

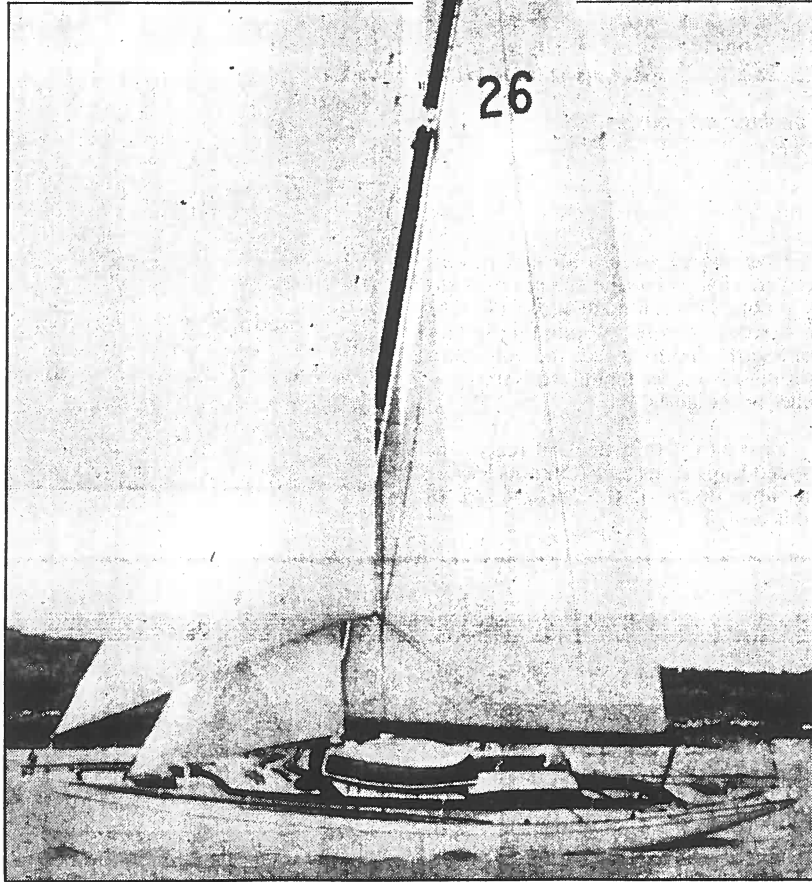


# Lovely Leda turns up in Seattle

Just the other day I was engaged in that national pastime of browsing among magazines at the local newsagent. In the section devoted to nautical publications I was scanning through the brokerage section of an American journal which specialises in wooden boats when my eye was drawn to an advertisement boldly headed "Leda."

To me, there is only one Leda — that classical bowed counter-sterned cutter built at Birkenhead, Auckland and launched in 1949. In 1953 she sailed away from her South Pacific homeland and never returned.

*The classical lines of Leda are well illustrated as she slogs down the Rangitoto Channel during a Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron cruising race in 1950-51.*



With avid interest I read the fine print: "This spectacular vessel was designed by Knud Reimers and built in New Zealand in 1950. Leda is heavily constructed of double-planked kauri wood over laminated Mango frames, fastened with copper rivets. Unbeatable in her early racing days, she recently provided her owners with a safe, comfortable and fast South Pacific cruise. This classic beauty is irreplaceable, offshore equipped and seriously for sale. Asking price: \$US95,000." The broker's office was listed in Seattle, Washington State.

There was no doubt this was the Leda — one of the finest big cutters built in New Zealand. The often-asked question from older New Zealand yachtsmen, "What ever happened to Leda?" has been answered. How the memories come flooding back.

Leda was not launched in 1950 as advertised, but at precisely noon on October 12, 1949. I know because I was there. For some reason, the primary school authorities of the day took a very active interest in the building and launching of Leda. She featured in the school journal published by the Education Department in Wellington (compulsory reading for every primary school child in the country), to my knowledge the only yacht to ever be so honoured.

On her launching day children from many of Auckland's North Shore schools were lined up in orderly rows, like soldiers on parade, to witness the great event.

At the time, I was in Standard 1 at Stanley Bay Primary School. Great was the excitement as we were herded along the quarter-mile length of the now demolished Stanley Bay ferry wharf to catch the steam ferry Makola to the ferry terminus at Auckland. Here, under the shadow of the lovely old ferry buildings, we caught the Northcote/Birkenhead ferry Kestrel and just before midday we disembarked at the Birkenhead Wharf. Here it was all activity.

The Auckland Harbour Board floating crane, Hikinui, now a dump barge owned by a major engineering company was alongside, her crew arranging slings and other lifting gear. On the wharf itself, propped up in a temporary cradle, was the majestic, white painted Leda. To the eyes of an eight-year-old, somewhat bemused by the whole scene, she looked enormous.

And big she was. Overall, Leda measures 53ft 10ins, 35ft on the waterline, 11ft 2ins in beam, with a draft of 7ft 7ins. Her displacement is 13 tons, six of these being her lead keel.

Leda was traditionally and excep-