

# 2003 Raid Finland, Small Craft Racing

## by Csaba Hanyi

Light rain was falling, the wind is from the north at about 16 knots. We are tacking north up the channel known as the Skiftet, which is exposed to the open sea from the south and the north. When unfavorable conditions arise, this area can be treacherous for small craft because the wind can create seas up to 3 meters. Today the chop was well less than a meter, and the sailing is great. My French built "Pirmil" is pointing quite high and taking the waves in stride. Just ahead, under my jib I could see "Penni," a Haven 12, heeled over, with the rail down, flying a large Finnish ensign. Seppo has his wife and their 2 children onboard and has full confidence in his boat. He built it himself. To my port "Meander," sailed by Peter, our Australian entry and crewed by my Swedish friend from last year, Christer. They are struggling with their large jib. Two of the three safety boats are within sight and this keeps the confidence level of the sailors high. Further ahead on starboard, I could see the distinct sailplan of "Coquina II", the organizers own boat which is a replica of Herreshoff's 1889 boat. Mike is sailing with his wife and their 10 month old son Nathanael today, they are doing quite well among the fleet of 14 international boats in this seven-day race through this fascinating environment.

It is Tuesday, our 4th day, and this morning we left the charming small island of Lappo on the Aland side of the archipelago. Today's destination is the island of Jumo, a remote fishing village 15NM away on the Turku side of the archipelago. "Look, there's Woge, that's where the entrance is." informs Mika, my crew. "Woge" is a 1922 German J-Jolle sailed by Manfred along with his 12 year old son Marek. The boat was designed for lakes but is making fools of us all due to her speed. "I don't think we'll make it on this tack, and there is better wind on this side." I reply, as we press on.

At the mouth of the entrance now Kleiner Kerl is lowering sail, this is no surprise as the young couple from Berlin has shown us for 2 years that their Norwegian Arendals Sjekte is faster upwind under oars. Finally we are through the entrance "lets shake out that reef" Mika suggests, and soon we are short tacking north up the middle of the narrow channel, "Hey there is plenty of water on that side, look at Coquina!" I soon understand what my Finnish co-pilot is talking about, Coquina is tacking within 2 meters of the east shore, where granite cliffs go straight down, "Mike has learned something from the Finns about reading the islands" I reply. Soon we will arrive at the small rocky wooded island of Sjalö, where members of the community are expecting us with some hot salmon soup and fresh baked bread, served in a makeshift tent in the woods. This is Raid Finland sailing at its best.

Classic boats of all sizes are becoming more popular, only 20 years ago there was little desire to own or maintain older boats. With the current classic renaissance came regattas, the CIM series, Brest, Morbihan, Flensburg, Risor to name only a few. To be in the "classic clique" never meant that one needed to be made of money, but only that one chooses a boat according to the budget. There was a void concerning small craft racing and in 1997 the first classic sail & oar "Raid" was organized on the river Douro in Portugal. Only 12 boats attended, but since then over 10 of these type events have been organized in 5 European countries.

In 2002 the first Raid Finland was organized from Helsinki easterly along the coastal route 95 miles to the town of Lovisa. Nineteen boats represented 12 nationalities, and everybody had a blast. The weather was warm and the scenery between the countless small islands made for a very memorable journey.

Raid Finland is the creation of Mike Hanyi, who is an American now living here with his Finnish family. Mike is not a professional event organizer, and has never worked with or attended any similar events. Upon the start of the first Raid Finland, I remember hearing from many "What is the organizer, doing sailing his own boat? Isn't he supposed to run the show observing from a motor launch!?" Within 2 days this the talk turned into "Mike's one of us, he would not make us sail in any situations that he would not do himself, Bravo!" But all-in-all the quality of the organization and the charts we received are excellent.

This year, 2003, we are sailing a new circular route through the Turku archipelago, with its thousands of small islands and skerries. It is claimed by many and easy to agree with, to be the most scenic sailing area anywhere. The views are breathtaking. Mike and Richard Wynne from the UK have seen very large sea eagles fly above. The small rock islands were ground down through millions of years of the ice age. A few of the larger islands support towns or fishing villages, most of the small ones are uninhabited. The waters are warm and clear, the sailing routes are well maintained with buoys and stick markers, Except for some morning showers the weather was very good.

So what is Raid Finland's secret recipe? Take a number of freshly grown and well aged trailerable classics between 4.5m-7.5m, find an interesting and new scenic route every year, arrange modest accommodations for the non campers, throw in a dash of local music, together with visits to museums for more flavoring. Then employ some of the most adventurous caterers to meet the fleet in remote predetermined locations and cook the participants nightly in a Finnish sauna.

The International blend of people will assure a great social atmosphere on every stop. For dessert, end the event somewhere that ties in with a major event, like Finland's International Woodenboat show or the Tall Ship's visit to the city of Turku.

The mix of people present is a bit unusual for an international sailing event, There are no sunglassed young yachties here, but an interesting mix of family and friends.

From Holland a father-daughter team sailed a 19 ft. Drascombe. The French builder of my "Pirmil" is sailing one of his other boats: "le Seil." There are several families also: One from Sweden in "Sus," a 17ft with their two teenagers; and two from Finland: "Olivia" was sailed by the Holm family with their teenage son, and "Penni" with two preteens. An executive from Belgium brought his smallest boat, a Friesche Schouw, with GSM wired up to his Bluetooth (hands free wireless) he conducted business almost the entire week. The Danish sea scout troop again brought their large Stormegin along with several young men.

The common language is English, even the children speak it passably. Swedish comes second due to the assembly of similar Scandinavian languages.

The week passes much too quickly, lasting friendships are formed, E-mail addresses exchanged to transmit pictures, many glasses wine drunk (which arrived in the ballast tanks from France and Denmark), and fond memories of the nightly sauna sweat parties stored away. Plans are formed for next year's Raid Finland 2004.

### **Sidebar: Raid Finland Facts**

Raid Finland is an annual sporting tour organized by Mike Hanyi & Matti Salo, in cooperation with the Sail & Oar Association of Finland, a club for small classic boats. Participation is restricted to a total of 25 open boats of minimum 4.5 m length and maximum of 7.5 meters, (monohulls). Maximum weight is 650 kg. Divided into 2 different classes with the use of a handicap system: Racing; which allows sailing and rowing, or Cruising; which is for those who prefer to be rated only by sailing abilities.

**Objective:** To experience the nicest Finnish sailing routes in international company using interesting boats in a regular competition. The organization takes care of the accommodations, safety coverage, catering and sight seeing.

**Route 2004:** The archipelago of Western Nyland, from Fiskars in Pohja, 100 miles easterly thru the Gulf of Finland to Siuntio in semi sheltered routes. The route is carefully planned for small craft. All sections are sailed as a race with meetings, starting procedures and charts.