

Tin-Opener Affair

The tin-opener affair, meant as a joke, was entirely his pigeon, aided and abetted by Tasman Empire Airways.

Little things are always going wrong with such a complicated and high-powered set-up of generating plant, batteries, wires, lights, aerial and so on, but Terry kept the radio going for the whole 12 days and apparently never entertained the thought of giving up and getting some sleep when some fault was being particularly obstinate.

He never got more than six hours sleep on end and generally much less, yet he never went to sleep during the day and was always on call in an emergency on deck. And what a man he is to have on the foredeck when the boat is dipping her nose under and it's blowing hard in the middle of a black moonless night.

Through it all he maintained an almost incessant flow of cheerful chatter. Nothing appeared to upset him and nothing was too much trouble.

Nobody could ask for two better crew men than the Ponsonby brothers, Frank and Harry Gray, or their off-sider, Arthur Wratten. These three are fine men on the tiller, great hands on the end of a rope, good cheerful company and absolutely reliable. They didn't just do everything asked of them; they asked for things to do, and their judgment was sound.

Taking of two women, Kit and Erica Wilson, aboard Leda no doubt drew smiles or sneers from many so-called tough yachtsmen. Ask Leda's crew how these two turned out on the trip and they will tell you they were absolutely first class. Far from detracting from the efficiency of

the crew, they increased it tremendously.

The crew always had good hot meals. They had no worries about washing up, what to eat or whose turn it was to cook. Inside, the boat was always shipshape and all the crew had to do was sail the boat as fast as it could. The two girls stitched up sails and were quite capable of taking the tiller in emergency. As Terry Hammond said after the race, they were easily the hardest-worked people on the boat and he would have no hesitation taking women with him in an ocean race.

We all had a great time, a great trip and a great race and each one of us would be prepared to have it on again at the drop of a hat.

The Sydney public has also given us a great reception. From the moment we bowled in through Sydney Heads and the press launches asked us if we were Tara or Southern Maid, while a solitary Kiwi in a tiny launch shouted out "Kia Ora Tauranga," it has been like a dream, with friendliness for the crew and admiration for the boat from the man in the street, yachting officials and Sydney yachtsmen.

There were so many unusual features in this race that it is impossible to sum them up in a few words, but nothing seems more certain than that the race, whoever sponsors it, will never look back from this year. We enjoyed every moment of it, and so would you.

LEDA GAVE CREW THE THRILL OF LIFETIME

From W. A. WILSON, co-skipper of the yacht Leda
SYDNEY (Airmail).—Realization of our ambition to finish first in the Tasman yacht race came as one of the greatest thrills of our lives to the four of us who were intimately concerned with building, rigging and preparing the Leda. To judge from the smiles of the other five crew members, the finish gave them no less pleasure.

No doubt we were lucky to get some good winds at the finish, but we also consider we were most unlucky with the weather for most of the race, and things were more than evened out.

Leda finished first, the first New Zealand boat ever to do so, and if the Sydney boat Solveig quickly robbed her of any chance of winning on handicap nothing can take from her the honour of being first across the line.

As far as the crew is concerned no praise can be too high for the boat herself. Given even a sporting chance by the wind they feel sure she would have had no difficulty winning on handicap as well as being first across the line. Imagine how we felt when, having left the fleet out of sight astern in the first 24 hours, we had to sit off Spirits Bay and watch all the boats carry a breeze with them round North Cape.

Again Leda got away, although the wind never once drew ahead of the beam nor rose above about eight knots. Slowly but surely, as it died away to nothing, the two "ghosters," Rangī and Solveig, crept up on her. Rangī passed her and Solveig was abeam and only 100 yards away after one week's sailing, and with only 500 miles of the 1240 to go.

Solveig was still in sight astern the next day and, after a 12-hour storm, there was yet another day of ghosting weather with the wind dead aft—worst possible conditions for Leda.

It wasn't until the morning of February 5 (nine days out from Auckland), that the wind really began to come ahead. It blew quite a severe storm from nearly ahead all that night, and Leda revelled in the going, putting about 20 miles on the next boat. It was still forward of abeam the next day and slightly aft the following day when Leda finished.

Matter Of Luck

Still, there's a lot of luck in ocean racing and, if Leda was unlucky, Tara and Southern Maid, the two biggest boats in the fleet, were probably unluckier. With about twice Leda's displacement, the flat calms interspersed with tantalizing cat-paws from dead aft were an even greater handicap for them. They got their share of strong reaching weather, but both had bad luck with chafed gear and some of the unforeseen little incidents which invariably crop up in such a race.

As for Solveig, the weather might be said to have been designed for her. The wind was nearly always extreme, either very calm or very rough, right ahead or right behind. Nothing could have suited her better.

No crew could have been happier on the trip than Leda's and none could have worked harder or better. Things worked with the utmost smoothness the whole way over and it is doubtful if Leda could have been handled much better.

Terry Hammond had to be seen in action to be appreciated. He wasn't just a navigator who kept the boat right on the rumb line the whole way across and made his landfall less than a mile south of Sydney Heads. He worked the radio transmitter for hours every day, sending out messages, getting weather reports, contacting planes, steamers and amateurs round the coast.