

# SISTERSHIP

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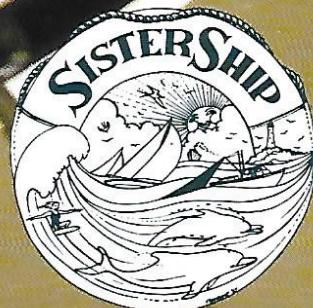
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Issue 5  
1989!



## In this issue:

- Our polluted oceans - what to do
- Molokai to Waikiki by outrigger canoe
- Life on a lightstation
- and more!



## SUBSCRIPTIONS, EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

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**Sistership** is a magazine for women who are concerned with maritime issues. Committed to promoting women's professional and recreational experiences, it is a positive networking forum. **Sistership** seeks to inform, entertain and inspire.

Editorial contributions are welcomed. Format: double-spaced typescript, using one side of the sheet only; or IBM/Compatible 5 1/4" floppy disk; or Macintosh disk (Microsoft Word, Works, MacWrite are acceptable). Please do **not** send one-off originals. Black and white photographs and artwork are preferred. All contributions will be returned if they are accompanied by SAE. No responsibility is accepted for contributions but great care will be taken.

We want you to write, draw, compose or photograph for **Sistership**. We want all readers to be part of the network by making submissions of every kind. We need to find out what women were, are and hope to be doing the world over.

If you would like to write but feel hesitant, contact us and we will send you some guidelines. The topics are yours to choose, as long as they are relevant to women on and around the water.

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The views expressed in **Sistership** are not necessarily those of the editor.

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Cover photograph shows the interior of Bruny Island Lightstation

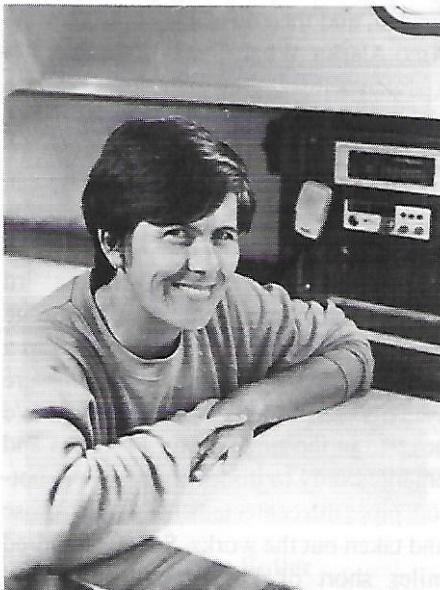
TWO women and I went sailing last Sunday with four young teenagers. It was an enlightening day for me. As a professional sailing instructor I mostly teach (affluent) adults, who wish to learn to sail for solely recreational purposes. Last Sunday's outing reminded me that there is certainly more than recreational amusement to my chosen occupation.

We were fortunate to have one of the rare days of sunshine that this year has brought Sydney, and, although the wind was light, we savoured the effect.

The boat we sailed was a Cavalier 37, a sister ship to the vessel in which Kay Cottee made her record-breaking solo world voyage. And to these inquisitive and energetic girls and boys, that fact provoked innumerable questions and was a source of wonder to them. They were particularly intrigued by the prospect of six months' "solitary confinement" aboard the 11-metre-long vessel!

It didn't take these novices long to attain an initial understanding of the equipment, language and how to actually handle the vessel.

The basic manoeuvres were soon well practised. Steering by the wind and sheet handling under control, they were almost on their own (with a little help from the



Photograph by BARBARA ALDRICH

**Ruth Boydell**

adults for collision avoidance tactics).

Venturing on deck was tentative at first, but by the time we'd been on Sydney Harbour for an hour or two, there was a rush to go forward every time a vessel passed. This was for the thrill of experiencing the pounding foredeck from the resulting wash.

Going below was an hour-long exploration of "space management". Lockers, cabin doors, hatches, the gimballed (rock-

ing) stove and other galley delights, lifejackets and safety items, the radio and nav(igation) station were all discoveries which required full explanations. How does it work? What does it do, exactly? These questions demanded more comprehensive answers than had ever previously been expected of me. It was quite challenging to answer thoroughly.

I suppose it is the nature of children to be inquisitive. I haven't taught many children, but these four certainly took in information with a zest that I admit astonished me. They have certainly made me stop to think about how much I take for granted in life, because Jenny, Geoff, Yvonne and Bart are blind.

Sailing has been the means to develop my intellectual and physical capabilities. It is certainly a challenge for me in both those spheres. These children reminded me that learning never ends. And that the lessons occur in many different forms.

Jenny, Geoff, Yvonne and Bart taught me a lot. Thank you.

## *Ship's stores*

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Letters to *Wavelength*, *Sistership*'s letters column, should be addressed to *Wavelength*, Sistership, PO Box 1927, Crows Nest, NSW 2065, Australia.

A SHORT note to congratulate you on *Sistership*. I have very little to do with the sea – apart from part-owning a house on the shore of Port Phillip Bay – but I find the magazine a delight to read.

Have you ever tried to move into the area of science fiction? There's a lovely book by Joan Slonczewski, called *A Door into Ocean* (published by The Women's Press, London, 1987). It's about an ocean world – peaceful, female-centred, whose inhabitants live on organic rafts and in harmony with their sea-bound co-habitants. Well worth a read to anyone who fancies the life or the philosophy!

**Jenni Mitchell**  
Rural Women's Network  
Melbourne, VIC, Australia

I HAVE been living aboard a yacht based in Cairns for the past 18 months, but have resolved to go ashore for a while, till my children are older and we can give cruising a go again.

I found being the mother of a baby, alone and isolated on the yacht, very depressing at times. To know that there were other women giving it a go would have inspired me no end. So, I plan to subscribe for a dear friend of mine, who works on a fuel barge at Flinders Island (Queensland) with her fellow. Their yacht is moored alongside the barge. They will be there for nine months before they get a break.

I wish you the best and hopefully a real network of women seafarers will appreciate *Sistership*.

**Erica Higgins**  
Yandoit, ACT  
Australia

*SISTERSHIP* sounds fabulous! I have visions of spindrift and sail, lots of dangerous, hard work too, and have much pride in you bold women who dare. I wave heartily to you.

**Celeste West**  
Booklegger Publishing  
San Francisco, CA, USA

THE FIRST three editions of *Sistership* arrived and followed me out to the Arco

Juneau, and then weeks later, here to the Arco Alaska. What a great magazine! It's a source of inspiration to me ... and solace at those times this job tends to wear on me. Nice going ladies!

Right now I'm bound for Long Beach, California, on this VLCC (very long crude carrier) with yet another load of "Alaska North Slope Crude" aboard, serving as 3rd Mate. It will be a whole month voyage round trip from Long Beach thanks to a high-powered procession of low pressure systems across the North Pacific. We hove-to in the first one for two days and emerged only to discover one of the bottom pipes in a center tank had broken loose and taken out the works. So, one hundred miles short of Prince William Sound where we go up to Valdez to load, we turned and headed for the shipyard in Portland, Oregon.

It's been a wild month of coping with severe weather and constant repairs. Lots of time "tank diving". Luckily, I'm working with my friend Carol Widenor who is aboard as Chief Mate. We spent yesterday afternoon crawling through the double bottoms under #2 tanks looking for any leaks. It's a pleasure to be working with Carol and see a woman doing one hell of a job under incredible pressure.

P.S. I just found an excellent book while in Portland – *Seawatch: The Seafarer's Guide to Marine Life* by Paul V Horsman, 1985, Facts on File, New York.

**Marie Wuerker**  
Palos Verdes Est  
CA, USA

I'M A 23-year-old deckhand living in Seattle, Washington, USA and am affiliated with the Women's Maritime Association. Let me rephrase that ... the company I worked for just went bankrupt and left me jobless, so I am now an ex-deckhand, marine technology student wondering where I am ever going to get a job, and when can I afford more than peanut butter and McDonalds on Sundays.

I feel *Sistership* will bring a little more hope into my endeavours, and acquaint me with other women around the world trying to live their lives as they wish.

**Betsy McDaniel**  
Seattle, WA, USA

WOMEN'S participation in Australia's maritime heritage has for too long been neglected, and your initiative in highlighting it is to be applauded.

The Australian History Resources Centre is a teaching collection that holds artefacts and material on all aspects of Australian history. However, women in history is one of our particular areas of focus. So, if we can assist you or your readers with research we would be delighted to do so.

Our best wishes for the success of *Sistership*.

**Valda Rigg**  
Curator, AHRC  
Sydney, NSW, Australia

LAST year I finished a five-race circuit around Lake Ponchatrain (Louisiana), in my 1966 Islander 32ft sloop Resolute. Resolute placed 10th in the cruising fleet of 13 – I just have to keep reminding myself she's a cruiser, not a racer! But at least I got out there and learned a lot about racing and just pushing my boat to its potential, without being afraid. There were only two female skippers out of 120 boats (we both owned our boats), and hopefully gave encouragement and a sense of realistic possibilities to a lot of the female crew we met – that they, too, can get out there and skipper their own vessels! We'll see next year!

After five years of crewing on other guys' boats I cannot begin to describe the personal satisfaction gained from controlling my own direction and desires with my own boat. Just get out there and do it!

**Captain Roberta Bienvenu**  
Houma, Louisiana, USA

I AM A yacht broker, help run a charter fleet with my husband, but am most proud of my "Outward Bound" type experience in covering a difficult trip alone with a 73-year-old woman! Last summer, this woman and I were the first to circumnavigate Newfoundland, and accomplished it in two months on a 30ft sailboat.

**Jan Forkert**  
Anchor Marine Inc.  
Sister Bay, WI, USA

Continued page 22

# *Hup! Ho! - Molokai to Waikiki by outrigger canoe*

You have to be fit, strong, brave, balletic and above all, determined to race an outrigger canoe, as world class Australian kayaker GAYLE MAYES found out in a race off Hawaii.



THE STARTING line was awesome! Twenty-two outrigger canoes, about 25ft long, crewed by some of the strongest and fittest women in Hawaii, Tahiti, and California were about to compete in a unique, 46-mile race from Molokai to Waikiki, Hawaii, and we were a part of it.

Jane Hall and I joined the Newport team in California, and trained with them for two weeks. That fortnight was a concentrated crash course – we learned one style of paddling, how to do water changes and thirdly, a great deal about group dynamics and the stress put on individuals when picking a team for such an event.

The most memorable lessons were the social ones – learning to appreciate the Californian sense of humour and getting to know the other paddlers, who proved so confident, competent and outspoken in their beliefs.

The Newport crew (with these two Aussies) sat among the other starters. Our support boat and the other half of our crew hovered, with the rest of the support boats, outside the starting field, engines revving, waiting for the action to begin.

Heart pounding, adrenalin surging and breathing under control, we now waited with paddles poised ready. The arm and back muscles of the woman in front glistened with fine spray in the dawn light. The starting flag dropped, and we were away!

Paddles dug deep, backs strained, shoulders dipped and pulled. Salt water splashed and foamed as 132 paddlers gave everything they had to the first 20 strokes. Chaos, collisions and careering canoes sorted themselves out as the Offshore team, also from Newport, took the lead and held it convincingly. We stayed up with the others in the lead pack and after a kilometre the rest of the field began to drop back slightly. Every 12 strokes the familiar "Hup! Ho!" calls rang out as we changed paddling sides, then settled into the rhythm set by our stroke, Ellen.

Breathing was now deep and steady as our paddles kept in time and the coast of Molokai Island slid past. We paddled strongly, aware that the pace had to be maintained as the other crews weakened and dropped further behind. Still amongst the first seven, we left the silent and rugged

shores behind and turned towards the big island of Oahu.

After half an hour we were allowed our first change of crew. Each team has 12 members, with six at a time in the canoes. It's the job of the coach to work out who paddles best in what seat in the boat and who combines best with whom. The escort boat had kept alongside us and now moved forward for the change with three fresh paddlers standing ready to launch themselves into the warm Hawaiian ocean. They jumped in and lined themselves up in front of us with their arms above their heads to help the steerswoman to find them amongst the swells. The canoe approached and paddlers one, three and five unzipped their covers, then, as they approached the "water babies", in a finely tuned flowing sequence, paddles were stowed beside seats, the "active" paddlers jumped out of the canoe as the "fresh" paddlers grabbed

Continued page 4

Top: Six women paddle mightily in the open seas off Molokai as the support motorboat looks on.

## *Hup! Ho! — to Waikiki by outrigger canoe*

the side of the canoe and swung into the still-warm seats, grabbed the paddles, zipped up the covers and took up the rhythm of the other paddlers. The craft does slow down dramatically but if the change is fast and efficient, the boat picks up speed again quite rapidly. With fresh paddlers in they make up any ground they may have lost. Carried out smoothly, changes look like a water ballet sequence.

Once out in the Channel we would feel the swells lifting and carrying the craft. It didn't take long before we were surfing the waves, powering along and then down the face picking up speed, slowing in the troughs, losing momentum, then surfing again as the next swell came through. The sheer exhilaration of speed and energy between boat, crew and ocean was terrific!

Another change and more fresh paddlers. Sometimes we only changed two paddlers, and only once did our courageous steerswoman have a break. It's vitally important to have a woman at the helm who has many gifts. She must be a motivator, a paddler, a dictator, a humorous helper, a superwoman, a crew "mother", and able to fight for six grueling hours if necessary. By the end of the race Sue had lost her voice and cramped totally on one side of her body. She had to have a change during the race to eat, rehydrate and massage the cramps from her side. Fantastic effort for a first time!

Meanwhile, the race continued and we had paddled our way into fourth place, then steadily third, then incredibly second. The race can be won or lost on the route taken. We took the wide route, however, from Molokai to Oahu, while two other crews came inside. These were local crews who obviously knew the wind, tide and wave conditions and used them well to their advantage. While we wrestled with the ocean swells, we saw the two crews catch a current that took them quickly down the coast of Oahu and pushed us back into third and then fourth place — much to our dismay! Even though we saw what was happening our Hawaiian coach still maintained the course and watched us drop further and further behind. Disappointed and frustrated at such tactics, we saw our hopes for second place fade.



Shoulders strain as the team puts on pace. Paddlers change places mid-race when tired team members leap from their seats into the sea and fresh replacements swing in.

The "Awesome" Offshore women were also caught by the local crews and there was a boat-to-boat, stroke-by-stroke, battle-royal raging for first and second place as the Offshore crew changed course radically to meet the fast approaching challengers close inshore. Sheer determination and strength of the mighty Offshore women pushed them on ahead to take the lead again and increase the distance between first and second.

Our steerswoman decided to cut closer inshore, but it was too late and a bit too close. The canoe was inside the surf zone off Oahu and in danger of being caught by a wave. From the vantage of the support boat one of the women grabbed the loud-hailer and screamed a few well-chosen words of warning. But it was too late. From the support vessel we watched in horror as a large wave crested between us and the canoe, which was lost from sight in the trough. "Oh my God, they're going to flip!" was all I could think of as I watched helplessly, aware that Jane was paddling. The wave continued to crest as the canoe tipped further so that the entire outrigger was out of the water and performing a slow-motion roll and the crew airstroking. The wave then broke on the craft and, in reaction, several women threw their bodyweights onto the outrigger, which was enough to counter the roll.

Shaken but together and amazingly upright, the women started to paddle out of the surf zone. Now the coach was yelling frantically to "get the hell outta there!"

through the hailer. They had shipped a ton of water which slowed them down tremendously, keeping them in the danger zone for far too long.

Once out of the breakers they regained the rhythm while one paddler frantically bailed out the bathtub!

The women had used a lot of energy to get themselves out of the fix, so, it was time for a change. The coach decided to have a five person swap — the first one of the race. Quite a spectacle as five fly out and five jump in. Unfortunately the boat comes to a standstill for a while, but we were on a secure, if disappointing fourth.

We continued on course down the beach of Waikiki, past the familiar landmarks and motels, heading for the Hilton and the crowds. My mind returned to the ceremony at the start where all the women gathered shoulder to shoulder, hands joined, heads bowed in prayer, asking for the Hawaiian god of the sea to bless us and keep us safe on our journey. We sang a short prayer as the sun rose and even though we had dropped our hands, the bond between us remained and stayed with us through the race — sisters across the seas.

The victorious Offshore team was waiting to greet us with lais and hugs of congratulations. We were disappointed with our fourth, but it had been a fantastic experience! Tired, wet and thirsty, we greeted the other crews, swapped stories, swam in the crystal clear water, and then continued to party ...

CANDICE CARSON runs a charter boat, Freight Train, in the West Indies with her husband George Banks. Here she reports on the particular joys of seeing dolphins in their natural habitat.

ONE OF the pleasures of living on the ocean is the opportunity to see the marine creatures in their free and natural state. I marvel at the sight of whales, octopuses, squid and, of course, the fish. But none of these gives me quite the same feeling I get from seeing dolphin.

Observing these beautiful mammals always makes me feel happy. To me a dolphin visit is a gift. They seem to be having such a good time, and when they leave, and no matter how long they stay it is always too soon, they leave a trace of their beauty and joy behind. Four interactions with dolphins stand out in my memory, three of them were when we were sailing and one was at anchor.

When dolphins come and play in our bow wake I always run to the bow and clap and whistle and tell them how graceful and wonderful they are. Our dog, a Gordon Setter known as the Beast, would join me and peer under the bow pulpit to check out these seagoing dogs. Perhaps she caught the excitement from me, or perhaps dolphins have the same affect on dogs as they do humans, but she would cavort around the deck when we saw dolphins. A curious thing began to happen. She would dance around and we would say, "Oh Beast, there aren't any dolphins". But we would be wrong, and she would be right, the dolphins would generally appear. How did she know? Could her higher frequency hearing detect them? Could they communicate with her in some other way?

One time during an especially long and tiring transatlantic passage my husband, George, was on watch at night when he heard a "pow" sound. Thinking it was a whale sounding he was immediately wide awake and peering into the darkness ahead. Out of the corner of his eye he saw

# Something special about dolphins

a white streak barreling toward our stern. Anyone who has ever been overtired at sea has experienced a lack of clear thinking. George's first thought was; "they are firing torpedoes at us". But no, it was a

slow and steady is the best method. That is what my mind said, my body kept looking over my shoulder and kicking faster. When we got close to the boat I was thinking about who was going to go up the

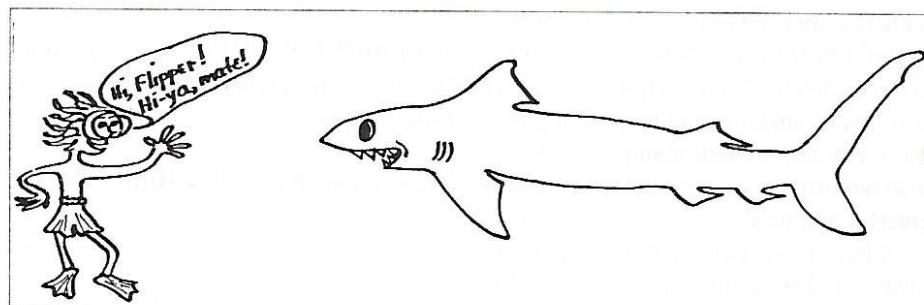


Illustration by KAREN SULLIVAN DAY

dolphin visit lit up with bright phosphorescence. He woke me up and we enjoyed a spectacular show of dips, curves and leaps covered with sparkles. It was a magical moment.

Another time we were on the north side of Tortola, British Virgin Islands, taking our charter guests to Anegada when we spotted some *Delphinus*, white-bellied dolphins. We hove to and I jumped in the water with my mask, snorkel, and fins. I urged the guests to try and swim with the dolphins. Tim, whose fun loving nature compensated for any midwesterner's distrust of the ocean was the only one willing to give it a try. The dolphins kept their distance and soon swam away, except a large one who stayed about 50 feet away. We slapped the water and told this shy dolphin to come play as we swam up to it. We got within 20 feet before I really looked at it and realized it had slits in its neck. "Oh Shit! that's not a dolphin." I motioned Tim to swim back to Freight Train and kept thinking, "no matter how fast I swim, this shark can swim faster so

ladder first when Tim said, "That wasn't a dolphin, was it?"

Before I finished shaking my head he was standing on the transom. I don't think he even touched the ladder. At the end of the charter Tim wrote in our log, "Suggestions for future charters – don't take the guests swimming with the sharks." So much for that old husband's tale that dolphins and sharks are mortal enemies and you never see them together.

My last dolphin story is when I finally got to play with them in the water. It was an experience I will treasure my entire life. I think I have swum miles after elusive dolphins, when I would get to where they were, they would be somewhere else. There was one golden time at an anchorage in the Virgin Islands that two bottlenosed dolphins played with us. One was about eight feet long and the other close to 12. They swam up to Freight Train, and when George and I leaped in the water, *they stayed!*

My first thought was how big they  
Continued page 6

# Unassuming accounts of courage

COME HELL OR HIGH WATER. By Clare Francis. *Sphere, London, 1977.*

COME WIND OR WEATHER. By Clare Francis. *Sphere, London, 1978.*

Reviewed by DAWN SPRINGETT

IN JUNE 1976 Clare Francis sailed her 38ft boat, Robertson's Golly, in the *Observer Royal Western Transatlantic Race*.

Twenty-nine days later, after gales, icebergs and equipment failure, Clare sailed into Newport, Nova Scotia, to become the women's record holder. Not only was this an amazing and hair-raising feat, but Clare has written about her solo endeavour in an un-assuming, humorous and entertaining way.

Clare feels that "anyone" can sail away, but she seriously underestimates her own courage and determination as well as her ability to plan, plot and persuade large sums of money out of sponsors!

Clare vowed "never again" but within a year she was involved in planning for the Whitbread Round the World Race in which she was the only woman skipper.

Clare and her crew of 11 sailed the 65ft ocean racer, ADC Accutrac, along the longest route in the world. They did not

win but the descriptions of the changing weather, the challenges of the long distances between ports and the sensitively written passages about the crew, their determination, terrible humour and frightful habits make *Come Wind or Weather* the bestseller it inevitably became.

I am fascinated by the courage demonstrated by this long-distance sailor, but even more, I am fascinated by her ability to write "such rattling good yarns" about her experiences. Both books are highly recommended to *Sistership* readers!

SEAFARING WOMEN. By Linda Grant De Pauw. *Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1982. 246pp.*

Reviewed by JO ELLEN HEIL

"SEAFARING women? Do you mean mermaids? The only heroines at sea are the ships!" In *Seafaring Women*, historian/author Linda Grant De Pauw clearly demonstrates that the heroines at sea are not the ships, but real women who have been seafaring for literally hundreds of years, women who have left us a legacy to admire, laugh about and take courage from.

reach out and touch them when I put my arms out the larger one rubbed up against my hands. I felt like a box turtle with a cat jumping around it. I wanted to join in the play but lacked the speed and agility to be much of a participant.

We who live on or near the ocean are so fortunate in so many ways, but to me the best part is our proximity with nature. On land, the wild creatures that share our planet are difficult to interact with, in the marine environment we have the chance to observe wildlife close at hand. How lucky we are!

*Seafaring Women* is a highly readable book, packed with stories of women who went down to the sea for a variety of reasons. Chapters include "The Mists of the Past" (sailors' yarns and customs about women), "Pirates", "Warriors", "Whalers", "Traders" and "A New Day Dawnning".

"Mists" dispels the myth that women were ever considered bad luck aboard vessels; "New Day" covers women's recent accomplishments as merchant marines and military personnel.

With accounts taken from all over the world, De Pauw draws the reader into the fascinating world of women on the waterways. She introduces women who disguised themselves as men in order to set sail, daughters who were raised aboard trading vessels, and even female whaling captains.

One meets the greatest pirate who ever lived – a Chinese woman named Hsi Kai Ching Yih. Known as Madam Ching, this 19th-century warrior commanded "almost 2,000 ships and 50,000 pirates" and never knew defeat. Her squadron leaders were nicknamed everything from "Scourge of the Eastern Sea" to "Frog Meal".

Less exotic, but no less hard-working were family members and friends of the officers and sailors who served in the British Royal Navy. Whether employed as civilians or listed in the ship's register, all made themselves handy with compass, needle, pen or ladle. Wives who gave birth on board ship preferred to deliver between broadside guns. The shock of firing broadside to leeward aided their labour and gave rise to the expression "son of a gun".

The author also includes American seafarers who performed most ably. One such foremother was Mary Patten, who commanded the clipper Neptune's Car for 52 days, bringing it safely into the San Francisco harbour on November 15, 1856. She successfully navigated the difficult westward passage around the Horn, dealt with serious discipline problems and coped with a dying husband. Mary was 19 and four months pregnant at the time.

Linda Grant De Pauw concludes with the lives of modern women who have

## Something special about dolphins

From page 5

were. My second thought was how many teeth they had. It was on the surface and the smaller one came charging up from the bottom with her mouth open. I had a fleeting thought about the wisdom of this but she turned at the last possible second. They joyfully swam at us and turned and jumped and smiled. Although they would not let us

# by seafaring women

attempted to wrest out a nautical living in overwhelmingly male spheres. Balanced with accounts of military personnel, researchers, adventurers and Greenpeace activists, these contemporary women continue the legacy of women's timeless involvement on the oceans.

*Seafaring Women* would be an entertaining, enlightening gift for anyone interested in maritime history. (You might even want to treat yourself!) It includes suggestions for further reading, an index, and is suitable for readers 17 and up.

In De Pauw's own words, "Seafaring women were a minority among both women and seafarers. But they were real people, not creatures of fantasy. Their history is a significant and badly neglected part of our maritime heritage".

*Seafaring Women* recaptures that heritage. Sail on, sisters!

## LET THE SEA SPEAK

I shall let the sea speak for me;  
I shall never sing again,  
Never let heart cry or cry break  
From the brain.

I shall wade in the waves like a boy  
Sun-tanned and dream of ships;  
Run on the beach laughing with songless  
and salt lips.

*Elsa Gidlow, 1929*

From *Sapphic Songs - Eighteen to Eighty*, published by Druid Heights Books, Mill Valley, CA, US, 1982. Distributed by The Naiad Press, Inc.

sailing  
horse trekking  
surf school  
Scuba diving  
cross-country  
& downhill  
skiing  
walking



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- to encourage all women to have fun
- to explore a wide range of physical adventures
- to build strength, confidence and leadership
- to develop new networks.

We are working towards an integrated, supportive program involving aspects of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical work.

As a company, we work with skilled individual women who have specific areas of expertise and, where appropriate, we also link up with established adventure operators.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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20 The Drive

Stanwell Park NSW 2508 AUSTRALIA

Tel: (042) 94 2302

# Australia and the Antarctic minerals grab

IF THE recent oil spill disasters in the Alaska and Antarctic regions do not influence the federal Labor cabinet to decide against signing the Antarctic Minerals Convention, nothing will. While no decisions are due until April 18, federal environment minister Graeme Richardson declared his hand on a recent ABC *Four Corners* program.

Unambiguously, Richardson spoke of "limited" tourism with "trained" guides. "Our claim was staked a long time ago," he said, "... our proximity to the region, our long-time role ... inevitably someone will go ahead and mine and the [Minerals] Convention will minimise the damage."

Richardson has encouraged lobbying from leaders of the environment movement in an attempt to prove to them that he is sincere. But saying that mining can only go ahead with protection, is like saying we'll only rape you a little, as Philip Toyne from the Australian Conservation Foundation pointed out on *Four Corners* last month.

Richardson has refused to consider the third alternative which conservation organisations like Greenpeace and the Australian Conservation Foundation are promoting.

"Australia is in a unique position to take the lead and push for the Antarctic to be made into a national park, where scientific research would continue to be carried out in the world's only demilitarised and relatively undisturbed environment," Lyn Goldsworthy, convenor of the Antarctic and Southern Oceans Coalition (ASOC) told Direct Action recently.

Representing more than 172 conservation groups from 35 countries, ASOC is committed to fighting mineral exploitation of the region. Their solution, which

would benefit the whole of humanity, is to make the continent a huge protected world park, with the only commercial development being a limited "wilderness-type" tourism.

Having a whopping 42 per cent stake in the Antarctic Treaty – or some six million square kilometres – Australia represents a powerful member of the exclusive 12-nation member club that first coveted the polar wilderness in 1959.

After six years of negotiations, nine members signed the convention in Wellington, New Zealand, last year, but according to the Antarctic Treaty, 16 of the 22 "consultative" countries which have territorial claims must sign the convention before it can come into force.

Australia has until November 25, 1989 to sign the convention. If it does, a "voluntary commitment" comes into effect until domestic legislation dealing with mining and safety codes (among others) are introduced.

While the government claims that the convention includes rules to protect the environment and wildlife, Greenpeace says that these guidelines are inadequate.

"The stringent rules and regulations in the Arctic have made no difference," Goldsworthy pointed out. "This delicate unique environment, which is literally the only place on earth that humankind has not yet polluted, must remain a global world park," she told Direct Action.

While the extent of mineral sources remains a mystery, it is known that Antarctica is endowed with gas, oil, copper, platinum, silver and gold. It is also a source of fresh water – an increasingly rare resource in these times of global pollution.

If nothing else, the Valdez oil spill last March alerted the world to the possible

Since PIP HINMAN wrote this article, the Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, has announced Australia's intention not to sign the minerals convention, but to propose Antarctica as a world park.

disastrous consequences of mining and minerals transportation in a polar environment (not that governments and minerals companies have a record of concern about such matters).

The opening up of the Alaskan oil fields has proven that the technology does exist to exploit natural resources in very desolate environments, even if it doesn't exist to clean up human-made disasters.

According to Goldsworthy, current estimations indicate that Antarctic oil would only extend the world's supplies by another five years. As she pointed out, "The global values of the Antarctic are far more important than any economic gains which would only go to a few companies within a few countries."

Goldsworthy's response to the convention formulators who insist that signing the mineral's convention will not signify the start of mining activity, is to ask why money is not currently being spent on new technology to meet the world's energy needs rather than exploit the only remaining wilderness continent remaining in the world.

"The Antarctica was where the hole in the ozone layer was first picked up. It has enormous scientific value as well as promoting scientific co-operation," Goldsworthy said. "It is also the only place in the world that is non-militarised and is nuclear free."

While Antarctic Treaty member governments are currently trying to assess the profitability of its natural resources, Third World governments that didn't get a look in back in 1959 are angry about their disenfranchisement.

In 1983 Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mathathir Bin Mohamad put forward an

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# Whitsunday dream into action

When seven women decided to sail the Whitsundays in Australia's Great Barrier Reef, wild horses, gales and storms could not stop them. Now they've decided to do it again, this time on a boat they are rebuilding themselves. MAILIN SUCHTING and LIES PAIJMANS report.

IT WASN'T just the thought of an exciting adventure which stirred the imagination, but also the price, which started as a rumour of \$30 per week for a yachting "Adventure in Paradise". By the time we realised that it was actually \$300 each per week for the boat alone, there were seven of us – mostly from Wollongong, south of Sydney – and there was no turning back. We had launched the holiday of a lifetime – seven women sailing the Cumberland Islands in the Whitsunday Passage off the coast of Queensland.

The real inspiration was the thought that we would be part of a group of women who really liked each other, doing something challenging together. Five of us started meeting to plan this dream and the fever soon spread to the others. That was all we needed to get us going. Lack of experience worried some of us, but we were determined not to let this get in the way. We could do it! Bolstered by good food and fuelled by a spirit of panic and enthusiasm, we launched a serious attempt to increase our experience and knowledge. We were learning to sail.

Finding Ruth Boydell, a woman of great expertise, patience and calm, gave us the sense that nothing could go wrong. For those of us who had not sailed before, Ruth made it seem easy. For Lies, who already had experience, Ruth reinforced and consolidated her knowledge.

Numerous weekends we tripped out onto Sydney Harbour, wind or no wind, practised "woman overboard!" endlessly, ate copious amounts of delicious treats and spent a lot of time staring up at the sails struggling to grasp the concept of wind and sail. Then, before we knew it, it was July – time to go.

There we were. And our first hurdle was how to handle 27 bags of luggage (without food) and the hub of obscene tourism that Airlie Beach offered us. Then



The doughty crew of the Isaac Manley (from left): France, Annette, Lorain and Pam keep a weather eye out in the Whitsunday Passage.

there was the "administrative" problem of our boat not having arrived off the market shelf. This, however, actually worked in our favour, as we were handed over to Queensland Yacht Charters and offered a bigger and, therefore, better boat (particularly given our storage requirements and the fact that we had duplicated everything provided, having anticipated a less well-equipped boat).

By this stage we had ourselves in bow-lines over passing the required "sailing skills test". We had collectively decided to implement an emergency hierarchy with Lies as skipper, Annette on the mainsheet, Jo on the port winch, Mailin on the starboard winch, Lorain at the mast hauling halyards and France and Pam at the ready to reef the sail. The tense, traumatic episode we envisaged was not to be. Sue, our tester, was just like one of the crew, and after going about and a quick jibe, she hopped into her dinghy, casually waved us goodbye, and sped off. It was just us and the Isaac Manley.

The day had started with showers and heavy clouds but we felt optimistically certain that any clouds would soon dissipate. This was, after all, sunny Queensland. It was actually just the beginning of an ever-increasingly darkening sky, rising seas and howling gale force winds. It barely stopped raining the whole week and for women who were looking for Paradise, it called for a lot of imagination.

You could imagine us imagining the sun as the rain poured down and the portholes leaked. Twice daily radio schedules made us realise we were actually lucky compared to others because, unlike them, we were not to be daunted by having to use a bucket in the cockpit as a toilet when the "head" malfunctioned. Nothing could dampen our enthusiasm. In fact, the challenge and exhilaration offered by the elements was beyond our wildest dreams and, while others harboured at resorts for their chosen comforts, we sailed on.

Even in our darkest hour, anchoring in  
Continued page 10

## *Yesterday, the Whitsundays – tomorrow ... the world!*

IT JUST so happens that our return to the Whitsundays can be made a reality, as Lies is co-owner of a (damaged) 40ft ferro-cement yacht which, with a concerted effort, will be on the water this year, ready for our next adventure.

Since the Whitsunday trip, enthusiasm has grown and some of us are now working hard at making *Tharwa* seaworthy.

Work so far has involved reconstructing, out of a tangle of broken concrete and mangled mesh, a new hull on the starboard side.

The hole has been replastered, smaller holes epoxy-filled, and we are now at the stage of finishing preparation and fairing the hull for repainting, and putting the final coats of varnish on the mast and hatch covers.

There is still an enormous list of



Keeping the Whitsunday dreams alive: inside the hull of *Tharwa*,  
Paula Beattie and Lies Paijmans apply cement.

things to do, but the list is getting shorter and the number of women helping has grown.

For all of us, and especially those of us who had only ever dreamt of having

such adventures as the one we had to the Whitsundays, these experiences have reinforced the belief that, given the right encouragement, we can do anything!

## Whitsunday dream into action

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dangerous waters in gale force winds at dusk in the pouring rain, we would not exchange the hazards of Neck Bay for the lure of Lindeman Island Resort, which was trying to cajole us into its paternal arms.

We never did make it to the El Dorado of our dreams, to the most southerly and isolated (and most beautiful) islands of the Whitsundays, due to the weather; but we came back feeling we had gained much experience and confidence, and knew we would be back for more.

.....  
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# The not-so lone Rangers hit Lake Macquarie, NSW

Sistership played a dual role in this year's NSW Ranger Section Regatta, attended by 400 girls and young women. State Ranger Adviser SUE CONDE reports.

THE annual State Regatta is the premier event in the Ranger Section calendar. It is generally held at a different venue around the State of NSW, Australia, each year and is attended by up to 400 girls, young adults and leaders from approximately 50 different units.

In March this year participants travelled from country areas such as Armidale, Canberra, Bathurst, Blue Mountains, Shoalhaven and the Central Coast, and from all parts of the Sydney Metropolitan area. The campsite at Styles Point, Rathmines on Lake Macquarie provided ideal conditions for all types of boating – rowing, canoeing and sailing.

The girls and leaders camped in light-weight tents, and part of the fun came in renewing friendships made at last year's regatta. The bank of the lake was very impressive as each unit had its own "colours" and many units wore their special regatta camp uniforms made in these colours. For instance, SRS Sirius of Manly looked very smart in their black and white outfits and the Nepla ranger guides from Canberra looked psychedelic in their polka-dotted uniforms of rainbow colours!

Each unit competed in a variety of races – canoeing and rowing in singles, pairs and relays. The canoe slalom course provided a few challenges on the water and the rowing slalom this year was run on dry land with the "cox" directing her blindfolded pair of "rowers" around an obstacle course using only correct rowing terms – "Easy, Port! Give way together!" Other land events which kept the spectators busy included lifeline throwing, first aid and resuscitation, and ropework.

The theme of the 1989 Regatta was "sistership", and we are very grateful to Ruth for generously giving us permission to use part of the *Sistership* logo in our regatta badge. We were also very excited



Sue Conde, State Ranger Adviser, presents the *Sistership* trophy to Gemma Williams and Xanthe Hinchcliffe of Kuring-gai ranger guide unit at the State Ranger Regatta, Rathmines, Lake Macquarie, NSW, March 1989.

when she offered to present a trophy for one of the races, and we chose a new event this year for the honour – the Beginners' Canoe Race. It was appropriately won by the Kuring-gai ranger guides, a brand new unit competing in their first regatta!

The final trophy presentation on Sunday afternoon was exciting. No point

scores had been posted during the weekend, and as the final 10 top scorers were read out the tension mounted. Then, congratulations to the overall winners, Mangerton ranger guides from Wollongong and their leader, Judy Fyfe.

Another prized trophy is the "Oar", presented each year for good sportsmanship, good camping, "sistership", and generally good rangering. Excellent participation by two units this year resulted in its being jointly won by Bathurst ranger guides and SRS Sirius from Manly.

Boating is just one of the many activities of the ranger section program, which aims to challenge girls and women aged between 14 and 25 to develop as useful citizens in our community. Besides the fun on the water, other highlights of the weekend were the campfire on Saturday night when the banks of the lake echoed the singing of 400 girls, and the Guides Own early Sunday morning – an ecumenical "quiet time" together. The weekend provided opportunities for each to develop an appreciation of the natural environment through the enjoyment that comes from

Continued page 24



All set for the canoe race at Rathmines.

# Such sweet solitude...

Nowadays there are few lightstations in the world which are operated manually, but for those who do work the lightstations it is a demanding and, at times, stressful occupation. For the last 18 years LYN COOK has lived in isolation in lonely lighthouses around the coast of Tasmania, Australia's island State as an unpaid, unsung heroine.

THE advertisement read "Position Vacant. Lighthouse Keeper, must be married man, and not mind isolation. Apply ..." Which in due course we did, and were accepted.

My husband had always liked the bush, and I had followed in his footsteps. After all, this was really an adventure, something we both thrived on. It was also an escape from the rat race of city dwelling. So, in great excitement we sold the lease on our service station, stored all our furniture and packed our gear, and set off for our first lightstation. Our family consisted of my husband and myself, our two dogs, two canaries and our pet wallaby.

We arrived at the less isolated Eddystone Point Light, off Tasmania's beautiful east coast, and spent two glorious months there. We then sailed on the MV Cape Pillar to Tasman Island, the most isolated lightstation in the Tasmania region.

I can remember my first glimpse of it; an ugly grey rock standing like a sentinel at the southernmost tip of the east coast, on the edge of Storm Bay. Treeless, fogged-in for weeks at a time, even I, who can find beauty in most things, found very little to admire in Tasman Island.

Standing in the midst of Australia's most popular tuna fishing ground we never saw fresh fish the whole time we were there. Well, we were almost 1000 feet up, and we didn't have a long enough fishing line!

We had no 240 volt power, but had to rely on a 110 volt system, which meant we could only wash one day a week and any vacuuming or polishing had to be done on the same day. Any ironing had to be done with flat irons, heated on top of the briquette combustion stove. This was an ugly

great monster that belched black, gassy-smelling smoke at me each time I opened the door to feed it with the briquettes, which turned into fine yellow dust in the pan below and proceeded to coat everything, including the walls, a dirty yellow to match. It is no wonder, when someone mentions combustion stoves, I just about blow my lid!

The kerosene fridge spent more of its time out than on, all the meat spoiled, the bread thawed out, and so did the milk. Next to the stove I hated the fridge!

We had a cow on the island called Creamy. I never will know why, as she never provided any milk (I can't say I blame her). Most of the sheep had wonky back legs, making them stagger like drunks. A few months after we got there our wallaby went blind and we had to shoot her. My dogs were my friends. They were the only ones I had to talk to for most of the time.

I only saw my husband for a couple of hours a day, and then he was too tired to talk. The other two keepers' wives had their own lives to lead. "This has got to stop," I told myself, "I know: I shall keep the same hours as my husband." So, for two years I kept watch in the tower with him, and slept broken hours. Mind you, we did a lot of reading, and everyone in the family got hand-knitted jumpers and cardigans for birthdays and Christmas two years running. Oh yes, Tasman Island was aptly named Alcatraz by the keepers and their families, of that there is no doubt.

When my husband was made Head Keeper, a few years later, we then made the move to Maatsuyker Island, situated between South East and South West Capes, almost on the tip of the west coast of Tasmania. My first sight of this beauti-

ful isolated island was at daybreak from the deck of the Kathleen-del-Mar. The sight of it made me hold my breath in delight, and thank goodness, once I had my feet on dry land, I would no longer feel seasick.

Yes, we had the dreaded combustion stove, the kerosene fridge, the 110 volt power system, but I had come to terms with these; and Maatsuyker Island was paradise. Horizontal scrub (after all, we were in the path of the Roaring Forties); gum trees (I can still smell them); Tea Tree; Blandfordia, commonly known as Christmas Bells; wild orchids; marsupial mice; parrots, tame black jays and numerous sea birds; on the rocks known as the Needles, a colony of Tasmanian Fur Seals; and fish, glorious fish. Every time and every place I looked I saw something dif-



# life on a lightstation

ferent. Why, even in gale force winds the island and the sea surrounding it held a strange fascination for me. This was isolation at its best.

We spent seven-and-a-half-years in this splendid solitude. In that time the station became semi-automatic (which meant no more watchkeeping in the tower), a new 240 volt power plant was installed and many other changes were made.

We moved then to Cape Bruny Lightstation, on Bruny Island, which is certainly not so isolated. (*Access to the mainland is maintained by a regular car ferry service – Editor*) As a matter of fact, for the first few months I felt like I was living in suburbia again. However, I made Bruny Island my home for eight years and grew to love it.

I now live in suburbia again after 18 years lightstation duty and when friends say to me, "Lyn, think of the wasted years," I smile and tell them I would do it all again, for the isolation was wonderful.

*A version of this story has been published in Versions – a collection of women's writing.*



(Left) The keepers' residence on Bruny Island, seen from the light;  
(right) Bruny Island Lightstation.



Photographs by BARBARA ALDRICH

# Australia and the Antarctica minerals grab

From page 8

alternative to the carve-up of Antarctica. Questioning the right of the Antarctic Treaty signatories to decide Antarctica's fate, a group of Third World countries argued in the United Nations that the Antarctic is the "common heritage of all humankind." Other countries see the carve-up as inevitable and have simply attempted to strengthen their hold on a slice of the cake.

Meanwhile, under the guise of "scientific research," Britain and France are pouring money into their "share" of the 1 per cent of the continent that is not ice-covered and destroying the delicate ecological balance that exists there.

Conservationists are worried because the tiny portion of land available for minerals exploration is also home to rare plant and animal species, some of which have already become extinct.

Antarctica's marine ecosystem is also in danger. Japan, for instance, has repeatedly been caught whaling for "scientific purposes." Once a viable industry, since World War II whaling has severely depleted species like the Blue Whale, of which there remain between one and three thousand.

With mining yet to proceed, other environmentally damaging practices are already well underway. Last January Greenpeace protesters tried to stop the French from constructing a runway that would threaten the breeding grounds of penguins.

From a report in the January 22 British *Guardian Weekly* it's clear that the French, who are intent on improving access to their atmosphere research facilities, are not perturbed about breaching the Antarctic Treaty. This stipulates that heavy machinery and helicopters must not be used near breeding colonies. The local French commander also denied that the runway was pre-empting the ratification of the mineral's convention.

But as Greenpeace have pointed out, the building of a new base cannot justify wiping out penguin colonies or be allowed to threaten the breeding grounds of 75,000

birds, as the airstrip threatens to do. After international protests and an outcry from the French scientific community, the work has been suspended.

One of the biggest threats to the Antarctic environment is the growing number and size of the 69 bases. Besides piles of rubbish accumulating on the shore line, much of the liquid waste is being dumped into the sea. Greenpeace, which set up the only non-government base a couple of years ago, has found high levels of the heavy metal cadmium in waste at the United States's base at McMurdo Sound.

*The alternative proposal for a protected park catering for limited wilderness tourism would enable many people to see and experience this unique place.*

On April 15 it was revealed that Richardson has given the go-ahead to the RAAF to test direct flights between Tasmania and Antarctica. Long-range helicopters will be used between Australia's three permanent stations and summer field bases. The plan is being sold as an opportunity for scientists to step up their research. However, it's not hard to fathom the real aim of Richardson's plan. It is being argued within Federal Cabinet that it is a way to "enhance" Australia's territorial claims and thus to neutralise Treasurer Paul Keating's opposition to signing the Antarctic minerals treaty.

Keating disagrees with signing the convention only because he believes that it will be tantamount to admitting that Australia does not "own" its staked territory. Apart from that, the convention does not

stipulate that royalties be paid by mining companies to the nation claiming the land being mined.

"Signature would mean that we concede our economic claims over Antarctica for virtually nothing, forfeiting our sovereignty and opening up the possibility of subsidised (mining) production competing with Australian mineral products," Keating said recently.

Richardson, on the other hand, argues that to avoid someone else getting "our bounty," as he describes it, Australia should sign the treaty.

Australia's big mining companies, however, are taking their time to warm to the idea of mining in the Antarctic. While not opposed to mining per se, their major concern is the cost associated with working in that part of the globe. Oil prices, for example, would have to climb close to \$50 a barrel for the mining industry to consider extraction of petroleum from Antarctica a profitable operation.

Less hesitant to venture down south are the tourist industry entrepreneurs. Already the number of tourists visiting the continent each year is around 7000 and the developers of "Project Oasis Australia" want to increase the numbers considerably more.

Lobbying for governmental approval, Rhode and Partners' "Project Oasis" plan includes building a runway capable of taking Boeing 747s, transporting super energy-efficient buildings and building a conference centre.

While they emphasise "educational tourism" rather than "a Club Med" approach, it's not hard to imagine the damage that would be caused by the refuse left by 300 luxury tourists each week.

Because very little control could be exercised over land-based tourist facilities, both Greenpeace and the Australian Conservation Foundation are opposed to this type of tourism. They stress that the alternative proposal for a protected park catering for limited wilderness tourism would enable many people to see and experience this unique place.

### Conferences and Events

The information for the Conferences and Events section comes from a variety of sources, many of which are acknowledged in Network, page 18. Thanks.

**April-July 1989, Endangered Caribbean Turtles**, Culebra, Puerto Rico. Week-long field studies to patrol beaches, monitor and protect leatherback, green and hawksbill turtles. For this and other expeditions contact *Earthwatch 39 Lower Fort St, Sydney, NSW 2000, Aust. or 680 Mount Auburn St, Box 403, Watertown, MA 02272, USA.*

#### Women's Whitbread Round the World Race

A team of women are preparing a boat, Maiden Great Britain, and crew for the Whitbread Round The World Race to begin in September 1989. For further information about the challenge contact *Tracy Edwards, 1 Hamble Manor Court, Hamble, Hampshire SO3 5GB, England, UK.*

**June, 1989 13TH Conference of the North American Society for Oceanic History**, National Maritime Museum, San Francisco. For further information contact *Dr William N Still Jr, Department of History, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353, USA.*

**29 June, 1989 Cutty Sark Tall Ships Races** preliminary gathering in Terschelling, thence London to Hamburg, Cuxhaven, Malmö and Lübeck. Contact *Mariners International Club, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF, UK.*

**July, 1989 Youth Sailing Championships** Nagoya, Japan. Five youths, 15 years and under, from five Sister Cities of Nagoya.

**3-7 July, 1989 Research and Small-scale Fisheries**, Montpellier, France. This is intended to be an interdisciplinary conference, and the organisers hope to draw participants from a wide range of disciplines and nations. The official languages will be English and French. For more information contact *Dr J Lemoalle, Symposium Pêches Artisanales, ORSTOM, BP 5045, 34032 Montpellier Cedex, France.*

**10-14 July, 1989 Fifth World Conference on Transport Research**, Yokohama, Japan. For further information contact *Professor Hideo Nakamura, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, Japan.*

**17-19 July, 1989 INMARSAT International Conference on Mobile Satellite Communications**, Queen Elizabeth II Conference

Centre, London. Contact *Blenheim Online, Ash Hill Drive, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 2AE, UK.*

**25-27 August, 1989 North Sea Conference on the Social History of Maritime Labour**, Stavanger, Norway. This conference is sponsored by the North Sea Society. For further information contact *Poul Holm, Fiskeri-og Søfartmuseet, DK-6710 Esbjerg, Denmark.*

**18-20 October, 1989 Ninth Naval History Symposium**, Annapolis, Maryland. Call for papers and panels. Please submit abstracts to *Associate Professor Wm. Roberts, Department of History, US Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD 21402-5044, USA.*

**17-19 October, 1989 NAV 89 - Satellite Navigation**. Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London. Details from the *Royal Institute of Navigation, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AT, UK.*

**28 November-2 December, 1989 Marintec China and Marintec Offshore China**, Shanghai Exhibition Centre, China. Details from *Paul Woodward, Seatriade Far East, 4306 China Resources Building, 26 Harbour Rd, Hong Kong.*

**International Commission for Maritime History Conference**: "Food for the World; Maritime Trade and shipping of Foodstuffs" is the proposed theme for the conference to be held in Madrid, Spain, in 1990. For further information contact *Professor C Konickx (Secretary-General ICMH), Britse Lei 46, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium.*

**1990 International Maritime Heritage Year**. The World Ship Trust plans this with the object to arouse worldwide interest in our maritime heritage so that important ships and other nautical artifacts can be recorded, and appropriate steps taken to ensure their preservation. Any interested person or group could contact *The Vice Chairman, World Ship Trust, 129A North St, Burwell, Cambridge CB5 0BB, England, UK.*

**May, 1990 Fourth Conference on Chinese Maritime History**, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

**August, 1992 First International Congress of Maritime History**, Liverpool, England. Proposals for papers and complete sessions are welcomed from scholars interested in all aspects of maritime social and economic history, including ports, merchant shipping, maritime labour, international trade, technology, fishing, whaling, maritime business history, underwater archaeology and maritime communities. Younger scholars and researchers from the developing countries are especially invited to

participate. Proposals should be sent as soon as possible, but in no case later than 1 September 1989 to *Professor LR Fischer, Maritime Studies Research Unit, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St Johns, Nfld., A1C 5S7, Canada.*

#### European Epidemic

During 1988, in north European waters, at least 2,000 seals have died from a virus for which no cure has been found. The seals which contract the disease most commonly die of liver infections or pneumonia; probably from diminished immune systems resulting from the disease.

Most of the deaths have occurred in German waters where it has been estimated that half the seal population has been eliminated by the virus. The virus has also spread to Danish waters. The virus causing the epidemic is unknown, yet many experts believe there is a strong correlation between the virus and pollution.

From *Dolphin Data Base News*, PO Box 5657, Playa Del Rey, CA 90296-5657, USA.

#### Fund established to honour Yeomen (F) of World War I

The first enlisted women in the US Navy formed their own veterans association in 1926. It was officially chartered as the National Yeoman (F) Organisation in that year. In 1986 it still had 259 members on its rolls, most of them over 90. Because of illness and infirmity, the organisation has disbanded.

In the history of women in the military, the memory of each generation has been lost when the generation of women veterans was no longer able to tell its story. Today, however, as the number of women veterans grows along with the proportion of women on active duty, the living are determined to perpetuate the memory of their foremothers.

The Gertrude S and F Harvey Howlat family of Fort Lauderdale, Florida has provided a seed donation to the curator of Naval History at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC to establish the Smithsonian Yeomen (F) Memorial Fund. The Fund will be used to finance exhibits, publications and historical naval research focused on perpetuating the memory of the Yeomen (F). And, best of all, a few of these women are still alive to enjoy their long overdue recognition.

From *Minerva's Bulletin Board*.

Skin cancer is a serious problem affecting those who spend much time outside in the sun. Don't risk it. Wear a hat and sunglasses to minimise the danger.

# Tangling with an environmental horror

The millions of tonnes of rubbish dumped into the oceans every year are killing marine life at an alarming rate. A US organisation called the Entanglement Network is having some success fighting this environmental tragedy. The California Marine Mammal Center's ALICE M. HALE reports.

RESEARCHERS estimate that approximately 14 billion pounds (6.35 billion kilos) of rubbish are discarded into the sea worldwide every year.

A large quantity of that waste consists of synthetics, primarily plastics. Unfortunately, those qualities that make plastics so useful to humans – their strength, durability, and light weight – make them particularly dangerous to fish and marine wildlife. Sea turtles eat plastic bags and balloons, mistaking them for jellyfish, a favourite food. Birds eat plastic pellets, perhaps mistaking them for fish eggs.

Discarded fishing nets can remain intact for years entangling birds, fish, and marine mammals and other organisms.

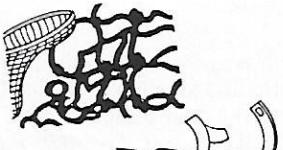
According to the Entanglement Network, millions of non-target marine animals are killed annually. For example, scientists estimate that 30,000 to 50,000 northern fur seals die every year from entanglement in lost nets and other sea debris.

Visitors to CMMC have seen living evidence of these problems. The Centre has admitted many patients, most recently Liberty (a California sea lion) and Erika (a harbour seal), who suffered serious injuries as a result of accidentally swimming into gill nets as pups. As the animals grow, the net remains the same size, causing an increasingly deepened laceration. Many more marine mammals drown after being trapped in discarded and active fishing nets, including our most endangered great whales.

To inform the public about entanglement (defined as the capture and often death of marine organisms in plastic debris and lost or discarded "ghost" nets), and

**Three of the major categories of plastic pollutants dumped into the seas.**

**FISHING GEAR**



**CARGO WASTE**



**CONSUMER ITEMS**



incidental take (defined as the unintentional capture of non-target fish and wildlife in active fish nets), and to support legislative solutions to the problem, many environmental and animal welfare groups have banded together to form the Entanglement Network.

Members include CMMC, Defenders of Wildlife, the Centre for Environmental Education, the Humane Society of the United States, the Oceanic Society, and many others. "We want to be the voice of the environmental community on issues of plastics pollution," says Al Manville, chair of the Entanglement Network, and senior staff biologist with Defenders of Wildlife.

The Network was originally founded in 1983, when the public was just becoming aware of the plastics pollution problem, says Manville. The first conference on plastics pollution in the marine environment was held in 1984. After a period of inactivity in 1985, Manville was inspired to reactivate the Network when he saw the beginnings of Congressional activity concerning issues such as driftnets

and plastics pollution in 1986.

With that activity came media coverage of the problem and increased public awareness. Manville decided to capitalise on all of those factors. "We'd learned that one of the most effective ways to deal with problems like this was through coalition," he recalls. The Network resumed meetings in July of 1986. Today, membership in the Network has grown from 14 original member organisations to more than 38, and the list continues to grow.

A major tool of the Network is its newsletter. It recounts legislative activity on the federal, State, and local level involving incidental take, plastics pollution, and the control of the use of non-biodegradable plastics. It also reports on non-governmental efforts to solve the problem, such as local beach cleanups. It focuses attention on Network involvement in specific issues, such as reducing the incidental take of Dall's porpoises in driftnets, the importance of the use of turtle excluder devices, and dolphin deaths caused by tuna fishing operations.

Information is included on publications, audiovisual productions, and studies available to member organisations to inform their constituencies.

The Network strongly supported US participation in the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). The MARPOL convention is composed of five annexes, which regulate five different types of vessel-source pollution.

Annexes I and II (which govern oil and chemicals in bulk) have been in effect for some time, having been ratified by nations collectively representing at least 50 per-

## From page 16

cent of the world's shipping tonnage. Annex V went into effect December 30, 1988. No plastics may now be dumped into the ocean by any signatory nation.

The Entanglement Network also helped draft and support of HR 940, the "Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act," the domestic implementing legislation for the MARPOL treaty that prohibits the dumping of any plastics by any nation within 200 miles of the US coastline.

Manville says that it will be up to Entanglement network members, and others, to see that Congress oversees the enforcement of the new legislation.

"They could argue that 'We've done our thing for plastics pollution, and now we have to move on to other concerns,'" he warns.

Along these lines, some members from the Entanglement Network are also participating in an ad hoc advisory committee on plastics with the US Navy working on a final series of recommendations for the Navy in complying with the new regulations.

The next step is to find alternatives to plastic packaging. "If the Navy is going to comply with the new laws, then logically,

they are going to have to work with industry to find nonplastic packaging alternatives. But the Navy alone may not be able to convince industry to consider such steps.

"We'll need a fast food chain such as McDonald's, for example, to adopt nonplastic packaging. We might even need a push for additional legislation."

As a representative of Defenders of Wildlife, Manville has spoken to industrial groups such as the American Paper Institute on the subject of biodegradable packaging.

Local laws and developments are creating the need for packaging alternatives on land as well as at sea. Manville points to a possible ban on all nonbiodegradable plastics that is being considered in Suffolk County, New York.

"That will be precedent setting," he asserts. "New York is going to close its landfills by 1991. Where will that trash go? How will we deal with this trash?"

As a recent Entanglement Network newsletter reports, there may be alternatives available. A biochemist at Boston College, Maria Bade, is awaiting a patent for a new process to make chitosan from

chitin, the material in exoskeletons of marine crustaceans such as lobsters, crabs and shrimp. Biodegradable chitosan could then be manufactured. The process can produce extremely strong and biodegradable clear films.

"That has marvelous potential," says Manville. "It is readily available, and if we can get the process commercialised, it can be a major part of the solution to the problem."

More challenges are ahead for the Entanglement Network, including the fight against tuna fishing methods that kills tens of thousands of dolphins every year. Also in progress is a suit filed by some members of the Network challenging the issuance of a marine mammal take permit to Japanese salmon driftnet fishermen within waters under US jurisdiction. Through its newsletter, the Entanglement Network will keep member organisations informed of the progress of these issues, as well as what local communities can do to help solve the complicated problem of entanglement.

*California Marine Mammal Center, Marine Headlands, GGNRA, Fort Cronkhite, CA 94965, USA.*

## Serendipity helps save the seaboard

It all began when the May/June issue of *Alaska Fish and Game* magazine was delivered to Judie Neilson's office at the Oregon Department of Natural Resources by mistake. Flipping through it, she was drawn to an article entitled "The Plague of Plastics" that told about the increasing proliferation of plastic debris in the environment and the resulting impact on wildlife.

Then she got an idea to organise a cleanup of plastic debris on Oregon's 350 miles (560km) of coast. She formed a steering committee and they divided the coast into 14 zones and found local residents to be "zone captains" to identify which areas were accessible and where debris, once collected, could be stacked. Her original idea was to have

1,500 volunteers - roughly 10 for every 150 miles (240km) of accessible beach. Saturday October 13 1984 was selected as the cleanup day to coincide with the Year of the Ocean and Coastweek activities. The hours of 9am to 12pm were chosen since they agreed with favourable tides.

Saturday morning dawned to high wind, hail and driving rain. But despite the black sky and bleak forecast, volunteers arrived by the car and busload, dressed for the weather, raring to go.

The results: a total of 2,100 volunteers participated in the cleanup. More than half came from inland cities, driving at least 75 miles. They collected more than 26 tons, filling 2,400 20-gallon bags with plastic, including approxi-

mately 48,900 chunks of polystyrene larger than a baseball, 6,100 pieces of rope, 5,300 plastic food utensils, 4,900 bags or sheets of plastic, 4,800 plastic bottles, 2,000 plastic strapping bands, 1,500 six-pack rings and 1,100 pieces of fishing gear.

Judie Neilson has now not only successfully generated interest in volunteer beach cleanups from Maine to Hawaii, but her idea inspired beach and village cleanups throughout the Mediterranean, in Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Spain and Turkey. And it all started because a magazine landed on her desk by mistake.

*(Reprinted with permission from the publishers, Center for Environmental Education, 1725 DeSales Street NW, Suite 500, Washington DC, 20036 USA)*

## Classifieds

### Charterers, crew and schools:

Are there any women interested in women-only sailing adventures? Day, weekend, or weeklong? *Sistership* is also keen to identify women who want to learn to sail. We'd like to access any charter companies and sailing schools offering these services. *Sistership* will set up a contact service for women worldwide who would like to get together on the water. This list could include professional crew, as well as recreational boaters. Contact *Sistership*, PO Box 1027, Crows Nest, NSW 2065, or phone Ruth (046) 26 6740.

### Women's sailing programs:

**Sound Sailing School**, 39 Woodside Ave Westport, CT 06880, USA, (203) 227-7413.

**Womanship**, 137 Conduit St, Annapolis, MD 21401, USA, (301) 267-6661.

**Women for Sail**, 5181 Hidden Harbour Rd, Sarasota, FL 34242, USA, (813) 346-1606.

**Women at the Helm**, Watergate Yachting Center on Clear Lake, 1500 FM 2094, Suite 1610, Kenmaw, TX 77565, USA, (713) 334-4101.

**Surfing lessons** – Andrea Thomas can teach you to surf in one lesson! Maui Surfing School, PO Box 424, Puunene, HI 96784, USA, Hawaii 877-8811.

**WILDWISE** is a new Australian organisation for women's adventures, including horse trekking, scuba diving, surfing, downhill and cross-country skiing and other delights. Telephone Wildwise on (042) 942 302 or write to Deb Collins & Chia Moan, 20 The Drive, Stanwell Park, NSW 2508 Australia for a brochure.

**Outdoor Trips for Women** – backpacking, sailing, canoeing and more on Vieques, Puerto Rico. Contact New Dawn Adventures Inc., 518 Washington St, Gloucester, MA 01930, USA, (508) 283-8717.

**Women in the Wilderness** is a US organisation dedicated to fun in the outdoors, to respect the wild places we travel in, and to women's spirit of growth, change and adventure. WITW offer canoe trips for women of varying experience, in all parts of North America. Contact Judith Niemi, 566 Ottawa Ave, St Paul, MN 55107, USA, (612) 227-2284.

**Floor space for rent** – Are you making your own sails or awnings? Floor space is available in Sydney suitable for lofting sails. The space is available for short term rentals. Call Judy (02) 516 2487.

Rainbow-coloured wetsuits are available

from Rainbow Waves, Sydney. Contact Ann (02) 869 1786.

**International Journal of Maritime History** – a scholarly journal devoted to the economic and social aspects of maritime history. It is a new, fully referenced journal for researchers concerned with the economic and social history of the merchant marines, shipbuilding, fishing, ports, trade and maritime societies. The journal will be published in June and December beginning in 1989. The subscription also includes two copies per year of the International Newsletter of Maritime History, in March and September. The subscription rate is US\$45. Contact Prof. L.R. Fischer, Maritime Studies Research Unit, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, NFLD A1C 5S7, Canada.

Sick of your newsletter looking like a dog's breakfast? Ring Susan at Cider Press for a quote on professionally produced, desktop-published camera-ready artwork. Highly competitive rates, women's publications a specialty. Tel. (042) 26 4414, Fax (042) 26 4415

Do you have items to swap, sell or that you wish to buy? Try placing a notice here in the classified section of *Sistership*, (046) 266 740. Rates are 60c per word.

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### Women's Aquatic Network, Inc.

The Women's Aquatic Network brings together women with interests in marine and aquatic policy, research, legislation and other areas; and promotes the roles of women in these fields. Their newsletter includes employment opportunities and a calendar of conferences. Membership is open to all who are interested in WAN goals. *WAN, PO Box 4993, Washington, DC 20008, USA.*

### Canoeists for Conservation

A Sydney-based group of people concerned about rainforests, and the encroachment of the timber industry. Call *Neryl (02) 331-1701 or Brian (02) 790 2124.*

### Minerva and Minerva's Bulletin Board

Minerva and Minerva's Bulletin Board are quarterly publications on women and the military. They are a wholly independent enterprise associated with no group. The editorial policy emphasises diversity. Minerva includes material from enlisted women, veterans, Red Cross and other civilian veterans, military spouses, peace activists, defense analysts and academics. The Minerva Center also produces Minerva on Air, a daily radio program, as well as a variety of workshops. Contact: *Linda Grant de Pauw, The Minerva Center, 1101 S. Arlington Ridge Rd, #210, Arlington, VA 22202, USA, 703-892-4388.*

### Australian Maritime College

The college has full-time courses from certificate to graduate diploma level which cover fisheries biology, port management and electronics, as well as the more traditional sea-going occupations. Contact: *The Admissions Officer, Australian Maritime College, PO Box 986, Launceston, TAS 7250, Tel. (008)030 277 (toll free).*

### Greenpeace

Our greatest strength must be life itself, and the commitment to direct our own lives to protect others. Some of the challenges for 1989 includes campaigns to save whales, seals, turtles, Antarctica, as well as reduction of toxins. Help spread environmental awareness. Join Greenpeace. *155 Pirie St, Adelaide, SA 5000, Aust. 1161 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20009, USA. 2623 W. Fourth Ave, Vancouver, BC V6K 1P8, Canada.*

### Pacific Peace Fleet

Committed to spreading information and awareness about nuclear testing in the Pacific. Contact: *PO Box 686, Marrickville, NSW 2204, Aust.*

### Oceanic Research Foundation Ltd.

Founded in 1977 with the aims of promoting and encouraging study and research into maritime resources and environment. "Learning by adventure" is part of the philosophy, which emphasises small, privately-funded expeditions. The ORF makes their research vessel, the Dick Smith Explorer,

available to university and museum researchers to reach "difficult" destinations. Contact: *ORF, PO Box 247, Windsor, NSW 2756, Aust, Tel. (045)79 9254.*

### Rural Women's Network

The Rural Women's Network of Victoria aims to link women's groups and interested individuals into a network towards sharing resources and skills to meet the needs of rural women. It also enables women in rural Victoria, through their own contact and support network, to have a more active and influential role in government decisions which affect their lives and those of their families and communities. RWN produces Network, a quarterly newsletter, available upon request from *RWN, PO Box 500, East Melbourne, VIC 3002, Australia.*

### Paddlers for Peace

We are a Sydney-based group of people who enjoy paddling as a pastime and are concerned about peace and the environment. Paddlers for Peace was formed to promote the awareness of peace and environment issues in and amongst the paddling community. We will have activities as a group which will include picnics, training days and protests. Join us in working for world peace and a healthy environment. Contact: *Robert Wood (02)869 1786 or Hugh Pitty (02) 869 2124.*

### Women's Sport Promotion Unit

Women should have an equal opportunity to enjoy participation in sport, and the benefits that go with it. The

WSPU produce a newsletter, *Active*, which is available upon request. For further information contact: *Women's Sport Promotion Unit, Australian Sports Commission, PO Box 176, Canberra, ACT 2616, Tel. (062) 52 1111.*

### Ranger Section of the Girl Guides Association

Ranger Guides 14-18 years  
Rangers 18-25 years  
The girls and young women of the Ranger Section challenge themselves in an eight-point program, creating a great way of life. The program includes: fitness; service; creative ability; relationships with people; out of doors adventures (including canoeing, rafting, rowing and sailing); mental development; homecraft skills; and character development. Contact the *Ranger Section of the Girl Guides Association in your capital city.*

### Earthwatch

is a company of scholars and citizens working together. Its members sponsor research expeditions, sharing both the costs and the labours of field work. Earthwatch supports the efforts of scholars to preserve the world's endangered species, explore the vast heritage of its peoples, and promote world health and international cooperation. Contact: *Earthwatch, PO Box 403, Watertown, MA 02272, USA. 39 Lower Fort St, Sydney, NSW 2000, Aust.*

# More sea-seeing than sight-seeing

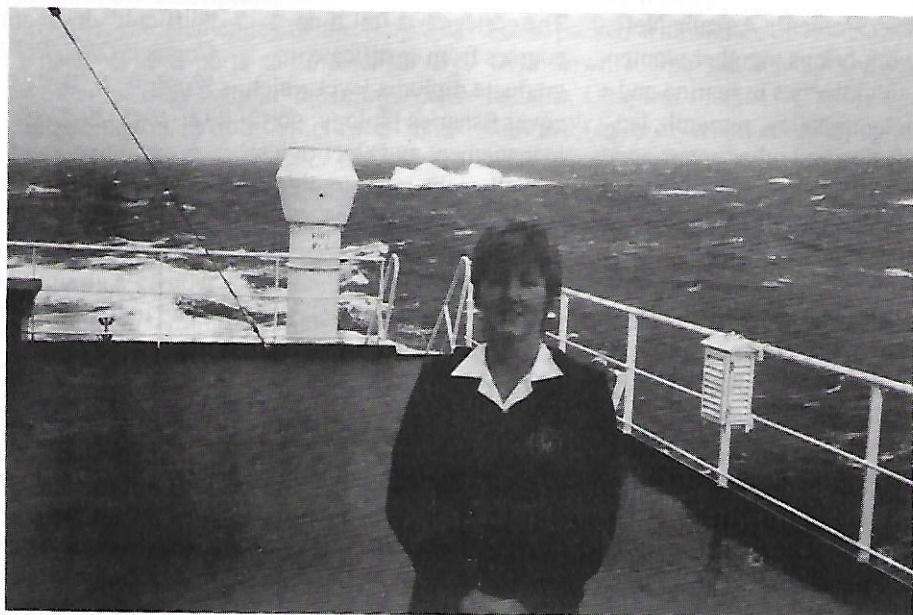
SANDRA RISK is one of a select few women who serve in Australia's merchant fleet. Here she talks about her life at sea and an encounter with an iceberg.

WELL I suppose it's time that I shared some of my sea going experiences. I've always said that one day I would sit down and put some of my adventures on paper but that day has always been tomorrow.

I have lived within easy reach of the coast all my life and even though I haven't spent too much time on sailing boats, I have always loved the ocean.

I completed my higher school certificate at Cumberland High School in Sydney's inner west in 1981. From school I went straight to college in Tasmania after being offered a cadetship with the Australian National Line as a marine deck cadet. The cadetship entailed completing a four-and-a-half year sandwich course at the Australian Maritime College, Launceston. Two-and-a-half years were spent at college with two years spent at sea. The subjects at college ranged from general maths, physics and chemistry to naval architecture, coastal and celestial navigation, marine and electrical engineering.

My cadetship was a great experience. Our original class consisted of 40 students from all States of Australia and even one from New Zealand. Thirty eight males and two females, the other female being Eunice Mehrens from Brisbane. Needless to say, Eunice and I became good friends from the start. Our time at college had its ups and downs. Originally we had to adjust to living in a new environment – we only had one Tasmanian in the class. There was also the added factor that for most of us this was the first time we'd actually moved out of home on a fairly permanent basis. After overcoming all this we made some very good friendships with both our classmates and the locals.



Is it a rock? Is it a ship? It's an iceberg! Sandra Risk at sea.

After spending five months at college which was basically pre-sea training where we were taught survival, fire-fighting, first aid, ropework, signals and general ship knowledge etc – i.e. bulkhead not wall, deckhead not ceiling – we headed off

*I got on the radio  
and merely said, in my  
best flirting voice,  
"Ship on my port bow,  
ship on my port bow.  
what are your intentions?" Well that was  
enough. Everyone out  
there realised that there  
was a female in their  
midst and started calling ...*

for sea. Some had already spent some time at sea but for most, like myself, this was the first time.

With some trepidation I joined my first

ship, the Brisbane Trader, in Melbourne. We left the berth that very afternoon and headed for Tasmania. I was sure that I would be sick. I kept thinking about the Bass Strait and how it was renowned for being rough. To my surprise, I survived.

When I think back now to some of the really rough crossings that I've experienced on the Bass Strait. I count myself lucky that my first trip was so calm.

During my cadetship I sailed on a variety of cargo ships, these ranging from straight container ships to roll-on, roll-off ships (i.e. those with a stern or bow door where cargo is driven straight into the cargo hold) to dry bulk ships. In my two years sea time I travelled extensively. My first overseas port was Auckland and then, after New Zealand, I went to Nauru, India, Christmas Island and various countries in Asia. My last foreign-going ship as a cadet was the Australian Venture. Here I was completing my understudy time so I was holding my own watch for part of the voyage. We went to New Zealand, then through Panama to Philadelphia, on to Halifax, Zeebrugge, Tilbury, Hamburg, Rotterdam and then back to Australia via the Cape of Good Hope and a composite great circle which took us just south of

**From page 20**

Kergulen Island 49° 30'S.

This would have to be my most memorable trip as cadet. Initially the thought of going through Panama fascinated me because the maximum breadth of a vessel to fit into the locks is 106 feet and we were 105 feet across (or similar proportions.) We spent a night at anchor off Balboa awaiting the next day's convoy. The canal was everything that I had expected and more.

After Panama we made our way up to Philadelphia. I think it was probably around the 7th of March when we first started observing Halley's Comet. Unlike the stories we read on our return to Australia, we saw the comet and tail quite distinctly whilst in the Caribbean.

Then we finally got to Philadelphia, albeit one o'clock in the morning and we were to sail at 0800. Well I put one foot on the wharf and declared that I had now been to the United States. After a seven hour trip back down the river to the ocean we came across very thick fog which stayed with us for the rest of that day and the next.

On the 17th of March, St. Patrick's day, we arrived off Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was the first time that I had ever been to a port that was covered with snow. We entered the port in sleety conditions and had to wait a few hours for the weather to clear enough for us to berth. The cargo operations there were incredibly efficient and much to our chagrin we sailed before nightfall. You see, often life aboard a merchant ship isn't all you would imagine it to be, with many long lonely hours at sea and comparatively few hours of freedom to enjoy foreign ports.

For the next few days we sailed through a sea of ice. We constantly altered our course to a more southerly setting to try to skirt the ice, but it seemed to be everywhere.

To my disbelief the engineers were even wearing jumpers and jackets in a usually stiflingly hot engine room.

We eventually left the sea of ice and headed for Europe.

Here I had a brief look at all four ports: Zeebrugge, Tilbury, Hamburg and Rotter-

dam but as cargo handling operations there are so efficient we didn't really have much time for any serious sight seeing ... again.

After leaving Rotterdam we headed home. One night whilst sailing off the coast of Spain, we – the captain and myself – decided to play a little joke on the third mate. As anyone who has sailed in this region would know, the radio (Ch 16) is constantly abuzz with silly talk. People usually just make statements, not to anyone in particular, just to anyone who listens. At times, these comments can be quite distasteful. Anyway, at 2358 I got on the radio and merely said, in my best flirting voice, "Ship on my port bow, ship

third mate wasn't!"

After Cape Town, the first bit of land we saw was Kergulen Island. What an eerie place. We had been in and out of fog for a few days and then when we came south of the island, suddenly visibility improved and we could see the steep cliffs and the glaciers. Looking back now I can't help but think it would be a shame to let the French commence nuclear testing there. But I won't go into this now!

From here on in, it was Melbourne bound. We didn't really expect to meet up with any ships before Melbourne, so a few days after Kergulen Island I was surprised to find a target some eight miles away on the radar. After intense scrutiny with the binoculars, I saw it. At first I thought it was a rock but knowing that there was nothing on the chart, I kept looking, trying to work out what I was seeing. My next thought was that it was a ship, but again that couldn't be. If it was a ship it had to have broken its back and been sitting on the bottom. Suddenly it dawned on me, it was an iceberg! I immediately called the captain and then made an announcement over the public address system. "Attention, attention, the tourist attraction today is icebergs on the port bow!" Well I tell you, Mr Kodak and Mr Fuji sure had a good day! As we got closer, we saw another couple a bit further off.

At the time of sighting I was quite excited, but the next day when I had more time to dwell on it, I realised how dangerous the situation actually was. The iceberg hadn't actually jumped at me out of the radar, I was just trying to get a good picture and a bit of sea clutter wouldn't disappear. And then to see it visually, I took a good hard look. I couldn't help but think ... what if I hadn't seen it on radar? What if it was night time? It was quite a frightening thought actually! Then it was an uneventful return to Melbourne, thank goodness.

Twenty-one months after my voyage on the Australian Venture, I was sailing as second mate on the South Australian Brigantine One and All during her Australian legs of the First Fleet Re-enactment.

Perhaps I'll write about that later.

*When I had more time to dwell on it, I realised how dangerous the situation actually was. The iceberg hadn't actually jumped at me out of the radar, I was just trying to get a good picture and a bit of sea clutter wouldn't disappear. And then to see it visually, I took a good hard look. I couldn't help but think ... what if I hadn't seen it on radar?*

on my port bow. what are your intentions?" Well that was enough. Everyone out there realised that there was a female in their midst and started calling: "What is your position? ... Where are you going? ... What is your name? ..." I handed over the watch at 2400 and left the third mate to four hours of this. When you're at sea for an extended period of time you are easily amused. Surprisingly, at hand over, the

## From page 2

SHRIEKS of delight and cries of "At last!" were heard in our end of the world on reading about *Sistership*. Congratulations!

I have been elected to put the views of a small group of forgotten and often shunned women of the sea to *Sistership*. We are the people who choose a life on the water on ... dare I write it ... motor cruisers!! It seems that if one is not fighting the elements and hauling yards of canvas, one is not a sailor. All boating and yachting magazines cater only to the sailing boat variety of sailors.

So, we powered sailors cruise around from place to place and have no outlet for our adventures, and certainly no articles are written for us offering help and advice. Can this be remedied? Would you like articles of interest from us?

For example, my husband and I are about to set off on our 14-metre MV to cruise to New Guinea, Solomons, and to Fiji. Our boat has been built with long-range cruising in mind. Perhaps what we have learned about solar panels and food storage would be of help to others if we could be recognised as serious sailors and have a voice in a boating magazine.

I know we are a small minority, but we are women who live on the water. Here's hoping *Sistership* will close the gap between sail and motor women.

Lorraine Maconachie  
MV Chameleon

Townsville, QLD, Australia

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I'M WORKING on a prawn trawler out of Darwin as cook/deckie ... and loving it. It's great to be out on the sea again.

I have seen some amazing creatures – they could well make a new *StarWars/Alien* movie with some of these weird and wonderful creatures that live on the ocean floor ...

And sharks! Wow! You wouldn't last a minute swimming around out here – they are always there, thrashing, gnashing and looking ominous. We pulled two up in the nets last night and to actually touch this creature was strange ...

I haven't seen any dolphins out here as yet – even though I spend hours up on the bow, especially at sunset. The sunsets are outrageous in their colour and it often seems the sky wants to BURST!

This prawn trawler is called the Invincible and is part of the Tiger Fisheries fleet based in Darwin. It is 23 metres in length and the living quarters are like a small flat (that rolls around constantly). I love the motion, but could see how others might loathe it. There are five of us on board: skipper, three young lads as deckies and myself. We are fishing for scampi, which are small lobster-like creatures that taste great!

It's a funny sort of life – not one I'd choose forever – but it's an experience, good money and plenty of sea-time (what for? I'm not exactly sure, but that will show with time I know) ...

## II

AM presently sitting on the foredeck of the Invincible headed for the banana prawn grounds up near Irian Jaya, just east of Pu Pu Aru, one of the many small Indonesian islands. We are unsure whether there will be any prawns left up here because a week ago 40 Japanese long line trawlers arrived, and along with a few similar Indonesian boats they have huge nets and catch anything and everything in them. No wonder areas are knocked out so quickly. Our nets are small and only go along the seabed. Yes, we do have a lot in our nets that we discard and throw back, but such a small amount when compared to the bigger trawlers.

This is my fourth month and I am becoming accustomed to the whys and

wherefors of the fishing life.

We have just been in Melville Bay, refueling and stocking up on "quality" food. Unfortunately, all the fruit and vegetables were almost rotten and the barge and aircraft due in the day we left ... So, it's imagination with frozen food! However, the seafood is wonderful – fresh barramundi, prawns, scallops, fish, scampi, lobster and bugs.

The article in *Sistership* #3, about the leatherback turtles interested me, because I've heard we'll see quite a few of them in the Gulf (of Carpentaria). Last year they had a huge one in the net and when on the sorting tray it was about two metres across. The boys fashioned a harness for it which they had to slip round its body (without having their hands bitten off) and then they winched it gently over the side. It swam away unharmed, if a little bewildered. I have seen two turtles up here and both went back in the water with minimum hassle. But wow! They have foul putrid breath which makes you dry-retch immediately if you smell it ... Ugghhh!

Sea snakes are another creature we hurl straight back. You grab their tails and pull fast! They are quick, vicious animals and some are so big! Stingrays, eels, cobblers, puffer fish, catfish, etc all spiky and venomous and very painful. You get a sting, bite or stabbing per day whilst frantically grabbing for prawns amongst the rest of the life on the tray.

Although this fishing life is a far cry from sailing, I am still upon the ocean I love so much. It is very hard work, involving long hours on deck; sorting and grading the prawns when they're running hot ...

My favourite time is now. I've served and washed up tea, the lads are in bed for an hour or two and it's just getting dark. I escape to the top deck and have a cold beer, roll a cigarette and either write letters, or my diary, or lie back and watch the sunset, stars or whatever ...

**Sara Tinning  
Darwin, NT  
Australia**

# On the track of a cetacean unicorn

The oddly-named "Unicorn Tours" was a memorable opportunity for leading authority on whales and dolphins, MARTHA BUTLER, to experience proximity with the fabled humpback whale.

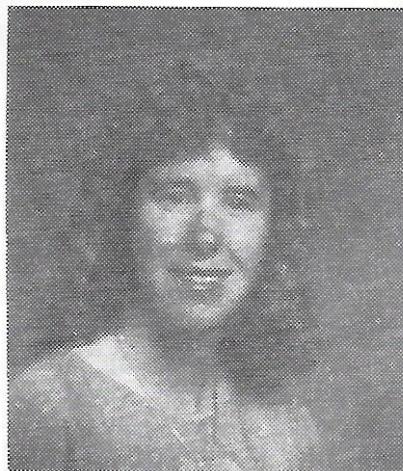
DESPITE its name, this tour takes people to see whales, not unicorns. There might be some significance in the name, however, because of the myth of the unicorn, a goat-like creature, which never made it on Noah's Ark and subsequently was drowned... but many whale scientists tell us that the whale evolved from a land creature not far different from the ancestral goat.

The tour runs twice a day during whale-watching season, which occurs from late November until mid-April off Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii. The purpose of the trip is to see the great humpback whales, so named because their back humps when they surface.

In March, 1988, 48 others and I took a trip like no other trip. Many articles have been written about whale-watching, which depict the surfacing, blowing and diving of the whales. Many of us have read about the anatomy, physiology and migratory habits of these creatures. We are most certainly not at a loss for articles telling about man's slaughter of whales or articles that try through implication and insinuation to make the whale seem dangerous.

Missing from the list of articles about the great whales, however, are those about their sheer beauty and awesomeness. There is a good reason for the lack of such articles. Trying to depict such grandeur is like trying to capture the magnificence of the painting of the Sistine Chapel on a postage stamp.

For the 49 people who were on that tour, the experience was very real. Much of the trip was spent seeing whale; at normal distances of 70 to 150 feet and further. We saw mothers and babies, we saw breachings, and we saw their individ-



Martha Butler

ual fluke prints, which are as unique as our finger prints.

As we started back, two whales were sighted blowing about 90 feet from the boat. One of the crew turned the boat in that direction and approached the whales. They dived and everyone groaned, fearing that they had left and no closer viewing was going to be possible. Suddenly the

entire boat full of people, including the crew, erupted with gasps and cheers of delight as the two whales surfaced right beside the boat.

For well over half an hour, we sat still with the motors off while these two whales played around the boat, looking at us as we looked at them. They rolled to expose the white undersides of their long pectoral fins. I saw the two blowholes open wide as one exhaled right below me. They were so close that the knobs on their heads could easily be counted, but not a person on board felt the slightest fear, for there was absolutely nothing to fear from these gentle creatures. (They eat only zooplankton—not even fish need fear them.) Indeed, the mood was one of reverence, awe and exultation for such magnificence.

The experience made everyone on board instant friends, as we knew we had seen and shared something few other people will ever experience.

Truly this is one story involving a unicorn which is not a myth. We saw a legend living!

## The whales' friend

EVER since she was a child, Martha Butler has been fascinated by the behaviour and intelligence of whales and dolphins. Her insatiable appetite for books on marine mammals, combined with a degree in psychology from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, made her one of the leading "whale and dolphin" authorities in the desert.

Desert? Yes, Martha grew up and into her dedication to cetaceans in Las Vegas. Remarkable as this "marine mammal mania" might seem from the middle of the desert, it is even more remarkable considering that Martha is legally blind.

Stricken with Retinitis Pigmentosa at the age of four, Martha learned self-reliance early. She seemed not to pay much attention to what "blind people" were and were not supposed to do.

After graduation, she actively pursued her interest as she observed grey, blue, finback and humpback whales from Mexico to Maui.

One time she was close enough to have a humpback blow in her face. She also eagerly sought out information on dolphins and visited them whenever she could.

Fortunately, Martha still has enough perception in a small area of vision to operate computers and word-processing equipment; and in keeping with her status as "mid-desert whale authority", published in 1987 the original novel, *Whale Tracks*, which deals with threats to the whales' survival, and explores possibilities of whale-human interaction. She's currently working on a sequel, which will deal with understanding dolphin communication.

*From the Earthtrust newsletter.*

# The not-so Lone Rangers

From page 11

experiencing adventure and companionship out-of-doors.

All the boats used belong to the Association, and the transport of the aluminium rowing boats, fibreglass canoes and fibreglass and timber sailboats by truck and trailer was performed with the help of many willing volunteers. All equipment, including buoyancy vests, buoys, ropes, oars and paddles was also transported from our boatshed at Cabarita, Sydney, to the regatta site.

This year it was exciting to have sailing dinghies at the regatta for the first time for many years, and many girls had a chance to sail – some for the first time. The Association is expanding its sailing programs at our Water Activities centre in Sydney, and the regatta provided us with a great opportunity to promote this. Next year we hope to include sailing races in the regatta program.

The Association's Water Activities Centre, RTS (Ranger Training Ship)

Tingira, is situated on Hen and Chicken Bay, Cabarita.

Originally the Kings School boatshed, the property was purchased by the Girl Guides Association in 1969. Training and recreation programs in all types of boating, rowing, kayaking, canoeing and sailing are offered to all members of the association.

Metropolitan ranger units act as "duty crews" each weekend as they assist with boating activities and some maintenance work on the boats and equipment. Membership of the Association is open to all girls and women provided they are prepared to make the Guide Promise.

As the founder of the Guide Movement, Robert Baden-Powell said, "Our aim in training the girls is the education and development of character through their individual enthusiasm from within, and not by imposing upon them collective dogmatic instructions from without".

If you want new friends, if you want new fun – come and join us!

## CROSSWORD SOLUTION #4



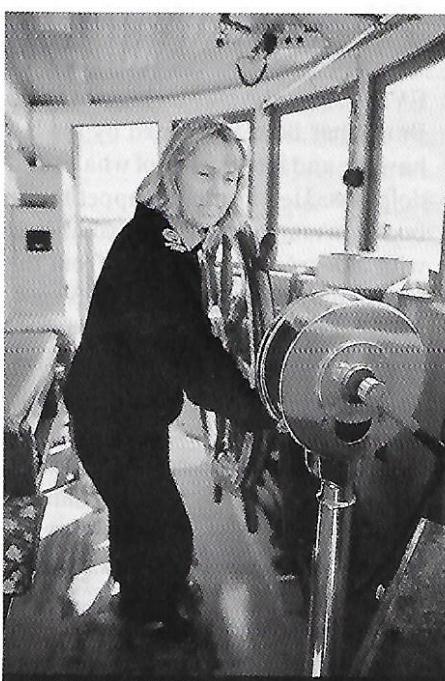
## Who is this mystery woman?

*All we know is she operates a ferry from Auckland, New Zealand.*

*One of our readers, C. Secula, photographed her but didn't take her name.*

*The first person to identify her will win a free Sistership T-shirt.*

*Write to Sistership Mystery Woman Competition, PO Box 1027, Crows Nest, NSW 2065, including your name, address and telephone number, and info about your size, preferred colour etc.*



## ON THE HORIZON

**In Sistership's next issue:**

**Sea shanties – a rare perspective, by Heather Vose**

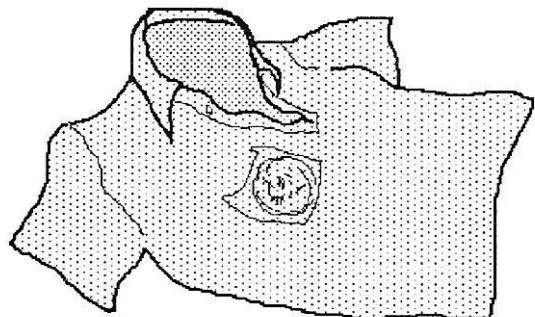
**Dot Smith recalls one of her voyages to Antarctica**

**Seattle's Sailmakers – Hasse and Petruch, by Merlyn Storm**

**Sistership looks at sailing schools**

**How to say "Wow!" under water: Susan Nicholls experiences the marvels of scuba diving**

**Wavelength – letters to Sistership**



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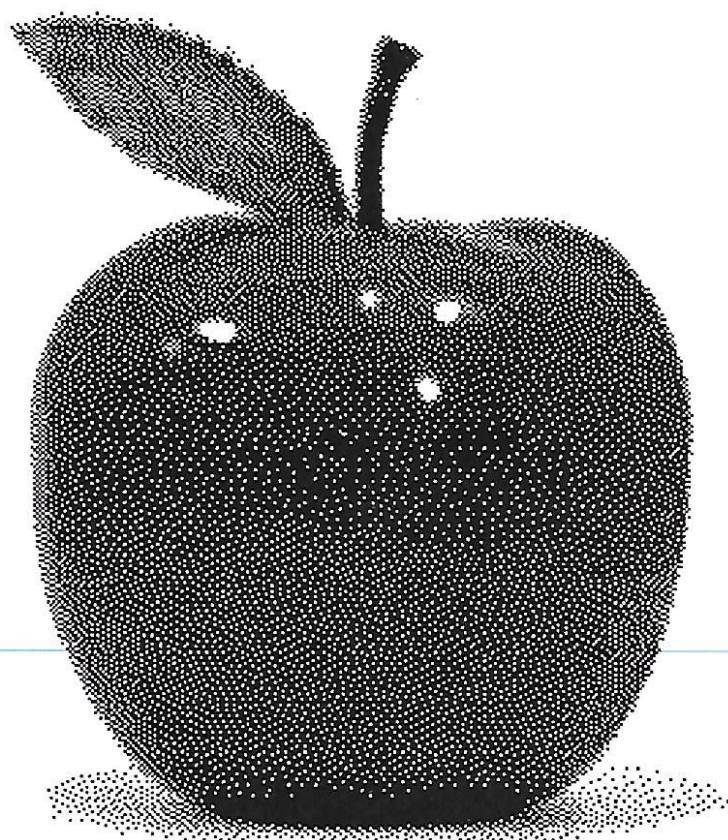
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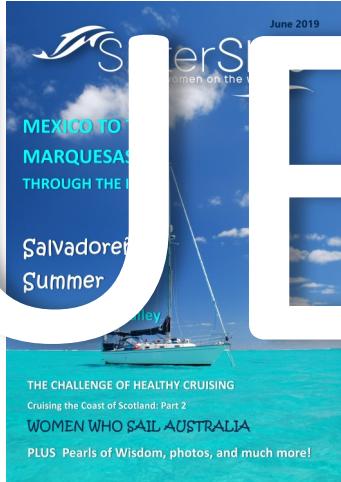
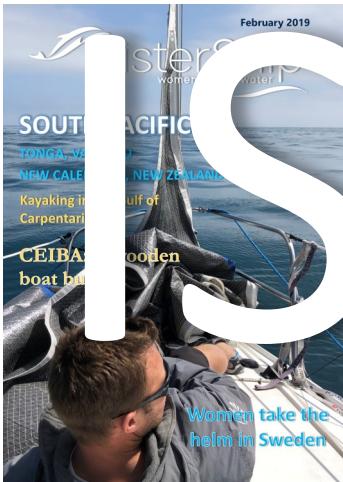
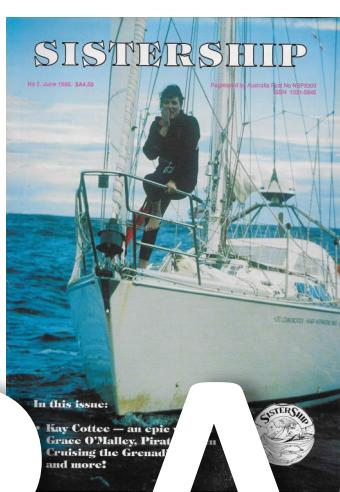
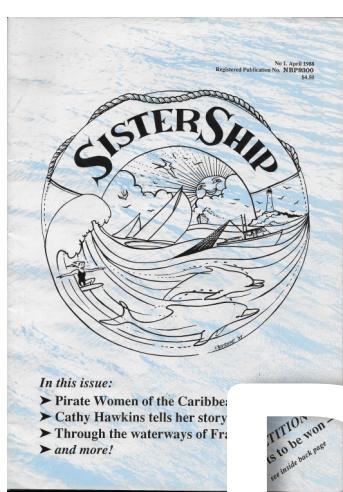
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