

By Don McIntyre

Don's talk at the Squadron on Saturday 15 August was so popular it was fully-booked, with many more members unable to be accommodated. His experiences were enthralling and he has agreed to provide this article for members to read.



Don on *Buttercup* during the 1990 BOC Challenge

BORN in Adelaide in 1955, Don McIntyre has been adventuring all his life. In 1993 the Australian Geographic Society awarded Don a Silver medal for his 'Spirit of Adventure' shown during the 'Teddy Bears to Antarctica' sailing expedition. This was a voyage in his 50 ft yacht *Buttercup* which he raced solo around the world in the 1990 BOC Challenge, coming second in class and receiving the RSAYS Youth Trophy Award in 1991. They sailed to the site of Douglas Mawson's hut and each teddy had to pay, with the money donated to the Camperdown Children's Hospital in Sydney.

Thirteen years later, in 2006, he and his then wife Margie were both awarded a Gold medal, as the Australian Geographic Society's 'Adventurers of the Year' (the youngest ever to receive the award) for their year living 'Together Alone' in a box in Antarctica. They sailed there with five other crew in their 60 ft Expedition yacht *Spirit of Sydney* to Commonwealth Bay, built a small 2.4 m x 3.6 m box chained to rocks and then, after the yacht sailed back to Australia, endured a year of total isolation in the windiest spot in the world. Every summer *Spirit of Sydney* would sail to Antarctica, sometimes twice!



One of the teddy bears on the expedition to Antarctica

In 2012 the Australian Geographic Society, recognising Don's many diverse expeditions over the years and his ongoing efforts to promote adventure, presented him with its highest accolade, a Gold medal for a 'Lifetime of Adventure'. This was only the twelfth time it had been presented in the 25-year history of the Society. The inscription on this ultimate Gold medal simply read, 'For a life spent encouraging Adventure and Discovery'. Humbled to receive it, Don thanked Margie, past sponsors Dick and Pip Smith, and then boldly declared that he was not yet retired!

It all began back in Adelaide on 6 May 1979 when he set out on a voyage into the unknown flying a Plain Blue Ensign and the RSAYS burgee on board his self-built Duncanson 29 yacht *Skye*. He never really returned!

Years earlier he had graduated from the South Australian School of Navigation as a certified celestial navigator and did various deliveries around the coast. Inspired by his early sailing mentor, Maurice Bellemans on his 38 ft Gaff schooner *Sari*, he joined the Naval Reserve at HMAS *Encounter* and served three years as quartermaster gunner. Many Squadron members offered advice and opinions during Sunday lunches at the Club. Keith Flint who also sailed a Duncanson 29 was a great help. Don was living on board the Steam Tug *Yelta* in the Port River at that time while finishing off *Skye* alongside.

Finally, Don was off on his first big adventure to the Great Barrier Reef. While he was waiting for good weather in Apollo Bay in Victoria, a UK solo sailor called in for repairs. It was David Scott Cowper, attempting to beat Sir Francis Chichester's solo one-stop circumnavigation record. Don helped with repairs and they became good friends. A few years later, having beaten that record, David again set off to beat the wrong-way-round solo record of Sir Chay Blyth. He planned a service stop in Albany, Western Australia. Don had just returned to Mooloolaba from a two-year Pacific cruise on *Skye* and agreed to assist. While in Albany he met Nick Franklin, the builder of Aries windvanes who asked if he would like to sell them in Australia. YES!

Months later came a call out of the blue from Nick in the UK asking Don to head to Sydney to service Aries windvanes for entrants in the first ever BOC challenge – a solo round-the-world race. In Sydney he became friends with all the entrants. He also met his boyhood hero Sir Robin Knox Johnston, who instead of talking Southern Ocean storms and Cape Horn, wanted to talk about cricket! In that instant, Don decided to do the 1986 BOC challenge. David Cowper had offered to lend his circumnavigating yacht any time Don wanted it. It was on! This was the start of bigger things. Eight years later, Don finally crossed the start line in 1990 with a purpose-built 50 ft Solo racer, flying the RSAYS burgee.



Skye departing the RSAYS in 1979

So what happened between 1982 and 1990? In 1983 Don was one of the earliest ever to be awarded the Australian Yachting Federation 'Yachtmaster Offshore' and 'Yachtmaster Ocean' certificates. In 1983 McIntyre Marine Services started importing and selling gear for Don to use in the BOC, then building and selling fibreglass versions of his planned 50 ft BOC yacht. The first was sold to Keith Flint at the RSAYS. Don founded the Shorthanded Sailing Association of Australia with the help of Sir Robin Knox Johnston, and ultimately became the organiser/underwriter of the 1988 Goodman Fielder Wattie Bicentennial Around Australia Yacht Race which called into the RSAYS. The late Sir Peter Blake was racing the 60 ft trimaran *Steinlager 1* in the race and became a great mentor to Don. He passed on valuable advice and opinions about the commercial world of sailing. He also helped Don's first attempt at launching a Whitbread Race campaign.

During the 1990 BOC Don won the 'Communicators' award, the Middle Harbour Yacht Club 'Navigators' award and in 1995 received the Boating Industry of Australia's highest 'Robert Grieves Achievement' award. He became an Ambassador of the AAP Mawson Hut's Foundation and in 1998 was appointed an ongoing Australia Day Ambassador by Australia Day Council. In 2000 he ran with the Olympic torch on the Opening Day of the Sydney Olympics and in 2003 commenced two three-year terms on the Board of Directors of the *Young Endeavour* sail training ship.

But the fun never stopped. After the BOC Don was offered a skipper's position with a West Australian Whitbread campaign. John Bertrand was coach and Huge Treharne the navigator, but sadly the budget was never achieved. In 1997, with \$250,000 funding from Microsoft, Don set up *Expedition Reef Bound* and a live interactive 11-week expedition with a multi-award winning website through the Great Barrier Reef celebrating International Year of the Reef.

In 2000, with support from Dick Smith Foods, Don was able to create the cutest little 36 m 600 tonne helicopter-equipped ice expedition ship in the world. *Sir Hubert Wilkins* set out half-way around the world from Finland, leading four years of amazing expeditions of *Discovery Exploration and Adventure*. They included three seasons in Antarctica and treasure hunting in the Philippines. All this was inspired by his boyhood hero Jacques Cousteau.

After some dramatic encounters with the New People's Army terrorist group in the Philippines, the ship was sold. Don enjoyed four successful years of tarmac rally car racing and in 2007 made a world first solo ultralight Gyrocopter flight around Australia.

In 2008 15-year-old Jessica Watson rang Don to explain her dream of solo sailing and asked for some advice. Eight months later Don decided to help her with a boat, a manager and a press conference, and agreed to underwrite things if she didn't find a sponsor. As they say, the rest is history. Having supported a few other solo sailors and young adventurers, this is Don's biggest success in supporting adventure. Jessica inspired many!



Expedition ship *Sir Hubert Wilkins* in the Antarctic



Talisker on the *Bounty Boat Expedition*

As Jessica was about to finish her voyage back in Sydney, Don was on his back on the bottom of his 25 ft open whale boat, halfway between Fiji and Queensland, suffering a kidney stone attack! This was during his *Talisker Bounty Boat Expedition*, reliving William Bligh's voyage following the mutiny on the *Bounty*. It was a 48-day voyage of nearly 4,000 miles from the Kingdom of Tonga to Kupang in West Timor. He and the three crew had virtually nothing onboard. Setting out with only two weeks of water and a few small survival biscuits each day, no charts and no toilet paper, Don lost 18 kilos during the voyage. It was an epic adventure. The boat capsized four times and they nearly lost it on a reef one night, but he and the crew all survived.

Inspired by Jessica's non-stop solo voyage, Don decided to recreate Sir Robin Knox Johnston's win in the 1968 Golden Globe Race, by organising a 50th Anniversary Golden Globe Race www.GoldenGlobeRace.com he hoped to sail in. It became so popular, so fast, that he had to manage it instead. It was hugely successful and Squadron member Mark Sinclair (*Captain Coconut*) entered. It is on again in 2022 and three South Australians have entered, together with lifelong friend David Scott Cowper, who will be 80 years of age when crossing the start line!

Inspired by the early Whitbread Round-the-World Races (later becoming the professional Volvo Round-the-World Race) Don is again creating waves by establishing the hugely popular Ocean Globe Race www.OceanGlobeRace.com celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the first fully-crewed Whitbread Round-the-World Race. He is in Adelaide for a month promoting the idea to stakeholders that Port Adelaide and South Australia might like to bid for the right to become Host Port of this major international event. Thirty yachts would stop over in December 2023, bringing around 2,500 international visitors, a large media contingent and corporate connections to the state. International media exposure for the Ocean Globe Race is expected to reach over \$650 million, with an economic return to the state of approximately \$24 million expected. The Port Adelaide and SA brand would rocket around the world.

So what's next? Don will launch his new yacht *Trekka* in France on 26 September this year. It is a plywood 19 ft ocean racing kit boat, which he will race solo across the Atlantic in November 2021. He has launched a new One Design home-built class called www.ClassGlobe580.com and, five months later, there are nearly 100 builders in 25 countries around the world and 17 agents selling kits. If you're up for it, Don is running a Mini Globe Race for these Mighty Minis in 2024. Yes, that's correct! Via the trade wind route! *Watch this space.*

Videos of Don's adventures are available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/mcintyretheadventure>

