



Tracy Edwards Log Book

September 25th, 1989

What an unbelievable day! Everything that could go wrong did! Tanja had a drink of water when she got off watch and it was salty. I did the chat show quickly. We switched over to another water tank; then I stayed up a couple more hours as we were passing through Rocas and Fernandez Islands just off Natal. I finally got to sleep at 0130. Got up at 0230 to do the positions and lo and behold the other water tank was salty.

Dawn came off watch and we discussed the possibilities. We reckon that there has to be salt water leaking into one tank and then crossing over, rather than the water maker. Switched to another tank. Got the generator going and the water maker. More problems as the electronics in the control box have been ruined by salt water. Meanwhile we are over on our ears ploughing through squall after squall.

We finally got the water maker going. Dawn slept next to it. I grabbed an hour's kip and next thing I know I have water spraying in my face!

I leap out of my bunk and it turns out to be the tank manifold. Switched tanks and got back to sleep at 0530. Up at 0700 when Angela woke me to tell me there is salt water coming out of another tank.

We switched again but it's the same with all of them now. Dawn got up and we put our heads together to try and figure out the problem. I called the office through Portishead at 0800 and asked Dee to tell Duncan (yacht manager) that the water tanks are possibly leaching or the water maker is not working properly.

Meanwhile we had the Rucanor are still six miles in front but L'Esprit have taken miles out of us and are only 14 behind. Finished plotting positions and went back to the water maker. I pumped out the bilges; loads of water. While I was doing that we hit a really powerful squall – 26 knots in about 30 seconds. We all raced up on deck with our t-shirts on. The boat was on its side, Sal battled with the wheel and Michele and Tanja were valiantly trying to get the headsail down.



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I let vang and main sheet off. Blinding sheets of rain, I couldn't see or breathe, a truly terrifying experience. The sea was almost flattened by the wind, spray everywhere, visibility nil. It was also freezing cold. We got through that one and then the next one hit as we were taking a reef.

Then it was back to the water maker; by now we had decided to put water from that straight into containers. Jeni now joined in trying to work out where the salt water had come from that had shorted the fuse box. Meanwhile lots of bilge pumping going on.

By this time we had decided that it was in fact the water maker malfunctioning.

Great.

The girls started collecting rainwater. We worked out that we can in fact, if all else fails, use the hand held water makers to provide enough drinking water and live on crackers and chocolate if we couldn't make enough to rehydrate the freeze dried food. Not a hugely cheerful thought though!

Nancy pumped the water tanks dry by using the bilge pump connected to the water tank manifold, Jeni was still battling away with the water maker.

Dawn meanwhile was running up on deck to look after the watch when the squalls ripped through. I was in the Nav Station when someone stepped on my bunk and broke it – that upset me more than the prospect of dying! Then someone complained that the watch before always stole the chocolate biscuits and breathe!

Jeni and Dawn had a breather while I worked out a watch system for the hand pump. Then I broke into my coconut and we all had some. It was amazing to actually 'chew'; something instead of swallowing hot mush! A few more squalls zipped through and then we tried the water maker again. It worked! Dawn watched it for a couple of hours to make sure it was ok but all was fine. Jeni and Dawn are so bloody good at what they do. Thank God!



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The dinner time squall appeared without fail. I only got some of the positions at 2100 but L'Esprit has overtaken us. We gained two miles on Rucanor – they are now only four miles ahead. The weather has been growing constantly worse during the evening – pretty much staying at 21 knots at 40' apparent most of the time. We really feel like we are living on the edge. It is so tiring it really wears you down and I do wish I could just stop still sometimes – stop moving for a few seconds.

Miles to go: 2086

Position: 06°12'S 33°57'W

State of crew: Exhausted.

