

# Chapter Nine

## 2018 SUMMER CRUISE OF AVANTI

The 28th Voyage Dunedin to Nelson

Bill and Margaret McIndoe

### Cyclone Gita Approaches

For several days on the weather maps delivered from Avanti's Weather Fax machine, we have been watching Cyclone Gita gathering strength from the warm tropical waters and wrecking destruction in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. Lying south of New Caledonia it headed down the Coral Sea and into the Tasman Sea. Directed by high pressure areas to the west and east it headed between them for New Zealand. The weather fax maps, coming every two hours, clearly showed Gita is not far off, homing in on Cook Strait and Waikawa where we are berthed.

#### **Ready for the Worst**

I dug out all our heavy weather gear from deep in the quarter-berth locker and found my sea boots hidden on the shelf under the table. Lining them all up for instant wear when needed made me feel like a real sailor. Alas I had no opportunity to don the yellow oilies and look gallant and show bravery because the weather was not bad enough here for that.

#### **Destructive wind and rain**

Tropical Cyclone Gita seemed such a wild beast roaming the Tasman Sea with its single sullen cyclop's eye fixed on Cook Strait. Gales and torrential flood rain everywhere. In many parts of the country trees are down, power is out, roads are washed away and whole areas are cut off by massive road slips. State of Emergency was declared in many areas, farms and houses are flooded, rivers and streams in spate and citizens distraught. On Avanti in Waikawa Marina (near Picton) only light rain fell and no wind at all. Bright blue sky in the morning. Amazingly it missed us completely. We did feel rather special.

#### **Gita Day - Wednesday 21 February 2018**

23:45 I am restless in my mind and in my bunk. The eye of tropical depression Gita is over Waikawa. I can feel it. The rain has stopped and it is calm. Was that the center of the tropical depression? After listening on the radio to the emergency reports of heavy flooding rainfalls and gale force winds in areas close to Picton it is unreal to find these quiet conditions.

On my barograph the trace went steeply down to 993hkp but at 23:50 it started to rise and at 00:45 is reading 997hkp. This sharp rise seemed to indicate that the centre of the depression has passed over. What actually happened was that it divided, like an ameba, with one half oozing through Cook Strait into the Pacific and the other half stoically remaining in the Tasman Sea. This gave me pressure signals on my barograph and clear sky of its 993hkp center as though it had passed overhead but actually only half of it had.

#### **Still a Sting in the Tail**

Thursday 22/2/18. 03:30. At times of stress when cyclones are about sleep is at a premium. There is still a sting in the tropical depression. There have been isolated strong gusts of wind, then back to calm. The masthead spinnaker halyard, tailed with an additional line leading clear across the next door motor launch and secured to its pontoon held the mast steady and prevented the boat from rolling in the gusts. But the noise of heavy rain on the cabin top kept me from slumber. When afloat in a boat rain is only a bit more water and there is plenty of that around and the boat is mostly waterproof. It is the wind that concerns sailors.

In the grand saloon of Avanti we had a pleasant day sitting out Thursday. We partook of tea and biscuits, wrote on our iPads, read and played games. Margaret produced nice meals which we ate accompanied by friendly chat, Bach, Mozart and Chopin. A good day had by all even though it rained, and then rained some more.

### **Skipper's Night Rounds**

Night Rounds are a naval custom which I still adhere to. Every night at about 02:00 I rise from my bunk with the call of nature and while up I check out the boat. More thoroughly at such times as these of inclement weather. Most items on this list can be taken in at a sniff and a glance. Some may need to be properly investigated.

#### **Check List:**

- 1) All crew OK: are in their bunks, on deck, asleep, breathing normally, awake, seasick, sick?
- 2) Unusual smells: lpg, diesel fuel, main engine or diesel generator running and overheating, wiring overheating, smoke, vomit, toilet odour.
- 3) Unidentified noises: search and find the noise.
- 4) Bilges empty of water: remove the mat at foot of ladder, lift the floor hatch under, inspect bilges with a torch. If just a little water pump out with the "last drop pump". Quietly, don't wake the other crew.
- 5) Remote lpg gas valve switch "Off ": switch is on the switchboard above freezer. Should always be "Off" when stove not in use.
- 6) Changes of temperature, or extra heat: locate heat source - electric heater under the table, stove or gas boat heater left on or an overheating engine.
- 7) Noise of pumps still running: fresh water pump, anchor washdown pump, main bilge pump, last-drop secondary bilge pump, battery charger cooling fan, electric fan heater - investigate and turn off. The fridge unit is under the chart table and the deep freeze unit is in the aft end of the sail locker make a hardly discernible whirring noise and of course are not to be turned off.
- 8) Dribbling taps: turn off properly, especially the galley sink cold tap.
- 9) Sound of running water inside the boat: Try to locate source, alert the skipper.
- 10) Charge-level of ship's batteries: record reading of E-meter as a % (state of the batteries meter). If on shore power and if below 70% charge level turn on battery charger.
- 12) Electrical switches all in correct position - what is on should be on and what is of should be off. Note: not all switches still have red "On" lights.
- 13) No 12v electrical load left on that would drain the batteries unnecessarily: Deck and interior lights off (except anchor light at night). Warning lights and alarms at normal setting. Devices (iPads and iPhone) charging indicator lights normal. Required devices have been put on charge.

#### **If windy:**

- 14) Unusual noises from the mast: clacking of halyards. Loosen, hook halyards around steps on mast and retighten to stop noise.
- 15) Gear on deck secure: not loose or moving. Listen for noises, flapping of screens and covers, Go on deck and button or tie down.
- 16) Sails properly furled: go on deck and look. Take action as necessary.

#### **If raining**

- 17) Adjust ventilation openings: close up forward hatch, bathroom window, cockpit screen and put cockpit cushions away.
- 18) Bring in the washing: not too difficult.

#### **If at anchor:**

- 19) Ship is still in position as originally anchored and not dragging: Estimate visually, turn on echo-sounder, radar and/or chart plotter to check position,
- 20) Depth of water under the keel: turn on echo-sounder and compare with charted depth. Allow correction for state of tide.
- 21) Other anchored boats in the vicinity are at a safe distance: estimate visually with a torch, if in doubt turn on radar to measure.
- 22) Anchor chain on foredeck secure and snubber taking the weight: go up on foredeck and check all is well.
- 23) Dinghy and outboard properly secured and OK: go aft and look.
- 24) Anchor light burning brightly: take a peek.

Night rounds completed; what now?

Go back to bed and sleep peacefully for the rest of the night, what's left of it.

---

### **Arriving at Waikawa Marina**

We had only just arrived at our allocated berth and still tying up the boat when when Henry and Karen Zelas plus their handsome black poodle arrived to welcome us to Waikawa. Henry had written to say they had sold their yacht and had moved to the "dark side" of boating and purchased a 42 ft launch. Their newly purchased "Tasman Ranger" was 50m across the canal from Avanti; we could see each other across the water. The invitation to join them for afternoon tea was welcome. As usual the boating men rabbited on interminably about sails and engines and the latest pump disaster while the women talked about more civilize subjects. All good fun.

### **Jem's Kindness and a Trip to Blenheim**

I had rung Jem Hall while in Picton and arranged to meet at Waikawa when we got there. Kindness personified he came bustling down with invitation to dinner and offer of the use of Jo's car. Next day we were then able to drive to Blenheim to get Two Degrees to find the problem with Margaret's iPad that was driving her bananas. We drove the 3/4 hour to Blenheim and 2 Degrees (our server) who solved Margaret's iPad problem of "no service" in a trice. Simon had given her the iPad from Australia and although it worked OK in Dunedin it showed "no service" at top left of screen when we left home. Sometimes it worked and mostly it didn't. Unbeknownst to us, inside the iPad the SIM card was still an Australian card. That was the problem that 2° in Blenheim quickly discovered and swapped a new NZ card for a \$5 note. Fixed at last.

Margaret bought a large rectangular frozen pizza which we took to Jem and Jo's for lunch. It was a winner, the source of which must be remembered for the future. Jem and I can reminisce forever about our four years officer training together mainly in the UK with the Royal Navy during 1946 to 1950. Which was followed by service with the Royal New Zealand Navy in the Korean War and in other spheres. Lots of laughs.

### **Margaret's Small Adventure**

Margaret, wishing to visit her friend Gay Maxwell in Paekakariki near Wellington, jumped on a Bluebridge ferry at Picton and crossed Cook Strait. Berthing close to the railway station she walked across the road and caught the train which delivered her to her destination. There Gay's son picked her up and drove her out to Gay's house near the dark beach, facing the Tasman Sea. She will return to Avanti on Monday. On her own she looked great with her yellow and grey little rucksack, off on a lovely small adventure. My very own 87 year old backpacker. Go the ancient mariner.

She left me with a boat load of food and I must keep cooking and eating to even make a slight dent in it during the long weekend that she is away. It is a busy life when cruising in Avanti.

### **Bill's Bunk Light**

The reading light above my bunk had been slowly dying. One by one the LEDS had been going out like glow worms, until when it was down to two little lights I was compelled to read in bed using a headlamp like a speleologist. Because of its age the LED bulb to fit the lamp was no longer manufactured and I was unable to find a replacement. The only answer was to discard the old and bring in the new. Instead of having to go over to the yacht shop to purchase a lamp, to my joy I found in my electrical box not one, but two complete new bunk reading lights with LEDS. I must have bought them for some long-ago abandoned and forgotten project.

No problem, I'll have one of those installed in no time. However that is not the way things happen in yachts; it is always more complicated and takes longer than ever expected. The old lamp had a built in switch. The new had no switch so I had to drill and wire one into it. The attachment to the woodwork was cramped and complicated but I would overcome all adversity.

### **And on the Third Day**

One the third day the installation was completed. I know it did take a while and my sore back will improve but I also know it will not come off the wall with all the screws I put in and the light comes on and stays on when I pressed the switch. My headlamp, useful as it was, can again be retired to the engineer's toolbox where it belongs. I then lay down on my bunk with the paper to test the light for brilliance. Oh hell, its too bloody bright. Whatever will Margaret say when she returns tomorrow from Wellington. However I might just nod off and that problem will also go away.

Best regards to all,  
Bill

End of Chapter Nine  
Written by M M (Bill) McIndoe  
aboard Yacht Avanti  
Sunday 25 February, 2018  
Berth 24, Pontoon 6E  
Waikawa Marina  
Near Picton, New Zealand