

Cape to Rio-1971

In June last year (1970) it was decided that a Sea Scout crew would take part in the Rio-Race on board Mr Porzig's 50 foot cutter "Active".

Ten Scouts started training, which for the first three months consisted mainly of hard work in the form of a complete refit of the vessel. Of the original 10 Scouts five were chosen, namely John Ravenscroft of 1st Clifton, Alan Cook of 9th Cape Town Martin Slabber of 2nd Plumstead and Hein and Paul van Gysen of 1st Muizenberg. Brian Coxon of 1st Fish Hoek was reserve in case any mishap befell one of the other crew members.

Just before the race two training cruises - one to Saldanha Bay and one to Dassen Island - gave the boys some night sailing experience. The Dassen Island crayfish provided the Scouts with an experience of a different order.



Two days before the start of the race a Cocktail Party was held at Unities, where the Mayor of Cape Town gave a letter of goodwill to be handed over to the Governor of the State of Guanabara. At the same evening the Skipper, Mr E. Porzig, and the Navigator, Capt. D. Powell, received their Warrants as Hon. Commissioners from the Divisional Commissioner. The following evening we were honoured by the presence of the Chief Scout who flew down from Johannesburg to attend the Blue Peter farewell dinner for all competitors in the race. The Chief Scout came aboard Active to present us with a kudu horn which we were to present to the Scouts of Brazil on behalf of the Scouts of South Africa. During the race this horn gave off such an unearthly smell that life below decks became well-nigh unbearable.

After the hectic preparations it was quite a relief to leave moorings. Following the chaotic start we were divided up in watches which we would keep for the rest of the race. The three watch-keepers were Capt. Powell, Jeremy Porzig and Hein van Gysen. The first evening we were still in sight of other yachts as we raced neck-and-neck with Pen Duick, who overtook us after a few hours. For the first seven days we made good progress owing to a hard South-Easter, and only had one day's run out of these seven under 150 miles. In this period we were occupied by sewing sails which were torn soon after the start.

Practically the whole of the rest of the race was hampered by lack of wind, and although we were busy enough we often had to find relief from the heat by jumping over the side while one crew member kept watch with a revolver in case of sharks. We saw quite a few whales on the way and on the second last day one gave us an anxious time by crossing repeatedly underneath the boat. On night watches we were entertained by whistling noises of the dolphins. Once we had an opportunity to swim among them.

We sighted many flying fish. After many unsuccessful attempts to catch bonito, we managed to catch a few dorado for the frying pan. On the whole our food lasted quite well - onions, squash, carrots, tomatoes, oranges, apples and eggs. The bread developed psychedelic spots, which had to be removed. Most of the cheese had to be thrown overboard.

We crossed the finishing line at a snail's pace. The sound of the engine was like sweet music. We were welcomed at the jetty in Rio by a reporter of the Burger who stood us a beer. He also told us how to order beer in Portuguese. The three days in Rio were spent in hectic sight-seeing, visiting one of the Sea Scout troops, relaxing at the Yacht Club swimming pool, and drinking coconut-milk. The climate was warm and humid; worse than Durban in summer.

Immediately after the start of the Carnival we had to leave for Buenos Aires - a distance of 1200 miles which we did in 8 days. During this period we ran into a pampero and a S.East storm and we had some magnificent sailing. Buenos Aires only saw us for 36 hours, in which time we had to dismast and load the yacht on board Tafelberg. Once on board the Tafelberg our troubles were not yet over because we served as Quartermasters and had to stand watches.

Our appetite was a source of wonder to the South African Navy to such an extent that one of the Scouts was given the nickname of 'tapeworm'.

On Monday, 15th March, we arrived back in Table Bay and we were honoured that our Navigator, Capt. Powell could pilot the ship into the harbour himself. After two days of unloading Active and resteping the mast, we were back on the school benches.

Many thanks are due to our A. Div. Comm , Mr P. Irving (Rocky), whose background work made this trip possible for Sea Scouts.

Rein van Gysen

The Cape Western Scouter May 1971



HONOUR FOR SCOUTS: (Cape Times 1 April 1971)



The State President, Mr. J. J. Fouché (right) met the skipper and crew of the 15.2 m (50 ft.) Cape cutter *Active*, which was 45th on handicap in the Cape to Rio race, at Government House yesterday morning.

With Mr. Fouché, from right, are Mr. P. D. Irving, assistant divisional commissioner for the Cape Western Sea Scouts, Mr. Eric Porzig, skipper and owner of the yacht, Captain Dave Powell, navigator during the race, and three of the six sea scouts who crewed, Jeremy Porzig, Hein van Gysen and Martin Slabber.

Mr. Irving presented Mr. Fouché with the first of the fifty first-day covers of the Cape to Rio race for his stamp collection.



Commemorative Yacht Race Cover, 1971



Insert card

This is a commemorative cover that was carried aboard the Boy Scouts entry "SA-29 *Active*" in the South Africa 1971 Cape to Rio Ocean Yacht Race. It is understood this was the first ever participation by the Scout Movement in an international ocean yacht race. The cover was signed by all members of the Sea Scout crew. Only 50 covers were prepared of which half were offered to the public and another five auctioned for Scout funds.