

# From Ratbags to Respectability

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A history of the  
Cruising Yacht Club of Australia



CRUISING YACHT CLUB OF AUSTRALIA



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## THE HALVORSEN CREW

## Trygve and Magnus Halvorsen

Trygve and Magnus Halvorsen are among the most successful ocean racers ever to have sailed out of Sydney Heads. Their record performances in the Sydney-Hobart race – some records still stand and are unlikely ever to be broken – overshadow even their unquestioned distinction in boat building, yacht design (Trygve's great talent) and ocean yacht navigation (Magnus's self-taught speciality). Trygve joined the CYCA in 1946, Magnus a year later. For many years Trygve took an active role in the club on the Safety Committee and also serving on the Board of Directors.

Lars Halvorsen, their father, established a successful boat-building business in Sydney, turning out a significant number of vessels for the navy in World War II as well as a whole fleet of bareboat cruisers stationed at Bobbin Head that were famous for their ability to bear up under the mistakes of inexperienced charterers.

Magnus and Trygve together designed their first ocean racer *Saga*, which in the 1946 Sydney Hobart Yacht Race was becalmed for 11 hours at the mouth of the Derwent River and still managed to achieve second place! Their next yacht *Peer Gynt* was a solidly built 11-metre (36-foot) double-ender in which they took third in the 1947 Hobart race and two successive firsts in the Trans-Tasman races of 1948 and 1949. Their next yacht *Solveig* was lighter and a different shape; at this point Trygve had become the chief designer, drawing a succession plans for yachts that were to have an almost unbelievable record of success. A raw talent, he did it all just with a pencil and paper on the living room floor in front of the fire. *Solveig* won the 1951 Trans-Tasman race and got line honours (2<sup>nd</sup> on corrected time) in the 1953 Sydney Hobart. In 1954 both Halvorsens fell ill on the eve of the Hobart race, and their navigator, Stan Darling, took

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*Solveig* to Hobart with their experienced crew and won the race.

*Anitra V* was their next yacht, which also enjoyed remarkable success. She was a 11.6-metre (38-foot) double-ender, light – strip-planked in Canadian cedar – and could pace it downwind with *Solo* which was some eight metres longer! *Anitra's* Hobart race record under the Halvorsens was an amazing 2<sup>nd</sup> (1956), 1<sup>st</sup> (1957), 2<sup>nd</sup> (1958) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (1959).

With their next yacht *Norla*, they broke their tradition of naming yachts after Skandinavian legend and combined the first names of their wives, Noreen and Paula. She was 5<sup>th</sup> overall in the 1960 Sydney Hobart and 1<sup>st</sup> in the 1961 Trans-Tasman race.

During 1961 and 1962 the brothers became involved in the first Australian challenge for the America's Cup, Trygve acting as house captain in Newport and Magnus crewing on *Gretel*.

The Halvorsens' final yacht, perhaps the most triumphant, was *Freya*, a double-ended development of *Solveig*. She had a vertical spade rudder and long straight keel. She chalked up a Sydney Hobart Yacht Race record that is unlikely ever to be broken – a hat trick, three successive firsts on handicap in 1963-1965.