



The
**Solo
Challenger**



The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society

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Treasurer: Arch Van Meter
Corresponding Secretary/Editor: John Ayres
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John Lubimir
Eric Thomas
Jon Jacobs

Spring 2010

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's hard to believe that it is already April and most of us are anxiously anticipating the annual ritual of commissioning our boats for the coming season. Perhaps you have gotten the fever from attending one of our Open House events already held throughout the Great Lakes (CYC, NSYC, DYC) or attended one of the three Lake Ontario 300 seminars focused on offshore, crewed and short-handed sailing. I realize that these events have already passed by the time you receive this, but hopefully you have been informed of these by email over the past few weeks. If you don't get the GLSS email blasts and would like to, simply visit the GLSS website at www.solosailors.org and sign up.

The past year has been eventful and productive for our organization. Five years ago the only member qualifying solo challenges took place on either Lake Huron or Lake Michigan. With the approval of the Ontario 300 as a GLSS sanctioned qualifying event at the January AGM meeting, GLSS now endorses member qualifying events on all five of the Great Lakes. Our society now truly represents all five of the Great Lakes. Growth and change bring new

challenges to our once relatively small society. We are fortunate that we have a seemingly endless supply of members who are willing to unselfishly offer their time, wisdom, and leadership for the betterment of GLSS. As a result of their efforts, we should have no trouble meeting the current and future challenges that come our way.

The January AGM was a great success due primarily to the efforts and organization of Jo Buckingham. Not only did Jo put together a truly enjoyable event at a marvelous venue, she also won the 50/50 raffle and then donated her winnings to the GLSS general fund.

Three new members were elected to the Board of Directors at the January AGM. Paul Nickerson, Eric Thomas, and Arch Van Meter have replaced outgoing Directors Blair Arden, Tom Hughes and Jeff Urbina. With the election of Paul and Eric, the GLSS now has Directors from four of the five Great Lakes. Many thanks to Blair, Tom and Jeff for their selfless service to GLSS as Directors and to Blair for chairing the Mac Solo race over the past few years.

Many of you may already be aware of a new addition to the GLSS website. Tony Driza has been working overtime setting up a "Members-Only" section which, to date, has resulted in a

noticeable increase in hits to the GLSS website. Understand that the Members Only area is a work in progress and we have no preconceived ideas on where we go with it. For the near term, we are restricting access to GLSS members who have paid their member dues for the current year. We hope to post information and documents pertinent to members, including but not limited to, Membership Directory and Contact List, Constitution and Bylaws, minutes from regular Board of Directors meetings to name a few. We welcome any suggestions and would appreciate any feedback as the Members Only area grows. Feel free to forward any feedback to Tony Driza, me, or any of the Board of Directors and we will do the best we can to address your issue.

The Mac Solo races are fast approaching and the start will occur on Saturday, June 19th. Both the Huron and Michigan starts will finish at Mackinac Island, hopefully before the awards banquet on Wednesday, June 23rd. Since last year's race was agonizingly slow, we're due for a little better luck this year. Jim McLaren is the Mac Solo race chair this year and Dan Pavlat will be coordinating things on the Lake Huron side. Cal Karr is heading up the Race Committee on the Island this year. Both Cal and Jim would welcome any help if you are so inclined and have the time.

From a financial standpoint, GLSS is in great shape. The Treasury is well ahead of last year's budget in terms of cash in the bank, so despite the dismal economy, we don't anticipate any increases in entry fees or dues. Additionally, GLSS has been approved as a 501c(3) organization which provides us with some tax advantages.

In sum, GLSS has a bright future and continues to grow and involve an ever larger population of Great Lakes sailors. Feel free at any time to contact me or any of the Directors with complaints, suggestions, or other input. Hope to see you on the water, but please try to stay well astern.

Jim McDonnell,
President



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2009 GLSS President Jon Jacobs speaks to the GLSS Membership at the 2010 Annual General Meeting

2009 GLSS Sailing Achievements

By Jon Jacobs

One of the highlights of any of the GLSS Annual General Meetings is to recognize the significant achievements of our members. The January 16th AGM at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle in Detroit, Michigan was no exception. We recognized the 2009 winners of the President's Award. These people are the quickest first time finishers on each lake. We had two in 2009. On Lake Superior the recipient was Jeff Roney on "Chas" and on Lake Michigan the recipient was Mark Mahowald on the "Waco Kid".

Five GLSS members were recognized for the completion of 5 Solo Challenges and given a commemorative plaque. There were: Walt Norris, Jeff Urbina, Adrian VanDenHoven, John Ollila and Eric Thomas.

GLSS member, Wally McMinn, was recognized for completing ten Solo Challenges and given the appropriate commemorative plaque.

With the first Ontario Solo Challenge sailed in 2009 and all five Great Lakes now sailing GLSS sanctioned and membership granting events a new award was established. In recognition of the sailing ability, the logistical planning to get to the start line and back home and the time commitment to sail all five lakes (beginning at each start line) at least sometime in ones sailing career, the "Five Lakes Award was presented for the first time to two great sailors and leaders of the GLSS: Wally McMinn and Dan Pavlat.

Congratulations to all of these fine members of the GLSS. They set the standards by which all of us can measure our accomplishments on the beautiful and challenging waters of the Great Lakes.



2010 Notice of Race Postings

Solo Challenge Entry Forms included with this Challenger mailing:

2010- 32nd Port Huron to Mackinac
2010- 14th Chicago to Mackinac



2010 GLSS Solo Challenges

June 19th

32st Port Huron to Mackinac Island Solo Challenge – 230 Nautical Miles
14th Chicago to Mackinac Island Solo Challenge – 287 Nautical Miles

July 17th

2nd Lake Ontario 300 Solo Challenge - 300 Nautical Miles

August 28th

3rd Lake Erie Solo Challenge - 271 Nautical Miles



Solo Sailing my Tartan's on Lake Erie by Paul Nickerson

After sailing centerboard dinghies for 20 years on Lake Erie, bays and inland lakes around the Eastern US, in 1993 I purchased a Tartan 30. It was well rigged for racing all of which figured perfectly into my hopes to do some singlehanded sailing as the kids were going to college and I was hoping to some cruising. Besides, I wanted a better Lake Erie boat and I could still travel with the one-design Flying Scot. After a year of racing the Tartan 30 JAM and getting to know it, I decided to do some serious singlehanded events. Year 1 I had only ventured out singlehanded a few times in perfect conditions.

Our club hosted an active group called the Lake Erie Solo Sailors and I started participating in their events which ranged from 1-2 events to a 160nm triangle sailed in central Lake Erie. The 3 basic steps in becoming a singlehanded sailor start with learning to get the boat in and out of the dock. At Edgewater YC we have perfect docks for single-handing, full length cat walks with wide slips and

wide fairways. I also learned early to pad the dock and not use boat bumpers.

The second step is learning to sail the boat and balance it in all conditions. The most important item for this is a good traveler and a good autohelm. If the autohelm is sitting there working hard the boat is not well balanced. Just like steering by hand, two fingers on the wheel or tiller should be able to control the boat.

Step three is getting your spouse and loved ones to let you go sailing by yourself and trust your judgment and knowledge.

I always tell people that if you are a couple going sailing you are probably sailing singlehanded. By this I mean that probably someone is at the helm and the other person is running around doing most of the work. With singlehanded sailing your mate is the autohelm who you love and trust.

About this time my company decided to move to downtown Cleveland which was only minutes from my boat. All of a sudden I found myself sailing several evenings a week after work and often it was singlehanded. I also discovered the freedom that singlehanded sailing offered. If it looked like a good sunset I was there. If the full moon was rising through the city, I tried not to miss it. Cleveland is the brunt of many jokes but you won't find a better sailing location between the sea breeze, sunrises and sunsets.

After many solo day sails and a couple of shorter distance events it was time to try some longer distance challenges. And with these came 3 more challenges. First was a greater awareness of safety. Jacklines, harnesses, SOLAS flares, first aid, spare parts, ditch bag, alarm clocks, these all took on a new meaning as we were going offshore on Lake Erie.

The second was time management. I'm amazed at how few people have sailed for 24 straight hours, with or without crew. With crew you have a watch system. Solo there are times you want to be sailing the boat and times you let the boat sail itself.



After drifting at 2 knots all night I was rewarded with this sunrise reflection.

There are jobs to be done from maintenance and repair, navigation, eating and sleeping. One of the strangest feelings is the first time you lay down for a 20-30 minute nap while the boat sails. I've gone from the kitchen timers to now using a Watch Commander, a 3-30 minute timer that will gently try to wake you and then sound an alarm that can wake boats a mile away. My first preference is generally sleeping in the cockpit. I'm amazed at how sensitive your brain is to changes in the boat while you nap. I'm also amazed that I can nap while the boat is getting pounded.



On a quiet evening, the full moon rises. The other boat went back in and I enjoyed an 8 knot offshore breeze that filled in for 2 more hours.

The third challenge is patience and determination. When the winds die there is little excuse for turning on the engine. When the winds are howling you want to know you and your boat can handle it.

The rewards of solo sailing to me are many. The first is just being on the water more than if I had to rely on crew all the time. Sunrises, sunsets, the Moon and the stars are all too forgotten and seldom seen on land today.



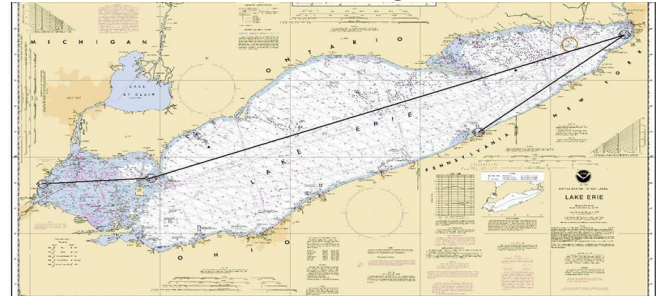
Sailing the Golden Highway into the Sun sure beats rush hour. I have made great friends through singlehanded sailing and had unbelievable experiences and exposure to boats that I would never have otherwise. I have met personal challenges and sat in bars listening to people talk about me not knowing who I was. I have also lost friends sailing (none sailing singlehanded) and as sad as that may be, I know they would have it no other way.

After sailing my Tartan 30 for 10 years and accumulating over 2000 miles in Lake Erie Challenges I purchased a Tartan 37c and 2 weeks later I did a 100 mile solo challenge. All this time I was well aware of a group called the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society which started as a group that did a Port Huron to Mackinac Solo every year starting in the early 80s. The Society grew and in the 90s included a Chicago to Mackinac Solo sailed simultaneously. Today the GLSS now recognizes members who sail solo events on every Great Lake.

The first Lake Erie Solo Challenge was held in 2007 and I couldn't miss it. After a fast start it became a tactical drifter as Lake Erie constantly made new winds. 2008 proved to be a very fast event with excellent conditions throughout on every point of sail but never a beat. Afterwards the skippers said that would be a hard one to beat. Then came 2009

and a challenge that will be even harder to beat. In 3 years the LESC has been sailed by a Tartan 28, Tartan 31, Tartan 10, Tartan 33, Tartan 34, Tartan 3400 and Tartan 37c. Tartan has always built great sailing boats and any model can be single-handed.

The 2009 Lake Erie Solo Challenge



The 271nm LESC course goes the length of Lake Erie and then turns at Buffalo to finish in Erie.

After sponsoring 4 other Great Lakes Challenges in 2009, the final GLSS Challenge of the season was the 3rd Annual Lake Erie Solo Challenge starting on August 29th. The course is from North Cape Yacht Club between Toledo and Detroit to Buffalo, rounding the Seneca Shoal Buoy, and finishing at Presque Isle in Erie. 14 skippers gathered to challenge the 271nm Lake Erie course. While strong NE winds propelled everyone to NCYC, the forecast was for strong westerly winds for the start on Saturday combined with cold weather. The wind went from NE at 15k Friday night to 8-10k from the west Saturday morning for the 1000 start. The winds and seas continued to build all day as the boats headed for the Pelee Passage dead downwind. Running at a constant 7-9 knots with 15-20 knots of apparent wind, all the boats seemed to enjoy the surfing conditions as they made their way through the central basin with plenty of daylight.



Putting Pelee Point behind us the waves build bigger in Lake Erie's Central Basin.

The waves continued to build as the open water behind the fleet lengthened and were now running 6-8 feet and auto helms and accidental jibes started to take their toll. Dan Pavalat in his Tartan 10 broke his mainsheet blocks and was sailing under jib alone. John Lubimir had wrapped his spinnaker and was unable to unwrap it so he rolled it up with his headsail furler and sailed under main alone. It was about this time Dan came on the radio reminding everyone the primary goal was to finish.

During the 2000 radio check-in I was the first boat to catch a new burst of breeze. After an out of control surfing broach the Genoa went rolling up and when things settled down the wind was over 30k apparent and I was surfing at over 12 knots. As night was coming fast my next task was to reef the mainsail.



Nicknack surfs at over 12 knots before the reef goes in.

There were now occasional waves in the 10 foot range and reefing downwind was going to be tricky, but I didn't want to turn upwind. Harnessed and with multiple jacklines I made my way to the mast but I had to stop and admire in awe a couple of surfs while standing at the shrouds with the bow wave at my feet and the bow hanging over the trough way down below. I then slowly worked the main down inch by inch only able to make progress during the surfs when pressure on the main eased slightly. 15 minutes later I was back in the cockpit as a moonlit night arrived.

Nicknack seemed to love the conditions as she sailed at 6-9 knots with just a reefed main on port tack. With the wind forecast to stay west for the night and not shift to the NW until Sunday afternoon it was time to honker down for a cold (low in the upper 40s) night. Apparent wind was still

in the 20s and the auto helm was not working very hard to maintain control. A quick radio check showed the rest of the fleet was down to one sail and licking a few wounds. In rolling up the Genoa I had braided 3 Genoa sheets. One boat pulled out and headed to Sandusky (his home port) with a broken mainsheet and auto helm problems. Three other boats had auto helm problems and other concerns from accidental jibes but continued to sail east hoping to continue and fix things or head for Erie.

The most frequent question I get about singlehanded sailing is "How do you sleep?" First, I run an alarm system (Watch Commander) that cycles every 3-30 minutes. I run this 24 hours a day to make sure I never doze too long and it also keeps me doing certain activities like keeping a log. As the temperature dropped into the 40s it was time to get below and catch some 20 minute naps as *Nicknack* continued to handle the lake just fine and shipping traffic was nowhere to be seen. At one point 3 freighters came in sight but they were soon gone. The 3 skippers with auto helm problems continued to sail east and had to steer by hand. By morning they were all exhausted and decided to head for Erie and as dawn progressed it became obvious just how deep the cold front had gotten. A dark line of clouds sat over the south shore of Lake Erie with what appeared to be waterspouts and heavy rain. The fleet heading to Buffalo was well to the north but the guys heading for Erie had to go right through it.



A tug towing this barge struggled upwind while we enjoyed continued surfing downwind. The dark line of clouds were the remains of the cold front that passed through overnight.

At the 0800 radio check-in the boats were approaching Long Point except for one. Walt Norris

sailing a Hobie 33 had rocketed his way to Buffalo and had turned the Seneca Shoal Buoy in about 21 hours. He reported sustained 18 knot surfs but was heading back into the wind and waves on his way to Erie. By 1000 my Genoa sheets were unwrapped and everyone had cleared Long Point with the winds back down near 20k with a little more sail area exposed. Speeds near double digits were common as the boats still surfed in 5-7 footers. A few clouds with extra wind and rain made their way over the fleet and the winds worked a little to the NW. About the time Walt Norris was finishing in 29 hours and 24 minutes the next boats were approaching Buffalo. Dan Pavalat had a jury rigged mainsheet and John Lubimir had his storm sail rigged on an inner stay for upwind sailing. Having never rounded the Seneca Shoal Buoy in daylight, I was quite happy to finally have a visual reference to it in relation to the 8 windmills that sit behind it.

Heading back upwind meant getting the Genoa reefed before the turn and the main was reefed as it had been for the last 24 hours. Just as I turned the mark a cloud with rain and extra wind moved in from Buffalo for a screaming close reach towards Erie. The cloud slowly moved past and the winds settled to about 20k apparent for a 7-8 knot reach towards the finish. Dunkirk came and went and then the winds lightened with 30 degree shifts. A confused Lake Erie threw *Nicknack* around while still maintaining 5-6k. This continued for a few hours as I followed close to the shore with a couple of boats in sight a few miles behind and further offshore. As I was worrying if the wind would die there was a sudden shift and the sails jibed (after I got the preventer off) and I was sailing in an 8 knot offshore breeze with 3-4 foot swells coming on shore. It was actually a pleasant sail as the sun lit the skies and I could see the finish 6 miles ahead. Looking over my shoulder I was surprised to see I was the only boat enjoying the offshore breeze. 45 hours and 14 minutes after the start *Nicknack* crossed the finish line in one of the most memorable sails one could ever have.

The lessons learned basically revolved around being prepared which I think I was but always have the utmost respect for Lake Erie. If you are not certain about your equipment you are not prepared. Know your limits and your boats limits. All the auto helms that failed were the wheel mount type on 33-35 footers. All suffered problems from over steering or

pounding on the waves. You must balance the helm so the auto helm doesn't work too hard but dead downwind this is nearly impossible to do. Play with the response and gain settings and see how they affect steering in different conditions. These make a big difference in the tendency to over steer, especially in a following sea. Safety can never be overstressed and all GLSS events require skippers stay harnessed to the boat at all times when out of the cabin. Life rafts are also required as well as SOLAS flares and a complete list of required equipment, all subject to inspection. There is a reason these challenges are treated as offshore events.



Future 2010 GLSS Events

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| August 13 | <i>The Kings Cup
Lake Michigan</i> |
| September 10 | <i>Lake Superior Solo
Scramble</i> |
| September 10 | <i>Lake Michigan Solo
Scramble</i> |
| September 11 | <i>Lower Huron Solo</i> |
| September 25 | <i>St. Clair Solo &
Big Al's Steak Roast</i> |

***Be sure to check the website often for
details on these events!***

<http://www.solosailors.org>



It's a small world....

By John Ayres

Finally, I was able to locate the material I was looking to replace on the boat (yes it's from Saudi Arabia –just like the Diesel fuel we burn) and was told, “we do not sell retail and you would have to work through a local distributor”. Mark the salesman recommended a guy (George Dunham) that was familiar with boats - that could do whatever work I needed. He also offered to send George my plans and ask to have George give me a call. Since this was a crazy idea to begin with, I decided that I would answer the phone and listen to what George Dunham had to say. After talking business I decided to ask, “so George, Mark said you had some boating experience”. After hearing about his Florida boat building bust, George said his last project was to build the smallest sailboat to cross the Atlantic single-handed.

Being the dude that supplies all sorts of Solo Sailor information for the Solo Challenger, I decided to get the full story just in case anyone was having the same dreams. It goes like this: former Delta Airline pilot, Hugo Vihlen first set the smallest sailboat Trans-Atlantic record back in 1968 in his 5'11" sailboat “April Fools”. Many years later and just months after Englishman Tom McNally broke the record in an even smaller sail boat (in the year of our Lord, 1993), Hugo Vihlen once again pulled-off a record setter in his smaller 5'4" sailboat “Fathers Day”. (Note: The boat design started out at 5'6" and then was modified to keep the record at the last minute. You might say that the boat length was “Opti-mized”). The voyage took Hugo 105 days (in the George Dunham Built sailboat). Hugo is still around at age 78 and so is Tom McNally who is working with George Dunham Designs on boat parts for another record setting Trans-Atlantic voyage (this time in both directions) in a 3'10" sail boat “The Big C” scheduled for 2010.

It was very interesting paging through Georges scrap-book of the boat building phases of “Fathers Day”, seeing the boat layout and before and after pictures of Hugo with his bleached white beard after surviving on “stretched” 85 days of rations (65 MRE's, 2 gallons of M&M's, 100 cans of Hawaiian Punch 34 gallons of water, one gallon of dried Fruit and no Chips-Ahoy).

George has mounted “Fathers Day”, the whole 5' 4" of her, entombed in an Acrylic display case. The Sailboat is “a work of art with every inch planned-out and optimized for Hugo's journey”. With no interested museums (Yacht Clubs?) here at home, she (Fathers Day) has been claimed by a Maritime Museum in Falmouth England for eternity, to inspire those who will pass before her and spark the imagination of those who venture out to sea.



Don't forget to Visit
www.SoloSailors.Org for the
2010 GLSS Solo Challenge:

- Sailing Instructions
- Notice of Race
- Required Equipment List
- Request for Entry
- Physical Condition of Skippers
- Extra Multi-Hull Requirements
- Sailing Résumé and Solo Passage Documentation Forms