



# messing about in **BOATS**

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**Special Features This Issue**  
"Great Adirondack Guideboat Challenge"  
"Requiem for a Skipper" - "Lark & Swallow"

# Commentary...

Bob Hicks, Editor



Two of the feature articles in this issue are taken directly from the newsletters of two small craft groups that came into being in order to bring together like minded trailer sailers. People of like minds getting together for mutual enjoyment of their chosen sport in whatever format that appeals to them is commonplace, and so are newsletters that most soon undertake to publish for their membership to keep all informed of what is happening. The two I chose for feature treatment happen to concern those who own small sailboats that they trailer to various sailing locations to enjoy cruising in company with fellow owners.

Both also demonstrate how far such newsletters can develop in today's instant copy/printing environment. The *Shallow Water Sailor* for September, 1999 is a 12 pager, 6 full size sheets nicely printed on both sides with 11 color photos included. It was the 77th edition, and the byline featured on page one was "Founder: John Zohlen". John was a Dovekie owner who felt that others owning the Edey & Duff shallow water sailboats would like to keep in touch despite widespread geographical distribution. Peter Duff supported this "togetherness" by envisioning an annual cruise for all interested, a week or more spent together cruising in some interesting shallow water cruising area, entitled by Peter "Magnum Opus". It is the report of the 1999 Magnum Opus that I reprinted in this issue to give you some idea of what sort of things go on when a group of people from afar come to one place to spend a week together sailing their boats.

Of special interest also in this Issue #77 was the announcement that a video will be available following publication of the December issue which will include all 79 issues published since 1986. Within this will be 955 pages of *Shallow Water Sailor*, 53 pages of the *Edey & Duff Newsletter*, 26 pages of the *Dovekie Manual*, 17 pages of Peter Duff's evocative Dovekie advertisements (great ads), 19 pages of magazine articles related to Dovekies, 3 songs of the sea, 369 photos from *Shallow Water Sailor* and a 1999 special surprise.

Well, is this lot of information, or what? This is all from 14 years of volunteer publication of a newsletter! It takes some dedication for such volunteer effort to be sustained, without the financial imperative that drives commercial publications. It also says a lot about the devotion of the Dovekie (and larger Shearwater) owners to their craft and their sharing of their enjoyment in sailing them. There is

no requirement for participants to be Dovekie or Shearwater owners, but the other smallish shallow draft sailboats that do join in are orphans from their own makes without such owner/user groups.

It is not clear whether this CD is available to non-subscribers of the *Shallow Water Sailor* but you can inquire if interested of Kenneth G. Murphy, 20931 Lochaven Ct., Gaithersburg, MD 20882. The quoted price to members is \$23.

Ron Hoddinott's *West Coast Trailer Sailing Squadron Newsletter*, from which I lifted the second feature article on the topic, is up to its 8th issue as of March, perhaps there have been further since. So Ron's off to a good start, the three sample issues I received are four pagers, two full size sheets nicely printed with color photos also. While not directly tied to the Sea Pearl, these boats seem to predominate, in part due to the geographical proximity of the original designer builder, Ron Johnson. Ron Hoddinott's effort is localized to the Florida west coast, and he mentions a similar trailer sailor group on the east coast of Florida that was inspiration for him to call west coast trailer sailors together.

At one time a Sea Pearl newsletter entitled *A String of Pearls* was in existence but I haven't seen it in recent years. Certainly the Sea Pearl owners seem to display an enthusiasm and loyalty similar to that of the Dovekie folks.

Trailer sailors cruising together in similar boats seem to benefit from the fact that their boats are alike, or closely so. As in one-design racing, this evens out most of the variations in progress made by the group. While these folks cruise rather than race, keeping a small fleet of similar boats together for a weekend or a week is easier to achieve than would be so with a fleet of random types of boats with their attendant differences in sailing speed and maneuverability. With similar boats, the differences in progress pretty much develop from the sailing skills of the skippers.

I also have to admire the social ability of a number of people who meet only at certain gatherings to maintain cordial relations and their enthusiasm over long periods of time. Given time, all of us with our own little ways of doing things can collectively create growing tension and conflict, even over trifling matters. Reading these two particular newsletters illustrated to me that it is possible for such group activity to succeed socially as well as an exercise in sailing boats.

# Magnum Opus '99 The North Channel

## (A Typical Cruise Report)

From *The Shallow Water Sailor*,  
Number 77, September 1999

By Sandy Lommen

The North Channel of Lake Huron has been a must-see since I first heard about it 15 years ago. We finally got there, and it was better than any fantasy could have made it. A 15 hour drive for us, and we were the closest ones.

Lake Huron runs largely north and south; the most northerly part of the lake was our destination. There, Manitoulin Island forms an east-west barrier, creating a fascinating strip of water for both deep-draft and shallow-water vessels. Any trees that grow on these dirt-starved islands all point downwind, so constant is the prevailing westerly wind. But what I had forgotten from previous visits to northern Ontario is the stunning beauty of the rocks! They dominate the landscape. They are bald, glacier-rounded, and come in many colors: White (quartz), red and pink (granite), and black, and more. Makes me hunger for a geology course.

Eight boats holding 22 people gathered at Little Current, Ontario on July 25:

Shearwaters: *Rosemary* with Nick Scheuer, his children Ellen, Laura, Dave, and grandchildren Gabby and Robby; *Ardea* with Harry and Alice Mote; *Blue Heron* with Mary, Dean and Damon.

MacGregor 26s: *Time Enough* with Bob Ahlers and Carol Moseley; *The Boat* with Ruth and Alan Penticoff.

Dovekies: *Sundowner* with Guenter Arlt; *Puddleduck* with Mary, Ed, Abbie and Tyler McGuire; *Waterbed* with Leo and Sandy Lommen.

Nick Scheuer found us a dandy launch ramp, with all the requirements: good, cheap, secure parking for two weeks, docking space in such shallow water that they didn't charge us, clean bathrooms, and a \$3 fee to cover both launching and retrieving. With the North Channel running east and west and the winds mostly out of the west or southwest, you can tell that we did lots of downwind sailing and lots of tacking. The first week we went east. The protected anchorages were plentiful and the scenery just got better and better. Some islands were mostly woods. Others were mostly rocks. The water in all the Great Lakes this year is low so there were more rocks than usual. The biggest advantage for us shallow-water types is that when the chart said that a rock was awash, it was quite visible.

The second day out we sailed down a 9-mile long fiord of white granite with courageous pine trees growing impossibly out of the occasional crack. At the end of this fiord is a pool that could easily hold our fleet and more. We spread out and enjoyed our second campfire in as many days. We were to have only one more fire, the next day, and then conditions didn't allow. But Fred Peckham seems to have passed on his campfire ritual to Tyler McGuire. It's such a beautifully peaceful way to close a day.

Day three was the first of many all-day tacking jobs. All we could manage was to undo half of the downwind sail of the day before. The first week the running and tacking was broken up more than the second. Frequently we would tack to get out of our anchorage and out around some big island we were at and then take off down another lovely channel to an intriguing town and/or anchorage.

The next day we would have to undo the downwind stuff, round an always-interesting point and be off on a reach to the next agreed destination. One day the tacking back out of the channel was very pleasant, when the winds were a bit lighter than usual.

And there always has to be a Hole-in-the-Wall. This hole only allowed one-way passage because the wind was whipping past the southern opening, making it too dangerous to come out into the wicked chop off the point. Some tacking took all the skills of Leo, me and our other crew, Ellen, to maneuver through some tiny passages directly into the wind. But we had to. Everyone else was ahead of us, so we couldn't catch a tow. And the wind was too strong to row.

The second week's tacking was very different. The geography was different, too. Instead of the groups of islands with narrow channels that are characteristic of the east half of the North Channel, the water to the west of Little Current is open and broad. Wind is constant and has quite a fetch to it. By the early afternoon there is a chop sufficient to occasionally stop a Dovekie dead in the water. With a reef, the progress is nearly nonexistent. So our destination for early the second week took two days to get to, and they were long, bouncy days. But the goal was worth every bump and bruise.

The Benjamin Islands are the most unusual landform I have ever seen, huge pink granite piles. Sometimes all that you see is one huge, high rock! A few pine trees have managed to find purchase. But it is stark and stunning. We all stayed put the next day. It was so obvious that we weren't going to sail that day, it was never discussed. We hiked and slept and talked and swam.

We met some interesting sailors. We met some generous and loving Canadians. One church group had just finished a service and invited us to use their facilities while they all went off to somewhere else. They left their church hall open to us. It's never locked anyway. We were invited back the next day for sailboat races around their island. We had to decline the race.

At the halfway mark we all met back at the Spider Bay Marina, said goodbye to the McGuires, all of Nick's kids and grandkids, the Penticoffs and to Guenter. We greeted Nick's new crew, Peggy, and hung around Little Current to recover from over 80 miles of sailing! The town was having a big party called "The Haweaters Festival", complete with street entertainment, boat parade, fireworks and hawberry delicacies. (hawberries are the fruit of the hawthorn tree and a hawberry ice cream cone could pass for raspberry or strawberry.)

This cruise seemed to have more wild animals and birds than most of the others. We heard loons every night, always a joy. There were great blue herons and ravens and a bald eagle, besides the usuals that Alice and Harry are best at describing. For creatures, we saw several snakes but no rattlers. We saw two bull moose one morning. Mary saw a fisher cat. And we saw beaver and muskrats and signs of raccoons. And one awesome visitor.

Our usual nighttime anchoring style is to find some rushes or muddy spot on the shore and pull the boat in so it's soft aground. Just to sleep better I throw out an anchor into the mud. Usually the rode is all bunched up exactly where I put it the night before. One lovely night on Jumbo Island we did just that and fell snugly off to sleep.

The adrenalin rush came at one minute to midnight. The rumbling center hatch woke us in an instant. Leo, remembering ducks-on-deck in the Chesapeake (but ducks don't fly at night), pounded on the overhead to stop the racket. Silence. Now the forward hatch came under attack. With a quick move, the port hatch cover was lifted up in the air as far as the shock cord would allow and then snapped loudly back to the deck.

With that, Leo beamed a spot light and we saw the front hatch lying crooked and open. Leo quietly adjusted it back into place, turned the light off again, and we waited. Nothing. No critter scrambling on the deck, nothing wading in the water. No noise whatsoever. It was a complete puzzle. It actually seemed impossible that there was no other hint of what had just happened.

After 15 long minutes, Leo shone a light onto the deck and we saw a big muddy swath across the starboard hatch cover. But we could see nothing outside the boat to give us a clue. We lay back down, very still I might add. After 45 more minutes of shallow breathing, we felt we could talk. It seemed unlikely to have been a person because we would have heard something else. But it had to be something with hands or good working paws, we thought, like

## The Shallow Water Sailor

"A simple boat, a bit of thin water, some sedge and willow, a blackbird's song, and a friend or two."

Peter Duff, designer (with Phil Bolger) and builder for many years of the Dovekie and Shearwater shallow water trailer cruiser boats at his Edey & Duff yard in S. Dartmouth, Massachusetts, undertook to organize group cruises for owners of his boats, and one came to be the annual big one, the "Magnum Opus".

One Dovekie owner, John Zohlen from Maryland was inspired to start a newsletter chronicling the exploits and adventures of Dovekie (and later Shearwater) owners and launched *The Shallow Water Sailor*. Today John has retired from this self imposed task but his creation carries on, edited by Kenneth G. Murphy.

The September, 1999 issue chronicles the "Magnum Opus 99" cruise, an appropriate example of the sort of activities and adventures these shallow water sailors enjoy together.

To learn more about *The Shallow Water Sailor*, write to Kenneth G. Murphy, 20931 Lochaven Ct., Gaithersburg, MD 20882.

a raccoon. And maybe it just leaped off the boat silently. Maybe. But eventually we went back to sleep, satisfied that the event was over.

The next morning as we were about to set sail, I noticed from standing in the bow that the port hatch cover's plywood was not in its usual fine shape. There in the corner was a stab mark on the upper surface and a big gouge on the side. No raccoon has teeth that will make that impression. Guenter was nearby in his lovely Klepper kayak and we eagerly told him the night's story. He's had a lot of experience camping with bears and assured us that they can move about very quietly. He has no doubt that we had a bear visit. When we told him about the fried bacon that we were

snacking on at 10 o'clock that night, that really clinched it. Vet Bob Ahlers checked out the teeth marks, and Moby Nick said to never fill them in!

My favorite sailing day was the second to the last day, when Dean suggested a destination that would have come from Peter Duff, if he had been there: Find the little creek on the north shore and follow it up to the original site of Fort LaCloche. This was a good challenge that used the shallow water boats to their best advantage, not to mention the resourcefulness of the crews of the three boats remaining. We found it! We had a very private anchorage by the waterfall and a lovely hike following the creek upstream to a beautiful, se-

cluded lake. What a great conclusion!

Having sailed 60 miles the second week, the cruise's total mileage (not figuring for the tacking) was 140 miles. This covered the most ground of any cruise I've been on. Still there is much more to see. The next time we sail the North Channel, we would like to put in at the far west (locals suggested Blind River) and take out at the eastern end, like Little Current or Killarney. Another possibility is to launch in the island-spattered McGregor Bay and just concentrate for the two weeks on the many spots there. Whatever we decide, it is comforting to think about swimming again in the pure warm water and climbing up onto the warm, welcoming rocks to dry off in the sun. We'll be back.