

# Survive the Savage Sea by Dougal Robertson (1973)

Dougal & Lynn were poor dairy farmers in England with their 4 children when they decided to sell everything & sail around the world. They bought a 50 yr old 43' sail boat. The kids were 19, 18 & 12 yr twins when they set out in 1971. They sailed across the Atlantic & by 1972 their oldest fell in love & stayed in the Bahamas. They picked up a new crew member in Panama on their way to the Galapagos Islands.

6.15.72 three killer whales struck the boat & it went down in minutes. They grabbed what they could & jumped in the life boat with the dingy tied to it. Water jugs had no air & sunk. The dingy got swamped but was bailed out later. Trying to row 200 miles against the current back to the Galapagos Islands was out of the question so they would have to travel 1050 miles with current & wind back to Central America.

They had 18 pints of water & minimal food & supplies. Fish & turtles were attracted to their life raft which attracted sharks. They were thankful when it rained or a flying fish landed in the dingy & when they caught a turtle [sometimes with eggs] or fish. It was exhausting constantly blowing air back into the leaky raft. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day they saw a ship, sent up a flare but were not seen. They chose to survive.

While others tried to rest, the watchkeeper kept a lookout for ships, baled water & blew up the raft. Sunny days helped dry out the fish or turtle meat but was hot. Clouds brought rain, but also waves & dampness made the meat rotten. He would avoid fishing when sharks were around [they severed the fishing line]. They drank the blood from the turtle but threw out the kidney [they heard it was bad for you].

It took 13 days to travel 400 miles north to the Doldrums [little wind, but lots of rain & food]. Day 15 they were able to save 3.5 gal of rainwater & the dingy broke loose. He had to swim 200 yds to get it & paddle quickly back to the raft. Thankfully the sharks were not interested in him right then. Some water had too much salt so Lynn administered enemas to them to absorb water that was undrinkable.

Day 17 they had to abandon the sinking raft & move to the dingy [not designed for that much weight]. With only 6" of freeboard they had to counterbalance any shifting weight. He attached a floatation collar [later developed a leak & had to be fixed] from the raft to the dingy, added a sail & sun canopy. The fiberglass dingy was not comfortable, but they were not sitting in a puddle of water [so their boils started to heal], they didn't have to keep it blown up, they didn't have to bail as often & sharks didn't pump against them.

Food & rain were more plentiful now. There was a 12-hr downpour that required constant bailing. Due to dampness a lot of meat had to be thrown out. Day 24 they were halfway to land. Day 38 they saw a ship & lit a flare & they were saved 300 miles from land. Seeing the ship come to save them he realized he would never experience another such pinnacle of contentment.

Note: Synthetic ropes resist knotting unless the ends are lashed with cord. Turtle fat was separated & the oil was used as an ointment. The best place to hook [gaff] a fish is within 6" behind the head. An umbrella will help keep sun off & catch rain. Do NOT drink salt water.

Quotes: "You've got to get up to survive." "anesthesia by exhaustion"

Definitions:

- 3- servile = subservient
- 4- privations = hardships
- 11- anachronisms = relics
- 16- Genoa = large sail used in light winds
- 19- bilious = sickly
- 20- garboard = hull plank
- 22- ruefully = regretfully
- 28- dead reckoning = estimation of position
- 30- gagged = silenced
- 32- painter = rope used to tow a boat
- 32- gunwale = top of boat's side
- 32- bellows = an instrument to blow air
- 35- yawed = to turn sideways
- 38- drogues = sea anchor
- 41- thwart = prevent
- 43- reef = to reduce the sail area
- 45- combers = waves
- 45- facetious = silly
- 61- occluded = blocked
- 67- stream = unbroken flow
- 77- tripped = actuate a device
- 77- sea anchor = water parachute to reduce wind drift [leeway]
- 77- offal = discarded insides
- 79- kapok = tree fibers used for old life vests
- 80- specter = threat
- 83- impertinence = disrespect
- 83- unsavory = distasteful
- 83- owlshly = resembling an owl
- 83- misgivings = doubts
- 87- gaped = stared
- 89- stoical = longsuffering
- 89- inconsequential = insignificant
- 94- serum = watery fluid
- 97- cockleshell = light flimsy boat
- 99- freeboard = distance from water to top of boat's side
- 100- suppurating = weeping
- 100- desultory = random
- 102- livid = furious
- 103- yawned = stretched
- 103- demurred = protested

103- strop = huff  
106- even keel = without leaning a boat  
106- leeboard = boards used to prevent drifting  
107- abaft = near stern [aft]  
107- larder = pantry  
109- festooned = decorated  
110- shoal = shallow  
111- scull = paddle  
112- hitherto = before  
115- onerous = difficult  
123- shipping = taking on?  
125- veritable = real  
125- soused = soaked  
126- sluiced = rinsed  
128- tumult = uproar  
129- spume = spray  
129- succor = help  
131- automations = robotic  
133- foment = provoke  
133- contrite = sorry  
135- arduous = difficult  
135- imbibed = drank  
136- spar = mast  
138- broached = accidentally turning sideways  
138- starboard = right side [portside = left]  
139- hove = yanked  
140- chapaties = like a tortilla  
141- apothecary = pharmacy  
141- panacea = cure-all  
141- impervious = water-resistant  
142- gaff = spear  
142- coddled = pampered  
145- thole = endure?  
149- petulant = grumpy  
150- limpid = transparent  
151- coup de grace = finishing blow  
153- luscious = juicy  
153- phosphorescent = enduring luminescence  
154- luminescence = light  
154- torpor = inactivity  
155- strontium = malleable metallic element  
155- acrimony = spite  
158- engendered = caused  
158- deprivation = lack  
158- recrimination = blame  
158- reconciliation = reunion  
161- harangue = lecture  
163- ministration = care

163- oblivion = forgetfulness  
163- usurping = assuming  
164- delirium = confusion  
166- iridescent = shimmery  
167- roe = eggs  
167- decanted = emptied  
168- semi-delirium = confused state of mind  
169- alacrity = eagerness  
171- conciliator = peacemaker  
172- unbidden = uninvited  
175- rigger = rugby  
176- bric-a-brac = junk  
176- offing = near future  
178- churlish = rude  
178- sodden = soaked  
178- aboriginal = native  
180- helmsman = person who steers  
180- chortled = laughed  
180- indefatigably = tirelessly  
193- bulwark = side of a ship  
201- focsle = cabin nearest the bow  
201- abrogation = retraction  
202- congee = rice porridge  
216- wantonly = shamelessly  
221- ponderous = laborious  
221- irreparable = permanent  
233- heliograph = mirror  
238- drogue = pocket of fabric below raft  
239- specious = false  
240- pompous = arrogant  
241- caul = inner fetal membrane?  
247- voracious = ravenous