

Sailors Enjoy Challenge of Mackinac to Manitoulin Race

By Eric Fish

The fourth sailing of the Mackinac to Manitoulin yacht race had a little bit of everything - good winds, poor winds, protests, victories, and milestones - but the common thread was enjoyment.

"It was a great group and it was just a lot of fun," said Mackinac Island Yacht Club Rear Commodore Dave Rowe, who sailed with Mike Foster and Sam Kovalak aboard Brent Murphy's boat *Killarney*.

The race, called MacMan by the sailors, was founded in 2004 to promote sailing in the North Channel and around Manitoulin Island in Canada. It begins annually on Mackinac Island and finishes at Little Current, Ontario.

"I think the sailors have a wonderful time," said Margaret Van Camp, Little Current Yacht Club commodore.

This year, 25 boats were registered for the event, but Mrs. Van Camp said 23 actually raced.

The course consists of two legs, which can be sailed independently. The first leg is an overnight passage from Mackinac Island to Gore Bay, and the second is the next day, from Gore Bay to Little Current. The second leg promotes more entries from Manitoulin Island, and Mrs. Van Camp said eight boats sailed only in the second leg.

On the first leg, boats found 15 knot winds and waves two meters high, and the fast, rocky conditions were too much for the St. Ignace boat *Dragonfly* to handle.

"Those two meter waves just sort of did them in and they turned," Mrs. Van Camp

said.

Dragonfly is skippered by Steve Sjogren and crewed by his wife, Martha, and the couple's twin 11-year-old sons. The family raced in the annual Fourth of July Around the Island Regatta earlier in the month and gave the MacMan race a shot.

"If you were ever going to get seasick, you were going to get seasick on the first leg of the race," said Mr. Murphy, captain of *Killarney*. "We were sad to hear they had to drop out."

Following the rough waters and high winds, sailing was much quieter. Mr. Murphy said the boats normally reach Gore Bay and finish the first leg at 7 a.m. the next morning. He said *Killarney* finished the leg around 7 p.m.

Winning the first leg Cruising A class was *Hiawatha*, captained by Robert Porter. The Cruising B class pennant went to *Skyship* and the Racing class win for the race's first leg was awarded to *Eagle*.

At Gore Bay, the fleet enjoyed a fish fry hosted by the Gore Bay Rotary Club before departing the next day on the race's second leg.

In a complete reversal, the second leg of the race to Little Current saw little or no wind, and the boats were moving so slow that some of the crew from race co-chairman Dennis Centis' boat, *Azzuro*, went for a swim.

"They said they had no trouble catching up to the boat," Mrs. Van Camp said. "Saturday was the kind of day that a sailor would decide to become a power boater."

Mr. Porter and *Hiawatha* repeated their first leg per-



***Hiawatha*, skippered by Robert Porter, sails toward the starting line Thursday, July 26, for the fourth sailing of the Mackinac to Manitoulin race. Mr. Porter also sails annually in the Chicago to Mackinac, Bayview Mackinac, and Trans Superior yacht races. *Hiawatha* captured first place overall in the Cruising class, winning the Manitoulin Transport Trophy.**

formance and took the Cruising A Class win for leg two as well. The dual leg victories gave *Hiawatha* the overall victory in the Cruising Class and earned the skipper and crew the Manitoulin Transport Trophy. Mrs. Van Camp said that *Hiawatha* was the lone front-runner of the group, finishing the race about two hours before anyone else.

Hiawatha has been a busy boat this summer. In weeks prior to the MacMan race, Mr. Porter raced it in the Chicago Race to Mackinac and Bayview Mackinac Race. In the upcoming weeks, he plans to race in the Trans Superior

Race, which departs from Sault Ste. Marie and ends in Duluth, Minnesota, and sail later this summer on Lake Erie.

Bill Hibbard and his boat *Tack Too* took the Cruising B crown for the second leg and Rick Thompson aboard *on the edge* took the Racing class to round out the second half of the race. Mr. Thompson also won the overall Racing class, partially because Dieter Sallesky and *Eagle* were disqualified from the race's second leg.

The official reason for *Eagle's* disqualification was because the boat rounded

James Foot Patch, a shallow part in the water near Little Current marked off by a buoy, on the wrong side on her way to the finish line. Mrs. Van Camp said the race committee attempted to contact *Eagle's* captain Dieter Sallesky to warn the crew, but couldn't reach them in time.

"It was just an unfortunate error," Mrs. Van Camp said.

The fourth sailing of the race also gave birth to the first female skipper in the event's brief history. Adrienne Gamble of Naughton, Ontario, sailed her boat *Ariel* with a crew of two men, creating another milestone in the young tradition of the Mackinac to Manitoulin race.

Despite the finishes, Mr. Murphy said this particular race, with varied winds and unreliable weather reports, was a bit unnerving at times. In the dull winds, most of the boats stayed together.

"This had very little to do with skill, it had a lot to do with the luck of the draw," he said. "If you had favorable winds where your boat was, you would take off."

Upon arriving in Little Current, the boaters enjoyed a barbecue and the awards presentation.

"You can't have a better crowd of people," Mr. Murphy said. "Usually when you lose races, you're disappointed. We all go to these ceremonies and we clap as loud as we can for the people that beat us. I wouldn't say it's a big competition; it's a big get-together."

"We didn't place in either race [leg], but that doesn't bother me in the least bit."

Mr. Murphy estimated that the boats sailed 12 to 14 hours longer than it should've taken them, but that it was still an enjoyable time. Of all the races he's sailed in over the years, he's identified this one as one of his favorites.

"This was the most fun because of the camaraderie," he said. "I can't put my finger on it, but we all got along so well. I've laughed more than I've laughed on any race."

Gala Celebration Marks Anniversary of Mackinac Bridge

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Little Bear East Arena.

A new bridge commuter token was dedicated to bridge designer and engineer David Steinman in a special ceremony Thursday.

Ironworker stories were told at the arena and at Bridge View Park, along with demonstrations of their work on I-beams that towered over the gathered crowds Saturday. A bronze statue honoring the men who built the bridge and the five who died during its construction was unveiled in an emotional ceremony at Bridge View Park Saturday.

A 101-foot-long Erector Set model of the bridge by Forrest Wyrick was on display there, complete with toy trucks and cars on the bridge deck. Authors signed books about the bridge, and commemorative tokens, posters, and T-shirts were sold.

The Oral History Association of Michigan recorded memories of persons involved in the construction and 1957 dedication of the bridge, and amateur radio operators broadcasted from Bridge View Park Saturday afternoon.

A banquet was held Friday night at Kewadin Shores Casino in St. Ignace, featuring a nearly seven-foot-long cake replicating the bridge. The next



The Mackinac Bridge 50th fireworks display in St. Ignace was visible from the Lake Huron shore in Mackinaw City, where this photograph was taken Saturday, July 28. Large crowds lined the shorelines along the Straits to see the colorful display. Fireworks also were shot from Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island. (Photograph courtesy of Michigan Department of Transportation)

day, renowned cake makers James Aslanian and Kevin Pavlina, who made the bridge cake, judged a cake contest, with creations made by local and downstate chefs. Gloria McLennan of TasTCreation of St. Ignace won the event.

Boat lines offered cruises to view fireworks. The traditional amber bridge lights twinkled as an almost-full moon lit the sky, and the weather was warm and calm as spectators climbed aboard boats and stood on the

shoreline viewing the simultaneous fireworks display.

"From my vantage point, all local participants and visitors appeared to be having a great time," said Barbara Brown, a Bridge Authority member who chaired the three-day celebration. "It exceeded all of my expectations and hopes for this event. Everyone was so cooperative and happy, and appeared to be so proud of be a part of this event."

She was assisted in the

preparations by event organizer Anne Ottaway, who has a summer home in Cedarville.

Congressman Stupak brought from Washington a leather-bound Congressional tribute to the Mackinac Bridge from the Congressional Record.

Now, at the MBA's request, Ms. Brown will begin planning a small ceremony to mark the historic opening of the bridge, which took place November 1, 1957.