

Our First Boat

In 1973, Kevin Veness (Margaret's brother) and myself decided to venture into boatbuilding as an additional source of income and possible future business.

The accompanying pictures are of the one and only cruiser we built as, shortly before finishing it, the World economy crashed, and the market for this type of boat collapsed.

The building and finishing of this boat is a saga all of its own.

While we were building it, we decided to sell the farm and move to Western Australia, where we could look at the possibility of starting a business.

The buyer of the farm was so impressed that he asked us to stay on at the farm until it was finished and he would buy it as well as the farm. However, when the economy crashed, he was badly affected, and even had difficulty settling the farm. He turned sour and asked us to leave the property. This meant we had to find somewhere to finish the cruiser.



We all had caravans, so accommodation was not a problem, but where to place the cruiser was. We finally moved onto the Mooney Creek Caravan Park, lock, stock and cruiser!

Everything progressed well until the first of two floods hit the park. During the first we were lucky with the vans, as the water came only to the doorsteps, but the cruiser, sited on the banks (as can be seen in the photos) was lower down. We had to race madly

around, grabbing some cakes of soap and ramming them into the pipe openings in the hull to prevent the boat sinking, then float the boat away from the stands on which it had rested to avoid it settling crookedly and holing the craft.

Then, as the waters receded, came the task of floating it back over the shore and settling it on new supports.



Unfortunately, this was not to be the last flood. Within weeks it was all repeated again, only this time it was daytime, and we were able to get the vans to higher ground, and prepare the cruiser by welding the supports to it (it was all steel).

This park normally never flooded, but apparently there had been some concern for a weir further up the river, so they decided to open the floodgates to release water pressure. Never mind us!



However, with all three of us (Kevin, Frank Veness and myself) working long hours, all was finished and the boat launched there in the Mooney Creek. It was a great moment for all of us, marred only by the knowledge that the economy had become uncertain.

This turned out to be much worse than was expected, but as we had already made our plans to move West, I placed the boat in the hands of a Broker, and off we went. As the economy grew worse, we



decided to build a trailer and for Kevin and Frank to take my truck and the trailer East and bring the cruiser over to the West. If we could not sell it, we may as well use it!

The trip across Australia required wide-load permits for all States, as the boat was 25 feet long and 10 feet wide, weighing 3 and a half tons. One interesting point on the stupidity of bureaucracy here is the fact that they had to tow the boat to Norseman [more

than halfway across the WA] before they could apply for a wide-load permit for WA.

Built of steel and looking as smooth as fibreglass, it raised a lot of interest, but, unfortunately, by this time the economic crisis was affecting Western Australia as well. I eventually sold it for what it cost in materials. A blow to our hopes of a new boatbuilding business . . . but that is life.

More disappointing was the fact we believed (at that time) that steel was by far the best material from which to build, and did not have to look untidy as most steel hulls did.

(At that period in time Aluminium was far too expensive to be considered a common building material.)

Built of steel but with the finish like fibreglass, it was fitted out with a large forward cabin, locker room, separate toilet, galley, dining table [which converted to another bunk], seating in the cockpit area which was designed to come together and make another double berth [protected by a canopy which effectively made this an area approximately 3 metres by 2½ metres with full head room], anchor well, tinted armour glass windows, and boarding ladder. It was powered by a V8 Sea Tiger [Ford] marine engine. It proved to be an extremely stable craft in the wildest of conditions.



Our Yachts and Ski Boat



*Left: Silver Mist [26-foot Soling].
A truly magic sailing machine and my last yacht!*



*Right: The Magician [21-foot cruiser-racer] in which
we had many years of great sailing and racing,
and had many victories. It was also the "training
ground" for a lot of young sailors.*



*Left: Rimfire [18-foot Bullet ski
boat], behind which Lynley,
Geoffrey and friends all learned
the exhilaration of water skiing and
I continued a 30 year love of the
sport until health finally made me sit
back and just watch the kids.*

Some of Our Trophies

A few of the trophies won in *The Magician* and *Silver Mist* racing from various clubs (and golf).

In most cases the club trophies were usually something for the house, so the cupboards are full of cut glass dishes, fancy glasses, fancy place mats, and many other bits and pieces.

The main thing we sailed for were the pennants. As can be seen, there are many, many of those from a number of clubs. The primary ones for us are those with the "F" on them - that means "Fastest" which was always our priority!

The trophy in the middle of the pennants is one I have always cherished. It was presented to me one year because "they could never tell how many kids were on my yacht!" The other Major one is the "Digger's Cup" (top right). This is a perpetual trophy that stays in the trophy cabinet at the club. A real honour.

The golf trophies were won after I retired from sailing due to failing health.



SAILING:

Division 5 Special "Sardine" Trophy - 1980 (for training kids - they could never tell how many I had on the boat - and we still won)

RPYC Div 5 Consistency

Cockburn Sound Regatta Consistency - 1981-82

RPYC Murray Stubber Memorial Trophy, Div 3

Cockburn Sound Regatta Point Score State Champion, Div 4 - 1981-82

The Diggers Cup Perpetual Trophy (Royal Perth Yacht Club) 1987 (shown at right) - won with *Silver Mist*

GOLF:

Glen Iris Veterans GC Club Champion - 1998

Glen Iris Veterans GC Winner - 1998





Whether waterskiing...

*Just spending the day out
on the water sailing...*



*Or seriously
racing...*

*Our boats were always full
of kids enjoying life...
as it should be!*

