

VICE COMMODORE'S WINTER TALE

Chip Cunningham, W1321, Solje

Prologue: Because I (Nick Seraphinoff) had to leave Detroit right after five boats arrived from England, I assigned my man Chip to take the boats to the warehouse for storage. He had to take the boats one at a time on road bases which was a big job and I said to myself, "Thank goodness I have a guy like Chip to do this." UNTIL I GOT THIS E MAIL FROM HIM!

Nick, my man,

First rule of sailing: Protect the Equipment.

Second rule of sailing: You Are the Most Important Equipment! I'll get back with you to find out how you're doing (*with your bruised ribs*). But this may take your mind off your injury.

The boats got moved OK today—only one thing. Kind of big thing actually, but it was so much fun (very nearly almost enough fun,) so I'm sure you will understand. Wednesday when I first came down to move the boats it was sunny and thirty-six degrees. The wind was about 12 knots and steady from the south south-east which means that sailing the river from Bayview Yacht Club was a reach both ways. Who could resist a situation like that?

When I got Tony's boat to BYC there was nobody around so I just pulled up under the hoist and rigged it. I couldn't find a tension gauge but I think I got it reasonably close. It's not like there was anybody to race with.

I improvised a sling, picked it up, swung it off the pier and lowered it onto the ice. That grey double stripe is really classy from underneath. The wind was blowing straight up Conner Creek and the boat doesn't point all that well on ice, so I pulled it out as far as I thought the ice would hold me. The river is frozen maybe three hundred feet out from the wall in front of the clubhouse. When I didn't want to trust the ice anymore I got in, trimmed the sails in a bit and started sailing (sort of) while hanging my feet out over the leeward side to hold her from making too much leeway across the ice. It wasn't what you'd call elegant, but it worked: it got me to open water.

The really amazing part is that there is a wide patch of water open in front of BYC. As I was sailing over to the main channel, I saw a boat coming out of Lake St. Clair, downbound. It didn't look like a freighter. In any case I didn't want to get caught in the channel ahead of it, so I waited. It was the Canadian Coast Guard Icebreaker *Hollyhock*! What luck!

I let her go by and headed down river a respectful distance behind her. I must have been doing four or five knots and she wasn't pulling away too fast. She was knocking me a pretty clear path. It's not like the river is frozen—it seems mostly like chunks floating down from upriver and they get all jammed up. The occasional big chunk that did float back into my path I could steer around—no trouble. There was a lot of small ice and mush though. *Hollyhock's* engines were really churning. She must have been grinding a lot of it up. I think maybe she was also trying to stir up warmer water from deeper in the river. Anyhow, sailing a Mark IV through it sounded like when you shake a box of marbles. I looked carefully over the side of the boat and the hull looked fine. So I kept going.

I made it about half way to the Ambassador Bridge before my nerve ran out. You know, I was thinking, "I bet this icebreaker is not out here just for fun. It must be breaking a path for boats. Besides me, I'm pretty sure the only other boats out here are...*freighters!*" The problem was if I met a freighter in the channel I wasn't sure how things were going to work out. The path was not wide enough to pass in at all. I mean I certainly expected that he wouldn't run over me and that I could sail ahead of him until I found a place to pull over and let him by. But I hadn't seen any places like that yet.

So I turned around and headed back upriver. It quickly became really clear to me that that was exactly where these freighters would probably be coming from: the die had been cast a while ago, so to speak. Well, that, and making headway going upriver against all the ice and mush was not as speedy as sailing down river. More big chunks had drifted back into the path also. Well, I thought, I can always turn around. Lake Ontario is open.

Besides, it was getting cold too. Thank god the wind kept me on a close reach! The boat was moving as well as could be expected. I had the genoa cracked off quite a bit to push through the ice the current was bringing toward me. Every minute that passed without seeing a freighter come around Belle Isle only made me more nervous. But as it usually is, all the worry was in my head! *No freighters—anywhere!* How's that for luck? I swear, I didn't have a beer until I turned out of the shipping channel headed back over to BYC. But then I had a few.

I could see there were five guys standing on the end of the pier watching me. When I got to the thin edge of the ice I asked them to come out on the ice and take a

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Heffernan took out a potential Wayfarer sailor as crew, and several sailors practiced their single handing skills. Izak Kielmovitch sailed a Hartley Mark IV with Nick Seraphinoff as crew. Apparently the boat sailed well, as Izak had a best finish of Second and bought the boat, replacing his Mark I.

Activities were not limited to the weekends. A midweek lunch was the justification for a trip to Sinbad's Restaurant (by Wayfarer) with the fleet joined by a Flying Scot sailor in a borrowed woodie Wayfarer. Several impromptu "seminars" occurred during the week, with Nick Seraphinoff one day showing how to install the Hartley masthead flotation on several Wayfarer sails, and on another day showing fiberglass repair techniques. Dave Hepting displayed his new aluminum rub rails that he installed on his Mark IV, an apparent hit, as he assisted in installing them on one additional Mark IV so far, with two in progress.

In addition to the club-centered activities, visitors took advantage of other activities in the area. This year there were fewer trips to Disney World and the Daytona Beach and St. Petersburg beaches. There was a trip to Cedar Key, an as-yet undiscovered locale reminiscent of Key West in the 1930's. A trip to see the manatees (aka the endangered "sea cows") by kayak, turned out to be a trip for the manatees to see the kayaks, the National Commodore's kayak being nudged by one of the placid creatures.

In case you want to pencil it in on your calendar, next year's Wayfarer Midwinters are February 5-7, with club races the following weekend, and the George Washington Birthday Regatta on February 20-21.

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line (you know—that black line I carry) and pull me up onto the good ice. They were yelling something back at me—I think they were arguing with me—but I told them my ears were bad and I couldn't hear. So finally one of them came out on the ice. I had made a few throws and the last one stretched the rope all the way out—about 75', I think. He was on good ice. He couldn't get me up by himself. Then he finally got a couple more guys to come down and help pull. The boat slipped up on the ice no problem. They pulled me onto the good ice and then they let me know they were pretty damn pissed at me.

"You're not even a member here, are you?" they asked. You know the elitist tone they can take.

I said, "No, I'm not, but I'm permanent crew for Nick Seraphinoff and he said I could come down and take his boats out anytime I wanted. Is the kitchen still open?"

So, Nick, you might have to answer a few questions about that when you get back. Otherwise, when I was lifting the boat out I had a good look at the bottom and it was fine. I mean absolutely fine. I had already decided that if it was damaged the slightest bit I would buy it and let Tony sail it until a replacement came in. But it's fine, so you don't even have to tell him if you'd rather not!

I planned to come back down Thursday to move the rest of the boats, but I needed a day of rest. I was shot. But I am *so satisfied!*

Say hi to Tony and his Mary and everybody else! (By the way, I checked the weather and didn't see any storm in Florida. It looks like you're going to have a fine race). And a special hello to your Mary too.

Tony's got a hot boat now! You remember what they used to say about hot rods in the 50's: "Break them in hard; break them in fast: they stay *hard and fast.*" I think they used semicolons in the 50's.

Cato

P.S. I wasn't asking to put the burger on your tab! I just needed your OK for them to serve me. Anyway, thanks! It was typically thoughtful of you and it really hit the spot. Next time it's my treat at the Whitehorse. Get better, man.



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