

**1998 Lake Michigan Crew Over Board Study**  
**Provided by the**  
**Lake Michigan Sail Racing Federation (LMSRF)**

This is an effort to encompass Offshore Racing Sailing stories from crew over boards during racing, on the way in or to the race course, delivery trips before or after a race along with Lake Michigan boats that attend races away from Lake Michigan. As these stories developed, it became clear that when a boat sank, the entire crew was then "over board". This simple fact, originally not considered, added greatly to the database.

Many stories contain just the cold hard facts. The emotions and anxieties were removed to keep the possibility of a libel suit to a minimum, since these are stories typically told of others on board. The range of emotions in the stories include shrieking of women who believe they are seeing someone drown, foul language amongst crew accusing others of not pulling their weight, accusations that certain people are short of brain power or just plain stupid. Some involve crew mad at skipper, skipper mad at crew and crew mad at crew. Much of this type of anger seems to come out just at the stressful time of recovery and diffused quickly thereafter.

Put yourself on board in each story and imagine how you would react in the situation.

**LM Case 1**

As reported by Alan R. Johnston, January 21, 1998

In the 1973 Chicago-Mackinac race off Point Betsie, MI at 5 to 6 AM with the sun just over the horizon making light, there was a thud on the deck. Escapade, a PJ 37 owned by Alan Johnston was about to get into trouble. Weather was wet as everyone was wearing rain gear. Ned Johnston (owner's son) leaped out of his bunk, put on his foulies and scampered up on deck to find that the spinnaker pole had dropped to the deck. As he went to the bow to inspect, he leaned over the pole when a puff hit. The chute filled, raising the pole and lifted Ned right off the deck into a one and one-half backwards gainer as graceful as an Olympic diver into Lake Michigan. As he rolled along the side of the boat, a cockpit crewman, Bernie, reached over the side of the boat to grab Ned and slipped through the lower lifelines head first! Bernie did not know how to swim. Now two crew without pfd's were overboard as the boat sailed away. Ned stripped off his foulies, came in behind Bernie and supported Bernie as the waves passed. Meanwhile back on board, they were able to see Ned and Bernie the whole time, started up the engine, u-turned, pulled up alongside, hauled Bernie aboard first and Ned second. Bernie was stripped of the remainder of his clothing, fairly incoherent from hypothermia, warmed dried and recovered. Ned faired a little better. Alan Johnston said that had he known that Bernie could not swim, he would not have let him sail on his boat.

**LM Case 2**

As reported by George Ehrick April 27, 1998

On Saturday night at 10:30 after the start of the 1992 Chicago to Mackinac race, Scott Fruechtel was coming off the bow to the back end after cleaning up the foredeck. Koala Flyer, a Farr 37 was flying a chute in 10 knots of wind with 1' seas. He grabbed the lifeline for support, which was lashed with line at the attachment point to the pushpit and this messenger cord type line failed. The now loose detached lifeline didn't stop Scott and he went overboard with his PFD on. George was not steering at the time, yet was on deck and shouted to the helmsman Tom Knudtson to head up into the wind. The chute wrapped around the front of the mast bringing the boat to a quick stop. The crew dropped the mainsail, leaving the chute up and threw the heaving line to Scott pulling him back to Koala Flyer. The entire recovery took 3 minutes.

**LM Case 3**

As reported by Holland Capper, January 27, 1998  
and Al Ganek September 24, 1998

One week before the Chicago-Mackinac race, Incredible, a fiberglass boat and Measure for Measure, a Holland designed ½-tonner, 30' long, cedar ¼ inch thick cold molded New Zealand boat met. Winds were out of the Northeast, blowing about 12-15 mph with 2' seas. On the starting line Incredible was coasting along on starboard tack. Measure for Measure without a bow lookout was on port tack. Incredible's bow hit Measure for Measure at the waterline on the starboard side penetrating all the way through to the port side of Measure for Measure leaving a hole 3' by 4'. Once the crew recognized that the boat was going to sink, they had time to get their life jackets and put them on. Measure for Measure sank within 5 minutes. Measure for Measure had just passed safety inspection for the Chicago Mackinac race and was loaded to the hilt. Incredible's backstay was broken and the backstay adjustment line ended up in their own propeller and unable to assist with the recovery of the entire crew of Measure for Measure. Another competitor Larry Demouth picked up 2 of the swimmers, and the Chicago Police Department came and rescued the other four. The collision put Incredible out of commission with the Chicago-Mackinac race 2 weeks away. Holland had to go and charter a replacement, which was White Out. Measure for Measure missed the Chicago Mackinac race that year.

#### **LM Case 4**

As reported by Robert Zeman, Jr., January 27, 1998

After winning the 1960 Chicago-Mackinac race on Free Booter, a 60' wooden ten-meter, the delivery team of four new owners Robert Zeman, Jr., Bud Zeman, Dick Alexander and Norm Larson, who just took title to the boat at the Island attempted first to get a balky generator and engine performing smoothly. After a day of attempts, they threw in the towel and decided to sail home, since that's how they got to the Island. First stop was St. Ignace and they fiddled a little more with the engine without success. Weather forecasts were not what they are today and the chalkboard indicated that winds would be 25 knots, perfect for such a boat and they headed out after an overnight stay. Things started out slowly, winds were light as they headed west towards Grays Reef. The winds were building by 6 PM and a 12-hour northerly storm was just starting. All aboard donned their life jackets. Winds topped 72 knots on the meter. Waves were 20' to 30' (measured by the known heights of the spreaders, reaching the height of the first spreaders). After getting toward the shallows at White Shoals, they jibed for deeper water. Then they approached Grays Reef and jibed again for deeper water. At the 5 am watch change they were making upwards of 15 knots of speed. And then crunch. They hit the northwest corner of Isle aux Galet, or as the mariners refer to it, Skillagalee. Each wave pushed the boat farther and farther into the reef. As it pounded its way through the rock, it became apparent that it was time to abandon ship. Seeing an up bound freighter, they set off 2 flares. Apparently the freighter did not change course and did not seem to make note. They pulled the handle to inflate the raft and nothing happened. Next they went to manually inflate and they had it filled in 5 minutes. Voluntarily, the crew went into the liferaft. Two of the four ended up in the water separated from the raft, and bobbed up and down, in relatively shallow waters, while the other rafters scooped them up and what seemed to be an hour they arrived on the little spit of land above the water. They watched as each succeeding wave lifted the boat higher and higher on to the reef. An hour later the Coast Guard appeared and dropped anchor on the leeward side of the reef. They launched a rowboat and two Coast Guards men rowed for an hour to reach them. The four pleaded with the Coast Guard to pull their boat off. The response was no-way. They then pleaded to have the Icebreaker Mackinaw directed over to do the tow, again their request denied. Two days later, the insurance company surveyor arrived at the sight. The local Indians in the area had stripped the boat clean of rigging and hardware. The boat was left there for the birds, wind and waves to consume her.

#### **LM Case 5**

As reported by Donald Carroll, January 23, 1998

Years ago around 1975 or 1976, the Chicago Yacht Club Sheldon Clarke Regatta started out with a Friday night race. It was blowing 20 knots out of the southwest. A triangular course was set, with two reaches and a final beat. Fou de Vous was beating on starboard tack, setting up for a tack, as Fury was rolling in on port. A communication between the bow and driver on Fury was not understood. Fury hit Fou de Vous amidships, Fou de Vous kept moving forward while Fury's bow broke the shrouds dismasting Fou de Vous and cleaned many of the stanchions down the port side of Fou de Vous. As Fury's bow came back to the cockpit, Mr. Carroll (nephew of Donald Carroll) somehow had the top of his skull pinched off and was swept overboard.

Speculation has it that his head got between the winch on Fou de Vous and the bow of Fury. Recognizing that nephew Carroll was in great difficulty, Terry Ahern from Fou de Vous jumped in to the Lake to assist. Both Terry and nephew Carroll were wearing float coats. Now Fou de Vous was in no condition to rescue with their mast and sails down in the water. A May Day was made while many boats that had finished, or were trying to finish, came to assist. Another competitor, Wild Onion, found the two victims and brought them aboard. Time in the water, 5 to 10 minutes. They revved up for the race back to the shore, the dock was cleared making room for Wild Onion, the ambulance and paramedics stood by waiting for their arrival. Nephew Carroll was transferred to the ambulance and taken to the hospital where he died during the remainder of that long night.

#### **LM Case 6**

As reported by James Webb (Witchcraft C&C 30), January 22, 1998

In 1988 at a Jackson Park Yacht Club Wednesday night beer can race, it was dark when the lead boats actions seemed erratic. Witchcraft, being second place, fell off 10 degrees to investigate. Latest Trick an Olson 30 had tacked and without a toe rail, the crewmember slipped under the lifeline straight overboard. Latest Trick attempted to run their engine, yet fouled a line around the prop. Victim was not wearing a PFD. Victim was in the water for 2 minutes. Witchcraft affected the recovery.

#### **LM Case 7**

As Reported by Neal Greenwald, 1/20/98

In July 1988, the year of the record breaking Chicago to Mackinac race, Murphy's Law, a Nelson Marek 41, was nearing Point Betsie on the Michigan shore at night in a storm. Neal was coming off the bow after setting the chute when a wave rolled the boat and as that wave kept moving forward as it was rolling along the deck, it swept the feet out from underneath Neal. Neal went through the lower lifelines and was swept away from the boat. Wearing full foul weather gear including boots and a Type III pfd, he was swimming hard to keep air in his lungs. 10 yards away, he saw the duffle bag type chute bag and swam for it. He got it, swung it up over his head to fill it and was able to put his foot in a big ring in the bag and stand upright, with better flotation. On board, the MOB pole went into the water with a strobe and the MOB button was pressed on the loran. Neal never saw the strobe and never saw the pole in the darkness and waves (4'-6' in height). Neal started working his options. Will I be out here all night? How will I use what I have to make it to daylight? The boots are weighing me down, yet they are keeping me warm, do I ditch them? The sail bag was white in color and a goodly sized target compared to the size of a human head in the water and was found with a spotlight on Murphy's Law. The boat pulled up along side, threw Neal a sheet with a knot in the end of it and pulled Neal aboard. Neal commented that while he's glad he had his pfd on, it was marginal in assisting keeping him afloat. He had to work pretty hard to keep himself up. Time in the water, 12-1/2 minutes.

#### **LM Case 8**

As Reported by the Great Lakes Scanner, September 1989

On June 28, 1989, the Tartan 10 "Arete" was beating toward the weather mark in a race near Chicago. Winds were north at 25 knots, seas running at 5 feet. Arete was on starboard and approaching the Tumblaren class "Viking" which was on port tack. "Viking" tacked to stay clear. Her skipper Clark Pellet slid across the boat breaking off the tiller and falling overboard. "Viking" was disabled and lowered her sails. "Arete" saw the emergency, made a quick stop and deployed her Lifesling. Pellet had the Lifesling in hand in two minutes, and although he had never seen one before, he was able to figure out how to put it on. "Arete" rigged a tackle from the spinnaker halyard and hoisted Pellet aboard. Within 5 minutes of going overboard, Pellet was back on deck, albeit, a different boat than he had started from. "Arete's" crew had practiced with the Lifesling earlier in the year. During the emergency, "Arete's" crew was concerned that they were drifting away too rapidly from Pellet while he was trying to figure out how to get into the Lifesling. They started the engine and backed down briefly to take tension off the trailing line. When Pellet was in the

Lifesling, the engine was shut down.

**LM Case 9**  
As Reported "In the Wake of the Fleet"

OVERBOARD... by Cindy Sims.

DROWNING IS A DEATH I NEVER FEARED until, following a freak incident in this year's Chicago-to-Waukegan race, I was swept overboard and hit by a wave whose impact filled my lungs with water. What happened? A rogue wave threw my helmsman off balance, causing the boat to crash tack. After 18 years of offshore sailing, under conditions sometimes worse than that Saturday's, I can count on two hands the times I wore a life jacket. This year's beat to Waukegan was not one of them.

The command for life jackets was given long before our start by George Petkovic, skipper and co-owner with John Zurawski of Zot, the Soverel 33 on which I sail. Since I was below charting our course, I was the one who secured them. It was my intention to put one on, not because catastrophe seemed imminent but because I knew it would be a helmsman's race and that I would be spending the day on the rail. I considered the life jacket an extra layer of insulation. Nonetheless, in the excitement of starting, I failed to slip one on.

Had I drowned, only I would be to blame. If you think I'm being hard on myself, as people have suggested, consider the facts. Most devastating to me is that once I was in the water, before George had completed his jibe and returned to retrieve me, another boat passed that was significantly closer to me than Zot. Given the seas and my anxiety, I may not have been a credible witness, but I felt certain that its crewmembers had seen me and that heads were turning in my direction as the boat sailed by. Fellow crewmember Ken Quast, who kept track of me while the Soverel was maneuvering, concurs that he had seen someone on the other boat pointing toward me.

Once this competitor sailed on, blithely it seemed, my euphoria at the prospect of rescue was replaced by the darkest despair. Treading water in saturated clothing and gear too cumbersome to remove, I became an anchor. The effort to keep my head above the water was the greatest challenge I have faced. My throat felt scorched by the water I was trying to expel. Eventually I stopped bobbing and began to sink. Clawing my way to the surface, I resigned myself to the one fact that I'd been fighting: that I was dying.

In wind and waves as treacherous as they were on that day, there was never a moment when I was free of danger. I want the competitor that could have helped - but didn't - to know this. I want readers who didn't wear life jackets to know that not every boat that plies this lake is prepared to save you. My ordeal reminded me of something I long ago was taught: that I am responsible for my own safety. My omission not only jeopardized my life but the life of John Poast, the crewmember who dove feet first off Zot and who ultimately saved me. What is just as chilling is the ordeal I put the crew of Zot through. For a group of people who never sailed together until this year, their performance, under the severest stress, was admirable.

When tossed, the horseshoe landed within feet of me - but the wind claimed it. On Zot's second pass, when I was below the surface more than above it, John Poast, who was wearing flotation, asked to jump in. George granted permission, later saying that it was the most painful decision he has ever known since the last thing he wanted was to have two people in the lake. But had that decision not been made and had Poast's plunge been any less precise, I would have died. When Zot made its final successful pass, I was barely cognizant. At least four men fought to pull my waterlogged gear and body aboard. Adrenaline is a powerful drug, for when I felt their grip failing, I uttered, "Don't lose me," and locked my arms around a lifeline. That is when George left the helm and, using both hands, heaved me to safety. No one is clear how John Poast lost his grip on Zot, but with both sails down, it is a conservative estimate that as I was being pulled aboard, the boat was sliding down the waves at five knots. From the moment of separation, a crewmember always had him in sight. The engine was started, but a safety line fouled the prop. The crew then went to hoist the sails while George hailed Spitfire, a Franklin 40, which acknowledged the hail and dropped its jib in preparation to assist. But before helmsman James Hellquist and Spitfire's crew could

effect rescue, Voodoo, owned by Richard Grunsten and skippered that day by Dick Stearns, was in process of picking John up. When I called to thank Hellquist, he said, "From what I observed, and considering the conditions, Zot did everything right."

The epilogue? The Coast Guard was called, fully apprised and asked to stand by. I was stripped, dried and wrapped in blankets - my body heat restored by a crewmember who applied his weight to mine. Ken Quast was injured in the melee that saved me and later went to a hospital for a precautionary check-up at everyone's insistence. With John Poast aboard Voodoo, the Tripp 40 placed third in IMS section one and will likely take first following redress.

The fleet owes its utmost respect to the people aboard Voodoo and Spitfire. I owe my life to the skipper and crew of Zot. Let me now thank those I have mentioned and those crewmembers I have not yet had a chance to commend: John Florance, Jim Lynch, Ann Marie McManus, and Tim O'Donnell. Near drowning was the most sobering experience I have known, and I wish it on no one. In conditions like this year's Chicago-to-Waukegan Race, or at night under nearly any conditions, wear a life jacket. If not for yourself - for the crew.

Editor's Note:

Cindy Sims is a professional writer based in Chicago. She has chosen to share here experience with her fellow sailors in the Chicago fleet out of concern for their safety.

#### **LM Case 10**

As reported in American Sailor, December, 1993

On September 12, 1992, during the Jackson Park Yacht Club Lutz Regatta, two yachts "Esta Es" and Apparition were running with spinnakers in 30 to 35 knots of wind. "Apparition", was overpowered and gibe broached to windward putting the mast in the water and fully exposing the keel and rudder. A crewmember was thrown overboard. "Apparition" launched her man overboard module. As "Esta Es" passed "Apparition" she spotted the man overboard and rounded head to wind. The victim was then seen to go under and not come up. "Esta Es" dropped the spinnaker, started her engine, and powered to windward of the victim's last known position. "Esta Es" then bore off slightly and stopped the engine. The victim's head popped out of the water and "Esta Es" threw a horseshoe which was carried away by wind and waves. By this time, "Esta Es" was dead in the water and about eight feet away from the victim. The Lifesling was thrown, missed by a few feet, lifted by the crew and flown like a kite to drop right on top of the victim. Four crewmembers lifted the victim from the water. He had swallowed some water, was shivering uncontrollably, had severe leg cramps and was exhausted. He had been in the water about four minutes wearing foul weather gear and no flotation. Skipper and crew of "Esta Es" received the US Sailing Rescue Medal.

#### **LM Case 11**

As reported by Stephen D. King, January 22, 1998

On October 4, 1992, we were racing a J/30 on Lake Michigan five miles off Chicago in 15-18 knot southeast winds, clear skies and unlimited visibility. Waves were one to three feet in a chop leftover from stronger winds earlier in the day. We had rounded the windward mark, set the chute on a port jibe and were in the process of hauling down the number 2 genoa when our bowman went overboard. He was leaning against the lifelines with one hand reaching for the sail and the other holding onto the top lifeline when his boot slipped on the deck and he went over the top. Of the six of us left on board, I was the only one to see him go. I hauled on the helm to harden up, yelled "man overboard" and instructed the crew to drop the chute and deploy the Lifesling. For about ten seconds, the crew were frozen in place. (Afterwards, they told me that their first reaction was "Why is he doing a man-overboard drill in the middle of the race, particularly when we are comfortably ahead of most of the fleet?") Then they got the spinnaker down below and cleaned up the lines while the jib trimmer trailed the Lifesling. While we were sailing upwind, I would see that our bowman was floating high with his vest fully inflated. While wearing full foul weather gear, Jerry was floating comfortably high in the water and looked like a race mark. The vest literally glowed in the water, he was easy to spot. I tacked the boat when I was upwind of him, came close aboard, and then made one more

circle before the Lifesling reached him. As he got into the Lifesling, we brought the boat head to wind with sails luffing, and pulled him to the stern where he was able to get a foot onto the stern ladder, and with assistance from two crew, climbed aboard. Total immersion time, approximately 4 minutes.

### **LM Case 12**

As reported by Richard R. Elledge in an Incident Report  
to the Chicago Yacht Club Mackinac Committee

Alibi, a Tartan 10, was entered in the 1994 Chicago-Mackinac Island Race with Richard R. Elledge of Chicago, Illinois, as skipper.

Only July 23, 1994 at about 22:35 hours, Alibi was near the rhumb line (Chicago - Point Betsie) on port tack, beam reaching under spinnaker and mainsail. Course was 20 degrees magnetic, apparent wind was steady at approximately 15 M.P.H.; speed was registering 7.0 to 8.0 M.P.H. on her log. There were small (approximately two foot) following waves. She was sailing comfortably, on her feet, with no control problems.

The midnight watch (R.R.E., H.L. and M.G.) had gone below at approximately 20:45 p.m. leaving C.N. (watch captain), J.L., J.O'C. and the navigator, A.B., on deck. As that watch progressed, dark masses of clouds were observed across the horizon from, generally, the northwest to the northeast, with vivid lightning displays. In the immediate vicinity, the sky was clear but a distinct black cloud was approaching from the north/northwest. The crew on deck had put on their foul weather gear (but not their PFD's) and were watching several boats some distance ahead expecting them to provide warning of the approaching foul weather and to signal time to strike the spinnaker.

At approximately 22:35 hours, the boat was hit with a strong gust which put the boat on her ear followed by a wind shift (a header) which clocked very quickly to the south of east and then apparently shifted quickly back to the west. No rain was associated with this squall, nor was a wind line observed on the water nor did it appear to have affected the boats ahead.

Initially, the gust knocked the boat down. As she righted herself, the boat bore off and the crew below started coming up. C.N. (who had been handling the spinnaker sheet from the portside mid-cockpit) eased the spinnaker sheet, released the main sheet and, observing that J.L. was casting off the spinnaker guy, stood up preparing to step forward and across the cockpit to the spinnaker halyard cleat. At that moment, the boat jibed and the boom struck C.N.'s right shoulder, knocking him out of the cockpit, over the lifelines and into the water.

H.L., coming on deck and facing C.N., saw the incident and shouted "Man Overboard" several times. J.L. moved immediately to the stern, located C.N. in the water and threw the horseshoe, with strobe light and MOB pole attached, towards C.N. He then stood at the aft pulpit pointing at C.N. in the water and continued to do so. At the same time, the navigator, A.B., recorded the location on the loran (N. 42 degrees, 48.37 minutes - W. 87 degrees, 08.81 minutes). At the same time, J.O'C. on the tiller, headed the boat into the wind to stop the boat. The spinnaker and main were taken down and secured. R.R.E. started the engine and took the tiller.

As the boat started to turn back, the crew lost sight of C.N., either because a larger boat passed between C.N. and Alibi or (more likely) when C.N. ducked underwater to remove his foul weather boots. J. L. continued to point in the direction where he had last seen C.N., using Alibi's MOB strobe light in the water as a reference point. After, perhaps a minute or two, C.N. was seen waving his personal MOB light. Alibi then motored down to him, made a starboard turn into the wind and was laid alongside of C.N. J.O'C. reached down and grabbed the suspenders of C.N.'s foul weather pants and C.N. grabbed the toe rail.

With some difficulty, the crew managed to drag C.N. up onto the deck. As several of the crew maintained grips on various pieces of C.N.'s clothing and C.N. maintained his grip with both hands on the toe rail, the



Lifesling was passed around his back and under his arms and the D rings were brought together. The block and tackle which is carried in the Lifesling bag was then used to get his shoulders above deck level, CN shifted his grip to the lifelines, his legs were lifted by his trouser legs and he was rolled under the lifelines.

During this period, while C.N. was being recovered from the water, Witch-Craft, a T-10, came alongside, offered assistance and stood by as the operation was completed. Witch-Craft advised that she had recovered Alibi's MOB pole, strobe light and horseshoe. During the same period, another T-10, Invention, sailed over to ask if assistance was needed.

Once C.N. was on the deck, he was taken below, bundled up in a berth with sleeping bags and treated for shock. Although he was experiencing pain in his arm and shoulder, the extent of his injury was not then known.

Thereupon, Alibi proceeded under motor and main towards Racine, Wisconsin, which was approximately 33 miles distant. The attending Coast Guard Ship, Katmai Bay, was radioed on Channel 9, to advise of this incident and that Alibi had withdrawn from the race. In Racine harbor, Alibi was met by paramedics who took C.N. to a local hospital where he was x-rayed, treated for a broken collar bone and released.

As reported by Richard R. Elledge, August 30, 1994

Dear (Mackinac Committee Chair) Ruth Ann Moorman:

I apologize for the delay in submitting this Report concerning the injury and MOB incident on Alibi during the Chicago to Mackinac Island Race. I discussed the incident, informally, with Vlad Kobal and reviewed a draft of this Report with him.

I have given considerable thought to this incident and I do have comments.

First, the MOB drill. We had done our "full crew" drill the prior morning. Everyone on Alibi believes that it made a difference - and may have been the difference. We thank you and your predecessors for insisting on a current full crew practice.

Second, the MOB equipment. We had a horseshoe with drogue, light and pole attached (which was thrown toward our MOB) and the life sling, with block and tackle (which was used to get our MOB up on deck). Our MOB never saw the horseshoe, light and pole...it just wasn't close enough and, he says, he never thought to look for it. Our spotter threw the horseshoe, etc. as quickly as he could but had to fumble for several seconds to get the pole free. The top of the pole was in a cloth sleeve with snaps on the backstay and the butt of the pole was in a cup-like affair with an open ring. (Both items are in the West catalog.) I would suggest that 11.52 needs further consideration. The high likelihood of some amount of fumbling, resulting in the loss of a few critical seconds, tends to off-set the desirability of both a daytime and a nighttime locator attached to the horseshoe. I suggest that two devices attached to the horseshoe are one too many. I would opt to keep the light and eliminate the pole. Next year, I may install the Survival Technology MOM module (with inflatables) which releases everything with one pull.

Third, and most important, the PFD issue. The MOB was my watch captain, an experienced sailor, who is both sure footed and careful. He always brings his own PFD, an inflatable harness. (Alibi had a full supply of PFD's but I encourage the crew to bring their own - one that fits. I pass out lights and whistles at the beginning of the race.) The specific reason he did not have his PFD on was simply because it was still warm and the storm seemed still to be some distance away. Therefore, although he had put on his foul weather pants, he just had not put on the jacket yet, and he wears the harness over his jacket in bad weather.

The general reason he wasn't wearing a PFD at 10:35 p.m. reflects, I believe, a pervasive attitude within the fleet that (i) PFD's are a bit of a nuisance to wear and (ii) when I need it, I'll have enough time to put it on.

Demonstrably, most of the time most people on most boats sailing in Area III events do not wear PFD's. It is just not done.

The only thing I can think to do about a dangerous, but general, practice is to talk about it. I enclose a copy of a letter written, originally, to the members of Columbia Yacht Club in the Columbia "Binnacle". I am sending a copy to Don Glasell offering it for publication in the LMSRF newsletter. If you believe it should be offered to American Sailor, please feel free to do so.

As reported by Richard R. Elledge, August 30, 1994

Dear Friend:

As some of you may have heard, one of my crew went overboard in the middle of the night during the Chicago-Mackinac Race this year. We were under spinnaker. A strong gust, followed by a wind shift resulted in a jibe which caught him standing in the mid-cockpit. The boom hit his right shoulder, broke his collar bone and knocked him over the lifelines into the water. It was a very sobering experience for me and my crew, despite the happy ending. We were all very lucky! We did get back to him in time, we got him out of the water ourselves and we took him into Racine without further incident. He tells me his collar bone is mending nicely without much discomfort or inconvenience.

Since all of you are boaters, let me share a couple of observations with you. First, practicing the "man overboard drill" does pay off. We had done a "full crew" MOB drill the prior morning. We are all convinced that this made a significant difference. The initial response should be almost instinctive and almost immediate: throw flotation; record position on Loran; someone stand clear to maintain eye contact with the MOB and point at him; stop the boat. Quickness is essential! In the end, experience and teamwork will get the job done, but the prior drills will get the job started faster...and a couple of seconds can make a huge difference in the dead of night when the boat is moving away from the MOB at approximately 12 feet per second.

The most troubling aspect of this incident concerns PFD's. The crew member who went in the water that night uses an inflatable/harness PFD and generally wears it over his foul weather jacket. It was a beautiful warm night in mid-lake with lightning on the horizon and stars overhead. He was sitting in mid-cockpit wearing his foul weather pants with his jacket and his PFD by his foot. He just hadn't put them on yet. Then the blast hit, there was a jibe and he was in the water, treading water, with no PFD on.

Let's acknowledge the facts. We all stumble sometimes. We all misjudge a wave sometimes. Every year experienced sailors do slip, trip or get knocked overboard into Lake Michigan. Three people went overboard during the 1994 Mac - at night and not wearing PFDs. A young man went overboard during the Mac several years ago - at night and not wearing a PFD. A very capable sailor went overboard during the 1992 Chicago Waukegan race and she was not wearing a PFD.

And let's acknowledge what the general practice is out on the lake. We all have PFD's with us when we sail, but most of the time most of us don't wear them. Our general attitude seems to be that (i) we'll put it on "when conditions warrant" but (ii) conditions don't warrant, yet. I believe that there is a problem with our attitude and the problem is that attitude.

I would suggest that we need to adjust our attitude. We need to temper our confidence with a realistic fear of the unexpected. No one expects to go overboard, but every year someone does. Sooner or later, we're going to lose that someone. And it could be someone for whose safety you or I were responsible, either directly (crew) or indirectly (by example).

Regards,



Richard R. Elledge,  
Commodore

As reported by James Webb (Witchcraft T-10), January 22, 1998

In a flash of lightning, Jim observed the boat ahead, Alibi (T-10), get knocked down and ordered his chute doused. As they continued North, Jim glanced down at the water and thought he saw what seemed to be a face. He shined the flash light on it and it was! There were a number of MOB lights in the water in the area. Jim had to finish dousing sails in order to make recovery and came back to the face in a tie with Alibi. Witchcraft stood by as Charlie Noble was recovered by Alibi. Shortly thereafter Invention another T-10 came over to ask if assistance was required. Afterwards, Jim and crew picked up a number of flashing strobes returned to the owners at the finish line except one of which did not have identification and Jim kept!

### **LM Case 13**

As reported by Steve Kindra, February 4, 1998

In the 1994 Chicago to Mackinac race approximately mid-lake, Nitemare, a North American 40, was on port tack at 10:30 PM, reaching along after peeling from the .75 to 1.5 chute. Weather reports indicated that a cell between Milwaukee and Racine was on its way with 60 mph gusts. In the peel, they had used a snatch block to attach the 1.5 chute to the pole as a temporary. The bow crew went to pull the lanyard on the now empty afterguy and the lanyard gave way. 15 seconds after this, the squall hit. The helmsman turned down wind and the boat went into a death roll and the bow submarined. This action catapulted the helmsman overboard. The bow crew, harnessed to the boat, was fully underwater. As the boat spun around it jibed and an inexperienced crew member now in the water holding on, thought he would be safer in the water and let go. The boat righted and another crew grabbed the helm. They attempted to douse the chute and there was a knot in the halyard. They cut the halyard, collected the chute, and then dropped the main sail. They checked to see that all lines were aboard and started the engine. One line was missed and wrapped around the propeller. They raised the main and dropped the COB gear into the water 15 seconds later. They sailed back on an estimated 180 degree course knowing that the two in the water had no PFD and no lights. As luck would have it, another boat, Experience came upon the two of them. One of the crew had the sense to use his lips and whistle at Experience who was already sailing on a main and number 3 jib. As they hauled the first out of the water, the rescued mentioned that there was another in the water and they commenced search and found the other crew.

### **LM Case 14**

As reported by Lake Sailor, August 1995  
By Terry McMahon

Overboard!

Valuable lessons learned when an early-season race turns into a near-tragedy

On Sunday of Memorial Day weekend our Soverel 33 Natural High participated in the Milwaukee Yacht Club's annual Memorial Day Handicap race, featuring a centerboard class and a keelboat class.

We had gotten off to a fairly good start, port-tacking the fleet from the pin end. The wind was westerly around 18 to 20 knots, and it was very cold - Lake Michigan was a frigid 42 degrees. We had completed the first triangle of an Olympic course and by the time we reached the weather pin the second time the wind had picked up to the high-twenties range. At this point, feeling confident and smug, we set out spinnaker, pulling up even with the J/35 Ragtime. The wind continued to steadily increased and by the time we had to

jibe it was blowing close to 35 knots.

We had a good mix of crew, some new to the boat, some regulars and some seasoned sailors who sail with us occasionally - all adults. I felt confident that if we could pull off this jibe, we would win this race.

We decided to jibe the pole first to keep the spinnaker under control, but this was our first mistake. Our boom vang was off and I jibed the main, the boom crossed, but the top of the sail never did. As the boom slammed back on port, we rounded up hard and our crew member Stephanie fell from the high side through the leeward lifelines into the bitter cold lake. As the boat rolled over to starboard, Dave yelled, "Steph is off the boat!" The boat then violently rolled back to port and laid over with the boom and spinnaker pole in the water.

I was prone on the cockpit floor with Lynn on top of me, and my wife Patti dove behind and threw the life buoy, which was taken away by the wind.

Although the life buoy was too far for Steph to swim to, it gave her a little comfort to know that we were aware that she was overboard. She did not have a lifejacket on, but luckily was somewhat buoyant with air filled into her one-piece foul weather gear.

Lynn went to the stern and kept an eye on Steph as Patti, Dave, Pat and Francis pulled the spinnaker over the pole end which was still in the water. When it finally ripped in half, the boat righted and we gathered in all the lines and tacked back for our stranded crewmember.

Patti steered while I tried to start the engine, wasting precious time. After rummaging through the traveler post I found the keys and shift lever and finally got it going. However, because we were severely heeled for so long, air got in the lines and it stalled out after a few minutes. We had one reef in the main so we were able to controllably turn the boat towards Steph for recovery. We pulled to leeward of her and Pat threw her a rescue rope which landed right on top of her.

At this point, Steph had been in the water between 10 and 15 minutes. She was facing away from the boat totally oblivious to the fact that we were only five feet from her. We got her attention and she grabbed the line rather weakly and I turned the transom right to her. Patti grabbed her first, struggling to get her limp body over the open transom, then Lynn grabbed her, finally Joel reached in and the three hauled of them hauled her into the cockpit. (I could never imagine this from the full height of the topsides.) Patti, an ICU nurse, hauled her below and Joel, a medical doctor, diagnosed moderate hypothermia, meaning she was unable to warm herself. Down below, she was unable to lift her head and she was disoriented and exhausted. Patti stripped her from her wet clothes and raided the sea bags for warm gear, while she was bear hugged by Lynn.

When we finally got the boat under control and everyone settled down, we sailed back to the club, trying to raise the race committee who did not answer on the prescribed channel or on 16. When we docked, Bob ran to the car and got his sleeping bag while Steph's boyfriend dry bunked with her until she stopped shivering. Hot liquids were given once she felt under control. It was a truly terrifying experience, but one in which we learned numerous lessons.

First and foremost, everyone on board a boat should have their own safety gear. When we were about to leave the dock that morning, I asked if everyone had life jackets - four people did not. We scrambled to get everyone life jackets, but the lesson here is that PFD's do little good if they don't fit you properly with the gear you sail in. We now have a standing order that you bring and wear your life jacket. However, I should have been more forceful in ordering that life jackets be worn that day.

The second lesson is that you as a crew or skipper must be prepared to deal with these emergencies on your own. We were well in front of the entire fleet except for Ragtime, which was on the opposite side of the course. There were absolutely no other boats anywhere close to us to lend a hand. Also individually you

must be prepared to handle the same situation yourself. Sailing in May on Lake Michigan is extremely volatile and cold. Many times I have raced on other boats when the skipper ordered all sea bags left on the dock, and out we headed, totally unprotected from the elements if they changed. Minimally, I will bring what is needed for the season, not just the current weather. I won't skimp on the safety gear either, even though this was just a course race. The proper gear is imperative, not just from a safety standpoint, but also from an owner's liability standpoint. It's just not worth it.

The third lesson is not to depend on any safety gear to work as planned. When Patti tossed the life buoy, equipped with drogue and die marker, it blew off into oblivion before it even hit the water. By the time we could even throw a man overboard pole or deploy a man overboard module, we were well away from Steph.

The fourth lesson - and this may be blasphemy to die hard racers like us - is that for the want of a few pounds of advantage, we only had a few gallons of diesel in the 10-gallon tank. The only time we even really needed the engine, it failed because of air in the lines. We made all the efforts to clear the sheets out of the water before engaging the propeller, but the effort was wasted and could have been fatal.

Another lesson is, thank goodness, Steph wasn't wearing boots. I have heard so many stories about being dragged under by heavy boots that serious thought should be given to redesigning them. For years I used hiking boots for my Soling which were short, tight fitting and still reasonably warm. Sneakers and boat shoe designs have soared into the next century of design, but offshore boot wear seems to have stayed back in the days of the old fishing schooners.

The final major lesson learned was never, ever, deviate from known boat handling procedures. Always jibe the boom first. We know that, but because of the rush of the new season and excitement of the race, we overstepped good judgment thinking that if we jibed the pole first - we end-for-end with a lazy sheet and guy system - we could just steer the boat under the spinnaker at all times. This was a mistake and so was the thought that we could successfully jibe the big chute in winds in excess of 35 knots when we never have before. Why did we think we could do it in the first race on a cold and gray day in May?

I am proud of the crew of Natural High. We have done well together and have had a great time, but the main purpose of owning and campaigning the boat for Patti and me is to have fun with our friends and to give our kids the same opportunities we've had growing up. To throw all that away for not using common sense and proper seamanship should give everyone reason to reflect, while not running scared, and thankfully, becoming a great lesson and not a tragedy.

### **LM Case 15**

As reported by The Chicago Tribune

Monday, June 2, 1997, Section 2, Page 2

#### **BOAT CREW MEMBER MISSING IN LAKE**

by Jose' Patino Girona  
Tribune Staff Writer

Cathy Geraghty knew something was wrong when she saw the yellow rope of Life Sling from her friend Herbert Kaczmarek's 35-foot sailboat floating in Montrose Harbor.

She knew it had been used, and rushed to Kaczmarek, who stood in the cabin of his boat Dixie, sullen, spiritless and speechless.

For the first time after 51 years of sailing, Kaczmarek saw a crew member fall into Lake Michigan and not come back. The incident occurred during the Olympic Cup Sailboat Race, an annual 12-mile race sponsored

by the Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club.

According to police, a 60-year-old Chicago man lost his balance as he was pulling down a sail 4 miles east of Montrose Harbor. He fell into the 50- to 55-degree water and hit his head on the bow, police said.

The man was not wearing a life preserver, which is not required in the race, police said. Another crew member, a 40 year old Evanston man, jumped into the water to attempt a rescue, police said. He grabbed the injured man but was able to hold him for only several seconds, police said.

Rescue crews from the Coast Guard and Chicago Fire Department arrived 15 to 20 minutes after the man had fallen into the water. As of nightfall, they had searched unsuccessfully for the injured man.

The other crew member was taken to Northwestern Memorial Hospital, where he was in good condition, a nursing supervisor said. Although both men were experienced sailors, police speculated that a life preserver would have helped in the rescue attempt.

A life preserver would have been a great psychological boost, said James Korienek, a police officer with the marine unit. "It gives you some psychological advantage because you don't have to move all the time," Korienek said. "It's pretty intense when you have 5- to 6-foot waves.

But sailors at the yacht club and Montrose Harbor said that some wear the device and others do not. Preservers are generally used when sailors sense a dangerous situation, they said. "They are cumbersome to some extent," Geraghty said, adding that use "varies from person to person." Meanwhile, Kaczmarek who remained in the boat after talking to the police, was uninjured. "What is my mood?" asked 83-year-old Kaczmarek, who competed against 60 to 65 other boats Sunday. "I am not elated."

Friends and fellow sailors said there could not be a more trusted skipper. Kaczmarek has sailed in the Chicago to Mackinac Island race more than 20 times, said Larry Niemi, commodore of the yacht club and a friend of Kaczmarek.

That race is about 400 miles long and can last 30 to 50 hours, Niemi said. "I have known Herb Kaczmarek for a long time, and if I was going to be in a bad situation, I would want to be with him," Niemi said. "He has the most experience of anyone in the club."

"Bad things shouldn't happen to good people," said Geraghty, who learned sailing from Kaczmarek. "He is an incredible person. He is so caring."

Tuesday, June 3, 1997,

### **SEARCH FOR MISSING BOATER CALLED OFF**

by William Recktenwald  
Tribune Staff Writer

Fire department rescue divers who jumped into Lake Michigan from a helicopter are credited with saving the life of an Evanston man, although a 60-year-old man involved in the incident is missing and presumed drowned.

The men were on a 35-foot sailboat about 5 miles off Monroe Street Harbor Sunday afternoon, when Bruce Chapman, 60, slipped and fell into the water. "We threw him the life ring right away," said Kaczmarek, 83, "and I thought I saw him swimming toward it."

In spite of 5-foot waves and a strong wind, Kaczmarek was able to maneuver the boat close to Chapman. John Freeman, 40, of Evanston then jumped in the 50-degree water to help rescue Chapman. Freeman struggled to hold on to Chapman, but the combination of high waves and cold water sapped his strength.

**Addendum to LM Case 15 3/23/2015**

**BEGIN**

Lt. Earl Zuelke  
Chicago Police  
Marine Unit  
Fax:312-744-5937  
Ph:312-744-4817

June 3, 1997

Page 1 of 6

Dear Lt. Zuelke

I am enclosing a marked copy of the race chart showing my best guess of the position of the man overboard from *Dixie*. The nominal course was from Metro N (33349.9, 50070.2; 41° 55.83' N, 87° 31.63' W) to Metro S 33371.4, 50104.1; 41° 52.83' N, 87° 31.63' W). They would have been sailing about 20° off a dead downwind course of 190°. The rhumb line course was 180° True. Most of the boats, probably including *Dixie*, went in toward shore first, so they would have been heading about 210° T given a nominal wind direction of 010°. They would then jibe when Metro S bore 170° T from them. When they got to about 1/8 mile from Metro S they would drop their spinnaker. I believe that is when the first man went overboard. Evidently, they managed to return and get the man alongside, which is when the second man went into the water. The boat would have drifted downwind but crabbing sideways a bit, say about 210°. If this is consistent with the report filed by Herb Kaczmarek, I would suggest you start at my yellow inflatable mark, which is where the second man was recovered and work on a reciprocal course of 030°. You can check the geometry on the water. It should lead you back to the nominal place where the first man fell in. If it isn't quite right, at least you have a basis to make adjustments.

I am also enclosing a clean copy of the chart with a table showing the Lat/Long and T.D. of each mark. There are pages from our racebook dealing with the subject of Man Overboard and Radio Communications which you have an interest in.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions. This morning you can reach me at home 708-XXX-XXXX. I also have a pager with me, 708-XXX-XXXX. I've been asked by Don Glasell of the Area III office if the name has been released to the public and if a copy of the police report will be available. He's been getting calls from the racers. If you get a chance, you might wish to call him at 847-674-7223. He serves as a central communication point for the racers and would be an effective way for you to get any comments you have disseminated to the racers.

Bruce Thompson  
Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club

Lt. Earl Zuelke  
Chicago Police  
Marine Unit  
Fax:312-744-5937  
Ph:312-744-4817

June 5, 1997

Page 1 of 2

Dear Lt. Zuelke

I talked to Ray Mazzola yesterday regarding the previous letter I sent you and then I called Herb Kaczmarek. Herb estimates that the victim went into the water at about 1/4 mile NNW (bearing 340°) from Metro S. I've marked both that point and Metro S on the attached large scale chart. You've put a red Chicago Marine Police buoy at this nominal point of entry. The yellow inflatable mark is still at the point where the survivor was retrieved. I checked the scene from our whaler last night and the geometry looks about right. The bearing from the yellow mark to Metro S is about 035° and to the red mark is about 030°. That is exactly what I originally estimated.

The distance between the red and yellow marks is about 4000 feet. Herb says they only had the victim held to the boat for a couple of minutes before they lost their grip. He then held onto the survivor as they drifted south. Estimating that it took 20 minutes from entry to recovery and that the boat travelled 4000 feet, it was drifting at 200 feet / minute or 2 knots. This is plausible given the conditions. (It also indicates why it was so hard to hold on to him!). Say they maintained contact for between 2 and 5 minutes. That would put them 400-1000 feet from the red mark in the direction of the yellow mark. That is pretty close to Metro S on its northwest side. That is where I'd begin the search. You might want to run this past Herb for his comments and refinements. I hope this is helpful. Good Luck with the search and Thanks for your efforts.

Bruce Thompson  
Pager 708-XXX-XXXX

**END**

Alerted by marine radio, Chicago police and Coast Guard rescue boats headed to the scene. At Meigs Field, a Fire Department Air Sea Rescue Unit helicopter piloted by Cmdr. Leendart VanDorp and Lt. Keith Wilson headed to the scene. On board were Firefighters Robert Cordt and Brian Hurn, both rescue divers. Once Freeman was rescued, rescuers began to search the 44 foot deep water for Chapman but could not locate him.

Poor weather conditions on the lake Monday caused Police Marine Unit scuba divers to postpone their search for his body.

"The lake is too rough for us to put our divers in the water," said Marine Unit Officer Lee Labiak. "We will search Tuesday if the weather improves."

Life jackets are not required to be worn on a boat the size of that involved in the incident, but boating safety professionals said they might have been helpful Sunday. Neither Freeman or Chapman were wearing them.

Sunday, July 13, 1997

### **BODY IN LAKE IDENTIFIED AS LOST BOATER'S**

by Ka Vang

Tribune Staff Writer

The Chicago police marine unit recovered the body of Bruce Chapman, 61, from Lake Michigan on Saturday morning. Chapman of Ingleside, fell off a sailboat during a race June 1, said Sgt. Len Labiak of the marine unit. Boaters discovered the body about 6 a.m. floating four miles northeast of the lighthouse at the east end of Navy Pier, Labiak said. The marine unit retrieved the body a few minutes later. Chapman was pronounced dead at the Stein Institute in Chicago, said a spokesman for the Cook County medical examiner's office. Officials there had not yet determined a cause of death. Police said Chapman lost his balance and fell overboard during the Olympic Cup Sailboat Race.

Chapman was pulling down a sail during the race when he fell into 50-degree water with turbulent waves and hit his head on the boat's bow, police said. Chapman reportedly was not wearing a life jacket, which was not required for the race. Crew members threw a life ring into the water, but Chapman was unable to reach it. Another crew member tried to save him by jumping into the water, but was unable to hold onto Chapman because of the cold water and rough waves.

### **LM Case 16**

As reported by John Erb & Jeff Asperger, January 26, 1998

In 1981 on Memorial weekend, it was blowing 25 knots with 6'-8' seas making it cold and wet. Racing downwind on a Cook 35, Thunderbird, they performed an accidental jibe which snagged the boom between the backstay and the checkstay. Jeff got up to clear the boom when a wave hit and forced the second accidental jibe. Jeff Asperger had his arm over the boom at this point and was catapulted overboard. Jeff was not wearing a pfd. The crew threw floatable things to Jeff, all which missed the target and blew away. Jeff had a new pair of boots on that he would not part with. He recognizes now that it helped him hold some of his body heat in by keeping the boots on. They also went to drop the spinnaker, got the engine going and went back for Jeff. Rich Maskey is commended for his excellent steering. It took 4-7 people to pull Jeff back on board, Jeff was not capable of helping after being in the 41 degree water for 4-9 minutes. Things weren't over yet. He was hypothermic. They stripped him and layered blankets on him and got back to shore. The crew thought they recovered Jeff fairly quickly. Jeff thought it was an eternity. All worked out well. Jeff never thought that going out for a little fun on the weekend would have him staring in the eyes of the grim reaper.

### **LM Case 17**

As reported by Glenn McCarthy, January 26, 1998



In the 1993 Queen's Cup, Esta Es was making good speed in 2 foot swells under chute on a broad reach at 2 in the morning while the wind was moving forward. It was time to change over to the jib and people took their positions for the change. The chute was not disconnected from the pole when it collapsed the first time. Steve Toncray started to gather the chute figuring the chute was tripped. The chute re-filled pulling Steve overboard. The chute collapsed again and Steve went underwater disappearing. Steve was not wearing a PFD. "Man overboard" was shouted, as the boat was turned towards the wind for a "Quick Stop" maneuver. The chute refilled and Steve had his arms and legs wrapped around the chute like he was climbing a halyard horizontally. Two in the cockpit reached out and grabbed the backside of Steve's clothes and fell backward into the cockpit with Steve landing on top of them. As the off-watch came up and said who went? The answer was, we got him back already!

### **LM Case 18**

As reported by Gene McCarthy, January 27, 1998

In the 1970 hurricane Chicago Mackinac race, Gene McCarthy was crewing on Esbro a 60,000 pound sixty-three foot wooden yawl with a 4' bowsprit. As the winds were building out of the north, they had already shortened to triple reefed main, jib staysail, mizzen and jib top. On Sunday afternoon at 5:00pm they were 20 miles north of North Manitou Light. Wind was up to 45 knots. The call came to lower the jib top. The halyard was released and under the weight of the hanks, the jib fell to the deck. That sail had to be secured and Gene volunteered to go forward. Timing was critical. The bow was plunging up and down in 10 foot seas, with half of the time the bow under water. He measured the sail tie in his hand, with a tail in each hand and ran forward. He put his arms around the sail and through the pulpit and missed on his first try. Without looking to check the incoming sea, he went for a second try. The bow plunged into a wave carrying Gene and the sail overboard. Gene was not wearing a pfd. Gene was wrapped into the folds of the sail. As the bow came back up, the sail and Gene swept under the bow of the boat. The bow continued its rampage two more times as two waves past. All of this time there was no air to breath and no way out. As the third wave lifted the bow, the sail opened with a roar. When he saw where he was, he figured the plunging bow would crush him. He put up his arm to protect his head and felt something and grabbed it. When the boat rose again, he found it was the bow sprit side support wire and wrapped his arms and legs around it. The crew had believed he was washed over and was looking out the back end waiting for him to wash out. Then one looked forward and saw him, ran up to the bow and pulled Gene back aboard. Immersion time was approximately 2 minutes. After reviewing the circumstance, the decision was made to jettison the jib top as a safer measure and the paid Jamaican hand "Bernie" drew the short straw to do so. The next move was to drop the Main sail and the next 12 hours they plunged up to Grays Reef on mizzen and jib staysail, with winds 50 to 70 knots.

### **LM Case 19**

As reported by Robert Zeman, Jr., January 27, 1998

Addendum by Roger Ryan, February 4, 1998

Approximately 1965, during daylight, on the second leg of the Tri-State race on the sloop rigged 50' Q-boat Cara Mia, Roger Ryan was working the mast position. The narrow, low topsided heavy displacement Q-boat had a 25 horsepower gas engine in her. They were reaching with full main and spinnaker, in 25 knot winds and 4 foot white capped seas. The call was made to reef the main. The boat has a worm and pinion gear rotating boom to roll the main around the boom to reef. The hand cranked handle was on the leeward side of the boat at the gooseneck. While under strain to crank the boom round and round, either the chute collapsed or a rogue wave hit, lurching the boat. The handle slipped out of the gooseneck rotator. Roger slid across the deck into the water with the winch handle in one hand and grabbed the lifeline with the other. The water pressure pushed Roger aft until his hand hit the stanchion and burst his grip free. Free of the boat that is. Roger was wearing bib overalls, a pull over (non-zipper) hood and knee high sea boots. The water filled the inside of his rain clothing quickly. He kicked off the boots while his head ducked under each passing wave. He believed he was working on drowning even though he was a better than average swimmer in excellent physical shape. In his hood pocket he had a Res-Q-Pac. This was a device about the size of a pack of cigarettes, with a CO2 cartridge. He squeezed it, it inflated into pfd about the size of Dolly Parton's bra. While the device was designed to be placed under the armpits, he found that it lacked the flotation to keep

his lungs from filling. Instead he straddled the device which gave him greater buoyancy. At this point he started coughing up water from the great amount of time he had already spent under water. Meanwhile aboard ship, the boat had sailed off to leeward, dropped sail and was motoring slowly with her tonnage and 25 hp motor. As the boat circled back, everyone aboard was laughing. They missed. The second turn, the laughs stopped as people recognized that this was starting to get serious. They missed. On the third pass, doing four knots, Robert grabbed for Roger and described it as "trying to grab a fire plug doing 90 mph in a car". A crew member of German descent said "you better hang onto him or he's a goner". Robert replied, "you better start helping and stop talking, because if I lose him, I am throwing you in." The crew of German descent got up off his hind side and helped roll the water filled Roger aboard. Roger continued to cough up water as they made their way towards shore. In reflection, Roger thinks that he would have died without the assistance of the Res-Q-Pac.

#### **LM Case 20**

As reported by Jeanette Krstolich, January 30, 1998

In the 1988 Chicago Mackinac race, the boat "Pegasus", a Tartan 41, broke her mast which swept off the stanchions down one side of the boat. The crew loaded the mast, rigging and sails back onto the deck and pulled into Pentwater, MI. Mr. Krstolich, a crewmember, while the boat was in its slip in Pentwater, walked along the deck of the boat and without the lifelines there, simply walked off the boat into the water. He was not wearing a pfd. A number of the crew started laughing at him until one crew member said "he doesn't swim!" They threw him a horseshoe life ring as he splashed and floundered in the water. The owner, Bernie Kasa, said "If I knew you couldn't swim I would have never let you on my boat".

#### **LM Case 21**

Story withheld by request of boat owner

The statistics drawn from this case, are included on the graphs at the beginning.

#### **LM Case 22**

##### **MAYDAY ON THE LAKE**

By Kathryn Martin

Chicago Magazine, October 1995

How a leisurely cruise in a historic schooner turned into a harrowing fight for survival.

Bobby Usher was the first to notice the water on the cabin floor. It was 10:30 at night, ten or so miles out into Lake Michigan, and he had just finished a turn at the helm of the celebrated 85-year-old sailboat Fame. The five sailors on board the 40-foot craft were three and a half hours into a trip from Chicago to Racine, when Usher went below to catch a nap and saw the worrisome puddle. Still, a wooden yacht is expected to take on some water through the planks in her hull, and this was early in the sailing season, before the boat's cedar had swollen to plug the gaps and chinks. Dave Usher, Bobby's brother and the skipper of Fame, checked the electric bilge pumps. All systems normal. He figured the pumps would catch up soon enough. But when Bobby swung down from his berth around 1 a.m., his feet slapped into water sloshing over the floorboards.

The crew began working a manual pump, and Dave Usher decided to head toward Wilmette harbor while they checked things out. The water was under control, so no one was particularly concerned. They could see the lights of Baha'i Temple, an alabaster beacon to the west. Under full sail they'd make the harbor in little over an hour. "We've been chased off the lake plenty of times in storms," said John Mazziotti, one of the crew. "A little water didn't seem like a big deal."

After a while, Pete Usher - Bobby and Dave's cousin - went down below to take a turn at the pump. "I'd been thinking all along, If the captain's not worried, I'm not worried," he said. "But I was surprised at the

amount of water in the cabin-it was ankle deep when I got down there."

Meanwhile, when they tacked westward toward the harbor, the sailors found themselves in a predicament. The wind, a nor'wester all night, was now kicking up from the north, blowing the boat in one direction while the waves were carrying it in another. Six- and seven - foot breakers began walloping the boat. Fame had just 18 inches of freeboard-the vertical distance from the water line to the deck-and she had even less now, heeled over, leaning into the lake for a faster run. Water was flowing into the cockpit over the side of the boat; big waves repeatedly washed over the bow and deck. From below, Pete heard someone say, "We're in trouble!"

When he climbed up on deck, his cousins were passing out life preservers. Though there were cellular phones on board, there was no time to call for help: What happened next took a few moments.

"A strong gust hit us, the boat nosed toward the wind, and then the bow was standing on top of a huge wave," recalled Dave. "All the water on board rushed to the back of the boat, into the cockpit. Every wave that hit us after that was flowing right into the cabin, where we already had water to begin with. She was awash, half sunk at that point."

When lake water swamped the cabin, Fame stopped in her course, curtsied, and bobbed back upright. Then she sank-dropping out from under her crew, with rustling of sails and creaking of rigging and gurgling of bubbles. The mast stopped descending with two feet jutting out of the water.

The men were amazed and relieved that the boat had struck bottom, that the lake here was so shallow. Dave yelled for everyone to stay together and to hold on to the mast.

And then the mast dropped silently out of sight. There was no debris, no sign that a 40-foot vessel had been there a few seconds before. The boat just disappeared. They took a head count: five. Five men bobbing in six-foot seas and wriggling into life preservers three nautical miles east of Wilmette Harbor at 2:30 in the morning. The water temperature was 57 degrees. No mayday call had been made.

In the lore of the Great lakes, sea captains called Superior stormy and Erie tricky, but to Michigan they paid the utmost respect. They made legends of Lake Michigan's sudden tragedies-seven of the 13 worst shipwrecks on North America's inland seas-and they warned their crews of the prevailing winds that sweep the lake's 320-mile length and the unpredictable striking motions of the waves.

They knew that a man afloat in six-foot waves just a mile or two offshore would be battered rhythmically with each approaching swell. He'd be tossed high enough to see harbor lights perhaps, then swept back behind curtains of lake water. Teetering whitecaps, breaking over his head, would feel warmer at the crests, while the troughs of the waves, water pulled up from below, would be bitter cold. After a while, gravity would become a dubious notion as would concepts like east, west, up, down.

The five men on Fame that night were experienced recreational sailors, not the kind to make life-threatening mistakes or to underestimate the lake's penchant for trouble. In their classic boat, they knew the risks: Every year, two or three boats sink or capsize in Lake Michigan, and two people die in boating accidents. Odds for surviving a night in the cold, billowing lake are long. "It's not routine on search-and-rescue missions in Lake Michigan to find people alive long after a boat's gone down," said a Coast Guard rescuer. "The Great Lakes can be particularly unforgiving-and deadly."

The trip on Friday, June 30, 1995, started out as a pleasant cruise on a warm, tranquil evening. This would be Fame's first overnight voyage of the summer, and the crew planned to stop at Racine or maybe Milwaukee, depending on the weather. Eventually, they'd end up at the Usher family cottages on Eagle Lake, in southeastern Wisconsin, where everyone was gathering for the annual Fourth of July weekend bash. The wife of one of the sailors would pick them up sometime Saturday, after they called to say where they docked. That part was rote: This crew, with a few additional brothers or cousins, had made the trip

three of the last four years.

Dave Usher, one of the owners of the boat, arrived first at Burnham Harbor. At 32, an imposing six feet four, graceful and lean, without an extraneous ounce of body fat, he shares Fame with Mike Mulcahy, another cousin. Dave, the youngest of six kids from Beverly, and his siblings have sailed all their lives; their father put them on boats as soon as they could swim. Dave is what boating people call a diehard: though he works as a pipe fitter in a 100-year-old family business and renovates a Lincoln Park two-flat on the side, he spends every spare hour on the water sailing Fame and his three other boats.

In the crew that night were Dave's brother Bobby, their cousins Paul and Pete Usher, and John Mazziotti, who's not a relative, though he might as well be. Unlike Dave, these four have stocky frames-with bushy, dark hair and identically cadenced voices, they could almost be brothers. All four are married (Dave has a girlfriend), and all five of the men are childhood buddies from swimming and sailing boats on Eagle Lake with their fathers, uncles, and crowds of cousins. Bobby Usher-also a diehard; he crews on several boats and has a wooden sloop under repair in his garage in LaGrange, a fixer-upper for when his three kids are a little older. The others probably don't qualify as such, but they have logged plenty of hours under sail, and they have crewed regularly on Fame for five years.

To many old-timers in the sailing community, Fame is the First Lady of Chicago, a celebrity of Lake Michigan's harbors since she arrived from Marblehead, Massachusetts, in 1920. She cuts a distinctive profile, sleek and low to the water, with white cedar planking over an oak-framed hull, sitka spruce spars, and an uncommon double-gaffed rigging, meaning that her mainsail and foresail are trapezoidal, not triangular, with booms at both top and bottom. She's 40 feet long and eight feet wide, with a 35-foot mainmast (41 with topmast) and a 26-foot foremast. She is, at 85, the oldest wooden schooner in Chicago, and her likeness graces two Chicago Yachting trophies - Columbia Yacht Club's "Fame and Fortune" award and the Heritage Boat Club's "Fame" trophy. A wooden rendering of her half-hull is mounted on a Chicago Yacht Club wall.

Launched July 13, 1910, she was the personal boat of her designer, Bowdoin B. Crowninshield, scion of an East Coast shipping family and a noted naval architect (he designed a 1903 America's Cup contender, Independence, and the only seven-masted schooner ever built, the 375-foot behemoth Thomas W. Lawson, which broke in half on the rocks off England in 1907, drowning all but three of her crew).

Fame's fourth owner, Benjamin Carpenter, brought her to Chicago in 1920 and she changed hands a few times until insurance man Ted Dunlap bought her in 1926. Dunlap owned her for about 40-years; his meticulous care is the main reason Fame was still in sailing condition after 85 years (most of Fame's wooden contemporaries had a life span of about 25 years). When he grew too old to handle Fame himself, he offered her use to a young sailor each summer in exchange for the boat's upkeep; his one request was that every two weeks the boy call Dunlap in his 1100 North Lake Shore Drive apartment to alert him, then sail Fame back and forth a few times outside his window.

After Dunlap died, Fame was passed around, but luckily none of her owners went for the nautical fashions of the 1960s and '70s, when wooden hulls were abandoned, fiberglassed over, or "fixed" with layers of epoxy. She never sat out a season; by 1990, when Dave Usher and Mike Mulcahy saw Fame for sale in Wooden Boat magazine, the schooner had been afloat for 80 continuous years. They bought her for about \$20,000.

The evening of the ill-fated sail, the crew gathered at Burnham Harbor at about 5:30. Lake Michigan was serene and cerulean blue, undulating against the docks. Dave and the others rigged sails, stowed overnight packs, and loaded provisions (the Ushers stashed food even for short trips). The marine forecast called for northwest winds at 10 to 20 knots, fair skies, air temperature in the sixties, and waves at two to four feet-a lovely if not breezy send off for a night sail. By seven, the schooner slipped out of the harbor, tacked to the north, and set out of the harbor, tacked to the north, and set a course practically straight up the coastline for Racine. The men talked about work and took turns at the helm, and Paul Usher sang sea chanteys like "What

Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor?" Until Bobby Usher woke to find the water sloshing around in the cabin, it all seemed like a routine excursion.

For the first few seconds after Fame went down, Lake Michigan felt warm to the crew, at least compared with the biting wind and waves that had buffeted them on deck. They stayed together, though waves were hurtling over their heads, shoving them away from each other. No one panicked. "The worse thing you can do is get excited and scare each other," said Bobby. "You make big mistakes that way. We were just floating, bobbing in the water, getting used to it, while the skipper was getting a plan together."

But within minutes, the water took on a chill. "At first I thought we could just float there for days," recalled Paul. "But when it got cold, I thought, I don't want to be in this for even five or six hours. I had a much greater respect for Lake Michigan then-if she wants to toss waves, you just go with them."

There was no chance that a passing boat, if any were out at this dark hour, would spot them in the thrashing water. They were all strong swimmers, though, so they decided to make for the Baha'i Temple, visible when they were tossed to the top of the swell. Swimming would also keep them warm and on top of the water, and someone estimated they'd hit shore at least by noon. Pete even kept his shoes on for the first hour, figuring on a long walk down the beach before he would call a cab and go home.

Dave, Bobby, and Pete Usher managed to swim within ten feet of each other for half an hour or so, until Pete developed leg cramps and called out for the others to stop. Dave and Bobby swam over to help ("You can't float if you can't kick, and if you can't kick, you panic," Dave pointed out), boosting him up and holding his head above water while he flexed out the kinks. They tried to call Paul and Mazziotti over, who were 20 feet ahead. But it didn't take long to become separated in the water; within minutes, the two men were out of earshot, then out of sight.

This wasn't the plan they had agreed upon. "The two rules of sailing are 'Stay afloat' and 'Stay together,'" said Bobby. "Paul and John had disobeyed skipper's orders. This was a concern."

For a while, after Pete's cramps were gone, Dave, Bobby, and Pete could tell where the other two were by watching the seagulls circling overhead, dive-bombing both groups of swimmers as if they were big fish. Then, suddenly, Dave vomited.

Hypothermia, the fall of the body's core temperature to 95 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, can strike in air temperatures as high as the 70s; water immersion is a common cause, because it increases the body's conductive heat loss by a factor of 25. Experts say that someone in 50-degree water for 20 minutes or longer is at high risk. They also note that lean athletes, who don't have an abundance of body fat to insulate them, are especially vulnerable.

When the core body temperature drops to 95 degrees, a hypothermia victim experiences violent shivering, loss of muscle coordination, difficulty speaking, and confusion; below 90 degrees, shivering stops, skin turns blue, pulse and breathing slow and behavior becomes irrational. If the body temperature continues to drop, the victim usually falls unconscious, with an erratic heartbeat and respiration rate; below 78 degrees, the heart usually fails, though many victims die before this point. Still, doctors aren't inclined to declare hypothermia victims dead until they are warm and dead-one man in Chicago in 1951 survived after his body temperature plummeted to 64 degrees.

"Sailing on Lake Michigan, I know about hypothermia, but it never even crossed my mind that Dave could have it," said Bobby. "The water felt warm at first, then chilly, but we were swimming hard. And Dave's in top shape physically."

"Just before he got sick Dave told us, 'I'm not floating real good,'" recalled Pete. "I was surprised. I thought we were all doing pretty well. Bob and I linked arms with him and in a few minutes he passed out. Pretty soon he was mumbling and groaning...We had no idea what was wrong with him. We thought it was

maybe a heart attack. He was scaring the heck out of us."

Pete and Bobby tried to drag Dave through the waves, but his face kept falling in the water. They'd yank him up by the back of the sweatshirt, screaming, "Don't give up; you gotta swim, you gotta kick!"

Meanwhile, half a mile closer to shore, Paul Usher and John Mazziotti had lost sight of each other. Each man was swimming alone toward the shore lights, waiting for the sun to rise to warm him up a little. As sailors, they also knew the winds would die a little at sunrise. "Paul and I wanted to stick together, but the only orientation was to get to shore," said Mazziotti. "The waves weren't stopping Paul, but I'd swim 50 yards northwest and get pushed 100 yards southeast. I thought about getting pushed out into the middle of the lake and a couple of times it crossed my mind; I really want to see my wife again. But mostly I refused to think pessimistic things. I really thought we'd all make it. I figured the other three Ushers would get to shore before me, swimming with the power of six legs. The Usher boys are survivors."

The waves got bigger toward morning, but then the sun rose and the wind eased off. Sunrise cheered the men; Paul and Mazziotti doggedly stroking the waves; Pete and Bobby supporting Dave through the swells and chop, holding his head above water. "There were times when I couldn't help wondering if I was going to be dragging Dave or Dave's body in," said Bobby. "I'm a God-fearing man but I didn't have time to pray. My only business then was to keep my baby brother from the bottom."

At 6:43 that morning, Dan Bertrand, A U.S. Coast Guard lieutenant pulling a shift at Glenview Naval Air Station, woke up to an urgent broadcast on the P.A. system: A sailboat named Gypsy, on its way from Chicago to Racine, had picked up a man in the water two nautical miles east of Evanston.

"We'd been hearing what we thought was birds, and then we spotted someone in the water," said George O'Rourke, Gypsy's owner. "At first we thought it was some idiot Northwestern undergrad out for a morning swim, but when we turned off course to get closer, we could see the guy was in trouble. He was waving a life jacket over his head."

Paul Usher told O'Rourke that his boat had gone down more than four hours earlier. A few minutes later, Gypsy picked up John Mazziotti, half mile southeast of Paul. "The sun hadn't been up that long, and I saw this sailboat motoring north along the coast without any sails up," recalled Mazziotti. "It was the first boat I'd seen, and I wondered if it was a mirage."

Paul and Mazziotti were exhausted but in good condition, wrapped in blankets and drinking tea. At 6:45, a Coast Guard helicopter launched from Glenview with Bertrand and three other men aboard to search for the other three sailors. "I remember thinking as we flew over there, I hope they're wearing life vests," remembered Bertrand, the rescue swimmer for the mission.

Twenty minutes earlier, though it seemed like forever, Bobby and Pete had seen a sailboat turn abruptly east from shore, and they hoped it was to pick up Paul and Mazziotti. Now they saw the Coast Guard helicopter speeding east over the water. "That's the sight I'll remember: this great orange helicopter," said Pete. "We were so relieved they were in the air—we knew it might take them hours to find us in a boat and we didn't know how long Dave had."

The helicopter conducted a Victor Sierra search, a triangular flight pattern designed to find people in large bodies of water. At 7:11, Bertrand spotted three swimmers. "They had their life jackets on—we seldom see that—and were huddled together, pointing to their friend," said Bertrand. "We could tell that he was bad off. He had that blank look you find in shock and hypothermia patients, and I thought, I should get in the water real quick. The helicopter set up a hover and I jumped in. The guy grabbed on to me, then reached up for the helicopter and I knew he was really out of it."

At 7:15, the helicopter prepared to lift the Ushers aboard, but two Coast Guard boats and a Chicago Police marine unit boat had arrived, so Bertrand helped push the three men up onto a Coast Guard craft, which

sped off to the Evanston boat ramp and a waiting ambulance. Gypsy had already dropped Paul and Mazziotti off at Wilmette Harbor; they were under medical observation at the Coast Guard station, answering the police and Coast Guard's questions ("They asked about drugs and alcohol, and I told them they could test any one of us," said Mazziotti. "We were all sober, and our captain doesn't even drink at all").

At 7:45, Dave, Bobby, and Pete Usher arrived at St. Francis Hospital's trauma center in Evanston. Bobby had a body temperature of 98 and Pete, 95; they were given warmed IV fluids and attached to heart monitors, then released after a few hours. Dave was in critical condition, unresponsive and blue, with a body temperature of 81 degrees and an irregular heartbeat. The doctors put in an IV, hooked him up to a ventilator administered heated and humidified oxygen, and ran tubes into his stomach and bladder so that they could direct warm fluids to his body's core. Dave was admitted to intensive care, and doctors would later tell his family that things had been terribly touch-and-go.

"They were really lucky they were wearing life vests-and that the lake was as warm as it was," saidCarolynn Zonia, emergency-room doctor on call when the Ushers came in. "If the water had been down around 40 degrees, as it is in winter and spring-well, most people don't survive for long in water that cold. David didn't have as much body fat for insulation as his friends did-they fared better in the cold water."

Julie Bauer, Dave's sister, heard about the accident on the radio. She phoned the family, scattered between Chicago and Eagle Lake. When Dave woke up around noon on Saturday, his mother and girlfriend were there. Hooked to a respirator, he was anxious to speak and someone handed him a pen and paper. "All five OK?" he scrawled.

Dave's condition was upgraded to good late Saturday, and he was released two days later, in time to drive up to the "shipwreck party" under way in Eagle Lake. After sleeping and massaging sore muscles for much of the weekend, Pete, Bobby, and Paul also made it to Wisconsin (Mazziotti had to work). Bobby made a point of sailing on Eagle Lake the day after the accident, and both Dave and Mazziotti went sailing within a couple of weeks. Paul says he'll go back out on the water as soon as possible, but Pete is not sure if he'll tempt fate: "The Coast Guard said it's a miracle that Gypsy found us. How many miracles do you get?"

Gypsy's crew evidently felt the same way. After picking up the two sailors, the O'Rourkes made it to Racine on the first leg of what was supposed to be a three week circle of the lake. But on Monday, they saw another yacht go down-a brand-new fiberglass 26-footer washed onto the rocks. The boaters were rescued, but enough was enough: The O'Rourkes headed back home to Chicago.

Members of Fame's crew are still mulling over the circumstances that led them to become separated. In hindsight, Paul thinks it was a godsend that he and Mazziotti swam away from the others, since they ended up in a position to signal Gypsy. "When Mazz and I went off on our own, I had no idea anyone was any worse off than I. It was just really hard to stay together unless you were constantly yelling back and forth," said Paul. "A lot of lucky things happened to us. It was lucky that those three stayed together, and it was lucky that two were swimming faster and were able to signal the boat."

Bobby maintains that Paul and Mazziotti made a mistake that could have cost Dave his life. "Four people could have swum Dave in faster. And what if Gypsy hadn't come along? We were in very serious trouble, and Pete and I had no help."

But Dave isn't judgmental: "I think it's a good idea to stick together in that kind of situation. In the water I thought everyone was experiencing the same symptoms as I was-shivering, no energy when I tried to kick. I was thinking, Bob and Pete have three kids apiece-what have I done? In the end Bobby and Pete were able to take care of me when I got sick, but if Pete had gotten leg cramps again, Bobby wouldn't have been able to hold both of us up.

"Still, once the boat's gone, I guess I'm not the skipper of anything anymore. What I say at that point is only



a suggestion."

Because of high winds, it was a week before Fame's owners could get a boat out to see if she could be salvaged. The schooner had landed upright in 41 feet of water, her mast four feet below the surface, fish darting in and out of the sails. "She looked exactly like a ghost ship sailing the bottom," said Joe Sherlag, a former Fame owner who had dove into the wreck to take down the sails and rigging and retrieve the men's wallets. "Her sails were completely full, only she was under water."

Dave Usher snorkeled around the wreck, but not for long. "The water was cold," he said.

Two days later, the pros came out to raise the schooner. For about \$7,000 Harry Zych's crew from American Diving and Salvage slung four air bladders under Fame's hull, then inflated them to lift her up. With barely a sound, the two masts poked out of the lake at a 75-degree angle, the deck surfaced low in the water, and Fame popped upright to the cheers from the onlooking boats. The salvagers threaded a suction hose into the hull and started the engine pumps, and columns of water gushed out as Fame's hull rose to ride her normal water line.

The damage was minimal, since the boat had landed upright on the lake floor: dirt and grunge, a split along a glue joint in the mainsail gaff boom, blistered paint and warping of the wooden fixtures, an oil stain along the length of the mainsail, and water in the diesel engine. Fame might look as if she had just been raised from the dead, but three weeks later she was able to hoist her sails for the Heritage Wooden Boat Festival in Montrose Harbor and cruise the lake in the nautical parade. The boat's cedar planks were swollen tight; her trip to the bottom had ironically helped seal the hull against further leaks.

There was another item the divers retrieved from the sunken ship before she was raised: a Bible, bloated and water stained. Last February, when Mike Mulcahy was checking on Fame in the boat yard, he found a new shiny copy of a Gideon Bible placed prominently on deck. At first, he thought that an evangelical group had gotten into the shed and left copies on every boat, but there were no other Bibles around. Then he decided it was a personal joke, played by some friend on Mulcahy who claims to be atheist. But he still found it strange that no one ever claimed credit. So he stowed the Bible on board.

"And it's going right back on Fame, since she's back on the water," he vowed. "We couldn't have had better luck than to have the boys all make it and to find Fame sitting straight up in the water with so little damage. Coincidence?"

### **LM Case 23**

As reported by Glen Curtis, February 23, 1998

In July of 1980, the race went from Michigan City, IN to New Buffalo, MI roughly a Northeast route on a J-24. The wind was North with 1-1/2' waves at the start and building. The race started at 7:00PM. The 10 mile course took them along the coast with some tacking to stay off the beach. The crew of three including Glen Curtis was Dan Hosna and owner Keith Robinson. Glen and Dan donned PFD's and harnesses were connected, while Keith was so intent on winning this race, he repeatedly declined the offer for a PFD or harness. Glen and Dan were new to the boat for this race. There was no briefing as to where equipment was stored and even the lazarettes remained locked. The wind and waves had built as they went up the coast and the waves had turned into breakers. Wind exceeded 25 knots and waves exceeded 6', it became survival conditions for boaters that night. At about 10:30PM, not far from the finish line, they were contemplating a tack when a wave rolled them 180 degrees. The mast snapped and they re-righted. The boat had 2' of water below and a cockpit full. Keith appeared in the light of the moon near the top of the mast. Glen spent many years as a life guard and immediately went for the cockpit cushions and gave them a throw. The wind carried the cushions away and did not come close to reaching their target. Keith then disappeared. Glen and Dan could not locate any tools to remove the mast that was sweeping side to side across the deck. They could not find if the boat had a 2-way radio. They struggled to get the outboard motor into the water and found that it could not assist at all with the rigging and sail in the water. They made many attempts of

building a sea anchor to carry the bow into the waves, to no avail. It so happens that the remainder of the fleet had already dropped out and the race abandoned by the Race Committee. The fleet had organized a boat count and came up a J-24 short. The fleet organized a Search and Rescue. After tooting the ships horn towards shore many times, Glen and Dan decided to swim for shore about ½ mile away. They took a few more floatable objects and jumped in, still wearing their PFD's. On each wave crest, Glen shone a flashlight to shore. Dan was not as strong of swimmer as Glen and Glen ended up assisting by pulling Dan along. As Dan weakened, this in turn weakened Glen. As they got to the shallows where their feet could touch sand, a competitor from the Search And Rescue had been tracking the flash of lights from Glen and came in the water to help drag the two up to dry sand. Glen and Dan collapsed on the beach from the exertion. After rest, they finally lifted their heads to see the J-24 on the beach 200 yards down from them. Keith Robinson, washed up on the beach 2 days later.

Lots of thoughts have gone through the minds of Glen and Dan. The first was, never leave a floating vessel. The conditions on deck seemed extreme with the mast flailing around, but staying with the floating boat clearly would have been better. Going to sea without familiarity of the boat will be avoided in the future. They recognize that Keith's penchant for winning placed his life in front of survivability.

Later when Keith Robinson's regular crew gathered, they took Keith's ashes out on Lake Michigan on a Pearson 36 for his final sail.

#### **LM Case 24**

As reported by No-Name, February 24, 1998

The names have been hidden to protect the innocent, by request.

In August of 1994 on the way out to the starting line in Area III off Chicago's lake front, a 33' racer had the main up in 8 mph of wind and calm seas. They were running by-the-lee moving about 3-4 knots. The helmsman had about 40 years of experience. No-Name, was in the main trimming position, facing aft when the main accidentally jibed. Out of the corner of No-Name's eye, No-Name saw the boom, with a loose footed main, coming in fast. No-Name put up his/her arm to protect his/her head, and the boom caught under his/her arm and lifted No-Name off the deck and over the lifelines. When the boom came to a stop at the shrouds, No-Name was fired off into the water, having released the mainsheet earlier in the sequence. No-Name was not wearing a PFD at the time. The boat circled, picked No-Name up and went for the race course again.

#### **LM Case 25**

As reported by Nick Schneider

Nick Schneider/Dave Morrow on Latest Trick, a Olson 911, in September 1996 was in the MORF Commodores Cup Regatta Wind 15-20 knots, 5'-7' seas. After crossing the finish line on the run, they needed to jibe to make it to their home port. The decision was made to do a "chicken jibe". This consisted of heading up into the wind and tacking and bearing off to a run again. In the process of tacking from Starboard to Port, Phyllis Bannon positioned up near the shrouds on the rail, slipped through the lower lifeline into the water. Phyllis was wearing a PFD. She grabbed for the lifeline and caught it. Phyllis is a rather small individual and surprisingly, her light weight caused the swage by the pulpit to fail, yet she held on tight. Two others in the crew quickly jumped over to her skimming on the water and pulled her back aboard.

#### **LM Case 26**

As reported by Paul Ulatowski, March 4, 1998

In early June of 1993 on a MORF buoy course race off Chicago's lake front aboard Sadie Hawkins, the wind was about 15 knots, seas were running 3'-4' with a dead down run to the finish on spinnaker. On board the S2-7.9, Bill Witzmann's assigned position was to hold the boom out. About 350 yards from the finish

line the wind shifted suddenly. Bill being a lineman for Com Ed (electric utility) believed he was stronger than the wind and attempted to push the boom back out. The boom won and jibed. It shot him 15 feet away from the boat. Bill was wearing a Type III pfd. The crew dropped the chute and sailed back upwind on main alone. A horseshoe was thrown to Bill as an assist, but missed the target. They set out the Lifesling and got Bill attached and lowered the main. They pulled him along side and much to the amazement of all, Bill could not assist in getting himself up on deck. Bill climbs telephone poles all day long for a living, yet the cold water had zapped his strength in the 3 to 4 minutes he was immersed. The crew attached the main halyard to the Lifesling and cranked him out of the water. Once aboard, they re-hoisted the main, sailed across the finish line to collect their 2nd place finish!

#### **LM Case 27**

Story withheld by request of the victim

The statistics drawn from this case, are included on the graphs in the beginning.

#### **LM Case 28**

As reported by Dr. James Janik, March 23, 1998

In the 1989 Chicago to Mackinac Race aboard the G&S 34 Genie, James was working the bow, while the others had stayed in their assigned positions of navigator, cockpit and helmsman. Through Saturday night, three squalls had rolled through and had forced 12 sail changes including chute peels. At 5:00 AM, the decision was made to move from the #2 to the #1. James was in the act of setting the #1 up and had the tack attached. Unbeknownst to James, the cockpit crew had shifted the #2 jib sheet from the winch and into a jammer. As James was tying the jib sheet into the #1 laying on deck, a wave bounced the boat and he leaned against the clew of the #2 for support. The jammer let go, the #2 swung outboard under his additional load and splash he went! James had the presence of mind to hang onto the new jib sheet, wrapped the line around this hand many times, fortunately it came to a knot on deck and kept him with the boat. James was not wearing a PFD. Now being towed by the boat, sometimes he was under water, sometimes he was above. One time he was above, he heard someone shout, "pull yourself aboard". This was impossible after spending a full night battling the skies, going through the numerous sail changes and simply not having the strength to make that move. The boat headed up, took 9-10 boat lengths to come to a stop and the crew pulled him aboard.

#### **LM Case 29**

As reported by Bob Warnecke, March 20, 1998

Thirsty Tiger, a Holland 51, had just turned the first weather mark heading downwind in the Chicago Yacht Club Verve Cup in August of 1993. There was 8 knots of wind and flat water. After getting the chute set, the bow man, Dave Hill, went to the bow to pull the #1 down. His normal stance was to rest his bottom on the top lifeline. The pin on the end of the lifeline at the bow failed and the bow man fell backwards and into the water on the windward side. The bowman was not wearing a PFD. Another crewman hailed "Man overboard". They performed a quick stop, lowered the spinnaker and picked up the crewman. Total time in the water was 3 minutes.

#### **LM Case 30**

As reported by Terry McMahon April 3, 1998

Enhanced By Mike Derusha April 6, 1998

Around 1988/1989 in late June or early July with the wind out of the Southwest 12-15 knots, Terry was cruising his S2-7.9 from Egg Harbor to Fish Creek in Door county. Earlier in the day the racing fleet had started on the Egg Harbor-Hat Island Race outside Fish Creek harbor. There was a turning mark in the race where the boats jibe from a beam reach to a beam reach on the opposite tack, with a catch - if you blow it, you end up on the rocks dead ahead! Terry's course went across the fleet and he noticed a Peterson 36 named Meridian who had their sails down, stopped dead in the water, a man overboard pole in the water and

the entire crew looking over the side of the boat. Terry came to inspect and they said that they lost a crew over board and had fouled their prop. The mid deck crewmember had been hit in the head with the jibing boom and was carried overboard. Many people had seen him in the water floating and seemingly looking and responding to the passing boats. He was not wearing a PFD. Much to Terry's dismay, the trailing boats in the fleet looked over at this situation and not one of them stopped to inquire or assist in the search and sailed right on by. Clearly the man overboard pole was thrown in the water some fair distance away from where the crew went into the water, simply because it seemed the right thing to do. Three days later, the crew was found on a beach, dead.

### **LM Case 31**

As reported by Thom McCluskey April 6, 1998

On a MORF buoy race in June of 1995 with 1' waves and 10-12 knots in a pre-start maneuver aboard Mystified, a Catalina 30, an accidental jibe pushed the jib trimmer Roger VanderGuegten overboard. Thom keeps a flotation device within his reach recognizing that all other devices hanging off the back end of a boat are not instantly releasable and threw Roger a cushion. They rounded up, turned around and threw Roger a rope and pulled him alongside, from there Roger was able to climb up the swimming ladder. They made the starting line on time and went racing.

### **LM Case 32**

As reported by Peter M. Dorenbos, September 18, 1992

To Catalina Fleet 21

In Chicago on July 12, 1992. Five crew aboard Moonraker, a Catalina 22, started the first windward leg of a 12 to 14 mile race in the Jib and Main section of a Midwest Open Racing Fleet (MORF) race. It was a rainy and blustery morning; winds at 15 to 18 mph. Halfway through the first leg, beating she was knocked down by a wind that seemed to be ours alone. We took the knock down all right, "loose the sheets, etc.," but three big waves came. The first climbing up Moonraker's Genoa; the second lifting her bow so the keel actually folded under, despite the so-called lock that was supposed to secure it. With that, the center of gravity had changed and the third wave slapped her bottom and turtled her over.

Crew climbed on her hull and started to right her but, despite the forward hatch being locked and the companionway having been boarded up, the lazarette lockers opened up and took in enough water in 40 seconds that when crew brought her over, the stern never rose up and her bow raised and sank.

What's wrong with this picture? Only one crew had on a life preserver. And, if we'd have had the lazarette lockers latched with something, I probably wouldn't be writing this.

The saving grace was that three boats that race MORF had good attitudes, good reactions and good seamanship, so as that San Dad had five people aboard in probably three or four minutes, and the other two boats circled and watched to ensure a safe rescue.

San Dad (Catalina 27) – Mr. William Lawler, Skipper

Narnia (Hunter 22) – Ken Nelson

Strictly Pleasure (Beneteau 35) – Dan and Mary Ann Hayes

I feel a very special closeness to my fellows and look forward to racing with them next year and many more years after that. Hopefully in front of those wonderful sailors.

As reported by Marty Mudge, July 20, 1992

"MOONRAKER" now MUCKRAKER

Before I went to bed Saturday July 12, my Dad called and asked if I would like to go to breakfast and Mass with he and mom on Sunday morning. I told him I was going sailing. When he asked if we wear life preservers I replied that they are worn in heavy weather and when handling the "Spinnaker" pole on the bow. While he didn't reply, the following silent moment was enough to make his point.

I awoke with stiff muscles Sunday from riding in a bike trip covering 25 miles in three hours the day before. Paul who introduced me to Pete the owner and captain of Moonraker couldn't make it today. So I wasn't initially in the mood to sail but as I approached the lake on Lake Shore Drive my mood changed and I remembered that the air show would be overhead and my foggy mood turned to anticipation.

It turned out that three other guys were also crewing with me including Joe who is a client of mine and a relative by marriage with Pete. There would be plenty of company on the boat.

With a little delay we boarded Moonraker. A 22 foot Catalina sailing sloop and motored out of Montrose Harbor on a 180 (South) course to starting area number 4 marked by a buoy in the water. "SA4" is about 1.5 miles off the south edge of the Monroe harbor breakwater.

We rigged the sails including the Genoa Jib or front of the mast sail. This sail is usually used in lighter air due to its large size. On the ship's radio, the weather service predicted winds of 10 to 20 knots and waves up to three feet. Anyway with 5 crew members we could offset the "heeling" of the boat due to the heavy wind.

After rigging the sails it was clear that we were at the wrong starting area as there were no other boats around. A check of the racing book indicated that we should be at SA7 which is about 2 miles off of Burnham Harbor.

We were now under sail and heading 180 about 2 miles for SA7. On the way to SA7 the weather got worse due to an approaching storm which first hit the Loop and then spread to include the area off of Burnham Harbor. I went to the cabin and put on my light golf rain suit and a life preserver. Everybody else put on heavy weather gear made of oil cloth over their regular clothes.

The starting areas are always exciting as there are many sailboats in a very close proximity jockeying for position to get a good start for the race. Today with the heavy and shifting winds it was all you could do to avoid hitting another boat or avoid getting hit. Most of the other boats were sailing with no jib or with the storm jib.

The race course that will be sailed is known only when the starting boat (which has it's sails down) puts up a course sign at the stern of his boat. He put up course W-1. We then looked in the course book which translated W-1 into the buoys we have to sail to and around that are located along the Chicago lakeshore for this purpose.

The starting flag went up and because we were in great position, (a boat close by had to give way) and we got off to a great start.

Our first buoy was buoy W on a course 222 or roughly southwest, the source of the wind. As we couldn't sail into the wind we set on a course of 180 due south. The boat was "close hauled" which is the fastest feeling point of sail. This is because the speed of the boat is added to the speed of the wind making you feel that you are going faster than you really are. Our course speed was 4 to 5 knots which was fast for this boat.

The winds were getting faster and gusting and shifting due to the storm which was now right on us. Waves were probably up to four feet. The effect of the boat was dramatic causing us to "heel to port" 45 to 80 degrees. Pete was struggling with the helm and I remarked to Joe that I wouldn't like to trade places with

him.

The crew members were on the rail or high side of the boat and leaning over the safety rail every time the boat heeled over approaching 90 degrees. Pete closed the cabin door with the help of Joe placing the three cabin door boards in the slots and closing the hatch over the boards to secure the cabin. It was now raining hard.

Pete asked me what the next mark was but the course sheet was locked in the cabin. Joe and I started to open the cabin hatch door but were called off by Pete because he needed us on the rail to offset the winds. The hatch door might not have been closed properly because Joe and I were having difficulty getting the hatch door to raise over the top cabin door board.

The wind was gusting and we heeled over about two times 90 degrees. Pete had an earlier experience heeling over burying the leeward rails and the boat righted itself with no problem.

The last time we heeled, Jeff the forward crew member and most experienced announced that we were going down. A large wave hit the genoa sail and pulled the bow into the water. Three more waves hit the "gennie" confirming our "pitchpole" into the water.

All five crew members were now swimming either jumping or falling from the boat. Pete was holding onto the stern and was stunned for about 20 seconds, but quickly recovered. I was at the beam and the other crew were at the bow. We took a quick head count and everybody was accounted for and in good health.

The boat then "turtled" moving counter clockwise with the mast at 6 o'clock. Pete swam to the bow and he and Jeff climbed onto the hull resting on the "keel" trying to get the boat to right itself. The boat continued it's counter clockwise movement trying to right itself and never fully recovered past 9 o'clock.

The keel was of the retractable type which had retracted into it's slot when it turtled. I'm guessing that should not have happened and probably caused some damage to the hull. John and the other crew members heard a clunk which meant that the keel re-extended and caused some damage. There were hissing sounds indicating the air was leaking out of the hull at a rapid rate.

The boat continued it's roll to 9 o'clock with the stern under water and the bow just slightly above the water. Crew members were holding onto the port side as the rigging was on the starboard side. Pete knew that the boat was going under and directed everybody to stay away from the starboard side to avoid getting caught in the rigging and getting pulled to the bottom. The boat sank and we were swimming. It took about 2 minutes from the time we hit the water.

I knew from my coast guard sailing class that the other crew members had about ten minutes to live from the combination of heavy clothing, 4 foot high waves, 60 degree water temperatures and no life preservers. It didn't occur to me that the boat would sink until it did, and I knew we were in trouble.

John was in trouble as the waves would hit his heavy weather jacket hood and pull his head under. He couldn't work on the zipper or he would sink. I swam over to him and let him hang on to my shoulder while I tried to undo his jacket zipper. I got it down to the bottom when a big wave hit us. Somehow I ended up under water with John using me for a log. I pushed him away and when I surfaced a rescue boat was approaching. John was able to get his coat off and we all swam to the rescue boat.

I didn't know if the boat was under sail and would be able to stop so I swam to the bow, reached up to the bowsprit and grabbed it. I wasn't going to let it get by without me. I counted to three and pulled my leg up to the spinnaker pole stored on deck. Another count to three and I pulled myself onto the deck getting help from a man named Bill, a crew member of the rescue boat.

Joe got run over by the boat and had to swim down 5 feet and away from the boat.

When I ran along the deck to the stern of the boat I heard Pete calling to the attention of the crew in despair that I was missing which I quickly corrected. The remaining crew were pulled into the stern of the boat and the captain ferried us to Monroe harbor where Pete gave the coast guard the necessary reports.

Everybody but I had lost their wallets and car keys and other miscellaneous things that were in the boat. But we were grateful that we had retained our lives. Boats and other things can be replaced.

On the way to Monroe Pete was already thinking about his next boat and how he didn't like the swing keel design. Joe was glad for the experience with this crew so he would be better prepared for sailing safely with his wife, and I feel that I now don't have anything to be afraid of as I have experienced the worst. It is a testimony to the human spirit.

I heard that Pete was looking for Moonraker now Muckraker on Saturday with a salvage company using the "Loran" coordinates we took on the rescue boat and bottom searching sonar equipment.

Each day I read a daily meditation book. It's meditation as I read it on the morning of July 12 is:

"If you believe that God's grace has saved you, then you must believe that He is meaning to save you yet more and to keep you in the way you should go. Even a human rescuer would not save you from drowning only to place you in other deep and dangerous waters. Rather, he would place you on dry land, there to restore you. God, who is your rescuer, would certainly do this and even more. God will complete the task He sets out to do. He will not throw you overboard, if you are depending on Him."

And life goes on.

As reported by Joe Des Jardins, Date Unknown

## RELEARNING SOME OLD LESSONS

Southern Lake Michigan is not known for its heavy air. In fact, Chicago's moniker of Windy City is a misnomer as far as this skipper of an overweight, underpowered, hunk of ancient Swedish half-tonner is concerned. Because our fleet races in light conditions so much of the time, we tend to forget some of the basic safety considerations that we learned in every safe boating course we ever attended. Sometimes mother nature reminds us that we need a refresher.

Just a few days ago She did just that. We had a boat sink on the race course.

It's true that no one was hurt; it's true that several of our skippers proved to be excellent seamen in fishing the four crew out of the drink; and it's true that the rest of the race was able to go on as scheduled with only a few sailmaker's bills as the downside. But I know that I, after hearing the details of the sinking, started reviewing in my own mind some of the sloppy safety habits and some changes we should make on JOLI. I chatted with the skipper of the boat that sank and the one thing he mentioned several times was how quickly everything happened. From Knockdown to Turtle to Righting to Sliding slowly backwards to the bottom took about a minute and a half in his mind; so don't think you will have time to do all the things you should have done at the dock when the situation becomes extreme.

Since I do my best thinking with my fingers on the keyboard, I thought to share some thoughts with the fleet and any other sailors who might be listening.

The reason the boat sank was that she flooded after taking a knockdown. Knockdowns happen, they shouldn't, but when a skipper is intent on having the maximum sail up for the conditions and then gets a



rogue puff, knockdowns happen. However, a boat won't sink if there is no way for the water to get inside the hull. How many of us on that same day forgot to dog down the forward hatch. Sure, most of us had the companionway slid closed to keep out the rain, but how many of us had the hatch boards in and locked in place (for that matter, how many of us have hatchboards "capable of being secured in position with the hatch open or shut..." [ORC Regs. 6.13])? In fact, the boat sank had his forward hatch dogged down and had his companionway closed with the hatch boards in place. What caused the flooding was the cockpit lockers. When the boat turtled, those big heavy fiberglass seat hatches opened up and swallowed as much of Lake Michigan as they could. And they kept swallowing when the boat was inverted because the through hull for the swing keel pendant became a vent for the trapped air inside the hull (yes, there is a reason for "Soft wood plugs, tapered and of various sizes." (ORC Regs., 6.52)). "She looked like a whale breathing, with her gray VC-17 bottom all shiny and a column of air and spray shooting out the through hull."

Do you make it a practice to latch your seat hatches? Don't you think you should?

Of the four crew on the boat that sank, only one was wearing a life jacket. He was the first person rescued; as a matter of fact he was buoyant enough that he rescued himself by grabbing the pulpit of the rescue boat and swinging himself aboard. Have you ever tried to swim with your foul weather gear on? Try it, and I think you will come up with a policy similar to the one that we are starting as of now on our boat. That is:

If it is foul enough for the skipper to put his rubber pants

on, it is foul enough for life jackets to be mandatory.

I know that we all suggest that our crew don life jackets whenever they feel the need and we never want them to feel it is uncool to be so attired. But the crewpool yuppies being what they are, there are times when the skipper must dictate; and on JOLI that is the new rule. And it includes the skipper too.

It is mid season now, the water is warm enough for you to have a REAL man overboard drill. Why don't you try one on the next trip to the starting line. Oh, okay, you've never even done a pretend one. Then just try one with the horseshoe buoy this weekend. Next weekend you can jump in the water screaming and see how long it takes for the crew to get the boat stopped, turned around, and back to get you; you may find that life jackets should be mandatory sooner on your boat than on mine.

Review the Required Safety Equipment of the Offshore Racing Council (As modified by MORF, they are in the Race Book , starting on page 33); do you have everything you are supposed to have? Our fleet depends on each of its members to abide by the rules that we publish; it is a matter of good sportsmanship as well as good sense to see that your boat complies with the rules.

As Race Committee chairman I have a special responsibility that every one in our fleet have a good time, since racing is the reason the club exists. But also, as our fleet has gotten more competitive, and aggressive, I note that we have gotten more accident prone; and I cannot think of a more rotten ending for a great MORF race day than to find out a tragedy occurred because we didn't pay enough attention to safety.

As reported by Peter Dorenbos, September 10, 1992

#### TO RESCUE MEDAL - US SAILING

In Chicago on July 12, 1992, Midwest Open Racing Fleet (MORF) started the first Jib section on a 12-14 mile race. It was a rainy, blustery day with winds about 15 or 18 mph.

At approximately 12:00PM, a sharp, hard wind hit the Moonraker along with three big, fast waves and she was over on her side. A wave then lifted her bow and her keel folded up despite the so-called lock and she turtled. Crew climbed on her hull to right her but in less than a minute and a half, and in spite of her forward

hull being locked and the companionway having been boarded up, she swallowed water through her lazarette lockers and, on the way to being righted, she sunk leaving crew very vulnerable to our own inadequacies.

Close by, also racing, was San Dad, a 27' Catalina; Narnia, a 22' Hunter; and Strictly Pleasure, a 35' Beneteau. San Dad came at us dropping their sails within, I think, two minutes and had all five crew safe on board within five minutes. Narnia and Strictly Pleasure closely watched the rescue, circling nearby ready to assist if necessary.

I, the forlorned Skipper of Moonraker, therefore nominate the San Dad, skippered by Mr. William Lawler of Lake Forest, Illinois, for the U.S. Sailing Rescue Award. He reacted quickly, without hesitation, and very skillfully in saving five lives (only one crew member of Moonraker was wearing a life jacket). Also if there is such a thing as an honorable mention, I would like to nominate Ken Nelson, Skipper of Narnia; Don and Mary Ann Hayes of Strictly Pleasure who ensured that all were safe during those moments. These individuals, because of their positions, and limited visibility in that weather acted in a most commendable manner.

The details of the rescue are as follows: three crewmen were rescued by throwing lines out and simply boarding on the stern; I was holding on the starboard side and boarded the ladder way; and, one crewman who had literally jumped out of the water on to the bow sprit was grabbed and dragged on board by the seat of his pants.

Simply watching, good reactions and attitudes, and skillful seamanship are the reasons Mr. William Lawler is my nominee for the award. The other skippers have to be mentioned because they were there with the exact same attitudes, ready to act if needed.

MORF has an annual award dinner and this year it will be held on November 7, 1992. I would like to have the award on hand-and honorable mentions, if possible-to be presented to my rescuers at the award dinner so that they can also receive the recognition of their fellow members who will also be present on that night.

Thank you.

### **LM Case 33**

As reported by Richard Grunsten April 8, 1998

On a course race off Chicago's lakefront in 1996 on the Nelson/Marek 1200 Voodoo in a foggy 10-12 knot wind and choppy conditions on a beat, the Kevlar serving connecting the lower lifeline to the eye on the pushpit failed, this in turn with the weight of the crew hiking against the lifeline caused a stanchion to fail dropping three crew into Lake Michigan. The overboards included John Connelly - foredeck, Xavier Dreze - trimmer and Laura Buckman - trimmer. It is not known if they were wearing PFD's. Voodoo spun around and picked up John Connelly, while a competitor, Hot Lips, peeled off their course and picked up Xavier Dreze and Laura Buckman. The total time in the water for the crew was approximately 1-1/2 minutes. Both boats retired from the race and headed back to shore.

### **LM Case 34**

As reported by John Moravec April 21, 1998

In early September of 1991 Silver Heels, a Hunter 28.5 was approaching the starting line on starboard tack, with the remainder of his section approaching on port tack. His plan was to tack to starboard when the gun blew and communicated this to the crew. Patti was standing at the mast, the gun blew and John hailed "helms a-lee". As the boat heeled in the other direction, Patti simply flew overboard to leeward, clearing the lifelines. Patti was not wearing a PFD. In the 12 knots of wind and 1 foot waves, John threw Patti a floatable as he passed her, unclipped the lifeline back at the pushpit, circled around, came head to wind and the crew lifted Patti out of the water through the lifeline opening. Total time in the water was 70 seconds, Silver

Heels was 40 seconds out of first place for the day.

### **LM Case 35**

As reported by John Cremer April 27, 1998

In late July of 1976, the Lake Michigan Championships were held in Milwaukee, WI. John Cremer and his crew on Omega, an Erickson 39, were leading the fleet going dead downwind in 35+ knots of wind and 2' of seas on a course directly to the mark with full main and spinnaker. John turned the helm over to Peter Reiske, while John went down below to help pull the spinnaker down. There were three crew on deck pulling the spinnaker down as well. As the spinnaker was being gathered and John was pulling it down below, either the spinnaker sheet or afterguy wrapped around John's leg. Peter, back on the helm, turned the boat to weather to round the mark and in the process, the spinnaker re-filled. One of the crew on deck who was an Olympic gymnast did a flip and was able to grab the lifelines, nearly going over. John was not so lucky. The spinnaker pulled John right up the hatch and he flew out and overboard. The guy or sheet left rope burns on John's leg and hands. John was not wearing a PFD. Another crew member on deck threw John a PFD, in those days, a drogue was not part of the device, yet with John's swimming experience from his High School and College swim teams along with his experience with the Navy Underwater Demolitions Team, he was able to swim to the PFD and get it. John did get retrieved by a competitor and was in the water for approximately 10 minutes.

### **LM Case 36**

As reported by John Chick April 28, 1998

It was a cold rainy windy Sunday in August 1993 at the PHRF Championships in Waukegan, IL. Winds were 20-25 knots, waves were 3'-5' and the air temperature was in the low 50's. X-press an X-boat  $\frac{3}{4}$  tonner was going up wind flying a #3 jib coming in to the 2nd weather mark closing in on the mark doing 6-1/2 knots of speed. The call was to tack. In the middle of the tack, a freak wave hit the bow redirecting the course of the boat. Kathy Bringham, handling the bow position was in the middle of her step and the boat disappeared out from under her. As she went overboard, she reached for the lifelines and caught the upper one and held on. As she swung into the side of the boat, her jaw hit the sheer line breaking her jaw in two places and breaking two back teeth, she let go and fell into the water semi-conscious. Kathy was not wearing a PFD. At this point, the boat has slowed to 4 knots of speed. Todd Labaugh who was working the middle of the boat recognized that Kathy was in difficulty and dove in to help support her. Todd was not wearing a PFD. Todd is an athletic muscular type. The remaining crew dropped the jib, turned the motor on, spun around and stopped 30-40 yards to weather of the two crewmates. They had tied a line to a horseshoe and threw it to the two floating crew members. Quickly they pulled them aboard. Kathy was in the water for 1-1/2 minutes. They took Kathy below, dropped out of the race and headed to shore where they took her to Lake Forest Hospital for care. Two weeks after this incident, Kathy was back aboard sailing with her jaw wired shut!

### **LM Case 37**

As reported by John Chick April 28, 1998

In August on Friday in the 1997 Verve Cup at Chicago Yacht Club, the wind was building as a front was approaching. X-press an X-boat  $\frac{3}{4}$  tonner was going up wind coming in to the 2nd weather mark. Wind was over 20 knots and waves were building from the shore. Kathy Bringham went out to the bow and set-up the spinnaker bag. Shortly after that, the call was made to tack. In the middle of the tack, Kathy lost her footing and slid across the deck under the lower lifeline. Kathy was not wearing a PFD. She grabbed the spinnaker and held on tight pulling the entire spinnaker out of the bag into the water with her. Kathy was partially wrapped in the spinnaker and banged against the bottom of the boat a few times. The crew leapt to their feet and grabbed Kathy as she trailed alongside the boat bringing her back aboard. Kathy was in the water for about 30 seconds. The spinnaker had wrapped itself around everything underwater on the boat. The crew took a knife to it and cut it free. They dropped out of the race and called it a day. When they got back to the

dock, they sent a swimmer in to clear the remainder of the spinnaker that was wrapped around the rudder.

#### **LM Case 38**

As reported by Richie Stearns, August 3, 1998

On a gorgeous 70 degree 1st of the year racing weekend in 1992, the Beneteau 42 Phantom had crossed the finish line in 10-12 mph of wind and flat seas. They turned on the engine, left the main up and dropped the jib on the run back into the harbor. Richie Stearns took the clew end of the jib and started folding. The boat jibed accidentally and the boom came across and caught Richie at the hip clearing him over the lifeline and into the icy 35-40 degree water. Richie was not wearing a PFD. The boat turned around and picked Richie up with an immersion time of about one minute.

#### **LM Case 39**

As reported by Scott Miller, May 8, 1998

On August 26, 1987, Scott's dad, Mike Miller was sailing in a single handed race from Muskegon, MI to Racine, WI around buoy #7 and return to Muskegon. After sailing for 25 hours non-stop, with 20 miles to go to the finish line, the winds had increased to 25 knots with 5' seas. Mike apparently decided to flatten the main or reef the main. He went forward to a winch that was on the leeward side mounted on the boom and started to crank. The winch broke off at the wrong moment and Mike went overboard. Mike was not wearing a PFD. Later, the boat washed up on the beach at Haoffmaster State Park. Mike Miller did not survive this event.

#### **LM Case 40**

As reported by various sailors and Chicago Tribune articles

8/29/65 Sec. 2, Pg. 6, 8/29/65 Sec. 1B, Pg. 12,

8/30/65 Sec. 1A, Pg. 6 and 8/31/65 Sec. 1, Pg. 21.

In August 1965, during the Columbia Yacht Club's George Harvey S. Night Navigational Race, the course took the boats from downtown Chicago to the Calumet Gas buoy south, then north up to the Gross Point buoy, then south back to Chicago for a 66 mile race. 44 boats started and 11 boats crossed the finish line. Winds out of the North created a run for the first leg, a beat for the second leg and a run to the finish. The winds had built from the start to around forty knots during the race. Many boats came back to the harbors with broken masts, booms, torn sails and rigging failures. Many sailors became seasick.

In the middle of the race, a flare was spotted. Upon checking, it seemed that a sailor had fallen off of a boat by the name of Heritage, but was quickly recovered.

A 26' all-aluminum boat by the name of Lorelei with a total of 4 crew on board was seen at the first turning mark off of Calumet. From that point on, the boat was never seen again. One crewmember, James Davis was found dead in his PFD one day later by passing boaters. The other crew, Murray Morrison (owner), Joseph Vermoch and Robert Hunyadi were never found.

Speculation has it that the hatch opening to below decks went down to the floor of the cockpit. If the cockpit filled with water and the hatch boards were removed, nothing would have prevented the water from going down below. The scuppers in the cockpit floor reportedly were small and too few. Draining the cockpit would have taken a long time, if it had filled.

A women who made the delivery of Lorelei from Jackson Park Harbor to downtown Chicago was thought

to be on board, but changed plans when the boat reached downtown Chicago and went on a vacation instead.

#### **LM Case 41**

As reported by Robert Hughes, August 3, 1998  
and the Grand Rapids Press

On June 11, 1998 during the Melges 24 Gold Cup off Chicago's lakefront, with 12 miles of wind and 1'-2' seas, Heartbreaker had just crossed the finish line when Robert Hughes said to the crew that they can relax since the tense race was over. It is common on Melges 24's to tie the single lifeline down to the deck between the pushpit and the first stanchion. Robert then looked over his shoulder and saw that two Melges 24's were finishing immediately behind him and that Heartbreaker was in the way. He threw the helm over to jibe and clear the incoming boats and the boom started across. Robert was in the way of the boom, saw it coming and ducked. He missed getting clobbered by the boom but the main sheet got him and pushed him through the lifeline opening backwards and a plunge into Lake Michigan head first. Robert was wearing a vest Type III PFD. Since the rudder was turned over hard, the boat continued turning lining the rudder up with Roberts head. The rudder became the "carbon fiber head opener" breaking the skin open across Roberts head and leaving him unconscious. It looked like a scene from the movie "Jaws 5". A cloud of blood circled Robert. The crew of Heartbreaker spun around and picked the now floating unconscious Robert out of the water. Heartbreaker called for assistance from the regatta organizer and a Boston Whaler was dispatched. They transferred Robert to the high speed Boston Whaler and called for an ambulance to be waiting at the dock for their arrival which did occur. Heartbreaker and the Boston Whaler looked like commercial fishing boats after cleaning a large catch. Robert spent 8 hours in the emergency room, where a full blood transfusion was performed to replace the blood he lost and 30 stitches were made to sew up the gap on the top of his head.

The next day, Robert donned a baseball batters helmet and took two 1st's and one 2nd in the racing of the Gold Cup.

Robert said that he would not have been wearing a PFD on that day, but since the Melges 24 class rules mandated that he wear one at all times, he had the protection in place. He credits the PFD for saving his life.

#### **LM Case 42**

Story withheld by request of the boat owner.

The statistics drawn from this case, are included on the graphs at the beginning.

#### **LM Case 43**

As reported by Bruce Thompson, August 27, 1998

In a Beer Can race at Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club on August 26, 1998 in 4-5 knot breeze and 1 foot chop during daylight hours, Quicksilver, a Laser 28, was in the process of jibing. Bill Zowman, handling foredeck, was standing in front of the mast on top of the cabin top which is crowned. The foreguy was left on tight and Bill struggled to re-attach the pole to the mast and over-balanced backward. Given the crown in the cabin top, he couldn't recover his balance and did a back-flip over the lifelines into the water. He never touched the lifelines. He was wearing a Type III PFD.

Quicksilver put the helm down, heading up into the wind, dropped the spinnaker bringing the boat to a stop head-to-wind. The victim swam toward the boat, they threw a line to him and pulled him over to the transom. He climbed back aboard the boat using the permanent swim ladder. They re-hoisted the spinnaker and finished sixth.

#### **LM Case 44**

As reported by Brian Tobin, September 30, 1998  
and Mark Schneider, October 13, 1998

On July 29, 1988, Measure for Measure was on its way back from the Chicago to Mackinac Island race having departed in high spirits from Leland, MI in the morning. The plan was to go to Frankfort, MI, but as the day went the winds increased to 35-40 knots out of the south and seas built to 5-6 feet. They had a single reef in the main and a number 3 jib up. It was past time to add another reef to the main and the decision was made to go into Platte Bay in protected waters where seas were only 2', to rig the second reef line. The crew was struggling to get high enough to feed the line through the reef eye in the main at the end of the boom and a few extra tacks were put in to stay in Platte Bay. At 5:30 PM, while heading out of the bay, wham, the boat hit a huge submerged rock which shook the boat. The crew did not look down below and focused its efforts on heeling the boat over and continuing to sail back out into deep water. Then wham, a second rock took off the keel and the boat rolled until the mast set on the bottom in shallow water, with the boat on its side. The five on board were Brian Tobin, Mark Snyder, Phil Mitchell, Tom Hogenkamp and John Vonnegut. Mark swam around to go in down below and retrieve PFD's. He brought one up and in passing it, the wind carried it away. Next he went and pulled out the life raft and first tied it to the boat before inflation and it filled as one would hope it would. All members at some point ended up in the water, some swimming for the raft. No one was able to get a PFD on. A Park Ranger from the Platte Bay National Seashore Park came out in a dinghy and asked if they would like a ride in. This dinghy looked small and it was agreed that if it flipped, it would only make matters worse, not better. The USCG was called in, picked up the crew and took them to Frankfort. Mark reports that the USCG did a great job and they were quite surprised to see how young their rescuers were. One of the USCG'smen commented, "wow, cool, we never rescued someone in a liferaft before!" Brian was the only one to have a wallet in his pocket, while all other gear was left with the boat. Cadence, a C&C 50, another Mackinac racer, offered to put up the crew on board their boat overnight. The next day divers went aboard the boat and pulled the personal belongings out so the crew could make it home. Later, a salvage company came out and took the hull ashore and a person on Portage Lake bought the carcass and reportedly it sits there today, unchanged.

#### **LM Case 45**

As reported by Michael Bird, October 7, 1998

On Saturday, October 3, 1998 on the way to the MORF Open, Circus, a J/30 was heading out in 25 knot winds and 6' seas with the wind in an easterly direction. With mainsail up and motoring, they were making headway, and made the decision to hoist the #3 jib. Mark Frankle, not normally the bowman, got out to the bow and was working on his knees when the boat dropped off of a wave. Mark was not holding on and separated from the boat. Mark landed in front of the boat and went under water. The crew shouted "man overboard" and the helmsman pulled the gear shifter into neutral. Mark was wearing an automatic inflatable PFD which deployed underwater. As it pushed him up, he came in contact with the bottom of the boat. The boat held him underwater and rolled over him until he popped up for air out the back end of the boat. Underwater time was estimated at 5 seconds. He waived and said he was OK. Mark had concern that his boots and raingear were cumbersome and attempted to remove his boots, but could not do so. The helmsman put the gear into forward and the boat circled around to pick up their lost crew member. They came upon Mark with a line and a Lifesling ready to throw, but the helmsman brought the boat close enough on the first pass to grab Mark's hand. At first Mark was on the leeward side at the back end, but the wind pushed the boat around where he was taken aboard on the windward side. They manually hauled Mark aboard. It was estimated that Mark was in the water for 4 minutes.

#### **LM Case 46**

As reported by Larry Wood, October 7, 1998

On Saturday, October 3, 1998, Pain Killer, a J/30 was going into the leeward mark about 40 to 50 boat lengths away with her sister ship Pronto alongside. The winds were 16-30 knots, waves were 6'-8' and the water temperature was 70. All of the crew had sailed, yet none had sailed together before this date. The boat was planing on the waves and approaching the leeward mark fast. A novice crew, Tom Berris, was assigned to gather in the chute coming into the mark. Tom stood up to gather the chute, and in the next moment,

Larry saw Tom go over board. Tom was wearing a vest Type III PFD. Larry turned the boat into the wind to perform a quick stop. Larry saw Tom waive that he was OK. But with the #3 jib and main up, and the spinnaker halyard, sheet and guy were eased out, the boat knocked over. When the boat re-righted, they doused the chute tacked over and started sailing for Tom. In the mean time, Flame a Jib and Main competitor, had thrown their man over board pole in and stood by. As Pain Killer made their approach, they threw Tom a lazy jib sheet to bring him alongside the boat and took 3 to 4 other crew to heave him back on board. Flame then sailed over and picked up their man over board pole. The swim ladder did not seem to be a useful alternative in these conditions. Pain Killer took second to the boat Pronto who beat them at the finish line.

### **LM Case 47**

As reported by Dorsey Ruley

On May 30, 1999 during the Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club Olympic Cup, the Tartan 10 *Jaws* was approaching the leeward mark with southwest winds of 12-15 knots, smooth seas, on a tight reach with the spinnaker up. The jib was raised and it was time to douse the spinnaker, while the boat heeled 30-degrees. Bruce Kennedy grabbed the spinnaker sheet for the recovery, gives a yell and does a perfect one and one/half gainer out of the boat while still holding the spinnaker sheet. Kennedy was not wearing a PFD when he hit the 59-degree water. He held tight onto the spinnaker sheet and was being dragged alongside at 7 knots. *Jaws* captain, Todd Hildwein, turned the boat into the wind using the "Quickstop" method. Being short-handed, Hildwein released the helm to assist getting sail down. The spinnaker was wrapped around the mast and the main and jib were lowered. Kennedy let go of the sheet and Hildwein threw a Horseshoe life ring for Kennedy to hold. Then Hildwein helped clear lines and sails, started the engine and head back towards Kennedy.

Another competitor, *Majic*, was behind *Jaws* and watched this happen, as they approached, all looked to be in control and safe as Kennedy had one leg up on deck. They sailed past, rounded the mark and headed up wind watching the event develop. When it became clear that Kennedy became separated from *Jaws*, *Majic* turned, dropped their jib, turned on their motor and raced over. Being short-handed, *Jaws* gladly turned over the rescue to *Majic*. *Majic* turned off their engine and lifted Kennedy out of the water by raw muscle power. Kennedy spent approximately 5 minutes in the cold water. The crew of *Majic* with first-aid knowledge checked Kennedy out and determined he had mild hypothermia. They stripped Kennedy of some of his clothing and put him in dry fleece.

Redress was requested by *Majic* for their time spent off of the racecourse, which was granted to them by the protest committee and earned a 1<sup>st</sup> place in the race.

For rendering assistance to another mariner in distress, [US SAILING](#) is pleased to award the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal to the Crew of *Majic* in honor of this event.

Ernie Messer  
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee

Awarded by Glenn T. McCarthy at the Chicago Yachting Association Yachting Ball, November 13, 1999.

### **REPORTS:**

May 30, 1999, Olympic Cup, Chicago, IL

During the Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club Olympic Cup on Sunday May 30, 1999 the T-10 *Jaws* was approaching the leeward mark with southwest 12-15 knots of wind, smooth seas, on a tight reach with the spinnaker up. The crew consisted of the owner, Todd Hildwein, two women (one a doctor), and a 49-year old, Bruce Kennedy, a bricklayer from Canada. Another crew had called at 7:00 AM and said that he could not make it that day. The jib was raised and it was time to douse the spinnaker, while the boat heeled 30-degrees. Kennedy grabbed the spinnaker sheet for the recovery, gives a yell and does a perfect one and



one/half gainer out of the boat while still holding the spinnaker sheet. Following the ORC Regs, Kennedy wore a foam Type III PFD at the start, inflatables were available on board, but ditched the device after the start since the weather didn't seem threatening. When he went in the lake, he was not wearing a PFD. Air temperature was in the mid-70's and the water temperature was 59F. He held tight onto the spinnaker sheet and was being dragged alongside at 7+ knots. Just "like don't let them bricks go." He pulls himself alongside of the boat as the boat is heading up in to the wind doing a "Quickstop" and the order is given to release all halyards. The centrifugal force of the turn makes it extremely difficult for Kennedy to hang on and the sails come partially down. The spinnaker rapped around the mast.

Kennedy could not pull himself aboard and Todd signals that he's going forward to help get the sails down, Kennedy motions that he's letting go, so Todd throws him the Horseshoe and Kennedy swims for it and hangs on to it. Todd helps clear things, starts the engine and heads towards Kennedy. With the sails partially up, *Jaws* could come to a stop in the water. No radio calls were made.

Another competitor, *Majic*, was behind *Jaws* and watched this happen, as they approached, all looked to be in control and safe as Kennedy had one leg up on deck. They sailed past, rounded the mark and headed up wind watching the event develop. When it became clear that Kennedy became separated from *Jaws*, *Majic* turned, dropped their jib, turned on their motor and raced over. *Majic* observed that 3 to 4 other racers apparently sailed by *Jaws* without making any offers to help. On the way over, they developed plans and alternate plans of recovery. *Jaws* gladly accepted the assistance recognizing that there were more able-bodied crew on *Majic* to lift Kennedy out of the water. *Majic* turned off their engine and lifted Kennedy out of the water by muscle power. Kennedy spent approximately 5 minutes in the cold water. They stripped Kennedy of some of his clothing and put him in dry fleece. Crew of *Majic* with first-aid knowledge checked him out and determined he had mild hypothermia. Todd had two ladders on board in preparation for such an event, but didn't get them in use. After *Majic* rejoined and completed the race, Kennedy was then transferred back aboard *Jaws*.

Ironically, on May 19, 1999 prior to this event, Todd had purchased the block and tackle necessary for hoisting a victim aboard in combination with the Lifesling. With the short handed nature and three sails to bring down and stow, there was not time to rig the device.

Todd Hildwein advises:

Don't race undermanned.

Practice your overboard recovery techniques as early in the season as you can.

Crew of *Majic*: Dorsey Ruley, owner, Jim Calto, Dan Thom, Kevin Brown, Eric Steele, Fred Kowitz, Mike Kruze, Nicole Radek and Dave Anderson.

*Majic* applied for a redress of 13 minutes 50 seconds and received it. This earned *Majic* a first in section and a first in fleet.