**Ireland – Newport, Rhode Island**

**Chapter 1 - Learning**

What makes a person decide to sail the Atlantic single handed in a boat under 26'. In my particular case it was a dream I have always had since I bought my first boat at sixteen.

At fifteen, when I joined the Limerick Boat Club to row, the Captain said I was too light to row, so they put me coxing. Among the pleasure boats in the club was a 17' half decked sloop, called the "Falcon". One day at the slipway she was being rigged by a senior member nicknamed Admiral Bottles, who asked me would I like to crew. From that day on whenever |I got the chance I was his crew and I will never forget my first sail, being pushed along by the wind. Eventually I passed my sailing test by the sailing captain and was given my ticket to sail in the “Falcon”.

There was a library in the club and the first book I read on ocean voyaging was "The Fight of the Firecrest", written by Alain Gerbault, a Frenchman. In it he described stitching his way with bad sails, and pumping a leaking hull, from Gibraltar via the southern route to New York in the year 1923.

The River Shannon, from the bridge at Limerick, is sixty miles from the Atlantic. The first fifteen miles downstream is very serpentine, having mud-flats, rocks, creeks, islands and marshes. Every weekend, in my own 16’ sloop, which I bought when I was 16, I sailed down-stream with various friends, sleeping under a canvas over the boom, one on each side of the centre board caging or if the tide was suitable to get ashore, in a tent.

At that time I was an apprentice cabinet-maker and I well remember on Saturday mornings looking through the sky-light at work, to see the clouds wondering if we would have to either, beat, reach, or run, down-stream: The Shannon runs south west from Limerick and the prevailing winds run up it, so if the wind was above Force 4, we never got below Bunratty Creek - about nine miles down. Here the river widens and gives no shelter.

There are two islands at the mouth of the Bunratty River, one of which is Greene's Island. Until recently Johnny Green lived there. At that time his father and mother and family lived on the island; farming, fishing and fowling. To me this was heaven and in the winter months I learnt to wildfowl there.

So here I was in my teens, sailing in summer, shooting in the, winter and fishing in between. All of these sports being near the water, which I loved. The weather and its symptoms always intrigued me and I well remember judging dawns while cycling to work, making my own diagnosis. It stood me well in later years.

On the east-west voyage I was only caught out twice at night, with too much sail up. Judging the weather is number one for me at sea and even on land I enjoy watching the sky, barometer, and temperature and listening to weather men on radio and TV. My only daughter still says “its brightening to the west” and laughs if she is visiting when the met men give a forecast.

People still ask me: “Did you read a lot at sea”? Actually, you get very little time at sea, between cooking, eating, sleeping, navigating, sail changing, maintenance, tidying lockers, etc. I had Tabarly's “Lonely Victory”, which is crammed with information on the North Atlantic; Glennan's book of weather forecasting and various books on navigation. These were the only books I had and they were well read. The Glennan book, with illustrations of clouds, etc., is excellent. On later, longer voyages I read whenever time allowed as I like reading. When I was young my mother saw me reading comics close up and since then I have work glasses, which if I got a penny for wiping at sea, I would be a lot richer now.

During those early years I often sailed single-handed and never felt lonely or frightened. Nervous? At times, yes, running home under jib. I often crewed in cabin boats and well remember a week-end in a leaking boat. The skipper woke in the morning and put his finger through a hole in the floor boards and said: "That's great lads we can sleep for another hour or more".

There is one lesson I learned during those early years in my open boat, “The Irish Rover”, and that is a great respect for the sea. A friend and I were running home under jib on the 13th May, about eighteen miles downstream when we were broached and capsized. I well remember being on the keel, bone dry, but do not remember getting there. Charlie who has been on the tiller, was nowhere to be seen. I know he could not swim and just as I was adjusting to being on the keel, with waves flying over me, from being dry and comfortable, Charlie surfaced. The upturned hull was reasonably high at this stage, as she had not found her air level with the centre casing, for the dagger board. His hands were doing a non-stop crawl on the smooth carvel built hull. After pulling him up, I will never forget his language. After an hour of this, Charlie was beginning to tire and he would not lift his head and shoulders above the waves, which were sweeping the keel from bow to stern. The anchor which had run out with the chain was keeping her head to wind. After each wave you would have to crawl forward after having been pushed back, to be ready for the next wave. Eventually I took a floating jib sheet and rove it through the stem fitting for the bobstay and put a loop around him. By this stage his eyes were bloodshot from salt water and his fingers were white.

If he had been able to swim, I would hardly be alive today. We drifted very close to a beacon marker on Sod Island, its base dries at low water. The springtide was running, at maximum and I said if I left before we came abeam I could swim it, if I took off all my clothes. Sod Island is about half an acre in area with little cover and to be naked on it, unless help arrived soon, exposure would get to you fast.

Anyway, I did not try it. After drifting in this manner for 2½ miles, a friend of ours in a sailing cruiser was seen upwind, coming down on us under bare poles. When he came abeam, they threw us a rope. The rope made contact, but as they were going so fast with a spring tide and a gale behind them, we had to let it go. Any-way Charlie's hands and forearms were numb at this stage. After they had passed us I saw them coming round into the wind and I then saw one of them rowing in a punt. Events happened very fast from then on and in no time we drifted up under their chain bobstay and anchor chain, which were sawing away like chainsaws with every lift she gave to waves, then crashing down into them. Charlie had his two arms wrapped around the bobstay and was being plunged underwater with every fall of the bow. I found myself on the bow, which was covered in blood.

What had happened was the owner got into the punt and told Paddy, who was his crew, to let go the anchor. When Paddy was trying to delay the chain, which was flying out like quick silver, he caught two of his fingers, which were badly torn, and which immobilised him. The owner was carried away in the punt, by the wind and tide, when his boat's anchor gripped.

Eventually I got Charlie up on deck and down the bow hatch. My shins were sore later, 'I can tell you. After unshackling the end of the anchor chain down below, I buoyed it with an old oblong two gallon petrol can and let it all run away. The good folk on Green's Island, who had seen the manoeuvring, picked it up the next day. After rounding up to the punt and getting the owner aboard, everything was O.K. Charlie made a rapid recovery in the cabin, but he told me he was afraid he was going to be whipped out the hawse hole when the anchor chain was running out. Both my knees were raw from rubbing off the upturned hull and were in bandages for two weeks.

Ten years ago I had to undergo an operation to remove a pea sized bit of grizzle, which used to float under the skin and sometimes lock the knee joint. A mouse in the joint, the medics called it.

Often, since then, when I am sailing alone, comfortable in the cockpit and dry, I say to myself that it will never happen again, and so far it has not. It is good to realize the danger. I progressed to a 30' Galway Hooker after selling my sloop. The hooker type is a traditional West of Ireland fishing boat and would be extinct now but for a band of enthusiasts who race them annually. Money being short made it necessary to go for this type, as yachts were expensive. She was purchased for £60 and I made my first sea voyage in her from Galway, on the hom I purchased her, told me she was fast, saying that: "She beat all the yachts in a regatta in Galway Bay". When they were presented with the cup the said: "We would rather money for Guinness", and they got it. She certainly was fast, especially off the wind and
until I married, she served me well up and down the Shannon.

After seven years of marriage, the bug bit again and I decided to build my own boat. Various plans were looked at some of which would cost £50 or more, which amount would go a long way towards materials. So, I decided to design my own sailing boat.

This was done in my garage, by adjusting long thin lengths of wood to form the hull shape. Something like a skeleton of a boat. When this was done, measurements were taken every two feet on the length and every foot from the keel. From these measurements the frames were made and fixed to the keel. She was plywood skinned and had an iron keel. The family and I enjoyed her for many years.

In between all this I still read everything I could about Ocean Voyaging.

At one stage I had seven boats: a sailing cruiser, sailing dinghy, clinker built lake fishing boat, outboard runabout, shooting punt and a rowing punt. Nancy, my wife, has a sister in Dublin, Celia, who rang her asking us to go to Spain with Seamus and herself. Being busy I said to Nance that I could not spare the time, the money was tight anyway. I did not say that I would be bored to death on a beach in Spain. I will never forget Nance's answer: “Sure I know that Pat, all your money is tied up in floating assets”.

It was not selfishness that I had so many boats, four of them were wooden built. Anyone who has a wooden boat will know the work they require.

The children, five boys and my favourite daughter all grew up in them. Two of my married sons own their own boats now and take their children away in them and another fishes lobsters in his boat off the S.W. coast. So it is satisfying for Nance and I to know we have given them an appreciation of nature.

I became aware at some stage in my life that there was one thing I could do well and that was to sail a boat. We all have talents they say, and I do not say it boastfully, but if I get into a sailing boat I feel very confident and happy, knowing that I am completely at home. I would imagine that anyone who takes on an Ocean would want to feel this way, but I have never heard or read about it. They would also want to have confidence in their boat and gear.

**Chapter 2 – The Boat**

Iniscealtra Sailing Club, to which I belong is based in Mount Shannon, Co. Clare. From it, fifty odd sailing cruisers sail on Lough Derg. This is the first and biggest lake of three, which you meet going upstream from Limerick. Being twenty miles long by nine miles at it widest, it affords marvellous sailing water. Here I was in 1985, at 59 years of age, cruising in my own boat and crewing an odd time with my friends in their racing machines.

During the winter months the club runs a series of lectures in a hostelry in Limerick. It was at one of these, when I was commodore, that I met Mike Gill (Col. ret'd.) he described a voyage from Sweden, in a Nordic Folkboat, which he had bought there. They met very bad weather in the North Sea and as a result his daughter-in-law had to be airlifted by helicopter to Norway. Mike and his son, Peter, carried on and eventually made Ireland.

In Garrykennedy, on the Tipperary shores of the lake, I met Mike one week-end in October, he was preparing for a race and asked me to crew with him. At this stage he had sold his Nordic Folkboat and had an International Folk Boat, also built in Sweden of fibreglass, which he had had shipped to Limerick Docks.

During the race, Mike, who is over six feet tall sat to leeward and said: "This boat is not like the others we are racing against, which you have to trim constantly". He was right, she had a long keel with a lead encapsulated in it. We did not win the race but nevertheless did well in light conditions.

I sailed with Mike again shortly after, and he told me the boat was for sale. He wanted a boat that could sail into a harbour he had dug out under his house on the Tipperary shore.

At £8,000 she was a bargain. I said nothing and returned home, thinking: “Here is a boat, on my doorstep that can cross the Atlantic”.

Peter, the youngest of my family, was seventeen at this stage and they were all settled in various jobs. Three of the boys were married and I had three grand-children.

A lot of thoughts buzzed in my mind for the next few days.

I live on the border of Limerick and Clare, which the Shannon divides approx. two miles North of Limerick. Returning home from a meeting on the Thursday after the week-end's racing, I called into our local. After one drink and a think, I rang Nance and invited her to join me. After Nance had had two Brandies and ginger ales, I said to her: “There is a boat for sale up the lake that can sail the Atlantic”. Nance always shoots from the hip, but even so I was amazed. I did not expect to get an easy "yes". In fact I was expecting opposition of some kind at least. "The best of luck to you Pat, I always knew you wanted to do it". She said later "You are not married to-a-fellow for thirty odd years without knowing what he is about":

My brother Pete and I have both owned boats all our lives and yet neither my father or any relations had a yearning for the shining tides. My maternal grandfather, whom I loved, and miss to this day, was secretary to the Limerick Harbour Commissioners and when I was very small, I remember being taken by him to the docks and the quays of Limerick and Liverpool. I was born in what was then known as the capital of Ireland, Liverpool on St. Patrick’s Day, but when my dad who was from Dublin died when I was ten, we came to live in Limerick with my mum’s dad.

My great-grandfather, who hailed from Armagh, married a Canadian when he was a Sergeant Major in Quebec. A Grand Uncle was born in Canada and my grandfather and my grand Aunt Nell were both born in Malta. So maybe that is where I got my love for travel.

I remember as a youth I haunted the docks; watching ships unloading from all parts of the world. After spending holidays in Tarbert Island with my grandfather, when I was thirteen and meeting pilots for the Shannon and sailors home on leave, I decided to go to sea. My mother, whom I had told, saw the Harbour Master before me and he painted a dismal picture of coal boats covered with dust, which put me off.

Anyway, here I was with a free hand from Nance and all the family to sail the-Atlantic. It was not to cross it so much as to see it. All my life, having read about it, I used to picture it and the seas and swells.

Money was the problem. Few people can lay their hands on £8,000. I had two boats at this stage: another Galway Hooker – and a Maurice Griffiths -Yachting monthly class, which I had purchased a year previously. The intention was to sell the Hooker after buying the other, but few people- want a traditional boat. I had a few quid, plus a two year old Liteace van, which I sold for £3,000 and the balance was procured from three life assurance policies, on which I borrowed. The life assurance companies I found charge a very low interest rate, depending on how long the policies have been in force.

Mike Gill, I must say, is a gentleman. I have seen boats sold where even the toilet paper and tea bags were taken out before sale. She came to be mine with two compasses; Stowe trailing log, echo sounder; R.D.F. and spray hood, which was invaluable at sea, as the hatch could be left open. You could also nearly always get out of wet gear outside the cabin, unless you were running. Her biggest asset, I came to realize later, was her storm main and jib. They were both excellent sails. The storm main had an area between a trysail and single reef mainsail. It had a wire leech line sewn in.

Under it alone, or under jib alone, or both, it carried me many thousands of miles. It is the rig I most favour her under, and as you shall see later, it carried us 750 miles in five days, which for a boat under 26’ is not bad.

The boat gave me tremendous confidence. Blondie Hasler’s famous “Jester”, a sister ship competed in the first singlehanded Trans-Atlantic race and many others. Three of my sister ships, also built by Mariehold of Sweden, had crossed the Atlantic. They have also sailed to New Zealand.

Word soon got around that I had bought a boat to cross the Atlantic. The month was November and the year 1985 and I was planning to leave the following year in May/June.

I had telephone calls from two of my sailing friends, within a day of each other, wishing me luck and saying that I would need help, planning etc. As it turned out later I finished up with a Support Committee of seven, each with responsibility for different aspects of the voyage. As each of these friends are busy men and as it was approaching Christmas, we decided to have weekly meetings from the first week in January until departure.In-between tying up my business commitments and studying meteorology, at Adult Education classes, I sailed singlehanded every week-end in fair weather and foul. Lough Derg, being surrounded by mountains for the most part, and having numerous bays and islands is notorious for wind shifts, squalls and short high seas. Conor O'Brien in his book "Across Five Oceans" describes meeting some of his worst conditions there.

Never having had a thorough bred keel boat under me before, I really enjoyed sailing her during that winter. It was a cold winter and it amuses me when I recall waking one frosty morning to find my top denture frozen solid in a glass.

It is one thing to say you will sail the Atlantic and it is another to plan and do it. The enormity of it hit me occasionally. Navigation was my biggest worry, as up to this stage I was only seldom out of sight of land, having only made some passages up and down the west coast of Ireland. The route to take was also a poser, there being a choice of three.

**Chapter 3 – Preparation**

The inaugural meeting of my support committee was held at my house on January 8th, 1986. We elected a chairman, secretary and treasurer. It comprised of seven friends, and I mean friends. Each one was a sailor and a member of the Iniscealtra Sailing Club. When I departed from the Mouth of the Shannon, at the end of May, there was not one item short. Thank you gentlemen.

Each member was given a task, having established the priorities. Most of them were amazed to hear I had little money left after buying the boat, so after navigation followed sponsorship and then the person; safety; the boat and equipment.

My own list of priorities included self steering. I had already written to the major British manufacturers, but their equipment was too heavy for a boat my size. We wrote to Mike Gill's son who was working in Sweden, asking him to find out what the other Folkboats used on their Atlantic crossings.

Sponsorship was high on the list and plans were drawn up for a campaign. Navigation saw me with another friend who taught the subject at adult education classes. He familiarised me with his sextant on artificial horizons. I spent many days, when there was sun, that winter and spring in my garden, taking noon sights.

Our local paper, at this time, heard about my plans and interviewed me, with the result that another sailing friend, Martin Burke, knocked at the door, one wet evening. He had two cardboard cartons containing 26 tins of peas and 27 tins of beans. He had asked his boss at Quinnsworth Supermarket, where he is a butcher, for tins which had been squashed, which are normally given to charity, to be given to me. That was the first of much help and assistance which I received. Later when I approached his boss to thank him, he asked me did I need any more supplies. I told him a list had been made out by one of my supporter's wife. As a result, before I left Limerick Docks, three trolley baskets of provisions, with the-compliments of Quinnsworth, were loaded aboard.

The single, most expensive piece of equipment, would be the self steering. I had told my daughter that without it I could not sail. She immediately planned a "Pat Lawless Trans-Atlantic Dance". When it was over she handed me the bones of a thousand pounds. It was an enjoyable night, with sailors from all parts in attendance at a fiver a head.

My committee arranged for free insurance for the "Iniscealtra", which was the new name I had given the Iniscealtra is gaelic for Holy Island. An island with a round tower and holistic ruins on Lough Derg. The insurance covered the boat until such time as I left the coast. They also arranged free lift out and storage with Brian Cullen of Derg Line Marina at Killaloe. Here I spent February and March, fifteen miles from Limerick, making her seaworthy.

The modifications I carried out are as follows:-

* Boring the bulkheads (two) in the bilge, to allow any water that might enter to go aft to the deepest section.
* Fitting two pumps - one in the cockpit and one in the cabin
* Fitting non-return valves to both cockpit lockers and stern lockers, which would empty into cockpit.
* Fitting bunk locker lids with catches, in the event of a knockdown, or 360º roll, so that contents would be secure
* Replacing spirit stove with Gimballed two burner and grill gas cooker
* Spinnaker pole
* Making and fitting storm boards for windows
* New and stronger shrouds
* New halliards, plus spare foresail halliard. Topping lift, fitting covers over catches: on the inside of locker doors, underneath side decks, to stop contents opening catches.
* Jack-stays for safety harness.
* VHF radio and aerial
* Navigation mast light
* Radar reflector
* Flares
* Fitting two strong washboards. The top one being one-third of height and fitted with two running bolts.
* Hand-holds in the cabin and a vertical bar just forward of the galley.

Word came back from Sweden, advising “Wind Pilot” self steering, manufactured in Hamburg was used by the Mariehold boats. This was ordered and paid for in German marks by another friend of mine, Manfred, who was travelling to Germany. He was leaving the morning after my daughters dance. Some of us were worried that evening, as we gave him the envelope containing £750 in German marks. When he got overheated dancing, he removed his coat and the envelope was sticking out of his back pocket. Carriage, insurance and freight, plus VAT were going to cost £250., so I called on the national airline, without success and then tried T.N.T. I.P.E.C., who very kindly brought it overland, free of charge.

During this time, apart from sextant practice, I studied the two position fix from a video tape.

The safety, and extra navigational equipment were ordered, including-Reeds Nautical Almanac charts. E.P.I.R.B. (Emergency Indicating Radio Beacon). This item is the size of a small transistor radio, which when-activated gives a signal denoting your position. The signal lasts for thirty six hours. Also:-

* Six man life raft.
* Safety harness.
* Watchman Locata Radar Alarm, which warns of approaching shipping at horizon range. It will also give a bearing of the approaching ship and this can be switched to local or distant.

The Seavoice V.H.F. was loaned by a friend, as was the sextant with which I was practising. Another friend presented me with a sextant before I left.

In March I went to the Irish Boat Show in Dublin, where I was interviewed on opening day for a T.V. slot.

International Paints Sales Manager, Graham Hill, gave me a free hand to draw on Antifouling from Derg Line, Killaloe. Hot Can promised two dozen cans, which they delivered the day before departure. Western Marine, Dalkey, gave me a fine pump, which I fitted in the cabin.

A spare storm jib was ordered, along with a trysail. All my other sails -2 mains (one storm), Genoa, No. 2 and storm jib were left for a check out. None of the sailmakers were interested in sponsoring me. The two new sails and repairs, plus the hire of a life raft, cost me £750.

With two of the support committee I visited Jack Coffey, who was the only Trans-Atlantic sailor we knew of in Ireland. Jack invited us to his house in Dalkey and was very helpful. He had taken part in the last. O.S.T.A.R. My birthday had just passed on the 17th March, the feast of Ireland's National Apostle, St. Patrick, which made me sixty. Jack who is an ex Irish Rugby International, looked at me and said: "You will have no problem doing it anyway. Sure you are only a young fellow".

A visit to drydock (doctor) for a checkout at the insistence of the committee, found me hale and hearty. The boat was also surveyed at a cost of £250 and was found to have wear in the rudder pintles. This I knew of when first she was lifted out. The boat was only ten years old but it was nevertheless reassuring.

After ensuring that everything aboard which could move in a roll was secure, the self steering arrived. Looking back it is humorous - the instructions advised the auxiliary rudder blade should be approx. 4" to 6" above the water-line as I later discovered, the stern wave covers it. Neither I, nor any of my sailing friends had, ever seen one before. At this stage it was well known that a 'Harvey Wall Banger' was attempting to cross the Atlantic, non-stop and single-handed.

It is annoying when working to find someone telling you how to do it, even though you know how. Apart from that, unless you ignore them, which is difficult, they annoy and delay you. My advice to anyone planning a voyage, similar to mine, would be to try and get her into the yard of a jail and keep the real Harvey Wall Bangers out.

Anyway I fitted the self steering, which I christened: "Nellie" after my favourite daughter. It was fitted to port of the transom hung rudder. I was advised it was too high - "if you are on a starboard tack it will be out of the water, etc." They say you should never go against either the pilot or instructions, which unfortunately I did, as you shall read later.

The American magazine "Rudder" had a letter to the editor, which I once read, that said: "That article of four pages printed last month on how to buy a boat is all baloney. When I saw her being craned from the trailer, my heart soared - she was beautiful.

Speed, ease of handling and comfort are paramount for single handers. A long keel may not be as fast as the modern fin keel racers, but it gives immense directional, and lateral stability. The only three races in which I entered with her, we had two firsts and a third. We came third in a fleet of thirty two boats, in a race of thirty odd miles; my son and I crewing. Winds that day were gusting Force 7-8 and though we were carrying full main and Genoa off the wind, with the Genoa sometimes poled out, she never once tried to broach, as others did.

In the other two races I was singlehanded for one, and had a friend for the other. Which gives a good indication of her ease of handling, if not her speed and comfort.

Self steering trials on the lake were satisfactory, but with constant wind shifts it was difficult to keep her on a straight course. On the return voyage, when I entered the mouth of the Shannon, which is a dozen miles wide, the same difficulty was encountered.

**Chapter 4 – Trials and Route**

Having a 4 h.p. outboard engine in a well in the stern locker, we descended the one hundred and odd feet on the fifteen mile run downstream to Limerick Docks. The Electricity Supply Board control this stretch of water. At Ardnacrusha you descend in two fifty foot locks at the hydro electric dam.

This was now early May and with my departure scheduled for the end of the month I was kept busy. Navigation took two nights a week, in a friend's house. Sea trials off the mouth of the Shannon in ferocious conditions. Provisions and rigging.

The route I decided upon eventually was the Southern one. My original intention was to have taken the direct route. While it is shorter, it is more hazardous: - depressions, ice, fog and headwinds. Not to mention cold and dampness and the opposing Gulf Stream, which make it difficult, not only for the sailor, but also for the navigator.

Everyone I spoke with advised me to go SOUTH. The only 'yes' for the direct route, as I see it, is that it is the fastest - not that I was going to break any records, but I figured, the shorter the voyage the safer it would be, maybe.

The main dangers as I saw them were: falling overboard being run down, or running into a ship at night; hitting floating objects; whales; navigation; breaking a limb or even losing the mast. If I lost the mast I may not lose my life, but the boat would certainly be lost, and as Nance said my "floating assets".

Two factors eventually decided my choice of route. Navigation, which never grabbed me as it did some of my sailing friends, because I never had a natural aptitude or talent for maths.

Charlie McDonnell (Gybe) of the support committee, who was my professor of navigation, once said: "Pat's main worry is navigation. In this respect one must recall the words of M.J. Rantzen in 'Little Ships Astro Navigation', i.e. it is the man who writes the navigation tables who must be the mathematician, not the navigator, who merely uses them".

The second route was via the Azores, not that I intended stopping there, unless I had gear failure.

A reply from Bob Bunker, whose name we had received through The British Folkboat Association, and who took part in the 1964 O.S.T.A.R., was also very helpful, as he took the Azores route, completing the voyage in 49 days and 18 hours.

Therefore, with the route decided, plotting charts were got and entered for the three legs of the voyage: S.W. to pass between the Azores and down to Lat. 36° N, 1,200 N.M then West on the low powered steamer route for 1,700 miles to the Gulf Stream to Long 64° W. and then the final leg in the Gulf Stream to Newport, Rhode Island, of 600 miles.

Favourable winds and currents present this route as sensible for cruising. Looking back on my return voyage, by the direct route, I would most certainly agree. Nevertheless, the direct route presents a challenge, and that is what it is all about.

The largest of the Galway Hooker type, of which there are three, was also, at this stage, preparing an assault on the Atlantic. She was the 40’ "Cliona" and in fact left Galway Bay the day after my departure from the Shannon. I had read that she received, by way of sponsorship, nearly £20,000. Through the good work of Eddie McCarthy, who was in charge of sponsorship on my committee, we netted £2,500. The largest amounts received were three £200's: one from my sister, Betty, one anonymous, and one from the I.S.C. The balance came from relations, friends, firms and individuals.

Physical fitness never worried me. All my life I had worked hard, and in between had walked with a gun and dog; sailed; fished and rowed. Anyway a boat is a natural gymnasium. After both voyages, apart from a few days, adjusting to land legs, I never felt fitter in my life. On the day after my arrival at Newport, RI, three of my children and some friends and I were dining at the Marina Pub on Goat Island. After the meal I leaned back in the chair and crashed to the floor.

Everyone there looked to see who was the drunk on the floor. Another time, only because I was held, I would have swayed in off a wharf. The first day I came ashore, the road up from the wharf was rolling like the Ocean.

The hurricane season (described as J.A.S.O.N. the initials for the six months June to November) hits the South East coast of the U.S.A. during those months. My departure of late May should see me safely through, as they rarely occur in June. I remember on the 1,700 mile leg to the Gulf Stream speaking on the VHF radio with the nicest skipper en route, a Captain Tosche, a German who promised to relay my position to the M.R.C.C. (Marine Rescue Co-Ordination Centre) at Shannon via Portishead in Wales. They had given me a passage plan and had notified the Azores, Bermuda and the U.S. Coastguards of my route.

M.R.C.C. had arranged with Portishead that should they receive a message it would be passed on to them. In this way my family would know of my safety and progress.

Captain Tosche asked for my E.T.A., which I gave at twenty-one days, which he passed on to the U.S.A. coastguards. He then gave me a weather forecast, saying there was a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico and a gale off Cape Cod, with the latitude and longtitude of it. After that I never even thought of requesting a forecast again.

We seldom know of hurricanes in Ireland, only occasionally getting the remains of one in its dying stages having crossed the Atlantic and they are bad enough. Being particularly interested in weather all my life, I remember asking a couple at a bar in Newport one evening about hurricanes. The last big whack one of them said was in the fifties. The tide surged sixteen feet 12’ above normal boats were in spaghetti on the roads and trees and houses torn down. As a result, Newport has a new waterfront with beautifully landscaped gardens and trees.

It is an historical fact in Ireland that it was hit in 1847 by what is referred to as "The Big Wind" or "The Great Wind" and it was I would imagine a hurricane. There was enormous damage as a result of it and one fact which emerged was that all the tinkers wives conceived, because, it is said: "the tinker men lid on them in fear that they would be blown away”.

Considering it was barely eight months since I had my first sail in the boat, it was now a week to our departure. Everything was in order. R.T.E. inter-viewed me for another T.V. slot. Books I had read spoke of two years planning with last minute rushing around. The only disappointment came on the eve of departure. The boat was blessed in the wet dock; a large crowd of friends and sponsors attended a departure reception in the Limerick Boat Club later, and during this a car, which I was kindly loaned by a neighbour, was stolen. In the car were charts; fresh fruit and vegetables, cigarettes and a marine battery, along with bottles of whisky and brandy, given by well wishers.

**Chapter 5 – Departure**

Funnily enough, I slept well, rising at 0600 hours. Spectators, well wishers, family and friends, including the support committee, arrived. By 1000 hours a large crowd had assembled, including T.V. cameras. As the dock gates opened I motored out under the outboard, to ships sirens, lorry horns and cheering. I remember looking up passing the Pier Head and saw my sister with a long face, in tears; Nance and Helen, I could not see, but much later I heard they had moved back, as they were in tears, also.

Belting down the narrows - more photos - this time from a plane, buzzing us. It had been sent by a local newspaper.

Anchoring at Foynes, home of Ocean sailor, Conor O'Brien, my sons Dan and Peter met me with fruit and veg. and my charts. The car had been located with these items intact. Nance had got onto Chloride and explained the position and they very decently provided another free battery. She, also, bought and sent down more cigarettes. The booze did not worry me. It is interesting to know that spirits, if taken when you are cold or exhausted, push the blood to the peripheries, leaving the vital organs without it. This piece of advice was given to me when I got my free medical, from another friend.

My son, John, is on a tug at Foynes. That evening, with the skipper and crew, after a few pints, we were having tea in the saloon. Walter, the engineer, had been on the tug "Turmoil". In December, 1951, the "Flying Enterprise" had listed when her cargo had shifted in mid Atlantic. For sixteen days the world had held its breath. Captain Carlsen, a Dane, had refused to leave his sinking ship. Eventually the tug "Turmoil" got her to within fifty-six miles off Falmouth Harbour, in ferocious weather, when she finally sank. Capt. Carlsen was taken off and came ashore to world-wide publicity and fame.

Walter, as many others before him, asked me had I ever been out in the Atlantic before. Another two friends had earlier in the year suggested that I sail to Vigo, in Spain, before tackling the Ocean.

When I was on the same latitude as Vigo, outward bound, I was not too far from Lat. 40°N. Below that you are not supposed to receive the North Atlantic depressions, which hit Europe so frequently. So much for Vigo. Anyway, a year later, at my age, was a big thing.

You can be influenced by advice and after Walter had painted a not too rosy picture of winter North Atlantic, Joe, a Corkman, who was skipper, God bless him, said to Walter: "It has been done before Walter". Those words of support are still vivid to me.

After all, I was not sure at that time if I was ever to make it.

Son Pat, who had given me invaluable assistance, had sailed down from Limerick, during the night, in his own boat. So, together we both tacked away from Foynes, down stream to Carrigaholt. Pat sailed back to Limerick that evening and it was not an easy parting. We were both emotional, but tried not to show it. The cracked voices were the only sign.

I was at a mooring, off the pier, as there was still some tidying and stowing to be done. People, well meaning, used to come aboard, some with their children, at Limerick Docks, when I was working. They meant well, but unfortunately were of no help to me.

R.T.E. and B.B.C., that evening, were forecasting S.W. force 4.5-6, for the Shannon area; with gales in Finisterre and Malin. The following day they forecast the same, except for an overcast sky with drizzle, from a weak front.

A five-day chart forecast, kindly given to me by the Irish Met office at my departure reception, was invaluable. It showed a ridge of high pressure to the South of Ireland. The radio forecasts confirmed this with a high 300 miles North of Finisterre.

So it was, at high water on Friday May 30th, at noon, I slipped moorings at Carrigaholt, under storm jib and main in rain and strong S.W. winds - it was not the best of day for a departure. Coming out from the bay, I passed the pier, on which a black labrador was barking furiously.

Once passed the pier, with wind against tide, we were being lashed by every second wave. I had made a flask of Ovaltine and some sandwiches, before departure. At 1600 hours, being wet and cold, I ate under the spray hood. Shortly after this I felt sick and vomited the lot. It wasn't sea sickness, as I knew when I was eating I wasn't hungry, but I said I needed it for warmth. It was just plain nerves. The same symptoms were with me when I left Newport the following year, but I was wiser and nibbled. However, the weather was good, with sun, which is a great help.

Loop Head, the northerly headland of the Shannon, disappeared in poor visibility and looking at my watch at six o'clock, I said: "What am I doing out here - they are all having their tea at home now and watching T.V.". Before dark that evening a trawler loomed out of the mist, at around 300 yards. It immediately turned and went south. By dark, being well clear of land, I stayed on a star-board tack. Instead of a sleeping bag, that night, I slept fitfully in oilskins and boots.

Every two hours I. checked our compass course. Dingle Peninsula, with its outward lying Blasket Islands, was south. This is the most westerly point of Europe. In Ireland they call it: “the next parish to America”.

Shortly after dawn the wind veered N.W. I was able to lay a course for the Azores. According to my log, we were not off the continental shelf. Seas were still lumpy but not as bad as the mouth of the Shannon yesterday.

Repaired bunk lee canvas, which broke during the night. Ever after, unless we were on the port tack, I used the cabin sole, as a bunk, bringing the cushions down. My galley and chart table occupied the port bunk.

The log, for the next few days, reads:-

**Sat 2040 Hours** Did not touch tiller since change of course this morning.

**2130 hours** Overcast all day, but dry

**Sun 0430 hours** Boat on course 236º true. Wind N.W. 4-5

**0530 hours** Hove to wind, clack

**0630 hours** Wind up again and off we go

**0900 hours** Wind eased and had no. 2 jib in cockpit when it increased again. Odd lump of sea flying over bow and into cockpit. Overcast with mist.

**1100 hours** Wind backed to West and eased. Changed to no. 2 jib – first sail change.

**1200 hours** Changed course to South, for maximum speed.

**1345 hours** Changed to full main. Pigeon on board. I christen him Charlie.

**2130 hours** Reefed main for night.

I found it took nearly an hour to change jibs and main sails. The full main with battens and slab reefing pennants is slow. The storm main without reefing gears is faster.

**Mon 0645 hours** Full main

**1100 hours** Wind F.2, but still sailing in moderate swell.

**1420 hours** Up Genoa

**1630 hours** Visibility hardly one mile

**1700 hours** Log not working

**1800 hours** Storm jib and one reef main

**2150 hours** Second reef main. N.W. 4.5.6

Mist all day.

**Tues 0700 hours** W.N.W. F.3. Barometer 1025 M.B. Much the same since departure. Still overcast. Sea short and lumpy.

**1000 hours** Changed to Genoa

**1800 hours** first rise in barometer – 1027 M.B. N.W. F. 4.

**2150 hours** Down Genoa and storm jib instead and took 2nd reef main. Hit the bunk. Wind N.N.W. F.4.5. Doing at least 5 knots.

The log not working was a serious set-back. Dolphins were in my wake the day it packed in. I even thought they might have a go at the rotator. There were three spare rotators aboard for that reason.

I tried another rotator and line, but no good. Am eating well and find I am settling down to a routine. Two boiled eggs in a cup for breakfast. Ham, cabbage and potatoes for dinner.

We have a member from Newport, Co. Tipperary, in the I.S.C. He lives in the Silvermine Mountains - I call him the "Mountainy Man". He boils potatoes every day, even racing. He calls it "Commemorating the Famine".

Two items, purchased before leaving, prove to be invaluable. They are springs with wire hooks and are used for holding antique plates to a wall. They hook onto each side of the cooker fiddle, over the kettle or pots. Never once did they let me down on either crossing.

Boiling water and sharp knives can be dangerous at sea and I never relaxed whilst handling either. The name of the game out there is survival and arrival.

On the third day out, Stormy Petrels appeared, or Mother Carey's Chickens, as they are called. They are roughly the size of our Blackbird and fly erratically, like a swallow. Flying in pairs, they seem to dance on the water. Later I met Shearwaters, which I christened "Gliders". They never flap their wings. I have seen them lifting off the water by just spreading their wings and running with their feet - off they go like a kite. I hated to see them, for they never arrived without bringing strong winds in their wake.

At about this time, I heard my first sonic boom. It is a double bang, at least five times louder than thunder. Charlie (the pigeon) and I were in the cockpit, but he did not seem to mind, but it gave me a start before I realised what it was.

My morale was excellent, bolstered by the fair winds and good progress. It was great to be awakened by the light of dawn. First thing check our course. It was also great to be able to cover the miles by night. Later the wind often died with the sun and often with the dawn.

The winds were steady, I noticed, and unless it blew strongly, did not gust.

**Wed. 0900 hours** Up Genoa

**1000 hours** Full main

**1500 hours** Changed ma to storm main. Now under storm jibe also. Plenty white horses. N.W. 15-6. Overcast, but warm.

**2200 hours** Furled storm main and reaching under jib. Wind W.N.W. F. 6-7

**Thurs. 0700 hours** Changed up to Genoa before breakfast. N.N.W. 3. Sky overcast, but mist clearing.

**0900 hours** Up storm main. N.N.W. 3-4. Speed: 5-6 knots.

**1800 hours** Down Genoa and up storm jib.

**2100 hours** Down main. Under storm jib for night. W.N.W. F5-6.

Very lumpy sea. First sun today - 4-5 hours of it.

Besides the navigation log, I kept a daily journal. On the days when it was too bad to write, or if I did not get time, I always filled it in the next day. I enjoyed putting my thoughts and experiences together. Writing, I discovered, is similar to talking. If you write a letter, you are all but talking.

On Thursday, June 5th, a ship was coming up astern. She had “Equadorian Reefer” painted in large letters amidships. While she overtook me to leeward, we made V.H.F. contact. They gave me a satellite position and promised to relay it to Portishead. (Lat. 44º 51' N. Long. 19.7’ W). I felt greatly relieved, knowing that my family would have word of me. After thanking them sincerely, I hot footed it to the chart and to my amazement it turned out we had covered 774 nautical miles in five days and three hours - the log must have been under-reading from the start. Averaging 15O miles a day was great news. For a boat under 26' long it was terrific and my morale was as high as a kite. My position, by D.R. (dead reckoning) on the chart, was 300 miles astern, but on the same line.

I had voyaged more or less directly, with N.W. winds, to within 400 odd miles of the Azores - in five days. Later, when I arrived home, my daughter Helen's scrapbook revealed a cutting: "Lone Sailor Crossing the Atlantic at a 100 miles a Day". My pace could not, of course, last and it did not. For the rest of the voyage, I never exceeded that mileage, for a given number of days.

The next three days, we covered three hundred miles.

It is funny how it goes at sea, prior to meeting the Equadorian Reefer, I had seen five different ships lights one night. Later I was to notice, nine or ten days could pass without seeing one. Then you might meet one every second day. One thing I will say, they were all very nice. Most of them flashed my position, and that I was well. None of them caused me hassle and always kept downwind. If, by any chance, any of you: merchant gentlemen are reading this, THANK YOU.

The first job, after checking the compass, in the morning, was to put on the porridge. I never tired of it. I had plenty of long life milk, which I kept for it I and I really looked forward to it. The hunger often drove me out of the bunk in the mornings. The eggs lasted three weeks - I only had three dozen - and they never went off. I regretted not bringing more, or even powdered ones, as I like eggs.

The tins I had were all too big. I discovered that, with the exception of Hot Can and Creamed Ambrosia Rice, which you could make a meal of on their own, the others would be left half full after a meal and you would like a change for the next meal. Anyway, it was not easy to keep a half full tin aboard as many the one was strewn around, no matter how well stowed.

Eventually I would dump what was left after opening them, even though I hate waste. The half size tins of beans, peas, macaroni, spaghetti, etc., would have been ample.

Water I had in plenty, but never used it, except for cooking. Apart from bathing my eyes, I never used it to wash. The boat tank held eighteen gallons and I also had 48 x 11, litre bottles, courtesy Ballygowan Spring Water. The Ballygowan bottles were first used, as they were taking up space. I found over the days that if I opened one for breakfast, I generally had enough for my break-fast the following day.

Up to now, I had used the safety harness when going forward. It is a cumbersome apparatus, which restricts movement. I used it two or three times only, later on, in heavy weather.

The fore hatch began to leak, when I was on the same latitude as the Bay of Biscay. Having sealed it with a squeeze gun and mastic, the cabin was now, if anything, very warm. As a result, the only clothes I now wore were a pair of underpants. Whether or not it was the heat of the deck or the fibreglass, I do not know, but the soles of my feet became tender. From then on, I always kept a pair of old socks, in a handhold, near the hatch, for deck work. The top of my ears were tender, which I noticed in the bunk. Whether or not it was the salt or wind, or even sun, I do not know to this day. I had to put sticking plaster on them. From dull overcast weather to a clear horizon, with sun, was marvellous. Charlie was enjoying himself, no end, preening himself daily. My journal of Saturday, June 7th, reads:

"Now south of Bay of Biscay, with Cap Finisterre abeam, over the horizon. Cabin Temp.70º when I woke this morning. Now below B.B.C. shipping forecast areas. Soon will be down to Lat 40º N, and below area of North Atlantic depressions in summer.

Reaching under storm main and jib, with strong westerly. Got up during the night a few times - could not sleep; noisiest and roughest, so far. Boat holding course. The sea was an indescribable green; on fire it was with phosphorous; even running down the windows in green blobs, like bulbs being turned off slowly. Will never forget it."

I was beginning to realise there are a lot of things worth coming out here to see:- The dawns and sunsets were truly magnificent; the ocean on a fine moon- dolphins, bird life, light night, cloud formations and their colours and the blue of the sea. I already have memories for a lifetime.

"Charlie is in better form than I am. That is a good sign of him, for I feel as healthy as a young trout. All my life the Atlantic bugged me, not so much to cross, but to see it. It is marvellous and I am in my element”.

**0730 hours** W.N.W. F2 Baro 1027 M.B. Genoa and storm main,

**1450 hours** Clouds filling in from N.W., fast. 6-7 knots. W.N.W. F.4 Storm jib and main, white crests

**1530 hours** 6-7 knots. Seas breaking and short. Sky now overcast.

**2300 hours** Bunk. Sky now clear - wind steady. Good sunset but high cirrus and mares tails.

**Sunday, June 8th Day 9**

**0600H -** Great sleep and a beautiful day. White horses, but a longer swell after wind of last few days. Could do with a break, as I have worked hard up to now to take advantage of fair winds, which I enjoyed nevertheless. Am I now over the worst of it? Wind W. F.4.

Got another one of Helen's notes. (She darned socks and old pullovers (and put notes in my clothes, when packing them for me. She is one great girl. It is hard to believe the boost to morale, a small note, from someone you love and from one who loves you, can give. They are in the oatmeal today. Thanks Nellie. Breakfast: porridge and long-life milk; Rye King biscuits with cheese and tea.

Have taken two noon sun sights to-date, and, after each one, along comes a ship and gives me a satellite position to within yards. Got a chance today to work out my own sights. Am impressed and reassured. Latitude O.K. Longitude, ten to twenty miles out. Must get a time check.

Cooking, washing up, eating, sleeping, sailing and navigating are keeping me busy. Plus, checking rigging screws, shackles, etc.

Three waves filled cockpit today, but the motion quickly shook them out again. Have to brace myself against motion constantly. Heading south since mid-night, when wind backed S.W. Sun all day, with clouds. Approx. 10 miles from Lat. 40°N - 250 miles N.E. of Santa Maria, the most easterly of the Azores; 600 miles west of Portugal, same latitude as Majorca. Unless wind veers, will go south to 36°N. Being helped by Azores current.

So far, have not put up top washboard, which is only six inches high. I was caught out, a couple of times, with the bottom one out. Waves coming into the cockpit, splash off the cockpit seats and come into the cabin.

Pale diffused sun. Wind now W.S.W. F.6. At 2100 hours, I lash the storm main to boom for night and lash the helm alee. The motion is much easier. Before that, the lee bow used to slam, coming off a wave. It still does, but not as badly. The whine in the rigging is less noticeable, also. Barometer: 1024 M.B. 5-6+7 Kn all day.

**MONDAY, JUNE 9th**

**0700 hours** Good sleep. Wind got up before I left bunk; you ears become very sensitive to its whine. Barometer dropped 2 M.B. during night.

What will I do? After two slices of grilled chopped ham and pork, a fried egg, wholemeal brown bread and marmalade and two cups of tea, I am feeling lazy. Am toying with the idea of trysail. The storm main was too much, at times, yesterday.

The odd breaking crest is flying over us, even under jib. I know I was lucky, on the way down, weather wise, but I worked hard taking advantage of it. (I pondered it, over a cigarette.)

Trysail up at 0930 hours and tearing south for next parallel 5-6-7 knots. I find I have to push myself today -tired, maybe. 1300 hours: Grilled chopped ham and pork, carrots and cabbage, followed by an orange.

Longest waves of voyage, with cross-swell; plenty of whitecaps and cockpit awash, now and then. Bow slamming. W.S.W. F.6. Speed, which I now estimate by our wake, and, I am sorry to say, by garbage going astern, is 5-6 knots.

**1500 hours**  Fine drizzle or mist. First rain since departure. No let up in wind or swell.

**1700 hours** Wind veering to west by 10° and easing now and then.

**1900 hours** Wind northerly and down to F.3-4. Rain ceased and let Charlie out and fed him.

**2130 hours** Bunk. Left storm jib and trysail up for night. Bar 1024 M.B.

**2330 hours** Up. Could not sleep. Temp. 60°. Cocoa and biscuits. Wind light but sailing N.2-3 but sailing for a point, south of the Azores.

 Still a lumpy sea, after two days of Force 6 wind. Plenty of noise, but I can hear that lovely bow wave, through the hull.

Checked navigation light and it is working - good man, Mike Kinsella, who fitted and wired my V.H,F, and Radar Alarm to one of my two batteries. They were fitted to a general fuse-box. (I seldom used the navigation light, unless the Radar Alarm bleeped and indicated a ship nearby).

**TUESDAY, JUNE 10th**

**0630 hours**. Am eleven days out now. A beautiful dawn. The rising sun showing an artists dawn. Wind F.3. Few clouds. After breakfast. Genoa and full main. Wind easing. Gigantic swell.

Looking down, whilst changing to Genoa, from the bow, was like looking into a wide deep valley. A few times I said “She will dip her bows" and I gripped the pulpit stanchions, but she lifted her nose only dipping.

**0810 hours**. Sails down - slatting with long northerly swell, before that had to tiller steer for two hours. Self steering stiff and I know why. The evening before I left Limerick docks, I dropped the shaft in its two half moon clamps, so that its auxiliary rudder was just below the surface. It just goes to show how you can be influenced by people’s opinions. (As I have already described, the instructions recommended the blade should be approx. 4" above the surface.)

What happened when I dropped it deeper was that the nylon top bearing was inside the two semi-circular clamps, attached to the pushpit, restricting the shaft inside the bearing. Up to now, the wind met with had been strong, or else the nylon bearing had taken some time to compress upon the shaft. One consoling factor was that it would steer in strong winds. I decided to raise it at the first opportunity.

Am now 480 miles east of the Azores and rolling, for the first time since leaving, and without wind in the sails, to steady the boat it is dangerous; the deck is particularly so.

**1600 hours** S.W. wind. Becalmed since 0800 hours. Set Genoa first, as still a big swell from N.W. Sky dotted with small cotton wool clouds, Cumulus Humulus – the clouds of fine weather - with a bank of grey clouds on the western horizon.

First day of calm and warmest.

Find, after experimenting, that she will self steer with mainsheet eased slightly.

**2200 hours**: Bunk.

**WEDNESDAY - Day Twelve**

**0630 hours -** Rose, after great sleep, to thick mist. Visibility about 500 yards. Porridge on. Nice to know you were moving during the night, however slowly.

Mist now turning to rain. You know, I have not taken an hour off since I started. Am going to the bunk now with a cigarette. Then, will work out yesterday's sun sight.

Just after a beautiful shower in the cockpit. Wind backed to south and we are on the first port tack since the Shannon.

**0900 hours** Noise of light plane. Must be a shuttle Lisbon to the Azores.

**0930 hours** Shuttle noise again. If it is a shuttle, that cannot leave me too far from the Azores. Tried R.D.F, without success. Can get two stations on transistor, which are directional with my position. Luckily the wind is onto the Island.

Big swell of yesterday down by half. Are we getting into a high?

**1230 hours** Must prepare lunch. Hard-boiled two eggs this morning with my boiled egg. Will have them with grated carrot, onions, beetroot and cabbage coleslaw.

Still drizzling, but wind holding. S.W. x S F.2-3 Bar 1027 M.B.

**1300 hours** Temp. 70° in cabin. Sun breaking through; mist gone and fierce glare.

**1345 hours** Boom beginning to fly about. Saw what I took to be my first bit of flotsom and altered course to investigate. A beautiful turtle, about two feet long, swimming away without compass or log and not in the least bit worried by the 'looks of him'. Becalmed again.

**1600** **hours** Sea calmest yet; big swell gone.

**1700 hours** Sky clearing to N.W. now, with light breeze. Total clearance now with brilliant sun and blue sky. Another turtle plodding the Atlantic, with dolphins leaping completely out of the water.

**1800 hours** Swell now longer. Checked all bottle screws and shackles AGAIN.

Will not get a chance to see Azores now. Was going to disembark Charlie, by air. Anyone want a locker full of pigeon shit?

Sea to the west sparkling, like diamonds. If only to see this blue water, it was worth coming.

**1900 hours** Sky filling in with soft clouds. Becalmed again. Cannot wait to get to Lat. 36° N and those reaching S.W. winds.

**2230 hours** – Wind S.E. and running under twin jibs. Main would not fill, due to swell.

**2300 hours** - Should have brought a whisker pole for No. 2 jib. I find, it will fill running, being lighter, when the main will not. Tiller steered a lot today.

**Thursday June 12th - Day 13**

**0700 hours –** Rose and adjusted sails. Weetabix and back to bunk. Wind E. F.2.

**0845 hours -** Toast and two fried eggs.

**1000 hours** - Plotted yesterday' run and other jobs. Did not wake so fresh today feeling a bit tired. Could have Genoa up, for better speed, but she would not steer herself. There is a fine mist. Doing 3 knots, wind E. F4-5. Anyway, so take a rest, Pa, you worked hard yesterday.

**1100 hours** - Just as well Genoa did not go up - we are romping along. Wind strengthening - horizon clearing.

**1200 hours** – Up Genoa - wind easing.

**1800 hours** - Down Genoa - flopping.

**2000 hours** -No. 2 now flopping. Have boom on preventer all day. Exceptionally long swell.

Dinner today too much for heat, i.e., stew, spuds, cabbage and carrots. I am stuffed after it. Tea much nicer - Tuna, beetroot and potato mayonnaise home made. I never realised the weather would be so hot on this route. If I had, I would have stocked up with lighter foods. Creamed Ambrosia Rice is terrific, as is Semolina and with raisins mixed through it makes them very nice. Neither needed heating. (Luckily I had two dozen of each).

Contacted Greek M.V. "Acarta" and confirmed my position.

Pigeon now dropping Creme de Menthe, wherever he can. He is a nuisance, at times, but has got really tame.

Only 100 miles to Lat 36° N and then we go west.

Heard two jet planes today, first in a long time.

**22.00 hours** - Bunk. Hottest day yet.

**Friday 13th June Day 14**

**0600 hours** - Wind easterly - F.2. Still running under twin jibs.

Bread showing green mould on crust, which I cut off and got four slices. Took tin foil from remaining loaves, as I think it is causing condensation in this heat. Yes, paper wrapping, inside tinfoil, damp. They will get hard and stale, but, I think, it will hold off mould. Eggs still O.K.

Most of my food was vacuum packed in plastic bags and is perfect - oatmeal, biscuits, Weetabix, Rye King, etc.

**1200 hours** - Very confused sea. Wind easterly, with big swell from N.W., and lumps of waves coming from astern. Still under twin jibs. On tiller since 0930 hours, as it needs constant attention. Wind F.3-4. At least we are going south of west.

Have a hard-boiled egg, sardines and beetroot. Had first Mars bar, for elevenses. Beetroot and sardine juice all over cockpit f1oor and me – delicious though.

This is the worst sea motion Sun and clouds, but mostly latter. Strong glare. Wind easing and veering. Jib flopping. Force 3.

**1430 hours** – sun now with intense heat.

**1530 hours** -Full main and No. 2. Sailed until 2000 hours, when becalmed.

Spoke to a skipper Philipino, who said he would relay my position.

**2000 hours** – going for a well earned rest now – before tea.

**2200 hours** – read for a while, then bunk.

**June 14 – Day 15**

**0600 hours** – still becalmed.

**0830 hours** – Rose, after deciding conditions were OK to dismantle self steering. I was lucky with wind direction for the first half of the way down. (After that it was mostly West and S.W.) as on many route you can be lucky. I had read of boats sailing into the Azores High Pressure System, being becalmed for two weeks.

You might say, “Why did you not to go windward and through the Azores, as intended?” Better boat speed and the Azores current decided me. Also when I was under trysail and storm jib, with the strong west winds, she was taking all she could. Anyway, while I always pushed her, I never overdid it.

Am now approximately 60 miles east of and 30 miles north of Santa Maria, the most easterly of the Azores Archipelago. Pretty soon I am looking forward to light reaching and mostly quarterly winds. I am no superman and will have to get the self-steering to work in these light winds.

**1100 hours** - Have Self Steering in cabin - too warm out-side. Trying to get shaft out of tubeing. 'Top nut is welded on. So that is that. There are two nylon bearings at top and bottom of tubeing, through which the shaft runs. Removing the other half of the semi-circular clamp from the pulpit, I fit them around the tubeing at the top bearing. Tightening them at an opposite angle, I hope to remove the egg shape, which is causing my problem.

Not a puff of wind. I come up for air and find millions of sardine sized fish all around and under the boat.

Was refixing self steering to transom and was hanging over the stern, fixing the lower clamps, when I thought I heard a breaking wave. Never, I said, and came up to see a whale, breaking the surface, off my starboard beam. Then others started surfacing. A pod of whales, numbering ten or twelve, going south. Never having seen a whale before, I thought of my life raft. They were on a steady course, about a hundred yards, or more, from me. So I went for the camera. They were beautiful, giving the impression of great strength and power. Only their backs showed and you could hear them spouting. The surface boiled as they submerged. I watched until they went out of sight, which wasn't long; they must travel very fast. If anyone asks me what impressed me most out there, without doubt, that pod of whales comes first.

Finished refitting self steering, which seems much easier to move. Must have some grub. I am only wearing my glasses (!) as temperature in cabin is 73º. Have bread, an apple and blackcurrant juice.

**1430 hours** - Still becalmed. Anther jet.

**1530 hours** - Light N.W. wind. Main and Genoa - just enough to keep sails filled. Wind not strong enough to test self steering, but it was trying. Spotted blotchy fish, about 2-3 pounds, when fixing self steering and it is now swimming in my wake.

**1930 hours** - Close reaching on her own with main eased. Thank God. Wind WxN since

**1800 hours**. Just after tomatoes, hard-boiled egg, beetroot and mayonnaise; cheese, crackers and tea.

Lockers are beginning to empty, so I bring goods from bow and quarter berth lockers and top up lockers under bunks.

**2100 hours** - Doing 5-6 knots for last hour. Decide to leave main and Genoa up for night. Sunset giving every indication of a fine day tomorrow, although barometer is at its lowest, so far, at 1020 M.B.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 15 - DAY 16**

**0100 hours** - Still lashing along - course S.W. Moon and cloud. Had set alarm for 0100 hours. First night carrying full main and Genoa. Made cocoa and ate tomatoes and cheese with Rye King. Temp. 65°.

**0700 hours** - Good nights run. Woke at dawn to find Genoa aback. Put her on course again. Showery overcast dawn. Nellie working much better. Azores on transistor radio, very clear now – abaft the beam.

**1300 hours** - One reef in main and No. 2 jib since1000 hours. N.E. wind F.4-5 now doing maximum speed: 7 knots. Heading west since, also. Taking a while to adjust to new compass bearing after fifteen days.

Unusual sea, short, steep and cresting. Is it because we are to leeward of the Azores? Nellie working great in this quatering sea. An odd crest slops into cockpit. Only 2,800 miles left now.

Pyjamas hanging up to dry in cabin. Got wet changing sails. Wind came up fast. Charlie in his locker - at least he got fed before it came up. Have not worn so many clothes in ages:- Cords, shirt, pullover, socks, boots and oilers.

**1400 hours** -Spent last three hours sitting in cockpit. Never touched the tiller. Was not sure of Nellie in those conditions and it was a pleasure to watch her. Changed into my last dry, and clean, pair of under-pants. My arse always gets wet in oilskins, when sitting on fibreglass - from condensation. Temperature down to 65° today.

Last of my first toilet roll, after 1300 miles. That would make a good T.V. advt.

To a visitor, the cabin would not smell nice: Laundry bag, mouldy bread, socks, long johns, pigeon shirt, etc.

**1500 hours** - Lunch and snooze. Wind down to F.4, but sea still very confused and lumpy. Practically on our stern now. How is it no one told me to bring shin guards. An All-American footballers gear would be very useful, at times, out here.

**1600 hours** -Wind down – N.W. F.3-4. Motion easier. Cock-pit filled a few times today. Sun out. Looking through Anna's homemade bread. She is a good friend of my wife, Nancy, and she baked it. There is fur on it now and I have cut off the best of the last four loaves- got about a quarter from each. Down to my last half-dozen eggs and they are great despite heat. The rolling of boat is supposed to help their life.

**1930 hours** – Nellie only magic. Plotted days run at 130 miles. Had dinner of ham, spuds and cabbage, since, followed by fresh fruit.

Topping lift swivel, at end boom, parted today - a worn rivet. Retrieved it with boat hook. Have just fixed it. After a snooze, delighted with progress -great for morale. Must make supper now and check for night. Still a nice roll.

**2200 hours** - Cushions on floor, rig up and O.K. Sun went down, clean and rosy. One reef main and No. 2 jib for night. Wind now N. F.3.

**MONDAY, JUNE 16th – DAY 17**

**0530 hours** – saw a ship during night, Radar Alarm did not bleep (?)

**0730 hours** – full main and Genoa. Wind S.S.E 2-3. Good clouds, Cirrus.

You would have to love this life of hard work, changing sails and having to brace yourself constantly. I lost the skin from the palms of my hands during the first week but grew tougher new skin, from many sail changes and pulling of halliards and sheets. Upstarts were also a problem from my hands being constantly wet. Now that we are in sunny climes they are O.K. I feel great strength in my arms. When I go forward on deck, I am always very careful, as one is very conscious of falling overboard, especially working on the bow. After leaving the cabin tops rails, forward of the mast, the deck is bare and when I grip anything on deck, in fair weather or foul, it is like a weld. When I empty rubbish, to judge boat speed, I always say: "that could be you (This eventually became ingrained in me).

The only occasions when I had near misses, were both at the mast, while hoisting sails. The first was when she lurched and having to use both hands on the halliard, I was flung against the mast. My shoulder was sore for a couple of days.

The second time, I was very lucky - finding myself going outboard fast. The shrouds are always a great hand-hold, when at the mast, even though they are slightly aft of it. Anyway, I put out my hand and felt the shroud in it. That was the greatest most dangerous moment of the voyage.

My knees were tender at this stage, from changing foresails, I now use a pair of well salted cords, which I kept near the hatch – they are like cardboard.

The 0530 hour start of day has my eating habits gone haywire:- Porridge at dawn and boiled eggs at 0800 hours. Just after lunch now at 1100 hours.

Not that I kept special meal times. Hunger is the best sauce. I ate when hungry. "The time of day, out here, is not important, anyway."

When cooking I always put on extra potatoes or boiled eggs, which can be used later in a salad. Lately they are salad days.

Going to miss tomatoes, I have only three left they are lovely, but then I will have onions, fruit, carrots, spuds and half a head of cabbage.

Beautiful sunny day with Nellie. I seldom mention you (family) because it only makes me lonely, but you are all in my thoughts – always.

These must be the start of the reaching winds to bring me to the West 1700 miles to the Gulf Stream. It is S.E. now and we are on 240°M - the nearest I can get and keep Genoa full.

Sun and full canvas flying. 5-6 knots. Baro 1027 M.B. Wind, S.E. F 3-4.

**1430 hours** -Finished tidying lockers and was reading. Went into cockpit when, SPLASH. A shower of spray came in and drenched me; you never know when one will hit you.

Was wearing my last clean pair of underpants, which were soaked along with pyjamas and towel, which had been airing. Feel fresher now though.

A third of mileage now completed - 2,300 miles remaining.

**1700 hours** - Find I have more time to relax, now that Nellie is working and weather has improved. Have not touched tiller since 0900 hours. Read, dozed, cooked and tidied a lot today.

All the fruit cakes are delicious (baked specially by Liz; Shibby; Mona; Brenda and Winnie.)

Charlie must have got that splash today, also, as he only came out a short while ago.

Pity I did not get to see the Azores. I was going directly to them and within 300 miles when I was pushed east on a dog leg. A-7000 Volcanic Peak on the highest is with lush vegetation abounding on the lower slopes.

**1945 hours** – YIPEE! Just got my position relayed home by Greek Skipper of Liberian Tanker 35º 59 º 25º 13’ W. Feeling great, as it is good to know the family are aware that I am OK and making progress. I worry a lot about them, worrying about me.

**2100 hours** - Tea, sardines, tomato with mayonnaise, Rye; King and Cocoa.

**2230 hour**s - The most perfect day yet: Blue sky and sea with a perfect red sunset. Will leave full main and Genoa up. Wind S.W. F3. Bar 1024 M.B. It’s been a long day, but a nice one.

**TUESDAY, JUNE 17 - Day 18**

**0800 hours** - Morning all. Just up, though I checked now and then during night, otherwise, slept like a log. Twenty-four hours now under main and Genoa. Days run 115 miles.

Toasting remains of bread, with marmalade it is delicious.

**0900 hours** – broad reaching until 0830 hours when wind veered 30º to W.S.W. Now close reaching, with motion lively. Lucky it did not change during night. That is one of the many chances you have to 1ake in this ball game. Sun peeping through clouds now and looking watery. It rained during the night. High Cirrus clouds, with Strato-Cumulus clearing. Thanks for that weather book, Kevin. Kevin O’Farrell is the sole surviving member of a crew of four, who sailed the 30’ sloop “Ituna” from Ireland to New York via the Canaries and Bermuda in the 40's. He told me, they pumped the whole way - existing mainly on potatoes.

**1300 hours** - Not eating much today; cabin temp. 79º, shooting up to 90º with cooker on.

**1400 hours** - One reef main S.W. wind now F.3-4 Baro 1025 5-6.

**1620 hours** - Changed down, to No. 2. Raining. Came up fast. Black sky ahead and to north; ends clearly defined. Wind veered S.W. to West after shower.

**1900 hours** - Short, lively, motion to windward.

**2100 hours** – Another big black mass ahead. The rain I don't mind. Wind shifts are the problem. During the last one, I found we were heading north.

**2130 hours** - Ship south of me, going west also. Impossible to train binoculars with motion of boat, even when you are becalmed. The sea is never, or seldom, idle.

The life raft was stowed under the cockpit floor, which is the most inaccessible place in the boat, and the step leading to the cockpit would first have to be removed. Originally, when I enquired about one, I was advised that due to the size of the boat, a canister type one, lashed on deck, would be swept overboard.

The valise type, which weighed 75kgs, fitted ideally in the compartment designed for an inboard engine, and there it would not be tossed around. Often, up to this, I had pondered on this matter, along with a survival kit, containing iron rations and, also, with my emergency beacon. I think in this regard I was like someone who is afraid to make a will in case he might die. Anyway, the emergency bean was kept in the locker, nearest the hatch.

Mike O'Donnell of my support committee, will smile when he hears that I did a 360º in mid Atlantic. He is Racing Captain of I.S.C. normally when taking down a headsail I head her up into the wind after disengaging Nellie, adjust the tiller with shock coad and also ease the main. This time I did all that, but did not wait for her to lose way. As a result, when I dropped the Genoa she kept going and gybed. That will not happen again.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE `18th Day 19**

**0700 hours** - Awoke at 0630 hours to Radar Alarm bleeping furiously. Leapt up and out but sweet Fanny Adams. What I did find was wind down to 'nil', sea haze and sails slatting. Must put shock cord uphauls on sheet blocks, which will keep them from knocking on the deck in light winds. Find mist now – visibility 500 yards. Spray hood worth its weight in gold as sliding hatch can be left open. Oilskins can be left in it and it makes a fine hot press on a good day.

Relying on radar reflector and alarm now.

**1000 hours** - Have had last two eggs - scrambled. Adjusted Nellie to lightest wind. Another escort of thousands of sardine sized fish. God, but I really enjoyed that1 breakfast. Ate with a fine relish.

**1100 hours** – Wind from W. F.2. Visibility improving. The ocean to myself and Portuguese Men-of-War. Genoa and main, Blue windows in sky. Cabin temp 70° already. Off pyjamas. Just after taking a time exposure shot of me in the nude, to thank the wives of my support committee in some small way, for flags, cheese and cakes, etc.

Checked all rigging screws, shackles and oiled Nellie.

**1200 hours** - Becalmed. Today first day without birds. Charlie basking sun. Banks of mist all around us. Rolling in swell.

**1400 hours** - After my siesta. Lashed boom amidships and let tuck of main hang in hatchway. It hangs down and acts as a fan with rolling.

**1500 hours** W.N.W. Breeze. Genoa and main. 2 knots.

**1630 hours** - Becalmed again. Clear sky. Thrown down with intense heat. 1 should be repacking lockers as they are slowing empty spaces, but it is too warm.

**1800 hours** - Off again. N.N.W. F.2.3. Until 0100 hours hand steering as wind up and down. Banks of mist all around horizon at sunset, which was a clean red ball of fire.

Now find when I am changing, up head sails, that it is easier to leave storm jib and No. 2 hanked to forestay and lashed to deck. Lashed Genoa to deck also for night.

Plenty of flotsam and rubbish for last week. Is it the Azores or low powered steamer route? Coke bottles, plastic bags, rubber, polystyrene and fishing floats, some with marked poles. Fluorescent tubes, hard safety hats.

**THURSDAY 19th Day 20**

**0900 hours** – Baro 1025 M.B. Light easterly breezed Sails barely filling and hand steering. Only heading they will fill on is 220º. Patience my boy. You learn it out here.

Passed what I took to be three sods of turf or peat. Is the “Cliona” ahead of me and is she lightening ship? I had heard they were to have carried some turf to America.

An armada of Portuguese Men-of-war today. I notice they have tendrils below the surface that act like keels. I also discover they can sail upwind. When we sail down on them, they bear away upwind. They are beautifully multicoloured and are transparent like jellyfish. They can give a severe sting and are about ten inches long.

Charlie has a ring on each leg. The starboard ring is red - numbered 10253 G.B.65. Port leg has a green ring. No wonder he lost his way. He has just shit on the log book. Went in for a tin of rice and he goes and shits on my cushion. It’s great to have something to give out about - except for his arse, he is not a bad' sort. My cigarette has shit on it now.

**1330 hours** - Sails down since 1300 hours - No. 2 jib only sail I can keep filled in this light easterly. Who would sail the Atlantic? I would.

**1800 hours** - Just been in touch with nice Brit, who will ask his captain to relay my position. 36º 02N. 22º 37W. My D.R. is very accurate. My noon sun sight not so which I put down to the big swell.

Am now 80 miles west of Azores.

No. 2, just keeping her going to the west. As it is the only sail that will fill in these conditions. Days run 84 miles. Total miles sailed to date 1,655m.

**1900 hours** - Calm sea, but not entirely flat. Long swell from north. Naked in the cabin, very warm - 75º.

Two good things about a calm: you get a rest and some work done.

Tried to cut mould from bread but only crumbs left. Charlie likes it. He is getting fat and I doubt if he could fly very far now. He is now with me eighteen days, which is two days less than myself.

**FRIDAY - JUNE 20th - Day 21**

**0900 hours** – Baro 1025 M.B. Good morning everybody. Brilliant day for anything but sailing. Will just have to wait it out. Was up at 0700 hrs, wind E. F.1. back to bunk. Must be above the six o’clock of a ridge of high pressure.

**1000 hours** - Cleared all heavy goods from port and starboard bow lockers to star board bunk locker as I do not like too much weight in bows, as I already have most of eighteen gallons of water left in the tank in the bow, plus sails, and spare battery made fast to cabin sole. By the time these jobs have been finished it will be too warm for work.

Found a hard boiled egg in tea and sugar locker and grand it was for lunch. Will finish other work on list later. Will have a cigarette. Charlie on the bridge on watch. I am like Long John Silver with his parrot.

I am getting time today to think of my family, who never once showed one ounce of doubt in my Atlantic venture. My support group, who were marvellous, all said they would love to do the same and until such time as they could, this was the nearest they could get to it. Everyone of them told me that they enjoyed being involved over the winter. Also, friends who helped and new friends I made as a result of this voyage. God bless them all, who made this possible. I am enjoying it immensely, forgetting the cold wet clothes and the strong winds. To be able to switch off the bad days, when the sun shines, is a great escape to happiness.

Robin Knox Johnson, who sailed solo non stop on a circumnavigation, was once described by medics as, distressingly normal. I only hope I am the same. I feel very happy and content out here in mid Atlantic, doing something I have read and dreamed of all my life.

Yes, of course, I am lonely at times, especially for my family, which is normal. But, it is not going to last forever and I know that, which is what keeps me going to the West.

I hope some, if not all, of my position reports got home. Am writing this with one leg on the other bunk to counteract the rolling.

Saw my first Sargasso weed, or Gulf weed, today. A beautiful bracken brown of many shades. Reminds me of a tree without a trunk and yet having foliage.

**1100 hours** - Barometer now reading 1030 M.B. Cabin temperature 75°. Butter lately mostly oily and it is fortunate it is the container type.

**2000 hours** - Sea glassy but swell still persists. Dolphins are giving a display of aerobatics and the water is so clear, they can be seen clearly swimming under the keel. A football drifts by - what beach did that come from?

**2100 hours** - First cuppa since breakfast - too warm. Hard work to make a few miles today, flukey east winds until 1600 hrs then becalmed.

**2200 hours** - Hit the bunk in the nude. Cabin temperature 77º

**0130 hours SATURDAY JUNE 21- Day 21**

Radar alarm bleeping and no ships. The second time this has happened! Is it a submarine? Or maybe a high flying plane.

**0830 hours** - Beating at 220º to light S.S.W. wind. Spray hood down. Will hold this course if wind holds, to get south and away from Azores high pressure. Great to be moving after yesterday. Barometer dropped 3 M.B. during night. Sky filling in from north.

**1100 hours** – Baro 1030 M.B. Highest of voyage so far. Nellie trying to work in this light wind. Still on 220° and doing 4 kn. now.

Feel lazy today. Had to force myself out of the bunk, even though I slept well. If this weather persists, will be like a grilled rasher. My hands are gnarled and still shedding skin from hauling sheets and halliards.

When am I to get the reaching wind that prevails in these latitudes?

Today, longest day of year.

**1600 hours** Shower ahead. Wind W.S.W up 5-6 knots. One reef main and Genoa and spray hood up again.

**1700 hours** Grated carrot, onion and sardines, with mayonnaise, or late lunch. Shook reef from main.

**1900 hours** Just had to disconnect Little Nell, as wind light, but she more or less steers herself when reaching.

**2100 hours** Tin of rice with raisins. Cannot eat muesli as it acts as a laxative, but breaking myself into it by mixing it with rice, etc. It seems to have the same effect on Charlie - if he needs it!

**2300 hours** -Sun sparky, but went down red. Wind tomorrow? Bunk. Genoa and Main with Nell in control. Best day's sailing yet – F.2-3-4 from W X N and N.W. all day. Days run 120 miles.

**SUNDAY 22nd JUNE - DAY 23**

**0830 hours** - Charlie took off and circled boat three times. First flight since arrival. Heading now 260º. Wind: W.N.W. Carried sail all night. One is inclined to get blasé out here and 'Ah! Don't bother', but if you did that when would you arrive. Anyway, I have a target. My eldest son, Jim, is getting married early in August.

Physically I am fine, and morale is great, and I must say I am happy out here.

**1200 hours** - More or less heading west since 1900 hours yesterday. Great. The longest day brought me fair winds. Nellie hard at it. Have had three Weetabix as it is too warm for solid food. Cabin now a record 83°. Making 6 knots with wind singing in the rigging. Will reef main soon.

**1700 hours** - Held off reef as I need all sail to drive her through confused sea. Swell from north will counter swell from east. Wind from N.W. Lee rail dipping in waves. Genoa leech flapping - leech line parted - changed to No.2.

**1900 hours** – N.W x N. F 4 – 5. One reef main. Spray flying and bow slamming. Will need to check rigging again immediately this thumping we are getting ceases.

Repaired leech line in Genoa sleeve by cutting slot, where it parted. Fed new line by pushing light wire cable up to slot and tied 'new line to old one.

Estimate days run at 120 miles.

Not worried about lack of sun sights. Still 2,000 miles to go with no reefs around.

Navigation was my biggest worry before departure and now it is my least. I well remember Gerry Corcoran saying: "Sure, so long as you keep going west, you can't miss America, unless you go South of Cape Horn". He was on my support committee and has a great sense of humour.

Taking a sun sight at sea is not the easiest thing. The books tell you to stand at the mast, but most days, even in calm conditions, you would need both hands to hold the mast, never mind a sextant. The only way I found, was to brace yourself in the cockpit. Your two hands are then free with one to actually hold the sextant and the other to adjust the degrees. The last sight, which I took three days ago, was with sweat running into my eyes.

Another few miles to the fold of the North Atlantic Chart, which shows my track from the Shannon.

Wedged between bunks, on floor, having a cigarette. Today was hectic; sail changing and sea motion more than keep you going. Am feeling tired now. But strong and healthy.

**1900 hours** – barometer dropped 2 M.B. to 1027 M.B. and wind, therefore is unlikely to veer. Course now 300º. Just checked and it has veered. Wind easing, speed down and lumpy lop is slowing us.

**2100 hours** - Large shower masses to windward. Heavy rain now. Sea much flatter after rain.

**2300 hours** - Large shower masses on most points of compass. Flaking west now with sheet eased. Large castle type clouds on horizon – will have to watch it tonight. Barometer steady at 1027 M.B.

Until the following Sunday, week showed us being 627 miles further west; the Barometer dropping only to 1022 M.B. Winds were generally from the S.W. and light to moderate, with an odd burst of F. 5-6 and under storm main and Genoa once for 48 hours and storm main and jib for 23 hours.

Showers and lightening were quite frequent. Lightening flashes always caused the Radar Alarm to bleep. When you consider the waves I have met, so far, she is a superb boat, and, a dry boat, considering her size. The lee bow slamming after coming off a wave and making the boat shudder, is the only unnerving experience, so far. Waves coming into the cockpit, an odd time, are part of life out here and are no problem.

Before this voyage, I had seen the cockpit filled on one occasion only and that was whilst doing sea trials.

Now 700 miles from the Gulf Stream and a great chance to get clothes desalted during rain showers, some of which were very heavy. I used to close self-draining cockpit stopcocks and make a tub of cockpit. Drying was the problem, the backstay being my only clothes line. Sometimes, before they were dry, they copped spray. No wonder they used to call the old sailors "salts". After a blow, during the week, when the sun dried up things, there were salt crystals everywhere, even up to the spreaders on the mast. Cabin temperatures hit 90° during the week.

Saved myself a few quid on a haircut. Ran my fingers through my hair and cut off the air above them, butt left hair over ears and nape of neck, and should arrive with plenty to spare. Had a decent wash, also. Ate last apple during week, but plenty of oranges and grapefruit left.

Hate being becalmed at night, as you are a sitting duck if a ship comes out of the night.

Charlie circled boat again and I hope he did what you know out there. Have never seen the decks looking so clean; salt is a great purifier.

Spoke to ship on Friday and got word home and also confirmed my position and chronometer time. The captain said my transmission was 'weak', so I must change battery.

Charlie getting bold and he now perches on cabin top handrail. The weeks have flown and except for sticking plaster, have not had a pain or an ache in a month at sea.

A week of S.W. winds have pushed us to the north; our Latitude now is 37° 56' north.

**THURSDAY 3RD JULY 1986 (day 35)**

Temp 72º. Will leave Genoa up. We are doing 5-6 knots and weather looks O.K., but will have to stand watch. She will not steer herself, with this rig, below force 3. NIGHT LADS.

**FRIDAY 4th JULY, 1986 (DAY 36)**

**0300** Sleep would not come – it must be the dozing during day – going to make cocoa. Wind holding steady. Sky glittering with stars. Temperature 71º.

**0100** Going grand – 5 knots

**0200** Going grand – 5 knots

**0300** Going grand – 5 knots

**0900** Going grand – 5 knots. Temp 72º course 300º. Still W.S.W., force 3. Only 10º off desired course. Stratus with Cirro Cumulouse above it. Must get the porridge on.

**1000** Waves or swell today like a succession of Ferry bridges. Grilling some ham now.

**1100** Sky clearing now and leaving Cirro Cumulouse (mackerel). 24 hours steady going now since 9.30 yesterday – still Genoa and storm main – eating up miles to westward – maximum sail for wind over that period. Thermometer creeping up now - 74º.

**1120** Still close hauled on port tack.

**1200** have storm jib ready if wind increases any more – for sail change – now 3-4. Salt water trousers on too.

**1300** Wind held steady – course 300º steady – temp 80º - no sail change – lashing it Gybe. Very satisfied to get word home yesterday. Today is Independence Day – must have a tot tonight. Writing lee bunk – motion wild going to windward. Anytime I was in cockpit, heat drove me back in. Spray hood gives you too much shelter.

**2100** Wind eased slightly. Less spray flying and little or no slamming now hope it carries us through the night. I suppose Pa Joe is up the lake tonight. He was one good son to me before I left. -Would not say "no" to a pint-and a dance in Martys now. Would like to see the sun setting tonight. Was reading where wave action from a disturbance can be felt 1,000 miles away. Ye Gods and Little Fishes - hope I don't meet any of those disturbances. A bath - change into good pants and shirt - a walk to a pub and a pint would be grand now, and the girls you might meet there.

**2200** Wind now eased but an odd spray flying and rigging still humming away. Force 3.4

You'll never guess what I am eating? A Mars bar. If I know Harry he called another support committee meeting or two - he is a gas man no doubt of that but a nice and sincere fellow.

Did Gybe and crew get to Blighty? I heard the weather is bad up North. Mickey McMahon was also to go. And, how did Austies Armada make out? Will have to wait and see. I was bloody lucky coming down – hope it holds. Last four days and nights a great boost to my westing. Still can't get over how good everyone was to me before leaving.

**2300** Sea flattening with wind decrease. Looks like sailing again tonight. Fairly moving now you can feel her lepping west. The lumpy sea was a bastard. Wind coming up now and again. Temp. 72º Sun. much paler than others.

**2330** At this this time - pale and diffused - not healthy looking and still fairly high

**2340** copper and clear

**2347** Sunset with hint of red - with some Stratus on its skyline.

END Will chance leaving up Genoa, as I predict drizzle or mist. We shall see.

**SATURDAY, 5th. JULY 1986 – DAY 35**

**0130** Ship going west to port. Could barely see her green starboard light – but it was forward – unusual – she had four white lights – one low down aft. Wind force 3.

**0300** Genoa fluttering now and then and odd slam – will adjust Nellie. Wind still steady.

**0500** O.K.

**0900** Still W.S.W – Force 3. 5 Knots.

 Good morning. Same wind, and barometer steady.

**2300** **hours** Barometer has dropped 3 M.B. since 1900 hours. Wind WXS – Force 4. Was under storm main and Genoa for 48 hours until 0900 this morning. Now under Now under storm main and storm jib. Motion very lively, going to windward. It is my favourite rig on her; she sails herself under it and is beautifully balanced. Will have lee bunk if I want it tonight. Saw a 'windog' on horizon (what we in Ireland call a 'butt of a rainbow'), which is a sure sign of wind. Plenty of showers around, also, which are hiding the sunset and it is not looking healthy at all; short deep swell.

 I have been using water from 18 gallon holding tank, in bow, for last few days. I have plenty of bottled left but I want to trim her.

 Had a shower in cockpit, during rain and the pigeon also. He held up one wing at a time to the sky and looked like a rag doll after it. He will do some preening after this. Had f my washing out for it, also.

 Charlie disappeared on Monday - there was no sign of him after changing a headsail. Will miss him, having had him for four weeks, picking him up after two days out. I suspect he fell overboard as the last place I saw him was over the dodger on the safety-line. If the dodger got a puff, it could have thrown him over. No one to give out to now, except myself.

Two, different birds, all white with long forked A tails, chirping.

Spoke to Noel Cummins, from Cork, a 90,000 ton bulk carrier. He told men divorce bill has been thrown out in Ireland. Will have to stay with Nance now. It is a great facility, when you meet a ship, to be able to get word home. It is nearly as good as having a telephone. Most skippers to whom I spoke enjoyed talking to me, asking me how many days I was out and if I was O.K. for everything, etc. They were amazed when they heard I was 60 years of age and a grandfather. They all wished me a safe and pleasant journey.

Was lucky not to have set fire to boat. Had kept a cigarette lighter between edge of bunk and bunk cushion. When I was pulling it out to light the stove, it must have flicked on. A piece of towel roll, wedged there was in flames. Lucky.

Find I have t steer in winds under Force2 les. Spent ten hours at it on Monday. The self steering bearing is still too stiff for light winds.

Half way now to the Gulf Stream, where we turn N.W. for Newport.

It is great, having spoken to a nice guy, what it does for morale. Spoke to a Filipino, who said he would post a card to Nance from Mobile, Alabama. He told me there was a gale off Newport and Cape Cod.

It is amazing what you can learn, when you have to. Six months ago I hardly knew latitude from longitude and seldom did chart work, or used a compass, not to mind a sextant. Colombus and even the early single handers were great men. No self steering, V.H.F. or radar alarms. It is much easier now.

Took my second towel out of its vac pack and it has a beautiful clean fresh smell of the hot press at home.

I find my dead reckoning is very accurate, as once after eight days, without either a sun sight or a confirmation of my position, we were only 25 miles out.

But, that was in reaching, or close reaching conditions and beating would be much more difficult.

Still-finding Helen's notes. She was so thoughtful and loving to think of them as they cheer me up no end and keep me going.

Watchman bleeped and I looked out and saw this huge ship approaching. We passed red to red. M.V. “American” Italian and bound from Norfolk to Tenerife. Good progress.

Another two degree of longitude and we will be on same meridian as St. Johns, Newfoundland.

**SUNDAY, 6th JULY - Day 36**

**0040 hours** - Changed to storm jib. Storm main up now for six days. We have dropped a knot but it is much more comfortable and more importantly it is more secure.

We are now on a heading of 320° and 340 ° is my maximum on port tack. If it veers, will come about. Very satisfied with progress over last four days, and, indeed whole voyage. Could have been held up in an Azores high pressure system. Was I lucky to have been pushed east of the Azores?

Lucky I shortened sail, lightening to south and wind now up - Force 4-5 from S.W. Course: 280°.

**0900 hours** Sky looks tossed, ragged Strato Cumulus. Barometer down 4 M.B. to1023 M.B.

**1900 hours** Barometer down another 4 M.B. to 1018 M.B. Wind still S.W. Force 6. Waves much longer, with lumps between crests, slowing her down, but at least we are on course. Plenty of spray and slamming coming off crests. Still holding storm main and stern jib.

**START OF OUR SIXTH WEEK**

Very difficult emptying bladder in these conditions. Find I have to kneel on floor with bucket and with both hands braced on handholds.

Find my digital wrist watch has gone haywire. One of the buttons must have been depressed. Bought three of them before leaving; two of which were set at G.M.T. and the one on my wrist was set at Irish time and I have kept it at Irish time to give me a link with home. Got booklet on it and best I can do is to fix it seven minutes fast. Prior to voyage I used a mechanical wrist watch but as it was not waterproof, I left it at home. I think you have to grow up with them to be in tune to digitals and computers.

Heavy rain now, which is flattening sea somewhat. A downpour now and wind increasing. Lee deck under now and then. Have mainsheet fed into hatchway, to ease it if necessary.

White water everywhere and had to ease main. Slamming reduced but losing heading. Starboard dodger has come adrift and is kicking up an awful racket.

Very difficult to estimate speed in these conditions. Have entered 4 knots in fog, but I am sure it is more.

Get into oilskins and put a shock cord on dodger. I am not being vain when I say this caper is not for the faint hearted. A wave half filled the cockpit from windward, when I was fixing dodger. Very short swell with deep troughs.

Find this journal a great help. Deeps your mind off slapping of waves, slamming of bows. rolling and shriek of wind in the rigging. But you know, I would not swap places with anyone this minute.

**2200 hours** - Barometer down another 2 M.B. 1016 M.B. will have to reduce sail for night.

**2300 hours** - Main down and secure for night. Put helm down and lashed it. We are jigging away to windward and the motion is surprisingly smooth. Used safety harness whilst on deck, first time since north of Azores. Raining heavily at times now. Sea a mass of breaking whitecaps, with long white foam following them.

I noticed while on deck that the lower jib hank was off the forestay.

An odd breaking wave slams over us. Estimate S.W. wind at F. 7-8.

**2400 hours** the Barometer dropped another 2 M.B. 1014 M.B. Wind still S.W. - Force (estimated) 7-8. I have no wind measuring instruments on board and never saw the need for them as your boat soon tells you when to reduce sail. The only wind indicators I have are ribbons on the main shrouds and backstay, along with the back of my neck and ears. Plus the whine in the rigging.

**2400 hours** – a drop of 13 M.B. in last 24 hours. Raining since 2030 hours.

**MONDAY 7th JULY – DAY 37**

**0045 hours** – Port dodger, this time making a hell of a racket. Easier fixed as it is the forward end and I have shelter of spray hood. Will have a lot of maintenance to do after this. Thank heavens jib gave no trouble.

**0120 hours**. – wind shift to the south; wore ship, i.e., gybed her into the other tack. Heading now 260º. Wind dropping fast – barometer up by 1 M.B. Heavy wind.

**0200 hours** – bunk and little sleep. Like being on the inside of a drum being played. Baro 1012 M.B.

**0530 hours** - Woke to north wind – Force 3-4; adjusted Nellie; rain gone - cold and dry. Back to warm bag.

**0930 hours** - Hoisted storm main wind N.W. Force 4-5. Broad reach 6-7 kn.

Something about this morning I have not seen in any other - it is wild, raw, I don't know, but very beautiful and I feel privileged to have seen it. Nature in a passion of grandeur; lumps of waves on their toes, trying to touch a cloud.

Had safety harness on again on deck. Course 260º - speed 6 knots. Barometer failing to rise in spite of north in wind. There are some things I will never know, as for instance, last night the wind blew in fury for five to ten minutes at a time, the final blast being awesome rand after it the wind decreased by half. Twice during the night I found myself wedged against the inner topsides.

**1100 hours** - First chance to look at starboard topside as something hit it last night which wasn't a wave. No mark to show for it.

Have only one pair of dry pants left now and three others waiting for a chance to dry. Rolling and bucking, but no great spray flying.

Going south of west. Was at 37º N, when plotting yesterday.

**1300** **hours** – 1015 M.B. Temperature down to 70º. Had a Hot Can and cannot praise them enough. Sweets and oranges getting low and will miss them as they are tasty. You miss tasty food, like rashers, sausages, etc. Should have brought some snack food like crisps.

Barometer beginning to creep up and an odd blue patch showing in sky.

**1500 hours** - Still flying it 6kn, getting a few jobs done in spite of rolling. Cloths drying under spray hood.

Today's plotting shows 420 miles to Gulf Stream - then 340 miles to Newport. Approximately another two weeks, if I average sixty miles per day. One thing I notice on this voyage is that you will carry sail when you would never dream of hoisting it.

Pruning last of carrots for grating. Tea: Sardines, carrots, onions and last of mayonnaise.

Was very lucky not to have lost wind vane from self steering. Looked out and saw split pin, which holds frame of wind vane, and it was hanging loose by its nylon cord.

The wind vane frame is stain-less steel, with a nylon sock sleeve laced at its aft end. There are two arms on it which fit into sleeves in the main frame. The top arm has holes in it for adjustment and its sleeve has one hole, which takes the split pin vertically. How long it had been this way, I do not know. When replacing and taping the pin, it fitted in perfectly. I can, therefore, only assume it was held in place by salt, neither arms having moved in their sleeves. I was lucky. The makers advise not to open the split pin ends. I would imagine the nylon cord acted as a sail and lifted the pin out, when the boat was knocked down.

**1900 hours** – Barometer 1017 M.B. up 1 M.B. Showers moving rapidly North South, got one of them with sharp wind increase.

Just put on pants and find the belt needs an extra notch - not surprised. How will you put down the time (?) they asked before I left. Trying to keep steady alone in weather like today is a whole time job. No wonder my hands are gnarled, as even in the cabin you are holding on.

**2100 hours** – Belting West for last twelve hours at 5-6 knots. Wind north for last three hours. Spray is flying at the bow as she leaps forward to meet the waves. I have found, since the Quartering Seas, that Nellie can do a better job than myself, responding to every wind shift. If I had gone by the makers instructions and not caused the tightness in the top bearing, it would have been perfect. Who, however, is perfect? Tiller steering in light winds will not kill me.

**2300 hours** - Might see the sun setting this evening; not too many clouds N.W. wind – Force 4-5 – sea still very lumpy. Spray flying and overflow from deck coming into cockpit.

Reading for last hour on cabin sole, at a difficult angle. Motion wild, but at least when reaching you do not get a whine in rigging. The shrieking in the rigging, last night, was unnerving and I feared for the mast.

Night time, I find, is the worst, as at least in daylight you have something to occupy you. At night, when it is bad, you cannot sleep and only doze fitfully. Also, your morale is low.

A doctor friend told me before leaving, that you are at your lowest ebb at three in the morning; your reactions are slow and the human spirit is weary and depressed. Not the best symptoms for having to go on deck. That, apart from comfort, is why I used to pay particular attention to the barometer and weather symptoms, especially sunsets, before deciding what rig to leave up at night.

I have noted, at sea, that winds are generally constant in strength, unless in showers, which bring squalls. They are also constant in direction and on average, last from twelve to eighteen hours. I would say that for the last hour we are at maximum speed, whatever that is: 8 knots?

Down to my last bag of sweets and trying to spare them. Running out of all the nice things; no wonder I am losing weight. Apart from strenuous exercise, I am on dietary food, i.e., powdered non-fat milk, high fibre biscuits, etc., but have seldom felt fitter, healthier or happier in my life.

**2400 hours** - Wind backed to N.W. Speed down. Mackerel and mares tails above Cumulus to west. Should see sun setting this evening - copper glow from behind clouds. Wind still backing; short steep waves.

**TUESDAY 8th JULY**

Rosy sunset behind clouds - hard to predict, but will leave rig up for night. Course now 260°.

**0130 hours** - 1017 M.B. - up by 1 M.B., which is good, as it normally drops by 1 M. in the evening.

**0950 hours** - Just awakened. Compass 230° - for how long? 1017 M.B. steady. Wind down- Force 2-3.

Constantly at helm now in between porridge and kettle. Would dearly love bacon, egg, sausage and toast. Have christened biscuits: "slates". "Miss the Times with breakfast” (to see how my shares are doing). That gave me one good laugh as the last thing you think of out here is 'money', or the Gulf Stream, or food, family and friends and enemies of the Atlantic venture camp. You get time to think out here, but definitely not money. Survival is uppermost and arrival next

**1200 hours** – Wind now backed to S.W. x W. Force 2-3. Left up short canvas until now as was checking stern locker, where the outboard engine is stowed, cockpit lockers and drains; tightening all rigging, etc; self steering bolts, one staunchion screw missing; replaced and retaped all rigging screws and also relashed dodger.

**1500 hours** - Wind now S.W. - 190° - must bring her about. Strato-Cumulus ahead from west to north - a mass of soft black clouds. Is it a front? Filling in all around now. Wind freshening.

**1300 hours** - Light rain - heading 295° - not bad. Am still well north of my intended course. Gulf Stream only days away now. The idea is to cut across it diagonally from a position 36°N 64°W to Newport. If I go too high before it, I could be swept north in contrary winds. Must make some southing from now on.

**1600 hours** - Still raining. Drenched by rain and spray; She backed and I had to rush out and bring her on course. Wind shifted fast to S.W. x W. I knew Nellie would never let it happen. Found tea, I was brewing, on floor. Wind now Force 5. Odd slam now. Glad I worked this morning, otherwise would have had more sail up.

Stripped and retrieved kicking strap, which was banging off lee window. Pin must have come off swivel on deck.

**1800 hours** - 1016 M.B. - down 1 M.B.

Lying in lee bunk, hoping the wind will ease, listening to whine, thump and slam. The thump is when a wave hits her to windward, below the belt. No Queensbury rules out here, or soft-gloves, either.

**1900 hours** - Seas building up - glad that I checked all gear. **1900 hours** – Barometer 1015 M.B - down x 1 M.B. Days run 102 miles. At 250º T. There is one thing for sure, those storm sails are excellent, especially that little jib, which has done Trojan work.

**2100 hours** - Main down, wind still S.W. x W, but force 8. Jigging away under jib, with helm alee. Comfortable bar rolling. Did not want anything to give at this stage. Course 220º.

Have kettle on for Bovril and Rye King, even though I feel as if I am in a tumbledryer.

The topping lift fall, frapping all the other halliards are inside the mast and the whine from the rigging is the only noise now, except for the odd breaking wave slapping over her.

Sky a leaden grey now. Temperature 72º - it is very humid.

**2300 hours** - Downpour for 10 minutes has eased seas. Barometer going steadily down. (1014 M.B. now) Wind Force 7-8, but seas still lumpy instead of being longer. Odd big whitecap breaks with a roar. The one you hear seldom hits, funnily enough. Cabin very stuffy and close. If we kept going on this course would make the Falkland Islands.

**WEDNESDAY, 9th JULY**

24 hours under storm jib, going south. Wind still westerly, Force 8-9. Would hate to have to take down storm jib in these conditions. Have been knocked way over, three times, by breaking waves. Have done a few gybes also, when she came into the wind.

**THURSDAY 10th JULY**

**0200 hours** - Wind easing between severe gusts. Barometer holding steady - 1014 M.B.

**0300 hours** - Rise of 1 M.B. Wind still westerly – force 6-7.

**2100 hours** - Barometer steady since 0300 hours at 1015 M.B. Lightening every five minutes or so, lighting up cabin. Sleep not coming easily. Rolling, frapping, whining, creaking and waves smashing. Cabin dry at least, so no complaints.

**SATURDAY 10th July**

**0500 Hours** –W.S.W. – Force 6

**0900 hours** - N xE. – Force 4. Long high lumpy sea. Sky clear. 1015 M.B. Took a noon sight: 36° 20' N 57° 25' W

The next few days saw fair runs, with 120 miles the best and 60 miles the worst and much sail changing. The winds mainly from W. X S. and not exceeding Force 5, with a calm of six hours. Also, lightning at night.

There is no doubt but that the ocean is very beautiful, especially at dawn, giving red hues to east; grey sheet clouds drifting and parting, revealing higher mackerel clouds, with blues here and there and every colour one could name.

**1840 hours** – spoke with M.V. “American Rover” the Bridge put me on to the radio officer, Bill Yerger, after confirming my position they will contact Portishead, Yippee.

Only made 265 miles last week, due to three days of gale from west.

Have been finding flying fish on deck an odd morning. They are transparent and are supposed to make tasty breakfasts, but not for me, thank you. I noticed that my wind instruments, the ribbons on the main shrouds, had climbed up to the spreaders during the gale, which gives a fair idea of how we were pressed over at times.

For the first time, I felt lonely one evening. I always missed the family, but never felt really lonely before that. The following morning, after a good sleep, I felt great. It was lack of sleep and tension, during the gale that had made me feel low.

Passed a baulk of timber, about 20" long x 11" x 6", at a distance of ten feet. God only knows what we pass and don't see.

As it is Sunday, must say a few prayers to thank the Lord for my progress and safe journeying, so far. Also, to ask him to guide me safely to Newport.

When we hit the Gulf Stream, it will assist us from ten to seventy miles, per day. Why they call it a stream is beyond me. There is nothing like it in the world; its volume equals twenty five times all the rivers of the world. I am apprehensive approaching it, as Bob Bunker had told me in his letter, that he met four short sharp gales in it, from N.S.W. & E, with another on entering the Labrador Current, together with vicious line squalls,

Checked navigation light and it is still working as is V.H.F. and Radar. Got a position report home, after nine days.

Big patches of waves constantly around now, some as big as carpets and have to push them off self-steering rudder, which is vertical.

Bermuda now only 350 miles to S.W.

Cannot understand short steep swell. Bow dipping changing jibs. Is there a west flowing current being sucked towards the Gulf Stream? This, by my reckoning, is only 200 miles away.

Would like to have T.V. now and watch a good western, or play a game of pool or snooker.

120 miles now to Gulf Stream. Heard first thunder with lightning, does that mean it is fork lightening? Other lightening was the sheet type, which is not dangerous. You feel vulnerable out here in it with the mast pointing up to it.

Cannot help thinking of the history of this route: Explorers, galleons, privateers, ship-of-the-line, A battles, submarines, shipwrecks, mutinies, flogging, slavers - you name it.

**0430 hours** - Awoke to find us heading north – wind shifts at night makes navigation difficult.

A month since Azores. Unlikely to make it in fifty days now.

Not being used to ocean conditions, my ears and the sails we could carry, gave me a fair guide to wind forces, together with wind and sea conditions. When you seek breaking crests being torn off by wind, or rogue waves, separate and isolate, lumping up vertically, or long rolling waves, with crests 200 yds. Apart, and God only knows what height, it takes strong wind.

Took the opportunity to extract light sequence; from Buzzard Bay, south, to Block Island, together with Radio Beacon signals. Have them in a zip type plastic folder. A beautiful day with minimum swell; mentally very relaxing. No Whine in rigging, thunder storm, high seas or sail changing and a day like this, without anxiety of any kind, is great for morale.

At no time, with the strong south wind did the waves get longer; short and deep they were with white water everywhere. Marvellous sailing without any strain on gear, although towards the end, when we got the squall, we could have had the storm jib up. The whine in the rigging was the worst of the voyage - even running.

I had no way of judging wind speed, other than books. The beaufort scale is a help, though at times confusing. After forty years of sailing, shooting and fishing, I firmly believe there is no substitute for experience.

Plotted days run, 50 miles. Sitting on Long.65° West. All we need now is WIND. 420 miles to Newport. Very warm and hazy all day with a frightful thunderstorm and a deluge. It is still cracking away on horizon.

2100 hours - East wind, giving us 4 knots - under full main and No. 2 goose winged.

Two to three days of thunder storms are normal upon entering the Gulf Stream, so let's hope we are now past them. They play hell with the wind. Flying fish all day, skimming over the waves. They clear 40 to 50 and 60 feet at a time.

**THURSDAY, JULY 17th**

Awakened by thunder and lightning, rain wind – Force 3-4 - W.S.W. Put one reef main. Thunder storms to south, with one overhead, flash through clouds. Black showers all around now. Later on that day it becalmed, sea as smooth as you can get it, could not keep sails from slatting. I found another flying fish on deck.

**FRIDAY, JULY 18th**

**0100 hours** 4 hours of wind - now dying.

**0800 hours** South wind - Force 2. No. 2 jib poled is pulling us along 2 -3 kn

**1000 hours** Now Force 4 - 1020 M.B. (Dropped 4 M.B. overnight).

**1100 hours** Force 5-6. Going great guns under No. 2 without any hassle - doing 5-6 knots.

**2000 hours** Force 6-7. Lovely sailing.

**2200 hours** Force 7-8. Maximum speed - 7-8 knots.

**2400 hours** Force 8-9 with rain squall. Torrential rain, flattening seas.

SATURDAY, JULY 9th

Ran all night until 1100 hours under No. 2 jib. 1010 M.B., dropped 6 M.B. overnight. Wind now N.E. F. 4. Main up and broad reaching. Fifteen hours under No. 2. We are moving at last.

Find it hard to believe we are on the home stretch, at last. Gulf weed aplenty: Carpets and rugs of it. Plenty of Portuguese Men-of-War, also, sailing away to where?

That southerly wind was the second I have met, the other one being near the Azores. Was that rain squall which hit us last evening a line squall? Before it eased, we had, for a short time, as strong a wind as any so far. I would not like to have met it against the Gulf Stream - it lasted for 1½ hours.

Like an autumn day now, with N.E. wind; temperature down, even with clear sky.

**1200 hours** – Just spoke with Indian tanker. They wanted to know if I was an Italian yacht. The U.S. Coast Guards asked them to look out for it, as it is overdue, with two of a crew. They are to send my position. Very nice fellow, Savio de Costa. Hope those two guys are O.K. Now 350 miles from Newport and it is very reassuring to get your position confirmed.. Reefed N.E. wind now - Force 4-5 and kicking up a sea against Gulf Stream. Just got a wave into cockpit, but used to it now. Had plenty of them in it yesterday. Switched on transistor and got Boston Station and their weather gives N.E. wind of 10 knots.

Had spuds, spinach and ham for lunch, and it was like cooking and eating on a bucking bronco. How my stomach is sticking all the sloshing around, I do not know.

Hope my position gets home O.K. The tanker was outward bound, from Philadelphia to the Mediterranean.

**1700 hours** Wind still N.E., but down to Force 4. Have non-stop Irish music from Radio Boston. Getting excited approaching land.

**2000 hours** Wind dying - main and Genoa slatting with sea motion.

**2100 hours** Becalmed. Not a cloud in sky all day. After all the miles, it is hard to believe I am nearly there. Will find the land strange again and will miss the ocean. It is really very beautiful and much better than anything I had ever read about it. It has a magic, which I find fascinating and in which I am completely in tune.

Boston forecasting fine weather, with odd thunder showers, until Monday.

**2200 hours** Wind up again- N.E. Force 3. Will shortly have to watch out for New York and other East Coast shipping lanes.

It is great to be in the Gulf Stream; the colour of the water is an indescribable blue. Its temperature runs from 70°-80º and have just poured a bucket of it over myself. But, the best is the 10-70 miles a day we are getting from it. Hard to get used to N.W. course after 1,700 odd miles heading west. Barometer and temperature down. Is it because we are going north?

Making a landfall has me nervous, after seeing nothing but clear water since leaving Ireland. A lee shore, poor visibility, tides, and navigation - it all comes back - the sailors instinctive fear of land.

American Dolphins are showing how they can do it.

**SUNDAY, 20th JULY**

Sailed throughout night under one reefed main and Genoa. Set alarm every two hours. Have not forgotten that line squall yet.

**1000 hours** - Shook reef from main - wind down to Force 3 - still N.E. Radio W.P.B.J., New York, forecasting 85°-90°- humidity, with cloud. News depressing: Three cops shot; son-in-law stabs mother-in-law to death and new drug called "crack".

Still short steep swell, even with Force 3. Sail gives odd slat – prevent on boom. Porridge is the one food I now look forward to. Have been out of Long-Life Milk for sometime now, but find powdered milk is O.K. I am now completely out of fruit; grapefruit was the last and it held well. My arms and hands are now like those of an orang-utan. Before the grapefruit gave out I could squeeze all the juice out of a half one with one hand. I reminded myself of Quint, in Jaws, balling up a beer can. That made me laugh. Had not one tin of fruit aboard; have plenty of tinned spinach, meat and stews, macaroni and spaghetti and even Hot Can left, but I do not relish it, would love a salad now or chips. You might say: Why don't I fish? To be truthful I have often thought of a nice fresh mackerel, but I do not want to hurt anything out here. This might seem strange to you, reading this by a fire or in a deck chair, but that is the way I feel. I did, in fact, bring fishing tackle. Is it because I feel that I could be hurt out here myself? That I am vulnerable, there is no doubt; anyone who goes to sea single-handed is. Maybe I am at peace and do not want to kill.

**1400 hours** - There is a counter swell from the east now, which is causing a sea fret.

Can pick-up New Jersey, New York and Boston clearly now, which gives me a fix as good as any R.D.F. Close hauled on starboard tack now for fifteen hours Temperature 90 but, with N.E. breeze, not too hot.

Days run, at noon, showed 120 miles. Radio W.G.S.M., Long Island, giving good forecast until Tuesday. N.E. wind variable in strength and direction now. Find myself easing and tightening sheets. Tiller steering, off and on, since dawn. Wind Force 2-3, all day 1018 M.B.

**1600 hours** - Becalmed after 3½ hours at tiller, in heat. Approximately 230 miles to Newport. Going to have a kip now in the shade.

**1800 hours** Still becalmed. If we do not get wind, could drift back to Ireland at approximately 40 miles per day. Sure is warm on deck -- soles of your feet would burn. It is now dangerous on deck and in cockpit, due to rolling. Swell seems to be longer. Might get a breeze at sundown. South Carolina is in a heat wave and hay is being flown in to save livestock.

**2100 hours** - Five hours becalmed now.

Just after having a bath in a basin. Can now afford to waste water. Very refreshing. Have to eat something. Mix Macaroni, cheese and a grated onion, in a pot, and heat it.

**2200 hours** - Slight breeze, rippling swell now, from S.W. Can't be far now. First real sign of land - a big dirty, but beautiful to my eyes, seagull. Fed him a few slates.

**2230** **hours** - Underway, tiller steering. Wind S.W. F.2.

The Gulf Stream, where I am crossing it, diagonally, is some fifty miles wide. When leaving it, some 50 miles offshore, I would then enter the Cabot Current, which flows south from Canada at 10-20 miles per day.

**MONDAY, 21st JULY**

Wind light during night but kept us going; S.W. Force 2. On tiller most of the time.

**0600 hours** - Dropped main - big rain squall approaching.

Not as bad as last as most of it moved astern, with smaller one passing bow.

**1130 hours** - Full main and No. 2. 4 Knots. Wind still holding from S.W. – Force 2. 1016 M.B. Close hauled on port tack and just holding course.

**1800 hours** - Tiller steering most of day - wind up and down - speed from 3-6 knots.

We still have a medium swell from the east, with a counter swell now from the north. Fierce heat and glare, have my pyjamas on all day.

**2400 hours** – tiller steered for last six hours. Light winds and smooth swells. We, at least, did 84 miles.

**TUESDAY 22nd JULY**

**0130 hours** – wind up slightly; will stay up if it holds. Moon came up large and red, as it did last night. 5 knots now. Lovely to hear the bow wave.

**0930 hours** – still averaging 4 knots. Went for a doss at 0530 hours and set alarm for 0630 hours, but did not wake until dawn, which is 0930 hours, (I am still chronicling this at Irish time), Nellie kept us going.

Sailed until 1530 hours, when wind died. 1021 M.B.

**1600 hours** – North breeze, too light for sails in swell.

Sails down until 2200 hours. N.E. – Force 3 – Main and Genoa, 40-5 and 6 knots. 80 miles day’s run.

Constant plane noise to west all day and figure it to be from Long Island, McArthur Airport. Long Island radio forecasting N.E. Got all my clothes dry today.

Figure 150 miles left. Shortening the distance but very hard work in this heat and light winds. Another 50 miles should see us out of Gulf Stream. Big thunder storm brewing aft. Ate last of raisins, this morning, with porridge. Ocean littered with plastic plates and cups. Five bottles of Ballygowan Spring Water left. Tank water is a bit tasteless, or stale. Last tin of sardines, also. Temperature today 90º, so do not feel like eating anyway. Heat haze all day.

If this evening breeze holds, will tiller steer again tonight.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 23**

**0100 hours** - Changed Genoa to No. 2 and took one reef in main. Wind S.W. - Force 4 - 1024 M.B. Nellie working. Lively sea motion.

Saw pod of whales going north - had dorsal fins.

**1800 hours** - Wind still holding - day run 80 miles.

**1730 hours** we were into the Labrador Current. It is quite easy to distinguish the difference by the water colour - I would describe it as' ‘dirty looking’. Had to down sails at 2100 hours - flat calm, or as near to it as you can be at sea.

Tiller steering is taking up a lot of my time lately. Did my chart plotting, which leaves 120 miles to Newport. All the East Coast stations are forecasting little and light winds. Spaghetti and peas and slates for lunch; too warm for anything else. Guzzling what is left of Ballygowan Water.

Should be crossing New York shipping lanes tomorrow, if we get wind. Looking forward to seeing a liner; have never seen one of them. Not a cloud in sight. Find myself smoking a lot in this trying weather.

Long Island Round the Island Race is starting to-morrow. 180 boats have been entered for this 200 mile race, and they are covering it on radio, and will have live reports by V.H.F.

The forecast is for this weather to last until Friday.

Day's run: = 28 miles.

**THURSDAY 24th JULY**

Still becalmed, with very little signs of wind. Sea now like glass, with medium swell from the east, Had a great sleep last night, ideal conditions for it; the heat is tiring. Opened the fore hatch, which I had sealed, due to leaking on the Azores leg.

**1400 hours** - Temperature 86° in cabin. 1028 M.B.

Saw my first tree in 54 days 25' to 30' long, roots and all; drifted near me and was in sight for hours. It was scoured of foliage and bark, by the sea, and bleached white by the sun. Where was it blown down?

Saw two ships on horizon today.

**1500 hours** - Another, smaller one, approaching slowly from N.W., and has an all white hull - seems to stop and start. It strikes me as being a large pleasure motor yacht. Maybe they are fishing. They are commercial sword fishermen. As they draw nearer, I can see them baiting hooks and turning away to let the line run out, finally dropping a ten foot marker pole, with a radar reflector at the top.

Eventually they approach me stern on and ask what am I doing. When I tell them I am 54 days out of Ireland, they give me a Loran position of 39° 57' 70° 13' W and tell me Montauk Point is 60 miles to the west. Montauk Point is the northern extremity of Long Island.

Working at my chart sees us 90 miles from Newport. This is very reassuring, as with other position confirmations which I received en route, it is a tremendous boost to my navigational morale. When they were approaching us, stern on, I could see: "Jack Pot, Atlantic City" in beautiful blue lettering.

The skipper, who was a ball of a man, was in a pair of shorts and had a teak tan. His crew I took to be students, working for the summer and they were all beautifully togged out in multicolour tee shirts, shorts and long peaked caps. One of them raised a swordfish's head off the deck by its sword. The condition of that boat would put any yacht to shame.

An odd breeze would give us 2 knots, but it was hard work. Bucketed water over myself most of day. Long Island race is keeping me going - I'm listening to it on the radio. Will sail tonight, by tiller, if wind comes up. If it does, should be off Brenton Reef, or Block Island, tomorrow - sometime.

In the excitement, forget to take photo of" Jack Pot". Hard to blame me as these were first people I had seen and spoken with in 54-days.

**FRIDAY, 25th July**

**0100 hours** - Sails down again after fitful wind. I am using cabin lights now at night, when needed, instead of torches. Was sparing my remaining battery up to this.

**0700 hours** - S.E. wind, Force 2 - giving us 3 knots.

**1140 hours** - Becalmed again. Passed a dead sword-fishing, floating belly up. Have not seen a seagull since that ragged one, a few days ago. Make out America is a very rich country indeed, when seagulls do not have to leave the land for food.

Only made 14 miles yesterday - getting cheesed off with progress and heat.

Radio forecasting thunder showers, the last thing I want approaching the coast. Winds are very strong in them here, and the accompanying downpour reduces visibility to 'nil'.

**1400 hours** – Another 1½ hours of light wind.

Days run: 21 miles.

**SATURDAY, 26th JULY – DAY 56**

**1000 hours** S.W., Force 2. Full main and No. 2.

 70 miles from Newport.

Wind light in Long Island race, boats averaging 3 knots. Last night and dawn, showed Cirrus, so maybe there is hope of wind. Cumulus now appearing to south. A whale now abeam for half-an-hour to port and on same course. An old bull, like myself no doubt. Took photos of him.

Rubbish aplenty: Bottles, planks, fluorescent tubes and plastic plates and cups in hundreds.

Finished my last bottle of spring water. Hold tank shows a brown sediment at bottom, so I am boiling water and letting it cool, for drinking. Big white liner on horizon, heading for New York. Super tanker heading east.

These last few days have been trying. Feel like a boiled lobster. Patience is essential in this game and I am afraid I have not got much left. More radio forecasts for thunderstorms for New York and New Jersey. Can now pick up Providence, Rhode Island, on transistor, which is directional to my course.

Spuds nearly done. I have spinach ready to go into the pot and Hot Can Beef Casserole cooking. I won’t eat the lot but it will keep me occupied. Yes, enjoyed that meal, especially spuds; ages since I have had them.

**1800 hours** Wind holding true from S.W. now Force 4-5. Took one reef in main. Speed now 6-7 knots, with short breaking waves on our port quarter. White horses aplenty now. Sun and Wind.

Passed sports fishermen, who are probably after sword-fish. A guy out on long pulpit with a spear or harpoon. Not an easy motion for him.

Just passed my first navigation buoy since the Shannon. It was a red spherical buoy with a pillar top, showing a black asterisk on it.

Another lovely seagull. It is great to see signs of land. All nervousness approaching land has now gone. After the last days of little wind, I find myself excited.

**2000 hours** - Visibility down now with sea haze. Just took what I thought to be Block Island in haze and fog. I could not figure out why the lighthouse was to the left of it, until as I got nearer, discovered it was a tug towing a huge hulk, without funnel or masts heading south.

**0100 hours** – 2000 hours US Time E. Coast - Light flashing off bow, as dusk approaches; identify it as Brenton Reef Light. Approach it and confirm, with binoculars, "Brenton" on pillared steel structure. Delighted, as I was expecting to sight Block Island first. The two headland lighthouses, with their foghorns sounding, were then identified, which mark the entrance to Narragansett Bay. This is a narrow deep bay and I was delighted to see shore lights appearing.

The wind had eased to Force 2-3. Fortunately the tide was flooding, but it was also giving a short swell, which necessitated some down wind tacking to keep the sails filling.

Fireworks lit up the sky, approaching the entrance to Newport Harbour. I discovered, later, it was to commemorate the Black Ships Festival, a trade treaty of two centuries with the Japanese.

Identified Fort Adams Light and entered Newport Harbour, I dropped the jib, to give better forward visibility, for I was now sailing through hundreds of moored yachts. Afterwards I discovered there was a clear lane. I had, earlier in the day, prepared the anchor and eventually found space in Brenton Cove and let go at 1004 hours, local time.

I prepared tea in the first smooth water for 56 days. While I was drinking it, a thunderstorm broke loose, with strong winds and rain; halliards (rapping and the howl of wind.

I did not worry, for we had made it. I am not ashamed to say that I went on my knees and said a silent prayer and hit the bunk.

I was awakened, the following morning, by a dinghy, with an outboard, going ashore. There was a couple in it, and when it returned and I looked out to hear what I took to be an Australian accent, enquiring about my flag. Graham Perry, who was a New Zealander, invited me to his boat, where I had hot toast with peanut butter and tea. His 40' Ferrocement ketch had come from South Africa via the Caribbean. He had met a tail end of a hurricane en route and had lost his Genoa, which had flogged itself to death.

Later he took me ashore. The colour of the grass and trees was beautiful. I had forgotten what the land looked like. He took me to a giant supermarket where I bought eggs, bacon, bread, butter, milk, veg. and fruit and eventually got through, by phone, to Nance who told me that three of my kids were in Newport but where to find them?

Later, when we were having a beer at the Pier Bar, with Veronica his crew, my son, Dan, walked in. I was delighted and amazed. He told me that when they had got word from the Indian Tanker that I was 350 miles from Newport, my daughter, Helen and my youngest son, Peter and himself decided to come and meet me. They had been there for three days. He had a taxi waiting as he had done a tour of the Waterfront Bars and we all piled in to meet Helen and Peter and other Irish friends they had brought down from New York. It was so lovely for me.

They had learned, from the Coast Guards, whom I had notified by V.H.F. that I was entering the bay, that I had arrived during the night. And, they had arranged a party.

Little did I realise when I was at the supermarket, that they were aboard "Inicealtra".

The following day I was interviewed by the Providence and Newport papers, along with radio and T.V. stations.

All-in-all, it was a very exciting ten days, amid extremely hospitable people. This was my first visit to the U.S.A. and I cannot say enough in its praise.

The Mayor invited me to the City Hall for a presentation and he and his wife had me as their guest to a ball in one of Newport's famous mansions, "Rosecliff". He pitted me out in one of his long dress suits for it.

These mansions, of which there are eight, are now held in trust by the nation. They were originally built by millionaires, viz, Astors, Vanderbuilts, etc., as summer homes. They have to be seen to be believed.

The Harbour Master, Bill Meussel, who was Coastguard Commander in Newport, before retiring, had me to his house, as a guest, at another party. This time for the skippers of the B.D.C. round the world race, which they were preparing for. I met them all Robin Knox Johnston – Biltong Bertie Reed the South African and many more famous sailors.

The houses in Newport are all built of cedar wood and it is unusual to see two of the same design. Newport was once the naval base for the Atlantic Fleet. When it was moved to Norfolk V.A., prices were depressed. Upon his retirement, Bill Meussel, told me he picked up the Commanders house very cheaply. There is nothing depressed about Newport now. Property appreciates by one-third annually.

It lies half-way between New York and Boston. The American Yacht Racing Union has its headquarters there. If you want to see boats, this is the place to come to. Looking down any street in Newport, to the harbour, is likened to a forest, with all the masts.

A sad note in Newport was that they had located the missing Italian yacht, 500 miles north of the Azores. It was found, upside down, with its keel missing.

While chatting with Graham Perry, I told him, when approaching land how invaluable the transistor radio had been. He said, he knew of five other cases of boats making landfalls with them. In my opinion they are every bit as good as an R.D.F.

Two things I could not understand in Newport: It gets dark at 7.30p.m. US time in the evening and there is only four feet of a rise and fall in the tides.

One of my support committee, Charlie McDonnell Gybe had arrived. Pete, Charlie and I took a two hour bus ride to New Bedford, home of whaling and of Moby Dick and Herman Neville fame. The museum and waterfront, with its preservations of whaling, is impressive. I would like to have seen Mystic, in Connecticut, which I believe is one of the best maritime museums in the world, relating to sailing vessels.

Time was flying. I placed "Iniscealtra" with the brokers, Bay Yacht Sales.

When I was booking my flight home, the girl in Gullivers Travel Agency said: You are the guy who sailed from Ireland, I saw you in the papers and T.V." and added: "You should be flown home free of charge". She rang some Irish travel agents but unfortunately it did not work out and the flight cost me $400. I mention this to give some idea of the kindness with which I met while there. Telephone operators were also amazingly helpful.

Through the Mayor, I got free storage until my boat was sold. The lift-out cost $75, which amount I left with the Mayor. Pete and I left "Inicealtra" at a police mooring, where Bill Meussel picked us up in his launch. I was lonely leaving her, as we had come through a lot together. I remember patting her deck, from the launch, & saying “Goodbye old friend. You carried me over many waves safely”.

**REFLECTIONS**

If I were crossing the Atlantic again I would carry two whisker poles, for running in light winds. I found there were many times when only the jib would stay filled, due to swells.

My compass was not which was a nuisance at night. (Your vision being lost when the torch is flashed.) I would also have a compass installed in the cabin.

Winds of Force 4-5 and upwards, generally lasted for a minimum of eighteen hours.

I found the barometer, the most basic means for evaluating the weather invaluable, together with studying cloud formations. The old seamen’s rhymes in Reeds being remarkably true and very helpful.

I now have a better idea of what to bring in the food line.

Looking back it was one of the highlights of my life. Marvellous memories of new friends and old. A family who never doubted my ability to make it. I am sure they had their moments of doubt, as indeed I had, but they never showed it.

It is not something you undertake lightly, but to anyone who has the bug, as I had, and if you feel confident in yourself and your boat, I would say: "GO FOR IT".