof camera with me to take some snaps - and of course there were heaps of other boats making their way out. The weather was kind, perhaps 5 to 7 knots.

So off I went, out about 5 km to where the ships were to come in, and dropped my sail in the water just as they arrived - stink boats everywhere as well! I got some great photos, and was amused when the water police came up to me and made me move - they were I guess afraid I would get hit by the stink boats. Don't know what they would have done if I had declined. I moved away a bit, they left, and I went back. It was really a great experience. And I got back to work later that day.

Another time, in 1983, I went down to Lorne with Jim Scott (more of him later), and Simon and others over Easter, for some sailboarding in the surf. The weather was not kind, and we only had one really good session, but it was magnificent, I still recall with pleasure sailing on that day! Not long after, I came down with a very strange bug, which I suspect was similar to Ross River fever, a mosquito borne disease. I was really crook for some months. It affected my whole life enormously.

Looking back I guess I had about 10 years of great fun on the windsurfer and sailboarding -

more of that in a minute.

In the middle 80s, Kirsten was going out with a fellow by the name of Jim Scott, who was great with his hands, a very practical guy. He was a keen sailor and windsurfer, and started up a business (which is still going) where he initially made windsurfers to order. Simon bought one from him, and it was absolutely beautiful, a wonderful short board which SImon adored. It had a sunset, as I recall, perhaps Hawaiian, on the top, just great. He got it in about 1985.

In 1986, I went to India for 6 weeks for CSIRO, and while I was there, Simon had an accident on the reef between the Cerberus and the shore, and the board was damaged beyond repair - thank heavens Simon was OK. We got another one, but it was not as pretty.

We also had some great races - I recall once being well out to sea, when a severe change came in during the race, and of course we were all knocked down - visibility was about 20 yards, strong winds and the like, but after 15 minutes or so, the wind dropped, we pulled up our sails, and finished the race.

In 1986, Betty and I also broke up, and I went to live with Suzi. Not long after, I asked Jim to make a semi floater for me, about 140 litres, which he did. His factory at that stage was not far from where Sue and I were living in Mordialloc. It was a great board, and I loved it. I could even jibe it pretty well. Of course by now I had learned to water start - what is that? Well, with semi floaters and sinkers, it was not possible to stand on the board and pull the sail up as you could with full floaters. So you lay in the water, picked up the mast at the tip, which allowed the board to swing downwind, then moved down the mast under the sail, pushing the sail up so you could breathe, until you reached the boom. You then grabbed the boom, put your feet up on the board, and waited - rear end firmly in the sea. If you were lucky, the wind would get under the sail and pull you up onto the board, quickly you would make adjustments to the sail and get underway - if you were too slow, the board would sink and you would start again. Or, there might not be quite enough wind to lift you out, so you would be partially lifted, just your rear end in the water, but not enough pull to get you out. There were tricks to get around this, but water starting was really hard to learn, but well worth it. Of course, if the wind died, you were cactus!

Standing starts from the shore were also great too, and they were somewhat easier to learn, and much easier than pulling the sail up. I did enjoy windsurfing!

By this time, Suzi also had a log, and we enjoyed ourselves sailing regularly. She wasn't great at it, but persisted. In about 1989, I decided that the log was just too hard to handle, and that there were much better and more responsive boards about - I bought a second hand Mistral, 240 litres - a true floater, much nicer to handle compared to the Bombora! It went like crazy, in a straight line, great for just reaching in and out, but almost impossible to quickly jibe or go about. but a ripper for a reach. Loved it. At the time, I was buying various sails for that

board and other, and had quite a quiver of sails from 7 square metres, 6,5.5,5,4.5 and 3.5. the 3.5 was really not much joy to use, when the wind was that strong the seas were just like a washing machine.

I used to sail throughout the winter - and often I was the only one in sight. I found that I could sail for about an hour before the cold got too much, or, if I fell in, 20 minutes after the fall was the maximum! I did enjoy it though. Over Christmas, I would try to sail each day, no matter what the weather. Great stuff!.

But then my life changed. By 1990, I was 48, and finding the windsurfing just a bit harder on the body, but more importantly, Sue was not well, and this had an important impact on me - and of course we had the farm to keep me busy. But even more important was my outlook. I still used to leave work to go for a sail, and get down to Black Rock and think, “Not today”, I was just lacking enthusiasm and will. Worn out. I was still windsurfing, but my enthusiasm was diminished - still loving it and wishing I could get back my enthusiasm.

At this stage the mad windsurfing craze had passed, and so only the few diehards were left - there were no longer enough windsurfers for racing at Black Rock, the younger windsurfers had grown up and moved on with their lives, and windsurfing was no longer attractive to the upcoming generations.

So I was still sailing over weekends, but my will to sail over the week and at other times was less. After Sue passed away, I continued to sail, but was put out by the fact that we had a lot of light airs, and I found that no longer was I keen on sailing in these. So after much thought, in about 1993, I bought a Sabre to use when the wind was too light for the board.

So I had more than 10 years of wonderful sailing on the sailboard. I loved it, and really only my body and life made me reduce my time on the board. Really I have had two sport loves of my life - skiing and windsurfing. Interestingly enough, both of them are individual sports, and you do not need to compete to enjoy them. My enthusiasm for skiing has also gone the same way as my enthusiasm for windsurfing, but much later - I still love them both, but can no longer windsurf - at 72 I don’t have the strength, fitness or rapid response necessary. But I can still ski, and still enjoy it. But again, now I only go when the weather is good to me. I have done skiing in blizzards!

So which do I live most? Well sailboarding can be done throughout the year, and skiing is a quite time restricted option. There is much less terror in skiing - perhaps. I don’t know, I love them both- the sheer joy of a reach in a southwesterly off Black Rock and over the reef is fantastic. The sheer joy of skiing down a great slope on a perfect day is fantastic. I can’t choose, I love them both.

So I started to race the Sabre on Saturdays, and sailboard when the weather was god on

Sundays - well that was the theory. In fact over the years, I sailed the Sabre more, and the sailboard less as age slowly caught up with me.

Mine is Sail Number 1312, and its name is Destiny. Why Destiny? Well, one of those memories that sticks in your mind. One lunch, Suzi and I were eating at a car park overlooking Sandringham yacht club marina, the car park just to the north of Sandringham oval. We were talking about what we wanted to do, and Suzi said we should buy a boat and cruise the world, and call the boat Destiny. This was of course before she fell ill, but I have always remembered that conversation - Suzi was always a great believer in Destiny. So when I bought the Sabre, a few years after Suzi passed away, I thought well, it is not an ocean yacht cruiser, but it will do for a start. So Destiny she is.

Black Rock on Saturdays is always a nightmare for parking. In general, I found that I needed to arrive at about 10 am to get a parking place, for a race that started at 2! I enjoyed getting there early, everyone else did, and we had a lot of fun chatting for a few hours, while desultorily rigging our boats, In the early days, parking was.. wait for it... free! Then they started to charge, and for a couple of years. I got a pass from one of the other members whose sister lived in Sandringham, and did not use her pass. But then I had to pay. At that stage is was only $20 annual fee/ Then the prices went up and up, and it is now $3 per hour casual

parking, limit $12 per day (whew), then it went up to a couple of hundred!!, and now non-residents are not permitted to buy an annual pass!!!!

At Black Rock, the Sabre fleet was pretty good, sometimes we had more than 30 boats. We had races within races of course. I was generally in the middle or just below the middle of the fleet, and there were always the same bunch of us there, all trying to beat each other. we had great fun.

Black Rock was also great for rigging, unrigging and launching. As the surface is all sealed, and there is a sealed ramp, two people carried boats into the water, whilst others of use held two boats at a time - tricky, but could be done. I had great times there, generally finished all of the races I started in.

However, I was close to drowning on two occasions. But before those, I remember well one incident where strong winds suddenly developed, I was on the wind, the best place to be, and struggling to keep the boat up. I wasn't worried though, on the wind in the Sabre is pretty good place to be in a strong wind. I was making lots of leeway of course, and just then I passed a Sabre, upside down, with the Skipper standing on the hull, hanging on to the centreplate, quite unperturbed! Well done John!

But the other two events. Well in the first case, yet again, a severe change in wind, increasing from the southwest quite suddenly put virtually all of the fleet in the water. Perhaps 50 boats or more. Heavy heavy seas. And the Sabre blows away faster than you can swim, so the first rule is grab it FAST when you bottle. I did, and hung on like grim death. I was getting pounded severely by the seas, cold, wind, and finally I tied myself onto the boat with a sheet, and waited for the rescue boat to appear. There was no way in those seas that I could get the boat up again. But I knew firstly that the rescue boats (3 of them) would be flat out getting the rest of the fleet up, and secondly, visibility was so bad that they could only see about 20 metres, and I would easily be missed, as would others.

After about 25 minutes, I was exhausted with the battering, a rubber duckie appeared, but I had no strength to assist. One of the crew member jumped in, and between us we raised the boat - the mainsail was completely shredded, beyond repair. I could not get in, and the other guy helped me over the gunnel, I dropped the rig, and was towed back to shore, where a lot of other bedraggled people and boats were also surveying the damage. It was a nasty event.

The second event was a few years later, also at Black Rock. It had been a very light day, wind out of the north, and I was about halfway down the final run to the leeward mark before turning for a fairly short beat to the north to the finish. Then all hell broke lose - about 40 knot winds. initially with flat seas, but they quickly got up. I should immediately have turned up into the wind,where I could easily have made shore - Sabres in strong winds are pretty good on the wind. But I thought, only about 400 metres to go to the leeward mark, I can do it,

and then I can finish the race without abandoning. Well, I got halfway down, when a rogue wave pushed the bow around to leeward, inadvertent jibe and into the water for me and the boat fell in, flipped twice (over and over - a really strong wind and big waves).

Now of course it was a distance from me, and getting away faster than I could swim! I swam as hard as I could after it (not easy in a lifejacket), but would never have got near it normally, but again the mast dipped to flip again, slowing the boat drift down, and I grabbed it, exhausted. Immediately tied myself onto the boat with the main sheet. Getting pounded. After a few minutes when I got my breath back, I tried to get the boat up, did, and over it went again. At this stage I had given up, and was just waiting for the wind to drop. My next land downwind was about Seaford! A few minutes later, to my amazement, a kayaker appeared, enjoying the heavy seas. He asked what he could do to help, so I tried again to get the boat up while he paddled around, and this time it stayed up. But I was so exhausted, I could not get in, I had not experienced this before, I had no strength whatsoever in my arms to pull me in. The kayaker jumped in and pushed me over the gunnel, and of course I took off. I did not get a chance to thank him, but have often thought of his help. Great stuff. So I sailed quite happily, on the wind now, wind still about 30 knots, upwind. But to get into Half Moon Bay, I needed to go for quite a long dig, then go about, and run in for the last 400 metres, and I did not think I had the energy to do that, nor the strength - I was sure that I would bottle again. So I beached the boat on the small beach in front of the starting box, on the bay side of the car park, unrigged it there and carried it up to the trailer. Very Very nasty indeed!

So I raced regularly, and did quite a few titles, States and Nationals.

The 1998 Nationals were held at Black Rock

Arthur Brett , a member of both Black Rock and Frankston Yacht Clubs, sailing “The Bearded Clam” (Sabre no. 1552) to convincingly win the Sabre National Championship series run by the Black Rock Yacht Club over the 1998-99 Christmas break. With a fleet of 54 entrants and after nine races with 2 races dropped, Arthur managed a very credible total points score of only 14 (one of his drops was a DSQ for an OCS in race 2 in which he was 1st over the line). He also won the Invitation Race, which was run before the “back to back” first heat.

Arthur who was World Sailboard Champion in 1988 was making a comeback to sailing after many years absence due to a back injury. He trained every morning before work for 4 months in the lead up to the Nationals.

Arthur’s win in the series was the result of an uncanny ability to recover from a mediocre fleet position at the weather mark by using his incredible downwind speed to close up on fleet leaders or to gain first place generally before reaching the gybe mark. Arthur also displayed good speed to windward and once in clear air on the upwind legs, was seldom headed.

Weather was ideal insofar as it ranged from 5 – 8 knots in the early races up to 10 – 15 knots as the series

progressed.

Second in the series was Murray Smith from Port Pirie Yacht Club in SA, sailing his immaculate new boat "Bits" that was built in only 3 weeks and launched one week before the National Titles. Murray, formerly from Perth previously sailed 505's and Solings, including a European campaign and is an ex sailmaker with the North loft in Melbourne.

Sabre stalwart, John Gratton from Brighton and Seacliff Yacht Club in Adelaide sailing "Odds N'Ends" repeated his 3rd placing of last year and was always nipping at the heats of both Arthur Brett and Murray Smith, especially in the lighter winds of the earlier heats.

Junior Champion was 15 year old Simon Balmer sailing "XTC". Simon achieved a very creditable 7th place overall and managed one heat win as well as one second, and one third in other heats.

For quite a while, I sailed both my Sabre and my sailboards regularly. The mistral was really a magic board, and I spend many pleasant afternoons and evenings reaching out from Black Rock in those great southwesterlies.

But time continued on, and I found that my enthusiasm for sailboarding, whilst not waning at all, was tempered by my ability to manage the board, both in setting up and sailing. And so over a few years, I sailed the boards less and less. In 2002, I moved to Mount Martha - the winds there are mostly easterlies, off shore, and gusty - not great for windsurfing. Since we have been here, I have only been out a few times, and the last was perhaps 5 years ago. I no longer have the skill or quickness of response needed, dammit. I gave my Jim Scott board away to a mate, I couldn't sell it on the web (says a lot about interest in sailboards), but I still have the Mistral. Probably I should get rid of it, I can't see me ever using it again - it will finish up at the tip, it is about 20 years old, who would want it? I do love sailboarding.

But for quite a few years, the Sabre was my saviour - at Black Rock, it was great, but at Mount Martha, more of a problem. For a start, you have to launch your boat over about 50 metres of sand, from the front of the club to the shore. At Mount Martha, about 50% of the boats are catamarans, and about 45% are Lasers, leaving only a few of us dinghy sailors not sailing Lasers. And of course, each group looks after the others in their group. So I virtually never got any assistance in launching and retrieving (much the harder part) from any of the sailors other than the one or two other dinghy sailors. And if you came in early or late, they were gone of course. Launching and retrieval were a nightmare. I got to the stage where after the race, I would pull the boat up on the shore, and fully unrig it, and carry all of the rigging up separately - a few trips. Then I would pull the boat up onto my beach trolley (hard yakka), and then pull the trailer up to the yard - really really hard yakka - a few steps, and then a long time to get my breath back - this from a bloke who had a heart attack some years earlier. I spent a lot of time and money on getting different wheels for my own beach trolley to see if it helped in retrieval - no, it did not!

The easterlies are a nightmare there, very gusty - they come down the estuary at about 2.30 and make getting into shore a nightmare - 90 degree wind shifts. On the other hand, Mount Martha had lots of good points - the races start right on time (unlike Black rock), and I could get to the Club at 1pm, rig for a 2pm start, and parking was dead easy. But the launching and retrieval was a nightmare. Boat storage initially was quite good, I could store the boat on a cradle that I had built. I had it set up so that I could use the Mount Martha club beach trolley for retrieval, and just push it off onto the cradle in the right spot. For launching, just pull the boat on to the Mont Martha trolley (required a bit of thought about leverage, but quite easy and manageable). But then they changed the whole set up. Effectively they lowered the height of my storage by about 20 cm, and no longer would the trolley fit in. I spent a lot of time figuring out what to do, and finally decided to just store the boat on my beach trolley, which would fit in. But it required more fiddling. The trolley is quite finely made and vibrates like crazy in any breeze, and boat jumps and down!. So I had to set it up so that is sat on a couple of old tyres to prevent this vibration - even though tyres were frowned upon....

We only had a fleet of three or four Sabres at Mount Martha, and I found myself less interested in sailing, and finding it a lot harder, even at 15 knots, I just became uncertain of my abilities to survive, and get the boat up if it bottled. For the past two years, I have raced perhaps only 2 or 3 times, and really have no more interest. My life at the moment is not easy either, and perhaps my enthusiasm for life is not there to any extent. In any case, shortly I will have to decide whether to renew my Sabre sub for the Yacht Club - maybe, as with the Mistral, I should sell it - will I ever use it again - realistically, probably not.... sad.

But again, things move on. About 5 years ago, I saw one or two Hobie paddle kayaks at the beach - they looked like great fun. I have never had success with Kayaks, my back would not let me use them for long - but these were great - back support, and you used your legs to propel the kayak through the Mirage drive - your strongest muscles.

At that stage, you could only get the grey colour - now lots are available, and they have improved some aspects. But it has been great, There are about 20 or so now at Mount Martha, and during the summer it is a great option to go out before the wind gets up. They are light enough to launch easily, although getting them up through the sand again can be pretty hard. But they are great fun, and quite a bit of exercise. On Saturdays and Mondays, a group of up to about 10 of us go out together, which is fun - although I do prefer to be on my own. I carry plenty of non-alcoholic beer on board, and a radio. Heaven.

I had the perfect storage in the early days, secure and easy. The kayaks are heavy, and having to lift them off the sand for storage for me is really hard. I did not have to, just stayed on the sand! Perfect. Then as mentioned above, they changed the whole system - wanted to store on

their sides - hopeless!. Finally they set up racks four high!!! I managed one of low ones, just off the ground. Now everyone else stores their board upside down. they are a beast to roll over, slippery and heavy. Not me. I just slide it in onto the rack, leaving the wheels on, and secure the lot. Simple, easy - downside - there are clearly dents developing in the bottom from the bars - too bad.

We have had great fun with the kayak - getting in can be quite tricky if the board has completely flipped, but I can do it. I always carry a cheap mobile phone with me just in case, and am very cautious. However, if the wind is much more than about 5 to 7 knots, it is not worthwhile, so should be safe. If the drive fails, we do have paddles (yuk).

So I have gone from an Arafura cadet to a 43 foot ocean yacht racer Bacardi, 36 Foot ocean yacht racer Jisuma, an interlude on a 36 foot ocean racer Destiny 3, Mirror, Windsurfer, Bombora South Pacific, Jim Scott sailboard, Mistral sailboard, Sabre, and Hobie kayak.

Sailing for me has always been a joy - a mixture of pleasure, fun, and terror, and companionship. Often I would wonder whether to go out, particularly when I was a bit tired, Whenever I did go out, I never regretted it!