

S.A. YACHT BATTERED IN STORMY VOYAGE

Nautilus Covers 490 Miles in 85 Hours on Trip to New Owner

'VARSITY' STUDENT'S VIVID STORY

With her crew soaked to the skin and her rigging battered by a 50-mile-an-hour gale, the 23-ton yacht *Nautilus* (now *Tarni*) has berthed in Williamstown, Victoria, after the hardest trip of her career.

She sailed out of Outer Harbor on Thursday night on her last voyage under Mr. Frank Verco, and covered the 490 nautical miles to Melbourne in 85 hours, which included seven hours of calm. Her new owner, Mr. Fred Werner, of Melbourne, will enter her for the New Zealand ocean race.

Mr. Gavin Viner Smith, a 22-year-old North Adelaide member of the crew, told the exciting story of the voyage on his return from Melbourne today. Mr. Verco was skipper, Capt. George Holman navigating officer, and the "crew" consisted of Messrs. Smith, Frank Powell, and Cleve Dedman.

There is a smack of the real salt in the young sailor's story:—

"Before leaving we took the precaution of single reefing the main, and double reefing the mizen," he said. "It was just as well we did. A light northerly wind gradually increased until off Second Valley it was very strong. As we rounded Cape Jervis the sea was confused and rough, while heavy squalls from the gullies made things lively. Rain was falling heavily and visibility was poor.

"The *Nautilus* was plunging into it, and an extra man had to stand by the wheel to help steer.

"We had our first thrill in Backstairs Passage, when in a heavy gybe the main-sheet burned a woollen glove off me. I was told to ease her off a bit, and held on just a fraction too long—see," said Mr

Smith, pointing to a scarred hand

Lucky Escape

"Off Yatala Shoal the staysail, which is on a boom, carried its sheet away. I went forward to get it in, but a heavy squall hit us and carried me out to leeward over the water, still hanging on to the boom. Luckily for me the sail flapped back again immediately.

"Near Cape Willoughby (where the *Minnie Sims* was wrecked in just such weather) the skipper ordered the main'sl in. It was stiff, and the gear was so swollen with rain that it tore our hands.

"We were soon out of sight of land, and the ocean was running hard with a following wind. That night we were in a calm that took us south of our course, but we made it up again the next morning.

"By Cape Northumberland it was blowing really hard. All hands were called on deck to get the main'sl in; by midnight we brought up Cape Nelson, where we were becalmed for two hours. We got our last hot meal here.

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"The glass was below 29; the first blow came from the south-west, and the big roll soon change into a nasty sea as the storm gathered. In an hour a vicious sea was running. The canvas was as stiff as a board, and all hands were nearly frozen with the cold.

"To get the heavy sail down we had to gybe and let go halvards as she came across. The halvards jammed aloft, and the man at the wheel kept on gybing. She came away a bit, and then the peak fouled in the topping lifts, carrying the starboard one away in a furious gybe.

Desperate Jump

"Get knives, go aloft to cut away the lines, and let her fly," the skipper shouted. But just then we gained a bit and decided to keep at it.

"One of the hands had a lucky escape when he jumped into the belly of the sail in a desperate effort to clear it. As he jumped the sail lifted for a gybe, and the crew yelled. It went back again—if it hadn't nothing could have saved him, for no man would have kept up in such a sea. Nearly an hour later we secured the sail, and just fell down to the cabin.

"It was impossible to use the stoves, for the seas were so heavy that the moment we put a kettle on all the water rolled out of it. We kept the bunks warm by coming off watch and using the blankets of the watch below! The cabins and engine-room were littered with wet clothes and oilskins soaked like cotton.

"Several big ones crashed over us and came roaring past the quarter, but the Nautilus behaved splendidly and rose to every wave, although once or twice we were thinking hard. The navigator reckoned the wind velocity at 50 miles an hour. We were logging 10 knots on several occasions.

Rained All Day

"As we passed Cape Otway we started the engine to cut down the drift which was inshore. Of course, it rained all day. Running up to the Heads, the sea and wind eased a bit, but they were still big enough to make steering hard work and sleeping harder still. We were under the stays'l for 23 hours, and at daybreak arrived off the Heads, where we had to wait an hour for the Rip to ease up.

"A sunny day broke, and as we steamed quietly through the Rip, decks and rigging were soon covered with clothes. It must

have looked like washing day as we went alongside at Queenscliff to report ourselves. We got the Nautilus safely to her new moorings at the Royal Victorian Yacht Club at Williamstown."

Mr. Werner expressed his pleasure at the seaworthiness of the yacht.