



CLUB MARINE

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Re-Member When



For the records

Barry Lawrence enjoys nothing more than heading offshore to fish aboard *Narmada*, his much-cherished Leeder flybridge cruiser.

Failing eyesight may have forced 78-year-old Barry Lawrence to relinquish control of his beloved 40ft Leeder Marine boat *Narmada*, but he's not holstering his fishing rod any time soon. Transferring part ownership to his son, David, Barry is happy for him to take the helm so he can continue to enjoy his monthly fishing expeditions with other members of Fremantle's Swan Yacht Club (SYC), where he has been a member since 1985.

Barry still enjoys deep-sea fishing, proudly holding two club records he's pretty confident

no one will ever beat. In 1998, it took him five minutes to calmly reel in an 18.9kg dhufish, 10nm south of Rottnest Island.

"If you get a samson fish or a shark, or something like that, they fight like buggery," he says, shrugging at how easy it was to land the record-holding fish.

He followed that fish with a 4kg skipjack in 2002 which, he boasts, is "huge for a skipjack."

Barry may be short in stature, but he lacks neither determination nor conviction. A champion

cyclist in his youth, he also raced go-karts and played lead guitar in local Perth band The Offsprings, later forming his own band, Bright Side. The prospect of owning a luxury boat had long been Barry's dream.

Born in Wiluna, WA, in 1938, Barry says he always liked the water. His first boat – a cheap secondhand bondwood dinghy – lasted one summer, until leaks and constant maintenance prompted him to purchase a clinker-built boat from a friend, for 100 pounds. Barry anchored the sturdier vessel off Margaret River only to wake the next morning with it nowhere to be seen. During the night, rough seas had lifted the anchor; the boat had drifted out, hit a reef and since then resides in Davy Jones' Locker.

Undeterred, Barry upgraded to the 18.5ft *Voyager* and joined the Offshore Angling Club, a local trailerboat fishing club that meets once a month for competitive fishing, with destinations ranging from Mandurah to Geraldton. His decision to sell *Voyager* some years later arose after an incident out of Jurien Bay.

"When we got out 20nm, it turned rough. The water was so high the swell was lifting the boat and pushing it nose-first into the next wave. One of the guys with a bigger boat stayed with me to make sure I got back home safely.

"The next week, I sold that boat and got the same one as my mate had – I saw the way it handled in the water and I was happy with that."

The boat was a 2.5-ton, 23.5ft Chivers named *Safari*. When it became too challenging to reverse *Safari* down his long, steep driveway, first moving four vehicles out of the way, Barry stored it in a pen at SYC.

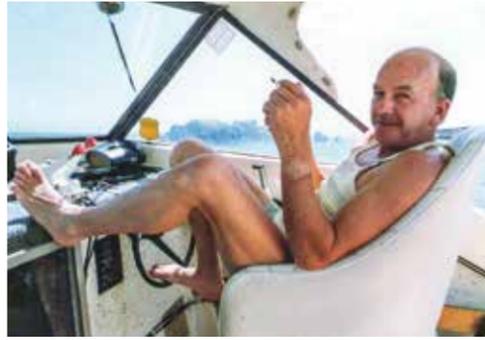
While GPS makes boating a breeze these days, Barry remembers the early days, when he navigated the Captain Jack Sparrow way by reading a compass and noting landmarks.

"You might drift 10 degrees too far to one side but, as you're coming in, you see your landmarks and just alter your course. If you had a rainy or misty day and you couldn't see land, you were in trouble! I've pulled in lots of guys who've needed a hand out there."

Besides his electrical business, Barry also ran a TAB shop, which he sold in 1995. While installing 240V electrical circuitry at the Leeder Marine factory, Perth, he spotted his next boat.



It's all about the fishing ... Barry displays some of his more notable hauls, including a club record 18.9kg dhufish (top).



master bedroom, a forward cabin with four bunks, a saloon that sleeps two more, a fully equipped bathroom and galley, and a rear fishing deck that can be hosed down.

No longer eligible to participate in trailerboat weekends, Barry left the Offshore Angling Club and ventured further out to sea with SYC. Ian Hall, Field Officer of SYC's angling section, says: "Baz was very competitive and took pride in winning our field days."

Barry was awarded Life Membership by SYC in 2015, thanks to his stint as Angling Captain from 2002 until 2010 and all the hard work he has put in to keep the angling section going.

As much as he loves heading out, the keen angler says it gets expensive fuelling a bigger boat in the search for a sweet fishing spot.

"If I had a trailerboat, I'd have no trouble because you tow it behind your car, drive up to Lancelin or wherever, and drop it in. *Narmada* is 40ft long – I can't pull that behind a car.

"With *Narmada*, I could go out sometimes 34nm to catch fish, but you're still limited. You can only catch one dhufish and two snapper – it's not really worthwhile going out that far for just two or three fish."

The experiences Barry has had were worthwhile, though, and he eagerly relates some stories.

"They were building a boat the size I was interested in, so I ordered one. The money from the sale of the TAB shop paid for it and they made the interior to my requirements."

In 1996, he pocketed the keys to his 40ft "floating hotel room", which he named *Narmada*. It included a

The prospect of owning a luxury boat had long been Barry's dream



Living the life ... Top: Barry does it tough on his Chivers Safari and (above) at the helm of *Narmada* (right).

"Fishing in *Narmada*, about 15nm out, I got a fish on and it pulled my rod out of the rodholder. My mate, Robbie, saw it go, dived straight in and grabbed it. He saved \$600 worth of rod!"

The 7kg dhufish remained hooked, so Barry was relieved to have it retrieved ... although he didn't consider diving overboard himself.

"I'm scared of sharks," he confesses.

While he has never seen a white pointer, Barry remembers the day he and his crew caught eight reef sharks and, on another trip, how one bloke took six hours to reel in an 8ft mako shark, which left teeth marks in the side of his boat.

The western side of Rottneest Island, where he's caught the most fish, is Barry's favourite fishing spot. Anchoring at Parker Point, at the island's south-east end, during summer and living on the boat for a few days with his wife, Pat, is also a favourite pastime.

"We'd relax in comfort with a million-dollar view."

Unfortunately, Pat doesn't share her husband's passion for the sea and isn't at all interested in fishing. Growing up in deepest, darkest Africa, she was 10 before ever seeing the ocean. Pat does, however, enjoy cruising up Swan River to watch the fireworks.

Pat says that on more than one occasion, she has been beside herself with fear when large swells pitched the boat onto its side. The most terrifying time was when driving through the heads at Fremantle toward Hillarys for the Bluewater Classic. *Narmada* twisted and tilted dramatically, with Pat clutching the side and fearing the worst, until the boat righted itself.

Barry explains the likelihood of *Narmada* capsizing is next to nil.

"There are two tons of motor down the bottom, and stabilisers. A small boat might capsize, but these big boats take a fair bit of turning over."

While his boats have endured plenty of nautical action, in 25 years as a Club Marine member, Barry has only ever once submitted a claim. Anchored overnight at Parker Point, he woke at 2am to a very strong wind. He'd had two anchors out, but says both anchors had grabbed weed during the night and couldn't hang on.

"*Narmada* drifted into a reef. A mate who was anchored nearby pulled me out into the open, but I couldn't drive the boat because the propellers were bent."



Narmada had hit submerged rocks and was towed back to SYC by Fremantle Sea Rescue. The repair was costly but, as Barry says: "Club Marine handled the claim with no hassles."

I couldn't drive the boat because the propellers were bent

On another occasion, *Narmada's* anchors had latched onto another boat's anchor.

"The boat twisted around and I had to put my inflatable boat between my boat and his so they didn't collide. I stayed up all night and at first light, dived and freed it from the other boat's anchor."

Barry may not miss those near disasters, but everything in his demeanour suggests he'd be behind the wheel of *Narmada* in a heartbeat if possible. While his failing eyesight doesn't allow that, he's still living life to the fullest and is as determined as ever to catch another record-breaking fish.

As he says: "Life is what you make it ... until you flop it!" 

If, like Barry, you enjoy nothing more than being on the water aboard your boat or PWC and you happen to look back on many years as a Club Marine member, we'd love to hear from you. Drop us a line by emailing magazine@clubmarine.com.au.

Happily land-locked Pat with seafaring hubby Barry.