

Chapter Five

2018 SUMMER CRUISE OF AVANTI

The 28th Voyage Dunedin to Nelson

Bill and Margaret McIndoe

Socialising in Picton

Visit to Picton in 1941

I have been visiting Picton since I was thirteen years old. The 2nd World War was raging against the Nazis, Italy and the Axis Powers and the news was all bad. My father, Captain John L McIndoe, was serving in the New Zealand Army in Egypt, Greece and later captured prisoner of war in Crete. My elder brother Jock was a Pilot Officer in the Royal New Zealand Air Force in action in Europe flying high speed Typhoon ground attack aircraft (where the casualty rate was two in three) with the RAF against the Nazis. My middle brother Peter was studying mining engineering at University of Otago and was on work experience coal mining on the West Coast. When the car in which he was a passenger went over a bank he broke his collar bone. Still to come was Bill's near death motor cycle accident. There was not much good news for mothers during the war.

My Brave Mother

My mother's life was under great stress with three of the four men in her family under threat of injury or death in action. When Christmas time came around she decided that we at home needed a holiday from the worries of war. She packed up all our camping gear, bundled us into the train in Dunedin and we set off for Picton.

The train journey was long, slow, hot and tedious. On arrival at Picton we set up camp in the then camping ground which, as I remember it, is now part of the Picton Marina area, about where the St John's Ambulance Station is now.

Teeth to Tow a Dinghy

My adventure-filled holiday in Picton centered around a small tin-clad dinghy that my mother hired so I could go fishing. I remember rowing one mile out to Mabel Island where I was certain I would catch the biggest blue cod in the Sounds. In the clear atmosphere and brilliant sunshine I soon began to get sunburnt, especially on the tops of my feet and backs of my hands. Realising I was heading for serious trouble and had to escape the sun, I stripped off and slid into the water. Grasping the dinghy's painter in my teeth and trying not to thinking of sharks, I started the long swim back to Picton towing the dinghy. I had no more sunburn while in the water and the cool salt water relieved the pain in my skin. Meantime my mother began to worry where her Billy-boy had got to. She sighted the empty dinghy and became fearful that her youngest son had drowned and the boat was just drifting. I swam on and her fears were relieved when close enough, my bobbing head was sighted.

Visit to Picton in 2018

Seventy seven years later I am still visiting Picton, wars all in the past but never forgotten, still boating and still having fun. I had emailed our friends in the North of the South keeping them up to date with our progress sailing up the South Island coast from Port Chalmers. At the conclusion of the section of our 2018 Summer Cruise in Avanti at the Picton Marina one of our friends came down to see us and have a meal aboard. Others rang with hospitable invitations to chat and dine with them. We had a busy and pleasant week socialising, talking and dining.

Margaret and I had not sailed up to the Marlborough Sounds for three years.

2015: On 2 January we spent ten delightful weeks sailing from Port Chalmers to Picton, cruising the Sounds through to Nelson and the Abel Tasman National Park.

2016: A year later, only one day before our departure on 1 January Margaret had a heart attack and all yachting was cancelled. My grandson James McIndoe Baily, from England, who was over for a visit, was to crew for us but that also was cancelled.

2017: Another year on 3 January we did make our departure for the Sounds and got as far as Akaroa. There we met a series of gales that blew, off and on, for three weeks. Yachting friends in Picton, the Sounds and Nelson emailed a simple message - "*Don't come*" the weather is worse up here than in Canterbury. At the first break in the weather we sailed from Akaroa and bolted home for Port Chalmers in half a gale. All that adds up to three years of failures to make it north to see our friends.

2018: This year we departed from Port Chalmers on 4 January and successfully sailed all the way to Picton. We have got this far and have had better luck than over the last three years.

Reunion and Catchup Time

Seeing our old yachting friends, mostly in their seventies or eighties, all now three years older, this trip has become an exciting event with much swapping of news, eating and laughter. Jem and Jo Hall showed us the alterations on their newly acquired house. Very kindly she lent us her car for the duration of our stay in Picton which made a huge difference enabling us to organise ourselves for shopping, spare parts, mail and visits. Heather and Nick Fulton also showed us the alterations to their newly acquired house and took us on a day trip in their magnificent 32 ton launch "Lola". Norman Sawyer showed us the completed alteration and renovation of his central Picton apartment. A wonderful difference from when we last sighted it. Next day he disappeared off to Chile.

We broke bread with everybody a least twice either at their place, on board Avanti or at a restaurant which was a good way to catchup.

Brian and Vicky Eames from Fielding, long time friends from our yearlier yachting adventures in the Sounds and senior members of the 40 South Yacht Club (of which I am an honorary life member), were on their yacht at their club mooring located just off the Picton Marina. We enjoyed their company on many occasions during this stay and especially grateful for the gift of a large piece of eye filet steak.

Problems Big and Small

However foremost in my mind was fixing the boat problems.

These consisted:

(1) The boat was making a small amount of water through the rudder-post packing gland.

(2) Echo-sounder had failed. (Fixed)

(3) Bathroom LED lights had failed. (Fixed)

(4) Electric toothbrush charger had failed. (Fixed)

(5) Autohelm ST4000 standby electric self steering needed much repair. (Fixed)

(6) Lap top standby navigation computer not accepting ship's GPS position data - plug problem. (Working on it!)

As you can see I have tackled and solved problems #2 to #5. I have now tracked down the cause of the leak in problem #1, the most worrying. The lower rudder post bearing is always under water and the packing gland, which keeps the water out, is leaking. I have pumped grease into it with my grease gun which reduced the leak to a small trickle.

Although I have done it in the past, regrettably at 89 years old, I am no longer slim or agile

enough to wriggle down into that small space to tighten or to repack the gland which would stop the leak. If I did go down there there is a chance that I might never get out again. However there is no doubt that there are good (and hopefully slim) engineers in Nelson who will be up to the job. I am still working on the last problem.

There is always another Problem

During a cruise of this duration problems in yachts regularly occur and have to be tackled head on. Avanti is a complicated little ship and the various departments produce their own type of breakdowns. Electrical, electronic, computer, engineering, plumbing, hull, steering, anchors, sails, rigging and administration all have breakdowns that stretch the skipper's ability. If the skipper has sufficient experience and skills many can be solved inboard. Otherwise outside help must be called on. Encouraging the information to be transmitted from the big GPS set to the back-up laptop navigation computer (problem #6) looks like defeating me. However I will keep plugging on and may have a breakthrough. Otherwise I should forget about trying so hard and bring in the experts to have it attended to professionally - then bingo, done, no pain except in the hip pocket.

The Plan

At the moment we are moored in Cherry Tree Bay at the south eastern side of D'Urville Island. It is 4nm on to French Pass and 10nm further on we will have a two day visit in Croisilles Harbour. It is a further 40nm on to Nelson, where reside the engineers. My plan, as booked, is to berth at Nelson Marina on Sunday 29 January, when I can set about seeking help.

Cherry Tree Bay

It has been a stunning day where at Cherry Tree Bay, warm and cloudless in this beautiful bay with more good weather forecast. Tomorrow we make French Pass and once through that exciting waterway spend the day on a mooring in Coppermine Bay on the south coast of D'Urville Island. The next day move 14nm (3hrs) to Wairangi Bay in Croisilles Harbour to meet up with old friends Helen and KK Cheng from Hong Kong in their 11m launch "Out There" whom we haven't seen for three years. They spend three months each year living on their boat in Nelson Marina, he playing golf and both cruising the Nelson Coast and the Marlborough Sounds. Interesting that it is *her* boat and *she* is skipper. Also that she refers to her launch "Out There" as a *him* (not a her).

End of Chapter Five
2018 Summer Cruise of Avanti,,
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Written by M M (Bill) McIndoe
24 January 2018
Aboard Yacht Avanti
at Cherry Tree Bay
Near French Pass