

feature

Restoration

WORDS BY **KIA KOROPP**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KIA KOROPP**  
AND **SUPPLIED**

# The GOOD DOCTOR

The popular children's author Dr Seuss provided the inspiration for an Auckland schoolboy's remarkable restoration of a 1980s Vistacraft V17. Turns out the project drew on plenty of life's lessons contained in the good doctor's books.



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ne of Seuss' more memorable books starts with the words "I do not like green eggs and ham."

The book – *Green Eggs and Ham* – was the result of a challenge laid on Theodor Geisel, aka Dr Seuss,

by his editor to write a book with less than 225 words: 'short and powerful'. Seuss produced a children's classic using only 50 words. It won the fourth best-selling English language children's hardcover book in 2011.

"Limited vocabulary but unlimited exuberance of illustration" was one review of *Green Eggs and Ham*. A modified version of that review can be applied to 15-year old Logan Walesby – a young man who succeeded where others had failed – who took on the challenge of turning a neglected ruin of a boat into his own success story.

*"Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!" – D.S.*

The vision to take on the rebuild of the Vistacraft wasn't an original one. The boat had been picked up twice before by previous owners who saw the potential and thought an overhaul would be worth doing.

The hull, a solid fibreglass shell, was stripped bare but intact. But as so many who have taken on such projects know, the thought and the reality are often two very different propositions. Each owner eventually sold the boat 'as is,' having given up on the project.

To quote Dr Seuss, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." While Logan wasn't the first person with the vision, perhaps he was the first who cared a whole awful lot.

Logan was directed to the boat on a TradeMe listing by schoolmate Eddie Robinson and decided it was a project worth taking on: "I instantly thought the boat had potential and began investigating the hull and what was needed to restore the boat." After researching the cost of restoration, he found capital through the sale of his 12ft Fyran timny and purchased the V17 and trailer for \$1,500.

She'd sat swamped and neglected in the back paddock of a property in Thames for the previous two years. Logan and his stepfather, Rob Smith, drove out to retrieve and move her to her new home, the carport of his family home in Auckland.

Logan worked hard over the next six months to

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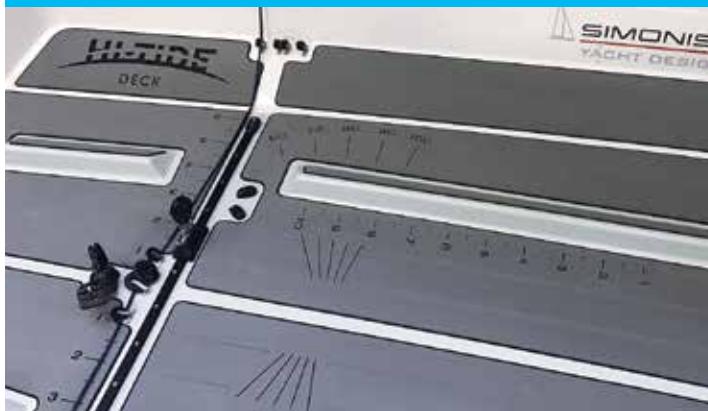
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advance his new project from bare hull to a fully-refurbished runabout. The process started with the gruelling task of grinding and filling fibreglass, sanding and masking.

"I began by cleaning it up and creating a blank canvas. I filled the numerous holes scattered around the rear end of the boat and began the never-ending process of sanding."

To achieve the smooth finish he desired, Logan's father taught him how to sand the entire hull by hand, a process that took over two hundred hours. "This taught me that the most time-consuming and the most important part of a job is the preparation."

Preparation, while a critical to all first stages of any project, can only get you so far. Funding the overhaul of any vessel, no matter how small, is a big financial undertaking. As a Year 10 student, Logan was short of both time and money. Having to maintain grades and extracurricular activities, he was under pressure to keep the project running.

"In my spare time during the holidays, I worked part-time jobs to give me the funds for the project."

**ABOVE & RIGHT** Well on the way to a stunning transformation – the old Vistacraft had been lying in a paddock before Logan noticed her.

**BETWEEN & OPPOSITE** The finished boat and the young skipper at the helm.





Through odd jobs and reselling goods, Logan was able to fund the initial 80% of the project. Borrowing the last 20% from his family, he is now working at repaying his debt – pride of ownership is entirely his own.

Given financial constraints, Logan needed to find premium parts through the most cost-effective means. “Through this whole project I was researching every product to find the best options while still having high quality to prevent over-capitalising on the boat.”

This research took him further afield than TradeMe purchases and Westhaven marine shops. During a trip to America, Logan filled his suitcase with two swimming platforms he was able to source at a lower cost than what he was able to find in New Zealand. “If you have brains in your head. You have feel in your shoes...” and in Logan’s case, more steel in your pack and cash in your pocket. Take that lesson in ingenuity, Dr Seuss!

As with all good success stories, the end result always comes down to the effectiveness of a good support team. With the support of some connected friends in the marine industry, he was going for quality down to the last coat of paint. His father, Nathan Walesby and cousin, Sam Walesby, helped sand and paint the hull.

Smuggler Marine’s David Pringle contributed a free-standing console unit and provided interior carpeting at



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cost price. Chris Caddell (Marine Technical Services) converted a second-hand long-shaft 2004 Yamaha 90hp to a short-shaft to fit the vessel's transom.

"I caught the bus from school into town every day to work on the boat in Caddell's Westhaven-based workshop with both him and my dad," reflects Logan of that stage in the rebuild. "It was amazing when the engine was bolted to back of the boat and it was running – all the work on the boat worth it for that one moment."

"You can get help from your teachers, but you are going to have to learn a lot by yourself, sitting alone in a room."

As pointed out by Dr Seuss and valued by Logan, lessons are learned by execution rather than observation. While the equipment and services offered by Logan's support team were invaluable, he was also determined that he was personally involved in every step of the rebuild process.

After purchasing and installing the electronics into the console

unit, Logan worked side-by-side with his father to learn how to run the wiring and crimp connections for the Raymarine chartplotter, stereo, switch panel, USB ports and interior lighting, providing invaluable hands-on experience in wiring and electrics.

"I mounted the battery, isolator switch and cabling. From there I learnt how to connect a switch panel and make everything work. LED lighting has been used throughout the boat to create a low-consumption lighting feature, including underwater lights." The refit was going to be Grade-A and complete down to the last detail, and Logan was a part of the process every step of the way.

From bare hull to a complete rebuild within an impressive six-month timeframe, *Dr Seuss* has been given a new lease on life and her captain has gained a few new tricks up his sleeve. Like *Green Eggs and Ham*, the story of *Dr Seuss* – the boat – is at its strongest behind the front cover. As Logan proves, young can be inspirational.

And now it's time to play with *Dr Seuss*. With 36 hours put on the boat since her re-launch, Logan can be found rafted up with his mates off Waiheke Island, fishing off the shores of the Eastern Bays beaches or wake-boarding in the Hauraki Gulf. His goal is to finish school, buy a car and set off around New Zealand with boat in tow.

So when you see a young man behind the helm of a gleaming Vistacraft V17, make sure to salute in passing – he deserves a few accolades for teaching us the value of setting your mind to something and seeing it through to the end. "Don't cry because it is over. Smile because it happened." **BNZ**



LEFT A solid partnership – Nathan and Logan.

*If you never did, you should. These things are fun and fun is good!" – D.S.*