



Solo Challenger



Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society

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Spring 2003

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Patrick Nugent

Thirteen years ago this month, I attended my first *GLSS* Safety Seminar at Jefferson Yacht Club. I was humbled at the time as I found myself surrounded by top-notch solo sailors. Today—thirteen years later—I have picked up quite a bit more gray hair, yet continue to find myself humbled as I spend time with my solo sailing buddies. I am honored to have this President's role in an organization for which I have so much respect.

The *GLSS* is like a bear coming out of its hibernation during the month of March! There is already a lot going on behind the scenes! Board members are separated by distance like we never have been before. I am impressed with the communication that occurs through the internet. Last week, the Board met in Kalamazoo to pull some loose ends together after months of e-mail correspondence. Safety Seminars are scheduled for both the Huron sailors and the Michigan sailors. (See Safety Seminar details in this newsletter.) Our Treasurer, Wally McMinn reports that we are "in the black" as we enter our 25th year of solo sailing. Jim McLaren has accepted the VP position via unanimous vote! And Tony Driza has successfully undertaken the massive job of collecting member input to update our safety procedures during the Mac solos.

The sleeping bear is continuing to come out of its hibernation! Watch your mail for announcement posters and Mac Solo

applications. If you have paid your membership dues, your Membership Card will be arriving shortly! Mark your calendars for the **25th Annual Port Huron-Mackinac Solo and 7th Annual Chicago-Mackinac Solo on June 21, 2003!**

SAFETY SEMINARS

Rob Robins has put together what promises to be an informative and hands on Safety Seminar. It will be held **on Saturday, April 19th, 2003—2:00 PM, and is hosted by North Star Sail Club**, South River Road, Harrison Twp. There will be presentation "shorts" conducted by **Todd Jones** on "Sail Trim and Short Handed Systems", **Michael Garcia** on "Medications and Sleep Requirements", **CWO Bradbury** of the USCG on "Communications and Rescue Safety", and by **Michael Clow** of *The Yachtsman* on "Staying Warm, Dry and Afloat" Following will be an open discussion, and a flare demonstration. If you've been wondering if your 15-year-old flares will fire, here's your chance to try it without igniting your neighbor's rooftop—bring them along! *GLSS* members are also encouraged to bring along gear that has made singlehanded safer and easier, from alarms to harnesses. Please make every effort to invite a prospective entrant to this year's Mac Race! New for this year is the addition of another Safety Seminar for the sailors on the Lake Michigan side—this seminar is scheduled for **Sunday, May 18, 2003 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the Michigan City Yacht Club**. For further contact information, please visit the *GLSS* website and follow the links posted.

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CAL KARR WINS HANSON AND EILBERG AWARDS

Tom Munson

GLSS member, Cal Karr, was awarded U.S. Sailing's Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal at the 2003 GLSS Annual General Membership Meeting. This Medal is awarded to any person who rescues or endeavors to rescue any other person from drowning, shipwreck or other perils at sea. Cal was selected recipient of the Medal for his rescue of Fred Ball off Fred's overturned multihull, *Lucretia*, during the 2002 GLSS Chicago to Mackinac Singlehanded Challenge. The permanent record of this award can be found at:

http://www.ussailing.org/safety/Rescues/6_15_02_singlemac.htm. Fred's account of the rescue follows this article.

Cal was also presented with the Ralph Eilberg Award for his rescue of Fred. This award was established by the GLSS in 1987 honoring Ralph Eilberg who inspired the first Port Huron to Chicago Singlehanded Challenge in 1981. It is presented in recognition of outstanding feats of seamanship on the Great Lakes and around the world.

FRED BALL'S ACCOUNT OF HIS RESCUE

I remember telling my wife prior to this year's Chicago-Mac Solo Challenge something to the

effect that, "Last year I cruised to the Island, this year I intend to race."

The following email went out to a few GLSS members shortly after the race. With a few minor corrections it read as follows:



Departing Chicago at 0800 I had a late start but worked well through the fleet. By noon most of the other boats and the Chicago skyline were out of sight. Around 1300 I skirted a small thunderstorm, took a wind bump with full working sails and hit around eighteen knots. Up until 1400 I had seen no speed under nine knots and must have averaged close to ten. About twenty miles east-southeast of Racine the wind died. The VHF forecast a thunderstorm moving southeast at twenty knots out of Port Washington with sixty knots of wind and hail possible. At 1530 southeast of Milwaukee now the storm's roll cloud looked behind me moving off southeast. With just a spike of wind to the northeast visible I decided to do a bump and run like before. The only smart thing I did prior to this was jump in a Mustang Survival Suit and put on a heavy hat. With full sails set and moving at nine knots the seas suddenly flattened with I would guess about sixty knots of wind. I threw off all the sheets and headed downwind, from nine knots, the boat speed went to twenty in seconds. At twenty-four knots there was a loud bang and the boat pitch-poled. When it hit ninety degrees I jumped. The dagger board flew out unsecured three feet from my head and then the nets settled pressing me two feet below the surface of the lake. With the floatation suit doing its job it was a hard swim out. Harnessed in I'm sure I would have drowned. I surfaced outside the ama glad to be hit on the head by golf-ball sized hailstones. All this happened in a two-minute time frame. Inspection of the hull showed the leeward ama stem zippered open and delaminated. That's what tripped the boat. When the sun cleared the clouds I threw off my cotton stuff dried out the inside of the suit as best I could and waited for sails on the horizon. I guess radio checks came and went. With the air and water temperature about 55 degrees during the night I was cold but OK. Cal Karr came by around 0230 Sunday morning. Within fifty feet of me resting in his cockpit, engine charging, he heard my call. I am forever grateful. Eleven hours sitting on the slippery hull of an inverted trimaran is what you might call "Time to think".



So what did I think about during those eleven hours?

Probably the usual stuff. How much I loved my wife, my sons, grandkids, family and friends. I mourned for my boat. I berated myself for the utter arrogance and lack of humility that got me into this jam. But what occupied my thoughts most was how I was going to get back inside the boat. In the morning, when I got warm enough I was going to take off my survival suit, dive under the boat and into the aft cockpit and grab some air, duck to the middle cockpit and grab some more air and then into the main cabin. I wanted to collect my survival box and retrace my path back out. Remember that "Lucretia" is 50' long and 35' wide and surrounded by netting. The water is 55 degrees. The sails and sheets are all dangling. There's a diesel slick around the boat. The batteries are up side down, and my right shoulder is badly injured... so, ask yourself, did Cal Karr save my life?

That night I saw two sailboats pass off to the east too far away to hail. Around 1400 I saw a green bow light. I reckoned it was going into Milwaukee, but then the light turned red. It stayed red for five minutes and then went back to green for another five. I have to apologize to Cal, but I remember thinking, "Boy, that guy's steering a really crappy course." Then the lights went to a steady red and green and stayed that way. After Cal heard me yell and dropped his sails and made his first circle around me I got excited, jumped up and down, and slipped and fell in the lake. Cal made one more circle backed "Belle" gently up to an ama and I stepped aboard. I was shaking so hard and was so stiff I couldn't get my clothes off. So I ask again, did Cal Karr save my life?

Cal and I are both named for inanimate objects. B-A-L-L, K-A-R-R. He's the first guy I met in the bar before the 2001 race. We both look alike. I know we wear the same sized clothes because Cal gave me a pair of blue jeans a tee shirt and twenty dollars when he dropped me off at the dock in Milwaukee. We're both married to beautiful funny blondes. My wife teaches tennis. Cal's wife is assistant superintendent of schools in Traverse City. I design houses for a living. Cal's a builder. But the really astonishing thing about all this is that as yet I really don't know Cal that well.

I got a Christmas present from him this year. His chart for the 2002 race. From his storm off Waukegan it clearly shows a two-degree westerly course change every hour for five hours. That's two clicks of the autopilot west every hour. It puts him eighteen miles west of the rhumb line to Point Betsy. If you ask Cal why he did this he might say one of two things. He was headed to Sheboygan, Wisconsin to take a taxi to Mackinac Island or, "I don't know why I did that."



Being fatalistic by nature, this incident really opened my eyes. As we speak, not one but two inverted egress hatches are installed in "Lucretia", Tim Kent has my 406 EPIRB, I have a submergible VHF, and only one Mustang Suit will be aboard and properly prepared. This is the obvious stuff. But here's what I really learned:



There are saviors, guardians and angels among us, and they're not all invisible. My savior is sitting right here, Cal. My guardian is here, Cree. And one of my angels is over there, Taylor. So the point is if we keep our eyes, ears and mostly our hearts open we may not need 406 EPIRB's or inverted egress hatches.



Another thing about Cal and me, neither of us is religious in any organized way. However I'm convinced that all this -- Cal's similarities to me, his unreasonable course, my good luck, this miracle really isn't unreasonable at all. In fact it's the opposite. It's commonplace. These miracles hide in our daily lives usually just going unseen. I walk in a state of grace knowing this.



I may never repay the debt I owe to you Cal, but I owe a debt and intend to repay it. To someone else, perhaps, even to someone in this room. But it's a debt I will repay.



So this toast is to Tim*, to Mike** and to you Cal. To the Saviors, Guardians and Angels among us! Thank you.

*** GLSS member, Tim Kent, currently sailing the "Around Alone Race" on Everest Horizontal.**

**** GLSS member, Mike Silverthorne, who lost his life during the 2002 Lake Michigan Scramble.**

In Memoriam

Sadly, just as this issue was about to head for the printers, I was notified of the untimely passing of Kathy Hawks after a long, valiant battle against breast cancer. Her presence on Mackinac Island will forever be remembered, and our condolences and prayers to Gregg Doty and Kathy's entire families. Pat Nugent has composed a beautiful tribute to Kathy:

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

Seashore *Patrick Nugent*

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength and I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come down to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, "There! She's gone."

Gone where? Gone from my sight—that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of destination. Her diminished size is in me not her, and just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There, she's gone," there are other eyes watching and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she comes!"

Kathy Hawks
1944-2003

Mac Race Procedural Changes

Tony Driza

As a result of the incidents occurring last season on Lake Michigan involving Fred Ball and Mike Silverthorne, a safety committee consisting of Tony Driza, Paul Schloop, Matt Scharl, and Joe Turns was formed to look into possible changes to both the required equipment we carry, and the procedures we follow during the race.

Over the course of several months involving face to face meetings in Kalamazoo and Chicago, phone calls and a blizzard of e-mails, the process has evolved to the point where we were able to recommend and subsequently approve at the Board level a few changes that should go a long way towards improving our safety record. Most of the emails from fellow members suggested that we require more or different types of gear to prevent accidents from occurring. A lot of debate went into what should or should not be mandated, including procedures we should adopt or continue to require. In the end, the one area of change that we could agree on for the most part (after all, we're singlehanded sailors, right?) was to tighten up our check-in procedures, put in place a plan to follow when someone doesn't check-in, and establish a penalty for failure to check-in within a given time frame. The short and dirty version is:

- ❖ Check-in mandatory every three hours.
- ❖ Exchange position, course, speed.
- ❖ Pre-printed forms will be provided.
- ❖ SAR by USCG after 30 minutes late.
- ❖ After 30 additional minutes, fellow competitors will be diverted to search.
- ❖ DSQ if no check-in within 1-hour window of scheduled. Skipper may petition Board/Race Committee to overturn DSQ upon reaching the Island.

It was felt that we didn't need to mandate more required equipment, but an additional category of "Recommended Equipment" was developed. The use of any or all of the gear so listed is entirely up to the discretion of the individual skipper. If you have it, we ask that you initial it on the form provided. The changes in their entirety will be available at the Safety Seminars, and on the web shortly. They are changes we can all definitely *live* with!

The 2003 applications for the 7th Chicago-Mac and the 25th Port Huron-Mac have not yet been updated as of press time for this newsletter. Please check the GLSS website <http://webhost.sailnet.com/glss/apps.htm> for the pertinent applications, which will be posted as soon as they are finalized. Download and submit them at your convenience, and see you on the racecourse in June!

A Chicago-Mac to Remember...

Paul Schloop

I was out driving today, and even though the temp was below twenty, the sun kept the car warm. Spring is almost here, and I am thinking about sailing. Every time I do, I think about the first Solo Mac and the spring of 1997.

I read about the race in the GR Press. There was an article in the Outdoor Section with a picture of Teri Smith from Muskegon preparing his boat for the first ever Solo Chicago to Mackinac Solo Challenge. A few names were mentioned, but no phone numbers or good information on how to enter. It didn't matter, I was hooked. Like a lot of sailors that used to race a little bit, I was now day sailing solo a lot because the family really wasn't interested in sailing. I saw this article and I literally had no choice, I needed to track these people down, and get in this race.

Rob Robins, who at the time was with Macatawa Yacht Club in Holland, was one of the names mentioned in the story, so I finally drove over to Holland and luckily found him. We both talked about the real joy we both felt at getting a chance to do something like this race. I filled out a record of my sailing history and the GLSS accepted my entry just in time for me to prepare for the race.

Getting to Chicago was not hard. We tied up at the Columbia Yacht Club, which was hosting our start. I always say "we" when I single-hand my boat; it seems both right and very strange at the same time. Columbia Yacht Club is housed in an old Canadian railcar passenger ferry located right off downtown Chicago. Inside, it is like a step back in time, a totally different world.

The night before the race, we had dinner and the skippers meeting aboard the ship. The Great Lakes Singlehanded Society, a collection of Lake Huron sailors who had sanctioned a Port Huron to Mackinac Island solo race for many years, was running this race as well. They had wanted to start a similar race on Lake Michigan

concurrently with the Port Huron race, with the finishers meeting on Mackinac Island the same week. Met some really great guys. You always try and find someone with a boat comparable to yours and I met a Wisconsin-ite named Mark Veenstra who sailed a Swan 36. I have a Bavaria 35 and thought we might be pretty close (as it turns out, we have almost match raced up the lake several times over the years. As the skipper's meeting began, and we listened to our race instructions and recommendations from the race committee, I glanced around the room and all the joking and laughing that had started the evening had ended. Although we were all competent sailors, none of us had ever done anything like this before, and there were a lot of nervous looks being exchanged. We said our good-lucks, and all went to bed early for the 8 AM start.

Believe it or not, I did go right to sleep, but not for long. In the middle of the night a very strong windstorm came up out of the SE, and in that harbor, a SE wind makes WAVES! The water was really high that year and there was less than a foot of dock above the water line. There were two and three foot waves in the harbor, and I woke when my bumpers slipped over the top of the dock and my boat slammed into the dock with a big crash. I ran out and re-adjusted my bumpers over and over for the rest of the night, not getting any sleep. I was going to be very tired before this thing ever got started.

There is a pay phone at the end of the dock, so I asked someone to hold my boat off while I called my wife to get some encouragement. Like the good nights sleep, that was not to be had either. That same storm had dropped 9 inches of rain in our area; my wife said that the power was out, the basement flooded, and what was I going to do about it. At that moment the wind and waves picked up again, and the boat smacked into the dock. The person trying to hold my boat off yelled that he had to go, and the other racers were leaving as well. I told my wife to call the plumber, the electrician, and whomever else she needed, but I had no way to get to her and I could not leave the boat. I was leaving and had to hang up on her silence. *Not* a good way to start something you had dreamed about doing for a long time.

The NOODS were in Chicago at the same time; they're races for fully crewed offshore boats. They had delayed their start that morning

because of the storm. We started. I was late for the start because of the phone call. The wind died down right after the start and all the boats sailed off into the misty fog. The only boat left near me was Teri Smith in the smallest boat in the fleet, a Cal 27. We slopped back and forth for a while in the chop left from the storm, making all of 1-2 knots. All I could think about was the phone call to my wife. Was she going to be OK, was the house OK, and what a long and miserable trip it was going to be to Mackinac Island with every sail banging, going only 1 to 2. It also crossed my mind that it might not be my wife that would meet me on the Island as we had planned, but her lawyer.

It wasn't long and the wind picked up quite a bit. It was rough with no visibility and *lots* of wind, so I didn't chance the Spinnaker (when you are single handing, the Spinnaker is always capitalized—can be a scary thing, that monster), I jibed back and forth every half hour with the 150 up and within two hours, the Swan appeared right out of the fog just ahead of me, on the opposite tack. Every half hour all morning we split tacks and crossed each other. The Swan would appear on the opposite tack out of the fog less than a hundred yards away, just like clock work.

By afternoon, the wind died down and visibility improved. The Swan was way east when the sun broke through, and the wind died completely where I was. I watched as three other boats popped their chutes east of me and disappeared. I never saw another boat for a day and a half. I had no wind to make any sail work. Finally at sunset the water flattened out and the boat started moving. There was still a haze and I could not see far on the water, but the sky was clear above me. A full moon came out that night and there was a thick fog right at the surface of the water. I was going 4 to 5 with no wind that I could feel at the deck level at all. The moon shone through the fog on the surface of the water making it look like molten lead. The boats wake veed away from the stern in perfectly flat water. It was magic, and one of the most beautiful nights I have ever seen.

All night freighters passed close by, but I could not see them. All I could hear were the big diesels and it sounded like I was being passed by freight trains from hell on this magical night.

In the morning, the wind was light and the sea flat so I put up the Spinnaker. I am an old catamaran racer without much experience with the chute short-handed, so that to tell you that this thing scared the hell out of me alone out there would not be an understatement! A lot of learning went on that day. Visibility was still not good, so I never saw another boat that day. Just a beautiful hazy sunny day with *Blue Max* and me, with an occasional freight train from hell rumbling by in the distant fog.

In the middle of that night, I finally got around Pt. Betsie, out of the shipping lanes and out of the fog for some quick naps. At sunrise a beautiful sight for me, was the three boats up ahead becalmed in the Manitou Passage about five miles ahead. The water was absolutely flat, with just a single shaft of air off of my bow. I worked that shaft and passed the Swan. By the time I passed the South Fox Island shoals, I had 3 to 4 miles on him.

Now came a big learning experience in this race. I was going right down the rhumb line a 6.5 to 7. I could see myself getting to the Island before dark, so I pushed hard. I stopped napping, stopped eating, and did not drink enough. By noon the wind suddenly switched to the northeast and doubled my distance, as I would have to tack back and forth to Grays Reef. The wind picked up and because I was tired I really carried too much sail. It was sunny, but an ominous line of clouds was over the U.P. As I approached Grays Reef the sun set, the clouds ahead were flashing lightning, and I was fried. I put a reef in the mainsail, but left up the 150. Not too smart!

I rounded Grays Reef just fine. Clear skies overhead, clouds and lightning to the north. A huge blast of air hit me and knocked me flat. I released the jib halyard and went forward to douse the 150. Got it down and I could hear a faint beep, beep. The auto-helm alarm. Ran back and got the boat under control, ran forward and the halyard was wrapped around the deck light located on the mast, forward of the lower spreaders. Standing on the boom with the boat hook, I got that untangled and the auto-helm alarm went off again. Went back to the wheel and got no response to the helm. Now an alert old catamaran sailor knows what being in irons is, but in my current condition, I thought I lost my rudder. Reached down to the rudder post and it was still there! Cursing myself for being a

fool, I got her going, put up the 110 and was flying along up the Straights thinking I was doing pretty good because the bigger boats in the fleet just reported being at the bridge a little ways ahead.

Not a good place to cat nap, the Straights, so I worked hard. The wind unfortunately started to die, so I put the 150 back up and shook out the reef in the main. We slowly worked our way up to the bridge, and by daylight I was there. The wind wasn't. I could get the boat up near the south tower, then the wind shadow would blanket me just enough so that the current was pushing me backwards even though my speedo said I was going 1 to 1.5. This went on for three hours. I tried every trick I knew, but all I was getting was more exhausted. I started my engine to charge my batteries and have it ready in case one of the freighters that were going by me got too close and I had to avoid a collision. After three hours, I stared at that gearshift lever more than once thinking about just chucking the whole thing.

If you have not been thoroughly exhausted before, you cannot imagine the level of depression that a person feels at a time like this when something you want is so close—6 or 7 miles—and yet feels so impossibly far. Finally, I looked behind me and a fog bank was slowly coming down the Straights and in the leading edge of the bank I could barely make out a patch of yellow. The damn Swan! The fog bank brought some air and we finished at the Island together. The race committee has an inspection team and welcoming team at the dock to help you tie up (could not have done it without them in the state I was in) and do a spot equipment check. We were greeted with a hug, a kiss, and a bottle of Champaign. I have a picture, a scruffy looking guy waving a bottle of Champaign with the biggest grin you ever saw.

Made a lot of friends over the years doing this race. Mark, Alan, Jim, Rob, Ron, Dave, Joe, Bill Mike, Time and the list goes on. We lost Mike in the Lower Michigan Scramble off Holland last year; none of us can believe it, and Tim is doing the Around Alone solo race. At last check, he had just rounded Cape Horn. Doing something alone to make friends seems strange doesn't it? But I know what I will be doing the 3rd weekend in June every year with some of the best people in the world!

Paul Schloop

Blue Max

Around Alone Update

As this issue of the *Solo Challenger* hits the press, most of the *Around Alone* fleet is in Salvador, Brazil, making preparations to their boats for the fifth and final leg back home to Newport, RI. There has been time to rest, rebuild, re-stock and reflect on what has gone before, and what is yet to come. Another skipper has withdrawn from the race; Graham Dalton aboard *Hexagon* was sailing happily along when the boat lurched forward, and according to Brian Hancock, the rig came crashing down. Brad Van Liew was diverted in Graham's direction as a precaution, but Graham was able to cut the rigging free, and motor into Mar del Plata. He had hoped to be able to secure another mast, but it was not to be, and he has withdrawn. Hard to imagine the frustration he must have been feeling at that point. Then a week later, it was Derek Hatfield's turn to feel the rage of Cape Horn as he was dismayed in 70-knot gusts and gigantic seas. Bad enough to lose the rig, but he also suffered damage to the keel, stanchions, hatches and a goodly amount of his electronics. He was fortunate to make it into Ushuaia, Argentina where he still sits awaiting a mast and sails before he can re-join the race. He was brushing snow off the decks down south while the remainder of the fleet was sweltering in Brazil. His plans are to do the best he can up to Salvador, take the mandatory 48-hour stop there, and restart for Newport behind the rest of the fleet. Tenacity knows no bounds when it's pertaining to the skipper from north of the border. For some eye opening reading, if you haven't already heard the tale of his pitch poling, point your browser to <http://www.aroundalone.com/raceviewer/archive/20030312/5010.htm>.

Of course, there is our very own **Tim Kent** aboard *Everest Horizontal*, solidly in second place in Class II, despite a woeful lack of funds. When it comes to being tenacious, Tim takes a second to no one! There appears to be a grass roots movement underway to welcome him back upon his finish in Newport in May; as more information becomes available, and we have narrowed his arrival window down, we'll get the news posted.

Having had the fortune to be a part of his start last fall, I can assure anyone who wonders if it's worth the trip, it is indeed! And lastly, even though the race is winding down to the final leg, Tim's expenses will continue on long after the last line has been made fast. Times are tough all over, but if there are any "dusty funds" lurking about in some almost forgotten shoebox under the bed, Tim will be able to make very good use of them!

This last leg should be just as exciting as the rest, with Tim having one more opportunity to take a first away from Brad Van Liew – keep up to date by logging onto the Around Alone website—at www.aroundalone.com.

Rode Shows

As we finally start to see days with temperatures consistently in the 60's, the activity in the boatyards will start to heat up as well. If there is something you'd like to see covered in one of the upcoming *Rode Shows*, or better yet, have an article that you'd like to contribute, hail me at tdriza@wmis.net and I'll get it into one of the upcoming issues. As much as things will allow, I'm going to try and put out a couple of them a month, more if I really need the typing practice!

Cheers.....Tony

Please help us keep your contact information up to date!

One of the more challenging aspects in communicating with all *GLSS* members is trying to keep track of where everyone is. People move around, change internet service providers and consequently e-mail addresses. Whether or not you are still actively racing, we'd like to keep you up to date on what is happening within the *GLSS*. Please send your corrections to tdriza@wmis.net. **Thanks!!!**