

Landlubber learns of sailing's lure

THE ALLEGED romance of the sea never has sucked me into its grasp, and a sailor I'm not.

To me, the definition of a sailor per se goes beyond having paddled a canoe down the Au Sable, hitched a ride on some friend's cruiser at Algonac, rowed on an inland Michigan lake, fished from a charter boat on the Pacific or even ridden as an overnight passenger on one of the old D&C ships from Detroit to Buffalo.

It dawned on me not long ago, when the annual hysteria over the Port Huron to Mackinac race was at its peak, that to the best of my memory I've never even set foot on a sailboat. What's the lure? Besides partying, that is.

FROM BIRMINGHAM'S Hugh Ross, head of the Ross/Michigan Mortgage Co., and his son, Tim, I got some answers born of six tries in the Mackinac race and three decades of more casual sailing both here and in Florida. I can only conclude that when the bug bites, it doesn't let go.

The elder Ross replaced earlier pleasure craft seven years ago by buying a brand new California-made, white 35-foot sloop which he named the Odyssey and made the first run for Mackinac in '81.

A third place finish in his class - 17th overall - was duplicated in 1985 and again last month, leading to a laughing comment, "We're in a terrible rut."

The crew of eight this year include Hugh as skipper plus Tim, Jared Finney, John Christman, Tracy Wagerson, Kevin Wagerson, Eric Plumhoff and Greg Leach.

"THE COMPETITIVENESS of the whole thing, the Challenge it presents, is the lure of this race," commented Hugh. "It's in the ability to take your boat and your crew and handle all that may arise, whether it be storms or calms."

"In this particular race we had only one storm. We didn't have a problem with that. Last year we were falling off of eight-foot seas. This way easy compared to '85."

"We lost no time in the squall, but we also picked up a lot of time in a calm. There's a challenge there, too."

"We weren't scared last year, even though it was so rough, because we



through
bifocals
Fred
DeLano

knew what the boat would take. But the second year we raced the conditions were just terrible. There were high winds and I was scared to death. I never had been out in weather like that.

"After you've done it a few years and have been through lightning storms and winds up to 40 or 50 and know you can do it, know the boat can take it and that your crew all know what they're doing, then you're still concerned but you're not scared."

Tim reminded his dad that on the second night out from Port Huron, after rounding Cove Island at the northeast corner of Lake Huron, the Odyssey's electronic system malfunctioned.

The Ross crew sailed through the night trusting a flashlight for compass readings and not sure of position relative to other boats until dawn.

But even this they took in stride. After all, they did get where they wanted to go. That's more than I can say for some friends who once lost their bearings and instead of docking at their Mackinac Island target wound up in Saginaw Bay.

THE ROSS family belongs to the Grosse Pointe Sail Club and throughout the warm weather regatta season are on the water weekends. Tim, who is in his early 30s, says of this competition, "The real sailors are the ones that win on a consistent basis in around-the-buoy racing on Saturdays, sponsored by the different clubs."

"Last year we won the spring and summer and for the season over-all in our class. That was particularly satisfying. That kind of consistent performance over a whole season means more than Mackinac, even though it doesn't to the general public. Around-the-buoy racing is more representative of the kind of sailors they are."

Gentlemen, literally and figuratively, "Fair weather to your heels. . . may the wind be ever at your back."

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Sentence shakes up her emotions

To the editor:

Livid, I sit in disbelief. I have just read the sentence handed down to Laura Pinis by Judge Norman Lippitt for negligent homicide as a result of drunk driving in the deaths of Lara and Vanessa Carloni.

The mother of teen-agers, I am only too aware of the prevalence of drinking among teen-agers and young adults on weekends.

I am appalled at the self-righteousness and lack of sensitivity displayed in the comments of Judge Lippitt regarding the case and the intervention of the victims' family and MADD. How tragic for these families, who have suffered such devastating losses, to be victimized by their own legal system.

For Judge Lippitt to classify this incident as a "fateful act" is absurd. When a person chooses to drink to that level of intoxication and drive a car, it is a deliberate act. A horrible mistake, yes, but one that should be held accountable with an appropriate sentence.

Two persons are dead and one is brain-damaged; families are shattered as a result of this act of irresponsibility. A more fitting sentence for Laura Pinis might have been to spend her days for some years of her life working in the rehabilitation department of a hospital or long-term care facility tending to the needs of those who have suffered brain damage and physical handicaps as a result of drunk driving. It may have even, in return, provided her with some relief from her "suffering."

It has been my experience with teen-agers in trying to impress upon them the perils of drinking and driving, that they do not conceive that they could personally be responsible for death and injury. The threat of going to jail, losing their driver's license, is much more of a reality to them.

How can we possibly instill in our

youth a sense of responsibility and accountability for their actions when such a mockery of justice exists? What effect will this lenient sentence of probation have to prevent others from drinking and driving?

Perhaps if the right to judge was bestowed only upon honest citizens with a representation from many professions, then maybe we could acclaim, as Judge Lippitt stated, to have the "fairest system of justice on the globe."

Patricia Dion
Rochester Hills

Judge's decision called a mockery

To the editor:

I was appalled to read the recent newspaper accounts of the "Laura Pinis" case.

This woman was responsible for the death of two people, through her negligence. Judge Norman Lippitt has come to the foreground and has made a mockery of the "Don't drink and drive in Oakland County" philosophy, let alone the judicial system.

He has told our young people that they need not be responsible for their actions. This girl chose to drink and then drive the automobile that murdered those two innocent victims.

Fifty percent of our highway accidents are as a result of drunk drivers. The judicial system was originally designed to protect the innocent, it would appear that decisions like yours, will set this process back once again.

The Judge's personal attack on the "personal loss" of Greg and Penny Blen, Oakland County MADD Chapter, is inexcusable and reeks of arrogance. It is frightening and disillusioning, to say the least, that society is in the hands of judicial people like him, who place such small value on human life.

Beverly Giaccone,
Birmingham

Your criticism was unjustified

To the editor:

I have read with interest your editorial recommending candidates for the Oakland County Circuit Court.

On the whole, the reasons for preferring some candidates over others seem legitimate. However, it seems to me that the accusation that Joan Young is somehow guilty of unfair campaigning, by having her picture appear on the court's annual report, seems farfetched. I can't imagine that many voters at all read that publication, largely an internal document, or even know of its existence.

As court administrator of what is acclaimed as the best trial court in the state, I think she was to have credit placed where it was due. You may have your reasons for choosing others, but it seems to me that your treatment of Ms. Young was patently unfair.

Carole Des Jardins,
Pontiac

Cox's profile is very appreciated

To the editor:

Just a note to express my appreciation for the very nice article you published on July 28 about Officer Thomas Cox.

Articles of this positive nature do much for the citizens in promoting even better community relations with the Public Safety Department and also provides increased pride for all officers in their daily activities.

Frank Laubhoff,
Director of Public Safety
Farmington

News that's closer to home



Love Is Great. But It Won't Carry Her Up The Stairs.

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