

A Long Cruise
in
a Short Boat

Parry Sound to Killarney

In

a Mirror Dinghy

1979

Graham Pilling M-56976
416-634-0763

A Long Cruise in a Short Boat

By John McCulloch

For some time members of the Ontario Mirror Dinghy Association thought about making a long voyage in Mirror Dinghies. Four men, all over 40 years of age decided to carry out this mission, known as "Operation Bearney". A seven day cruise from Parry Sound up the east coast and across the top of Georgian Bay to Killamey, a distance of approximately 120 miles, was the goal.

The main points of concern in a cruise of this sort are (a) compatible companions, four is ideal, six is maximum, (b) competent sailors under every weather condition and (c) boats in reliable, seaworthy shape. Participants were John Ryell, who built his boat, *The Beagle*, in 1970; Graham Pilling, who built *Wee Pal III* in 1974; Aart Vandermeer, who built *Ahoy* in 1971, and John McCulloch with *Lil Twister* which he built in 1972.

Itineraries were planned, menus drawn up, and equipment and personal items were checklisted. Boats and other items were packed, car-topped and trailered and on July 21, 1979, we arrived at Pleasant View Marina, just south of Parry Sound.

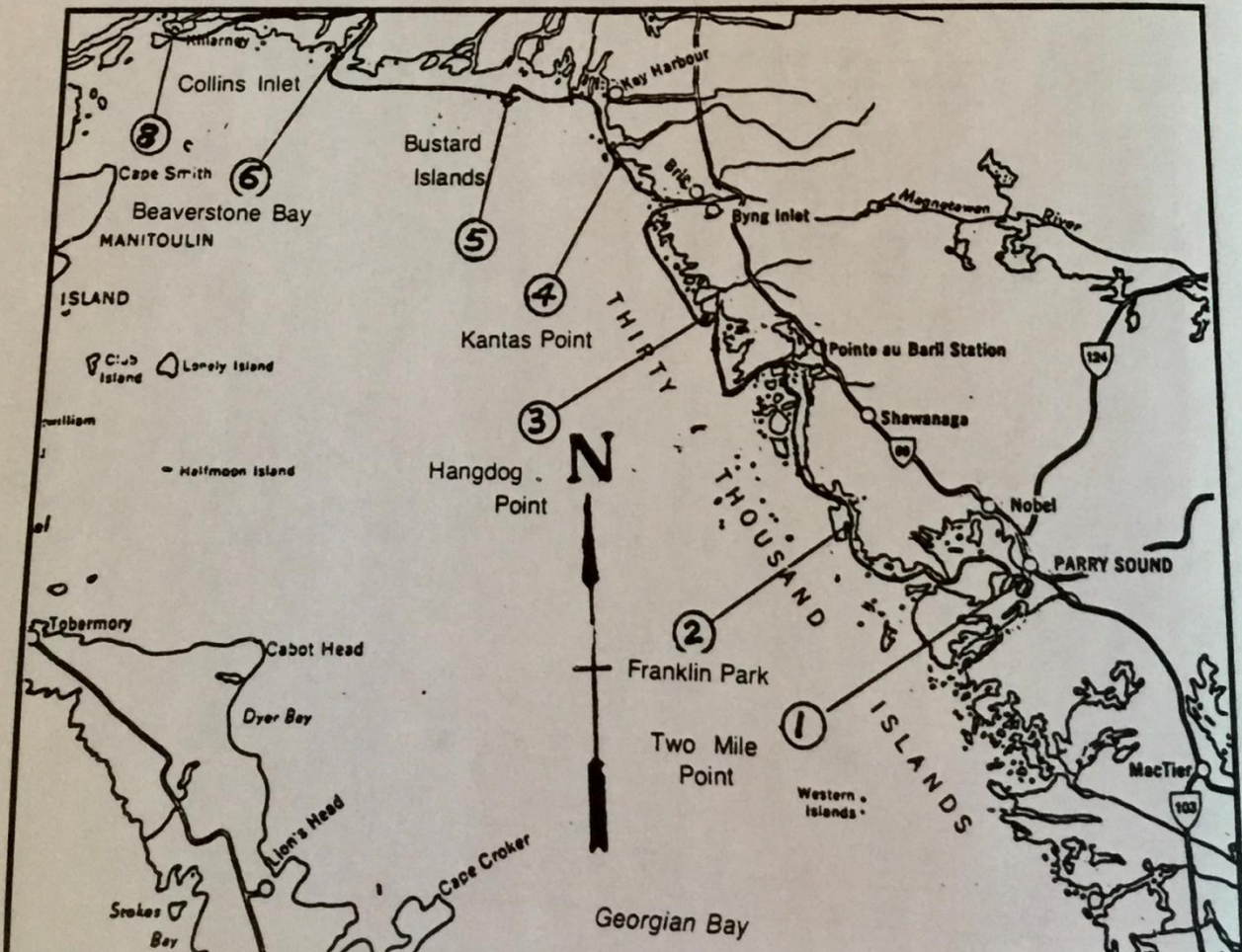
We had hoped to be in the water by 1400 hours, boats were finally ready by 1630, so we decided to have a meal, it was a long time since breakfast. We headed for the Harbour Light Restaurant and I did some last minute shopping; heavy duty garbage bags, a note book and a cob pipe which I fancied.

We explained our plans to Guy Ferguson, the owner of the marina, and asked him to inform the Ontario Provincial Police of our route and to put out an alert if we weren't back by Monday.

At 1830 we set off with *Beagle* leading the way. Three or four tacks against

a five to six knot headwind got us clear of the jetty and out into Parry Sound Harbour. Yippee! We were underway at last, with the sun starting to lower but a nice breeze still holding. We headed northeast on a reach. The dinghies handled like big boats, a bit sluggish with the weight of food and camping gear on board. We rippled through the water at a good walking pace. Red sails, and white canvas decks on four differently coloured hulls, must have looked a pretty sight from shore. About a mile from launch, leaving Rosetta Isle to starboard, Aart blew his whistle. We pulled alongside. "I can't find my life-jacket." There was nothing for it but to head back. Graham and Aart went ashore to the car, *Beagle* and *Lil* had a final check-out while waiting. We set off again, the wind and the sun dropping.

We cleared the harbour and headed into Parry Sound. On our port side, a



sandy beach just west of Two Mile Point turned out to be a perfect camping spot. We just got ashore when the wind died completely. Out with the boat pillows on the water's edge, the bow just resting on them, then down with the sails. Before lifting each boat, we took out the two main bags on either side of the centreboard case to decrease the weight. Our beaching routine took shape.

Setting up the tents was next. Then, blowing up the air mattresses produced a grim discovery. John had been elected to bring a foot pump . . . but the connection fitted only his mattress. The other three had to be blown up the hard way.

With the water about 68 F. and crystal clear, a skinny dip was a gorgeous way to relax after a hot and hectic day. "This is the life," we thought, wallowing like walrus. John was first out and had the kettle on four a cup of tea and a granola bar. "Six more days of this and we won't want to go home," we said.

The sun went down and I lit my cob pipe. It was a grand smoke for a new pipe. We packed the food away. A police boat, speeding by for the harbour, gave us a couple of hoots.

As the stars came out, so did the mosquitoes. Skeeter coils didn't have much effect. We could hear and see the shadows of dragon flies chasing them as they hovered around our heads. The only thing for it was bed and, by 2230, we were tucked in. Graham and John shared Graham's self-supporting four-man tent, Aart and I had small two-man tents.

The forecast on my pocket radio sounded good, possible thunderstorms late Sunday evening, winds ten to 20, westerly, in the morning, dropping in the afternoon, sunny and warm.

About 0430 I rolled off my air mattress. I heard a train in the distance and dozed off again. At 0500 a loon, very near by, was saying "Come-on, wake-up." A little later the sound of a train was coming down the lake so I poked my head out and saw a freighter go by. It seemed like hours later when a great tidal wave hit the shore. It was the wake from the freighter.

0530: Dawn broke and all the birds started a chorus, it was thickly wooded behind us. I couldn't sleep any more, I'd never before been wide awake at this time of morning so must have been getting used to life in the wilds.

0545: I could hear snores from John and Graham's tent and Aart turning over. I decided I would go fishing, it was too cool for swimming. I checked the

boats, a little breeze was moving across the water and the tell-tales on Lil's shrouds gave a flutter. Huckleberry Island was starting to appear through the early morning haze. I decided to make notes in my log and forget the fishing idea.

0610: The sun was a big, red ball rising out of Parry Sound. This is a picturesque and beautiful area, especially under such conditions.

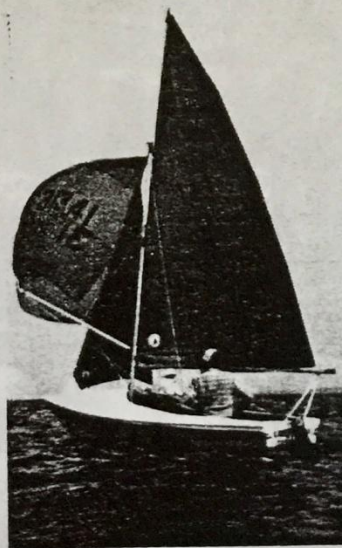
0625: The sun changed to orange as it rose in the sky. Five ducks quacked as they flew across our little bay and landed off the point.

0700: John stuck his head out of the flap of his tent. "Wow! I think I'll have a swim." A streak of pink moved like a bolt of lightning from the tent to the water, and another tidal wave hit the shore.

Graham and Aart appeared, fully clothed and a little sleepy. Faces were wet at the water's edge and mind and body all set for whatever lay ahead. Primus and gas stoves were lit, tea was brewed, Red River Cereal was followed by fresh, scrambled eggs, pumpernickel bread and jam — a meal built to last.

John and Graham volunteered to cook for the first day as John had

cook next day. We had over 80 pounds of food divided into 20 pound lots. Each lot had been listed and given to one of us. We used lake water for cooking and



tea, for for drinking we used a "Martec" portable water filter and purifier and never had a problem.

Centreboards made good tables on

a sandy beach. Washing up was done, tents were downed and everything again packed in waterproof bags. Boats were lifted into the water, bows perched on the pillows, and then final loading was completed and everything secured. We planned for the worst, and that's a dump. The last item on board was our lunch snack, a granola bar, and granola mixed with nuts, raisins and dried fruit in a tupperware type box, and a Tang orange drink made with filtered lake water for each person. We could sail without stopping for something to eat or drink. We chose our goal at breakfast and Franklin Island, about 20 miles as the crow flies, was it for today.

1030: The wind was blowing ten to 15 from Killbear Point so we had a good beat. Once we cleared Three Mile Point, we were in open water, nearly 350 feet deep. Our port tack got us past Wall Island on the north side of the Sound. Against a two to three foot chop, the boats were handling well. With the amount of cargo on board it was better, when a puff hit, to ease the main and keep the boat upright. The weight maintained our boat speed.

This was a test for our spray covers. They kept out 90% of the bow spray but when we hit a wave head on, the water would shoot between the cover and the gunwale and run down the deck. We were heading straight for Mowat Island. A change to starboard tack cleared it, and brought us into the centre of the Sound again. We could see sheltered water on the lee of Killbear Point so, after a mile, we tacked toward Patterson Isle where the seas were calmer and gave us a chance to bail. John had an old main with the lower panel removed to make it 18 inches shorter. For his weight he had better control in these conditions, but couldn't point as high as the rest of us.

At noon we got to the lighthouse at Killbear Park and managed to eat a few handfuls of granola. Ten to 15 knot gusts came off Parry Island, the sea was calmer and we were able to beat straight up the channel to Cousin Isle. We were now in familiar waters as we have our O.M.D.A. camping and sailing week at Harold Point in Killbear Park every year. Sure enough, we saw red sails bobbing around Harold Point and met our old buddies, Don Petrie, Don Huxtable and Ian Chapman from the Cherry Beach fleet. Finishing off a two-week camping/sailing holiday, they were pleased to see us and our modified cruising Mirrors. It was a hectic

half-hour stop. During our visit, we got out emergency rolls of sticky tape and sealed our spray covers to the topside around the bow and then left our calling cards at the little red hut.

We had decided beer was a no-no, we didn't have room and couldn't keep it cool. Needless to say, all rules can be bent. As a parting gesture, Don and the boys slipped a nice, cool Labatts Blue into each boat.

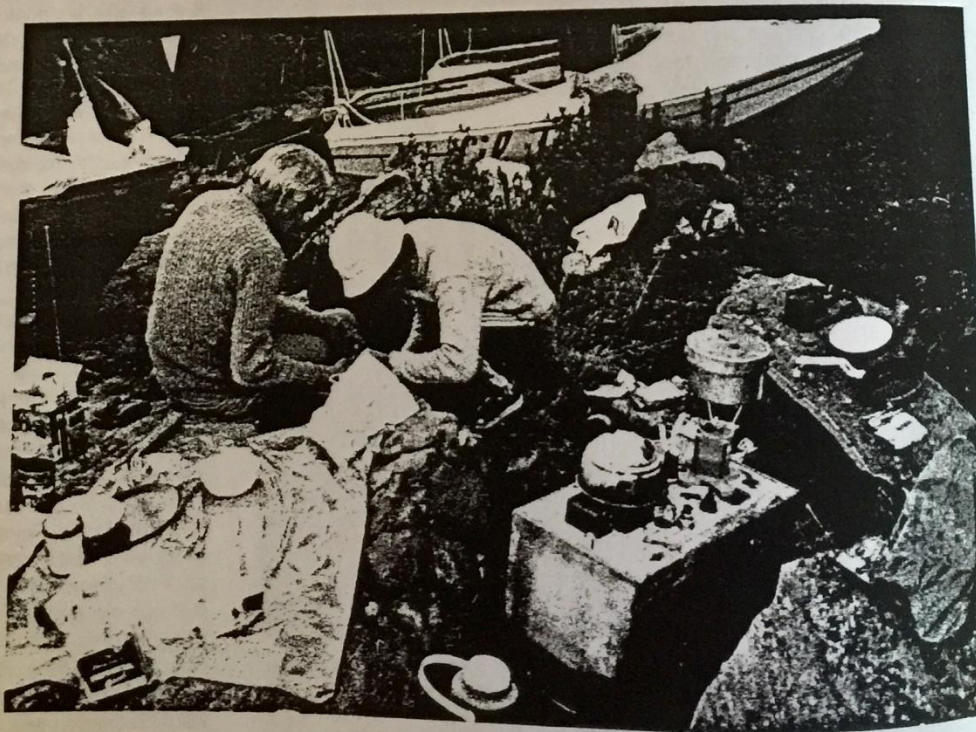
Once again on a starboard beat out the channel to the Sister Isles, John had to go about or be hit by a 22 foot yacht on port — a rather poor show on the other boat's part, he didn't even acknowledge John's call of 'Starboard'. We tacked for Davy Isle. The wind dropped to five to ten knots and seas were just a small chop, the sun was nice and hot. We tacked westward, Carling Rocks to port and Spruce Rocks to starboard. Then a long starboard tack took us to the Reid Islands, and another long, slow port tack to the Pancakes. The wind was now three to five, or less, but still steady southwest. Our orange drink was running low and I had decided to keep my Labatt's for dinner so, to break the boredom, I set up the filtering plant in the cockpit. Lil did not like these light airs and, with the

extra 40 ounces aft, was dragging her stern. We were spread out at this point, Wee Pal raring to go in her usual position, Ahoy, followed by Beagle and Lil, not too far behind.

We decided to sail the inner route between Ketcheson Isle and Snug Harbour. Our goal was still Franklin Island but, in case the wind died, we weren't taking a chance on a long paddle to shore. On we drifted, in two to three knot airs until, close to Snug Island, the airs picked up to four or five, but variable. This made life more interesting, we had to make the best of every puff. It was time to look for a landing spot.

Franklin is about the biggest island in the area — up to four miles long by two wide. We got to Burritt Point, having sailed about 16 miles on our second day. Graham shouted to head northwest to a spot called Franklin Park (Raccoon Station, Mosquito Junction). Within a 100 yards of it the wind died so we paddled. We gave Graham a hard time because there was no sandy beach, just tricky rocks to put the boats on and a small patch of long grass for the tents.

TO BE CONTINUED



RYELL'S RESTAURANT

A Long Cruise in a Short Boat

By John McCulloch

Part 2

We had no alternative. We hauled the boats out on to the rocky slope and, by 1830, set up camp for the night. Aart and I decided to share a tent to avoid putting up three in this small spot.

John got No. 1 menu underway and the other three readied tents, air mattresses and boats for the night. Graham wet a line and caught a small mouth bass which he threw back. John, Aart and I plunged in for a quick dip. It was cooler than Parry Sound was the previous evening, nevertheless it was refreshing. We lit a small campfire, had an excellent meal and ceremoniously

course, the garbage had to be checked piece by piece. They quietened down after they knew they were being watched. Back to sleep we went until 0200, when again there was an awful banging and clattering from the boats. The rigging tanged on the aluminum masts, we heard the rustle of paper, then a plop like a stone in the cockpit and then jumping around of small feet. On with the flashlights, and there were Ma and Pa Raccoon in the Beagle. John braved the skeeters in his pyjamas and found candy wrappers all over the cockpit, but no damage done. He brought

that excitement, I couldn't get to sleep.

0600: John made tea, Aart had a swim, and Graham and I checked to see if there was any other damage. Graham found the remains of a loaf of pumpernickel bread in his cockpit so we cleaned up the mess and got breakfast. We could find only half a package of dried milk, only enough for breakfast. We would have to get more somewhere. We found another half package a few feet away from Lil so reckoned the raccoons had scooped the lot. We broke camp at 0900, got the boats in the water, loaded and set off on a starboard run by 1000. Wind now south-southeast, eight to ten, another sunny day, a nice way to start a long day's sail. The forecast, winds southerly, hazy, hot and humid, suited us just fine.

North, to Narrows Island and Frances Point, we headed in a channel only 20 feet wide. Once we got to Galna Point, a half mile further, we reached with the wind on our port and sometimes shifting ahead. We were on a well marked, straight course, with lots of small islands and some attractive cottages. We got the odd wave from ma and the kids, father was obviously at work. Boat traffic was sparse so we sailed four abreast, just keeping out of one another's dirty air. We passed between Hoppner and Esther Island, Polley Island and Rocky Rest Island, and on to Jack Island and Ontario's Oak Island, then headed north on a delightful run.

In wide open water, over a mile off shore, heading north to Shawanaga Inlet, passing Twin Sisters to port, was a nice three foot roll which made the boat surf at times. I added a little interest by popping Lil's spinnaker. The others didn't bother, so I got ahead of them, took some pictures, then pulled



drank our, now barely cool, beer each. It went down well. We finished chores and recapped the day's events. I poured a wee dram of Scotch medicine and, with no other takers, had a slurp, lit up his pipe and watched the sun go down.

Within minutes the air was thick with skeeters. The only thing for it was into the tents and straight to bed. Thank goodness we had good fly nets, we only had to bump off the half dozen that came in with us.

2315: We were nicely asleep when there was an awful commotion outside. We shone our lights through the flynets to see a pair of big, brown eyes looking at us and saying "Hey, what's with all the light?" Ma and Pa Raccoon were checking the pots and pans to see if we had left anything unwashed and, of

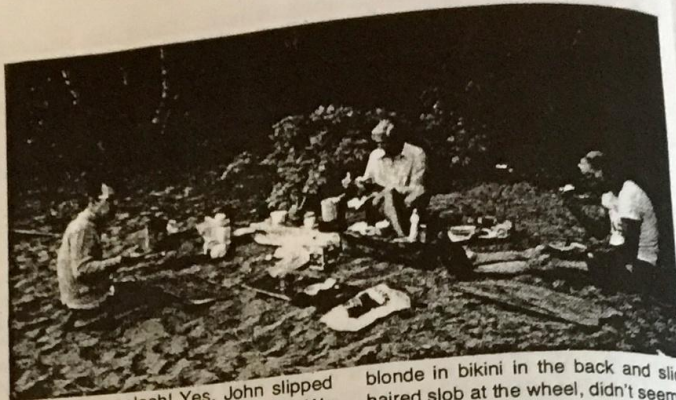
what was left of the sweets back to the tent and we all bedded down to sleep again.

I dreamed of waking up and finding the buoyancy tanks and cockpit chewed out of Lil and of trying to put them together with emergency tape, when I sat up. I heard more banging and clattering and thought my dream was true. It was 0430 and I grabbed my flashlight and saw raccoons disappear into the bush. They had been in Lil and Wee Pal, I found half-opened packages of beef soup and dried milk. I put the packages from the forward storage compartments into the side buoyancy tanks. I found they had broken a small door of Graham's stowage compartment, so jammed it closed with bits of timber, and ran back to the tent before I was eaten alive by skeeters. After all

the spinnaker behind the main and dropped back to join the fleet. It was the perfect place to be on this hot, humid day, between 75-85°F. We passed Osawa and McCormick Islands, the entrance to Shawanaga Inlet, then Hertzberg Island and Shawanaga Island itself.

We had five miles of this run. I noticed Wee Pal going off course and slowing down, so I moved nearer and found her skipper having a mid-day siesta. I said "Jane Rock is coming up on port side, better stay awake." Graham sloshed his face with water and got Wee Pal full steam again. We passed Grave Island to port and Lloyd Island to starboard, mile 29 from Parry Sound according to the chart. A course change at Turning Island was the end of our seven mile run. I downed my spinnaker and we decided to stretch our legs on a little island just of Nadeau Island, which is really part of Shawanaga Island. In a nice little deep-water bay on the lee side, a skinny dip was definitely in order. We tied the boats up and jumped in.

The wind gusting to 15 or so, we put on our life jackets as we expected a bit of a chop. Graham was on board and I was holding the Beagle for John when



there was a splash! Yes. John slipped up to his neck into the water again. We eventually got underway, wet John and all.

West, up Middle Channel and through Haggart Narrows, we passed beautiful scenery and mansion type cottages. One, in particular, had just about everything, TV, short wave radio, float plane parked just around the corner, landscaping with swimming holes, the lot.

We met a lot of boat traffic in this area. Some motor boats slowed down as they passed us. Others, not many I'm pleased to say, with well built

blonde in bikini in the back and slick-haired slob at the wheel, didn't seem to care. We wound our way up between Raspberry and Richards Islands and then up Pointe au Baril Channel. Closer to Lookout Island, it seemed we were passing through a ghost area. On our port side was a huge, abandoned, two-storey house, on our starboard side an abandoned marina with decayed jetty. Only a short distance away, in complete contrast, we passed Pointe au Baril Lighthouse, a fully manned, attractively kept place, freshly painted with a flowering garden.

About 1500, sun and wind were

holding well as we headed out to sea again. Leaving Armstrong Rocks on our port side and Nares Ledge on our starboard, we reached out to the red spar buoy. In their high-powered, semi-inflatable utility boat, the Coast Guard gave us a wave as they passed in the opposite direction. At the red buoy we headed north to Nares Point, now on the lookout for a suitable camping spot. The wind was light and variable, it was nearly 1700 with nothing suitable in sight. We pulled out at a fairly wooded area where the skeeters were waiting for us, we'd never last the evening, never mind the night there. We were sailing around all sorts of little spots when Graham hit bottom. Fortunately, there was no damage. We headed toward Hangdog Reef, the breeze was two to three and, with the islands, all over the place.

After hanging a left in a narrow channel at Leith Island, we met a couple of windsurfers. They had a cottage nearby and we asked them if there was anywhere we could pull up for the night. They suggested a cottage which wasn't in use along the channel. The cliffs in this area was not any good for us. We would have been happy to find a nice flat rock. The cottage was on a small

cliff and not at all suitable. We paddled over to some likely looking islands and found one which John and I thought might be suitable. We beached and accidentally-on-purpose fell into the water.

Aart was having a further look around. Then we heard Graham whistle from a quarter of a mile away so back to paddling we went. He had struck gold, a perfect spot with nice sloping rock for boats and flat areas for tents. Of course, we gave him hell for not finding a sandy beach.

Camp was quickly set up and we were back in the water. John demonstrated Ryell's racing dive which, to anyone else, would have been fatal. Our No. 2 menu dinner took the edge off our appetites. John was doing such a good job as cook the rest of us didn't mind washing up and setting up his air mattress. We had a routine and everyone was happy. Aart was firing up the stoves, John cooking, Graham setting up tent sites and I took on water filtration and orange drink, and all did odd jobs.

We found another package of dried milk so were O.K. for another day. John's racing dives roused a problem, we opened the first-aid box to find a

swab and an Elastoplast for a scrape on his foot.

Aart spotted what looked like a big, black cat running behind rocks nearby. Oh no! Not another night of racoons! It turned out to be a beaver. We all breathed a sigh of relief but, not taking any chances, safely stored all food out of reach of any four-legged friends.

As the sun slipped behind the horizon, in this rocky desert without a tree or blade of grass in sight, the skeeters were out in full force. Down and up with the sun seemed to be the answer.

Tuesday, 24th

We had a good night's sleep, with no interruptions. At 0630 Graham woke Aart and me and we had breakfast with one slight change, raisins added to the Red River cereal made it more interesting.

The weather was a little different today, it was cooler and overcast and the wind was ten to 15 right on our sloping rock. We weren't able to pick up any good marine forecasts, Parry Sound was difficult to hear at this location.

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Part 3

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We had a problem launching. We had to paddle each boat about 50 yards, to the lee side of a rock, pillow the bow, tie it to a rock, and go back for the next boat. When all were loaded and launched, we set off under jib and, once away from shore, hauled up the main. That was fine, except for Beagle. John had forgotten to fasten the outhaul on his main, and had to do so while drifting towards the rocks. He managed with only feet to spare.

As we beat out to Hangdog Reef Channel buoy, there was a small chop and angry looking rocks jutted all around us. Once around the buoy it was a nice run up Hangdog Channel. Back in sheltered waters again, leaving the Isle of Pines to starboard, we wound our way for two and half miles to Bayfield Harbour, where we swung westward on a reach up Alexander Passage. Aart forgot to check his figure-eight knot, his mainsheet slipped out and was trailing behind. He had a small panic getting it through the blocks for the reach, another example of Murphy's Law in action.

We passed quaint cottages and impressive real estate as we left Meneilly Island to port. One ultra-modern type castle was an architect's dream place. One of the fleet shouted over to me, "That's got to be the most expensive washroom in Georgian Bay," and someone's head popped up over the

tower. I'm sure he heard us, we didn't stop!

The wind picked up as we headed out to sea again, passing between The Brothers and The Sisters to the red buoy, 47 miles from Parry Sound. Visibility hazy, Graham took compass bearings as we passed each buoy, just to be sure. The wind ten to 15, the good old Georgian Bay swell three to four feet, we popped our spinnakers for a delightful and exciting five mile run in wide open water. Soon after passing Mercier Rock we altered course by 90° to clear Norgate Rock. On this run a few large cruisers were beating against the swell and seemed excited to see us, we noticed cameras came out. Near Raft Island, another 90° course change brought us back for a couple of miles on the run. We decided to head up Byng Inlet for more milk, our friendly racoons had left us short.

Another 90° course change, around the red buoy after Burritts Bay, brought us to a broad reach up a narrow channel with white water breaking on rocks all around us. After a half mile and a narrow passage at the Southern Rocks, off Duffy Island, the seas abated. It was plain, but gusty, sailing as the wind came off the trees on Danny Island. This was not a rough day. I'd hate to think what it would be like in a storm, and would certainly not wish to be in trouble in a big boat in the sea we had just left.

In depths between seven and 20 feet, we were sailing by the Georgian Bay Small Craft route. Rounding the southeast point of Gereaux Island, we could plainly see the radio station. We headed across the bay which is the south channel to Byng Inlet and left Clark Island to port. We joined the main Inlet channel and found it interesting to line up the marker buoys on Pine Tree

Point. In half a mile we pulled into a dock at a camp sight on the north bank. There was sure to be a store of some sort and it was time to stretch our legs.

Aart got a half dozen cans of condensed milk. Everything else was in good shape so off we set, back down the channel. Leaving Clark Island to port, we sailed on out the North Channel, this time a lot wider with three inch waves and a clear wind of five to ten. We set course for Cunningham's Island, three miles ahead, and had another 90° jog up Cunningham's Channel. Passing Golden Sword Island on our starboard, we met two Wayfarers, W866 and W2276, heading south. They were close hauled and would have a fair beat ahead.

It was now 1600, the wind dropped and, at last, the sun breaking through the haze. We passed Kantas Point and there, on the port side, was the perfect sloping rock. We wound our way through rock channels, pulled the boats up and prepared for the night. With the temperature in the high 70's, a skinny dip was in order before dinner.

Tonight's menu was freeze-dried steaks, runner beans and mashed potatoes. The wind died and, as the sun was setting, the seagulls kicked up a terrible racket, diving and darting all over the place. The shad flies were swarming, not affecting us at all but giving the gulls a field day. Aart, Graham and I rigged up fishing poles and, once again, Graham caught a small mouth bass which he threw back in. The skeeters didn't seem as bad as previously, but it was time for bed anyway. We had covered nearly 27 miles, even with the detour up Byng Inlet. Those long spinnaker runs helped cover the distance.

We opened the first aid box for 'binding pills' for John, the Red River cereal

and dried fruit were a bit much.

The forecast was for backing winds and possible thunderstorms. We weren't worried as we had allowed for a day's rest, though we were all keen to press on.

2315: I woke with water splashing in my face. The heaviest downpour I had ever heard was upon us, the vent flap was tied open, and a lot of water was coming in. When the rain eased Aart stripped off his pajamas and went out to close it. All was well until 0315, when the second storm hit. We had thought we would not need the fly roof and now the seam in the roof started to drip. It wasn't hitting the sleeping bags so off to sleep we went until 0430 when the third rainstorm hit. A gust of wind moved the stones holding the guy ropes and the roof was touching my sleeping bag. When the rain stopped for a moment I had to go out to fix it.

0650: Graham and John were bright eyed and bushy tailed, they had no problems with water during the night. Aart and I felt tired and didn't show a leg until after the 7 A.M. News. The forecast was southerly winds ten to 20, possible thunderstorms and a little cooler.

0800: After breakfast chores I decided to repack a stowage compartment, so started emptying it. I noticed a little hole in my tobacco pouch and didn't know how it happened. As I lifted out a few more bits, a mouse jumped out and into the other compartment, so I emptied that too. This time he ran under the foredeck spray cover, where I took his picture as he sat for a moment on my canvas water bucket. He ran up the jib hole, popped over the side and was last seen disappearing into the bush. We nicknamed him Smokey the Mouse, and often wonder how he is making out.

We were nearly at a point where a big decision had to be made. Would we go for Killarney or head up the French River? We decided to go to the Bustards and make the decision there.

1000: As it was cooler, with overcast sky and a ten to 15 wind blowing, we put on our wet weather gear. We reached to Rogers Gut, then three miles to Bigsby Island and the channel leading to Key Harbour. With a 90° course change, we beat for Dead Island. We were glad for our spray covers and wet weather gear, seas were two to three feet and the wind gusting 15 to 20. At noon, within a mile of Dead Island, rain came down heavier and heavier. In the lee of Dead Island a man on a small fishing boat with an outboard motor said "Don't go out there, it's hell!". We pulled into a small bay, nicely

sheltered from the huge sea we could see running up the west side of the island. That was the Northeast Passage, between the outer Fox Islands and the Bustards.

We sailed ashore and heaved the bows of the boats onto the pillows. They seemed just fine sitting there. We had various sizes of tarpaulins and Graham of rope to make a rain shelter and Aart and John went into the bush for long straight dead branches to serve as roof supports. Then Graham asked whose pillows had floated out from under the boat. A look of terror came over our faces. Where was Wee Pal? The boat had floated off the pillow and was bobbing across the quarter mile channel. Graham and I pushed Lil into the water and grabbed a paddle each. Half way to Wee Pal, disaster struck again. Graham's paddle broke, so I said, "Let's get the main up; we'll use one paddle and sail." Ten yards from the opposite shore, and a rocky one it was, Graham grabbed Wee Pal, jumped on board and we both sailed back to base camp. Fortunately the heavy rain had killed the wind and sea, Wee Pal would have been wrecked if she had hit the rocks.

Aart and John had the shelter constructed and, thanks to Aart's matches in a jar, a fire lit. We couldn't strike our so-called waterproof matches on the soggy, safety lighting strip on the box, their heads flew off. The boats were secured with long ropes to the bushes. One near shave was enough.

The rain eased and Ryell's Restaurant was set up. Hot tea, oxtail soup, and Ryvita with butter and jam were special for the day. The rain passed, our fire was going well and drying poles were set up. We decided to survey the land and see what was happening with the wind and sea. Aart stayed to watch the boats and fire. The rest of us climbed to higher ground and walked through the bush to the west point, overlooking the Northeast Passage. We passed lots of clumps of poison ivy, some with berries, others with bright red leaves. We met an elderly couple who had a cruiser in the lee of the east shore and were also interested in what the weather had in store. The wind had dropped to ten to 15, southerly, and, though the sea was not rough, there was a good four to six foot swell. Back to base we went and got the charts out.

With some beating to clear a shoal of rocks called The Shirt Tails, it looked like a good reach, for a total of six miles, into the Bustard Islands Harbour. By 1600 we were underway again. The couple we met had said we could take

an inner route through Dores Run, past Fox Bay and Beacon Rock Bay, round Obstacle Island, into the eastern outlet of French River. We decided we'd go to the Bustards or bust, so took the direct route along the open waters of the Northeast Passage. It was a bit like a roller coaster, sailing up and down the big swell.

The northeast coast of the Bustards did not look inviting, lots of cliffs and beaches. The northwest side looked much better. The wind was holding well, we altered course past Tarpot Island, sailed between Twin Islands and Meaford Island into a channel known as the 'Gun Barrel'. We headed past small islands into the harbour area where a couple of large motor cruisers were at anchor. We saw our nice sloping rock and flat top on Pearl Island and by 1900 had made camp. We even found a small wooden table and the remains of some good-sized camp fires. Ryell's Restaurant provided a super No. 4 menu dinner.

It was cool and swimming not on the itinerary and Graham and I had no luck fishing. The wind got up as daylight started to go so we battened everything down and were in bed by 2230. The rain came heavier and heavier, and thunder and lightning nearer. The wind changed 180° and water was driving at the door of our tent. Thanks to garbage bags and clothes pegs, we were able to make an inner door and then snuggled into our sleeping bags with sweaters on top. As I rolled over at 1530, I felt my hip hit bottom so had to put more air in the mattress. Wind and rain were still lashing down. The floor of the tent was like a river with water running off the rocks behind us, but our bedding was still dry. I covered my head and went to sleep again. At 1630 Graham had to get up to fix the stones holding the tent ropes. It rained until 0830, when the wind also died.

A Long Cruise in a Short Boat

Part 4

By John McCulloch

For some time members of the Ontario Mirror Dinghy Association thought about making a long voyage in Mirror Dinghies. Four men, all over 40 years of age decided to carry out this mission, known as "Operation Bearney". A seven day cruise from Parry Sound up the east coast and across the top of Georgian Bay to Killarney, a distance of approximately 120 miles, was the goal.

By 1400 we were heading west with light northerly winds, leaving the Ridout Islands to starboard and the Bustard Rocks, with their prominent channel markers to port. The light breeze stopped, the sun was out in a bright, blue sky. Approximately two miles off Bad River Channel, the western entrance to the French River, we were absolutely stopped for ten minutes. We were wondering if we were doomed on the last lap. We slurped orange juice, and an eerie thing happened. On our port side we could see disturbed waters, next the tell-tales gave a flutter and, with a 180° shift to the south, a nice breeze got up. We pushed the mains over, reset the jibs and carried on. Westward Ho! Closehauled on port tack with a one to two foot chop, we were heading full speed for Simpson and Grondine Rocks.

We left Simpson Rock to port and, as we neared Grondine Rock, Graham signalled to tack and pick up our marked channel. The spray covers did a fine job. The bell buoy, for the entrance to Beaverstone Bay, on the horizon was a welcome sight; our bottoms

were sore from hiking out. At 1815 we rounded this bell buoy, made our way past Sugar John Bay, then ran past Tadpole Rocks heading for Toad Island. Close to red buoy No. 84, our perfect flat rock was waiting for us. We could not have timed it better, the wind was dropping fast. We had done 18 miles even after our late start this day.

Dinner menu No. 5 was chili con carne, beef soup, Ryvita with butter and jam and tea. It smelled good but was, somehow, too dry. After three spoonfuls, the cook said he had enough and apologized. We did not feel like seconds and agreed to allow the cook one mistake. Again we tried fishing without success. Bad as the chili had been, it was better than relying on fish.

The weather, though cooler, seemed back to normal though forecasts still mentioned thunderstorms. I picked up radio station CKEY and thought it nice to know Toronto was still there.

Friday, 27th

After a night's sleep without interruptions, I woke at 0600 and witnessed one of the most beautiful sunrises I have ever seen. The birds' dawn chorus, with no traffic noise, and the odd loon clearing his throat and the chipmunks out for their morning run, made me thank God for nature.

Breakfast was slightly different this morning. We had used up our fresh eggs and, by George, freeze-dried scrambled eggs were nearly as good. I found an inch of water in my aft buoy-

ancy tank, it must have leaked in through the hand-hole cover at the Bustards. I had to throw out the rest of my skeeter coils, an emergency car flare and a spare battery for the radio.

0930: It was cloudy with sunny periods as we got underway. As we moved into Beaverstone Bay, the variable wind died and spinnakers hung like sheets on a wash line. After a few minutes we were again heading for Collins Inlet. The narrow channel seems to slice Philip Edward Island from the mainland. Two narrow gorges are a sort of geophysical phenomenon. The first starts at the head of Beaverstone Bay, our 100 mile mark from Parry Sound, and at this point is 15 to 25 feet deep and never more than 200 feet wide. Steep cliffs rise from 50 to 125 feet on both sides are a pretty sight with trees growing literally out of cracks in the rock face. It runs for about two miles and then opens into Mill Lake, which is over 80 feet deep and nearly half a mile wide by three miles long. Through this lake and out the west side, around Muskie Island, is the second gorge. This second gorge, for the first two miles, is even narrower than the first. Only ten to 15 feet deep by about 100 feet wide, it widens as you move slowly along. Talk about frustrating sailing, this is it. Trying to beat, reach and run, with nothing but flukey winds in the same 50 feet, we found the only way was to cleat the main and hold the jib well inboard to reduce the slot. This way, we could control our forward movements for about six miles before getting into wider wa-

at Le Have Bay.

Except for the odd cottage, the area seemed uninhabited but for a beaver lodge at the edge of the cliffs. We noticed the number of dead trees leaning in all sorts of angles on the bank, then the muddy water around a heap of sticks at the water's edge. We didn't actually see a beaver. We passed motor boats and sailing boats under power, but little else.

Around 1700, the wind was dying and the sky getting hazy, but the air was still warm. We looked for our nice, sloping rock and passed one of the motor cruisers we saw in the Bustards two days before. They seemed surprised as we waved and sailed past. The Mirror was making its mark in the memories of mariners which, of course, was what we wanted. Past Keyhole Island and other, unnamed islands, we saw a likely spot. Graham was first out and went flat on his keester. The rocks in this area are slimy, and care had to be taken. We got the boats out safely but the only flat space for the tents was 25 feet higher up the slope. This gave us a commanding view of the channel with Killarney Mountains in the background. We were about five miles from our destination and had covered 112 miles from Parry Sound.

Ryell's Restaurant had natural rock tables to work from, and we set up camp as usual. A skinny dip was in order, and we found a dead man in the rock near the water's edge. It was not a real body but an iron ring spiked into the rock and used for tying up the old log barges. We put a rope on it for climbing out of the water, otherwise we were in danger of doing ourselves serious mischief on the slippery rocks. We had a good diving rock, about eight feet out of the water, but didn't have room to practise Ryell's racing dive, which may be just as well.

While John and Aart were getting dinner ready, Graham spotted a three-foot northern pike snooping around the rocks below. He got his fishing pole into action but Mr. Pike had other ideas.

We were pleased that our cruise had gone well and that we were going to make our goal and yet a certain anticlimax seemed inevitable. We finished our last dinner and the skeeters hadn't forgotten us as the sun slipped behind Killarney Mountains. While I was making notes in my log I heard some rustling outside the tent door. "What's that?" I said to Aart. With our flashlight, we saw an old toad jumping up and catching skeeters around the tent door. We breathed a sigh of relief, it might

have been a snake or something trying to get in to see us. We were prepared for anything tonight.

Saturday, 28th

It's just as well we were ready. At 0130 there was the brightest flash of lightning and the loudest clap of thunder I've heard in a long time. It seemed right overhead. This time our tent was facing the right way and our fly roof well secured so we had no problem with leaks.

0315: A second storm rumbled through, giving us a good wash and at 0400 came the third big bash. I just raised an eyelid and went to sleep again.

0900: We made a lazy start, wanting to prolong the trip as six miles to go was a piece of cake. We had a good breakfast, tried to finish everything, and slowly packed for the last time. Just then we heard a 'tump-tump-tump-tump' of a single cylinder engine down the channel from Collins Inlet. Out of the haze appeared the biggest yacht we had seen on the whole trip, the Bremer from Chicago. It must have been 50 feet long, a beautiful looking craft with the radar scanner turning around, half-way up the mizzen mast. They must have had fun bringing that through the Inlet!

1130: Waiting for the wind to pick up so we could have a lively last leg, Graham obviously had Mr. Pike on his mind. He had to have a last try but only caught his lure in the rocks.

1200: Aart was last away, as usual making his final adjustments and going through his checklist. The forecast was light southerly winds, freshening and veering westerly in the afternoon. Leaving South Point to port, we got into open water to pass between Tree Island and Flat Rock. In the end we had to harden up and make a few tacks to Red Rock Point.

1400: The wind gusting to 20, we entered Killarney Channel. We half hoped to hear bells ringing, horns blazing and cheers from crowds with the Mayor at the end of the pier waiting to greet us while the wind backed 90° so we could pop our spinnakers and move gracefully up the channel. Alas, there were only a few tourists fishing off the banks and a few boatmen at Killarney Mountain Lodge saying "Where did those dandy little red sail boats come from?" We must have tacked 15 times to get to the Texaco Marina. A charming young lady said we could leave the boats in the parking area, but it meant moving a large boat trailer. We grabbed hold.

When it moved, Graham and John let out shouts and started running away. Aart and I quickly followed as we saw a swarm of wasps appear from the tow bar tube. Graham and John had stings on their legs but no serious after effects.

Across a small field we went, to old Bazal's campground and boat repair shop. Bazal was a neat, local character. He allowed us to pitch our tents and put our boats on the grass for the night, and organized a drive to Parry Sound for our cars and trailers. All this service was for \$10.00.

The task of derigging and unloading started and, when I rooted out my buoyancy tanks, I found the six packages of dried milk which we thought the raccoons had taken!

1700: Our driver arrived and we agreed to his price of \$60.00. We got back to Killarney with our cars and trailers at 2300. We all slept in Graham's four-man tent and next morning headed 260 miles back to Toronto.

Before leaving I pulled into the OPP Office. I must have looked a bit weird in my sloppy jeans and weather beaten eight day growth of beard. I said, "As we notified your Parry Sound office of our departure, I want to clear the books as the four Mirror dinghies have arrived here and we are now en route to Toronto. I didn't want a search party looking for us." He informed us that they would do that only if we were reported missing or in distress and "thank you for coming in."

We stopped for breakfast and worked out our finances. The total bill for the trip was \$84.00 each. Where else could one have such sailing enjoyment for that amount?



Cruising Rig For Mirror Dinghy

1. *Main Sail Hold-All:* A 1/8 inch nylon rope, run through a block at the top of the mast, and making an endless loop around mainsail, boom and boom kicking strap, flops about while sailing and does not hinder the main. To let the main down, pull this endless rope to a catch under the boom, two thirds of the way aft from the mast, then release halyard and gaff is guided down between the now taut lines on either side of the mainsail. The main can be tucked between the gaff and the boom and, by

pulling the mainsheet, the whole lot stowed overhead, out of the way.

2. *A Self-steering System:* Put a simple catch about four inches from the forward end of the tiller. A light line, with one end tied to a four inch length of shock cord, is fastened to the aft corner of the cockpit, the other end is led through a cam cleat on the opposite corner, positioned so as not to be in the way of the seat. To engage, pull the center of the rope onto the catch and tighten in the cam cleat to the required tension. It's best to have the line slide through the catch to more easily alter course.

3. *Jib Cleats:* These are essential.

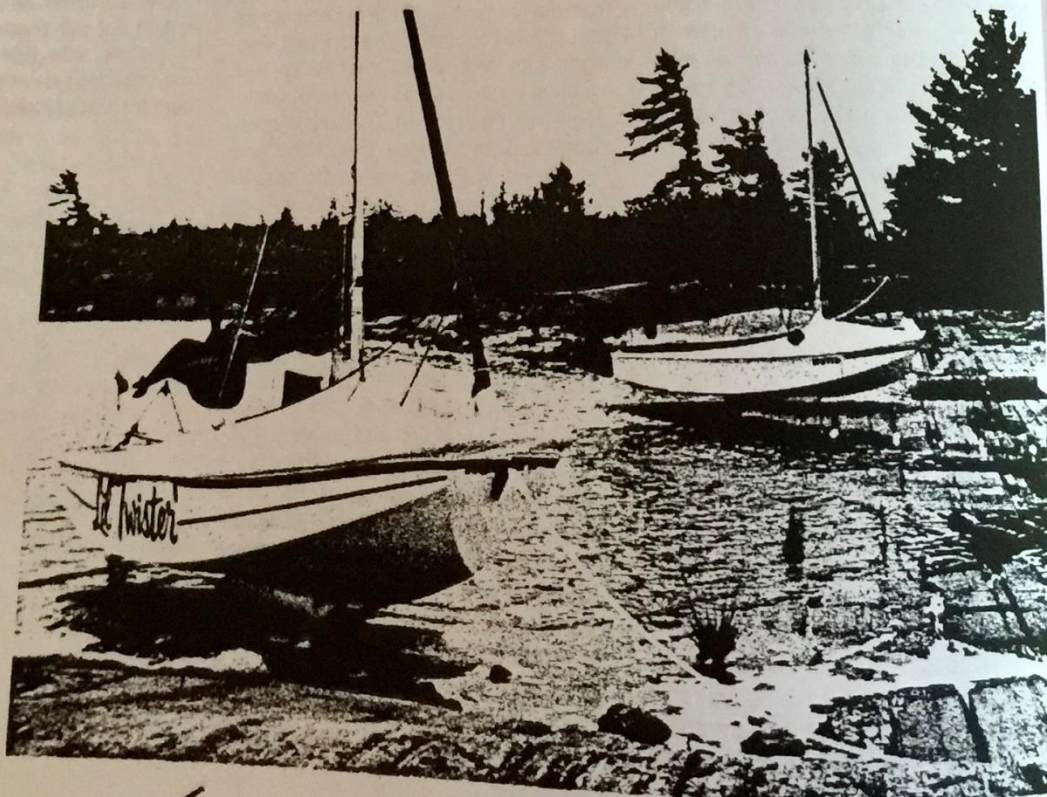


4. *Boat Pillows:* These must be made

from a robust, lightweight and water resistant material. We used a six inch diameter by three foot long length of ethafoam but in half, each length tethered by canvas straps set four inches from each end and holding lengths four inches apart. The top edge is placed on the ground and the flat surface holds the hull. These can be used for life floats in an emergency.

5. *Spray Covers:* The spray cover designed by Gordon Pilling fastens to underside of the gunwale by means of cotton or nylon strip sewn to the canvas, running the full length of the boat and tied at the stern. A second cover running through the inner edge of the canvas around the cockpit, is also attached at the stern, in front of the rudder. The high point around the mast is held to the gooseneck by means of a cord through an eyelet in the lip of the canvas. It is necessary to seal the cover to the hull with tape, especially around the bow of the Mirror.

6. *Buoyancy Tanks for Stowage:* A one inch hand hole covers enables the use of buoyancy tanks for limited stowage. The access is narrow and it is difficult to see inside. Most important — the primary purpose of the tank is not for storage



SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CRUISE

We had a superb cruise - seven days of glorious sailing in some of the most wonderful scenery to be found anywhere. We covered a lot of miles without serious mishap, injury or damage to the boats. We beat, reached and ran in a wide variety of conditions.

Because it was a "first time" - we played it safe. The trip was well planned, thanks to Graham's navigation we always knew our position, the four incumbents had much Mirror sailing behind them and most important of all - we never took a chance, or a risk, that might have jeopardized our safety.

So are 7 days Mirror cruises everyone's cup of tea? Perhaps not - the feeling persists that things could go wrong, that a certain level of experience, competence and knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for the trip. One recalls the absence of humanity after the first day out from Parry Sound - many of the islands are uninhabited and on occasions hours passed between the sighting of other boats. One remembers the more anxious moments - caught in a thunderstorm on open water and running for shore - the Mirror that drifted away from its moorings almost onto the rocks - the change in weather conditions and the difficulty in getting marine forecasts on our portable radio - the broad reach across to the Bustard Islands that turned into a hard beat on a 180° wind shift - the steep waves and difficult chop when the southerly winds blew hard - the isolation of four small boats when the nearest land was on the horizon. But the worst didn't happen - the trip was enjoyable and often challenging from beginning to end. We think it was a safe trip because basically we took no risks and that is the key factor never to be forgotten in this kind of adventure.

Mirror sailors planning a similar cruise should address the following guidelines:

- 1) The group size should be between 4 & 6. If more boats want to go, form several groups and sail independently.
- 2) The members should know each other well, be capable, experienced sailors, all able to sail at about the same speed.
- 3) Each sailor be reasonably tough - both physically and mentally.
- 4) The group have a recognized leader to make the decisions should difficult situations arise.
- 5) The boats be in excellent shape and fitted with spray dodgers and self-bailers.
- 6) The Mirror must be packed with all items well secured. It must be assumed that a capsize is a possibility.
- 7) Crews not be carried on long cruises.
- 8) Lightweight helms should carry a spare, shortened mainsail for the hard blows, or alternatively develop a reefing system.
- 9) One sailor be the navigator, responsible for identifying the route and charting the position of the boats at all times.
- 10) Start sailing early in the day and have most of the planned sailing complete by the early afternoon.
- 11) Start out from a Marina, leave your trip itinerary with the owner and ask him to contact OPP if not back by a certain date.

- 12) Planning for the trip, start the previous winter. Food, clothing, first aid, repair kits, navigation, charts, emergency equipment, tents, shelter and getting the boats ready are items to be planned with meticulous care.
- 13) Talk to other sailors with small boat cruising experience.
- 14) Each person must carry a whistle at all times & arrange a signal system.

If you plan your cruise along these guide lines you should have a successful voyage and a lot of fun.

The most important thing to do is: "THINK FIRST, SAFETY MUST COME FIRST".

MIRROR DINGHY CRUISES

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CODE NAME</u>	<u>AREA</u>	<u>PARTICIPANTS</u>
1979	"BEARNEY"	Parry Sound - Bustard Is. Collins Inlet - Killarney	J. Ryell, G. Pilling, J. McCulloch, A. Vandermeer
1980	"SOUND BUSTING"	Parry Sound - Bustard Is. Key River	J. Ryell, G. Pilling, J. McCulloch, H. Van Beusekom, M. Hick
1981	"NORCURRENT"	Killarney - McGregor Bay - North Channel - Aird Island Darch Island - Innis Is. Clapperton Is. - Rouse Is. Little Current - Hayward Is. and Return	J. Ryell, G. Pilling, J. McCulloch, H. Van Beusekom, M. Hick, A. Vandermeer
1982	"BIG FISH"	Killarney - McGregor Bay, Frazer Bay, Heywood Island and Return	J. Ryell, G. Pilling, J. McCulloch, H. Van Beusekom, A. Vandermeer
1984	"MANDOLIN"	Sheguiandah - Little Current North Shore - John Island Darsh Island - Innis Island and Return	J. Ryell, G. Pilling, J. McCulloch, A. Vandermeer

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