

# Port Huron-to-Mackinac Race Enjoys Rich History

## A Look at History

BY FRANK STRAUS

### Port Huron-Mackinac

This is the week when boats are scheduled to arrive at Mackinac Island after sailing courses of more than 200 miles through the entire length of Lake Huron. The sometimes grueling Port Huron-to-Mackinac race, which has gone by various official names in its 80-year history, is one of the longest sailboat races on fresh water. Together with its older brother, the Chicago-to-Mackinac race, the Port Huron race is one of the highlights of the Mackinac Island summer season.

Port Huron sailors have a special language of their own. They use many words and phrases unique to their race, some of which are printable. Let's share some of the rich language history of the Port Huron race.

**Bernida** - Name of the first winner of the Port Huron-to-Mackinac race, held in 1925. This 32-foot-long yacht, currently under restoration in a nonprofit effort led by Mackinac Island Yacht Club commodore Bart Huthwaite, preserves the hull lines of the Golden Age of sailing boats and ships. Advances in design during the 1940s and following decades drastically changed the appearance of more modern racers. In 1925, the *Bernida* sailed from Port Huron to Mackinac Island in 49 hours and 50 minutes. Sail lovers hope that the restored *Bernida* can travel the shorelines of Michigan to show her classic lines to people of all ages.

**Carbide cannon** - Finishing

yachters are traditionally greeted by a shot from a "carbide cannon" as they cross the Mackinac Island finish line. Carbide is safer than traditional black powder and can actually be squeezed from a tube like toothpaste. Union Carbide used to operate one of the world's largest carbide-producing factories, in Sault Ste. Marie.

**Cove Island** - Old-timers often recall the challenges of the former Cove Island segment of the Port Huron race course. Queen Victoria's men had reduced the dangers of boating near Cove Island a bit by raising a lighthouse in 1858. However, numerous rocks and shoals lying in wait about the island, and the high probability of mist or fog lying about the mouth of Lake Huron's Georgian Bay, continued to make this former race landmark an edgy spot for racers. The Port Huron race's two current courses no longer approach Cove Island.

**Old goats** - Any man or woman who arrives at the Mackinac Island finish line for the 25th time, after 24 previous races, is at that moment automatically promoted to the rank of "Old Goat." It is not clear what the connection is between yachters and goats, but some people say it has something to do with spending two to four days of hard labor out on Lake Huron without access to a bathtub.

**Pickle boat** - The last boat to finish the Port Huron-to-Mackinac race is unofficially dubbed



Yachts are docked at the Island in this vintage photo of the race week. (Photograph courtesy of Tom Pfeiffelmann)

the "pickle boat." The phrase has nothing to do with the supplies in the boat's galley and is actually a very old epithet that dates back to the days before electric refrigeration. Fish flesh spoils quickly, so slower fishing boats had to dunk their catch in brine while returning to port, thus creating pickled fish; from this practice, the custom arose of calling slower sailboats "pickle boats."

**Pink Pony** - One traditional gathering place for successful yachtsmen is the "Pink Pony" bar and grill on the ground floor

\*Please turn to page 15



## Peace Frogs

Horse Corral Mall on Main Street  
(906) 847-6144

## Voted Best Fudge In Michigan

—Detroit News, 3 Years In A Row!



Ryba's  
Fudge Shops

Mackinac Island

Mackinac Island Fudge  
Ice Cream  
10 Flavors including  
Turtle and Oreo Cookie

Carmel Corn  
Salt Water Taffy  
Mackinac Island  
Toffee

— 5 Locations —

For great gift ideas, contact us at:  
1-800-44RYBAS www.ryba.com

Jerry Murray



Scott's Cave Trail  
Mackinac Island MI 49757  
www.murrayrealtyle.com

906-847-0000  
fax 906-847-3202  
cell 906-430-0308

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Mackinac Island Public School Proposed 2005/2006 Budget

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on July 28, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. at the Mackinac Island Public School Library, the Board of Education of Mackinac Island Schools will hold a public hearing to consider the district's proposed 2005/2006 budget.

The Board of Education may not adopt its proposed 2005/2006 budget until after the public hearing. A copy of the proposed 2005/2006 budget is available for public inspection during normal business hours at the Mackinac Island Public School's Central Office, Mackinac Island, Michigan.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony and discuss the school district's proposed 2005/2006 budget. Following the public hearing, the Board of Education may adopt its 2005/2006 budget, not less than seven (7) days following the public hearing.

**The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.**

This notice is given by order of the Board of Education.

Patricia Martin, Secretary  
Board of Education  
Mackinac Island Public Schools