

West Chester
Pa. 19380
Dec. 1, 1976

Dear Frosty G^errard,

Here are various accounts of the Wreck of the Ginger Ann, -newspapers, Hannah Croasdale's, and mine. The newspapers were very wrong on many points. For instance, the fact was that Ralph was one-fifth owner.

Ralph's biographer will notice that two of the printed stories recognized Ralph as notable, while those of Hannah and me do not. I think a biographer might be interested in this tale as comic relief and as a close-up sample of the kind of frolic any scientist might have been in, in those high and far-off times at Woods Hole.

I've asked Janet Kellicott Nelson and Hannah Croasdale (who represented two other fifth-part owners of the Ginger Ann) to contribute more reminiscences about Ralph. Janet says hers are too personal; Ralph was a father figure to her in their friendship. Hannah and I recall two amusing incidents, but what he meant to us personally we, like Janet, can't say for the public. The two incidents follow.

After the Ginger Ann sank, Hannah Croasdale, Dorothy Stewart, Gladys Bulmer, and I bought a Nimblet, a new sound boat, from the Cape Cod Shipbuilding Co. up the Bay at Wareham, but only 16' long, christened Concord after Capt. Gosnold's ship and to make harmony among the four owners of diverse character. Ralph was a frequent guest on her for a day's sail. One time, at the end of an all-day trip in Concord across Buzzards Bay to New Bedford and back, we realized as we approached the "Hole" that the current, nearing flood tide, was with us through the Hole, and would also be running with us through the Gut of Canso, a very narrow passage between Pine Island and the tip of Penzance, which could be an excellent but dangerous short cut to our mooring off Dirty Beach. The skipper of the day directed Ralph, who was at the tiller, to steer through the Gut, keeping a sharp lookout for rocks, especially as twilight was coming on. Concord raced through. The rocky shores, so close, whizzed by. Safe at the mooring, we congratulated Ralph. "I had my eyes tight shut," he said.

In return for our nautical hospitality, Ralph invited Concord's 4 owners to dine, on him, at The Bellows, up beyond Falmouth. When we met him in Woods Hole on the appointed evening, he, having no car, inquired politely whether Dot Stewart would taxi us in hers. It was a roadster, so 3 rode in the seat, and 2 had to curl up in the trunk. And when the elegant festive repast was over, Ralph discovered that he had no money with him, and sheepishly had to ask his guests to lend him some. This added the crowning touch of gaiety.

I send these bits of writing, as a loving tribute, like wild flowers I might have picked myself, rather than florist's roses, to strew on his grave.

Margaret (Mrs. Grayson P. McCouch)

Monday morning

Aug 1931

Dear Family,

Well, yesterday's sail capped anything that has happened to me yet! I never had such a sail and I expect that it will be a long time before I have another! We took our new boat out on her maiden voyage - 8 of us, the five owners and 3 guests, it is a big enough boat to carry eight comfortably, and there was enough doing yesterday to keep all eight of us busy most of the time. We left Sunday morning to be home by supper - some of the crowd had a supper engagement. We got home by 3 AM with the help of the Coast Guards.

Keffer Hartline was skipper of the day. He is one of the five owners and the best sailor. He has ailed here seven years and yesterday was the first time that he had to be rescued by the U. Guard. He was fine!

The weather was pretty bad for sailing - a high squally wind and a rough sea all day - we had to put in a double reef in the sails almost immediately, and we kept it in all day.

Since this was our maiden voyage we were going to watch our ship carefully - make note of any little screw loose, etc. - that turned into a howling joke! The first loose screw noted ripped good size holes in the seats of the pants of 2 of our crew. But before we had time to worry much about that screw there was a rip-crash and the block of one of our back stays ripped out of the deck. With a 30' mast and a heavy wind a back stay is essential - our side stays were very loose anyway, so we had to luff up and hunt for another place to fix the back stay. On the next tack the other one tore loose and we had to luff up and fix that. Then a jib sheet parted and we had to luff up and tie it. Luffing up in miscellaneous places with our tides and rocks is often no joke. Then the topping lift broke away - we lit it ride and put the back stay on its cleat. On the next tack the back stay pulled up that cleat plus the cabin roof. Then we luffed up and meditated and finally put the back stays back on their original cleats in the stern of the boat which was a tricky place for them with their deck blacks gone but these were the only cleats left. Then we tried to go home but we couldn't make it against the wind and current in the hole so we put so sea again and ran before the gale.

Whenever there was a moment of calm we pumped - just to try to keep the water in our cabin below the bunks but everytime we would get the pump in place and goine - it took 2 people - something would part or we would have to come about and it would have to be stowed in haste.

On our first 4 tacks or so the jib sheets got caught in the 2 anchors forward and it kept 2 hands busy to free them. Then when we finally had both anchors out of the way - lashed safely, we had to anchor suddenly to fix the mainsail.

We sped before the wind up the coast of Uncatena and Naushon Islands with only minor breakages for a while - a sail rip - a mast ring - one of the supports of the cockpit seats, etc. I can't remember all that happened. But after only 2 attempts we anchored successfully in a cove at the west end of Naushon and went ashore for lunbh, after pumping her dry.

Here her happy but exhausted crew ate heartily and then slept on the sand in the sun for several hours.

Our skipper walked across the Island to see if the water in the Sound looked any more prosperous for a home trip. He reported it much worse so about 4 PM we set off for home the way we came with a head wind but a favorable tide.

We made long tacks out into the Bay till it got too dangerously

rough - then back toward land till it got too dangerously rocky. We gained pretty well for a while although she was pounding badly but on one tack when we had gone out as far as we dared and were coming about to get back toward the quieter water near shore there was an honest-to-goodness rip-p-p! and the traveller came off as our mainsheet, close-hauled, swung across it. That was bad for it was all one could do to hold the sheet anyway with a double purchase on the traveller and now there was nothing. Sumie, at the helm, luffed up and held her in the wind the best she could though we all got buffeted by the boom and shipped a good many waves. Then the 2 boys worked like fury and made a makeshift traveller "with a string sort of thing". We still had 2 cleats astern which hadn't gone yet but which had a terrific strain from the back stays. We cast off the back stays (for the moment) and passed a rope clear under and around the boat's stern - her rudder was on her keel - and locked it in place with these cleats. To this rope we lashed the traveller. The boys got it all fixed with spare rope, then they decided that wouldn't do and they stole some of our new anchor rope. We tied our tender to the tiller post. Every time we luffed up and dropped our peak the sail split worse so we had to stand up and hold it all this time.

Well the boys got it fixed so it held all right - we put a "check rein" on the end of the boom and thereafter one of us had to sit on the new traveller to keep the strain lateral and haul on the "check rein". That was my job for a while and was some job on a stormy night with the waves sweeping across the deck and the world turning upside down every time we came about, and all ropes combining to jounce you overboard on a tack. If one of the after cleats had ripped up like most of the other cleats had the after deck man would have been catapulted up and over and way out to sea! a good jibe would have broken a leg - But nothing happened thereafter to the after rigging.

After that and other delays we lost the tide - the wind swung even worse for us and we ceased to gain. We struggled for a while - till about 7 - then, after the hook on the jib's clew had broken - the bobstay eyebolt pulled out and the bowsprit shifted, necessitating a rope collar around our bow also, we finally decided to beat it back to Kettle Cove and anchor for the night.

That was not so easy - we had only flash lights and couldn't find our cove. We almost ran afoul of fish nets and had to jibe promptly. That gave me hot work for a moment astern alone with the 2 main sheets, the back stays and homemade traveller to manage but we got thru that crisis. We tried another cove and cast our anchors. They held and we downed our sails, then they didn't hold in the heavy wind and we drifted fast toward rocks. So we "upped" our sails and tried to sail off before we ran on the rocks but both anchors got fast again. We got them up finally, Ralph and I, with cheerful shouts "Port anchor's aweigh!" "Starboard anchor's aweigh!" when crash, bang, we hit the rocks after all. The shock threw me down but fortunately not overboard and we bumped along and then got off safely and sailed out again. The work up there, clearing ropes on that forward deck in the dark with the ship pounding along and at a 45° made one feel like a real sailor!

We made a safe (we hope) anchorage our next try and put the boat to bed for the night.

Things had got so wet and disrupted in the cabin that the foot of the pump got plunged into our basket of fruit and a peach came out the

spout. It made pumping harder.

When we put out for shore in our skiff the skiff filled and foundered and we almost lost it - we had to put back quickly and drop a passenger.

Finally we all got ashore and held a council. The best and easiest thing to do seemed to be to walk to Hadley Harbor - 4 or 5 miles away & telephone for help to the Coast Guard or the Supply Dep't.

We stowed our spare raincoats under the skiff, finished up any spare food (not much) and started off. Walking was bad and uncertain and a mile or so along the way one of the girls - a good sport - fell and sprained or broke her ankle. We held another council - several of them.

Then Sumie and 1 girl went on to Hadley Harbor to telephone, Ralph and 1 girl went ~~on~~ back for our raincoats and drinking water, the other 3 of us negotiated Janet (with the sprained ankle) over 1/4 mile of rough country and down a steep cliff to the shore. Here, with 1 our 7 matches we lit a fire and prepared to spend the night if no help came.

The fire felt fine. We were all more or less ~~and~~ wet and the wind was strong. You were cold if you stopped working a minute. Being in bathing suits we took our wet clothes off and dried effectively. I went back and left markers so the other parties could find us. Our skipper went off and returned with a hat full of mitilli. We cooked them in seaweed in the embers and with dry rye bread and drinking water Ralph brought back we feasted nobly.

Then it started raining and we began preparations for the night when we say - far off - our rescue boat. The Coast Guard had come for us. Sumie and Ruth returned after an 8 mile tramp in the darkness and we all ate more Mitelli and waited to be come for - in great joy.

Being taken off in a long boat from a rocky beach in a stormy sea was a new thrill for me! The Coast Guards were very genial and the trip home was fine! - very rough, wet, fast and exciting.

The sprained ankle was met in a car at the wharf. We got home at 3 AM. All who drank coffee went in and had it with the Coast Guard. I went home rejoicing.

It was a great day. Sailing like that took real seamanship and we were a good crew. None of us got seasick, discouraged or anything and we did have plenty of experiences.

The coast Guard promises to tow in our boat for us as soon as the sea goes down - it is still up this morning. The boat may have sunk or it may have drifted. If so each of us is out \$20 but the day's sail was worth it! If it is safe all is well for none of the accidents was really serious - just faulty screws or cleats - unless we sprung a new leak when we hit the rocks - which I doubt.

I hope this letter isn't too messy to read

Boston Traveler
Mon. 8-24-31

The Evening
Standard
New Bedford Mon.
8-24-31

TWO BOATING PARTIES SAVED

Motorboat Pilot Calls for
Help Off Naushon--Sloop
Is Blown Into Shallow
Water Near Same Place

[Special to The Standard.]

Woods Hole, Aug. 24—The northeaster which blew up Sunday night brought trouble to two boating parties, a motor boat and a sloop, in both of which were research workers at the Marine Biological laboratory here, and Coast Guard crews from the base here were kept busy until 3 A. M. Monday.

The first call for help was from a motorboat party that was off Kettle Cove, Naushon, a dangerous weather shore in a driving northeaster and the scene of the wreck in January, 1929, of a Cape Verde packet from New Bedford.

Boatswain Charles V. Morse, dispatched to the scene in a patrol boat, took off the passengers and took the motor boat, belonging to H. C. Smith, Woods Hole, in tow here.

A little later came the report that a sailboat was in trouble at a point near the same place, and a Coast Guard patrol, dispatched to the scene, found a sloop anchored so close in that in the patrol boat could not go alongside, and the eight persons aboard, four men and four women, were taken off in a dory. Taking the sloop in tow, with the rescued party aboard the patrol boat, they were all back safe at Woods Hole at 3 A. M.

As in most cases of this kind, where the amateur sailors do not spread the news of their ignorance of boats, there were no names available.

SEVEN RESCUED AT NAUSHON ISL.

Woman in Party Taken off
After Sinking of
Sloop

WOODS HOLE, Aug. 24—Dr. R. W. Gerard, instructor at the marine biological laboratory here, and a party of six friends were rescued from Naushon island by a coast guard crew from base 18 today just before their sloop Swastika, which they had abandoned, sank in 25 feet of water. Three young women were in the party. One of them sprained her ankle.

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All reached the coast guard base wet and exhausted from their harrowing experience with a disabled boat in a high northeast wind and heavy seas.

Dr. Gerard and his friends left Woods Hole early yesterday morning for a sail in the doctor's recently purchased sloop. Shortly after noon brisk winds arose. These soon reached gale proportions which broke away part of the sloop's rigging and caused her to be buffeted about by the heavy seas. Attempts were made to repair that damage but on account of the wind and heavy swell these were unsuccessful.

After several hours of being tossed the sloop, then in Kettle cove, was abandoned, and by the aid of a dory the party was able to reach Naushon island.

An attempt was made to walk to the Forbes estate, more than six miles away. It was while walking over this rocky road in the darkness that one of the young women sprained her ankle. One man went on, the others remaining on the beach, where they lighted fires to keep warm and used hand flashlights to signal to any passing boat.

Reaching the Forbes home, the man who had gone telephoned to the coast guard at base 18. Boatswain Charles V. Morse and a crew headed for the island in a cutter and just before daybreak succeeded in getting all members of the party back to the mainland.

Shortly afterward the CG-280 notified the base that the Swastika had sunk soon after she had been abandoned.

YACHT OWNED BY INSTRUCTOR GOES DOWN

Coast Guard Boat
Speeds to Rescue
of Party

TRAVELER BREAKS
IN HIGH WIND

Party Forced to Land at
Naushon

[Special to The Times]

WOODS HOLE, Aug. 24 — The speedboat 910 from Coast Guard Base 18 here came to the rescue of Dr. R. W. Girard, instructor of physiology at the Marine Biological laboratory here and a group of friends about 11 last night shortly before Dr. Girard's newly purchased 20 foot sloop the Swastika sank in 25 feet of water at Kettle cove off Naushon island.

The party of seven left yesterday morning for an all day sail. In the afternoon the seas became very rough and in the high wind the traveler broke. Shortly after the sails split, leaving the group to the mercy of the seas. While the sloop was tossed to and fro by the sea members of the party managed to make temporary repairs and they were able to make Kettle Cove where they dropped anchor.

The party went ashore in the dory, and all planned to walk to one of the Forbes houses on the island to call for aid from the Woods Hole base. A young woman in the party sprained her ankle on the beach, however, and the group remained with her while one man walked six and a half miles to the nearest house to call the Coast Guard.

Boatswain Charles V. Morse in charge of the 910 attached a dory to the boat and sped to the scene where he placed the group aboard the craft and returned to Woods Hole.

It was believed that a seam in the sloop had been opened while she was tossed about on the sea for she sank shortly after the party had deserted her.

Earlier in the evening the 910 assisted in the rescue of another group from Kettle cove. The motorboat Mary II owned by H. L. Smith, Woods Hole, went aground at 8:30 p. m. at the cove and members of the party went ashore to give the alarm. Chief Boatswain's Mate Perry Delsiet went out in the 910 and threw a line to the craft, towing her back to Woods Hole. The party reached Woods Hole at 11 p. m.