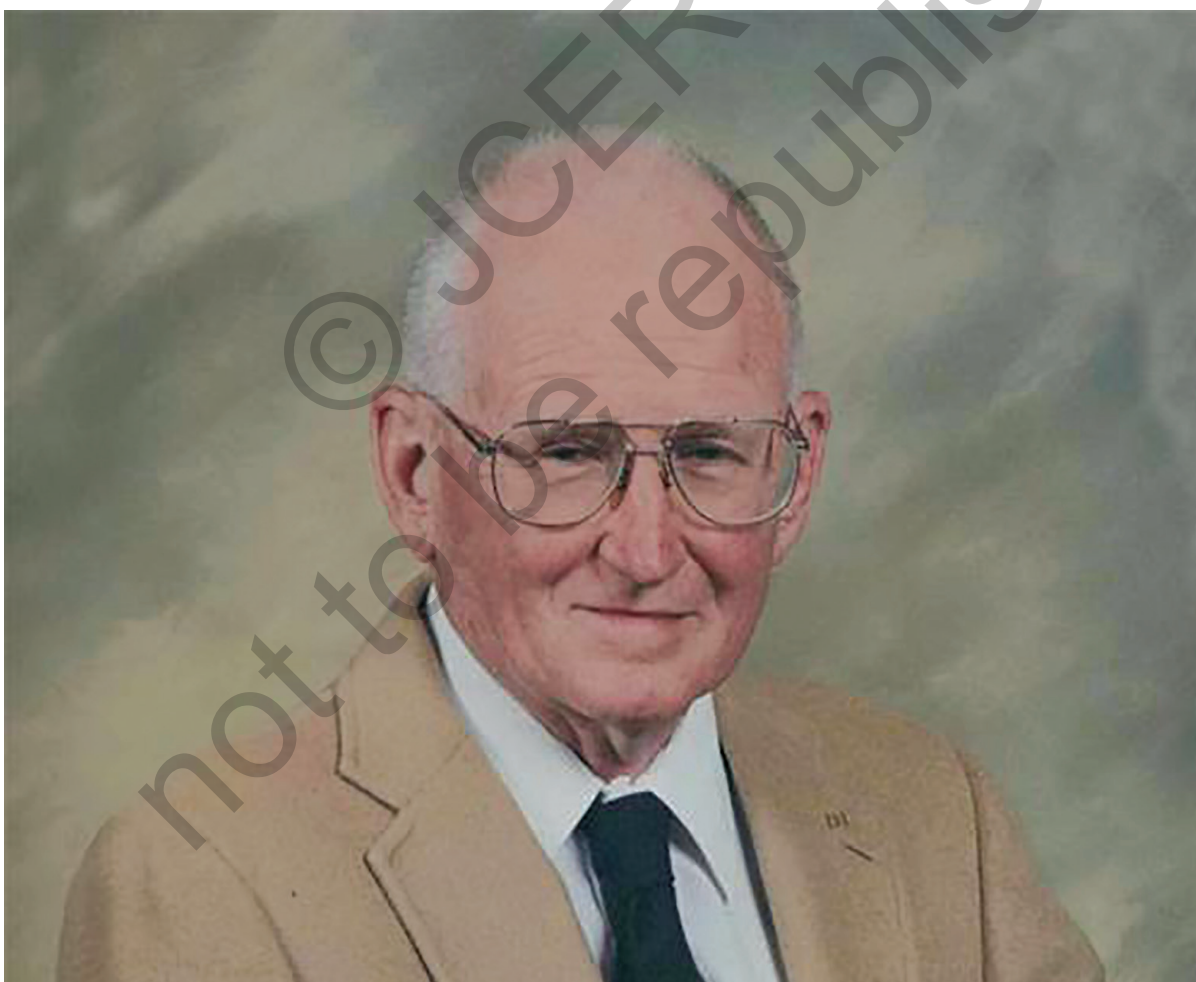


We're Not Afraid to Die... if We Can All Be Together



Gordon Cook and Alan East

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Cook (born in 1978) is a two-time Canadian Olympic sailor. He is the son of Stephen Cook and Linda Cook. He had a great interest in writing stories too. Alan was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2003 and has gained extensive experience as a litigator, manager and legal trainer. Alan is also the co-founder of a multi-academy trust Central Academies Trust.

INTRODUCTION

This is a story of extreme courage and skill exhibited by Gordon Cook, his family and crewmen in a war with water and waves for survival. The family celebrated their new year on board the ship.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The narrator is a 37 year old businessman. He and his wife Mary have dreamt to voyage around the world like the famous Captain James Cook. For this, they have been perfecting their seafaring skills for the past 16 years. They have got a professionally built, 23 metre and 30 ton wooden-hulled boat, Wavewalker. The boat has been tested for months in the roughest of the weathers.

In July 1976, the narrator, together with his wife and kids (son Jonathan, 6 and daughter Suzanne, 7) sets sail from Plymouth, England. The initial

period of the three-year journey (from the west coast of Africa to Cape Town) proves to be quite pleasant. Before heading east, they employ two crewmen, namely, Larry Vigil and Herb Seigler to help them tackle one of the roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean.

The second day they encounter strong winds and alarming waves. By December 25, they manage to reach 3,500 kilometres east of Cape Town. Despite the bad weather, the family celebrates Christmas on the boat. However, the weather worsens with the passing time. On the early morning of January 2, the family faces strong, mighty waves and screaming winds.

They attempt to slow down the boat by dropping the storm jib. They carry out life-raft drills and prepare themselves for the worst case scenario by donning life jackets and oilskins. Later in the evening, a “perfectly vertical”, huge, tremendous wave hits the deck of the boat, throwing the narrator off the boat. He accepts his ‘approaching death’ and begins to lose consciousness. The boat is just about to overturn when another huge wave comes and turns it right back. The narrator grabs the guard rails and sails into the boat’s main boom. He suffers injuries in his ribs and mouth.

Realising that the ship had water in its lower parts, he instructs Mary to take the wheel, while Larry and Herb pump out the water. He checks on the children in their cabin, where Sue informs him

about a bump on her head to which he does not pay much attention. The narrator begins waterproofing the gaping holes. Most of the water now deviated to the side.

However, their hand-pumps block due to debris and the electric-pump gets short-circuited. Fortunately, he finds a spare electric pump and connects it to an out-pipe in order to drain out the water. They keep pumping and steering all night long. Even their Mayday calls are not answered as they are in a remote corner of the world.

Sue's head swells, her eyes go black and has a deep cut on her arm. On being asked about her injuries, she replies to her father that she did not want to bother him when he was trying to save them. The family manages to survive for 15 hours since the wave hit the boat. The water levels are controlled to a considerable level but they still have leaks below the waterline. They decide to rest and work in rotations.

The wave had left Wavewalker in a considerably bad state. Since it is not in a condition to make them reach Australia, they decide and hope to reach the nearest island, Ile Amsterdam, a French scientific base. Unfortunately, the chances to reach the island are very slim unless the wind and seas subside. Besides, their supporting engine had also been damaged.

After pumping out the water for 36 hours continuously, they take a sigh of relief as just a few centimetres of

water is left to be pumped out. They decide to hoist the storm jib as the main mast is destroyed and head towards the supposed location of the islands. Having found some corned beef and crackers, they eat their first meal in two days. However, their relief is short-lived. The weather starts changing for the worse and by the morning of January 5, they are again left desperate.

As the narrator goes to comfort the children, he is left spellbound to see the fearlessness of his son, Jonathan, who says that he does not fear death as long as they all are together. This fills the narrator with determination and courage to fight the sea. He tries his best to protect the weakened starboard side. That evening, the narrator and his wife sit together holding hands, feeling hopeless and thinking that their end is approaching.

But still with all the moral support that he receives from his children, he continues his efforts. Fortunately, Wavewalker sails through the storm. He works on the wind speeds in order to calculate their exact position. While he is thinking, Sue gives him a greeting card expressing her love, gratitude and optimism.

Though he is not very convinced, he instructs Larry to steer a course of 185 degrees saying that if they are lucky they can hope to find the island by the evening. He then goes to sleep with a heavy heart. Fortunately, they sail on and manage to find Ile Amsterdam by

evening. On being informed about this, the narrator's joy knows no bounds.

MINDMAP



Jonathan calls him the “best captain” and the “best daddy” in the whole world. Soon, they get off-shore and struggle to reach the island with the help of its inhabitants. Stepping on the land after such turmoil fills the narrator's thoughts with cheerful and optimistic Larry and Herbie; supportive Mary; a brave seven-year-old girl who did not want her parents to worry about her head injuries and a six-year-old boy who is not afraid to die.

Important Word Notes

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. What part of the journey was pleasant for them?
 - (a) First part of the journey
 - (b) Last part of the journey
 - (c) First few months
 - (d) Never

Ans. (a) First part of the journey

2. When was the first indication of disaster?
 - (a) when it started raining
 - (b) next evening when the ship started creaking
 - (c) around 6 pm when winds dropped and sky grew darker
 - (d) when winds were strong

Ans. (c) around 6 pm when winds dropped and sky grew darker

Words	Meanings
Honing our seafaring skills	Improving our skills of travel by sea
Ominous silence	Inauspicious silence
A tousled head	Head having uncombed hair
Set sail	Started our journey by sea
Duplicate	To copy, To do it again
In the wake of	Happening after
Explorer	One who travels to seek knowledge
Hull	Outer body of a ship
Encounter	Experience, Face
Gale	Strong wind
Atrocious	Very Bad
Dawn	Morning
Gigantic	Very big; Enormous
Mooring rope	A rope used to tie a ship at the harbour
Stern	Back portion of ship
Aft of ship	Front portion of ship
Crest	Top portion of a wave
Capsize	Turn over in the water
Starboard side	Right side of ship

3. How many years they had spent honing their seafaring skills in British Waters?

- (a) 15 years (b) 16 years
(c) 17 years (d) 18 years

Ans. (b) 16 years

(a) Corned beef and cracker biscuits

(b) Bread and milk

(c) Noodles

(d) Meatloaves

4. What was their first meal in two days?

Ans. (a) Corned beef and cracker biscuits

5. What happened after the first indication of the disaster?
- (a) the ship turned upside down
 - (b) it broke the ship from inside
 - (c) a wave appeared vertical and almost twice the height of other waves
 - (d) it didn't affect the ship

Ans. (c) a wave appeared vertical and almost twice the height of other waves

6. Why did the author hire the two crewmen?
- (a) to take rest from long the voyage
 - (b) he wanted to spend some time with his family
 - (c) as he could no longer sail the ship
 - (d) to help tackle one of the world's roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean

Ans. (d) to help tackle one of the world's roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean

7. When did they reach Ile Amsterdam?
- (a) at 11 in the next morning
 - (b) never reached there
 - (c) around 6 pm in the evening
 - (d) they decided to take different route

Ans. (c) around 6 pm in the evening

8. What happened to the author's body when he managed to reach the deck?
- (a) his head smashed again
 - (b) his left ribs cracked, mouth filled with blood and broken teeth
 - (c) he broke his leg
 - (d) his broke his left hand

Ans. (b) his left ribs cracked, mouth filled with blood and broken teeth

9. What happened after the hand pumps started to block up with the debris floating around the cabins?
- (a) by repairing hand pump
 - (b) by taking out water with the help of bucket
 - (c) the author connected an electric-pump to an out-pipe
 - (d) the author found another hand pump

Ans. the author connected an electric-pump to an out-pipe

10. What had happened to Sue when the author entered their room to check on them?
- (a) her hands were hurt
 - (b) She was unconscious
 - (c) her head was hurt as there was a bump
 - (d) she was fine

Ans. (c) her head was hurt as there was a bump

SHORT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. What did the narrator plan to do? What preparations did he make for it?

Ans. The narrator planned to go on a round-the-world sea voyage on the same pattern as Captain James Cook had done 200 years earlier. For the past 16 years, he and his wife had spent all their leisure time honing their seafaring skills in British waters.

2. Whom did the narrator employ and why? When did he do so?

Ans. The narrator employed two crewmen—American Larry Vigil and Swiss Herb Seigler in order to help them tackle the southern Indian Ocean which is known as one of the roughest seas of the world. He engaged them before leaving Cape Town.

3. How did they celebrate the Christmas holidays?

Ans. They were 3,500 kilometres east of Cape Town on 25 December. The weather was very bad. Still they had a wonderful holiday—complete with a Christmas tree. New Year's Day saw no improvement in weather.

4. How did the weather change on January 2? How did they feel?

Ans. The weather changed for the worse on January 2. Now the waves were gigantic. As the ship rose to the top of each wave, they saw endless enormous seas roll-

ing towards them. The screaming of the wind and spray was painful to the ears.

5. How did the narrator react to the problems? What does it reveal?

Ans. The narrator did not lose his calm or courage in the face of problems. He thought calmly. Then he remembered that they had another electric pump under the chart room floor. He found it in working order. They were not getting any reply to their distress radio signals. He was not surprised as they were in a remote corner of the world.

LONG QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Describe the harrowing experience of the narrator as mighty waves hit "Wave walker" in the southern Indian Ocean.

Ans. A mighty wave hit the stem of their ship 'Wavewalker' in the evening of 2nd January. A tremendous explosion shook the deck. A torrent of green and white water broke over the ship. The narrator's head struck against the wheel. He was swept overboard. He was sinking below the waves and losing his consciousness. He accepted his approaching death. He felt quite peaceful.

Suddenly, his head appeared out of water. A few metres away, 'Wavewalker' was turning over in water. Her masts were almost

horizontal. Then a wave hurled her upright. The narrator's lifeline jerked taut. He grabbed the guard rails and sailed through the air into Wavewalker's main boom. Succeeding waves tossed him around the deck like a rag doll. His left ribs cracked. His mouth was filled with blood and broken teeth. Somehow, he found the wheel, lined up the stem for the next wave and held it tightly.

2. What efforts did the narrator make to save the ship and its passengers?

Ans. At first he slowed down the ship. He dropped the storm jib and lashed heavy mooring rope in a loop across the stem. They double fastened everything. They attached life lines, put on waterproof clothes and life jackets. After being hit by the first mighty wave, the narrator handed over the wheel to Mary. He stretched

canvas and fastened waterproof hatch covers across the gaping holes in the starboard side. As the two hand pumps got blocked and the electric pump short circuited, he found another electric pump and started it.

Then he checked his charts and started searching for an island—Ile Amsterdam. He got a reading on the sextant. He worked on wind speeds, changes of course, drift and current. He calculated their position. He checked and rechecked his calculations. They had lost their main compass. He made a allowance for magnetic variation in the spare one and also of the influence of the westerly currents. Then he asked Larry to steer a course of 185 degrees. They succeeded in reaching Ile Amsterdam island after 4 hours.