



□ ROUGH RIDE: Kate Elkington in landgear on the loan car.

Kate's riding high after sinking in the Atlantic

STEVE PIKE 10/7/1993
Weekend Argus Correspondent

FORMER shipwrecked sailor Kate Elkington, 30, who lost most of her belongings when the yacht, Baltic Wind, sank in the Atlantic, is smiling from ear to ear although she has only R38,60 in the bank.

The sinking led to seven frightening days on a liferaft with hardly any food, until a container ship, Nordlite, rescued her and Baltic Wind's skipper, Paul Rogers.

Kate's wardrobe has been pretty bare because most of her clothes went down with Baltic Wind — until this week when a guest at the restaurant where Kate has been working as a waitress heard her story.

"This chap asked me where I got my T-shirt, which has Nordlite on it. I told him I was wearing it because I didn't have many clothes left.

"All my other belongings are at the bottom of the ocean."

The diner is an executive of top clothes chain Hilton Weiner.

ARGUS

"Come to the factory tomorrow and we'll sort you out," he said.

She tried to dissuade him from carrying out what, to her, was an embarrassingly benevolent gesture.

But, he would have none of it. So, she went to the factory.

"He called a shop assistant over and told her that I could select enough clothes to fill a wardrobe. It was great."

It was a "fitting" end to an eventful year.

In January, she sailed to Rio on the catamaran Ali-cat in the Cape-to-Rio race. On her return on Baltic Wind, she and skipper Rogers spent seven days on a liferaft with a rusty tin or two of fruit, sweets, soggy rusks and a bottle of whisky before being rescued by Nordlite.

A few weeks later, she was off to Rio again to crew on Fortis, which was to be delivered to Cape Town by skipper Cal Tomlinson.

The passage took a mammoth 60 days including stops at Ilha Grande and Tristan da Cunha.

During the voyage they were hit by 12 m swells and gale-force winds. The boat heeled over once, causing some heart-stopping moments.

Tomlinson, owner Owen Thomas and another crewman were airlifted off the fated boat when it sank off the Agulhas bank, 10 days ago. Its final destination had been Port Elizabeth.

Three difficult voyages in six months have taken their toll.

"When I arrived back after the passage on Fortis I felt drained and tired. I had no money in the bank and nowhere to stay. Then, my former skipper from Ali-cat asked me to look after his house in Rondebosch and gave me the use of his car.

"Then, I got a job at Mijlhof Manor restaurant, kindly offered to me by Clifford Mijlhof.

"Now, I've got all these clothes.

"You wouldn't think that I had only R38,60 in the bank.

"Everyone has been unbelievably kind. The generosity has been overwhelming," said Kate.