

The skill learnt from sailing over many years can be encapsulated in the story of us sailing in to Port Vincent on "Lauriana" in the early 1970s. As many would know, the entrance to the wharf was narrow, and with a 9'6" draft and had a large turning circle, "Lauriana" did not have much play room.

We were heading towards the wharf when my father, steering from the stern, lost all controls. The gears were limp and unresponsive to his touch.

As a man with a soft voice, he always had someone next to him to relay messages. He turned to me. "Tell Dean (Paterson) to prepare the anchor - to drop it on my nod and secure it on my nod". I relayed the message as the yacht continued to glide through the water towards the wharf with the engines now off.

Moments later, my father nodded, and Dean dropped the anchor. The chain was marked for distance and he showed with his fingers how many marks had been paid out. My father nodded again and the chain was secured.

We all held out breath as the boat continued gliding towards the wharf until the anchor took hold, pulling the nose around to face us out to sea, swinging the stern around in an arc to the wharf.

I was by now at the stern holding a rope, which I literally passed to someone ashore. We missed the wharf by no more than a couple of feet, and no-one else had any idea of the drama that just occurred.