

My Dream to Sail Across Cook Strait or Bust!



A COFFEE BREAK BOOK

**by
JOHN**



Printed by



Adprint Ltd
Commercial Printers

Ph: 04 384 2844 Fax: 04 384 3265
60 Cambridge Tce, Wellington 6011
Web: www.adprint.co.nz

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My father was born in Westport, along with 11 brothers and sisters. His mother and father owned a fish and chip shop. The family lived upstairs, and the shop was downstairs. They were a boating family, and two of the boys had fishing boats. So they went out to catch the fish and father had a great garden of potatoes, and so they were in business, without having the middleman. Another one of Dad's brothers lived on his yacht in the Marlborough Sounds for five years. Sometimes he would pull along side an embankment and go ashore and pick blackberries, and make up a few jars of jam; going fishing, catching whitebait in season, and possibly getting mussels from time to time. GEE WHAT A LIFE, FREE AND EASY, NO WORRIES, NO RENT, NO POWER, NO TELEPHONE, NO RATES, ETC!! Later he looked after some property in the Sounds for a businessman that lived in Wellington.

My uncle quite often came across with him on his launch to Wellington Boat Harbour. As kids, our treat was to visit our uncle at the boat harbour, and go on board. Our family had an Easter with him at the Sounds, and

I personally fell in love with the Sounds, and promised myself that one day I would be back with my own boat. I will always remember my Uncle for the good times we had with him and especially the coconuts and the pineapples that he brought with him when he visited.

I remember when I was 2 years old, tubby time in the bathtub was a joy. Chasing a rubber ducky around the bathtub, till one day Mum and Dad gave me a toy tug boat, which I named "Little Toot". My first boat, Wow! What a thrill. So I played with it for hours, pushing rubber ducky around the tub with the tug boat. Poor old rubber ducky - he went quackers.

When I was five, I went to Auckland on holiday with my family. It was Christmas time and Dad bought me a toy yacht. I could not wait to sail it. We went to Devonport and I got my chance. How proud I was to see it bob up and down through the waves, with its sails filled with light sea breezes, and when a big wave came it knocked it down it always seemed to right itself. I hoped to have a real boat like this one day.

When I was still quite young, it was nothing for me to get a few sandwiches from Mum, and go out to the back yard where I had my latest boat: a tea-chest. So I pushed it into the middle of the lawn, hopped in, and pretended that I was in the middle of the Atlantic, with a small sail, crossing the ocean. I would sit out there for hours, with my map of the world, telescope, and my sandwiches. "YUM THOSE SANDWICHES WERE GOOD. WHAT WOULD WE DO WITHOUT OUR MUM?"

When I was 10 someone gave us a big wooden box.

I did not know much about boats and wondered if it would float, especially as it had a flat bottom and square sides. Anyway, I filled all the seams and put battens on them, and painted it. When it was all ready, I put it on my cart and took it to Kilbirnie Beach. This was before Wellington Airport was built. There was a little bathing shed on the beach, and when the tide was in, the water was shallow. So I launched my so-called "boat" and when I got in it there was not much free-board. It certainly was not stable, so the next week I got a pole and two kerosene tins and made an out-rigger. Then with a small mast and one of Mum's old sheets we were off with the wind. When the water seemed to be getting a bit deeper, I pulled down the sail and jumped out and pulled the box back to the beach, to have another ride. But alas one day I jumped out only to find the water was over my depth, and I couldn't swim, and when I hit the bottom, I popped up again to the surface, and with one hand grabbed the box and with the other hand paddled back to shore. After this I knew it was time to learn to swim, if I was going to continue in my boating career.

When I was 12 I made a punt out of some shelves and skirting board, and covered it with canvas. A couple of wooden blocks and 4 inch nails for the rowlocks, and made some paddles, for oars. A friend and I had a lot of fun with it at Kilbirnie Beach. At the beach there was a power house, where at one part the water was sucked in, and about 50 yards away the water would flow out. After being through the power house the water was lovely and warm, so lots of people enjoyed swimming there.

When I was 18, and half way through my apprenticeship

as a joiner, I decided to build a sailing dinghy. I had plans how to build the dinghy, and then I went out and bought the material needed to do the job. I finished the dingy in three months, during the winter.

We launched on Labour Day weekend. It was a beautiful day. I knew nothing about sailing, only what I had learned from books that I had read, about a single handed yachtsman that had sailed around the world. We went sailing at the Evans Bay Yacht Club, which I had joined that day. So everybody was watching, and as we were novices at sailing we were quite nervous, but in the end I thought we did very well. In the afternoon the wind freshened, and a friend of mine that knew how to sail came out with me, and we sailed up the Evans Bay harbour and around to Karaka Bay. I think it was one of the best sailings I had ever had. We pulled the boat up at Karaka Bay beach, and a friend of mine from work who lived there, kept an eye on it.

So the next day I sailed the boat back again with another friend, who had never sailed before. It was much the same as it was the day before, moderate northerly wind. The boat being new, we didn't have a strap to put our feet under, when the wind was blowing hard and we were leaning out of the side of the boat. Result being when my friend leaned out, he ended up sitting on the side of the boat, of course the only way he could pull himself up was to pull on the rope that was connected to the boom and sail. So the more he tried to pull himself up, the more the boat would keel over. It wasn't very funny at the time, but when we looked back, we had a few laughs. When we got to Kau Bay, the wind dropped, so we drifted into the



bay. We were able to throw the anchor out just before we hit some rocks. We managed to get the boat up on the beach and with the help of my brother and a trailer took it back to Evans Bay Yacht Club.

I found it hard to get a crew, so in the end I anchored the yacht in the bay, and sailed it single-handed every opportunity I got. The yacht was called "The Salt Spray" and proved to be a wonderful sea boat for the Wellington conditions. We also took it to Paraparaumu, and sailed to Kapiti Island and back again. Still in the back of my mind was that I would like to sail across the Cook Strait to Picton, but not in The Salt Spray. So after I had The Salt Spray for two years, I sold it in the autumn.

I had heard of guys taking up to five years to build a keeler. So I thought I would look around for a hull and convert it into a keeler. I looked up and down the coast for weeks. Eventually I found, under my nose, a ship's lifeboat at the Hutt River. An old guy that lived in a boat shed was the owner. It was about 22 ft. long, kauri planks, and clinker built. I thought it would give me a head start, rather than building from scratch. I bought the hull for £20. A friend that had a truck and others brought the hull back to Evans Bay Yacht Club. Easter was upon us, and all I had was nine months to my Christmas holidays, to convert this old hull into a keeler, to make my dream come true. Money was a problem, so I had to be careful with my budget.

The first thing we did was to prop up the hull. The hull was on the hard at the Boat Club and it was near the road, with good access to the footpath. We started by

scraping the inside of the hull. Then Dad painted it with primer. We put new ribs in and they had to be steamed in a steam-box, so as to bend them, to the shape of the boat. The boat was a double-ender (coming to a point at both ends). Then I got some big pieces of oregon timber and shaped it into the bow and stern, to make it strong for heavy seas. We predrilled, then drove the copper nails through the planking and then through the rib, then placed a rove over the nail, and peened over the rivet. That had to be done to each lap on the planks. Then we had to put chines around the lower side of the boat, and gunwales around the top edge of the boat. We had a bulk-head near the front of the boat, and another where



the cabin ends, at the back of the boat. I never had any plans, but I got ideas from other boats.

I made the cabin right out to the sides of the boat, and a split level deck at the end of the cabin, into the self-draining cockpit. I made laminated cabin doors, laminated hatches, front and back, and also a laminated cabin table in the saloon. In the galley we had a piece of 4x4 rimu, turned on a lathe, between the top of the sink-bench and under the deck. We had a Ford Ten motor under the cock-pit with access from the cabin. The cabin had three berths; sitting-room out to the side of the boat. Above the companionway there was a dog-house, which was glassed in, where you could stand upright. There were three portholes in each side of the cabin.

We jacked the boat up and put deadwood on the keel, also a great heavy piece of iron was fitted into the keel and finished off with cement. There were long bolts, which went through specially shaped 6 x 2s that were fitted into the bottom of the boat, to take the strain on the boat when it keeled over in the wind. The deck was double skin, one layer at a 45 degree and one fore and aft, with canvas in between. The boat was painted black, with varnished deck and top-side, and I also had a skylight on the deck. We named the boat the "Typhoon".

When we launched the Typhoon it looked like a new boat. We tried to estimate the water-line, and by the time we put ballast in the bilge, it was dead right. I worked on the boat, mainly on my own. The boat yard was like a second home to me for those nine months. I knew all the boaties and the ones that lived in the boat sheds. I had

electric power, so for nine months, I worked 4 nights from 6pm till 9pm, and all day Saturdays. The weather did not deter me, I was there all weathers, with my little light shining. Everybody passed by and made comments: a man with his dog; the old salts. Some thought I was "Noah" building an ark, and did not think it would float, but three weeks before Christmas, the boat was launched and "IT DID FLOAT". "HOORAH – WELL DONE".

COUNT DOWN – TWO WEEKS to Christmas, a friend and myself took the Typhoon on the motor to the Boat Harbour at Oriental Bay and slept the night on board. Next day there were gale-force winds so we returned to Evans Bay on the motor. ONE WEEK to Christmas my friend and I took the boat out for it's FIRST SAIL. We were quite pleased with the outcome; it seemed to handle well in the wind. I had been trying to get someone to go with me on the cruise to the South Island, but nobody seemed to want to go. At last one guy said he would go with me, but at the last minute his family rang my family, so we all got together and had a friendly discussion about the situation, and the pros and cons. We seemed to agree that we really hadn't had time to try the boat out properly, the motor had seen better days, and also the sails were second-hand. We shelved the idea of the South Island and decided to get more experience having cruises around the harbour and also to Days Bay, living on board, for two weeks.

We left on Christmas Day and sailed with variable winds, out into the Wellington Harbour. This was what I had been waiting for, sailing along with no noise, just the noise of the ripple from the bow wave. This to me was a

reward for all the work gone into building the boat. Peace at last! Away from the rush and bustle of the world, as if we were away in another world of our own. The friendly waves were sparkling all around us with the glimmer of the sun on them. The penguins swum around us, bobbing up and down, as if they were saying “Hi, have a happy day!” The whole world seemed to be smiling on us. I have never seen Wellington Harbour looking so wonderful, which proved to me, it does not matter where you are, anywhere is nice on a fine day.



I said to my mate, what about a cuppa? Too right!! I wondered when you were going to ask me. So I went down below to the galley and put the kettle on. Whilst waiting for the water to boil, I looked out of the port-hole and could see Days Bay in the distance. Soon I was up on deck with a cuppa for him and I, back into this little world of our own, and enjoying this wonderful moment. As I looked around I could see other boats, with people

fishing, and others swimming, while others were water-skiing. The seagulls were flying all around looking for a meal.

We looked out past the Orongorongos and we saw cumulus clouds - possibly a change in the weather later? We knew that the anchorage was fairly sheltered in Days Bay. As I looked over the Hutt Valley, high up I could see strata clouds gathering. Lower down I could see nimbus clouds scudding across the sky, which looked like we might get more wind soon. As I sat there on deck for a long time, looking around at all the wonders of the world, I found it hard to believe that people could say "there is no God". The Bible says "Be Still and Know that I am God". That was what I was doing, I was looking at things that God had created. But what about the power behind what we see? At a concert at the end they thank the entertainers. Then they always thank the people behind the scenes, who make every thing happen. What about us? Should we not thank the power behind what we see in the world? Sometimes it's not easy. If we really want to know about God and his power, the Bible says "Seek and you will find." "Ask and it will be given unto you". Just pray in your own words, and when you do receive an answer, you will find a joy that you have never known before. This power is called the "HOLY SPIRIT."

Wait a minute, I can hear my mate calling me to go on watch. He said, "I will go below and have 40 winks." We should be getting to Days Bay by lunch time, after that, a swim and a game of tennis. We still had about 3 miles to go, so I dropped back into a thoughtful mode. I thought how hard it is when you are keen on doing

something, and it is quite clear that in the end, the answer is definitely NO. It is hard at the time, but, that's what makes us SPECIAL people, to accept the word NO. It could be in many circumstances, getting married, buying a car, buying a house, or buying a boat. But what is behind all this? GOD. He only wants the best for us, nothing less is good enough, for GOD'S CHILDREN. The next step is patience. Just hang in there and you will get the REWARDS. To me the dream of building a boat and sailing Cook Strait or bust was just in the mind. But in my heart, it said WAIT, there is no rush. I got my reward, I waited. In 1967 another friend and I had the wonderful privilege of travelling around the world by ship. Through the Panama Canal, and back through the Suez Canal. We were away for a year, went to ports all around the world, plus America, England, and the Continent. God really proved HIMSELF to me by waiting.

We arrived at Days Bay, dropped the anchor, had lunch, and we went ashore and made a point of being friendly with everybody, and they accepted us as friendly sailors from Wellington as we always called in there at night, and that we were living on board. On New Year's Eve we sailed to Eastbourne. They had a Mardi Gras there and we had an enjoyable evening. Some people that we met kindly invited us to their home to see the New Year in. My friend was feeling very tired, so he stayed on board the Typhoon. I arrived back on the beach about 12.30am. I called out to my friend but he was fast asleep, with the light on in the cabin. He had the dinghy, so there was no way for me to get back on board. I saw a P Class yacht on the beach. I pushed it in to the water, and tried to

lay on it and paddle with my hands out to the Typhoon. Unfortunately I capsized on the first attempt, and ended up wet through. Second attempt I succeeded and got back to the Typhoon. I changed my clothes, and returned the P Class yacht back to the beach.

One night we saw water coming up over the floor boards in the cabin. We could not make out where the water was coming from. We tried everything to find the leak, but it was too much for the bilge pump to pump the water out. As a last resort we thought we might have to run the boat aground on the beach. But then I found the lever which, turned one way, guided the water from the sea to cool the engine, and the other way, from the bilge. This lever was in between the two positions, which caused the leak.

We had some wonderful sailing on Wellington Harbour during our holiday, and also took people out for cruises on the harbour. One night we sailed down to Eastbourne, and went to the pictures. About 11pm at night we had just got back on the Typhoon, when all of a sudden the wind varied around to the north-west, and in 5 minutes was gale-force. We were trapped! On a weather shore, and the waves were big and breaking. We knew it was too late to shift around to Days Bay. So we had to stick it out, with a little prayer. The first thing we did was to get all the rope we could, even from the halyards, and put out a second anchor. With the heavy chain attached to the anchor, and then rope, which we tied to the boat. The scary thing was that the direction of the wind was coming from the northwest, and the wind and the typhoon and the wharf were directly in line. If the anchor did drag through the night, the boat would be smashed

to bits against the wharf. We took the oars out of the dinghy, but forgot the rowlocks. We could do no more on deck, so went down below. From my bunk, through the porthole on the port side, I lined up two lights on the shore, and thought as long as these lights don't get out of line, the Typhoon won't be drifting. During the night I woke up every hour and check the lights.

At last, day break came, and the wind and rain was as bad as ever. We knew we had to get out of here, to Days Bay, for a safe anchorage. We prepared a small sail, and cleaned the spark plugs on the motor. But when we looked back, we saw that the dingy had turned "turtle", and lying upside down in the water, swamped. We started the motor, but the boat would not make any headway because of the heavy seas and the drag of the dinghy. So we cut the dinghy loose, and let it drift into shore. Finally we reached Days Bay and got on to a fisherman's mooring. We thanked the Lord for delivering us. We felt miserable, the sky-light was leaking on to our bedding. So we put the stove on and dried everything out. We saw some guys picking up set lines, in a boat. So we hitched a ride into shore with them. We were well known at the café, so they gave us a free breakfast, and we called home to say that we were safe. At lunchtime we had lunch at the other café, which was also free. Then we walked around to Eastbourne, to find the dinghy. It turned out that some boy scouts had found it, and pulled it up onto the beach.

My friend's father worked for the Council in Wellington, so we approached the Council at Eastbourne, and they kindly brought the dinghy around on the back of a truck

to Days Bay.
The wind had
now veered
round to the
west, and now
the seas were
building up
in Days Bay,
but we knew
our anchorage
was safe. We



bought some fresh food and borrowed some rowlocks, and attempted to row out to the Typhoon. After three attempts we made it, two of them we got swamped. We had a good night's sleep that night on board. The next morning it was beautiful, the day after the storm. That was the day that we had planned to go home, so we got an early start, having breakfast on the way. We both enjoyed the cruise, and the holiday.

At a later date I sailed the Typhoon on my own, going out every opportunity that I had. Sometimes with friends, we had many moonlight cruises. One night we took 14 people out for a moonlight cruise, we went to Ward Island, and they went ashore. Later we had a wonderful supper on board. I could not get the engine going, so we sailed back to Evans Bay. We were having so much fun; we never left Ward Island till 12 midnight. The wind was light, so we never got back to Evans Back till 4am. Everyone had a wonderful time, but of course very tired next day. One day I sailed the Typhoon back on my own to Days Bay, to see my friends.

One day, my son and I were in a boat half a mile off Oriental Bay, and he saw a \$20 note floating along in the water, so we shared it between us. I would like to give you some advice. If you want to know your children, buy a boat. You will find plenty of time to talk together with them, about things you normally would not even think about, in everyday life. It is when you are becalmed, or the fish are not biting. If you are going to buy a boat, please use it as I did; there are too many boats just tugging on their moorings.

Use common sense and enjoy your boating. Always check the weather report before going out, and don't forget your lifejackets, flares, emergency beacon and radio. Let someone know where you are going to, and your expected time of return.

I always wondered with the Typhoon, and how it was built, that if it capsized, whether it would right itself, like my toy yacht at Devonport? Guess I will never know.

GOD BLESS AND GOOD SAILING.

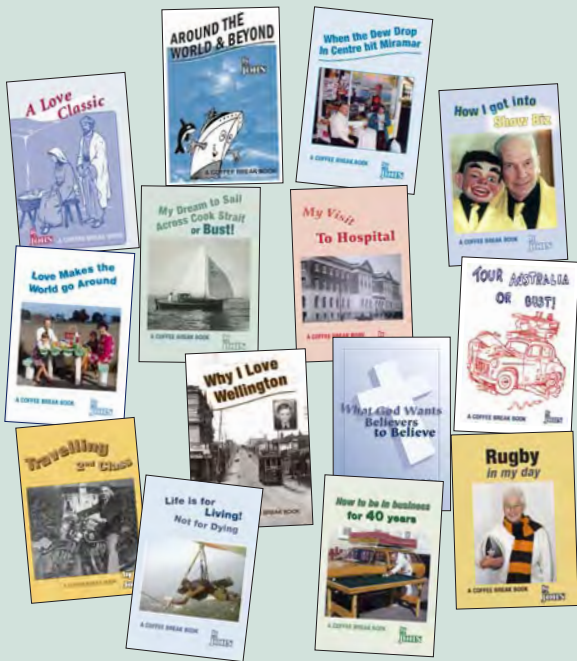


After the storm



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Getting the best out of life? You can do what I have done, and even better! Life is for living, so trust in the Lord and **Go, Go, Go!**

Phil. Ch.4, v13:

I can do all things through Christ that can strengthen me.

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