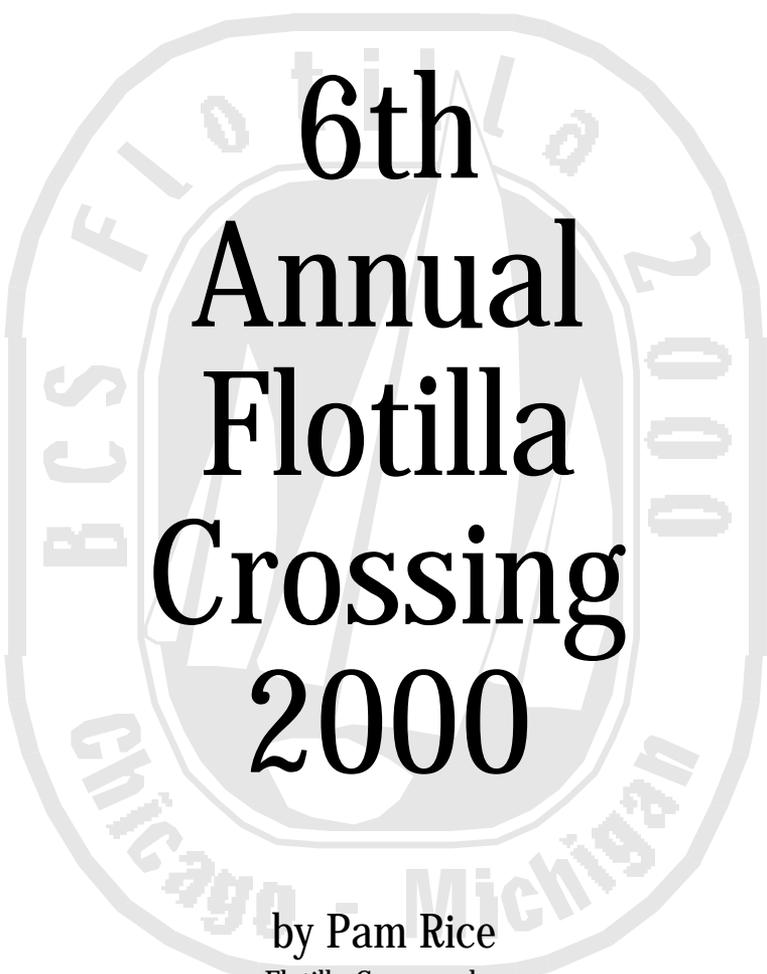


F L O T I L L A C R O S S I N G ' 0 0

S E C O N D E D I T I O N
A JOURNAL OF THE



6th
Annual
Flotilla
Crossing
2000

by Pam Rice
Flotilla Commander

Photos: Ernie Coleman, Delia Gray, and Robert Bassett

*Seven vessels set sail, all voyaging east, with the
same winds that blew.*

*It was the set of the sails, and not the gales
which told them the way to go.*

*Like the winds of the sea, are also the ways of fate,
as we journey along through life.*

*It is the set of the soul that decides your goal,
and not the calm or the strife.*

Eunice Jackson-Lyle
Skipper of 'Nightwatch II'

F L O T I L L A C R O S S I N G ' 0 0

Chapter One

Friday, July 29, 2000

The last few days before the crossing, there was still some confusion amongst a few of the boaters about who was sailing with who and on what boat. Up until the final hours, Bob Walsh of Failte and his partner Craig had to pull out. Bob's mother was to celebrate her 75th birthday.

As usual, skippers and crew were busily working to prepare for departure all thru the night and early morning.

Saturday, July 30, 2000

At 1:30 a.m., it felt as if my body was separated from my being. I was operating purely on re-mote, until I collapsed on my berth in *Purple Reigns*. Sleep came quick. It was a deep sleep. I woke up at 2:30 a.m., in a tizzy — I had overslept. I was supposed to have awakened everyone at 2:00 a.m.

I saw Delia Gray and Gretano Urgesi scurrying to prepare for departure. I really didn't think they were coming. So many, who had confirmed did not show up. Originally, we had twelve boats in this flotilla, now there were only seven.

Let me, first, introduce the members of this flotilla:
My Tyme II - Captain Wanda Robertson; Captain Pam Rice, Skipper of *Purple Reigns* and Flotilla Commander;
Alpha Rays - Captain Al Thompson (*Rear admiral of this flotilla*); Captain Yvonne Nelson, Skipper of *Von Voyage*.
Sea Horse II- Captain Wesley Smith, Captain Ernest Coleman, Skipper of *Miss Ann* and Butch, the miniature Doberman Pincher; Captain James Frederick, Skipper of *Affirm* and his son, James Jr.
Simple Justice - Captain Stanley Hill with crew Bobby Mitchell, Ron Hill, from Arizona; and Wade Crossen (past owner of *Simple Justice*)
Restless - Captain John Dopkeen and First Mate, Cathy Dopkeen
For Pete's Sake - Captain Delia Gray and First Mate, Gretano Urgesi
Amyth - Captain James Washington, First Mate, Adrienne J. and their son, Jimmy; Captain Robert Bassett, Skipper of *Joy*; First Mate, Lois Bassett will join us in St. Joseph. Captain Robelle McMiller produced our flotilla 'gear' this year, but was unable to attend.

Most of us, in this flotilla, are experienced sailors. Myself, Yvonne Nelson, Wesley Smith and Robert Bassett were members of the first African-American crew (of both men and women) to sail in the Chicago-Mackinaw Race in 1994. The crew of nine was captained by Captain William "Bill" Pinkney, world-renown, solo-circum-navigator. The boat *Upanayana (Keeper of the Magic Flute)* was that of Dr. David Blackwell, also of the crew. Robert Bassett is an active member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Stan Hill, a two-time participant of the Chicago -Mackinaw Races as

well as the Tri-State Race. Myself, organizer of the Flotilla Crossings since 1995 and Wanda Robertson, both have twenty-plus years of sailing experience; Wade Crossen, a multi-year participant in the Mac Races; Wes "Smitty" Smith, a multi-year participant in the Mac Races and solo-sailor of Lake Michigan; John and Cathy Dopkeen have sailed the coast of Lake Michigan on many occasions; James Frederick, a skipper of many years; a director of many sailing programs and is the first African American to sit of the Board of Directors of the American Youth Hostels; Delia Gray worked as a lifeguard with the Chicago Park District for more than ten years. Delia and Gretano have sailed to upper Wisconsin on a multi-week cruise in ongoing, adverse conditions. Al Thompson and Yvonne Nelson have sailed the entire Lake Michigan and part of Lake Superior several times. They have sailed for 40 days and nights at a time to various islands and through the Straits of Mackinaw and up into Canada.

* * *

There were reports of intermittent showers and thunderstorms; winds from 10 - 15 knots by afternoon and waves from 2 - 4 feet.

I wondered how bad it really might be. There was a tug-of-war with the idea of staying, or making a run for it. The struggle lasted for about 20 minutes. I didn't want to appear to be cowardly, but with new folks on this trip, I didn't want to make any foolish decisions, either.

I alerted everyone. We were to leave at 3:45 a.m. The signal— a masthead light and running lights and a raised main from the commander. At 4:04 a.m., *My Tyme II*, the

commanding ship, pulled out of her slip. *Restless*, *Amyth*, *Sea Horse II*, *Simple Justice*; *For Pete's Sake* and *Alpha Rays*, to follow.

The early morning was still very dark, no stars, no moon. We left the harbor single file. I turned on our GPS to get a good heading, 96 degrees to the Michigan City lighthouse.

Daylight will come in about an hour.

Our original destination was St. Joseph, MI, however, after listening to the weather channel, we changed our destination — the change was for the *good* of everyone.

About one mile from Jackson Park Harbor, *Amyth* reported problems with his water pump seal. His first reaction was to go back to Jackson Park. *Amyth* had his sails up and was going at a good clip. I suggested he turn off his engine and continue on and check with B+E, in Michigan City in the a.m. Everyone was okay with that.

Cathy of *Restless*, kept trying to get a radio check 3 hours into the voyage—but communications were bad. We all had gotten too far apart. We didn't know where everyone was. Occasionally, we'd see three boats on the western horizon. Later, we saw a sail boat to our port-stern, very close to the shoreline. We thought it was *Amyth*.

The skies were mostly cloudy. The sun peaked occasionally, but the threat of rain was on-going.

With 17 more miles to go, we still hadn't spotted the Michigan City Tower. It was very hazy and there was fog, at times. An hour later, we saw the tower. It was at that time the seas began to roll.

One mile outside the entrance, we saw a racing fleet along with 4-5 sailboats, who we'd surmised, had been the

remainder of our fleet. As we began to lower our main sail, the rain came, first as large, pelting drops, then as a down-pour. We weren't prepared for this one, it came from nowhere. Some folks in the flotilla had no rain at all.

My Tyme II was first to arrive. We took a spot in front of the Michigan City Yacht Club. Here, there was plenty of room for everyone. *Alpha Rays* was a minute behind us. We waited for the others to arrive. It was about one hour later before *Restless* and *For Pete's Sake* arrived, then *Sea Horse II*. One and a half hours later, *Ambyth* arrives. But where is Stan? *Simple Justice*? Did they have problems? Radio communications weren't the best. We will give them time. One and a-half hour later, *Simple Justice* arrives. The reason for being behind—they were 'trying different maneuvers'.

The rest of the day was a combination of light rain, intermittent showers, bursts of sunshine and sauna-like heat.

Once the flock was together, the next order of the day was to try and get some rest. Most of us took 3 - 4 hours.

Chapter Two

I was deep within sleep, when I heard someone say, “We’re going inside to have dinner at the club.” It was Al. Within minutes, we were over to the dining room. Dinner was great. Everyone attended except the folks from *Simple Justice*. They were sleep. Donna drove up from Chicago and joined us for dinner.

After dinner, a few of us decided to attend the outside church ceremonies going on at the pavilion in Washington Park. We walked over to the lighthouse, along the beach. The waves were rebounding off the retaining wall. “Will this affect our departure?”, I wondered.

We visited Al’s old docking wall. A place where, for years, he’d dock for free. He told us his ‘use-to’ stories. The rest of us were thoughtful enough to listen, quietly, out of respect. Upon our return to the boats, it was time to turn-in.

This had been a full day.

Sunday, July 31, 2000

The morning was gloomy with continuous drizzle, and 70 degree temperatures. I headed for the public showers. We had a shower on the boat, but we would have to wait a while for the water to get hot. By 9:30 a .m. all of us were ready to go to M&M's for breakfast.

Donna drove and was kind enough to shuttle those without bikes to the restaurant. M & M is a restaurant that serves 'home-cooking' and is located in a deserted strip mall. Adorned in rain gear from head to toe, we readied our bikes and took off for "Red's". We called M&M's, "Red's" place because an elderly, red-haired woman who frequents the place is there every time we go—we arrived too early for her today. Al told John that he was sitting in her favorite seat, and he would have to relinquish it, (out of respect) if she showed up.

After breakfast, some of us made our mandatory stop at the *Family Dollar* store next to M&M's on Michigan Street—they had a 50% off sale!!

Upon arriving back at the harbor, it was time to make a democratic decision. Were we going to stay in Michigan City or were we going on to St. Joe? The winds were from the north at 18 knots with 4-5 foot seas. Delia brought her hand-held radio to our meeting. The unanimous decision was to stay until 6:00 a.m. Monday morning.

The sun peaked through for a few minutes, followed by a spot of heat. The rest of the day was now open. This would give folks time to explore and shop at the *Lighthouse Outlet*. There were a variety of agendas planned. Vonnie, Wanda and I walked to the Lighthouse and spent

about 4 hours. The entire time, there was a threat of rain. The skies were overcast, the air was humid, but it was warm. After exhausting ourselves from the day's activities, no one really cared to venture out for dinner. So, once again we dined at the Yacht Club, and once again it was grand. Stan's cousin, Ron, from Arizona treated the entire fleet to this fine meal. THANK YOU, Ron! This was a pleasant, unexpected surprise.

Feeling bloated and unnecessary, we went for a walk along the boardwalk, to purge ourselves of 'glutton guilt'. Smitty and I saw the skies clearing, and concluded the following day should be okay.

F L O T I L L A C R O S S I N G ' 0 0

Chapter Three

Monday, July 31, 2000

5:30 a.m., the activity began. Folks were running back and forth preparing themselves for today's sail. Our departure time was for 6:00 a.m. The skies were cloudy and rain was definitely on the way. The winds, this morning, were from the west and slowly shifting.

All in the fleet were told to turn on their radios for a radio check. At 6:35 a.m. we were underway. Al, the rear admiral casted everyone off the yacht club wall. *My Tyme II* leaves first; *Ambyth* follows; *Restless*, *For Pete's Sake*, *Sea Horse II* and then *Alpha Rays*. We were to stay close, so we could keep in radio contact with each other. Leaving the Michigan City entrance was a cinch, it was what was to follow that was the challenge.

Everyone seemed to be handling the 4-5 foot waves well. Steerage wasn't easy, though. We had following seas. Waves came directly to the port stern. Continuous seas like this can cause stress on the rudder. Handling the wheel was a challenge. I thought to myself, "We aren't even out of sight of the lighthouse, and my arms are like rubber.

This can't possibly go on for another 4 1/2 hours!" The waves began to swell to 6 to 6 1/2 feet. *My Tyme II's* rails were burying in the water. The boat was surging port to starboard. "This ride is much to treacherous, not to mention what it was like for the 'newcomers,'" I thought. I had to make a decision. Once I retrieved a GPS reading on the location of the New Buffalo harbor, I radioed the rest of the fleet to let them know of the alternate plans. Communications weren't getting to everyone. *Amyth* could read us, so they alerted everyone. We had thirty-two minutes to get to the New Buffalo entrance—it seemed like eternity. Could you believe there was someone who was indifferent? Because I didn't speak to them directly, I can't tell you who. But at that point, I wished them well and a safe voyage. We have folks in this flotilla who hadn't done this before and our mission was to make the trip enjoyable, educational and safe!—So!

About 15 minutes outside of New Buffalo, I radioed the harbor master. I let him know the number of boats, along with beams and drafts. He put us on standby. After a few seconds he gave us the okay and the slip numbers. Approaching the entrance to this harbor was a challenge. Once *My Tyme II* made our first pass north of the entrance to lower our main, I saw the dredging company of *Donkersloot* in the entrance. "We cannot get past that dredger in the channel", I said to Wanda. By the time we came about, The dredger was gone. The harbor master, must of had them move. The waves crashed over the sea walls to the point you couldn't see the entrance. Timing was everything and so was our angle of approach. The trick— to angle for the entrance, using full throttle; cut

back, once in, and stay directly in the middle of the channel. Every skipper knew their vessels and entered in a precise manner. It made the strong and hearty, weak in the knees. I was proud of everyone. The call to enter New Buffalo was appreciated by all. Once inside the harbor, the waters were still.

John and Cathy got stuck, once inside, but with the help of Alpha and Captain Delia, they were pulled out of their dilemma.

At 9:00 a.m., we were all settled. Those of us who would have cringed at the thought of food 30 minutes ago, were now starving. We registered for the night. We entertained the idea of just staying for a few hours, but without registering, we might be bumped, if boaters came in that would pay immediately. So, with reluctance, we paid the hefty sum.

Two blocks up the main street was *Rosie's*, a place where we've eaten before. After breakfast, we parted ways.

AJ's and Jimmy's folks from the area came to visit for a while. We made sure we got contact numbers before they left, for good reasons.

This day, too, was rainy, warm and humid. We expected a summer shower. We could be in worse places. We passed this day, by doing boat maintenance, and having discussions on geographical matters, etc. To our surprise, New Buffalo was full of boaters, who were, too, caught between sailing south or north.

While in *Rosie's*, I ran into a client of twenty-five years ago. We didn't get *too* deep in conversation. She was with friends who helped her with her memory. She had to be eighty, now. *God is good.*

There was one frightening moment over Butch. We had seen Butch last in the arms of an elderly gentleman. When we came out of the restaurant, Butch wasn't where Ernie had left him (so we thought). Wanda, Cathy, and I, split in different directions, only to find out that Jimmy's son took Butch back to the boat. Although our plans have been altered due to weather, it has not hindered the flotilla spirit. We shall begin this evening, with a celebration of Al's birthday. Last year, we celebrated at *Hanna's*, here, in New Buffalo, and so shall we, this year.

The food at *Hanna's*, as always is great. The rear admiral, Alpha, sat at the head of the table. This was a prelude to Al's birthday. After dinner, many of us walked to the beach as a form of exercise. The plan, later, was to gather on *My Tyme II* and play "*Who's The Skipper*", (the *Captain's Game*, a game I found in a local shop. Myself, Stan, Rob, Ron and Wanda tried to play, but the questions were much too demanding after our full and satisfying meal.

We played 'hearts' or some variation of that—then we called it a night.

7:00 a.m. was to be our departure time. We would have to wait until the harbor master arrived, so we could turn in our keys and check-out.

Chapter Four

Tuesday, August 1, 2000

Happy Birthday Al!

When Captain John of *Restless* came by to see if we could do a radio check this morning, I was sound asleep. "Radio?" "What radio?" "Goodness, it's too early". I was in a tizzy state. When I had fully awakened, I hoped that I hadn't sounded *too* crazy.

The morning was nice. 73 -75 degrees; winds from the NW at 7-10 knots, with 1 foot waves. Everyone was preparing to leave. I learned last night, that Bobby of Stan's crew, *Simple Justice* was leaving today. That would leave Ron and Stan. Wade left in Michigan City. Stan also mentioned he had an emergency in Chicago. We'll miss him!—Bon Voyage.

Exiting the harbor one by one, *Alpha Rays*, *Restless*, *For Pete's Sake*, *Ambyth*, *Sea Horse* and *My Tyme II*, we headed 32 degrees to St. Joseph, MI. This was pleasant sailing. Everyone sported jibs and mains and cut the engines. About 10:00 a.m., clouds were rolling in from the south and west. Our lat./long. was 41.55 and 086.388 with 2 hours and 3 minutes to St. Joe.

We had company on the sail to St. Joe. A 42 foot Morgan Ketch with center cockpit, one of Bassett's associates and one other vessel. Both had sought refuge for the two days of bad weather in New Buffalo. The sail was like none other we'd had. We were averaging 6.5 to 7 knots, the sun was out, the waves were manageable and the winds were great. We made good time to St. Joe — 4 hours to the minute.

For Pete's Sake and *Restless* had excellent sail-trim and speed. Upon entering the harbor, we found the channel rough, as usual. Once inside, we saw the rotating bridge was open and Jimmy was on the wall. We docked and prepared to leave for Wolf Marine, immediately.

St. Joseph/Benton Harbor are two cities divided. St. Joe, being predominantly white and Benton Harbor being predominantly black. (*In fact, Benton Harbor is one of the poorest black cities in American.*)

The area, where we docked is at the foot of a hill, surrounded by trees, mainly weeping willows— a very pretty spot. There aren't any facilities, but the park offers much—it's free.

After we tied our boats to the wall, beneath the weeping willows, we assembled our bikes to prepare for our ride to Wolf Marine. After purchases were made. Wolf Marine loaded our things in a truck and delivered them to the river.

* * *

Clementine's was our choice for dinner and bicycles were our choice of transportation. There was a block-long race uphill from dinner which Delia had challenged everyone

to. A party for Al was planned at the swing, but, as we had expected, the mosquitoes were *too* bad. Tomorrow.

Wednesday, August 2, 2000

We were awakened by an announcement from Al, that storms were predicted for this afternoon. I dressed quickly, so I could alert the others. The winds were going to clock around from the north. We would like to avoid this at all cost. We've lost two days due to bad weather, already.

We waited for Robert and Lois to come down to the boats. Once we were ready to leave, *My Tyme II's* engine couldn't start. The problem was more than just batteries, (as we had originally thought) it was water in the glow plugs.

A dark cloud loomed overhead, and then the showers came. They lasted only 15 minutes.

Once Jimmy returned from breakfast, Jimmy, Robert and Gretano fixed the problem with the aid of phone assistance from Bill of *Mastercraft*. At noon, we were underway to South Haven, MI. This trip was uneventful. By no means is this meant to be a complaint. There was only one unexpected disruption. "Pop! Hisssss.... Hisssss...Pop! The noise frightened me so badly, I received a terrible headache. I turned slightly, only to find Wanda's head in an inflated, orange device, tightened around her neck like a boa-constrictor. Her water-sensitive life vest had automatically inflated. All we could do is laugh!—*after* she freed herself.

Upon entering the harbor, I radioed the municipal marina. I needed to reach *All Seasons Marina*, but they were closed for the evening. I led the flotilla to the municipal

marina at the Maritime Museum. We found slips for everyone. Municipal marinas don't accept reservations, but private marinas do. We had reservations at *All Seasons*, but they were closed. Just as well, this is more cost efficient. We parted ways once everyone was docked. We had planned to celebrate Al's birthday tonight, but everyone was *too* tired.

The evening was cool. Everyone seemed to have slept well.



Captain and Skipper, James Washington of Ambyth at the helm.



Robert Basset onboard Ambyth.

F L O T I L L A C R O S S I N G ' 0 0



One of the many birthday celebrations for rear admiral, Alpha Thompson at our favorite eatery, 'Clementines' in St. Joseph.





Cathy Dopkeen of Restless (above) and Captain Delia Gray of For Pete's Sake (below).





One of the birthday celebrations for rear admiral, Alpha Thompson, at Hanna's Restaurant in New Buffalo.



The official birthday celebration for Alpha Thompson in South Haven, MI.



Captain Al, Fleet Rear Admiral, at the helm of ALpha Rays.



Captain and Fleet Commander, Pam Rice, Skipper of Purple Reigns, in New Buffalo, MI.



Captain Delia Gray and First Mate Gretano Urgesi sailing "For Pete's Sake".



Captain Ernie Coleman sitting and Captain James Frederick (on right) and his son in Michigan City.



Captain Jimmy Washington at the helm of Ambyth.



Captain John Dopkeen of Restless in New Buffalo, MI.



My Tyme II exiting New Buffalo harbor.



The entire flotilla prepare for departure from New Buffalo.



Captain Ernie Coleman sitting and miniature Doberman pincher, "You da-man, Butch."



Captain Wes Smith takes a break.



Ernie, Vonnie, Smitty, Stan and Wade in Michigan City



Bobby and Wade in New Buffalo



Al and Bobby conversing in New Buffalo



Ernie at the bow and Smitty at the stern, departing from New Buffalo.



Wanda in New Buffalo

Chapter Five

Thursday, August 3, 2000

Dinghies were inflated. The morning was clear. It was rather cool for a summer's morning, but, this is South Haven and it seems to be like this every time we've visit. We donned our jackets this morning. When the sun rose high, so did the temperature. We all had breakfast by 11:00 a.m. We filled our day with bike riding, going to the beach and shopping. By 1:00 p.m. we were on our way up the Black River to sightsee. Robert and Lois, Wanda and myself in Wanda's recently purchased dingy from Wolf's; Delia and Gretano, John and Cathy, with John at the helm; and Vonnie and Al. It was an excellent voyage. We navigated for miles past the various homes with docked vessels of various kinds. Once we passed the populated areas, we started to see the more interesting aspects of nature. Turtles, nestled on rocks in the water; red-tailed hawk, an unusually large herring on a long, floating tree in the river. There were swimming turkey/chickens or wild turkeys. We motored under a covered bridge, which we found out later was a part of the South Haven Bike Trails. It was beautiful!

We had to be cautious of the shallow water and sub-

merged logs. Today was to be the official celebration of Al's birthday. The theme Vonnie put together was a "sweet" celebration. Champagne, cookies, cherry kajava, watermelon, etc. Gifts were opened and cards were read.

The sun was setting and it was time to think about dinner. Most of us went to the river boat, *Magnolia's*, famous for it's coconut shrimp. Following dinner, we went to the show for \$3.50. "Bring your own bag and the popcorn was free!" The movie: *What Lies Beneath*. It was a decent thriller.

What a super day!

Friday, August 4, 2000

When exiting the cabin this morning, I could already feel the heat of the morning sun. The marina manager was out on her morning rounds. She mentioned the temperature was to be 88 degrees; the waves, 0 - 1 foot with calm winds. This was to be one of the best days.

We took off for breakfast by 10:30 a.m. Wanda and Al met Vonnie and I, after breakfast, at the Donut Shoppe, after which, we left for the *Family Dollar Store*.

Once we returned to the harbor, we decided to register for another night, make phone calls, get ice, and do some cleaning and maintenance. Some folks went to the beach, others rode their dinghies up the river.

Italian was on everyone's mind for tonight. Vonnie and Al chose to go to *Captain Lou's* for fish.

South Haven is such a peaceful place, busy, but peaceful. Every now and then, that changes. A power boat pulled into the slip next to ours. We had just gotten 'rid' of

a larger powerboat with children and two barking dogs. When I saw them coming, I'd wish they'd seen the slip across the way. Once this guy was docked, I knew by the directions he was giving over the phone, that he was going to have a large crowd, and a noisy one at that—he was loud and abrasive. Loud and inconsiderate people repel me.

After our fine and filling Italian meal that evening, we returned to the boats.

One half-a block away we heard the party boat that was docked next to *My Tyme II*. Our intentions were to leave at 5:00 a.m. *So*, imagine 20 drunkards on a 6-foot wide dock, mingling with you and asking you dumb questions while you're trying to pack up bikes and deflate dinghies. We totally ignored them. They got the message and left for the bar up the way. It was reported earlier, that loud music was disturbing the entire marina. *So*, we weren't the only ones who were complaining. They left bottles on the dock, which we placed back on their boat. If that had of been us, the marine sheriff would have showed up and we would, probably, have been asked to leave.

Saturday, August 5, 2000

Rob woke us up at 5 a.m. Lois's ride had arrived to pick her and A.J. back to St. Joseph. Lois would pick up her car and they would drive back to Chicago.

My Tyme II exited the harbor first, then *Ambyth*, *Alpha Rays*, *Restless*, *Sea Horse II* and *For Pete's Sake*. The sun rise was beautiful. We were able to enjoy it from the harbor entrance as we waited on the rest of the fleet. Our mains

were raised, but the wind was coming from the south, the direction in which we were heading. Actually, the wind was from south to southeast. Those who could sail closest to the wind would fair better. We tried to get everyone to stay close. Thunderstorms were predicted for this afternoon. This was one reason why we were so determined to leave early, but not everyone adheres to what the reasoning *is*. Experience is the best teacher, for most people. My philosophy is to learn from other peoples experiences where I can, and save myself the trouble.

Chapter Six

As we passed the power plant, south of St. Joseph, the clouds began to roll in. The day had become overcast. The western and southern skies were getting darker. My concern is with Smitty and Delia. They sailed off to the west, out of sight, to pick up wind to tack their way to Michigan City. This was not a good idea, today. We've come 32.48 miles with 17.52 miles to go. "I hope the rain holds off."

Alpha Rays went into St. Joe to go back to Wolf's. "I hope they move quick and get to Michigan City before it rains." It was in the forecast, today, that we'd have thunderstorms in the afternoon or evening; waves from 2-4 feet with winds gusting to 25 knots. This was our determining factor for making a straight shot to Michigan City as opposed to going to Chicago from South Haven. Some folks voiced their opinion to *make* the crossing. Crossing is good. But, today the weather has the 'ace' card.

There was very little radio communication on this leg of the trip. Most of us were tired. *For Pete's Sake* and *Sea Horse II* have been out of sight since South Haven. Timing is everything when sailing, especially, when you're trying to sail around and in between intermittent weather.

Some people just don't get it. Leaving an hour later would make the difference of having a decent sail or a disastrous one.

Upon our approach into Michigan City, 10 miles north of New Buffalo, the winds began gusting up to 20 knots. The waves were 2 - 4 feet and getting closer together. Our sail, thus far, has been a swift one. Along the way we had a brief, but hard, rainfall.

Now, Smitty and Delia were not reachable, and no one knew where they were. But where ever they were, we hoped they would be together.

Around 3:30 p.m., just outside of the Michigan City entrance, we tried to drop the main sail. The winds would not let us do so, into the wind. We had to jibe and drop the main with the wind coming from our stern. Even in doing this, Wanda had to go forward and pull the main down, manually.

Once in the channel, we had to retrieve a fender. Several large power boats we were trying to exit the harbor at the same time (with the weather, I couldn't fathom why). I was trying to navigate within the small space left, without hitting other boaters. Wheewww! There was a close call with a 40' power boater. It was obvious he didn't know the Rules of Navigation—him and a few others. It was at this time, we noticed the dinghy Wanda had purchased, was gone! There had been a lot of stress on the line, we could tell by the remaining "fray". We headed back out into the lake to see if we could spot the dinghy. No luck.

Going towards the Michigan City Yacht Club, we noticed several boats tied-up. There were a few boats from our harbor. We turned the corner. No spaces.

“Over here! You can raft off of us!”, a voice came from a docked, steel boat. “We’re not going anywhere, because we can’t get up the river—we’ll be here.” We gratefully accepted. We waited for two hours. *Restless* came in, followed by *Ambyth*. *Ambyth* squeezed into a very tight spot in front of the club and *Restless* rafts off of him. The rest of the flotilla will certainly find someplace to raft.

By 7:00 p.m., no one else showed up. There was speculation that Smitty, for sure, had probably gone on to Chicago, since that was the way he could sail best, in this weather. Cathy, John, Robert, Jimmy, Wanda, and I decided to go to *Galvestons Steak House* for dinner. We headed to the bar to wait on our table. This evening was ‘call for DRINK!’, we all had two. We were really ready for dinner. It took another hour to be seated. We were a bubbly crew and as hungry as they come. When appetizers arrived, there was a quiet, yet brief ‘feeding frenzy’. We all ordered steak. It took another hour to get our meals. An amateur hypnotist could have easily put us *all* to sleep. We accepted the host’s apologies and cordially took our discounts and left, but not before stopping to check-out the blues band playing in the bar.

* * *

Upon our return, the *Alpha Rays* and *For Pete’s Sake* had arrived. Al said he ran into Delia outside of St. Joe—they had run out of gas. Al supplied *For Pete’s Sake* with gas.

Delia sailed most of the way to Michigan City, as oppose to motoring. Al spoke of the lightning all around them and how he attached his chain to the stanchion to ground the boat. John’s dinghy had been turned over and

took on water or worse (*or for the better*) it was acting like a drogue. At one point, John mentioned he'd entertained the thought of 'cutting it loose.'

Chapter Seven

Sunday, August 6, 2000

My *Tyme II* needed gas and a pump-out. Once again, Jimmy and Robert solved our glow-plug problem.

The day started out foggy and hazy. There were reports that the sun would break through today. That it did. The breeze on the way to Chicago was great. We left the entrance in formation, staying in close proximity of each other. So far, three miles out, we were still together. There might have been some mention of rain in the forecast, but I don't remember. We determined our heading and kept our speed at about 6 knots. This would put us in Chicago in 5 hours. It was picture taking time and Al started it.

The water was just right. The sky was blue with a slight haze. Sails were fluttering because we were heading towards the west. We chose not to tack. It would take us away from each other, so we continued to motor-sail. This was a *deja-vu* moment?

Today, we could motor faster than we could sail anyway. This crossing is bitter-sweet. Yes, we were heading home, but we've 'kinda gotten' accustomed to this travel. We

are already talking about our plans for next year.

Restless slows up to re-fuel. An assortment of flying insects appeared. This is *not* good. Now, this is *deja-vu* from 1997. This, as you may or may not know, is an indicator of bad, bad weather. Weather of which you don't want to be on the water. In 1997, the exact same weather conditions; fog early, somewhat hazy, heat, humidity, calm waters, light winds from the south west and INSECTS of all kinds, is nature's way of letting the 'acute' know what is to come.

I radioed the fleet to let them know of what might be coming and we needed to speed it up.

Since our exit from Michigan City we noticed a sailboat heading our same direction. He had to be three miles away. He stayed behind until Gary then he took off. Maybe he had heard the weather forecast. A large Tartan-10 passed us headed east. Curiosity brought him closer towards us. A couple of cargo ships past to the east and south of us. Our bearing was 281 degrees. We were 2 hours and 38 minutes from the Jackson Park Harbor entrance, as per the GPS. "New bugs, never seen this kind before", I thought. Many of them were clinging for the ride. "We really need to go faster. Not until I see the water pumping station, will I feel comfortable."

Delia and Gretano approached us from behind to pass us watermelon, left over from Al's birthday party in South Haven. It seemed to be sweeter and riper.

We're 11.2 miles from Jackson Park and we're still together. 1 1/2 hours at 6 knots.

We have had a hogg-pogg of various weather conditions on this trip. Enough variances to test one's skill in

every way. Blustery sea sprays in our faces, 6 foot waves to heat and humidity and intense sun.

We were averaging 6 knots. At 3:10 p.m., we had 1 hour and 4 minutes to go 6.5 miles. Winds coming offshore gave us a smooth ride. Main sails angled 5 degrees towards starboard side. We were still in shouting distance. The bell buoy was spotted along with the pumping station. With less than one mile to go, we picked up a strong wind from the southwest. There were a lot of boats out today.

Clouds were building. A dark cloud loomed in front of us. Rain's surely coming. Delia slows down and there is concern from the fleet.— Nothing to worry about, just visiting finches. They were photographing. Cathy from *Restless* claims that the finches were hers.

We entered the harbor in single file, just the way we left Michigan City. Everyone went to their slips. Then, as if, our arrival signaled the gods, the sky got darker. We knew what was coming, so we continued to unload. It had not been one half-hour, when the winds began to blow, and the skies opened up. A few of us were under the veranda of the yacht club watching the approaching storm. It had gotten to the point where there was no protection from the horizontal rains. We managed to get inside and go upstairs for a good view. Patio chairs were flying, garbage and everything else at the winds mercy. The street lights came on, the trees were lying down. *Deja-vu*. A repeat of 1997. The storm lasted only 15 minutes.

Where is Smitty? We had expected to find him here, when we arrived. 'Word was, that he had engine trouble and had to go into St. Joseph. A part had to be ordered. He planned to return towards the end of the week to sail Sea

Horse II back to Chicago.

We pondered for a while and had a bite to eat while talking about the week's travels. Next year, we'll take more time. We can go up to South Holland, Saugatuck, Grand Haven and maybe Muskegon??

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The crossings help everyone. They are really exciting for new sailors as well as the 'old salts'. Everyone who goes, has plans and ideas to made the next voyage more exciting and comfortable.



“We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.”

—Tess Garner of Angelitos II, wife of JPYC’s first Black Commodore.