

Courageous Kate to venture boldly on high seas again

Steve Pike

Weekend Argus Reporter

ARGUS

24/4/1993

AS IF THE ordeal of drifting for eight days on a life raft in the Atlantic Ocean was not enough, tenacious sailor Kate Elkington has flown to Rio de Janeiro and will sail back on Fortis, one of the last Cape-to-Rio yachts to return to Cape Town.

Kate, 30, who had a narrow escape when the yacht Baltic Wind which she was crewing on from Rio to Cape Town sank in the mid-Atlantic six weeks ago, is determined to give sailing another chance.

She and skipper Paul Rodgers drifted for eight days in a small life raft before they were picked up by the container vessel Nordlight.

Although rainwater was plentiful and she managed to rescue a bottle of whiskey from the sinking yacht, all they had to eat were a few soggy rusks and biscuits, some barley sugar sweets and about six rusty tins of fruit.

Rodgers said he made repeated May Day calls from the yacht's radio, but no one heard the message. About 35 Cape-to-Rio yachts were returning to Cape Town at the time.

Nor was there a response to the emergency transmitter, which emitted continuous signals while they languished on the life raft.

Despite her harrowing experience, Kate will crew for skipper Cal Tomlinson and another crew member on

Fortis, a Mauritius 43, due to set sail from Rio this weekend.

"I feel a mixture of anticipation, terror and excitement," she said before her flight to Rio.

"There was one condition that I gave when Cal asked me to crew for him. That was that we had to go and have a cup of tea with my good friend Janet on Tristan da Cunha, depending on the weather. She and her husband, who is a doctor, are living there for six months."

However, Kate said there were a number of things she would do before they left Rio.

"I'm going to make sure the grab-bag (a container with emergency provisions and equipment) is well stocked. I am also going to make Cal take me around the boat to make quite sure the boat does not leak and that there is a life raft."

And just to be doubly safe, Kate and Cal visited Cape Town Radio and set up transmitting times with the operators.

"My mother Vivienne has given me strict instructions to keep in regular contact with her and the guys at Cape Town Radio have promised to help," she said, clutching a pamphlet listing international calling frequencies.

"Many of my friends have told me that I must be completely mad. But I have always wanted to sail to Australia. This is one way of finding out whether I will be able to do it."



□ **BACK TO SEA:** Kate Elkington, 30, is going back to sea in spite of a gruelling sojourn on a life raft with little food in the mid-Atlantic six weeks ago. Weekend Argus took this photograph on her return to Cape Town after the container vessel Nordlight picked her up. Her mother Vivienne was there to meet her.