

Clarke, 76, is all ship-shape again

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DAVID CLARKE, the sailor with the small frame and big will power whom Capetonians came to know through his indefatigable spirit, is doing it again. This time alone.

Clarke, 76, will be continuing his round-the-world yacht trip tomorrow, weather permitting.

This time around, Clarke will be "travelling light" in a South African Lello yacht which allows for single-handed steering.

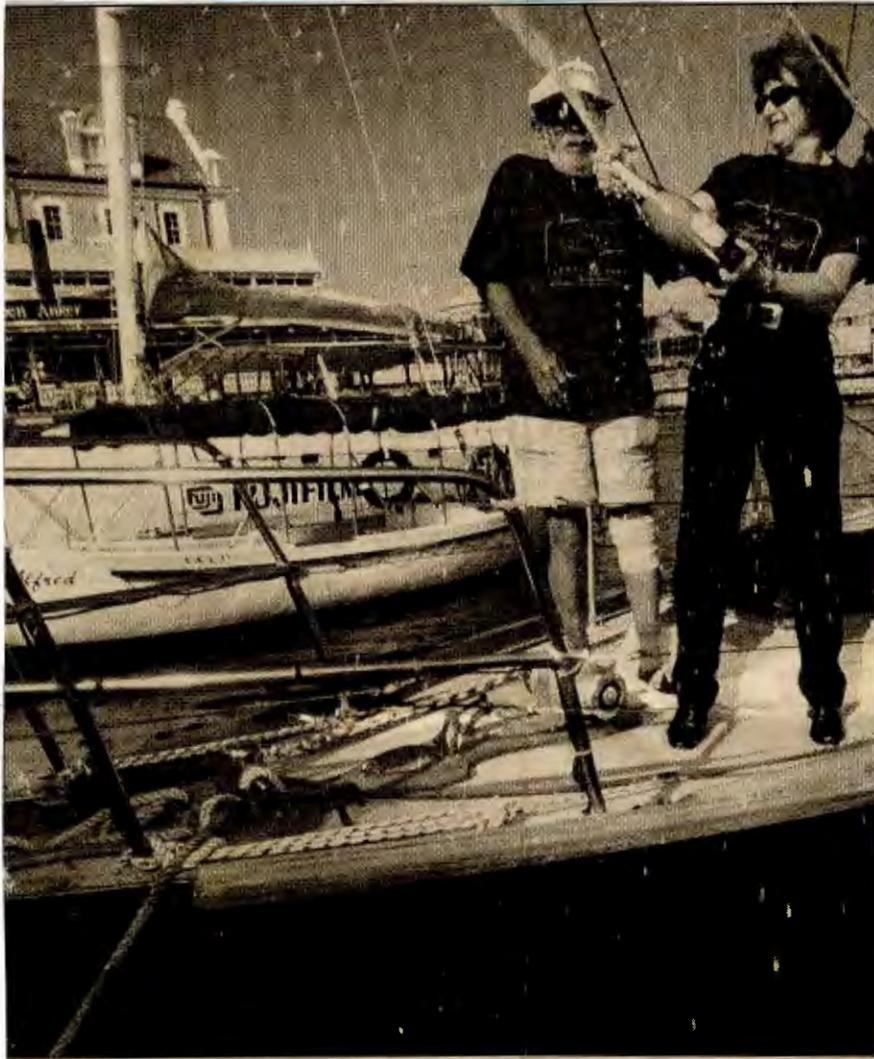
This trip, his second, was begun in 1999 when he left Florida in the United States. His first successful trip was completed in 1991, when he was 67. The previous record in the Guinness Book of World Records was set by Tom Maxwell, who was 68 when he completed his lone voyage around the world.

When Clarke's yacht, the Molly Milar, sank off the West Coast near Saldanha Bay in February, the sailor was only 7 000 nautical miles from becoming the oldest person to circumnavigate the world single-handed. Most of his prized possessions, including his clarinet and about 20 cases of wine, sponsored by local wine estates to celebrate his arrival in South Africa, were lost at sea.

He also lost his beloved friend and constant companion on that trip, his dog Mickey.

In the past few months, a group of amateur radio operators, yachtsmen and a leading Waterfront Hotel have assisted Clarke in obtaining a new vessel. Now this diehard is ready to take on the world again and will celebrate his 77th birthday at sea in his new, smaller yacht, which he has named "Mickey".

Clarke is to leave Cape Town harbour around noon tomorrow. His first stop will be St Helena.



READY TO SAIL: RYachtsman David Clarke gets an appropriately merry send-off from Claudé Agneessens, a representative of one of his sponsors.

PICTURE: ENVER ESSOP