

Basic Detail Report

ANMS1170

Title

Scrapbooks relating to yacht racing and the Halvorsen family

Date

1950 - 1955

Medium

Paper based material

Name

Archive series

History

Lars Halvorsen (1887 - 1936) was a Norwegian boat builder who, after struggling to create a successful boat-building business, migrated to South Africa in 1922 and Australia in 1925. Halvorsen began working from a small rented boat shed in Drummoyne, Sydney, with his eldest son Harold. After his first commission (a yacht) Halvorsen quickly received more work constructing cruising racers. He also began building the first of several 'Missionary boats' for the Seventh Day Adventist church. Requiring a larger premises, the fledgling business moved to a boat shed at Careening Cove, and in 1927 to Lloyd's yard at Neutral Bay. In 1928 Lars Halvorsen built Sydney's first trailer boat - a dinghy with an outboard motor. In the same year, Halvorsen was given the commission to build the MIRAMAR II. Described in the press as a 'floating palace', it was a 75-foot sea-going motor cruiser and was reportedly the largest and most luxurious boat on Sydney Harbour. Lars Halvorsen trained his sons to be shipwrights from the age of fourteen and they progressively joined the company; Carl in 1927, Bjarne in 1930, Magnus in 1932, and Trygve in 1934. His daughter Elnor joined in 1928, working with her mother Bergithe and the youngest daughter Margit, who worked as secretary of the growing business from 1939. Following the death of Lars Halvorsen at the age of 49 in 1936, Lars Halvorsen Sons Pty Ltd was formed with Harold as Chairman, Managing Director and principle designer, and Carl as Sales Director. The Halvorsens rented boats and established a speedboat joyride operation on Sydney Harbour during the 1930s and Halvorsen-built boats gained an increasing reputation for their quality workmanship. In 1940 Lars Halvorsen Sons Pty Ltd purchased a five acre property on the Parramatta River at Ryde and production moved from the Neutral Bay boatshed, which was retained as a service branch, to the new boatshed. The Ryde facility was the largest boatyard in the southern hemisphere, with an engineering section, blacksmith and lumber shops, stores, machine shop, plumbers shop, sheet metal shop, fuelling facilities and five slip-ways for craft up to 90 feet and 100 tons. During World War II owners of boats over 40 feet in length were asked to hand over their vessels to the government for the war effort and were refitted for military use. Over 200 boats built by Lars Halvorsen Sons were deployed by the Australian, United States and Dutch forces during the war, including 178 air-sea rescue boats (38-foot) and sixteen Fairmile-Class armed motor launches (112-foot).

Halvorsen-built boats were among the vessels that successfully depth-charged one of the midget submarines that attacked Sydney Harbour in June 1942. The momentum of war time production continued into the 1950s with the manufacture of cruisers and the subsequent establishment of a large hire fleet at Bobbin Head, on Pittwater north of Sydney in the late 1940s. During the 1950s, 'hiring a Halvorsen' and taking a trip up the Hawkesbury River became something of a Sydney institution. From 1926 to 1976 the Halvorsens built 1,299 vessels including motor cruisers, launches, tenders, yachts, tugs, mission boats, fishing boats and military craft. Halvorsen boats were a prominent feature on many Australian waterways, and the Halvorsen cruiser was a favourite pleasure craft for many holiday makers. They were widely respected vessels and are well remembered by those who owned or worked with them.