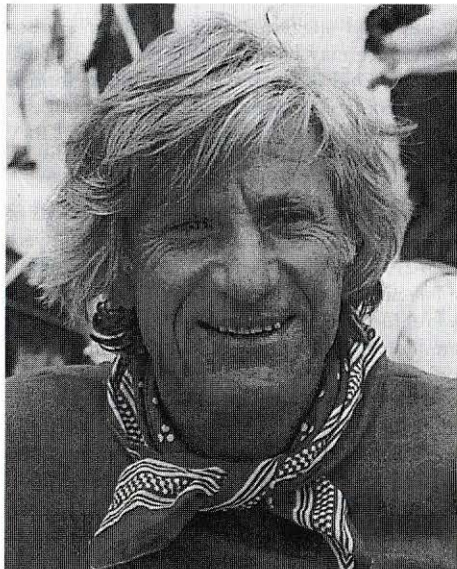


Joska Grubic



The eastern littoral of the Adriatic Sea with its hinterland has a tempestuous history. For centuries there have been wars and atrocities involving people of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. They have bred offspring who are eternal survivors, attuned to the chances of war and conquest. They are industrious, resourceful, determined, high-spirited and generous. One of them is Joska Grubic.

He was born at Split, the capital of Dalmatia, one of the provinces of Yugoslavia. Italian and German invasion in 1941 shattered his ambition to become an electrical engineer. Joska launched himself into a dramatic and complex situation with the intense patriotic fervour of ardent youth. He became an officer in a partisan force, until post-war disruption sent him first to Italy and then to Germany. Joska was determined to make a better future for himself and his beautiful German bride than seemed possible in a Europe destroyed and divided by war and its aftermath. He and Renate arrived in Melbourne on New Year's Day, 1950. As assisted migrants they were contracted to undertake allocated work for two years. Joska discovered how to be a metal finisher on the line at Holdens, and Renate became a waitress at the Richmond Hotel. In due

course they started a transport business, culminating in the manufacture of trailers and everything to go with them. He also satisfied an ambition of many people of his origin by becoming a farmer.

Meanwhile there lay dormant from childhood the desire to acquire a boat of his own. His first impression of Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron was deflating. From his memories of the family yacht of his childhood, Joska associated yachting with rich millionaires in elegant vessels and with shore facilities to match. He found a somewhat decrepit iron shed and few noteworthy boats. A large one caught his eye, and he asked what it might be worth. The estimate of £11,000 was daunting at a time when his weekly wage was only £16.

Joska wanted experience in the sport, and in about 1952 he joined Jim Taylor as a crew member on *Ingrid*. Colin Haslegrove's *Cooroyba* was moored alongside, and the two crews often relaxed together. Some names he remembered were Dick Fidock, Jolm Harrington, David Judell and Tim Williams. After two or three years he began to plan a vessel of his own. He would build it himself, in the somewhat exotic material of steel. At this time almost all yachts were wooden, and the only well known steel vessel in the country was *Solo* in Sydney. Concrete and fibreglass were in the future. He obtained plans from Alan Buchanan in England, who designed all his boats. Joska felt that people laughed about him behind his back for his choice of steel; that he would build it himself when he had no experience of doing so; and anyway, how had a New Australian amassed enough money for such a luxury and so quickly? One jeered, "Wooden skipper, steel boat!" These attitudes contrast with Joska's own conviction that he and others like him have a greater appreciation for and feel a stronger attachment to Australia than many of the native born.

In 1961 Renate launched *Marina*, a yawl of 42 feet. (Originally she was a sloop, but a mizzen was added to enhance performance.) The name was his daughter Julia's second name. Joska raced and cruised successfully in *Marina*, his most

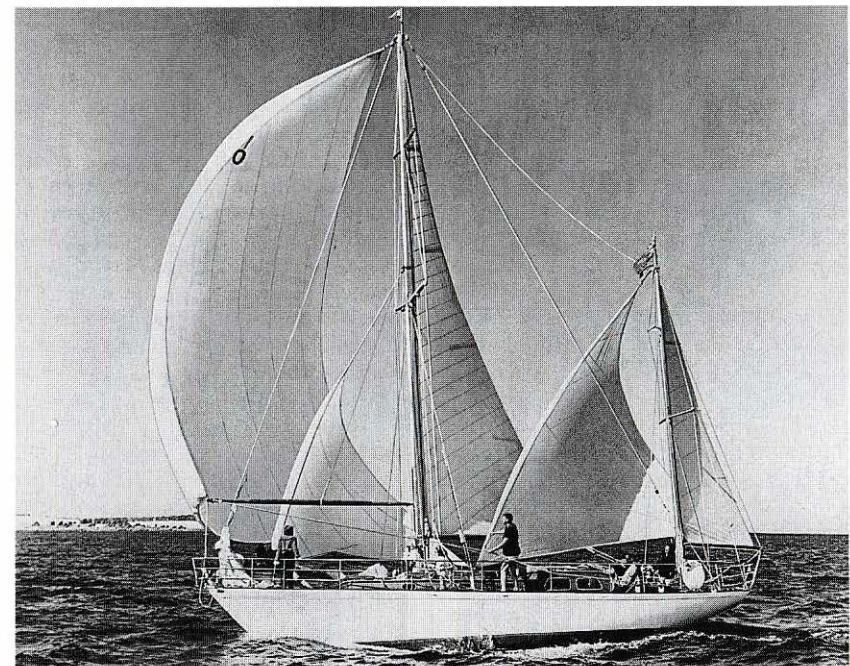
notable achievement being as winner of the inaugural race from Queenscliff to Port Lincoln. He took line honours in several of the annual races from Outer Harbor to Port Lincoln.

After five or six years, Joska wanted something bigger and better. Buchanan designed for him a steel sloop, 48 feet long, which was again built in Joska's factory. Seeking an evocative name, she was called *Adria*, from the ancient name of the Adriatic Sea, *mare Adria*. When she was launched in 1965, for a time he had the worry of owning two yachts at once. She was placed 19th in the 1967 Sydney-Hobart race, but he never won anything notable in her. Other vessels were registered with the same name, so she was officially *Adria Australis*, with the second component dropped for anything other than formal usage. She was a good ship (and still is!), but by now Joska was inspired by the challenge of the Sydney-Hobart race. This was dominated by big boats from Sydney, and he wanted to compete with them on their own terms.

Buchanan produced a design which incorporated the fashionable device of a trim tab to assist

performance to windward. Taking the image of the world's largest snake, living near the water of the Amazon and able to eat large animals at a bite, she was called *Anaconda*. She was launched in December 1971, but he could only manage a disappointing 23rd in that year's Sydney-Hobart race. In the following race *Anaconda* retired, and in 1973 she was 45th.

Still there remained the ambition to create here in South Australia a vessel to match the best in the world. To stimulate him was the prospect of the *Financial Times* Clipper Race from Dover to Sydney and return, the forerunner of the Whitbread Round the World events. This was intended to commemorate the great clipper voyages, the fastest of which was 68 days, and was due to start from Plymouth in September 1975. That put a sense of urgency into the project, and the vessel must cover the course in a shorter time than the clippers achieved. Construction must be strong enough to allow the yacht to be driven in extreme conditions, but as light as possible. Buchanan suggested the radical new concept of foam sandwich construction.

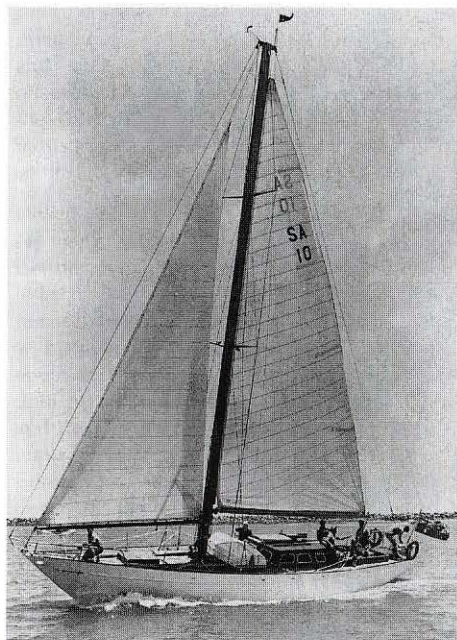


Marina

Joska had little experience of fibreglass, and none of the foam sandwich technique — nor did anybody else in Adelaide. Once again he and those working with him would learn as they went along. The first concept of 63 feet was rejected because of excessive draft and not much beam in proportion to length. Negotiation went back and forth with Alan Buchanan, until the final version became 83ft overall (76 ft WL) by 20ft by 10ft. The quick construction of the hull in a shed at Port Adelaide hired from the Royal Australian Navy posed a succession of challenges to Joska's ingenuity.

Disaster struck in May 1975. The completed hull was being towed from the shed to be lifted on to the keel, when a weld failed on one of the vertical beams of the cradle, weighing about a tonne. It fell across Joska, giving him fractures of the skull, right hip, left femur and ribs. He was unconscious for three weeks, but at the earliest possible moment he returned to the boat in a wheelchair to supervise stepping the masts and all the other tasks pressing to be done.

The departure of *Anaconda II* from Port Adelaide



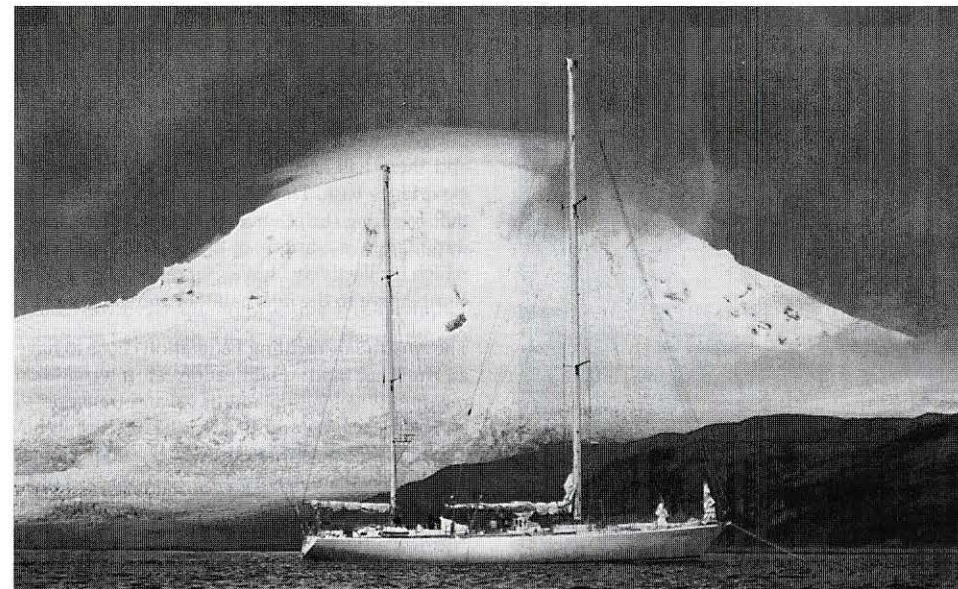
Adria Australis

on 14 November 1975 was a triumphant confirmation of Joska's determination and the strength of the team he had amassed for the project, led by Frank Jordan, Peter Grubic and Rex Bunting. It was too late to get to Plymouth for the start of the race, so they went to Sydney for the return leg. This led to Joska's first rounding of Cape Horn, and the first of his six equatorial crossings. The return was across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal to Mexico and home across the Pacific.

As well as competing in most Sydney-Hobart races from 1967 to 1992, Joska broke the record in the Sydney-Suva race; participated in the inaugural Sydney-Rio de Janeiro race; and took *Anaconda II* across the Indian Ocean through the Suez canal and the Mediterranean to England for the *Parmelia* race to Fremantle of 1979. From then until the yacht was sold in 1992, she was used by the Australian Army for adventure training. This was much more than involvement in sundry races, for there were also the passages to and fro. As a result, hundreds of young men and women from the Army have participated in Joska's style of racing, cruising and enjoyment.



Anaconda



Anaconda II at Heard Island

On 16 November, 1982 Joska left Port Adelaide for Fremantle to embark an expedition of twenty adventurers bound for Heard Island, led by William Blunt and Dr Ross Vining. This is 4,100 kms SW of Perth and 1,500 kms from Antarctica. The passage included pausing at the French occupied Ile de Kerguelen. They were the second team to climb Big Ben, which at 2,746 metres is the highest Australian mountain and our only active volcano. In Atlas Bay Joska had his biggest fright at sea, exceeding a prolonged knock-down by a willywaw off the eastern coast of South America. In a gale of hurricane strength, the anchor rope snapped and they were blown 10 kms out to sea. Had the wind been southerly, it would have been mortal to have been cast ashore in such conditions.

In 1986 Joska underestimated that he had sailed *Anaconda II* at least 176,000 miles. That figure does not include time spent in his earlier boats and what he has done since. No South Australian yachtsman has covered such a distance, nor traversed so many oceans, seas and gulfs. In addition to 28 Sydney-Hobart races, a Melbourne-Hobart race, a Sydney-Suva race, a Sydney-Rio race and two Queenscliff-Port Lincoln races, Joska has rounded all the great

southern capes, crossed the Equator six times, and negotiated both Suez and Panama Canals. He has taken *Anaconda II* to all Australian states, one of our most remote territories, New Zealand and at least 23 other countries. In this extraordinary career his only major mishap was ashore. To be crushed by your own vessel would deter many men, but he shrugged it off, together with subsequent additional fractures from other traumas. Indeed, he is quite literally a walking testament to the skill of orthopaedic surgery, which should inspire anybody involved in a rehabilitation programme.

Joska can be volatile, and he has been accused of sometimes being quicker to criticise than to praise his crews. Against that must be balanced a warm-hearted generosity of spirit, which has made him one of the most popular as well as one of the most flamboyant yachtsmen of our time. Nobody can match his achievements. They are those of a man who came to this country as an assisted migrant with no resources beyond huge energy, creative ability and determination to succeed. By a combination of innovation, resourcefulness and stamina he has certainly done so.

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