

# BLOCK ISLAND WEEK

## FOG, FRUSTRATION AND FUN..

**A**N INNOVATION on the American yachting scene this year was Block Island Week, July 10-17. Members of the Storm Trysail Club, a hard-sailing group of ocean racing men, mostly from the Long Island Sound area, who have all been at some time or other on a boat at sea under storm trysail, conceived the idea of emulating the British and their famed Cowes Week, the oldest organized event in yachting which brings in boats from all over the British Isles for a week of day-by-day racing at the Isle of Wight on the Solent. Block Island Week was to provide six days of daily races for ocean racing yachts in the waters surrounding the five-by-three mile lamb chop-shaped island nine miles off the Rhode Island coast.

When it was announced last fall, the response was instantaneously enthusiastic. Feeder races from nearby yachting centers were arranged to bring boats to Block Island, and 175 vessels from MORC craft to the big 73-footers that rate at the top of the Bermuda Race fleet, signed up. Yachtsmen came from as far as California, Florida, the Chesapeake and Maine, and there was a tremendous outpouring of boats from nearby ports.

The results were the inevitable mixture of good and bad that could be expected from the inaugural session of something on such a large scale. I was still mulling over how to report on the Block Island doings late in the week, when an unexpected windfall solved the problem. At one of the evening sessions of gamming and conviviality that add so much to an event of this kind, there was a Britisher present who said he was a sometime reporter for a weekly London magazine, writing under the pseudonym of R. Mann Stanleigh. Having been to Cowes Week all his life, he felt eminently qualified to compare the American version with the customs and confusion of the original. He had made a few notes with the intention of sending a



Rosenfeld

Typical Block Island Week scene: crowded harbor, fog bank, no wind. Bob Mough's "Inverness" (below), undefeated in three races held, was boat-of-week.



CLASS A

- (1) **Geronimo**, James H. Grove, New York (12);  
(2) **Gemini**, William Ziegler 3rd, Stamford (12);  
(3) **Northern Light**, A. Lee Loomis Jr., Storm Try-  
sail (11); (4) **Black Watch**, Dr. George W. Brooks,  
Larchmont (14).

CLASS B

- (1) **Inverness**, Robert W. McCullough, Riverside  
(2) **Thunderbird**, T. Vincent Learson, Amer-  
ican (6); (3) **Duster**, George Hoffman, Storm Try-  
sail (14); (4) **Kittiwake**, Humphrey B. Simson,  
New York (19).

CLASS C

- (1) **Storm**, A. E. Lunders Jr., Stamford (3); (2)  
**Sallygaster**, Charles F. Stein 3rd, Gibson Island  
(30); (3) **Rampant**, Centre W. Halmberg, Hunt-  
ington (24); (4) **Dolphin**, John Lockwood, Storm  
Trysail (40).

CLASS D

- (1) **Pursuit**, Richard F. Sheehan, Larchmont (3);  
(2) **Shearwater**, Thomas R. Young, Riverside (6);  
(3) **Volunteer**, D. P. Robinson, Ram Island (tie)

- (11); (3) **Ziphius**, Dr. Skip Sheldon, Royal St.  
Lawrence (tie), (11).

CLASS E

- (1) **Freebooter**, Anthony Widmann, Noroton (4);  
(2) **Navajo**, William L. Mover, 20 Hundred (8);  
(3) **Seafarer**, John Fales, 20 Hundred (11); (4)  
**Chanteyman**, E. L. Raymond Jr., Riverside (11).

MORC

- (1) **Jack Rabbit**, Ralph Heinzerling, Manhasset  
Bay (4); (2) **Medea III**, Richard L. Carlson,  
ELISS MORC (5); (3) **Capri**, Garrison R. Corwin,  
American (9); (4) **Red Pepper**, John R. Gever,  
Noroton (11).

SPECIAL PRIZES

Gerald Abels memorial for first place—corrected  
time Class B in the around Block Island race—  
**Inverness**.

Concordia Trophy for Concordia sloop or yawl  
with best score for the week—**Winnie of Bourne**,  
John Parkinson Jr., New Bedford YC.

Island Sailing Club of Cowes Tankard for first  
on corrected time in around Block Island race—

**Julie**, Paul Campbell, Indian Harbor YC.

Club trophy best three-boat score for week:  
Stamford YC (**Storm**, **Gemini**, **Bolero**) 37 points;  
second, tie between New York YC and Storm Try-  
sail, 59 points.

Outstanding Performance Trophy, **Inverness**,  
three first places, plus second overall in around  
Block Island race.

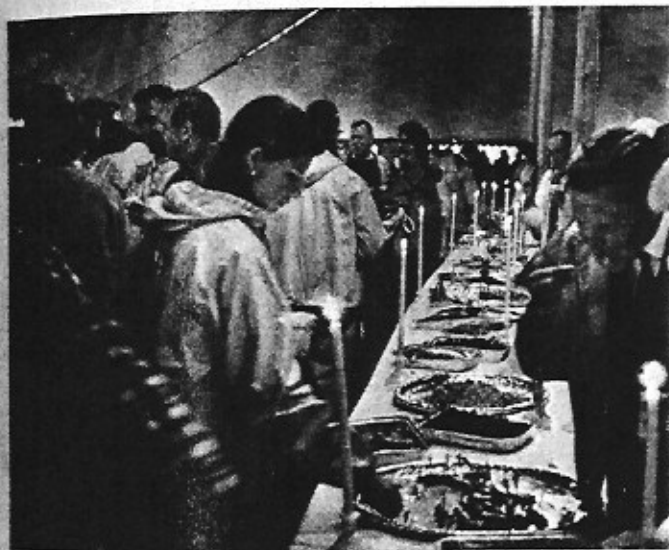
Results Of Feeder Races

American YC from Rye: Class A and fleet, **Chee**  
**Chee V**, Phil Handleman; Class B, **Sun Dance**,  
Clinton Lloyd; Class C, **Shearwater**, Tom Young.

Essex YC: Class B and fleet, **Fortune**, Mrs. Pat  
Duane; Class A, **Zephyros**, John Baringer.

Ida Lewis YC from Newport: Class A and fleet,  
**Moorca**, Paul Nicholson, Jr.; Class B, **Seafarer**,  
John Fales.

New Bedford YC: Class A and fleet **Kahili**,  
Henry Huidekoper; Class B, **Trupa**, Paul McBride.



Festive spread for opening party (top). Class B start action, "Dolphin"  
in foreground (above). "Nobody here but us gulls," (right, top). "Wait,  
there's a boat." Message board at headquarters, viewed by typically-  
garbed lady (right)

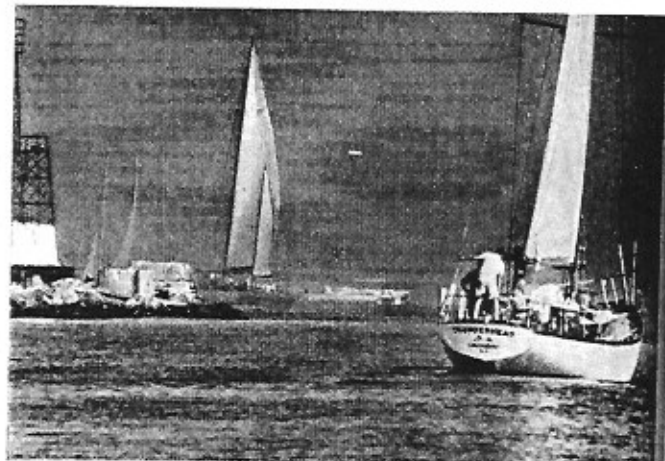




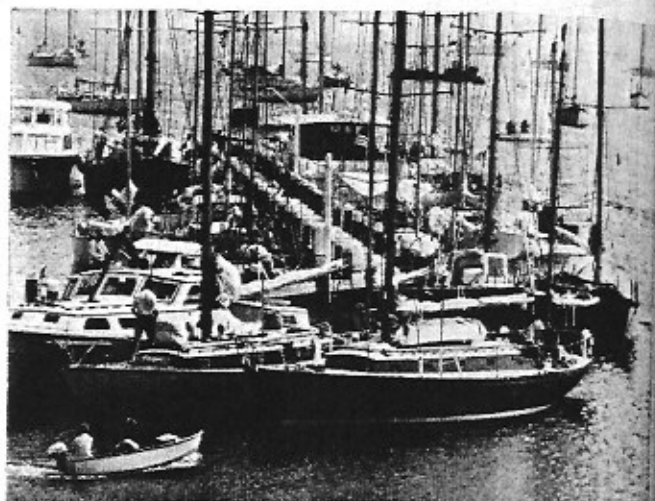


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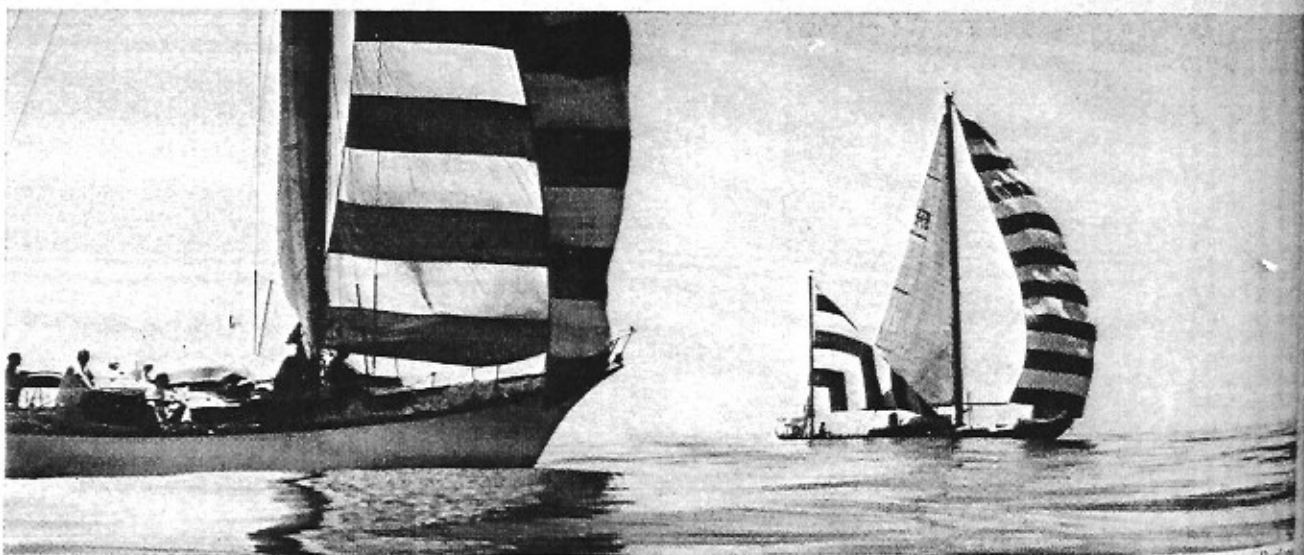
Bill Luders' "Storm" (above) undefeated in Class C with delicately-balanced "double slot" rig. Out of the sunshine into the fog (upper right) at Salt Pond jetty. Champlin's Dock was crowded (right). Typical frustration (below) of around-island race: "Thunderhead" (left) and "Gemini"



Rosenfeld



Agneta Fiske



Barlote

## BLOCK ISLAND WEEK

story back to his London publication but had missed a deadline and wasn't going to use them. If they would be of any use—

The offer was forgotten as the party continued, but when it was over, a sheaf of paper was found lying on the cabin sole under where Stanleigh had been sitting. Idle riffling of the salt-stained pages developed into active curiosity, and the upshot was that the

notes of the pseudonymous, or shall we say mythical, R. Mann Stanleigh are hereby reproduced as one man's impression of Block Island Week.

On top of the sheaf of papers was something headed "General Comment." It was written on the back of a receipt for a refunded airplane ticket marked "Cancelled; fog" and continued around the edges of a tattered ferry schedule.

Magnificent! (R. Mann Stanleigh

had written here) The Americans have done it! In their very first try they have produced that splendid combination of confusion, chaos, frustration and a jolly good time that is the essence of Comes Week. Much teeth gnashing, yet universal resolve to come and try again.

In quantity of results am reminded of that lamentable occasion early in Victoria's reign when a severe depression

(Continued on page 86)

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### The Berry Islands

Another and more convenient target is the Berry Islands area, best visited en route to or from Nassau. In the southern Berrys, one huge and two smaller marinas serve as customary stop-overs along the Nassau-Miami run, and as bases for the excellent fishing in the vicinity of Northwest Channel. On the other hand, the northern islands of the Berry chain are seldom visited, in spite of their accessibility. Although sand bores block the direct routes across the western banks, the eastern shores are steep-to and indented with interesting anchorages. Little Harbour, for instance, is tucked away under a high cay and is as pretty as can be found in the islands. In the northern part, side by side, are Bertram Cove and Slaughter Harbour, the former exposed to the north and the latter depending on shoals for protection from the south, but a little further around is Bullocks Harbour, easily reached from the northwest, where a snug anchorage exists just behind the cay with the light. If you want to be alone, get off the Northwest Channel-to-Sylvia thoroughfare and make a swing around Great Stirrup, then set your course directly for Cat Cay via Mackie Shoal marker.

These island jewels lie basking in the sun, in a climate tempered by the warm Florida Current and regulated

by the Trade winds, surrounded by waters so clear that all the reflected colors of the shallow bottom are seen vividly at the surface. But perhaps it's wrong to extoll these alluring attributes and maybe it's just as well that a sometimes angry Gulf Stream is there to shield this unspoiled archipelago from too heavy an invasion of this cruising Shangri-la.

### GADGETS & GILHICKIES

(Continued from page 54)

No doubt, with this little extra effort, the life of an engine can be prolonged considerably. I expect this 18-year-old mill of mine to serve me for at least another five years, and judging by past performance, it will still be dependable, reliable, and ready to go any time it is needed.

Editor's note: There is a point of potential trouble in the two valves used to regulate the engine's operating temperature, i.e. the bypass and regulating valves. If both should be (or become) closed while the water pump was working something would have to give—and with a big bang!



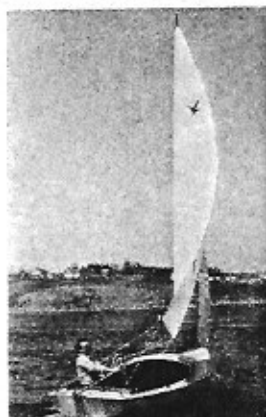
### BLOCK ISLAND WEEK

(Continued from page 52)

sion over Western Isles wiped out entire program at Cowes. Overheard one chap call this "Some snafu." American Indian term? Must check that. In view of British comparison and meager racing results am tempted to paraphrase that stirring accolade to the RAF with "Seldom have so many laboured so much for so little." Hundreds of chaps, sailors and islanders, put in thousands of hours on arrangements etc. etc. and they were splendid. All well ashore, but frustration afloat from combination of fog, too much wind, too little wind and some difficulties with race instructions. Good boats still prevailed. *Inverness*, beautifully sailed, top boat. *Storm*, *Geronimo*, *Pursuit* also good, but many others unfortunately thwarted, and—

Here the statement ran off the edge of the timetable, but the rest of the notes describing Black Island Week were in chronological form on slightly soggy paper. The following, then, is the main body of R. Mann Stanleigh's notes.

Sunday: Arrived Block Island too late for finish of feeder races due to rain that broke three-month drought. Much wind, fog. Air connection cancelled; forced to take ferry. Taxi from ferry to hotel. Cabman, actually a stout woman, asked how the weather was



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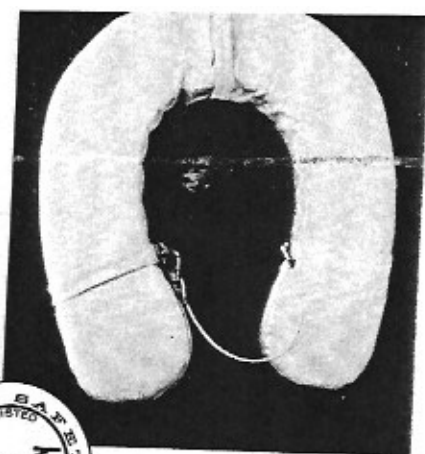
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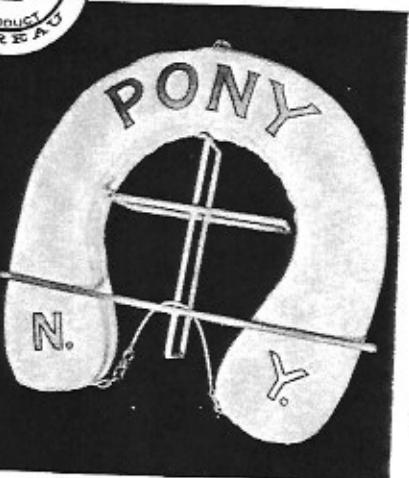
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in America. Expressed confusion.  
Thought was still in America. Chuckle  
for answer. "Well, yeah, but we're  
kinda independent here."

Was told yachtsmen were being given  
party by governor of shire of Rhode  
Island. Found large group, seemingly  
fisherfolk in colorful rain garb, stand-  
ing in tent. Discovered women present,  
also dressed like fisherfolk. All holding  
paper cups and talking. This was  
yachtsman's party. Later heard native,  
who could be distinguished from  
yachtsmen since he was carrying a fish  
rather than paper cup, say "Sure lots  
of 'em smashed." Confused. Saw no  
evidence of accidents or injuries.

Monday: Dawned bright and clear.  
First view of island. Moors, stone walls,  
low shrubs, sand dunes, salt grass,  
weathered old cottages. Excellent har-  
bour, called Great Salt Pond, over mile  
wide with one narrow entrance from  
northwest between jetties. Yachts a  
splendid spectacle filling eastern half,  
gleaming in sunshine, many rafted to  
large buoys placed there through cour-  
tesy of Army Engineers. Much more  
orderly arrangement than notorious  
Coves "trots." Launches busily plying  
duty; excellent launch service. Race  
called Champlin's Dock. Fine quality  
boats, many top boats. Also many family  
cruisers; youngsters and wives much in  
evidence. All entries rated by Storm  
Trawl Club's rule except little MORC

boats with own rating formula.

Followed fleet on motor yacht. Fitful  
north wind. Impressive parade of  
yachts bow-to-stern and gunwale-to-  
gunwale in channel on way to starting  
area at bell buoy just outside. Confu-  
sion over starting flags. Highly involved  
committee procedures. Great spread of  
sail as classes start at ten-minute inter-  
vals, tacking toward mainland. Stirring  
spectacle. Tidal currents very impor-  
tant—shades of Cowes. Government  
tidal charts much too general for racing  
use. One broad arrow covers multitude  
of back eddies, side currents. Lobster  
pots a discouraging indication how in-  
complete current charts are. Local  
knowledge valuable.

Confusion over starting signals  
caused some to go to wrong mark.  
Wind full of holes. Big yawl *Black  
Watch*, Dr. George Brooks, led fleet  
and saved time. Only lady skipper, Mrs.  
Pat Duane, won MORC class (had also  
won feeder race from Essex). What  
ho, chaps! Much enthusiasm ashore  
afterward; many festivities, large tent  
at headquarters dispensing beer on into  
night. Dress extremely informal, in fact  
scruffy. No old school ties. Much yarn-  
ing, gamming, waving hands ("I was  
here and I had him right under my  
lee" sort of thing). American sailors  
musical chaps. Trombones, guitars, ac-  
cordions in evidence. Much activity in  
island pubs. Sailors dancing, joining  
professional musicians. Trombonist

liked song about some saints who were  
marching.

Tuesday: Fog. Wireless used to give  
notice of postponed start. Restless  
morning fretting at moorings. Fog not  
bad in harbour but hooter at entrance  
moaning steadily; zero visibility reported  
outside. Start signalled four hours late.  
Moderate southwest wind. Fog closed  
in again but fleet nevertheless sent  
away. Much confusion, tooting of  
horns. Navigation and tidal knowledge  
vital. Many boats unable to locate  
marks. Others misunderstood flag hoists  
about location of marks. Frustrating not  
to see racers. Must get a sailing berth.  
Two yachts repeat wins from previous  
day—*Inverness*, lovely 47' Sparkman  
& Stephens yawl in Class B, *Storm*,  
sleek black sloop stripped down like  
metreboat, in Class C. *Geronimo*, Class  
A winner a new yawl designed by Bill  
Tripp, also sailed by him, moving very  
well. Ahead of bigger boats at first  
mark. Understand some big boats went  
almost to Long Island, misunderstanding  
signals on marker location. Pub life  
slightly less active this night, but still  
of splendid calibre.

Wednesday: Fog. (Local phrase  
seems to be "thick o' fog.") And wind.  
Fresh southwester, over 20 knots.  
Strange phenomenon. Breeze stronger  
in harbour than outside. Races can-  
celled for day in morning. This was to  
have been around island race for the  
Tankard put up by the Island Sailing

# BLOCK ISLAND WEEK



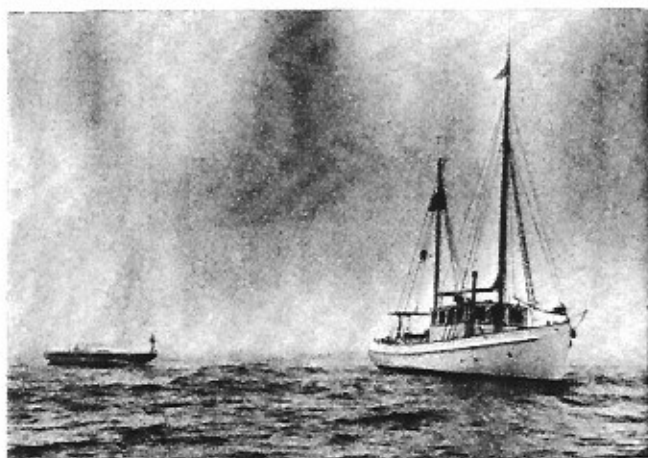
Barlow

Slow going in leftover swells, light air, for Class D leader, Dick Sheehan's "Pursuit" in an unfinished race



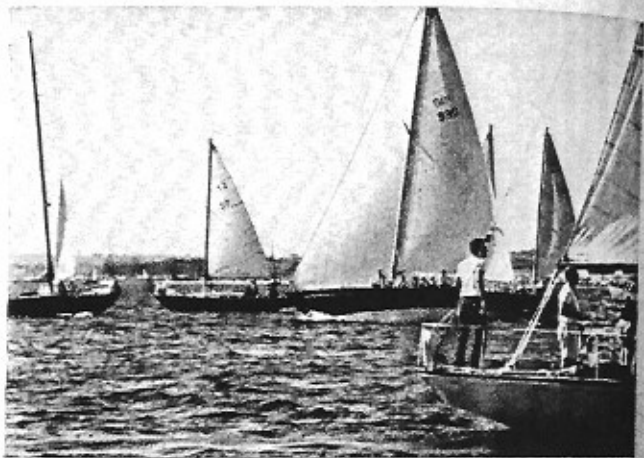
Robinson

Bill Luders, with "Storm" right at bell buoy for Friday start, leaves wheel (and picture) to warn off a barge



Rosenfeld

Typical conditions off Block Island as committee boat "Nor'easter" checks in a feeder race finisher



Robinson

"Inverness" charges through spectators and later starters while tacking for the beach at Friday start

Club of Cowes. Very disappointing. Decided to perform survey on island. Asked natives reaction to yachtsmen. Sample quotes: "They can come any time," restaurant manager; "Best week I ever had," liquor store proprietor; "Selling lots of ice but no fuel; we like having them though," marina manager. Wondered about police reaction. Was told man at top of telephone pole, almost lost in fog, was police chief. Works as lineman. Shouted inquiry up to him. "Fine group," he shouted back. "No trouble of any kind. Best behaved visitors we ever had. No calls for police assistance."

Informal parties developed during day. Much bicycle riding over wind-swept moors in fog. Evening festivity billed as clambake in special tent known as Job's Hill. Interested to see clambake. Found menu to be lobsters, corn, no clams. Over 1,200 served in long queues. Reminded of wartime Britain. Cold, windy evening. Fog cleared from harbour by late afternoon, but still blowing over hills from sea at nightfall. Loud jazz band, much violent performing of strange tribal dances by younger set in tent. One girl

dancing as five lads alternated as partners by crawling through each others legs, leapfrogging over backs. Girl oblivious to lads; never changed expression. Oh for the waltz!

Thursday: Clearing. Light breeze in harbour. Another attempt at around-island race. Made pierhead jump to Class C sloop asking for someone with naval signal experience. They claimed unable fathom committee signals and that circular ambiguous. Deemed assignment easy until began to read circular. Much violent argument as to meaning of paragraph under Course Four. Advised captain to ask committee boat. "Must never do that," he said. "Only way out," my answer. "O.K. You ask them," he said. Virtual calm at starting area. Boats milling. Signal flags hanging limply; unidentifiable. Hailed committee. "What course for Class C, please?" Bellowed answer "It's all in the bloody circular!" Another chap at opposite end of committee boat called over quietly, "All but MORC sail Course Three." Expressed thanks. Start a shambles of boats unable maintain steerageway. Much shouting, yelling. No collisions, but

many incipient fouls. Committee wisely postponed smaller classes until three bigger ones slowly cleared area.

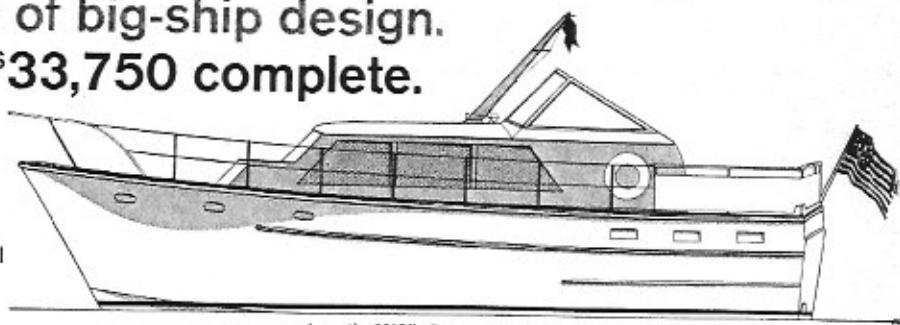
Long, frustrating day. Light winds, foul tides, much sail drill. Protracted view of island's sandy bluffs. Many boats obviously sailing wrong course. Began to worry about time limit. Checked circular. "Six hour limit plus a yacht's time allowance." For all? If one finishes is it a race? Who knows? Very short time limit for this course. Why any time limit for special race? Press on regardless. Julie sailing beautifully out front. Fine breeze at finish. Glorious sailing for last three miles. Finish well up. Excited. Told by committee boat "No race." "No finishes within time limit." Harsh expletives. Warily wended way to harbour. Discouraged. Let down. Quiet cocktails. Late supper aboard. Jazz band in tent at Job's Hill. No one else there. All tired, dispirited.

Decided to move through fleet. conduct survey on various matters. Asked prominent yachtsman, former member of rules committee, "How can stripped-down boats race against regular cruising boats?" Answer choleric. Subject

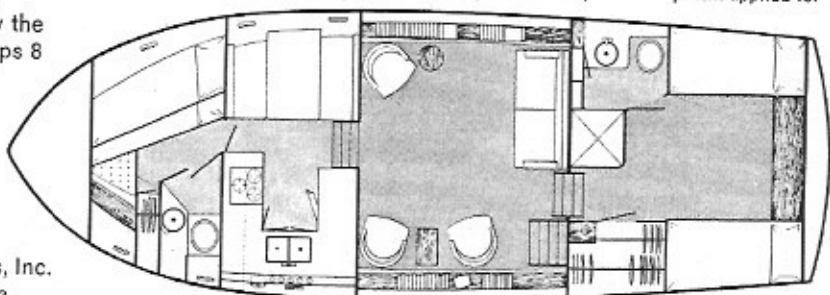


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near apoplexy. Decided to drop that survey; switched to race circular. Sample answers: "We had 13 academic degrees in our crew and we still sailed the wrong course." "We had three lawyers, two naval architects and a navy signalman in our crew and we sailed the wrong course." "My navigator and I almost came to blows, but he finally convinced me. We sailed the wrong course." "Someone should get the Moosehead for that one." "Why all this parage with signal flags you can't see? They sure got themselves all tangled up." "Sure some sailors don't read circulars, but when almost half of them can't understand one, there's something wrong." "It's the first time, and they're bound to learn." "That's the most complete circular I've ever read. Only trouble is, I sailed the wrong course." "Never should have a time limit on a special trophy race." And so on into the night.

Friday: Bright day. Encouraging. Fresh northeaster. Sparkling skies. Expressed enthusiasm. Skipper, veteran in the area, shook his head. "I give it two hours." He was right. Magnificent conditions at start and most stirring spectacle of week. *Geronimo*, *Inverness*, of line and immediately tacked for beach, out of tide in stronger thermals soon thereafter. Leaders, playing adroit tide well by crossing bar and staying to eastward, cleared North Reef

buoy in fresh breeze and away they went. Others, almost all smaller boats, failed to make buoy before wind died. Leaders stayed in good air and moved out steadily. *Storm* just made it, but not in leaders' air. Carried genoa and spinnaker on close reach. Very delicate balance. Only 32 boats in three classes struggled to finish within time limit despite extension to eight hours. Many continued racing after expiration, thinking that once a boat in race had finished it was a race for all. Much bitterness over this later. Hadn't heart for survey however. Poetic justice in *Julie* winning. She had also sailed magnificently on previous day. *Inverness*, *Storm* held form, Cal-40 *Thunderbird* second to *Inverness* for third straight day in B.

No night life. All too tired. Jazz band at Job's Hill playing all by itself again. Soon stopped and lights were turned out. Committee from The Corinthians, arriving by late ferry to take next day's committee duty, had burgee flying from ferry's stern staff on arrival. Different club provided working committee each day.

Saturday: Fog. Thicker than ever. Fleet finally told to proceed to starting area, but fog even worse there. All anchored, invisible from each other. Waited two hours. Finally, through fog, committee gun boomed three times, cancelling race. Many cheers from all sides in woolly blankness.

Eerie sound. Sad finish. Many boats headed home directly. Only small rear guard remained. Dinghy races for consolation. Hot dog supper and prize ceremony on foggy, windy Job's Hill. *Inverness* obvious choice for best performance. She and *Storm* both undefeated in own class, but she finished ahead of *Storm* in Tankard Race the one time they raced each other.

The summing up: noble experiment; excellent idea, well organized for first try. Much hard work by many. Wonderful spirit among sponsors. Consensus of hindsight recommendations: no time limit for around island race; simpler instructions and course signals; allow all boats a finish once a class has a finisher. This vitally important or standings for week lose meaning. By all means let's try again (as the chap said about Rome, Cowes Week wasn't built in a day, y'know). Jolly good idea all in all.

#### "BLITZEN" VICTORIOUS (Continued from page 46)

from Waukegan on the west shore to a point some 20 miles off St. Joe on the east shore.

Keen competition within each section kept section leaders well grouped with continuous tacking and covering maneuvers. Among the big boats, *Amorita* came over shortly after the start and headed for Montrose Point.