

## Quarterdeck

At the suggestion of Clive Arnold, in this issue we begin what we hope will be an ongoing regular feature, just as is the Quarterdeck column. Any experienced yachtsman can tell tales of silly actions and — more commonly — inactions. Many have funny outcomes; others reveal how easy it is to turn fun into tragedy. Since we are confessing our nautical sins, we have called this segment *Mea Culpa* (literally 'through my own fault'). We hope that Members will rise to the challenge to reveal their errors, hoping to educate others not to do the same. We will happily publish them anonymously if you are too sensitive for readers to know who you are. You can write your own moral, or leave us to do so.

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Soon after starting to set up this issue of *Squadron Quarterly*, the computer hard drive failed. After 2½ days of patient work, an obliging Mark Palmer at A1 Computing rescued almost all the files, but gone into electronic oblivion were E-mails and the electronic address book. Not having the latter, we have had to depend on memory to try to contact those who had sent copy by this means. If any have been missed, please accept our apology.

For others with computers, the pathology was thought to be a power surge on a very hot day, on which we heard that traffic lights failed for a short time. The little red light on our special plug was untroubled. Mercifully, the computer was still under warranty, so we have a new hard drive to replace the faulty one. To try to prevent recurrence, the computer is now protected by a device called a UPS — not the biggest delivery service in the world, but an Uninterrupted Power Supply. Judging by the occasional beeps and flashing lights which it emits, it seems that minor variations in power supply are disturbingly frequent.

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It is timely to recount what we called the *Jedda* incident. *Jedda* was the second Black Soa. She was built by David Binks for David Judell, the first being John Muirhead's *Enchantress*. In the early 1960s these light and boxy plywood sloops were startling speed machines, especially downwind.



*New Year's Day 2000, Sydney Harbour. Safe Passage, Newsletter of the Australian Marine Pilot's Association, 2000, 12: 5.*

In the race to Port Lincoln in 1963 *Jedda* came first and fastest and broke the record — not bad for a little boat less than thirty feet long.

The Black Soos were designed by van der Stadt for the shallow waters of the North Sea, where conditions must be like those of our Gulfs. I made my first cruise in *Jedda* to Kangaroo Island in July 1962, and raced and cruised in her until we bought *Kareelak* from Dick Tidock in 1967. A couple of years later, David built *Samantha*, a Duncanson 29 and sold *Jedda*. Her motive power was a long-shaft Seagull outboard engine, which was hoisted up the backstay when not in use. That could be difficult if she was sailing at any speed, so it was crucial to time the manoeuvre for a moment when the vessel had little way up.

The new owner took *Jedda* out one calm Sunday. Soon after entering the River, his daughter was below, changing into bathers, and he put his wife on the helm while he concentrated on

heaving the engine up the backstay. He had difficulty and allowed the boat to stop completely while he did so. He had not yet hoisted the sails. It was dead low water, so the relatively high rocks of the breakwater virtually obscured a large freighter entering the River. The pilot saw the yacht and sounded the ship's hooter, first a couple of times and then many times in quick succession.

We were working on the slip, with Pep Manthorpe nearby. He knew at once that something serious was wrong. Henry Rymill had *Nyroca* at the pontoon, and several of us jumped aboard as we went to see what had happened.

Unable to stop or deviate in time, MV *Straits Singapore* struck *Jedda* on her starboard side, abate the mast, forcing her under water. The young woman didn't wait for modesty as she only just scrambled to safety. The shaken family were brought aboard *Nyroca* and the Pilot vessel. The Port was immediately closed to all shipping. How many of our Members would recognise that signal from the Pilot Tower and know what it requires? If I remember correctly, the *Straits Singapore* was briefly held on the right bank of the River where it makes the turn at the apex of Le Fevre Peninsula, but if so she soon got off. It's interesting to contemplate the insurance implications if she had stuck fast until the next spring tide, because the Inner Port was very much busier then than it is in its present semi-extinct form.

*Jedda* was refloated and found to be badly damaged, with a huge irregular gape scoured out of her starboard side, like the bite of a marine monster. David Binks showed masterly skill in restoring her to pristine condition, but after a time she vanished from the pool. Several years later *Enchantress* was lost on the North Haven Breakwater, and we don't know if any Black Soos are still sailing.

A well-meaning but inept comment understandably angered David Judell. 'It's just as well you sold *Jedda* when you did, Dave. You're lucky to have missed what happened to her.'

David's response can be paraphrased, with his more vigorous additives edited out. 'If I had been there, we wouldn't have got in the way of the steamer in the first place!'

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Keith Flint has passed to us the anonymous *Medical Manual* published for the 1998 Darwin-Ambon Yacht race. It is the best thing of its kind we have seen, and covers a wide range of injuries, diseases and procedures, including good advice on how to stitch up a laceration and reduce a dislocated joint.

One good quote is worth emphasising. 'A point for boat builders and sailors using fibreglass resin and catalyst. Catalyst in the eye will blind you! Wash it out with copious water immediately. Best of all, don't get it in!'

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