Solo Challenger

Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society

Spring 2001

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wayne Gould, GLSS President

As the true millennium began in 2001, so too the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society is moving into the new millennium. Every GLSS President's first message has summarized the coming events of the year with glowing enthusiasm and optimism. I certainly will not deviate from that fine tradition. We are a closely knit society whose members count many among them as their closest friends.

Once again I am encouraged to be serving with Board Officers and directors who are dedicated, enthusiastic and very capable. Tom Munson has graciously accepted the responsibility of Vice-President and Race Chairman for 2001. Tom is well known for his charismatic work in our annual Open House. I will sleep easily knowing that Tom's steady hand is on the helm of your solo sailing program this year. Bob VanEck will be logging all the GLSS administrative details as Recording Secretary, while Jack Whyatt will continue to guard the ships purse as Treasurer. Patrick Nugent has signed on again as Corresponding Secretary and Newsletter Editor, and accepted the additional responsibility of e-mail Secretary. Your afterguard concludes with Directors, Mark Gutteridge, Jim McLaren, Robert Robins, Tari Smith, Dave Rearick, Michael Garcia and Wally McMinn.

This year the Board will begin the preliminary planing for the 25th Anniversary of the Port Huron to Mackinac Island Singlehanded Challenge in 2003. Details of the 25th Challenge will be posted on the web as they are completed.

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Inside This Issue...

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You will notice in this newsletter that we are asking for your help in updating our mailing list to include receiving the Solo Challenger and other correspondence via the internet. Pat Nugent has already formed a list of over 40 members who want their correspondence delivered via e-mail. Take a minute and e-mail Pat (pjnugent@concentric.net) with your e-mail address.

Our sailing schedule starts off on June 23 with the Port Huron/Chicago to Mackinac Island Singlehanded Challenge. Don't miss this classic event. September will be our busiest month with 3 events on 3 lakes. Lower Huron Solo on September 8, Lake Michigan Scramble on September 14, and the St. Clair Solo on September 29. Don't forget these dates on your calendar.

Finally, I would like to thank the GLSS Directors, Officers and members for placing their confidence in me to serve as your President. There have been 20 Past Presidents who have guided the GLSS with vision through the last 22 years. I trust that our unique tradition will be carried into 2001.

2001 AGM SUMMARY

Wayne Gould, GLSS President

The 2001 Annual General Membership Meeting was held at Bayview Yacht Club on January 20,2001. Following a lively social hour Bill Dembek (President) called the meeting to order at 16:30 hours. The minutes from last years meeting were read by Bob VanEck. Jack Whyatt reported on the financial status of the Society with a year ending balance of $1876.00. Bill presented the slate of candidates to replace to outgoing Board members. The following candidates were unanimously approved by the members attending:
Michael Garcia
Wally McMinn
Dave Rearick
Bob VanEck
Robert Robins

Bill Dembek then gave a re-cap of the 2000 events followed by brief reports from each of the Committee Chairmen. Bill presented Bob VanEck with a 10 year Plaque for his 10 successful Challenges. Jim Otton was honoured and awarded the Ralph Eilberg Award for his contribution and support to Phil Rubright during the 2000 Europe 1 New Man STAR Race. The Meeting adjourned at 18:00 hours. Following Bayview's delicious buffet diner GLSS members Jim Otton, Ray Mason and Phil Rubright were introduced as guest speakers, each reporting on their adventures during the 2000 Europe 1 New Man STAR Race (Trans-Atlantic Solo Race).

When Bayview's Bar was finally closed at 02:00 hours on the 21st of January, the usual GLSS members were seen leaving another entertaining AGM.

2001 SPRING OPEN HOUSE REPORT

Tom Munson, Vice President & Race Chairman

The March 28, 2001 GLSS Open House had an attendance of 40 people comprised of 13 members and 27 guests. Two guests traveled from East Aurora, NY, and another from Chicago, IL. It’s

encouraging that word of the GLSS is spreading and sparking interest beyond the shorelines of Lake Huron and Lake Michigan.

Two new members who did their first Big Mac in June 2000 spoke about their experience. Wally McMinn, who had cruised on his boat for several years prior to sailing the Solo Challenge, expressed the importance of being mentally prepared. Mike Mahar, who had purchased his boat 8 months prior to the Challenge, spoke about the necessity of having the boat well prepared and the problems encountered with his auto pilot. Both skippers agreed the Solo Challenge was an outstanding learning experience and they are better sailors because of it. Both skippers also plan to do the race again.

An excellent question and answer period followed covering all aspects of the Solo Challenge. "How do you sleep?" as always, was one of the first questions. Of course, a few of the "old timers" entertained the group with some of their sailing adventures.

All in all, the Open House was a successful beginning to the GLSS 2001 race season.

Our goal is to have a total of 50 boats sail across the start lines at Port Huron and Chicago on June 23, 2001. To achieve this goal, it is essential for GLSS members to spread the word about the Solo Challenge among their sailing friends and the sailing community.

Chicago-Mackinac Race 2000

Tony Driza

The race committee voice crackled from the handheld VHF, "*Whoa Nellie*, welcome to Mackinac Island!" The race over, I headed up into a stiff 22 knot SE wind, furled the 130, and dropped the main behind the relative shelter of Round Island. After rigging dock lines and getting a slip assignment, the first of what I hope to be many Chi-Mac solos ended with a burst of reverse in the slip to check down a boat that didn't want to stop moving. A bottle of bubbly from my bride and an 8-year-old bottle of Bacardi's finest, was icing on the cake to a dream that had occupied most of my conscious moments since deciding to compete in a single-handed challenge.

Backtracking a bit, I'd been intrigued with the thought of competing in a single-handed challenge for most of my sailing life. Taking the boat out alone or standing an early morning watch in mid lake with a crew sleeping soundly, cemented the notion that I could compete in a race with other like-minded sailors. Surfing the web lead me to the GLSS site and after exchanging a few e-mails with Blair Arden, Rob Robins and Dave Rearick I wound up sitting in on the March 2000 AGM. That night, listening to the escapades of the aforementioned sailors whose tales grew taller as the level in the keg decreased, plus those of the likes of Alan Veenstra, Jim McLaren, and Bob VanEck had me counting down the days until the start of the 4th Chicago-Mackinac Singlehanded Challenge.

It is said that getting to the starting line is the toughest part of a race; it was certainly true in my case. Outfitting the boat and completing a solo qualifier from Holland to Manitowoc and back in early May (with multiple layers of clothing and still cold…) filled most of my days off, culminating with the June 16th, 2000 start of the race. I had hoped to get the boat over to Chicago at least a

couple of days before the race started to give me time for any last minute malfunctions to be corrected, but work constraints and major preparations on board pushed me a day or so behind. I left Holland for Chicago at 2300, less than a day and a half prior to the start, hoping for an uneventful crossing. With all sails flying on the cutter rigged Island Packet 40, I made great time towards Chicago and from 45 miles out, I could make out the top of the Sears Tower. Winds and sea state worsened during the wee hours of Friday and I opted to shorten sail in order to get a more comfortable ride, with little loss of speed. Just short of Chicago later on that morning, radar showed a fairly stiff squall line. Anticipating the worst, I furled most of the genoa, tucked a couple of reefs into the main, and got ready for winds that would gust to 40 knots. For the next half hour, I hunkered down behind the dodger, wind whipped rain and spindrift in the air, as *Whoa Nellie* blasted towards Columbia Yacht Club. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, boat and skipper were in their elements. As anxious as I was to get in, catch a quick nap, finish rigging the boat for the race, and attend the skippers meeting, I really didn't want this passage to end.

Sleep came fitfully aboard *Whoa Nellie*, as pre-race jitters, the weather, and what little tactics I could muster filled my head. A hard beat to weather heralded the start and lingered long into the first full day of the race. Island Packets are great boats, but hard on the wind is not their best point of sail. The temptation was to point as high as possible, to the point of pinching, and I saw my boatspeed suffer as a result. Boatspeed took precedence over pointing; although somewhat south of the rest of the boats as we slogged toward the Michigan shoreline, I was generally happy with my progress. What I lacked in pointing ability, I made up for in the galley, and from the depths of my pressure cooker came a delightful jambalaya, with a slosh or two of merlot to wash it all down. Check-ins with the rest of the fleet were routine, and despite the beat in 3-5 footers, spirits were high as we all hoped for winds going southerly, and being able to set out chutes. I was amongst a few boats that felt winds would hold up nearer to shore and ran in to just off South Haven before tacking. The others favored a more offshore approach and had tacked to maintain a better line towards the Sable Points and Point Betsie. In retrospect, I wish I had done the same, for in the mid morning hours of the second day, I sailed into a windless hole off Muskegon and proceeded to sit for an hour or so. I can vividly recall every fly bite and the momentary puffs that came over the next hour or so; boats I had passed now caught up, and passed me. The jambalaya had lost some of its appeal and the merlot soured a bit; I watched in frustration, as boats passed off shore where the wind had hung on. I tried different sail combinations in a vain attempt to get moving again, but in the end the only thing accomplished was fatigue. No doubt about it, I labored much harder trying to get the boat moving, than trying to slow it down.

As morning of the second day wore into afternoon, the breeze finally filled in and I set out the asymmetrical to try and get back into the race. Boatspeed built nicely, but I was in closer to shore than I wanted, forcing me to gybe to get around Little Sable Point. Cutter rigs are flexible, but the inner stay is a bear to deal with when resetting the pole. Since I hadn't slept as much as I had hoped to, due to excitement and adrenaline taking over, all these sail changes were beginning to wear on me. Dame Fortune smiled a bit though and after the gybe I was able to set out the asymmetrical, wing out the main, and make up a few

lost miles. Chatter on the VHF increased as leaders Dave Rearick and Joe Turns told those of us further back in the fleet of thunderstorms that had darkened the sky and had winds on the increase. Dave Rearick on *Geronimo*, when asked what sails he had up wryly noted he had "two reefs in the main, and I'm praying!" Wanting to gain as much back as I could, I maintained the spinnaker/main combination while those further ahead had long since taken theirs down, and shortened sail to boot. The strategy paid off, as I was able to close the gap considerably; I nearly waited too long, as the first gusts from the storm caught me with the chute still up. Grappling with the nylon in the gusty winds took the energy reserves down a bit, and I didn't realize at the time that the spinnaker halyard had fouled the upper furler, rendering the genoa useless. When I attempted to set it in the increasing winds, the furler jammed, and only a fraction of the sail was out. Not wanting to fool around on deck in those conditions any longer than I had to, I furled it again, and set out the staysail with the main, passed Big Sable Point, and settled in for some much needed rest. On the recommendation of those who had done the race before, I set my alarms for between 30 and 45 minutes, after which I would check for traffic, look after sail trim and the boat, then back for another quick snooze. Each time I came back on deck, the masthead light of *Belle*, an Island packet 45 sailed by Cal Carr, also competing in his first Chi-Mac, was visible just in front of me. Although the conditions were probably worse that night than any other, I managed to put a few hours into the sleep bank which would serve me well for the last leg up through Gray's Reef and the Mackinac Straits to the finish.

Another dawn broke over northern Lake Michigan, unveiling overcast skies, occasional rain, and shifty winds from the WSW. In the dawn light I could see how the spinnaker halyard had fouled the genoa furler and it wasn't much of a job to free it. The leaden sky looked threatening enough that I opted to pole out the genoa and rig a preventer for the main, rather than run up the asymmetrical. Conditions improved somewhat and as I was still about 2.5 miles behind *Belle* and with distance running out, decided to set the asymmetrical again to try and catch him if I could. Boat speed jumped up at once and I thought the wind gods were finally smiling favorably on me. Earlier, I had heard reports from the front of the fleet that the winds had died and sailors were once again the main course for a host of dinner guests with hearty appetites, particularly for human ankles. I still had the wind and was just about to consider changing course to avoid the now becalmed fleet ahead of me when I too sailed into the next hole. As frustrating as the first time being becalmed was, this was far worse, as I watched wind ripple on the waters everywhere but where I sat. Sails hung limply, filling just often enough to cause me to spring into action, thinking I'd be sailing soon. *Belle* was now only a mile or so off, and it was with great frustration that I watched her catch the breeze and sail off, albeit slowly. Meanwhile, I rocked in the leftover slop, swatting flies, wondering if someone had held a gun to my head when I opted to compete in the race. Finally, the elusive breeze meandered my way and I was underway again, now some three and a half miles behind *Belle*. Winds were such that I put out the chute once again, determined to try everything I could to close the gap once more. Eyes riveted on the radar, I could see the distance decreasing ever so slightly. If the winds would just cooperate for the next 12 hours, there was still a chance to improve my standing in the fleet.

Meanwhile, chatter from the lead boats trickling back to us stragglers, made us aware of yet another wind shift. Under spinnaker, Joe Turns, Dave Rearick, and Paul Schloop, had made good progress towards the finish and had alluded that they might be able to finish with that configuration. It wasn't to be, as the winds backed to the ESE, and after all we'd encountered the previous two days, it looked like a tacking marathon would take place from Waugoshaunce Point to Mackinac. At 0100, I rounded the mandatory turning buoy and hardened up for the final slog to Mackinac. I had closed the distance to *Belle* to just under a mile, was sailing well and hoping to go by him shortly. I happened to catch a favorable, but temporary wind shift and went by him into 4th overall. It felt like each tack was a little harder than the previous one; fatigue was now a player, as I hadn't slept but 30 minutes over the previous 24 hours. An upbound freighter forced me to make a couple of extra tacks, and the winds at the bridge caused me to misjudge the length of a couple of tacks. The thought of ending up on the shoal east of the bridge, in sight of the line, had me spending extra time perusing the chart. During one of those periods, the autopilot was unable to hold the boat in the ever-increasing winds. Nothing worse than coming back into the cockpit and finding the Mackinac Bridge dead astern, whilst I was heading *west*. Gybing back around, I probably should have shortened sail at that point, but with the porch of the Grand Hotel in sight, I decided to just let her heel over, hang on, and hope to avoid another tack. Had the wind increased even slightly, the strategy wouldn't have worked, but the boat was able to handle the extra sail without too much difficulty and I crossed the finish line at just under 8 knots, dog tired, but pleased to have competed in, and completed my first Chi-Mac race.

Shorten Early!

Al Merrithew

I am of the opinion that we often sail with too much sail. I remember a great day last summer, sailing on a close reach, in a fresh breeze. I had the 150 rolled out and a full main. The wind angle was 45 to 50 degrees and the apparent wind speed was about 18kts. I started rolling up the headsail about 10% at a time. The more I rolled up, the faster I went. The boat was heeling less, there was less angle on the rudder, and the motion was far more seakindly. It wasn't until I was down to about 80% that the loran began showing a slowing.

Over the last 20 years, I have used this theory as a guide to decision making, particularly when I am alone: Shorten sail early.

A few years ago we were on the leg to Goderich. I could see the storm coming off the tip of the thumb of Michigan, and wondered if it was going to angle over our way. Murphy's Law says it will, so I kept a constant vigil.

A couple hours later I could see a greenish, low cloud coming in from the west. I ran up to the bow, dropped the 150 and put a reef in the main. My competitors, who were sailing within a couple hundred yards of me, likely thought me quite mad. We were sailing in fair wind, making about 5.5 kts when Cap'n Al starts running around his deck like a crazy man, dropping sails.

It was only 2-3 minutes or so, however, when the wind hit. It wasn't terrible, but the other guys were now dropping their sails, and they had to do it on decks heeling 45 degrees.

Another time I was sailing dead downwind near Presque Isle. I was making great time, moving along at 6 to 7 kts. I hadn't a worry in the world. What could be better? Suddenly, I felt the slightest breeze on my shoulder coming from the port side of the boat. It was nothing, really. Just a little breath of air, slightly cooler than the Southwest breeze in which I was sailing. It was just enough to prick my senses a tad. A few minutes later the skirt on the spinnaker began to flip back toward the boat. And I could feel the cool breeze on my shoulder again. Windshift coming!

I grabbed the heavy 150 from down below and ran to the foredeck, hitched it up and ran it part way up the forestay. Once again the spinnaker skirt bobbled, only this time a little more. Still, Black Magic was headed north at 6-7 kts. Though I was flying along, my gut told me to shorten early. I doused the chute, and ran the headsail up, or vice-versa. Just as I got the headsail ready, I looked up ahead and here came the wind-line on the water, directly out of the north! Nearly a 180 degree windshift. I turned to starboard about 60 degrees, then as the wind hit, rounded up to point.

The point is, the guy behind me had his spinnaker in his rigging. This scenario has repeated itself numerous times during the fifteen years I have been doing this race, not that I have won every time, but sometimes the little battles between you and Mother Nature can be as much fun.

I try to adhere to this rule as much as possible. A boat that has a herk-jerky motion, high rudder angles, and excessive heel is telling you a story. You just need to listen. Things break, things fall out of shelves, pillows get mussed up, the boat is slow, sails get torn. Battles are lost simply because we didn't listen. And we can't have our pillows all mussed up, now can we? Shorten hearly.

The following two short chapters are taken from Ron Dwelle's book, **Summer Studies**, *published by Xlibiris Press, 2001. Copies of the book can be ordered directly from the publisher at www.xlibris.com/summerstudies.html or from online booksellers such as borders.com and barnes&noble.com.*

Ron Dwelle is a long-time singlehander, having competed in the Port-Huron to Mackinac Solo in 1982 and 1983. He also was one of the founders of the Lake Michigan singlehanded society and has won both the Lake Michigan Solo and the Lake Michigan Doublehanded races. The following excerpt from his book gives some of his thoughts on singlehanding during his participation in the Newport-Bermuda Singlehanded/Doublehanded race in 1987.

Butterflies In The Bilge . . .

There is a certain nervousness—anticipation—in preparing for any passage, with the degree of discomfit directly related to the expenditure of imagination. In the case of going to Bermuda, I hadn't a clue.

True, I had read accounts of ocean passages—almost all hair-raising, many ending in disaster of some sort: shipwreck, sinking, days and weeks afloat on a liferaft. Presumably, these disasters were the successful ones; the unsuccessful were different: boats broken up, sailors dead, bodies devoured by sharks.

I spent the whole winter before in working on *Prudence P. Fishpaws*. Every single weekend, 8 am to 8 pm, Saturday and Sunday. Every holiday,

except Christmas. I took off time only for my son's birth in February, to deliver him in the Alternative Birthing Center of Women's & Children's Hospital in Providence.

On the boat, I refurbished all seacocks, re-finished the bottom, overhauled every accessory component of the engine, replaced the wiring system, repaired all hatches, dorades, and vents, totally renewed the rig, paid to have the sails all redone, had the liferaft inspected, refitted the head, upgraded the galley, got all new electronics, laid in spares for virtually everything. I expected the boat to be ready.

Myself, I exercised as I hadn't since college days. My intention was to be able to shinny the mast in rough conditions, if necessary going hand-over-hand up a halyard. I didn't quite accomplish that, but I was in good shape. I re-learned celestial navigation, practiced sun shots and star sights until I was comfortable doing them. I studied the charts, went to school with Nick Nicholson, my colleague who had twice won the "navigator's" trophy in the crewed Bermuda races.

When the time came, I was prepared, as was the boat. The biggest problem was placing Jo and the kids, since the boat was our home during the summer months, and summer rentals in Newport were generally in the range of my annual salary. We finally worked out a complicated multiple apartment swap among a number of people racing, with Jo staying in the apartment of the double-handed partner of Steve Pettengill, he moving to a bunk bed in the home of Bertie Reed's doublehanded partner, until all flew to Bermuda in a week or ten-days time.

The race itself was anti-climax. We started in a strong south-southwest wind, tacking out of Newport harbor and Narragansett Bay, and we had a strong south-southwest wind for the next four days.

Within four hours of the start, I was seasick, for the first time in my life. I had always thought I was immune to seasickness—I had certainly been in much worse conditions than I experienced here, and had never once even felt an inclination to queasiness—but I was seasick, for about eight hours until I had upchucked everything in my stomach, plus a little bit more.

For the next four days, I was hard on the wind, sailing as close as possible to southwest without pointing directly into the wind and stalling the boat. Unfortunately, this was not *Prudence*'s forte. If the wind was coming from abeam or aft of that, she would move well, but her design was not known for its closewindedness, and she proved it now.

Later, I was to learn from the old hands that these were much rougher conditions than usual, but I had no idea then. My wind speed meter had a scale of 0-60, with 30 at the top of the circle. When the meter was turned off, the needle rested right at the top, at 30. For two days, the needle was at dead top—30 knots of wind—and I kept tapping the meter to see if it was working or turned off, broken down somehow. But, no, if I studied the needle, I could see it move, dropping down slightly when the mast pitched aft, moving up slightly when the mast pitched forward in the waves. The meter was working—the wind was stuck at 30 knots.

As I expected, the boat did well. A broken jib furler and a non-functioning autopilot were the only

repairs I had to make in Bermuda—quite mild considering the conditions.

I did not do so well. I thought it was a miserable trip, constantly being thrown about, constantly wet. I could not sleep in a berth, even though Prudence's berths were thought to be well designed—the way sea berths should be made. I tried, but was thrown out by the boat's motion, and I finally tossed the cushions on the floor, with the spinnaker and storm jib, and slept there, where the motion was least violent.

I had a terrible time getting sun sights for navigation because of the incessant motion, and a star sight was out of the question. Heating food was a challenge; I didn't even try for the first two days until my stomach recovered and demanded to be served.

One thing that surprised me was the heat. As soon as I entered the Gulf Stream, with its 70-degree water, the air temperature climbed. Past the Stream, daytime temperature was in the 80s and it only dropped to around 70 at night. Any work and I was sweating. Soon I was naked, except for my safety harness, and I stayed that way until I saw Bermuda. I hadn't expected this at all. This was June, and all my June experiences were for cool or cold nights. I can recall frost on the decks during an overnight passage across Lake Michigan in June. I had brought all sorts of cold-weather gear—polypropylene long johns in light, medium, and expedition weights, wool trousers and sweaters, long-sleeve cotton shirts and fleece jackets, as well as a whole complement of heavy foul-weather gear. I had brought only one short-sleeve shirt and only one pair of (of course) Bermuda shorts.

Finally, approaching Bermuda, the wind and waves changed, as a storm front moved through, with squalls and rain. Then the wind went totally calm, with a confusion of waves from different directions, finally settling down to small rollers after six hours or so. The last 15 miles to David's Head were actually a good sail, west winds and the waves broken by the shoal water and the Bermuda islands themselves.

At the St. George's Dinghy Club I called Jo in Newport. Amazing to talk over the distance, her voice as clear and loud as though I were calling from next door rather than five-days away.

"I'm not sure you should come down," I said. "Especially with the kids. It was miserable, rough."

"But I've got the plane tickets already," she said. "They're non-refundable."

We spent most of our conversation talking over the wisdom of taking the children on a 640 mile ocean crossing and finally decided to do it. There was no concern about the boat's capabilities, or ours. It was merely a question of comfort. So she came.

Following a long passage, especially singlehanded, there's always a shot of adrenaline, a sense of euphoria out of all proportion to the accomplishment. Among racers, it shows up in the form of incessant talking, for maybe 12 hours, in spite of the fact that you've just been awake an additional 30 hours while making your landfall and safe entrance to the harbor. The progress of the conversation moves from "wasn't it awful . . ." to "there was this squall came through and I thought I was gonna lose the mainsail" to "Jesus, those waves were magnificent." By sleep time, most sailors have convinced themselves that it was a great experience.

Bermuda was a wonderful place, and I could almost understand the vagabonding spirit that would encourage someone to make the difficult passage in order to spend six months wandering through the little string of islands, exploring the country, meeting the people. Unfortunately, I had only a week there.

When Jo, Anna, and Chase arrived, we did the briefest of island tours, then prepped the boat for the passage home.

Bragging Rights . . .

The passage back was better than the one down, because it was more variable. From the time we left Bermuda, the wind gradually increased for about 24 hours, until we had rollicking conditions—20 knot winds on our quarter and big seas—for another full day. Though the motion was quite violent, we were making rapid progress. But then, the passage was punctuated with a terrific gale—16 hours of winds over 40 knots.

It was awesome. Breaking waves cascaded over the boat, engulfing it entirely. The scend of the boat—with the wind coming from slightly behind the beam—was chaotic, with a sort of general corkscrew pattern interrupted by wild leaps and drops. We had locked ourselves inside the boat, with just a scrap of sail up to keep the boat moving and under some control. Staying on deck was impossible, cooking was impossible, sleep was difficult, talk was impossible, navigation was difficult, sex was impossible. We worried a bit about the boat and for the first time realized that a "small" boat like our 40-footer could actually be overwhelmed at sea.

In the event, nothing terrible happened—except for the cabin becoming a shambles—and the wind eventually began to fall until we were becalmed. By this time, we were within 100 miles of Newport and—not racing—we turned on the engine and motored until the wind sprang up to carry us in. Turning on the engine was, for me, the best sign that the passage was not pleasant—a declaration, "We want to get away from this incessant motion!"

In the motoring and then the light wind that carried us into Newport, Jo and I talked over our experience. For my part, I had already decided that I would not cross the Atlantic. The Bermuda race had been a "qualifier" for the singlehanded transAtlantic race, held every four years, but I knew that I was losing interest.

There was now no doubt in my mind that I could make the passage. The Bermuda passage was no different from a Lake Michigan passage, except that it was longer and more uncomfortable, and I felt that transAtlantic would be no different from Bermuda, except that it would be longer and more uncomfortable. Making it across no longer seemed a challenge to myself—more like a chore. (I suppose the odds of dying are a bit higher transAtlantic than on Lake Michigan, but that's mostly because of the greater distance and inability to hide from storms.)

I would undoubtedly love the competition of a race, but I knew *Prudence P. Fishpaws* was not really competitive. The transAtlantic boats are divided by length, so I would be racing against other boats 36 to 40 feet long. The more modern boats in the Bermuda race, like Steve Pettengill's *Freedom* and Al Fournier's *El Torero*, had beaten me in by nearly two days in a 600 mile race, and I knew I could expect no better in a 3000 mile race that was dead upwind, *Prudence*'s

worst point of sail. The only boats that I had beaten to Bermuda were older style, long-keel boats like my Cheoy Lee. I was pretty certain that I had little chance of winning against my sized monohulls, and of course in the Atlantic race there were also speedy multi-hulls to contend with. To do the race just to say that I had done it—for the bragging rights—didn't seem all that worthwhile.

To my surprise, and relief, Jo brought up the same thoughts as we were slowly approaching Newport.

"Why don't we go back to the Great Lakes?" she said. "I don't know if I really want to 'take off.'"

I couldn't have agreed more with her.

"The porpoises were nice," she said—we had been visited several times by troupes of porpois who would caper around us for a while and then disappear. "And the blue of the water. And the phosphorescence at night."

I agreed again.

"But everything else is better on the Lakes. The water. The ports. The weather."

I reminded her of the holding-tank laws for boat sewage.

"Well," she said, "I didn't say it was perfect."

We decided before we tied up at our mooring in Newport that we were soon to be history for this eastern port. And for long-distance passage making. I haven't regretted it yet—except for the bragging rights….