

# Louis launches a dream to sail away

ONCE an obese, successful businessman, now a born-again health fanatic and adventurer, 41-year-old Louis Botha has found a novel way to spread the word about his new zest for living to all armchair adventurers.

In the four years since his conversion, the new-look, slim and fit Mr Botha has lived out a wealth of life-long dreams. This week he starts another.

In the glare of the public eye at the Durban Expo 85 extravaganza, he is building "a survival craft", a spartan 9m yacht to sail single-handedly around the world.

"I love to share my new love of life with others.

"In every person there is

an armchair adventurer just waiting to get out. I don't have an armchair any more and I get a real kick out of seeing others getting hooked.

"If by watching me, at least one or two of those armchair adventurers are inspired to do something about it, then I'll have succeeded.

"My working here and talking to people about what I'm doing will inspire many people to realise their dreams," Mr Botha said this week.

He's spending the three months of Expo 85 rigging out completely fitting out the interior of his yacht.

Three brightly coloured



Doing it his way — Louis Botha has swapped his armchair for life on the ocean waves

By DENYSE ARMOUR Picture: JIMMY HUTTON

caravans, made from the shells of old Railway coaches, will house a workshop, office and bar where visitors can look at what building a yacht entails.

"They'll be able to walk up a gangplank and look down at what's going on in the yacht and watch the work inside through closed circuit television," Mr Botha said.

He hopes to launch his yet un-named yacht on January 7, the day after Expo closes.

"After reasonable sea trials I will find a crewman and sail to the UK. I'd like to enter the Ostar — the Observer

Single Handed Trans Atlantic Race to Newport in the US.

"Then it's the BOC around-the-world race in September. I can't enter legally, as the minimum craft size is 13m. But they can't stop me sailing," Mr Botha said.

"It's a complete realisation of my dreams and a total challenge for me. I'm not looking for accolades and acknowledgement.

"There are certain things a man does in his life to prove himself to his social peers. But this is not for that. I'm doing this for me — I need to,

for my own sake," he said.

Although Mr Botha has done a fair amount of sailing, he doesn't have a great deal of experience.

"I realise I've got limited experience and many more qualified people will write me off before I've begun. But I believe, given dedication and ambition, one can overcome possible deficiencies in experience."

Mr Botha's wife, Liz, will remain in Durban to run his clothing business. His son Aldan, 9 and daughter Zena, 7, think it's "the most perfectly natural thing in the world for their father to be off sailing around the world".