

INTRODUCTION



"I call to God. God will help me. At dusk, dawn and noon I sigh deep sighs - he hears, he rescues."

Psalm 55:17. 'The Message.

I lay in my bunk gripping the sides with white knuckles, feeling the painful legacy of this rough passage on my upper left arm. The bruise, now looking very impressive, happened last night when I was in the cockpit having a wash. Our small 29 foot Duncanson yacht, *Shearwater II*, did a mighty broach and I was thrown sideways, catching my arm on the hatch way entrance.

It is 0300 and outside it's soupy black. There is no moon and the clouds are obscuring the stars. We are passing over a sea mount in the Indian Ocean on our voyage from the Cocos Keeling Islands to Rodrigues. It will take us five or six hours to pass over this mountain under the sea where the depth has suddenly risen from 5,500 metres to 1,500 metres causing very confused, rough seas. We are being tossed about relentlessly as a result. In a way, I'm happy that it is dark. I can't see the ugly, raging sea.

My prayers alternate between, "I think we'll be right now God. You can spend your time looking after someone else." And "No, wait, God, I didn't mean it. There is no way I can possibly do without you even for a few minutes. You are part of my life, especially while cruising - a very big part."

Of course, every day as a Christian, I am in touch with God, but voyaging seems to increase my awareness of His presence. There are so few distractions for a start. From horrible gales where I beg Him to watch over us in our little yacht to glorious sunrises and sunsets, I feel in total awe of His wonderful creation. There are the dark, black-as-tar nights when I ask him to comfort me, to wrap His loving arms around me so that I don't feel lonely or afraid. Then there are the times on the vast desolate ocean when I feel there are just us, a few shearwaters and God in the whole universe. I think of how privileged and blessed I am and just wish that others could experience the same feelings.

Several people have asked whether I will write a book about our voyages. There are so many books already written about people's experiences on the water, and most of them have had much more exciting and traumatic experiences than we've had - Thank God! I thought long and hard about it, and realized that I could only write a book which acknowledged the help of a gracious supreme Being whose presence was as comforting as the loom of the lighthouses guiding us along the coasts. Ann Davison, the first woman to sail solo across the Atlantic felt the same way when she wrote, "the sea is an alien element; one cannot live in it or on it for long, and one survives that little time by one's own wit and judgment and the grace of God."¹

Besides experiencing new cultures and meeting a vast number of interesting people, we have had a lot of time for

¹ Ann Davison, *My Ship is so Small*, Peter Davies Publisher, London. 1956 P.118

reflection and conversations with God. The change of lifestyle over the last four years has had an effect which I am sure will give lasting meaning to everything I undertake in the future.

My book is one that I hope will give you an insight into the cruising life we experienced and acquaint you with the community of people who live out there on the sea. I hope it will encourage you to seize each new, exciting day and opportunity. The moments NOW are what are important. The right moment may never arrive and will never return once past. "The real tragedy in life is not that life ends so soon, but that we wait so long to begin it."²



A gale at sea - scary moments indeed

The following blessing is glued into the front of our log book. It encompasses everything we hold dear and believe

² Barbara Johnson, *Boomerang Joy*, Zondervan Publisher. 1998

important for the life God has so graciously given us. Recalling what comes to mind as I reflect on each phrase, it seems appropriate that I base this book around it. It is my prayer for you also, as you read the ensuing pages.

God give you:

- Courage for daring and hoping
- humility for learning
- passion for living and loving
- trust for believing
- freedom for growing and changing
- strength for enduring
- capacity for giving and receiving
- tenderness for understanding.

AND THE BLESSING OF ALMIGHTY GOD - FATHER,
SON AND HOLY SPIRIT - REST UPON YOU AND
REMAIN WITH YOU, NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN