

Stowaway moggy gets her sea legs on tanker

By ROB MAETZIG

TARANAKI'S globe-trotting cat, Colin's, was seasick for two days — but now she's a real sailor, says the master of the methanol tanker inadvertently carrying her to South Korea.

"The cat is healthy and well," said Captain S. Chang in a faxed message to The Daily News from his vessel Tomiwaka, somewhere north of Papua-New Guinea yesterday.

"She's having a most good time in our second engineer's cabin, sleeping on the sofa and sometimes wandering around inside the bridge and on the bridge deck."

Captain Chang said Colin's appeared to be seasick for about two days after the Tomiwaka sailed from Port Taranaki on November 15.

"But, after that, it has been maintained a good and healthy condition. The cat has been eating the salmon fish, beef, and some cookies. She likes to eat salmon fish than other feed."

The cat is on her unscheduled trip after being taken aboard at Port Taranaki for a feed and then falling asleep.

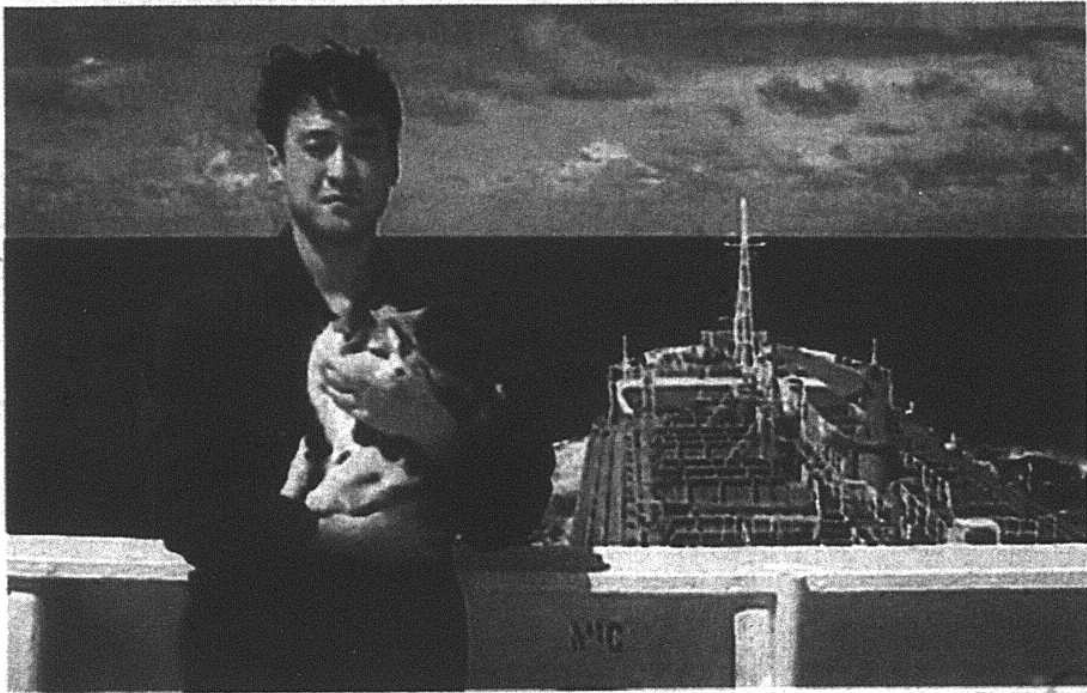
Initially, it was hoped a ship-to-ship transfer would take place off the Korean coast to another tanker heading back to New Zealand. But now it seems Colin's may go on to Japan, where it is hoped the Tomiwaka can meet up with a Kiwi-bound tanker.

"Our logistics staff in Auckland are trying their darnedest to work something out," said Methanex New Zealand spokesperson Gerry Kennedy yesterday.

"You wouldn't believe the number of our people who are involved in this cat saga. It's good though — all this for one little puss. We're confident we'll be able to get the cat back."

Ms Kennedy said the Tomiwaka was to be retired after its run from Port Taranaki to Korea, and Methanex was trying to establish if the tanker would then sail to Japan before heading to the breaker's yards.

"We hope that's what will happen, because there's plenty of tankers sailing from Japan to New Zealand under charter to us. It



AT SEA: Colin's, safe in the arms of a crewman on the Tomiwaka yesterday.

Photo: TVNZ



PUSS PAPERWORK: New Plymouth shipping agent Larry Stewart with e-mails and faxes relating to Colin's.

Photo: TREVOR READ

would certainly make the problem easier," she said.

Meanwhile, Colin's may not have been aware of it as she continued to eat and sleep her way towards Korea, but yesterday, in New Zealand, she was rapidly becoming a media celebrity.

New Plymouth shipping agent Larry Stewart and Port Taranaki staff spent most of the day being interviewed by newspaper, television and radio reporters as the media turned its attention to the cat's plight.

And as the news spread of the little cat's great adventure, so did the stories.

"When we had a lot of coastal tankers calling here, she used to go

aboard all of them," recalled former Port Taranaki employee Charlie Potts yesterday.

"All the cooks used to feed her. Then she'd sit at the end of the gangway and watch what was going on until the tanker sailed.

"She only ever went on board the local tankers though. She'd never go on to a foreign boat. Maybe she didn't like the smell of garlic," said Mr Potts, now retired.

She even has an official staff identification card with photo, and a job description of fridge security.

Colin's — so named because she was adopted by a port employee named Colin — has lived at the port's tanker terminal for the past nine years.

Westgate Port Taranaki Staff Identification Card



Issued
Sep-99

Collnz
FRIDGE SECURITY
Signed *Rue*

CAT CARD: The missing moggy's (mis-spelled) ID card.

How she came to end up aboard the Tomiwaka and on her way to Korea is contained in a message from the master of the tanker to Larry Stewart. It reads:

"Good morning! Mr Larry. Currently our 2nd engineer has managed the cat. He said that the cat was following him by crying and supposed the reason of crying may be hungry.

"Therefore, he brought the cat on board to give some food and intended to land ashore again prior to sailing, but he forgot it due to sleeping.

"Therefore, please advise what kind of measure I can take if necessary. I will do all necessary steps to follow your requirements, if any."