

Skipper ¹⁶⁻²⁻⁷¹ (71)

guides

Wayfarer into Rio

From Staff Reporter Neil Lursen

RIO DE JANEIRO, Tuesday.

MR. PETER STRONG, 71-year-old veteran boat builder and designer from Durban, sat back in his armchair at Rio's plush yacht club and relaxed — and he deserved every second of it.

For, at an age when many men reach for walking sticks, Mr. Strong had won a remarkable battle with the sea.

When he took his yacht Wayfarer over the Cape-to-Rio finish line here yesterday, he completed the distance in 29 days 17 hours 57 minutes and 34 seconds—but this told only part of the story.

He also beat more than half the race fleet, after setting out 28 hours late because of rough weather off Cape Agulhas.

Air search

Wayfarer's journey to Rio started on New Year's day, but the weather led to an air-search for the blue-hulled ketch, and gave the crew the frustrating sight of the other entrants sailing over the horizon.

The yacht put into Cape Town for the night and started next day, determined to catch the fleet. She did this long before she was 1 000 miles out.

Asked if Wayfarer might be penalised because she put into Cape Town after the start Mr. Strong said: 'We were 28 hours late—and that is penalty enough.'

'After we left the Cape, we caught the fleet in three or four days,' Mr. Strong recalled. 'We were going well and then we developed little troubles that slowed us.'

'One black night, for instance, we were running very hard in a force five wind with spinnaker, mainsail and mizzen sail set when we were knocked down.'

Blown over

The yacht skidded sideways and was blown over on its side, a hair-raising experience for a vessel of its size.

'We eased her down after that and the other boats started going ahead. It was frustrating, very frustrating,' Mr. Strong said.

Wayfarer soon slipped into the South Atlantic's 'agony belt,' the vast region in mid-ocean where most of the Cape-to-Rio yachts ghosted along in near calm conditions under a broiling sun.

'For a day or two we would get a reasonable wind, but mostly it was just terribly hot.'

'I am satisfied with Wayfarer,' Mr. Strong said. 'Since January 1, we have sailed in just about every condition possible for a yacht—storms and calms, everything.'

'She performed well, but anything can be improved. I have a few ideas of how I could have designed a better hull. I must put them down on paper.'

He hopes to sell Wayfarer — named after columnist Don

Stuyt of the 'Daily News', Durban—in Rio for R25 000 to R26 000. If this plan fails, he will sail her back to South Africa.

Meanwhile, the American yacht Ma'm'selle has arrived in Rio with the story of the 'save of the trip.'

It happened on the first night out when Ma'm'selle found herself in a storm. According to skipper C. Edward Hartman II, a 5 m wave smashed over the boat. It knocked crewman Charles Hartge from one side to the other and bent two stanchions on the starboard side.

Another crewman was hurled from his bunk and the flooding put the engine out of action which meant no power for the generator. It was 10 days before the engine was repaired and the sloop could have lights at night.

Ma'm'selle's crew also had to wire their heavy bronze centre-board firmly in place to prevent it from being seriously damaged.