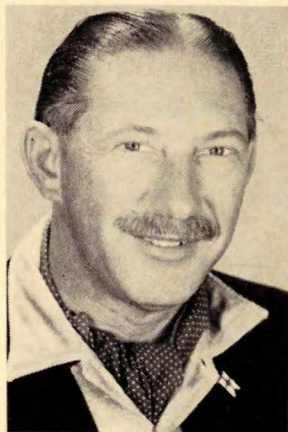


FLYING SAILS ON A ROOF TOP



(An interview
with Arthur Saul)

I SUPPOSE you could say that I got this interest in sailing from my father. Dad was a seafaring man who had sailed around the world five times before settling down," said suntanned Arthur Saul. We were in his office in a corner of a hangar at Baragwanath Airport outside Johannesburg where Arthur and his attractive wife, Sue, conduct a thriving business called Flying Sails.

They make sails and fibreglass yachts and Arthur's main concern is the fact that the 4,000 sq. ft. he currently occupies in the hangar is getting too small.

"How did it all start?" we asked.

"Well, I made my first canoe when I was eight and then when I was in my teens I built a yacht. My racing yacht *Sturgeon* won nearly every trophy on the Reef in 1947. You see, I've been playing around with yachts and sails for the past 30 years."

"But how did you get into Flying Sails?" we persisted.

"Well, I started making yacht fittings from stainless steel—purely as a hobby, of course. And then a few friends asked me to make some for them and then—well, you know how it is! One thing led to another and I was soon becoming a very busy boy. I was at that time on the technical staff of South African Airways and it got to the stage where I had to decide which was paying me better—my job or my hobby."

"So you quit your job," we prompted.

Sue poured tea for us and Arthur lit another cigarette.

"Yes, I worked in my garage-workshop but, of course, that was too cramped," he said between puffs. "Then early in 1961 I heard that Don Ord, who had started Flying Sails a couple of months before, could not carry on because of other heavy commitments, so I took it over right here in this hangar at Baragwanath Airport."

"These sails of yours," we asked, "are they all for local yachtsmen?"

"By no means," replied Arthur. "Apart from supplying to yachtsmen throughout the Republic and South West Africa, we export to Rhodesia, Lourenço Marques and Beira. As a matter of fact, we send them as far as Malawi. Our sails are made of terylene which is strong, and like a man's shirt, drip-dry. Canvas sails get wet and heavy and can cut down your speed but with terylene the spray just runs off."

"Where can you do your yachting in this mine-dump infested area?"

"Oh, there are plenty of good spots. For instance, the Cinderella Dam at Boksburg, where the East Rand Yacht Club meets, is a first-class venue. And then, if you want to feel the sting of salt spray in your face, you can take your boat down to Lourenço Marques or somewhere else on the coast."

"I used to tow," said Arthur, "but you must realise that there are not tarred roads to the side of every stretch of inland water—and I found that on the rough roads stones were being kicked up and damaging my boats. So I

thought I'd better get them up in the air."

"I bought a Volvo station wagon and designed a special, stainless steel and aluminium roof-carrier with a dolly to hold my boat. Come and have a look at it."

In the shade next to the hangar was Arthur's 505 yacht on top of the Volvo. It lay in a dolly lined with a type of honeycomb rubber. "This rubber lining serves a dual purpose," explained Arthur. "Firstly, it obviously prevents scratching the hull and secondly, the weight of the boat presses the air out of the honeycomb compartments and creates dozens of little suction pockets which hold the boat firmly." (See picture below).

"By the way," we asked, "why did you choose a Volvo?" Arthur thought for a moment. "Well," he said, "I had a look around and felt that the Volvo was the most suitable."

"Do you think," we ventured, "that there will be many yachtsmen who will be interested in this elevated yacht idea?"

"Can't see why not," said Arthur. "You know, there are about 15,000 yachtsmen in South Africa and I happen to know that the yachting boys are switching to station wagons. There are two reasons. Firstly, a boat on the roof doesn't get stone-damage and, secondly, a station wagon has such a lot of space that you can carry all your yachting gear, sails and camping equipment (if you need it) plus the family, without discomfort."

"Have you had occasion to try out your new carrier," we inquired.

"Sure, a couple of weeks ago I went down to Maritzburg with the boat on the Volvo. The boat weighed 286 lb. and the dolly 60 lb. That's a total of 346 lb. In addition, I had the sails in the back and the mast lashed on top. Then, of course, there were my wife and daughter and myself and all our kit."

"Sounds great," we murmured, "but surely there must have been a drop in petrol consumption and speed?"

Another look of understanding pity from Arthur. "Naturally, with all that weight there was obviously a small drop in miles-per-gallon," he said with the indulgent tones one uses to a child, "but as for drop in speed—certainly not! Remember this is a Volvo. We came back from Maritzburg in 6½ hours, we cruised between 70 and 75 miles an hour and we never dropped lower than third gear through all the hills and mountain passes."

We left soon afterwards envying those lucky people who can hoist their yachts on to the top of a station wagon and get away into the middle of a lake or miles out on the open sea, far from telephones, radios and newspapers and everything else that goes to make up this world of worry in which we live.

Maybe Arthur Saul and his sailing and yachting friends, have really got the answer, we mused as we joined the queues of traffic back into the centre of Johannesburg. ■

