

August 5-12, 2006
Annual "Crusing Club of New England" Cruise
On Board the Sea Cup
Captain: Al Schober
First Mate: Maren

Saturday, August 5 "Out of Prison"

The weather leading up to this cruise is so terrible that I am despondent. We are through the worst heat wave I have ever experienced and the day before our cruise is hot and muggy. I just don't feel like doing anything except lying around the house.

This morning arrives cool and clear. The sun is up and I know it will be a sunny and pleasant day. My attitude is completely changed! I jump out of bed, dress and take a good walk in the neighborhood praising God for this beautiful day. It feels like I am out of prison. For a week I have been inside air conditioned houses. My spirits soar..

I empty out the refrigerator and pack up my clothes and food for the boat. By 11:30 a.m. Al and I are in the car on the way to the yacht club...or so I think.

"Hmmm...I think I left the oars to our dinghy in the Toyota. I am going back to get them"

This is disappointing but I admit to Al,

"I remember the time we left home on a car trip and I suddenly realized that I had not packed my underwear! You were nice enough to drive back home for me. So I am not complaining."

At our club we load our bags onto the wagons and then load it all into the launch. Jim Reyburn drives us out to the Sea Cup where I put all the food into the ice box. Al has gotten the blocks of ice at Burr's Marina.

Before you know it we are sailing to Fisher's Island. It is a long sail in the hot sun and after awhile I have to go below and seek shade. I am hot and uncomfortable.

We are rafted up on the TYC mooring with John and Janice Patry. Their sailboat is named the "Betty Boop!".

When I unpack some clothes out comes my canvas shoes...one black and one blue! By mistake I have grabbed one of each color! At least I bring the correct ones for my feet!

The water looks so inviting to me so I put on my bathing suit go for a swim off the boat. The water cools me right down. I feel wonderful and like my old self .

There is a beautiful sunset tonight.

Sunday August 6, 2006 "Don't forget the Dinty Moore!"

We leave West Harbor about 8:00 a.m. for the long haul to Dutch Harbor. We are sorry to leave our friends John and Janice.

"I'll never forget the fillet mignon...it was delicious!" I call out to John as we are leaving.

"And don't forget the Dinty Moore" he called back.

That is a funny story. Last night sitting on our boats, John asked me,

"Hey, what's for supper?"

“Dinty Moore” I answered. “What are you having?”

“Fillet mignon” he smiled.

We laughed. They are like complete culinary opposites!

So Al and I ate our canned stew while John fired up their grill and cooked their steak and potatoes.

Then John said, “Don’t eat too much Dinty Moore” and he handed over to us some of his extra steak! What a nice guy. We appreciated his gift and it was tender and delicious.

Today is a beautiful sun shiny day with lots of wind. We tack up the coast past Watch Hill and on and on to Point Judith Lighthouse where we take a hard left into Narragansett Bay. Much of the time I sit on the deck. I sun grateful for this cool breeze and beautiful coastline. “This is heaven” I told Al.

We get to Dutch Harbor at Jamestown, Rhode Island about 3:30 p.m. and find the other boats in the cruising club. Our club burgee is very distinctive and easy to spot: a green topless mermaid on a white background. I don’t know why I said topless. All mermaids are topless I believe.

We drop our anchor and secure the Sea Cup for the night. Bev and Barb our fleet captains motor over in their dinghy to welcome us and so do Cliff Fisher and Dale Plummer.

Tonight we grill pork chops on board and I serve rice and heated canned green beans with it.

Monday August 7, 2006 “It’s wrapped around the halyard!”

Last night I sleep fine on my bunk until 2 in the morning. Then I wake up in a sweat. I feel overheated and I am. Being out in the sun yesterday leaves me feeling cooked. So I wet my wash cloth with cold water and wipe down my face. Then I climb the ladder to the cockpit and bunk down under the stars and breezes for the rest of the night. Perfect.

Today we motor sail with just our jib over to Bristol Yacht Club. As we get close Al tries to roll up the jib and it wont work. “It’s wrapped around the halyard” Al calls back to me.

He clamors onto the deck in the strong wind and tries to fix it. I pray that he will not be knocked into the water and review in my mind what I will do in case he does!

Al is able to free the jib and it rolls up fine.

When we get to the Bristol Y.C. the launch driver points to the mooring we are to use. It is a mooring without a stick! So I get the long boat hook out and prepare to do battle. And it is a battle. Al drives the boat and makes pass after pass at the mooring while I lean way over and try to hook the line. I can't find any line! So exasperated I steer the boat while Al tries it. He too thrashes around with the hook to no avail. Thankfully the launch driver returns and helps us. Finally we are on the mooring! The mooring has a very short line!

After settling in on our mooring I take a sun shower in our head. It feels wonderful. Then Al and I just relax on the boat reading, working puzzles and having a nice supper aboard. We have 19 boats participating in this cruise week with us! Most of

the members we already know from past years and some of them are new members we look forward to meeting.

Tuesday August 8, 2006 "Get your paws off of my ice cream!"

Last night I wake up on my bunk below feeling hot and uncomfortable, so I set up my mattress and sleeping bag in the cockpit and go right back to sleep in the cool night air. I love it.

Today is a full day of planned activities. After breakfast Al and I take the launch in to shore and explore the Bristol Yacht Club. It is a beautiful club...large and active. Many children are gathering for morning sailing lessons. It is wonderful to see these young people learning a healthy skill that they will enjoy all their lives.

Inside the clubhouse hang many interesting pictures to look at. One picture shows an America's Cup race boat with the crew straining to keep the boat moving fast through the high seas. The boat has not one but two large steering wheels in the stern. The helmsman uses his hands to steer one wheel while one of his legs was steering the 2nd wheel! Impressive!

This morning all our club members are taken by launch across the Bay to the town of Bristol where we tour the Herreshoff Boat Museum. The Herreshoff boats are wooden sailing vessels built in Bristol until 1917. The museum houses many boats as exhibits. One of the boats is named "Torch". This Herreshoff boat is part of a fleet of such boats racing on Fishers Island in 1930. We are allowed to explore the boat ourselves after taking our shoes off.

After the museum we also tour the America's Cup exhibit across the street. Just looking at the pictures of America's Cup races gives me the goose bumps. I can stand there looking at a picture of the crew members happy in victory, despondent in defeat, or racing the boats and begin to feel the strain and excitement of the adventure. Emotions are so strong, minds so focused on the present moment...it is a powerful experience.

From there Al and I walk up tree lined High Street admiring the many beautiful old homes. We make our way back down to the main street and find the Sunset Café where we have an enjoyable lunch.

All of the club members meet down at the "Pub" at 2:30 p.m. for the launch ride back.

Gene Lohr is enjoying his ice cream cup when Al pretends to stick his finger in it for a taste.

"Keep your paws off of my ice cream!" said Gene.

Tonight is the night of our club barbeque on the grounds of the Bristol Yacht Club. Al and I pack our canvas bag with the horseradish shrimp spread I have made for the appetizer contest and some grapes I am bringing with us.

We all gather under grove of trees with tables and chairs set up. Barb climbs up on a chair so she can be seen and heard by the rest of us.

"Now move clockwise around the appetizers. There is no starting point. Just sample each selection and form your opinion. Then take a piece of paper and pencil which will be handed out to record your first choice...your favorite appetizer. Each appetizer is numbered so write down the number of your first choice."

This is not going to be ease. There are a lot of good looking "horses ovaries" here as Al calls them.

After all the sampling and oooing and ahhhhing, word soon spreads that the crab are special. They are quickly devoured. The votes are in and the crab cakes are the winner. Everyone cheers.

Tonight is a good chance for all of us to mingle and get to know each other better. At Al's suggestion I group each sailing crew together for a close up picture for our CCNE website. A nice way to speak with our friendly fellow sailors.

While I am doing this hamburgers and hotdogs are being cooked on the grill for all of us and we are soon enjoying this food from the grill plus salads on the side.

At 8:15 p.m., a little late for this, a yacht club member strides swiftly down the lawn towards the water with a canon in his hands. Not everyone notices. He sets the canon up pointing at the water and gives a whistle warning three times. Not every one notices. Then he sets the canon off and a very loud explosive noise erupts that shatters the night sky. Everyone notices! A woman next to me screams and frightened jumps straight up in the air! The sun has set and as the American flag is slowly brought down the long pole, we all stand solemnly in silence and respect. America is beautiful and we are thankful for our many blessings of which we are reminded by this traditional little ceremony.

After our meal Elliot strums his guitar and he and Kendall sing many sea shanty songs and folk songs. This is an unexpected surprise and pleasure for all of us. We listen and some of us hum or sing along. Peace settles on the group and a moon rises full and bright. We gaze upon it in awe.

All too soon we are ready to return to our boats. A perfect ending to a wonderful day.

Wednesday August 9, 2006 "My cigar has gone out!"

While eating our French toast for breakfast this morning on board the Sea Cup, a motor boat passes by our stern and a man calls out, "Hey, Al!"

"Do you know who that is?" Al asks me.

"I have no idea," I answer.

About 20 minutes later it happens again. From across the bay we hear,

"Hey, Al! Hey, Maren! Al, come and get me! I need a ride back!"

Al and I look questioningly at each other with raised eyebrows.

I will settle this once and for all.

Standing in the stern of our boat I call out over the water,

"Who are you?!"

"Warren!" comes back the answer.

Oh, Warren! It is WarrenTrafton! We know our friend Warren lives nearby in Wickford and are delighted with this unexpected meeting. Al quickly clamors into our dinghy and drives over and brings Warren back to our boat for a little visit. Warren is happy and talkative as ever and he is a fellow Tartan 30 owner. He is a successful boat broker and we have a good time chatting with him. After Al drops him off at the Bristol Yacht Club we pull up our anchor and motor over the short distance to Potter's Cove with the rest of our club members.

Today's main event is billed as a dinghy race at 2:00 p.m. This should be fun.

Bev gets on the channel 78 and gives us all the information.

“ Now you need to meet at our boat, the Montrose, at 2:00. Bring your dinghies and the two toy fishes we gave to you all. The two toy fishes are mandatory, but anything else you bring with you is optional.”

“ Can we bring our buckets?”

“Optional. I suggest you wear your bathing suits.”

“Do we need to wear any clothes? “

“Optional.”

So we all get in our dinghies and jam together at the Montrose at 2 pm.

“Now here are your plastic bags and here are your instructions. The starting line is behind me between the red buoy and the No Wake buoy. Line up along the starting line and I will start the race. Go around the Rusty Nail and then back to the finish at the Montrose. You must use the plastic bags I give you for a sail. Do it anyway you want to. There will be no motors! On the last leg you have to paddle back to the Montrose using your hands!”

This is certainly a different kind of a race! We have never heard of such a race but we are game. It is a clever way of doing this.

We take our two boat paddles and stuff them into the large black plastic bag. At the start of the race Al and I hold the plastic bag high in the air holding onto the paddle ends. There is a small friendly breeze and the plastic bag catches the wind! We are off. Al and I are in a good starting position and slowly but surely we take the lead! The breeze blows us ever so slowly towards the Rusty Nail. Amazing how this works. Now we are ready for the last leg and the final push for the Montrose. “Paddle with both you hands,” shouts Al. So with Al on one side of our dinghy and with me hanging off of the other side we both paddle like dogs in the water...furiously paddling towards the Montrose. This is not at all easy! We go sideways in the water and I have to adjust my position. We finally reach the Montrose and we are the first ones to finish the race! Unbelievable. Behind us Bob and Lois Geary soon come in and here comes Cliffy and Jackie Fisher firming up third place! “A clean sweep for the Thames Yacht Club,” Cliff shouts jubilantly.

Soon we are joined by all the other dinghies with all crews paddling furiously.

Now it is time for some water fun. We look at our toy fishes which are little squirt bottles. Some of us fill them up and squirt them at each other. We all look at each other and shrug our shoulders. What in tarnation are these little fish good for? We look at the buckets we have brought in our boats. Won't these bucket work better? Before we get a chance to fill our buckets, a gush of water comes unexpectedly from behind and hits us in the back! It's those two teenagers in the kayaks that are with us. Oh no! They brought their super soakers with them. We can't let them get away with this! Quick fill the bucket. Stand up! Let them have it!

All hell breaks loose. The water war starts! 18 dinghies filled with adult (dolt?) crew members spring to action. Get those kids. Hey! Who just hit me with water? Just for that...take this! Gush! For the next half hour there is water pandamonium.

Dignified engineers and business men and women, respected community workers, whatever...come unglued. Who cares what we are? No one gets away with throwing water at me!

The water is coming from every direction now and from all sides! Laughing we fill our buckets with water and with revenge.

Al gets slammed with a deluge of water from behind. He fills our bucket and stands up in the dinghy. With all his might he heaves the water off the dinghy and ...his body keeps right on going in the direction of the force. Before my eyes I watch my husband fall into the water and sink from sight. Hat, sun glasses and all. Sputtering he soon resurfaces and clamors back into the dinghy. The water keeps flying.

“My cigar went out!” Al announces.

“We are a people gone wild. Now most of us are sliding off our dinghies for a swim. Things are calming down somewhat and for another 30 min. we relax in the water with our “noodles”. Finally we break up and dinghy back to our own sailboats...laughing and laughing. For just a while we become children again having fun. No other agenda. Just having fun in the moment.

Fortunately no one is hurt although Al has some red marks on the inside of his leg. “Battle scars” he calls them. And so ends a dinghy race gone crazy with joy and laughter and lots of water fun. A day to remember for sure!

Thursday August 10, 2006 **“AAAARG!”**

Another beautiful day dawns. There are blue skies and the waters surrounding our boats in Potters Cove sparkle in the sun.

This morning I think we are all a little sad to leave Potters Cove, a place of such natural beauty. We will long remember our time spent here in joy, laughter, friendship and pure fun.

And more fun is on the way. Conditions are perfect for a delightful sail to the East Greenwich Yacht Club. There is plenty of wind and no need for any boat motors. This is sailing as it should be: just the sound of the wind in the sails, and the waters rushing by our sailboats. The fresh air and sunshine are intoxicating.

“Ready About, Hard-a-lee! Yahoo!”

We arrive at the EGYC about noontime and take time for lunch on board and rest. Then many of us call the launch to take us ashore for showers and walks in town. It feels good to hike up the streets and get some exercise while admiring the many old homes on quiet residential streets.

Our main event today,...is tonight! Tonight we all gather in the banquet room at the Yacht Club for our formal club dinner and awards presentations. It is also a very special event because we are eager to greet Jennie & Chuck Atkins, Al & Donna Feir and Pete & Joann Brower who have driven a long distance just to be with us. These wonderful friends are members of our cruising club who could not cruise with us this week. We are so happy to see them, embrace them and chat with them!

We are all standing before dinner tasting the appetizers when I glance around the room and notice that Joe Kaplowe and his crew have not yet arrived. Just as I am missing them, the door opens up and in walks Joe. I mean I think it is Joe! Because in marches Bluebird the Pirate that looks very much like Joe! It is Joe! Black eye and all. “AAAARG!” grumbles Joe. “AAAARG!” There is much laughter and appreciation for Joe and his crew members one of which is dressed like a pirate herself with a life-like looking parrot on her shoulder!

The dinner is served buffet style and each dish is really delicious.

Our fleet captains Bevan and Barb make the presentations for the several awards.

The appetizer contest, dinghy contest, code flag contest and scavenger hunt (Kendell Storm holds up the precious red thong!) have all been great fun.

Al and I had all the right answers to the code flag contest except the final answer. Congratulations to Bob and Lois Geary for their winning answer "See" worthy!

By the way, Doug and Dorrie Hanna are guests of Bob and Lois Geary on board the "Sagacious" this week. We are all long time friends from the Thames Yacht Club and it is great to have them with us on the cruise.

"This is the longest time we have ever spent on a cruise," Doug tells me. "At the longest we have been on a cruise 2-3 days."

It looks like they are holding up just fine and enjoying each day.

We are especially grateful to Bev and Barb for the work they have done in stepping in as substitute fleet captains at the last minute. Every club cruise needs leadership in organizing the special events, making advance reservations, welcoming us, communicating with us and holding us all together!

Thank you Barb and Bev and of course Debra Caruso who is a co-fleet captain! I know we all appreciate Debra's special loving and kind words to us all. Debra, you will never know how much your kindness means to us.

And a special very big thank you to Jennie and Chuck who made so many advance preparations for our cruise as our fleet captains, only to have to unexpectedly pass their responsibilities to someone else.

The party ends abruptly when our launch driver warns us of a rain storm approaching. We hastily run off to the launch and to our boats as the rain starts.

Another great day has ended.

Friday August 11, 2006 "Oh, no! Kendell beat you to it!"

Today's main feature is a planned morning sailboat race to the Newport Bridge. The race starts at 10:00 a.m. and the starting line is declared to be between Buoy #5 and the "Montrose". Not every boat is participating, but many are. Al and I had planned to leave early this morning to start our trip home to New London, but at the announcement of the sailboat race Al changed his mind. He loves a challenge...especially a sailing challenge. At the 9:00 a.m. roll call we declared that we were in the race.

"I know," Al whispered to me, "we will stick two boat oars into our large black plastic bag and stand it up in the stern to catch the wind!" It sounded like a good joke and a good way to reuse the plastic "sail" we had been issued at the dinghy race on Wednesday.

"Four minutes to go!", shouts Bev on our radios. We are approaching the starting line and the old adrenaline starts to kick in. "Three minutes to go... Two minutes... One...20 seconds....the race has begun!" and we are off.

Today is another one of God's gifts to us. Clear, sunny, blue skies and plenty of wind. About an hour later the "Sybaris" is spotted not far from us on our port side. And what is this??!! What is Kendell holding in her hands? It looks black and strangely familiar. Oh, no! Kendell is on the bow of the "Sybaris" and she is unfolding and lifting up the black plastic "sail" from Wednesday's dinghy race! She and her son Jeremy or Ryan are proudly standing tall on their bow with this added "sail".

“Oh, no!” I tell Al. “Kendall is beating us to it! She is using the black plastic bag!”

So be it. Maybe it gained them some honest time.

Coming up to the Newport Bridge Bob Geary radios to us,

“I request that we use GPS time as our finish time.” The “Sea Cup” passes under the bridge at 12:06 p.m. and 22 seconds. We are not the first to pass under the bridge and thus finish the race. And we are not the last. It has been a good fun race which lasted two hours or more.

At this point we depart from the CCNE cruise and head home towards New London. We plan to get as far as Point Judith today but we change our minds when we arrive at 2 p.m. This is too early to end our sail. Where should we go? Out there over the water beckons Block Island and we respond to the siren call. We head for Block Island.

The rest of the day is spent sailing to Block Island out under the open sky and sea. Just sky and sea. What a wonderful feeling to be out in the open like this. This is what I love about the Block Island “runs”. Just sky and sea.

We arrive about 5 p.m. and find the CCNE mooring occupied by the “Seaweed” boat! Wonderful! Marilyn and Gene are not on the boat, but we slowly and carefully maneuver along side of her putting out our bumpers and handling the lines. We are now cozied up to the “Seaweed”. Where are Marilyn and Gene? Probably in town having a lobster dinner and “doing up the town”. We may not see them until after midnight.

Marilyn and Gene return to their boat at 7:30 p.m. and are surprised to see the “Sea Cup” tied up next to them! They had dinner at “Dead Eye Dick's”. Al and I have a nice tour of their new motor boat and good visit with them.

I will close my journal here. Al and I have loved each moment on this week’s cruise and it has been very good for us. Good times and good friends. It doesn’t get any better.

Over and out,

Maren Schober
on board the “Sea Cup”

