



Sailing with Moko the Dolphin

By Stephane Tiedemann

A couple of years ago my Dad celebrated his 75th birthday.

He had been complaining about not being able to sail any more because he no longer had the strength. So I decided to buy him a boat for his birthday, a that was small and light, yet big enough for an adult to sail. That was when we discovered 'Puddles' the Firebug was for sale.

We do most of our sailing at Mahia, on the East Coast of New Zealand, which happened to be the home of Moko the dolphin. We soon discovered that Moko also thought Puddles was a nice boat and decided a Firebug was a good toy to play with. My Dad and I both had several experiences of Moko deliberately swimming in front of the centreboard, bringing the boat to a sudden stop. The cheeky dolphin would then swim around to the stern and push on the rudder, causing the boat to perform a complete circle on the spot. Needless to say, my Dad at age 75 and slightly frail, wasn't too

impressed by Moko's behaviour but we both realised what a special experience this was. Other memories include Moko rubbing up alongside the boat and showering us with spray from its blowhole (Moko was longer than the Firebug). Moko would also wait until the Firebug got up to speed, surf alongside the boat, disappear under the stern then lift the back of the boat up so that the nose would dive under!

Moko passed away about a year ago, but gave us an experience we will never forget. 'Puddles' the trusty Firebug continues to sail the waters of Mahia and is now giving the next generation of family members (especially my three year old daughter) their own fond sailing experiences to remember.

Artwork by Fran from the Netherlands