

1999 New Zealand

1999 New Zealand Sailing Adventure ... almost ...

By Rod Flannery, Australia

I won't even try to catch up on a day to day basis for the last month. So much has happened and I will just cover it as it comes to mind.

The last entry on 'Diary #22' was dated 07OCT99 and stated that Ivan had ring me the previous evening and asked if I wanted to sail his boat to New Zealand with him. The proposed departure date was about two weeks hence, being the Wednesday, 20OCT99. It seems the following two weeks were very busy. At least that seems to be why I didn't write anything in that period.

I seem to recall that Josh and Rhys had a great time up at the farm, but I don't recall much else. There was plenty to be done to get the boat ready, but with Ivan's new found financial resources, he just paid the shipwright to attend to it all. There was work on the autopilot and the boat had to be slipped. I was not included in any of this and didn't miss it.

Everything was geared up for us to leave on the afternoon of the 20th October 1999, Wednesday. Then there was a problem. Self steering not ready? I can't really remember. It was put off until the next day, and then finally until the Friday. I had said goodbye to Josh and Rhys each day when they went to school and each day they came home and I was still there. Friday rolled around, so Sandra and I headed down to the boat. Charley Morgan was now a member of the crew. While Ivan ran around and did the Customs paper work, Charley and I did a few jobs on the boat. Stitched a sail and cable tied a cable to the back stay.

Sandra stayed as long as she could and then had to leave. She said goodbye and headed home.

I went up the road and bought a big bottle of Duty Free bourbon.

The real drama started when Ivan arrived back at the boat. We were all ready to go. He told us, that all he was waiting for, was a call from his insurance agent. Apparently, he was told when he first insured the boat, that if he wanted to go right 'off shore' then all he had to do, was give them a phone call and clear it with them. It seems that he didn't call them until midday on that very Friday, and then he found out that there was a bit more involved than he had been led to believe. The boat needed to be inspected by a Naval Architect and a special 'off shore' insurance rate had to be agreed on.

Well, at 5pm on Friday, there was no way in the world that he was going to get hold of a Naval Architect. Ivan had a big argument with his insurance agent and said that he had been misled. The agent said he would be pleased to insure us when we arrived in New Zealand, but there wasn't anything he could do for us on the crossing. Ivan told him to cancel the policy altogether and that he had been a good customer for about 4 years, and that he would find another company when he got to NZ and that we would go without insurance.

Having said all this he was fired up to leave and so was I, but Charley had reservations. He asked Ivan, what insurance he had for us, the crew. Ivan told him that when the boat was comprehensively insured, we had plenty, but with him cancelling the policy, then he had no liability insurance, to cover us. Charley didn't think this was good enough and I didn't want to make waves. Ivan was getting a bit stroppy with him and I was just trying to keep out of it.

Then Charley said the key words. "What happens if there is an accident, you have a family man here! (pointing at me). This hit me fairly solidly. What if there was a problem, would Sandra have any recourse to financial help to raise two kids? I started to see where Charley was coming from. Finally, when Ivan asked me what I thought, I had to reluctantly agree with Charley. Charley said that we should wait until Monday and get the boat inspected, get it insured and then take off.

Ivan was in a bad way. He had been so keyed up with organizing for the departure and then having to wait another 3 days. It was agreed that we would all meet back at the boat the following Monday. I caught the train home and wandered into the house at about 7:30 pm, much to Sandra and the boys surprise.

Ivan rang up a little while after I got home and asked me what I really thought about "all this bullshit". I'd had time to think about it a bit, and told him the following.

- He wouldn't have a worker on one of his building sights, without insurance.
- He wouldn't drive a car with people in it and not have insurance.
- Insurance wasn't just for use as a financial safety net for Sandra and the kids in the event of an accident, it was also for his and Sybille's protection in the event of a lawsuit by my estate.

If Ivan, Charley and I all drowned, with no insurance and a big legal battle eventuated, Sybille might lose everything that they had both built up and worked for. In the end it was only a few extra days wait and surely he would be happier if the boat was insured. I was no happier than he was with the extra delay. My holidays were ticking away.

Sandra and I spent the weekend with Josh and Rhys. We went out for dinner one night to a really nice restaurant called Valentin's at Greenhill's, with the boys and had a great night. We also went down to Mum's in Belmont on Saturday, and I forget what else we did, but it was good because we were all together.

Monday rolled around and the call from Ivan came. The guy had inspected the boat at a cost of \$500. He had pronounced it 'a well founded boat, and that he would be prepared to go to sea on it himself'.

It was insured for \$230K and the premium was \$2300.

We were ready to go. Sandra was looking after 'day care kids' and so we enlisted Geoff and Norma to drive me down to Newcastle. Sandra drove our car with the 'day care kids' and I went with Rhys and Josh in the Page car.

We all met at the pier, Customs checked us out again and then left. I gave Sandra the bourbon, so I could get another cheap bottle on the way through the airport on the way home. This somewhat breaks the Customs and excise laws, but too bad.

I hugged and kissed Sandra, Josh and Rhys for real this time and at 5:30 pm we were on our way. Apparently they drove up to Horseshoe Beach to wave, but I was busy on the boat and didn't see them.

The finale to this story is, that we suffered structural failure around the skeg area that started to let in water. The steering was damaged and we had to eventually abandon the boat about 200 nautical miles from New Zealand. We set off an EPIRB and a New Zealand Orion aircraft came out and supervised our rescue by a cargo ship. It was a Japanese freezer ship destined for the area below Chile to pick up a load of frozen krill for Japan. The ship was heading for Lyttelton Harbour to refuel.

The following is the transcript of the log we kept for the duration of the voyage.
New Zealand here we come

26/10/99 Tuesday 7am

- S 33.04.674

E 152.29.407

Light north easterly winds, poled out headsail, goosewinged

Spent 1/2 hour trying to figure out date and what day it was.

Saw a stack of dolphins

Steak for dinner.

27/10/99 Wednesday 8am

- S 33.15.122

E 154.44.844

150 miles

10 knots, North, overcast.

Stormed last evening. Charley gibed the boat and laid it over. None of it his fault, gave us some interesting moments.

Good lightning show, torrential rain.

Added more and more (all) reefs during night.

Ivan didn't like his dinner and so threw his peas all over the wall?

27/10/99 Wednesday 5pm

- S 33.15.200

E 155.30.700

188 miles

10 knots, light winds overcast

Found a small flying fish on deck. Quite a few birds. Some big birds like Albatross or something.

Meatloaf.

28/10/99 Thursday 7am

- S 33.33.215

E 156.03.290

Speed 2.5 knots

218 miles from Newcastle

Boiled egg breaky.

Suns out. Rained all night, very heavy. Need more wind.

-

- 10:30 am

Suns out, wind light on nose doing 3 knots.

Took reef out of main. Charley repairs Genoa turning block.

Seen heaps of great big birds.

28/10/99 Thursday 5pm

- S 33.17.500

E 156.32.700

No wind, no wind, no wind. Idled along all day on autopilot.

Lots of blue bottles - some rubbish.

29/10/99 Friday 7am

- Good sail overnight. Rodney saved the day with a tin of creamed rice.

We had to gulp it down as a big black cloud appeared from nowhere.

It was a fizzer. Seen dolphins.

29/10/99 Friday 5pm

- S 33.37.100

E 158.19.670

Speed 3.4 knots

331 miles

South winds 10 knots

Flat ocean. Odd fluffy cloud. Spectacular day. Light winds.

MPS up all day. MPS tack wore through.

To New Zealand (Three Kings Island) 691 nm

Solitary albatross around on and off.

Ivan had us in stitches, telling us about his staffing woes.

Charley reminiscing about his days on a freighter.

1 reef main + MPS. Reaching all day.

30/10/99 Saturday 8am

- S 34.07

E 158.57

Speed 5.2 knots heading 120 degrees

Beautiful day, light N/easterly puts it on the nose.

Charlie put last night's cross on the chart in the wrong place, so this morning,

instead of having the excitement of seeing us move ahead, we had to rub his cross out, and our new cross was behind where Charlie's was.

It was suggested maybe the chart was wrong, not Charlie.

Full main, Genoa and "staysail" for effect.

Sardines for breakfast, Charlie refused these because of the smell, and ate his biscuits dry. Rod was here to organise weevils for him.

Auto pilot steering as plenty of sun for the solar panels.

366 miles from Newcastle

655 to New Zealand

156 Miles to Lord Howe Island in the north

30/10/99 5pm Saturday

- S 34.36.387

E 159.45.452

Speed 5 knots

Wind N/east 15 knots most of the day

3 reefs in main. Charlie spliced some ropes.

Auto pilot most of the day

Most of the day on 120 degrees, now on 90

To Newcastle 411

To New Zealand 612

51.5 nm to 7am 30/10

31/10/99 7am Sunday

- S 35.00

E161.17

Speed 7.8 knots and flying along

489 miles from Newcastle

537 to Three Kings Island

236 to Lord Howe Island

513 miles is half way. We should do this today

Spirits are high with speed.

2 reefs in main, stay sail out, Genoa reduced to hanky.

At least no rain.

31/10/99 5pm

- S 35.11.800

E 162.46.800

Speed 8.4 knots

Lunch, Plate Du Jour 'Salad au cans'

Repaired water tap in galley

Wind 16 knots at NNE, overcast

To Newcastle 570 NM

To NZ 457 NM

24 hour distance 159 NM

01/11/99 8:30am Monday

- E 35.33

S 164.50

A bit late today. Helmsman too busy and everyone else asleep.

Wind 20 knots from N/East. Overcast.

Speed 7 knots, seas 2 metres on 3 metre swell.

Saw a whale just on dusk yesterday. It ran with us for a while.

Some sort of pilot or killer whale. Saw a flying fish this morning.

Over night looks like we've cracked the skeg and rudder on hull plate,
don't think it will be a problem

Wind increasing 25 hours for 179 nautical miles.

To Newcastle 668 NM

To NZ 363 NM

01/11/99 5pm

- E 35.26

S 165.44

Winds easing, seas moderating.

Course 60 degrees, speed 6 knots

3 reefs, inner headsail and furled gib.

Dolphins turned up for a short stay

Water now increasing through skeg.

Saw a ship 'Cape York' at 2:45 at E 35.30, S 165.28,

going from Cook Straight to Melbourne

Charlie called him on the radio. We even had to change course to avoid him.

They blew their horn and waved.

Bilge pump handling water.

To Newcastle 709 NM

To NZ 319 NM

24 hour 140 NM

2/11/99 7 am Tuesday

- S 35.21

E 167.15

Winds light N east 5 knots.

Speed 2.5 knots

Full main and genoa

Muslie for breakfast

Calm night. Charlie saw a boat and proceeded to watch it climb into the sky.

Called us and we thought it looked like the moon. SS Moonship.

To Newcastle 782

To NZ 245

24 hour 118 miles

Hot showers all round and fried eggs and ham. 2 rotten eggs thrown to fish.

Melbourne cup a bit of a fizzer.

2/11/99 5 pm

- S 34.59

E 167.37

Been going one week!!

Overcast, bleak, little wind and right on the nose.

Mainsail up and motor just idling. 3 to 4 knots. On autopilot. 28 miles today. Grrrr!!

24 hour 96 miles

To Newcastle 798

To NZ 255 miles

Bearing 69 degrees, track 51 degrees

3/11/99 7 am Wednesday

- S 34.11.500

E 168.23

Wind S/east, 28 knots showers

Bilge pump still a problem.

Sighted merchant ship last night, bound for Melbourne.

Called him up (Italian), passed to north of our position.

Steak and lentil minestrone for evening meal.

24 hour run 89 NM

To Newcastle 832 NM

To NZ 190 NM

Bilge pumps packed in after three days solid pumping. Now full time on buckets.

-

4/11/99 6:30 am Thursday

- S 33.44

E 168.44

Inevitable, we are going to sink. Pumps no longer handling water.

Bailing with buckets.

Approx 7 am we had a meeting and decided to let rip with the Epirb.

Its only a matter of time before we are in the raft. Est 10 hours.

Seas horrendous. Water pouring in stern

4/11/99 10 am

- Had soup waiting for rescue.

If the right boat comes with pump we may be able to save her and tow her in.

Motor is running charging batteries for radio etc.

5/11/99 Friday

- Night spent on 'Sagami'

People incredibly friendly

Captain Korean, 1st and 2nd officers Japanese, crew 28 Philippines

Language difference is fun.

Cook complaining, 3 recipes and now 4 with Australians.

They keep bringing us beer and mineral water.

THE END!!

Read more about: [The published Newspaper Story and: Final Comments & Thoughts](#)

Copyright © Rod Flannery, Australia 1999 - 2007 - All Rights Reserved