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Wayfarer off to Rio day behind field

WAYFARER, the 50-ft. Durban ketch skippered by marine architect Peter Strong, set sail for Rio yesterday, nearly 24 hours behind her competitors after battling gale-force head winds and heavy seas in an attempt to reach Cape Town in time for the start on Saturday. She arrived at the start line four hours after the start.

Wayfarer reached Cape Town under tow from the tunny boat, Shaka, and then crossed the start line which had been set up for her before being towed to a berth at the yacht basin for victualling and scrutinizing by the race officials.

Mr. Tom Unite, one of the race organizers, told me yesterday there was no rule to prevent Wayfarer starting as she did. "She had to pass the start line and she did this after the start ship SAS Mosselbaai had reformed the startline specially for her."

Hasty preparations were made for her to sail at 4.30 p.m. yesterday. David Alexander, who will help the Wayfarer's one-legged navigator, Melville Duff-Richardson, said on the quayside yesterday afternoon just before sailing: "With ideal conditions we could make Rio in 27 days. But it might be 37 at the outside. There was only minor damage—a few tears to the mainsail."

MORAL VICTORY

Speaking of their chances of victory, he said: "It would be rather nice to be 23 hours behind the winning yacht at the finish, and having left 24 hours late, we might have a moral victory."

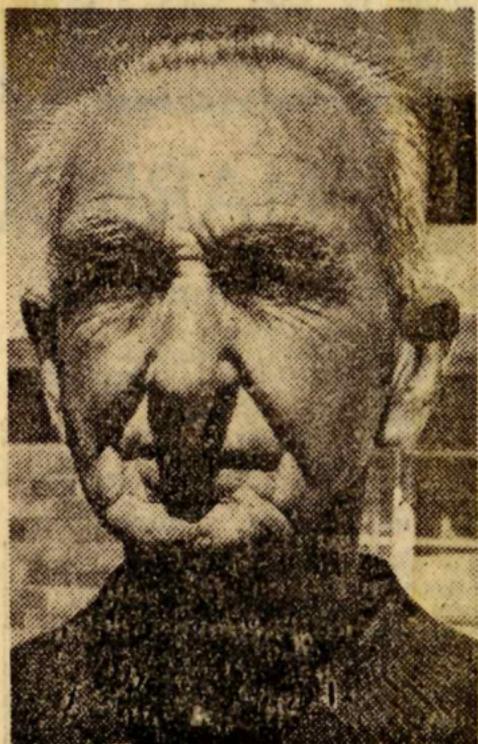
Mr. Alexander sailed from Durban to Cape Town on the ketch Ilanda.

The voyage across the South Atlantic is not new to Alexander. Recently he sailed from Rio to South Africa—"an exciting trip".

There was almost no wind as Wayfarer cast off from her moorings at 4.20 p.m.

Cries of good luck rang out to the late starter from well-wishers on the quayside.

Wayfarer set out from Durban on January 1, intending to reach



Peter Strong, 70-year-old builder-skipper of Wayfarer.

Cape Town on January 11. She put into East London to repair a leak before running into gale-force head winds gusting up to 80 kph, which caused serious concern for her safety at the race headquarters. On January 15 a full-scale search was started for Wayfarer and on Saturday she was sighted about 115 km from Cape Town, 25 km off Cape Hangklip by a Maritime Group aircraft on a routine flight.

When I saw her yesterday there were few signs of her ordeal, but perhaps there is a lot more to come as she tackles 3 500 miles of hazardous South Atlantic waters on her way to Rio. David Alexander would not disclose which course she would sail, but hinted that it would be a northerly one. "It's up to the skipper," he said.