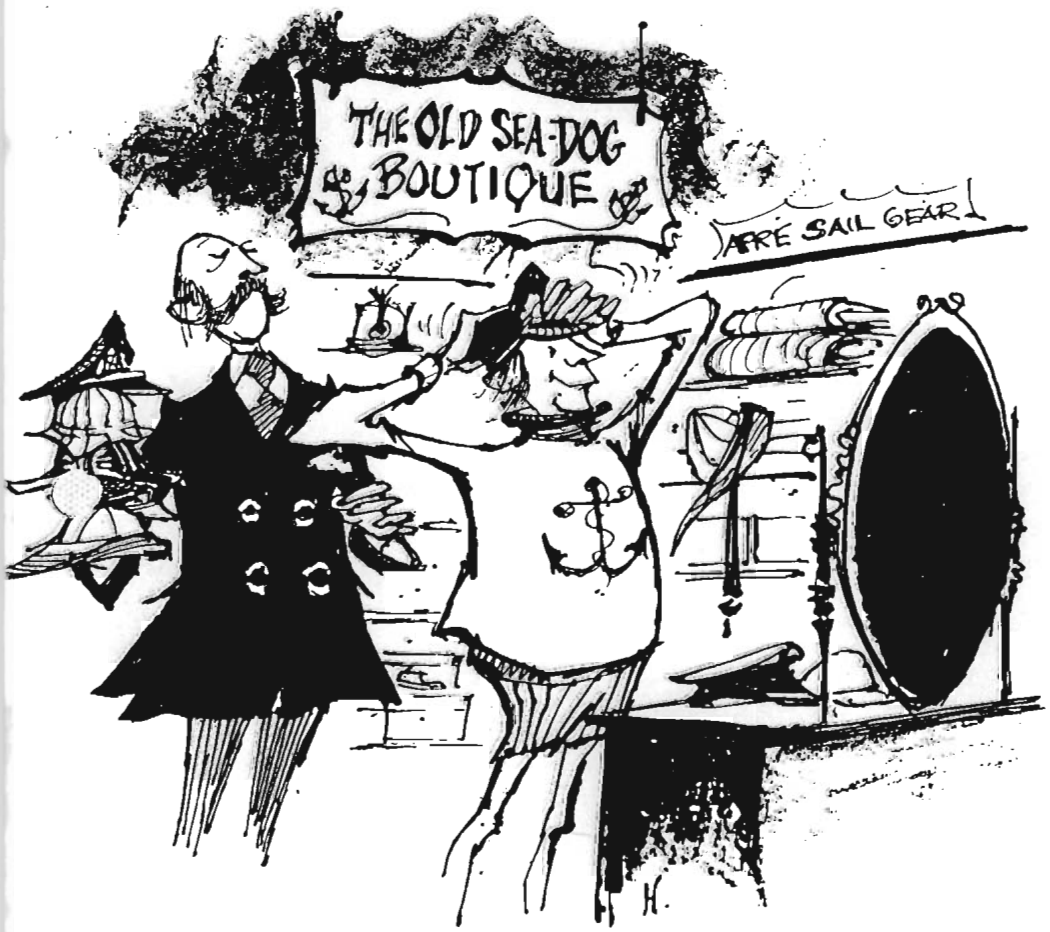
How To Be A Famous Ocean Racer

(Without Knowing How To Sail)

by Tony Cable

The Cruising Yacht Club of Australia this year is to undertake an active programme of encouraging newcomers to the sport of ocean racing, and as part of this effort it is developing a formal training curriculum which should be of considerable benefit to new and old hands alike.

As a contribution to this, your scribe decided to put his hand to the pump and draw some dirty water up from my bilge which may provide some useful preliminary tips for the new entrant on how to play the game. No details, however, will be presented that have anything to do with 'how to sail', for the writer, being a very mediocre hand, wouldn't presume to offer this advice.



The comments in this 'manual for mugs', are of a strictly non-sailing nature which, if followed scrupulously, could make the novice seem like a famous yachtsman without him actually knowing how to sail. This idea is based on my experience over a number of ocean races, during which I have witnessed varying degrees of sailing incompetence among crews of many boats – from their skippers down to the newest of hands. Many individuals among these, however, had a happy knack of giving an illusion that they were much better than they really are!

This is not to have a shot at all those fellow mediocre sailors, for they are, to a man (almost), excellent shipmates and, after all, it is the companionship that accounts for much of the pleasure of ocean racing.

What I am saying to a new chum is that his lack of sailing knowhow shouldn't be a bar to entry. Go ahead and sign on a yacht. If you have any nous, you will readily master the mechanical, routine functions you will be given and, meanwhile, you will pick up on sailing experience.

The basic reason for this opportunity for the new man is that all yachts seem to have a 'passenger' or two among the crew, whether or not they come aboard as such (the role is usually played by one of the regular hands, whether he be the skipper or a crew member who may as well be a passenger for all the help he provides). There is thus some space for a 'trainee' to be carried, and if he can make himself useful in ways which I shall outline, he may well prove more competent than some of those who have already done many miles at sea. Later, he can become famous for his abilities

in such 'technical' tasks as foredeck and cockpit work or perhaps in navigation or cooking; excelling in these maybe, but still perhaps, not really even then able to sail.

By 'sail', I mean being able to steer and control a yacht in all conditions; not necessarily race it, but just plain sail it. Many famous ocean racing men can't sail so, therefore, it should be possible to set down a whole host of non-sailing activities that one could excell at, thereby becoming celebrated. Humourous as this might seem, I assert that there have been members of Australian Admiral's Cup teams that could not sail by the above definition (Mr Editor, that should get a letter or two).

If one has a Laser or a Finn yet doesn't know the rudiments of sailing you will probably be out of control within a few yards of leaving the beach. But on an ocean racer there are others to cover for you, and while disastrous things can happen through your lack of knowledge, you are not necessarily pinpointed for the blame. That well-known Kiwi yachtsman, Sid Brown, has been quoted as saying "Thirty percent of crews on maxi-boats are useless anyway"; yet see and hear them in their uniforms at the bar, and, to a man, they all look like champions.

The most famous non-sailor I ever struck was Harold, a publican from some little place in N.E. Tasmania. We were in Launceston on 'Fare-Thee-Well' in company with Don Mickleborough's 'Southerly' sometime after the '65 Hobart. Now, Don over the years has been renowned as a great collector of characters; his boat in its hayday bore the well-earned nickname, 'The Floating Hotel'. On this particular occasion Don was approached by an emissary from some chap who wanted to sail back to Sydney. Subsequently, the man arrived, just on sailing time, carrying no other gear than a banjo case and a black Gladstone bag, and it transpired that the latter contained nothing but grog, not even pyjamas.

Harold nevertheless excelled on the trip, for while he chose never to go on deck at all, he made the homeward voyage very pleasant, just sitting on his bunk dispensing grog from his sea bag and entertaining the boys with regular plunks on his banjo.

Harold has not been sighted since, but I'd bet if Don saw him strolling along the marina, he'd whisk him aboard as a permanent hand, sailing ability notwithstanding.

Years ago I was a 'nigger' on 'Kintail'. One night we started a long race, and at the end of the first watch I was sent below to rouse the next shift. I succeeded with the exception of a new hand, Cliff, who explained that, as he was a bushy from Dubbo and a guest of the Captain, he didn't have to go on deck. As a result he had two uninterrupted night's sleep. It wasn't till we got home that the crew informed me that Cliff Monkhouse, among his many achievements, was holder of several 18' titles.

But this was the sort of thing that always happened on that boat with a crew whose nicknames ran "Horney George", "Sox", "Shirts" and "Wally the Wombat". Oh, Wally couldn't sail either, but he was most welcome aboard as he happened to own a pub. But I've got a little away from my subject.

Ocean racers — what sort of people are they?

Most of the established ocean racing hands are, in my estimation, of a very fine character, and maybe it is the sea that has struck this common denominator, being such a tester and sorter of men. Those who physically and mentally can't take it very soon fall by the wayside. Those who remain have been tested and prepared for the worst that is usually dished out.

Perhaps because of this sorting, the participants come from all stratas, rich men, tinkers, tailors and sausage makers. One wouldn't normally see a surgeon and garbage man golfing as a pair, but having been together on a yacht through tough times, they can readily develop a much more firmly based respect and friendship than would be possible given conventions ashore. The sea knows nothing of cheque books or status.

Many sports call for physical prowess and character, but few call upon these qualities in matching the elements. While a football team, for instance, needs as one attribute, group spirit on a Saturday afternoon, the ocean racing crew needs this spirit also, but along with it, a high level of compatibility is necessary to keep them working harmoniously while confined for longish periods in sometimes trying and even dangerous conditions.

Looking at the participants in different categories, first take the skippers. These cover the spectrum, from those who have represented Australia to complete novices. With regard to the former, I think it is necessary to point out, as far as ocean racing is concerned, the difference between a 'champion' and a 'seaman'.

Champions from other classes often crew on ocean racers because of their proven abilities in helming, tactics, trimming, tuning and knowledge of the rules. This does not necessarily make them wise to the ways of the sea nor able to sail most effectively in it in

other than relatively placid harbour racing conditions. I have struck several champs who are no better than a raw recruit when, in a big seaway, they get flattened by seasickness and haven't the drive and stamina to keep going.

Seamanship represents a range of skills that really distinguish the good ocean racer from his inshore counterpart, and while the seaman may not necessarily show finesse in, say, tactics, he will be the best chap to be with if it gets at all hairy out there — perhaps calm in a real crisis, knowing how to make a boat ride out a real blow, with storms'/s etc, capable of 'jury wrigging', — in short, those whose knowledge will contribute to the survival of the ship.

Even the old skippers can vary from being fine men to those you can lose much respect for — the ranters and ravers, the disloyal, the ignorant, the negligent and incompetent (as an example, I have known of one or two of these to go to sea with less than minimal water and stores aboard) — something on a par with failure to provide survival equipment.

A next group to identify are the 'old hands' who have raced consistently over many years. They are not necessarily "stars" for all the miles they have covered but, universally, they are top people to have on a crew — experienced, steady and gifted — with a broad range of skills.

Looking at the novice skippers, many of these enter the sport more due to the ...cess of signing a cheque than a progression through the sailing ranks. The latter could be looked upon as a modern day version of 'purchasing a commission', and from the moment these skippers take command, a crew will automatically grant them the courtesies, rights and authority that a ship's master traditionally holds. Some may learn to deserve it, and some may not. Those who don't will soon make themselves known, but such is life. The sport is lucky to have newcomers with the boats and the necessary regular injections of heaps of money to keep the boats going, and in most cases despite their initial shortcomings as sailors, they can still be excellent fellows to be with.

New and old hands alike are these days challenged by an accellerating technology on yachts — new methods of headsail changing, new types of sails (e.g. bloopers), electronic and hydraulic gadgets, new winches, centreboards, stiff-type sailing at sea. If one walked onto a top yacht after an absence of say five years, it would take a deal of reorientation. The top hand of yesteryear might well find with such a layoff he has lost much of his racer's edge.

A further group are the relatively young top rate hands. These can be *quite* young, maybe already having had many years in various other classes. With their varied backgrounds they can adapt very quickly to this branch of sailing. Because they are new, they won't necessarily be widely *regarded* as famous.

On the other hand, one crowd which should be taken down a peg are the famous who really have no strong claim to such a title. Because ocean racing can be an easy-entry sport, it is not unusual for someone to come in, develop some special skill (e.g. being a good man on the bow) and before long, are famous. His reputation may spread because he himself has spoken of it, and sometimes even gullible yachting journalists will be mesmerized by one of these coves and create for him his image — without ever having sailed with him. As a new hand you will not be long in meeting one of these chaps, and you will see how myths are quickly exploded when there is some hard and skilled work required.

Taking up ocean racing

A prerequisite in taking up ocean racing is a degree of dedication, which achievement in any sport demands. That's pretty obvious. Without some solid application, you will be wasting your own time and the efforts of those who may initially extend help to you. (You may even prevent someone else from getting a berth.) To start with, you face a 'Catch 22': to find out if you like the game you need to try a race or two, but to get a berth you need to be experienced in racing! But as you'll note later your own persistance in getting a ride can overcome this.

Don't go into it with *rose coloured glasses*. It is guaranteed, for instance, that you will regularly go through hard, rough and miserable weather — maybe on your first trip. Don't dream of how nice it will be out there in gentle breezes and smooth seas with the 'tang of salt air'. Ponder what it would be like in a protracted gale, say, 60 k for two days.

Think of pitch-black nights with enormous waves you can't see coming at you; sail changes on surf swept foredecks; wild runs with very big following seas; broaching and the fear of gybing ('disaster' when you do); urgent calls on deck; no time for oilies; cutting cold; clammy, wet sticky, smelly clothes, water down your neck and a wet bum; fighting sleep and physical tiredness. Contemplate being below, battling against the gyrations when handling gear; changing clothes and cooking; the shambles; the racket —

crash, bang, trickle, trickle; things that go boom in the dark; wet blankets, no sleep, drips in your eyes and ears; the pessimism that it won't end, the 'realization' that you were a fool to take it on; the dreams about hot food, showers, T.V.'s, loungerooms and clean sheets. You've got to be crazy to do it.

In the last Hobart Race of the 58 boats that retired, 41 percent gave as their reasons for so doing: "the weather was too rough" or "seasickness"; * these latter boats didn't fail, the men did. The weather was not as rough as reported ashore. It spanned less than 24 hours with the maximum breeze up to about 50 knots.

much for the emphasis on heavy weather. If this was on all the time, one would be mad to keep it up. The appeal of ocean racing is harder to define. "Men go down to the sea in ships and they know why they go, but it is no good asking them why because they won't tell you. Once you put the question they realise you just can't understand and kindly switch to some simple subject like grog or the dreadful price of anti-foulding" – a quote from the late Jack North, 'Offshore', June/July, 1978, p.251).

For my part I like the satisfaction that comes from doing well in hard conditions; I enjoy 15-20 knot spinnaker runs on sunny days; smooth seas are great; ports away from home are good fun and ocean racing people are always good to be with on boats and land. Otherwise I can't think why I like doing it.

* Official post race analysis from the Sailing Committee C.Y.C.A.

Getting a ride

There are few formal introductory programmes that serve to provide a guaranteed lead onto a crew. Hopefully the C.Y.C.'s initiative will be a long term one to alleviate this deficiency. Short of this, getting a berth is a rather haphazard process where only the persistent are assured of success. Firstly, an approach may be to contact the Secretary of a Yacht Club, although this will probably be fruitless as he might be too busy, or not interested in non-members, or be unaware of what you are talking about, or not run a crew register, or not have Members interested in training newcomers. The R.O.R.C. in England has (or had) a good scheme. For 50p you could file a registration form detailing your experiences which could be perused by a short-handed skipper (pardon the image). My five bob got me a ride in the Channel Race on the R.N.V.R. yacht – a very cheap way of getting to know some Pom sailors, who really got to know this area in 1939-45.

Friends and vague contacts are another obvious source, but really, the best way is to persistently walk up and down a marina asking for a ride. Often as not someone will need an extra pair of hands at the last minute. Seagoing hours build up with a ride here and a ride there; this enriches one's experience by seeing different crews, boats, techniques and gear. Following such a pierhead jump, sooner or later you will be asked along for another race and, lo and behold, you will find yourself on a regular crew.

The best time to try for an ocean racing berth is just after a major race, such as the Hobart, when many crews, for political purposes, try to regain lost time with the family. (Actually it is impossible to really make this up, and many actually need the services of O.R.M.C.'s*). You may be able to get a few hours on one of the very good boats whose regulars are at home.

Trying just before a major race would be less successful, for then even experienced men, who often 'come out of the woodwork', can find it hard to get a berth then.

Try getting a cruise back from Hobart or from other major races such as Brisbane or Gladstone. Returning from these, many boats may be shorthanded and they may take a punt on the odd stranger who appears. While they may only be cruising back, you may be lucky enough to get a good range of weather (even a good dusting), and so get a very useful 600 miles or so under your belt.

A winter harbour series is also a good time to start. Yachts are not necessarily fully crewed with their regulars in the off season, and 12-mile races are a good opportunity for an intensive introduction – even if you still need to test yourself at sea.

To close this part: in essence, few will really put themselves out to help you get a regular berth; if you really want to break in, it is up to your own persistence and keeness.

The need for training for ocean racing

I was recently on a well known ocean racer reaching flat out down the coast in dream conditions. The helmsman, finding no problem in pointing, left his relief in the bunk and handed the wheel to the chap who happened to be nearest him in the cockpit. Shortly afterwards the new driver exclaimed that this was

* Ocean Racer's Marriage Counsellors.

the first steer he had been given after two years crewing on the boat!

This incident caused me to reflect on the abundant lack of training, formal or informal, which occurs in our fleet. There must be a significant wrong in the situation where a chap had never been given the opportunity to touch a wheel in two years, not even when returning from a finish or when out on a social day! My idea of sailing is not spending an eternity being the port side winch grinder, No. 2 on the foredeck or the nav or cook. Sailing is holding the wheel and coaxing the boat along, sailing with the crew helping you to do it.

Two years! In the same time the chap could have learnt to climb mountains or to fly an aeroplane, yet it appears that driving a boat is so difficult it needs a great long apprenticeship before one can even touch a wheel.

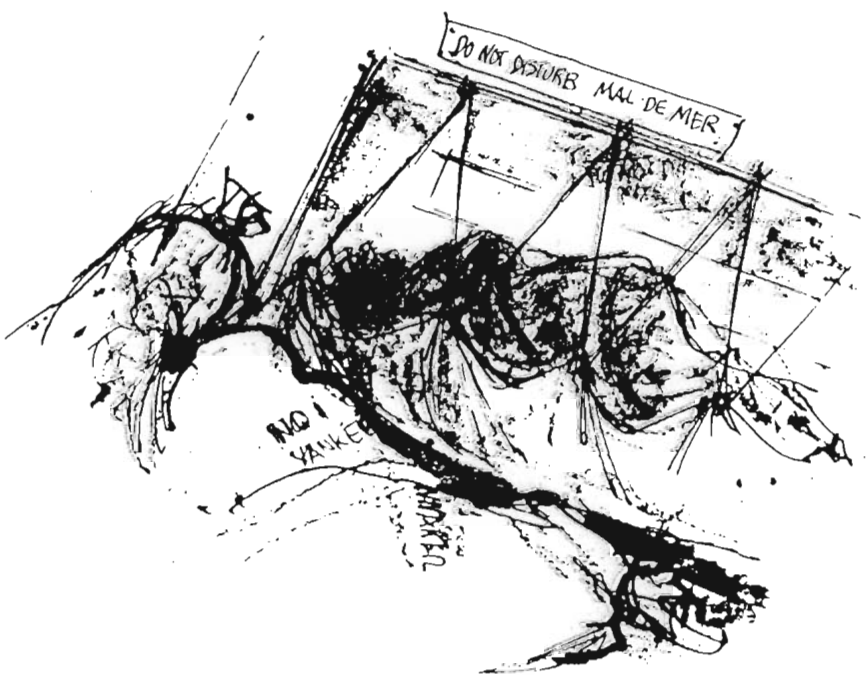
Sk rs and sailing masters who love to sail might ponder this.

I have never been on a boat where conscious training has taken place. I am not referring to sessions for crew co-ordination such as before a major race, rather, I mean specific training given to newcomers. I do not concede that taking a new man on a crew and, at best, giving him lots of advice over a season, is training.

With a really aggressive formal training programme a rank amateur could be very quickly advanced in the mechanical aspects of handling an ocean racer. For instance, how many times in a summer season would the man on the bow do a gybe? Twice a race? How good, by contrast, would the new man be if he was taken out for two 8.00a.m.-5.00p.m. days doing nothing but say, a sequence of 30 gybes down the harbour then 40 tacks back with trimming coaching on the way and then repeating and repeating this. I have never heard of this being done, but I'd bet you could teach a monkey to gybe over these same two days. We don't do this in our sport; it takes many races for a man to do as much.

If this two-day idea has any substance, continue to ponder the extent of an individual's development over several other intensive days of training. Can I further pose a question to any famous helmsmen? Does it take years to learn your craft? If not, how many intensive days' work would it take for you to make an amateur handy at the wheel? Whatever your answer, how much active instruction have you ever given to new helmsmen?

I can foresee two major stumbling blocks in this area: firstly, getting vessels to train on, whether they be training ships or those from among the active racers who have skippers interested in training; secondly, there is a need to find capable educators — experienced men who also have the skill to impart their knowledge as instructors.



Becoming a famous ocean racer in the loungeroom

Sit in your favourite chair and glean as much as you can from the extensive literature on sailing, a good deal of which is about ocean racing. However, when you eventually get afloat, be circumspect in recommending to a crew that "author so and so says it should be done in such a way", for that author may be out of date, or not really up on what he was talking about and, at any rate, your crew might have their own tried methods. This is not to say that

newcomers should shut up until, by seniority, they have earned the right to speak; it is simply a caution about 'book learning'.

One particular area you should study is knots, and an ideal place to learn them is in the loungeroom. Don't step aboard before you can handle some of the basic ones, as these are always needed, often in a great hurry. They are among the basic vital skills of a deckhand, and a sure giveaway of a new man if he has to ask someone to tie something for him. In this area you could readily surpass some of the famous sailors for it would be an interesting exercise to determine how many of them don't know their basics in this department.

In fact one could pose a minor test to a "top" hand who naturally should know the answer. You have to make up a very long line quickly (say for a dinghy to tow) and all you have are various sized rter lengths. What knot should be used that is quick to apply and will join lines of different widths and materials? (I would go for a sheet bend to be quick, but then I'm not a top hand.)

The only knots I know well are the reef, clove hitch (and its variant, the rolling hitch), sheet bend (and double sheet bend) and not to be overlooked, the bowline. I delude myself that these are a good enough essential group; if you learn a few more you will have all normal situations well covered. Whipping and splicing, when needed, tend to be less urgent; The non-sailor can look very good if he extends his ability to do fancy knots (the chap who can do a Turk's Head can impress me), do various splices e.g. rope to wire, and be handy with other wire work such as ging.

There are many other skills that can be developed in the comfort of your own home; navigators can learn their thing; cooks can practice on the family; skippers can play with computer programmes. Indeed, the more one thinks about it, one doesn't really need to go sailing at all; in fact rather than getting beaten around on the next Montagu, I might settle down with a good cruising book, and if any part of it makes me feel wet, cold and miserable I will jump into a hot shower.

Becoming a famous ocean racer at the mooring

The new man can be much more useful than the experienced hand even before the boat leaves the marina. Some 'heavies' can be completely useless up until the lines are cast off. Some, for instance, can join a yacht on the eve of a major race without having contributed any work at all to its preparation (and they may even have displaced in the process an inexperienced hand who has worked long and hard on the boat). If you, in your innocence, cannot pick who is such a heavy, a tip is that he will often be the chap who arrives very late to rig the boat on race day, and even when he turns up, does nothing but sit on his bum in the cockpit.

Tremendous expense and a tremendous amount of work is needed to maintain a yacht, and many skippers very much appreciate any labour the crew can give. To me it seems entirely fair that if you are on the regular crew, you should put a reasonable amount of work back into the boat, e.g. on regular scheduled work days. In practice, many crew members do not acknowledge this duty and either do not contribute or do so only in a half-hearted way. The new hand can obviously, through his willingness, be in front of these. On the other hand, some skippers do not appreciate the work that their crews give and can even overexploit the willing ones.

If you have some technical ability — carpentry, electrical, mechanical — you will immediately be of value. But even the most hopeless handyman can be kept fully occupied on useful and necessary jobs — washing sails, painting, cleaning, lifting, oiling, carrying. There is always something that needs to be fixed, more so when the boat is racing long and hard. The new man enhances his value when he can knuckle in and do things without being asked.

On a work day many regulars arrive late or cannot come because they are visiting sick grandmothers (who never get ill on race days). A full crew working a good 9-5 day can potentially achieve heaps, yet this seldom seems to happen. You can be again valuable by giving such a day top priority. The reward could be, as it has been to many newcomers, "Well, he's not much of a sailor, but he deserves a trip for all the work he has put in".

One 'sailing' advantage of all this work on the mooring is that you get to know where everything is, and here you will be very much more useful than the famous name who jumps aboard at the last minute wearing his 'I've represented Australia' shirt. While he is up there in the middle of the night clutching the wheel like glue, you are the guy who is doing all the running around; you know and he doesn't where all the switches are, the spare fittings, the torches and how to turn the gas on. You can instruct him on the use of the head, tell him what sails you have (because you washed them), get a spare shackle, clear the weed off an impeller, find a blanket for him when he wishes to retire and even make his favourite hot drink. He is the famous sailor, but you will be able to find and replace such things as a broken sheet, batten, block, far quicker than he can.

Indeed this 'top helmsman' may often be good only for sleeping, eating and steering, and that's all. He will not cook and wash up, pack sails, tidy up or do anything extra. This sometimes lazy, self-assured senior hand will in many ways be useless. Give me any day a good helmsman who is also willing to do everything from the stem to the tuck. If you are lucky enough to see one of these coves in action, then you will appreciate what makes a really top hand.

HOW TO BECOME A FAMOUS OCEAN RACER

(without knowing how to sail)—Part II

by Tony Cable

This is the second and concluding article on this subject. The first, in last month's *Offshore*, dealt with such topics as 'taking up ocean racing' and 'how to be a famous ocean racer in the loungeroom'. Here the emphasis is on how to become a famous ocean-racer when at sea. Again, the purpose is to give some non-sailing tips to the newcomer in order to help him in the initial stages of taking up the sport.

Safety

Safety is a subject to which we all give considerable notional support but, in practice, pay little attention to. The C.Y.C.A. has been a world leader in establishing safety regulations, but if it weren't for the scrutiny of our safety officials, many boats would not comply with the requirements, some probably being deficient even to a culpable degree.

The new chum can read up on the safety requirements and know the gear just as well as the established hand. Indeed, it wouldn't be hard to know more about this area than the famous. Few new hands actually do this, but there is every reason why, before a race, you should learn the location of: the extinguishers, the life raft, the dan buoy, flares (read the instructions on and find out how to operate such things). Be sure to locate, untangle and work out how to fit a lifeline and lifejacket. Much of this equipment one will never use, but when they are needed, it is not the time then to discover how they work. Read up on, or get someone to run over with you, a 'man overboard' drill. This should include learning what to do instantly (and this is vital) at various points of sailing, e.g. running.

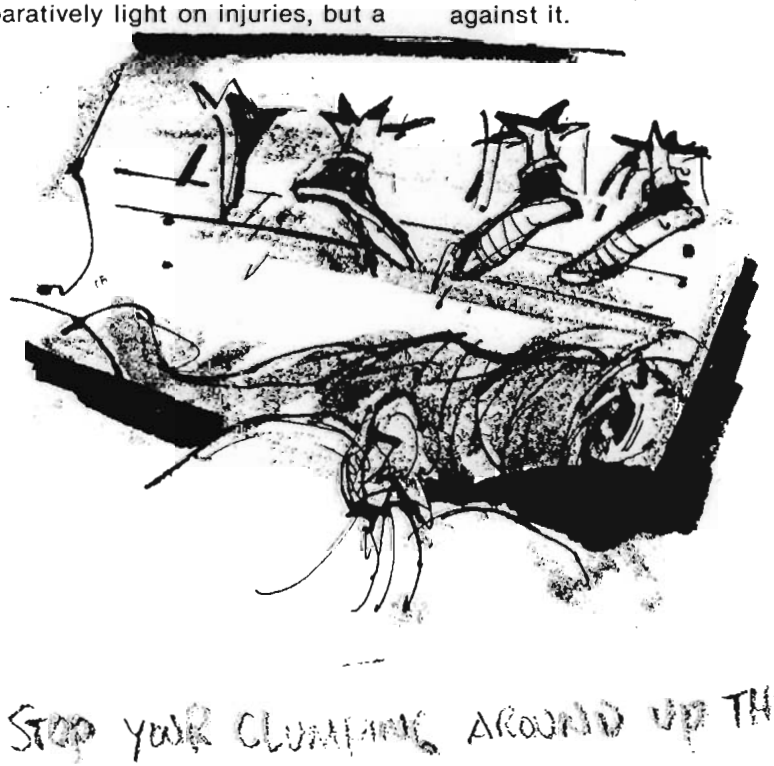
The importance of safety is, of course, self evident, but you will find very few who understand anything like the amount they should about it.

As part of this section, medical aspects should also be considered. Find out where the first aid kit is stowed; often it is well hidden. You may uncover a deficiency by undertaking a thorough check of its contents, bearing in mind that even the 'regulation' inventory has important deficiencies. A useful hand might even go to the trouble of having a qualified person examine the contents and add to it (e.g. nothing is listed for treatment of diarrhoea).

Ocean racing compared with other active sports seems to be comparatively light on injuries, but a knowledge of some first aid would be an asset. Few of us, for example, would know how to give mouth to mouth resuscitation; when you think about it, this has got to a pretty crazy situation for those participating in a water sport.

Clothing

There is no need to be fashion conscious when going ocean racing. The requirement is only that your gear be functional in respect of the cold, the sun and the water. For the cold, woollen garments are of course the answer; how many of these you take depends on whether you are built like a spider or carry a deal of insulating lard. But you will be in situations where your efficiency will plummet with the temperature, so protect against it.



About a third of your time will be spent in the bunk. The important thing is to get down and rest.

The best investment you can make is in a good set of oilies. These are not too cheap, but there are very wet situations out there when you would willingly pay anything for a well designed, leakproof set. Ask around to get opinions on what are the best models; some have design features that are in advance of others.

You don't really need seaboots when sailing out of Sydney. While it is nice to have warm feet, you are in no danger of losing toes without them. Further, you don't necessarily look the real thing wearing boots along the marina, and they are not too appropriate when worn at the bar particularly as your feet get terribly clammy if someone spills a beer down inside them.

Watches

To look at some aspects of the daily routine at sea, watches should be mentioned. Systems vary from boat to boat—4 hours on, 4 off; 6 during the day, 4 at night; and so on. Helmsmen can run their own watch sequence, the hands another. Odd individuals such as the skipper or navigator might not stand watches. Sometimes one of the hands might not be rostered for a watch but will be on permanent call.

The new man can make himself useful while on watch in numerous non-sailing ways—packing sails, washing up, making up sheets, keeping an eye on the gear to spot possible failures, e.g. chafing, and simply just keeping a lookout. If you are bashing to windward for any length of time, an awful mess can be created below, so regular tidying can be very useful.

When it is cold, dark and wet one is naturally disinclined to want to do any work and there is a temptation to defer jobs till later. But it is just in this situation where the willing hand shows himself as he maintains his enthusiasm and will to work.

Sleeping

As about a third of your sailing time will be spent in the bunk, it is not too irrelevant to mention some aspects of 'sleeping'. At first you might find that you cannot sleep with all the unfamiliar noises and movement, particularly with those 'booms' in the dark. The important thing at least is to get down and rest. Later you will probably sleep like a top and be undisturbed through all the shouting, radio skeds, etc.

Needs for sleep of course vary. Youngsters might want so much they can get bedsores; the older may be comfortable with little. Rest when you can in anticipation of the inevitable time when you may not be able to sleep because of hard weather or through being called up by a continual succession of sail changes and gear breakages. Be wary of spending, for instance, too much of your off watch on deck on a sunny day, with the result that you are sleepy and dopey when kept up most of the next night.

You will have to determine the bunking arrangements as they apply to particular boats. Some have quarter berths restricted to skippers and navigators. Perhaps you might find that you swap with someone from another watch. If there is a choice, always go for ones on the high side to put your weight where it does the most good. Some boats even require the sleepers to change from side to side when tacking.

It might be useful before a race to figure out how the lee cloths or lee boards work. It will then be a little easier to erect them when bumping along after your first watch. At the same time, you might note if there are enough blankets or sleeping bags aboard as some boats are not all that well equipped.

While on the subject of bunks, I bring to mind the story someone told of a hard race with three chaps tiered above each other on the windward side. Off a wave she went, the two top bunks fell down creating an instant dagwood of the sleepers—a serious shock to them, no doubt, but they didn't receive help to extricate themselves as the others just couldn't stop laughing.

You don't necessarily have to dive for the sack the moment your watch finishes. There might be something you can do that can be of further help, e.g. pack a sail or make some coffee for the new watch. While you may well feel like it, don't sleep in for an extra few minutes when called; this can readily irritate the watch on deck and you might be holding up someone who is really tired and wants to collapse into your warm bunk. When you do get up, don't delay getting your gear on and get up on deck as soon as possible.

When 'all hands' are called you have to react instantly and have no time to don clothes and oilies. Being woken, wetted and chilled in the space of minutes is just ocean racing, and at such a time we all wonder why we put up with it.

The Green Hand

Plenty has been written about seasickness, and I can't add anything by way of clinical advice. In theory I like to stay away from grog, fatty foods, have a good sleep and be relatively fit before a race, but read what the experts say. There are, however, some points otherwise relevant here. Firstly, it seems that the individual who has *never* been

sick is in the minority; most have suffered from it in varying degrees, though not necessarily every time they go out. The attacks vary from the cases where the chap is absolutely flattened to those more fortunate who have a heave or two and then recover. For those who get sick there can be nothing more debilitating. Fortunately, while one mightn't believe it at the time, sooner or later you will get your sea legs and start to really enjoy yourself.

The odds, therefore, are that you will be sick. The important thing as far as racing is concerned is that if you are sick then keep driving yourself to do your normal work (note, this is not a doctor talking). It being a fact of life in the sport that people inevitably get sick, it is also a 'given' that the crew's job is, nevertheless, to race the yacht hard in *all* conditions and not ease up at all. If you are unfortunate enough to be flattened and consequently miss watches, then you are not pulling your weight. It is not at all satisfactory that just as the breeze comes in hard, the seas get bumpy and more and more work has to be done, reefing etc., fellows start to put themselves to bed and don't come out.

Then, instead of having more crew to help when it is really needed, there are fewer! If you are afflicted so badly that you miss watches, you might decide after a brief experience to give the open water part of the sport away altogether. On the other hand, if you do persist, others may be reluctant to give you another berth. If you do succumb, you will have a degree of sympathy from those more fortunate, but this will quickly turn to disdain if you are sick below. Can you imagine the disgusting mess and smell it makes in a yacht bashing away to windward in the middle of the night? If possible, do not use the head, or get the crew running around with buckets for you; get up on deck and heave over the leeward rail in the traditional manner.

The chap who does get sick and yet keeps working is still readily accepted and his fortitude can be well regarded. Drive yourself and keep at it while it is at all physically possible. To do this you will have to call on extra stamina and willpower when all you want to do is forget about everything.

One of the first questions a skipper should ask when talking to a prospective hand is whether or not he gets sick. Be honest and give him a truthful answer. If this interrogation had been done more widely before the last Hobart Race, we wouldn't have had the stupid position of having a total of 7.6% of the fleet pulling out giving for their reason 'seasickness'.

While my above comments indicate that I have nothing against those who get sick, it really fails me why a boat can retire for this reason alone. I have little regard for those responsible for setting forth on a race which is known for its hard conditions with such inadequately chosen crews. Other boats had hands aboard who typically would have been filled with so much grit, determination and drive, they would have loathed to retire under any circumstances. There is nothing to stop the newest hand having the same motivation to thrash through. Blows always come to an end; power yourself through them.

Cooking

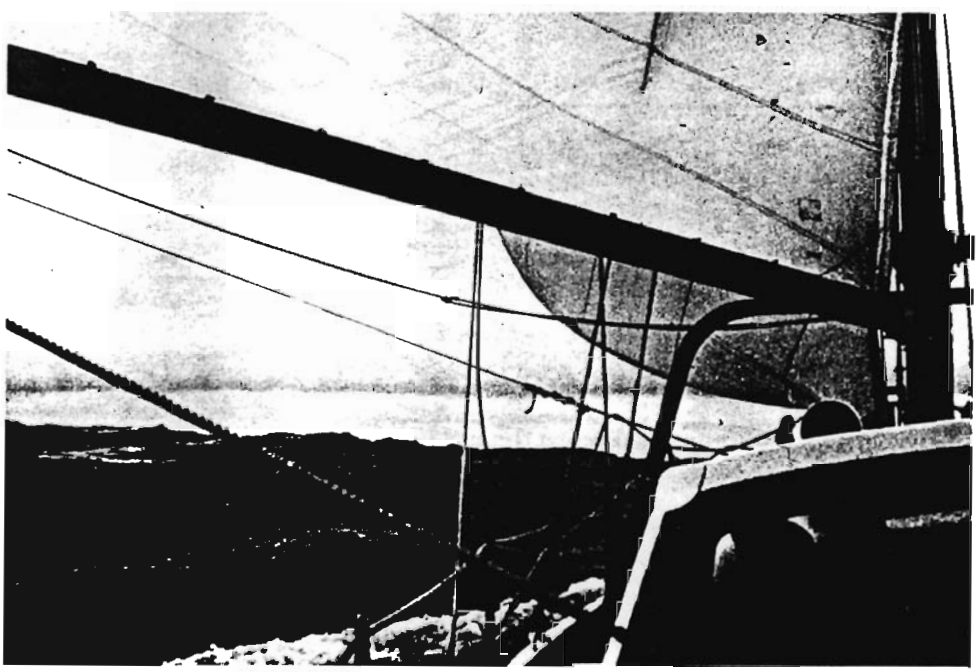
Cooking is one non-sailing activity in which the new chum can really carry his weight, and if he has the gut for it, he will be able to do something that many an experienced hand can't handle. From time to time I have sighted chapters in books or read articles on 'cooking at sea' that seem to feature complicated dishes that would seem to require lengthy preparation aboard and a great deal of planning (not that it really matters pre-race if the cook has time for it) and these seem to assume that crews have gastronomic inclinations. To me, all that is needed is for plenty of plain, easy-to-prepare food to be served regularly. This will meet the two objectives of having a good food service on a boat to provide sustaining nourishment, to keep up efficiency and to enhance morale.

It is not really necessary that the crew be fed at a luxury level; a few days on plain fare will not hurt them. The reason for this recommendation is that the more elaborate the menu, the more time the cook has to spend in the galley, and that cuts into his sailing time. Also, if the crew is rostered to cook, then the more simple the dish the less likely it will be that the non-initiated to make a mess of it.

The cook's aim should be to have the men well stoked with hot, nourishing food to keep their stamina up. No matter how tough he might be, a man is bound to drop in efficiency when, despite good appetite he can't get proper and regular meals. Even for those who are ill and not eating, the cook has a role in trying to get them back to normal again by being ready to give anything they can take—dry biscuits, boiled eggs and so on.

Whether the conditions are light and boring or hard and miserable, food can provide a highlight which is good for the spirits. Some boats have, for instance, a 'cocktail hour' which the cook can make interesting with the odd bit of luxury.

Many boats, even those run by well known yachtsmen, do not have a well organised food service. To me this is



inefficiency because the skipper is overlooking the simple importance of the food. This may happen because the captain simply has not stopped to think about such an 'obvious' thing; perhaps not too good on the tooth himself, he doesn't worry much about his crew—or cooking is not regarded as a sailing activity, so is disregarded.

The ultimate test of a good sea cook is not in terms of the type of food he puts out but his ability to keep it coming in hard conditions. There will be men aboard who will eat well and need good food whatever the weather. And these should not miss their tucker just because the weather is a bit fresh—that is, if the boat is to keep going.

I have sailed with two very fine cooks. One, call him Billy Ruby, is a 'chef' with an ability that would be recognised at a very select dinner party. He gave me a very good goal in saying 'no matter what the weather, I never miss cooking a meal'. Unfortunately Billy, while being a very good sailor, was rather over-exploited in the galley and frustrated at not being given enough sailing. He subsequently lost a lot of interest in the sport and doesn't go out much now, for while feeding the boys can be a satisfying thing to do by way of a contribution, one can hardly call it ocean racing.

The other top cook was Arch Lawson, better known to us as 'Ah Chee the Chinese Cook'. Ah Chee didn't have anything like the flair of Billy, but he did have a major physical asset in that he claimed that a lot of his insides had been transplanted with plastic. Ah Chee had a fondness for bottles of beer (we used to carry about 14 doz. on a Hobart) and as long as he could have a draw on a bottle day and night, he was happy and the meals would effortlessly keep coming along whatever the weather.

The best meal I ever had at sea was on *Southerly* in the 1961 Montague. We did a lot of drifting in that race and didn't get home till the Wednesday morning. By the Tuesday night we had all but run out of food and were getting a little peckish. To save the situation, Dougie 'left turn, right turn, about turn' Lintern went below and undertook a thorough search of the vessel. His effort was rewarded when he came upon a packet of rice and some powdered egg (the latter probably having been aboard since the war). He then proceeded to bake (or was it fry?) these ingredients into what turned out to be the world's largest crumpet (or damper or pikelet). We ravenously ate great chunks of this delicious thing, its taste being a subtle cross between sponge cake and fried rice.

Cooking arrangements vary from yacht to yacht. On a very large crew there might be a full-time cook. On a smaller one the job might be shared, or still done by the one man. If this last is the case, the chap can be readily disadvantaged if the crew are not alert to how much extra time he is spending in the galley when coming off watch to cook, and thus missing out on his allotted rest.

While you might not be able to cook, you certainly can wash up, a task that can be a deal more unpleasant than at home, which accounts for the great scarcity of seagoing washers-up. But here is one job that anyone can do that adds to the proper efficiency of the vessel. Generally, cleaning up will be neglected by the watches during the night, with the result that before breakfast the cook faces a sink full of cups floating in a sort of gravy made out of a combination of tea, sugar, biscuits, Bonox, peanuts and cheese and the drainhole is plugged up with carrots from the previous night.

There is much scope in this function for the new man. If you have the tummy for it, you will be able to provide a something of sometimes much underestimated value to the crew.

Grog

Some boats are dry, some wet, some skippers don't mind the crew having a drink or two, some place a total ban on it.

That famous yachtsman Raw Meat once defied a total ban by bringing aboard a flagon of cooking sherry and spent a lot of his time on the race helping in the galley. On another trip while he was allowed to imbibe, he still couldn't get a drink because all the cans were frozen and it seemed to be too cold there in Bass Strait for them to thaw out.

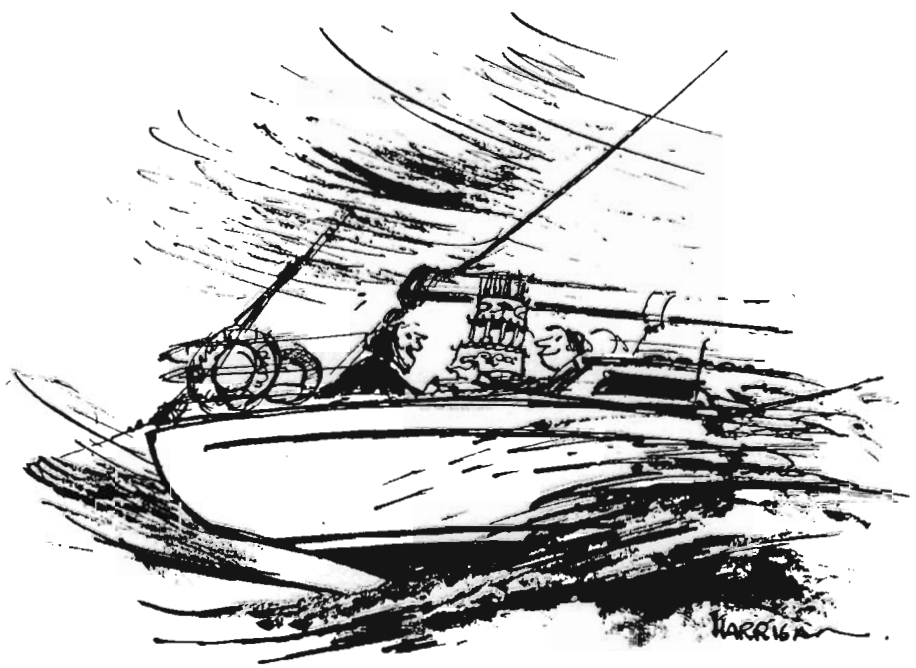
Whatever the attitude to drinking, there seems in any event to be very little done to excess. This may be for several reasons, from the fact that the crew know that they should be alert and concentrate in order to sail the boat well; they may prudently keep away from having too much in case anything serious happens; they wish to avoid sea-sickness; or simply they may not like much to drink at sea.

Navigating

This is a part of ocean racing in which I confess to having a zero level of skill or understanding. Nor do I have aspirations to master the art. The job carries much responsibility firstly in respect to the safety and survival of the vessel, and then for some of its success in racing.

Having acknowledged my ignorance of this subject, I will regardless give some comment on how to be a famous navigator. Firstly, it is

There will be men aboard who will eat well and need good food whatever the weather.



interesting to note that navigation is the only branch of ocean racing that is unionised. At the C.Y.C.A. the 'trade association' is the Navigator's Club, whose members have had a first rate education from such as Merv Davey, Gordon Marshall and Hedley Watson. There is also an Australian Institute of Navigation which grants a couple of certificates.

As an example of the power of this union, the navigators have established themselves as the only group from which an individual can win a prize in the Hobart, a Hitachi colour TV for the best log book (this is not overlooking the fact that the cook on the last boat to arrive also gets a trophy as a reward for his endurance).

These days less time has to be spent on navigation, what with aids such as R.D.F., electronic instruments, simplified work sheets and programmable calculators. Despite this, those aspiring to win the TV would seem to have to spend even more time at the task, making sure their logs present well—being neat with their writing, pasting in work sheets and so on.

Grimes, the Qantas instructor, is the sort of chap who could never win; his logs are a disgrace. He is so casual I remember him coming aboard for a Montagu once with a nav kit consisting of a stub of pencil and some bus tickets for his workings. For a chart, he had a tracing on a bread wrapper, and instead of a parallel rule, a cane sail batton. 'Sure the lines will be a bit wobbly, but the helmsman on this boat won't steer all that straight anyhow!' He found the Island with no trouble.

To give some advice on how to win the TV. Remember that the judging has nothing to do with where you directed the boat. They won't penalise you if you lost the race by going way out east 'looking for the set' and finding a sou'wester instead. Nor will they mind if you took the crew in under Jarvis Bay, Montagu or Maria for some calm spells. All you have to do is put up a pretty book. Forget your tactical errors; paste in beside the incriminating entries a selection of interesting Polaroid photos of the sun, moon and stars. If you are handy with a brush, also include watercolour washes of such things as features of the Tasmanian coast (if you can see it). In the 'remarks' column write colourful pieces such as what the afterguard said when they involuntarily gybed and the spinnaker exploded (expurgated of course). Don't let anyone else enter the log and do not under any circumstances get it dirty. If, as sometimes happens, she falls off a wave and the cook's brace of Finest Surrey Fowl flies from the oven to the chart table, your nice work may well be stuffinged.

Some serious skippers might put an end to their navs doing fancy work and get them to spend more time on deck. At any rate they will all in future have to get more sailing practice in, as this union's members face widespread redundancy. It is only because of the conservatism of the Rule that they haven't yet been replaced by black boxes, as has already happened to their counterparts in civil aviation. This union will become less of a force through a lack of employed members and also because other groups will water down their influence, e.g. the Brotherhood of Bilge Pumpers, the Fraternity of Foredeck Tap Dancers and the Guild of Grinders.

But I see that I have started to lose my head with irrelevant industrial matters, forgetting my purpose to give instructions to the new chum. What I should explain at this point is that some famous navigators can't sail (indeed some can't navigate too well either for there are examples of them overshooting Tasman Is. on the Hobart track by a whole degree!). This inability can be readily assessed at the start of a race when the only jobs they can be entrusted with are non-sailing ones such as reading flags, telling the time and counting from one to ten backwards. At this stage you can also see why some boats are destined to finish 100 miles behind the leaders; their navs already have them 100 yds behind the line when the gun goes off!

The amount of non-sailing a navigator does at sea is a function of the size of his boat. The larger ones carry full-timers who spend their days doodling on charts, fiddling with the radio and sleeping in their private bunks.

Some navigators are nice people; they don't get irritated when asked by ordinary crew members where their position is and do such kindnesses as giving the for'ard hands loans of literature, such as 'Playboy', which they generally keep under the chart table. Other navigators are mystery men who really only talk to skippers, often on the subject of tactics which they may know about to varying degrees.

To finalise this section the new chum should never ask a nav, (or anyone else for that matter) 'when do we finish', for once an E.T.A. is stated, it will be immediately altered by a spirit called Hewey (or 'Hughie' if you prefer that spelling). This chap, who is quite real, can be on the one hand very helpful to sailors, but when crossed, has the power to bung on the most amazing weather conditions.

At the finish of a race

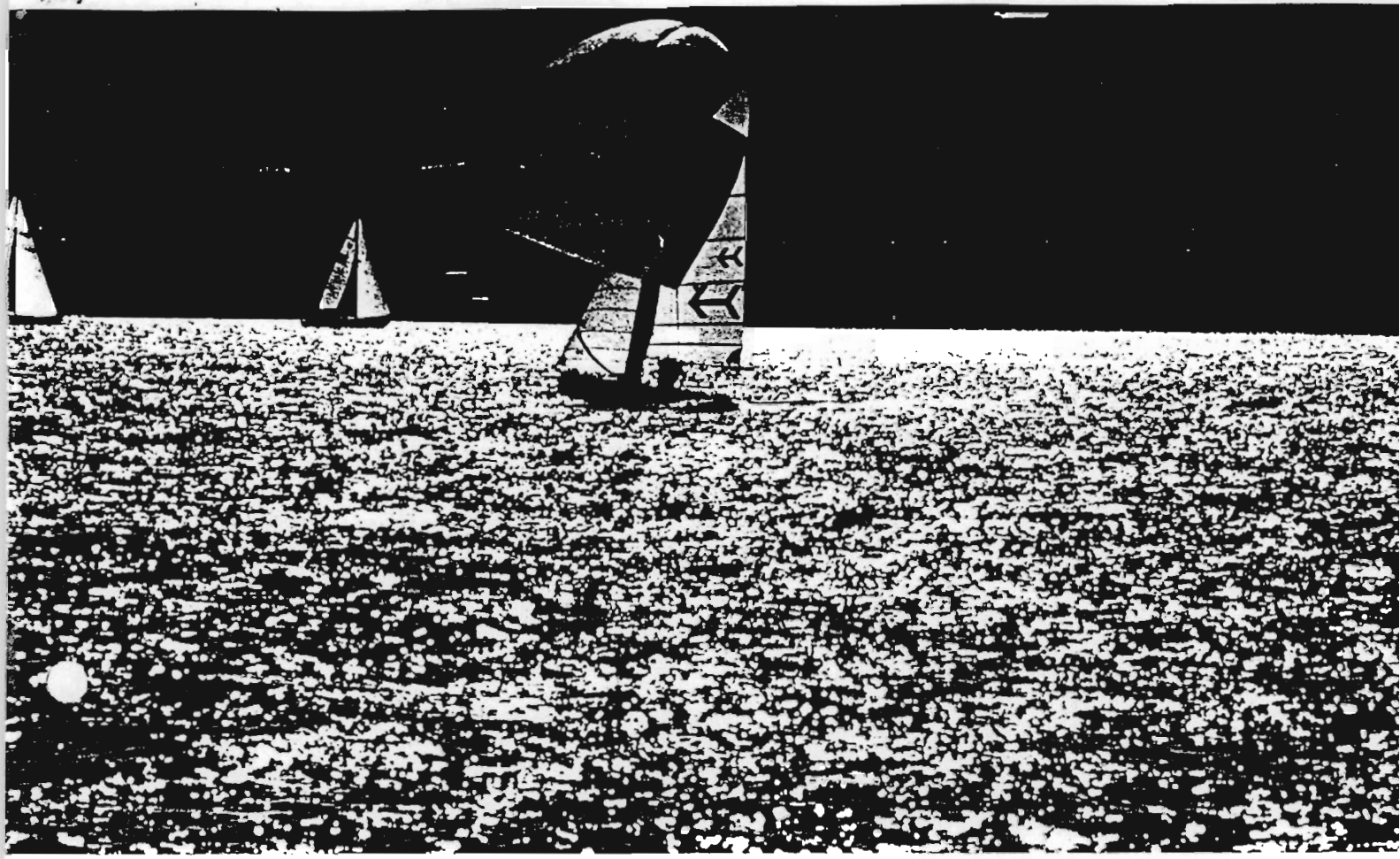
Depending on how shipshape a crew keeps their boat during a race, or on the conditions she has been through, the vessel may be in varying states of disarray.

Don't relax too much before the boat is completely put to bed, e.g. gear stowed, ice box cleaned out, hosed down etc. If the whole crew gets stuck into such jobs it can be done quickly; if some of them jump ashore straight away it only makes it harder. Again, the new man can show some application here.

Summary

I have tried in these articles to give some insights into participating in the sport without talking of sailing matters. We have seen that there are a great number of activities that can be done on a boat without actually sailing it, and many of these can be done well by the newcomer.

Ocean racing can do with many new hands, who will find it most challenging, exciting and enjoyable. If you want to have a bash at it, be keen, enthusiastic and hard working, and you will before long have a well deserved regular berth.



Junior Sailing: What about it?

by Tony Cable

Last year the Board set out to investigate the various requirements for encouraging a 'junior' sailing programme. Particular attention was given this matter by two former Committeemen, Mick York and Dick Cawse.

A practical effect of Mick's work was to encourage a group of ser sailors to launch their boats from the Club and compete in the 1976 Winter Races. Dick did some research and presented a "Preliminary Paper" to the Board covering objectives, facilities, courses, administration and the appropriate boat (s) to foster.

I didn't really appreciate what complex problem this was until I recently re-examined it as a result of a fund raising idea currently being studied (by no means yet adopted) which could result in, say, $2—4,000 being earmarked for junior sailing.

It is not easy to decide precisely what to do with a sum like this. My initial idea was to purchase one of the Solar 19 Van de Stadt centreboard dinghies, with its large self-draining cockpit, enough room for 2 or 3 lifejacketed trainees plus marina/hard stand. A training captain would be responsible for the care of the vessel and the implementation of curriculum. Funds would be administered by interested fathers or 'retired' yachtsmen.

Others I have spoken to had a variety of other ideas. The purpose of this is to canvass more opinions as to what should be done. Please communicate your views to *Offshore* or Board Members.

Objectives

Why does the C.Y.C. want to get into junior sailing? Do we want to worry about it at all? Why not let other Clubs do this?

One desirable reason seems to be the encouragement it will give to a flow of young recruits to the sport of Ocean Racing and other Club sailing. It is at present difficult for a new hand to get a start; maybe a formal programme would ease the entry problems.

Perhaps there should be an objective (indeed duty) for the C.Y.C. as the "home" of ocean racing in Australia to train new people to ensure this Country's status in the sport. Another inevitable result would be a stream of new Club Members, with the obvious benefits of this.

One view expressed is that the C.Y.C shouldn't be involved. There would be pitfalls in the Club having additional boats as "assets". Rather an Eastern Suburbs Foundation could be established with the funds being used for various projects outside the C.Y.C.

Continued next page

Age

When do we start a junior programme? Ask a father; his answer will probably correspond to the age of his son. (Mine is 6 months, so training should start with C.Y.C. rubber ducky races in the bath). The question is fundamental, for it will dictate what craft we go into; boys (or girls) of 10? 13? 15? 17? or new entrants at any age 23? 37? My view is that we should start with the late teens to get quicker results. A 15-plus year-old could be ready for sea quite soon; a 10-year-old would take years. Further, if we are training for ocean racing, who wants the responsibility of taking very young people outside the Heads?

Who

Sons and daughters of members only? Lady sailing associates? (Ladies, for instance, could be given rudimentary training before winter races?) Young people in general who live near the Club? Children of nearby schools as part of their sports activities?

One member identified a potential group—late teenagers—who had missed out on earlier sailing experience in the small boat Clubs and could not easily take up sailing in these.

The boat

Choose an age group and there are classes to match. (Dick Cawse identified about 40 different centreboard classes in N.S.W.). Start them early and a progression of boats will be needed, from Flying Ant/Sabot to Mirror Dinghy/Manly Junior to N.S. 14/Fireball/Cherub-Laser etc.

Someone said the only way to train is in centreboarders—but should we leave it to other Clubs to handle this activity?

There are two sides to the question of whether we designate an exclusive class: one for the eastern suburbs, which encourages a particular group of devotees, or should we have a "common" class that offers more interchange between Clubs? Whatever the class chosen, how is the transition then made to an ocean racer? If this is not adequately provided for then the whole exercise is defeated. How do we encourage ocean racing skippers to take along novices? One radical suggestion was to give an arbitrary time advantage for every novice carried. Another was not to worry about small boats at all but use an ocean racing yacht as a training ship. This seems rather appealing. Why not induce a skipper(s) to take out half a crew of novices on each race, each doing several trips with him? They would be checked out for seasickness, stamina, ability etc., and pass it on from this "boat Camp" as partly-trained people for other boats.

Facilities

A whole range of options come under this heading. Will there be a need for marina berths, moorings, parking for trailers, hard standing, racking, ramps? What house facilities can be offered? Our licensed premises may offer limitations.

The sailing programme

This can be dealt with when all else is resolved. Or do we simply train people without a racing programme? Where and when should races be conducted? What course? What club employees and members would be needed?

If junior sailing is not to be just a flash in the pan, enthusiasts will be needed. Does anyone have the formula?

Tasman Crossing *(cont. from page 11)*

Suddenly, as we passed the mouth of a narrow cut, there were signs of activity inside, and a 35-foot yacht backed into the stream with her skipper frantically waving us in. A moment for instant decision as, once in, *Narani* would have no chance of getting out again under sail. We charge through the entrance that was only slightly wider than *Narani* and slid to a miraculously gentle stop against the tyre fenders of the harbour tug *Wakatu.* Lines went to *Wakatu,* deserted on a Saturday morning, the sails came down, and *Narani* stopped moving for the first time since leaving the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania pier on the 18th of March.

A brief flurry of activity as our providential yachtie friend motored back to his mooring ahead of us and then presented us with the perfect gifts — a pint of fresh milk, a load of fresh bread and a pound of butter, all of which were consumed on the spot. A car drew up on the jetty and Dave King, the depty Harbour Master, jumped on board to inform us that the Marine Operations Centre in Canberra had been enquiring for us, we suspect at the instigation of our womefolk. Although we were overdue on our projected crossing time, we were not unduly so. Customs came and went, the health clearance was surprisingly achieved by telephone, and by 1100 on a cold, drizzling Saturday morning we were ashore as the guests of the friendly Agriculture Department Inspector to sample the local brew. An enormous steak with all the trimmings, a long luxurious sleep uninterrupted by a call to the deck or being tossed out of the bunk, the inevitable anti-climax at the end of the voyage, with nothing to do but clear up the mess inside *Narani* and wait for the rain to cease so that the drying out process could begin.

The weekend passed in a slow-motion dream. Monday morning the crew split up, two to go back to Australia, two to continue through Cook Strait, up to the Bay of Islands and on to the Friendly Islands.

For those for whom the voyage was over, an easing back into the routines of so-called civilisation, memories of gale-force winds receding into the back-ground, and the thought — I wouldn't do it all again next week, but next year — perhaps?

With the final winding up news letter for the UTA Sydney-Noumea Yacht Race, which was sent out in early July, Race Director Peter Rysdyk enclosed an entry form for the next (1979) Noumea Race. Up to July 15th the number of entries were eleven, which amounted to one entry per day. Four of the eleven entries were yachts who did not participated in the '77 Race. The latest entry is Josco Grubic's *Anaconda II.* Josco is obviously not happy having been beaten by Tony Fisher's *Helsal,* and is having another go.
