

Award-winning author Janet Hunt wrote the following story in 1985 but before it could be published, the *Rainbow Warrior* was bombed and it never reached the press. With the peace march coming up, it seems just as pertinent now as it did 24 years ago.

## Voyage for peace

It was near midnight, Wednesday 10 July, 1985. It was peaceful down by Marsden Wharf, lights reflecting, black waters lapping against the piles. There were distant sounds of people drifting along the street, the diminished noise of traffic.

On board the *Rainbow Warrior*, nine crew and four visitors had spent the evening in the warmth of friendship and camaraderie shared by people with a common purpose. The party was nearly over and some had retired to bed.

We know what happened next. A bomb exploded against the hull, killing crew-member Fernando Pereira. It was a direct assault, intended to nullify the peace movement's protest at Moruroa Atoll in September for the *Rainbow Warrior* was more than a converted cod trawler — she was the Greenpeace flagship and a symbol of resistance to nuclear abuse in the Pacific. She was to have been the parent ship for a flotilla of six vessels but instead lay drunkenly against the wharf, the dove on her prow almost covered by the waves.

For vessels such as *Django* and the trimaran *Klis II*, her loss made an unsupported voyage difficult but it was a different story for others. The *Warrior's* loss only increased their determination.

Return to 1985. Gael Johnson is 27. She has two young daughters, Monse (6), and Rosi (4). She will be one of seven crew on the *Alliance* when it sails from Auckland some time towards the end of July.

Before the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior* she and her fellow crew-members had weighed up the dangers; 4800 often stormy kilometres to Moruroa with the

prospect on arrival of additional hazards including a hostile reception and the likelihood of radiation. They will be at least four months away from homes and families. The loss of the *Rainbow Warrior* has brought those realities into sharp focus.

"There's been a whole heap of facing up to things we thought we wouldn't have to encounter until we got there. We were all high in celebration of those good, beautiful, strong people, with meeting



Gael Johnson photographed by Janet Hunt in Anzac Bay, the week before the *Rainbow Warrior* was bombed in July, 1985.

up with the ship which is the symbol of our hopes, and we were totally blown away with what happened," says Gael. "We have had to work through a whole process of grief and anger, but we have to get over it ... it has made us stronger in our resolve to carry on."

So why, given the danger, are Gael and her crewmates Tony Still (the owner of *Alliance*), Dave Wray, Paul Hodson, Frank Gaglio, Rangauna Godinovich and Angela Ryan continuing to make a journey that must now seem even more perilous?

Gael is blunt: she believes the third world war is not just a distant possibility — it began, in fact, in 1945. "We are actually surviving a nuclear assault which is directed against all life forms on the planet," she says. "You don't 'test' weapons that have a half-life of 24,000 years! That's just rubbish. Those weapons are being used against the animals and creatures of the ocean and the earth.

"Test' suggests 'controlled' and 'safe', but it's not any of those things at all, and that's been proven by the situation that Micronesian people find themselves in. There was a series of tests carried out there in the 1950s and now they're really sick people. The islands have been poisoned for their lifetimes and for lifetimes to come."

Preparations for the voyage have been slow. The initial crew, Tony, Dave, Paul and Gael, have been working since March when the first call from Greenpeace for vessels to join the South Pacific Peace Flotilla went out. They have invested a great deal of personal, financial and emotional energy in the journey. *Alliance* required re-fitting to make her seaworthy; new sails were needed, gear had to be borrowed and funds raised.

Because *Rainbow Warrior* will no longer be with them, there is greater need for safety equipment and an improved radio system. Part of the engine was damaged when it went