
The Shallow Water Sailor

Number 131

Founder: John Zohlen

May 2006

The Bosun Chair

I keep myself busy these days. Luckily I don't have to search far to find things to do. The SWS takes about an hour a day. I have two courses I'm taking on Photoshop. There's the usual house and yard work. Then there are children and grandchildren. For instance my older daughter decided that her family will bike the entire C&O canal. That's 184 miles from DC to Cumberland, MD. I was elected the support person. So my Toyota Sienna is now ready to take 5 bikes and seven people out to the canal to do a half-dozen segments of about 30 miles each. We will go from Cumberland to DC (that's the downhill direction). Erica and I (the youngest and oldest) will be the support team, and my wife and daughter, her husband, and two older kids the riders.

I've had a secret goal to do the entire Potomac, starting at its headwaters, canoeing down to Cumberland, then biking down to DC and finally jumping into the **Sanity** to sail the rest of the river down to its mouth. I don't think being the support person would count, but the goal remains in my mind.

So, tell me, what is your secret goal? Let's focus on sailing goals. Anyone out there with a goal? Perhaps it is the circumnavigation of something! Or just finally getting to a body of water that you dreamed out for years? You know, if you publically announce

a goal, you're more apt to accomplish it. There even might be other members willing to help you or team up with you.

I know, for instance, that John Zohlen has had his eye on the upper Choptank River for years. Every time we pass over it by car he starts talking about starting at Denton and sailing all the way down the river. Looking closely at charts will always give you lots of ideas.

Why not circumnavigate the Delmarva Peninsula (we call it the Eastern Shore made up of parts of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia)? Now that's a really big dream goal.

Some of these goals might be put aside, 'cause they require some support help from others, like lugging canoes or camping gear from one place to another.

Well you might be surprised to find other members willing to help. I'm ready. But first you have to tell us your secret ambitions.

Dream it then do it,



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Fifteen Minutes of Fame

Jacques Read

When I became a freshman at Princeton in 1953, my classmates were all male and were just about evenly divided between the sons and grandsons of alumni who had just graduated from New England prep schools, and the rest of us who were from public high schools and on scholarships. Carnegie Lake was so beautiful that I decided to try out for freshman 150-lb crew, although I knew nothing about the sport. The first boat of eight oarsmen that went off to race other college crews was largely composed of people who had been rowing for prep schools for several years, and whose fathers and grandfathers had previously rowed for Princeton. I made the early spring cut and got into the second boat (2nd Frosh), which was sent out a couple of times to race against prep school crews. We were, of course, well under the 150 lb limit and had only been rowing for a few months, while the prep school crews out-weighed us by many kilos and had been rowing for years. We always lost.

In April 1954, eight 2nd Frosh oarsmen, one coxswain, and our graduate school student/assistant coach got into a University van with eight orange and black-bladed sweep oars (11-feet long) strapped to its roof, and drove to the Corinthian Boat Club on the Potomac River at the foot of the Georgetown section of Washington, DC to participate in a regatta of several races among local prep schools. The boat club was loaning us a shell, and was putting us up for the night before the race in the boat club. A major hurricane, however, came up the East Coast the day we drove down. As a result, our coxswain, Les Blatt, was not treated to the traditional motorboat tour of the course, but was only shown a blueprint of the course layout.

When dawn broke the following morning, we got up off the exercise mats we had used for mattresses during the night, shared some donuts and juice our coach brought in (he had slept quite comfortably in his parents house in Georgetown), and

got into our racing jerseys and crew shorts for the race. The hurricane had largely abated, but the Potomac was close to flood-stage, and up-rooted trees and other debris was coming downstream in amongst the whitecaps, and were being stopped by a very large Army Corps of Engineers ship that was working just upstream of the course. The course consisted of two lanes that began with a line of dinghies anchored at the starting line, passed though several sets of buoys and ended one and five-sixteenths of a mile down river (the traditional Henley distance, set by a straight section of the Thames).

At the suggestion of the various coaches, after we had launched into the river and headed upstream, our bow pair (oars one and two) kept their blades unfeathered, and smashed down the whitecaps so the following six oars had relatively flat water for their oars. An eight-oared shell is 61 feet long, but only 24 inches wide at its broadest (the five position), and the oar locks are at the ends of tubular metal outriggers. In a race, the shell will usually be lifted entirely out of the water during a power stroke, with only a little ten-inch brass skeg, the oar blades and the rudder in the water. In short, a shell is not the ideal vessel for rough water. The borrowed shell we were using had "Shrimp Boat" painted on its bows, following a hit song of the early fifties.

We had to stay to the north side of the course to avoid interfering with the earlier races coming down the river, and Les Blatt, crafty coxswain that he was, saw a short cut where the water was comparatively calm. Unfortunately, the Three Sisters Islands, which had been shown to Les the night before on the blue print, were beneath that calmer water, and by less than the ten inches of the skeg. The shell was not a 21st Century fibreglass affair, but was just ash struts covered with sixteenth-inch wood veneer. We stopped abruptly, with thousands of little shreds of wood flying off in all directions. The cox took command to assure that everybody had unlaced their feet (crews launch the shells in stocking feet, and then either lace or buckle each foot into little platforms attached to the keel), so that nobody was likely to go down with the ship. He began polling the crew as to

who was a good swimmer when the current swept us off the submerged rock and started turning the bow downstream. It became immediately apparent that the oars were buoyant enough to keep us from sinking, combined with the still intact forward compartment. As we drifted downstream, a procedure for abandoning ship was roughed out. At this point, the huge Army Corps of Engineers ship descended upon us and got across the current above us to give us enough lee that waves were no longer sloshing over us. The cox gave a countdown, and we each hit the release lever on our oarlock in unison. We each grabbed our oar to keep it from floating away, and then climbed up a ladder on the side of the Corps ship.

The next morning, back at Princeton, I ran into town to buy a copy of the Sunday New York Times. I feverishly scanned each headline in the sports section to see how badly treated we would be, and, finding no article about the regatta, breathed a sigh of relief. But then, on closing the section, I noticed this strange photograph of nine heads bobbing in a row in a body of water that covered a significant fraction of the front page above the fold. It turned out a reporter for the

now-defunct Washington Star was aboard the Corps ship, and he had brought along his camera.

For the remainder of my rowing career, every boathouse we visited during away races always had a copy of that picture posted as a cautionary tale for what could happen if a crew really, really messed up. The only thing limiting the embarrassment and notoriety was the fact that Oprah hadn't been born yet. And later that year the Washington Star reporter sent each of us an envelope containing two glossy 8 by 10 photographs; one the picture itself, and the other showing the reporter receiving the "Sports Picture of the Year" award from President Eisenhower. We were only eighteen, and we had already squandered our promised fifteen minutes of fame.

Many years later, my wife had the two photographs professionally framed as a birthday gift. They now hang in our spare bathroom opposite the toilet.

[Ed. Jac and I have worked together in nuclear reactor safety for many years. I always delighted in his dry sense of humor and his special view of work and life.

I remember especially his story about running the New York marathon. Marathon runners always seem to talk about that phase of the race where they question whether they can keep running. This generally happens after about the twentieth mile or so. Jac got hit with this question in a big way and he started wondering whether he should quit. He looked around and realized he was probably in the worst possible NYC neighborhood. His mind balanced his pain against his fear of stopping in that particular neighborhood. Fear won out and he kept on going to the finish line!]



RaidFinland 2006

by Norm Wolfe

Norm and John Zohlen

*have a once- in-a- lifetime sailing adventure;
pictures on page 9*

Strong wind aft, rocks to port, boom to starboard. This is not an ideal situation for my first time sailing this boat. My eyes are glued to the roach of the sail as I try to ease the boat away from the rocks. The sail is plastered against the starboard shrouds, and I am fearing a gybe. Watch out for that telltale flutter of the roach. My crew is the boat's owner, Marcus, with little sailing experience and virtually none with this boat. Why did he buy this plastic H-Jolle, a German racing class with all kinds of go fast gadgets and rigging? Thankfully the trapeze is not rigged.

As we left the dock for the starting line, I had taken the helm and helped wrap four turns of the mainsail around the boom as a reef. What I need now is a Dean Meledones tiller taming shock chord. As it is, I cannot take my hand from the tiller, even for a moment.

How did I get into this mess? It all started with an article about RAID Finland in "Traditional Small Craft", followed up by a presentation at the 2004 MASCF by Csaba Hanyi and his son, Mike Hanyi. Csaba is from Baltimore. Mike grew up there, but later escaped to Finland where he lives with his Finnish wife and two kids. Mike is an avid sailor, and you may have read some of his articles. He participated in the RAID Caledonia in Scotland a few years ago, and, based on this experience, organized RAID Finland. Since Tiu and I manage to get to Estonia nearly every summer, and Finland is just across the gulf, why not try it?

John and Mary Zohlen were planing to visit their son and his family in Sweden in the summer of 2005, so I decided to get him involved, too. We met Csaba a few times for lunch in the Annapolis area, and decided to join up. The plan developed for John to

crew for an Aussie living and working in Sweden, Peter Lord, in his Swedish Combijolle and I would crew for Csaba in his wooden H-Jolle being restored in Finland.

RAID Finland is primarily for open sailboats with oars, although there were a few which did not have any oar power. We (21 boats representing 14 countries and totaling about 70 people) followed a track in the Baltic sea through the Finnish Archipelago National Park, thousands of islands and rocks on the west (Swedish) side of Finland, racing point to point each morning and afternoon for a few hours each. No around the buoys stuff. The course was planned so the caterer could meet us at the lunch spot, then drive on to the dinner and overnight spot via bridges and car ferries where necessary. John and I opted to go with rented rooms, rather than carry tents for accommodations.

I arrived on a rainy Friday, 22 July 2006, and found that Csaba's boat restoration was not finished, so we teamed up with Marcus and his H-Jolle. Since Csaba was familiar with the H-Jolle, he initially sailed with Marcus and I opted to crew for a couple of newlywed Hawaiians who had chartered a traditional Shetland Yole with a balanced lug rig like my NormsBoat.

John and Peter Lord arrived by ferry from Stockholm on Saturday in the rain. We assembled boats in the rain. We attended the small traditional boat show in the rain. But the rain did not stop the traditional steam boats from putting on a good display.

On Sunday the rain stopped at 1230 and the first race started at 1400. No rain for the rest of the week. However, the wind was ample. Most boats began with at least one reef; We tied in two on the Shetland Yole.

(Yole boat - a narrow, pointed Scandinavian style vessel, handmade with overlapping planks and used for in-shore fishing; ours was about 23 feet long)

The first race was only about 2 hours long, and ended on a nearby island with a drummer welcoming us to drums and cymbals. John and I had

a nice big room in the ‘inn’, so to speak, with plenty of room to dry our clothes. However, a door in our room lead to another guest room where a party of four were sleeping, and that door was their only access. Interesting. The two-holer was about 100 yards up hill. The wood-fired sauna was great.

On Monday morning we enjoyed breakfast in a dining room. Little did we know that it was our last meal under a solid shelter. After breakfast was an excellent skippers briefing, complete with projected photos of obstacles and landmarks. The charts and aids to navigation are excellent, but the charts are in Finnish, so it takes a little concentration to figure it all out. Soundings are in fathoms, but what real SWS'er is concerned with depth? Anyway, the Baltic was at about 68 degrees and there was no tide, so “no problem”.

By then we had discovered that Peter and John had about 4 cases of beer and four boxes of wine as ballast in a 14' boat. They were not in the lead, but they had a good excuse.

In the morning race on Tuesday, I sailed again with the Hawaiians on the Yole OSLA. We still had trouble setting the sail properly, so we did not point well and placed poorly. By afternoon the wind was subsiding and I was traded for two younger-than-40 Danes from the Danish boat, who rowed and sailed OSLA with the Hawaiians in the afternoon race.

The Danish sea-Scout boat was probably the largest boat by capacity in the RAID. It was about 25 feet long, had about 1500 pounds of water ballast, and a giant aluminum dagger board. We had 6 aboard and could move about at will. It spread what seemed to be a large amount of canvas, including a top sail, but it was not competitive. I was strictly a passenger and observer. It could be tented over and had room for about four to sleep comfortably, much like in a Dovekie, using all the floor space.

Tuesday night was a real treat. We ate and slept at the Rosala Viking Center, www.rosala.fi, enjoyed walking around the living museum and seeing traditional crafts being performed.

Wednesday brought winds 15-20 with higher gusts, and I was at the helm of Marcus's H-Jolle, as I

mentioned at the beginning of this article. We started 10 minutes late but passed at least half of the fleet. But then we had to come into the wind for the last two miles, and the rig was not tuned tight enough. The jib slacked and we could not point well, so finished near the back of the fleet. I did not go into the rocks, nor did I gybe, but as soon as we arrived I pried my fingers from the tiller and walked rapidly to the facilities.

There was no sauna building here, so a tent sauna was set up and its wood stove lit. Also a volleyball net was set up, in case we were bored. There was no afternoon race, but many boats took part in an around the island race, with many of the participants taking an opportunity to try out other boats. John tried to cut off a finger, which caused much attention and care by those with medical experience. He probably will tell a different story, but then, our perspectives are different.

While waiting for the around the island race to finish, we were treated to a restored 98' Baltic trader, SVANHILD, which came in and tied up to our dock. <http://www.svanhild.com/kuvia.html> (Photos only, unless you read Finnish)

She turned out to be our home for the next two nights and also our dining platform, on deck, since her dining room only accommodates about 25.

Thursday and Friday races were better for us, and we got more experience with the rig. On Saturday, the only race began at 1400, since it was the last race of the RAID. The first 10 km were rowing only for those boats which rowed. We took on a fourth crew member, the 17-year-old son from a Finnish boat. The Finnish teenager was behind me and I figure he decided he wasn't going to slow down any sooner than the codger in front of him, and I wasn't going to slow down as long as the Hawaiian 30-something beside me was rowing. The four of us rowed for a steady 90 minutes and finished fourth behind two sliding seat whitehalls and another boat with a bunch of kids under 40 rowing in it. We were pleased.

We ended at the Pargass Marine Technical school which had both a launching ramp and dormitories with hot showers. On Sunday, we said our good-byes and made our ways home. I hitched

rides with friends to Helsinki and took the evening ferry to Tallinn, where I met Tiiu the next day at the airport.

I see that Jim Michalak is designing a RAID boat to European specifications (i.e. Metric measurements). He is writing about it on his web site: <http://homepages.apci.net/~michalak/1feb06.htm>

Sea of Cortez

*Two emails are combined here
See photo on page 9*

Hey Ken,

Katie and I are just getting in from our Dovekie cruise to the Sea of Cortez. The weather was pretty tough almost the entire 5 weeks we were there. We were told that May/June is more stable weather. We were able to day sail on many days, and had one overnigher. Mostly we traveled northwestern Mexico in our van/camper and had a wonderful time. Mexico has certainly moved up to 1st world status in the last few years. The roads, schools and hospitals are much improved since we were kids traveling here. That's it except we certainly recommend the trip to anyone who likes Mexico.

The photo was taken in San Carlos, Baja, Sur. That's to keep it apart from San Carlos, Sonora, where we spent most of our time. We left our Dovekie at the dock for one week and traveled by ferry across the Sea of Cortez, then ran by bus to Magdalena Bay on the Pacific. We stayed in a \$16.00 motel in a little town with dirt streets and rented a Panga to take us out to the whale grounds. The female Grey whales give birth and raise the young in Magdalena Bay for one season. It was fantastic. We spent one morning watching the whales. That's it for whales, but we also saw a sea lion and a bunch of seals. We don't get many of these mammals in Texas waters so we enjoyed it.

Lee Martin

Second Dues Notice

OK, things are going well. I got about 20 checks, but still have 60 members who owe dues. As I've written before, this is the least fun part of being editor ... begging for dues. One thing that does make dues-time bearable is the letters that sometimes come with the checks. See the next page for John Trussell's letter. In my book John counts as *royalty* even though he counts himself part of the *rabble*.

About half of the checks were for \$35 which pays for three years of the newsletter. The other checks were for \$15, a one year subscription. That means next year I'll be chasing after some of you again! If you can, the three year subscription reduces the size of the dues collection job. It also saves you \$10 over the three years!

Please study your address label. If below the return address label it reads "Dues Year = 2006" you owe dues. Dues remain unchanged:

- \$15 for one year
- \$26 for two years (save \$4)
- \$35 for three years (save \$10)

Send check to Ken Murphy
20931 Lochaven Court
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

"To ply, unhurried, the blue deeps, or skirt the shining margents of the land, communing with the element whence life sprang, hearing no other sound but the splash of oar, the flap of sail, the whistling of wind in the rigging, and the swish and gurgle of cloven waves, revives one's strength and refreshes one's spirit. Here the tiniest lad sailing a dinghy becomes partner to the great navigators and discoverers of history ..."

Samuel Eliot Morison
"Spring Tides"

Dear Ken,

Please do not be misled by the timeliness of the enclosed dues payment - I am somewhat closer to being rabble than royalty.

In regards to Toon 19. Any new boat requires (a) that you get to know the boat and (b) that you adjust the boat to suit your wants/needs/preferences (or prejudices), and taste. Whenever you build a boat, you must accept (a) that the boat may never be finally finished and (b) that you will have to make adjustments.

In order to balance Toon 19 fore and aft, (the picture shows her down by the stern) I built a longer tiller, which allows me to sit up against the back of the cabin. This position puts the mizzen sheets slightly out of reach, so they have to be moved. Then add an anchor and rode to the bow compartment and an outboard plus gas can to the stern and see what happens. It is all sort of like "The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly..." Still, it keeps me happily occupied. I hope your weather up North moderates enough for sailing soon.

Yours truly,
John Trussell
John Trussell

Spring Tide

*Here is an excerpt from
Samuel Eliot Morison's book
Spring Tide*

*At the end of the first sentence I would add:
"and old men"*

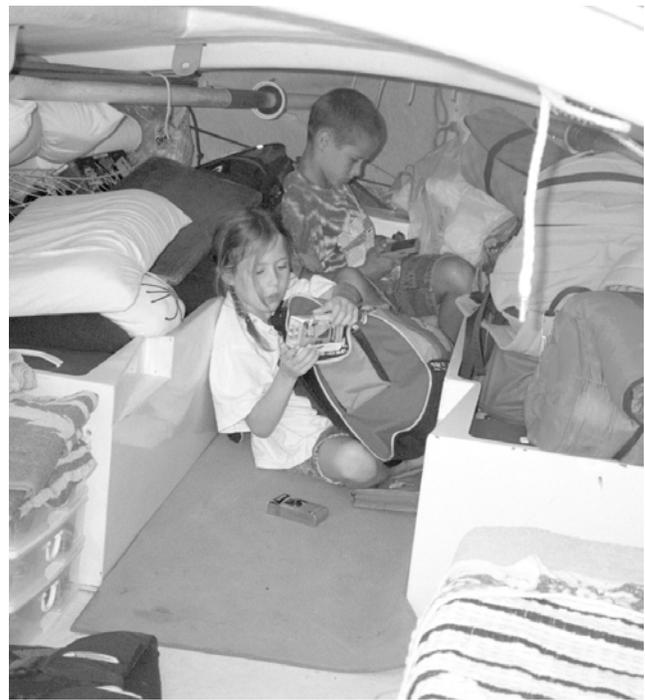
Chapter II. A YACHT'S CABIN

"Why is a small sailing yacht's cabin so altogether delightful to boys? It certainly is no luxury. The cabin of any sailboat from twenty to thirty feet long used to be highly uncomfortable, by land standards. In my youth, the fashion of yacht design never gave one headroom below, that is, room to stand up, except in really big yachts. To avoid bumping your head you had to walk about the cabin in a crouch, or sit on the transoms which did duty for seats by day and bunks by night. The table was usually a folding contraption which had a way of collapsing whenever someone's toe or knee struck a leg. The stove, usually a one- or two-burner oil gadget that had to be primed with alcohol and pumped violently to burn, gave out little heat and was difficult to cook a square meal on. The toilet, if it was something more than a chamber pot under a seat up forward, seldom worked beyond the first week after leaving the yard. In every rain, water found little cracks in the deck or the house to drip through, so that one had to spread a poncho over one's blankets to keep reasonably dry. Water also ran down the mast into the cabin and dripped in through the companionway when the tide swung your boat stern to wind. There was a distinct smell to a small yacht's cabin composed of dampness, oil clothing, sweaters, underclothes and dirty dishcloths, with overtones of whatever had been spilled from the last meal.

"Yet there was nothing so fascinating to a youngster as one of those moldy, cramped, confined

cabins. Lads loved cruising as much for cooking meals below and sleeping in damp blankets as for the sailing and visiting strange coasts and harbors. Boys begged to be allowed to sleep on board a small yacht in harbor rather than a comfortable bedroom ashore. Children who threw their belongings about at home readily submitted to the yacht discipline that everything must be put back; and boys finicky about their food ate with gusto doubtful concoctions out of cans, or the fish that they caught from the cockpit.

"Possibly this love for a small cabin was atavistic, derived from our remote ancestors for whom a cave was the only safe, indeed the only possible dwelling. Whatever the origin, it was part of a yearning for something compact, small, closed-in from the world."



Gabrielle and Roby DeMass proving Morison's views as right-on, as they enjoy their Dovekie's cabin while anchored next to Louisa Island, North Channel, Lake Huron. That night their mom woke them in the middle of the night to see an aurora borealis display.



Raid Finland 2006 Photos

Left - Norm Wolfe studies the competitors. "What no Dovekies?"

Below left - Typical evening stop. "Anyone for Volleyball?"

Below right - Friday lunch stop.



Sea of Cortez Photo

Female Grey whale pops up to say hello to Lee and Katie Martin while they were on their Sea of Cortez adventure. Can you guess what was going on in their minds during this close encounter with such a creature?

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Private Revolution of Geoffrey Frost

by J. E. Fender

University Press of New England, 2002

reviewed by Stephen D. (Doc) Regan, Ed.D.

The comfortable addiction to Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin in the 20 volume series by the indomitable Patrick O'Brian is overwhelming and powerful to the reader. Any other hero or heroes in the same milieu seem treasonous and painful; but even O'Brian had his limits with his wonderful characters. For we undaunted few the move to Fender's books is difficult but worthy substitution.

It is hard to describe the hero, Geoffrey Frost, without conjuring up images of Jack Aubrey; nevertheless, Frost is American, a privateer, and seems to be in significantly more adventure than Captain Aubrey of His Majesty's Navy. Frost will not bother other literary figures like Ahab, the Ancient Mariner, Nemo, or Long John Silvers. Still his fixture in escape novels of a nautical form is enchanting and worthy of notice, to say nothing of a reader's time and interest.

Author, J.E. Fender, does not inundate us with 18th century naval jargon and lengthy narratives about sending the lollyboy after a gronicle or relative bearing oil. I enjoyed this particular book (the second in the series, I believe) without once having to reach for my Dictionary of Nautical Terms or my Dictionary of Naval terms.

You certainly cannot do that with an O'Brian book. Fender does proffer a bundle of fighting and excitement at the expense of pensive perspectives on morality or history. Frankly, a damn good sword fight and a fine out-witting of the contemptible British is always worth an hour before sleep or whenever others read.

In this particular issue, Frost outsmarts an English war ship of considerable size and value, unfortunately at the cost of many cannons desperately needed by General Washington. But his prize is worthy of his award of the former British ship and a warrant as a Privateer, a position Frost detests but recognizes as an opportunity to boost his fortune and help in the American Revolution. He quickly brings his lonely ship to an island housing colonial prisoners including his brother-in-law. In the melee he captures 4 British ships, frees his friends, and returns the conquering hero. A bit of a stretch of the imagination but a jolly good read, never the less.

Any person who has even a small working section of the artistic cortex of their brain will be delighted by the physical structure of the book. A trade-back paper back, it is printed on heavy cream colored paper giving a slight illusion to age. But the font and decoratives that commence each chapter and border the page number show that some unknown person at the publisher's takes enormous pride in his/her work. This little book is a bibliophiles dream. It is also a darn good read.

