



SAILING WITH SIR: Julie Petersen, 11, never dreamed she would find herself among a group of streetchildren helming a yacht under the eye of British sailing legend, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston. The yachtsman is in Cape Town with his TSC Clipper 96 around-the-world fleet that sails for Salvadore, Brazil, tomorrow.

PICTURE: CEDRIC ROBERTSON

Yachting legend takes streetkids to sea and Mandela signals blessing

DALE GRANGER 10/7/1997

WHEN legendary British yachtsman Sir Robin Knox-Johnston took a group of streetkids sailing yesterday word reached President Nelson Mandela in London.

Mandela, who was told by the British High Commissioner that Knox-Johnston was giving the children a unique opportunity to sail, responded by sending a message of support to the famous yachtsman in Cape Town.

The children themselves were oblivious of the achievements of the soft-spoken man who has written 14 books, one on the Cape but mostly about sailing. He was the first man to sail single-handed, non-stop around the world and two years ago broke the 80-day barrier by co-skippering a catamaran on a 74-day circumnavigation — which earned him his knighthood. He has also spread the gospel of

sailing to people of all creeds overseas.

Knox-Johnston is in Cape Town until tomorrow when participants in the race he initiated, the TSC Clipper 96 around-the-world race, set off on their next leg from Cape Town to Salvadore, Brazil.

It is a race for people with no sailing experience, who have paid more than R140 000 to be taught, fed and clothed for the experience.

"Sailing around-the-world is like wanting to climb Mount Everest. The best way to do so is to enlist the services of a professional," he said.

To Knox-Johnston, out at sea, a person's worth is valued in winch-grinding ability, helming skill and enthusiasm for the sea. "Someone who is the son of a labourer can be a great sailor and another who is the son of a duke can be utterly hopeless at sea. I know who I would most like to sail with," he said.

His only advice to aspiring sailors is to "get to sea as often as possible".

He himself has lost count of the sea miles he has logged but it has been estimated at half-a-million.

And in an age where almost every sailing boundary appears to have been conquered he says there are still records to be broken at sea.

The only problem is he will not disclose what he has in mind: "If I revealed what had not been achieved everyone would know about it".

Swedish vehicle-maker AB Volvo said in Stockholm yesterday it would take over ownership of the Whitbread Round the World sailing race from June 1, 1998, Reuter reports.

Volvo said it had agreed with British brewer Whitbread to sponsor the 1997-98 event, which begins on September 21 this year and will be called The Whitbread Round the World Race for the Volvo Trophy.

CAO & TIMES