

## SQUADRON CLASSIC *ZEUS II* OWNER COMMODORE JIM DUNSTAN, DESIGNER PROFESSOR PETER JOUBERT

BY MAX PRESS

Professor Peter Joubert on board *Zeus II* with Jim Dunstan.

The late Professor Peter Joubert AO was a successful yachtsman, boat designer, marine engineer, Emeritus Professor and a man of many remarkable skills and achievements. To Squadron Members, he is perhaps best known for designing Commodore Jim Dunstan's Currawong 30 *Zeus II*.



Joubert is the only amateur yacht designer to design a Sydney to Hobart overall winner. In 1981 Jim had contacted Joubert about raising the height of the mast by six inches, which was agreed, and had his sails made by Hugh Treharne. Jim also installed a longer tiller which he found worked in his favour.

Jim said that he had six crew on board: three for helming and extra work when needed, and three crew for other duties. In those days she had a 12hp Yanmar motor. The taller mast performed very well. Jim stayed well off the coast sailing down and kept away from the eastern coast of Tasmania to avoid fog. They eventually closed in to enter the estuary and the finish line upriver. It was a slow race which did not favour the larger yachts, nevertheless, *Zeus II* was remarkably well sailed and well-handled and was declared the overall winner. In the light winds of that race, *Zeus II* took five days and 13 hours to cross the

finish line. A delighted Joubert was the first to greet Jim as they docked in Hobart.

*Zeus II* later showed her prowess by coming second in the 2002 Hobart race, taking just three days and 21 hours to finish. On that occasion, Jim was beaten by Bob Steel in *Quest* by the slim margin of four and a half minutes. After 44 years, Jim still owns and races *Zeus II*.

Joubert's Currawong 30s are marvellous yachts. In the 1977 Hobart race, another Currawong, *Lollipop*, placed fourth overall, being beaten only by three Maxis!

Joubert designed Sandringham Yacht Club member Thorry Gunnensen's beautiful boat *Tilting at Windmills*. Another of his standout designs is *Berrimilla*, a Brolgo 33. Some years ago, she circumnavigated the globe. Having competed in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, she sailed from Hobart around Cape Horn to the UK where she sailed in the Fastnet race. After that, she returned, rounding Cape of Good Hope and the coast of Australia, in time to compete in the subsequent Sydney to Hobart race. Then she sailed the North West Passage (Canada) leaving America to starboard en route to the next Sydney to Hobart race.

Years before all this, Joubert had been working on a 30 Footer in his own backyard which was next to a vacant lot. 'I thought we'd just pull the fence down and take the completed yacht out through the empty block. But then the owners of the block built a house on it before I had finished the boat,' he recounted. 'I thought about getting a helicopter to lift her out into the street but then had a better idea. I gathered all the final year students and hired some scaffolding. We built a scaffold at either end of the boat, fitted chain blocks and lifted the boat up in the air!' He said that with the help of the scaffolding, the hardy students were then able to slide the hull up over the roof of his house and into the front yard, a feat which no doubt gave the neighbours something to talk about for many years!

More than 100 yachts have been built to his designs, including the Currawong 30, Brolga 33, Magpie 34 and the Cape Barren Goose 37.

Joubert was born in Manly in 1924 and his father was a shipping engineer. His love of boating started at an early age when he sailed in Vacluse



Juniors. He tested well at school and was transferred to Woollahra Special School for bright children. At Sydney Boys High he was found to be a good candidate for engineering. During the Second World War, he was selected to be a pilot and went to Temora where he trained on Tiger Moths. In 1945, at the height of the war in the Pacific, Joubert was a RAAF fighter pilot in Papua New Guinea. One day he found himself upside down, hanging by his straps under his stricken trainer Tiger Moth, its wheels tangled in thick Kunai grass after a troubled landing. It was a powerful lesson in the life-saving value of a seatbelt; one he would never forget. 'I landed a fraction short, and the plane slowly tipped over... crunch. Here was I, hanging in my straps with my head about a foot off the ground, and I would have poled my head into the ground without my straps. I would have been left a quadriplegic.' This experience inspired him to become a tireless campaigner for mandatory seatbelts in vehicles, as well as safety harnesses for yachts. For this achievement, he was awarded the Order of Australia in 1996.

After the war, Joubert completed his Matriculation and went to the Sydney University School of Engineering. There he worked on a radio-controlled glider before being approached to be a lecturer. He was then invited to supervise the building of a new wind tunnel at the University of Melbourne. He retired in 1989 but continued his work as an Emeritus Professor. He studied

separating flow on submarines when engaged in a turning manoeuvre and advised the Department of Defence and senior Naval Officers on the severe flow and noise problems on RAN's Collins Class submarines, introducing a modified design of the superstructure fin which significantly alleviated these problems.

Joubert was a fine yachtsman. He competed in 27 iterations of the gruelling 628nm Sydney to Hobart race. He survived the 1998 race storm despite his yacht being turned upside down before righting. In 1993 he was awarded the Commodore's Medal of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia for outstanding seamanship after his crew rescued eight survivors from a sinking yacht at night in strong gale.

Joubert was a long-time member of the Sandringham YC and the Melbourne Club and also of the CYCA. He stayed regularly at the Squadron whenever he was in Sydney. Peter Joubert was an extraordinary person, humble, genuine and friendly. His contribution to the sport of sailing and yachting was magnificent. He passed away in 2015 aged 91.

*Zeus II* is listed on the Squadron Yacht Register and still sailing well after 44 years; Commodore Jim Dunstan is her devoted skipper – it's almost a love story.

Credits: with thanks to Commodore Jim Dunstan, numerous RSYS Members, the late Peter Campbell and the Sandringham Yacht Club. ⚓