



*It was utter peace. We liked swinging gently at anchor. We liked the wind's lullaby in the rigging. Here is the pool at the head of Bay Finn, with the mountains rising up from the deep blue water*

## NORTH CHANNEL NOSTALGIA

Or, Why Men Should Take Women Cruising

By JOSEPHINE WUNSCH

**R**USHING a lawn mower on an April afternoon in Detroit may not appear to have much connection with a summer vacation cruising, swimming and fish-frying in Georgian Bay. Actually one leads to the other as surely as casting the lines off the bollards at Arnold's Dock under old Fort Mackinac starts you down the North Channel.

It was the first warm day last spring — fitting out time — and I kissed my husband goodby for that week-end, and the next and the next. He had to whip *Minx* into shape for the Mills, the Mackinac, and all the other summer races. The *Minx* is a New York "30," a sloop now marconi rigged and still in excellent condition despite the fact that she is an old lady of forty.

While Eddie sanded and varnished down at Bayview that April Sunday, I stayed home working the business end of a spade. I was pretty griped. I had the house and baby Kay. Wasn't the yard and the Victory Garden the least he could do? A friend stopped by. She wore a print frock, high heels and lipstick. Her husband (who at one time sailed with Eddie but now, spliced, has turned into an Ideal Husband) stood at her side. She said, "It's simply awful the way Eddie leaves you flat every Sunday. Can't you make him stay home?"

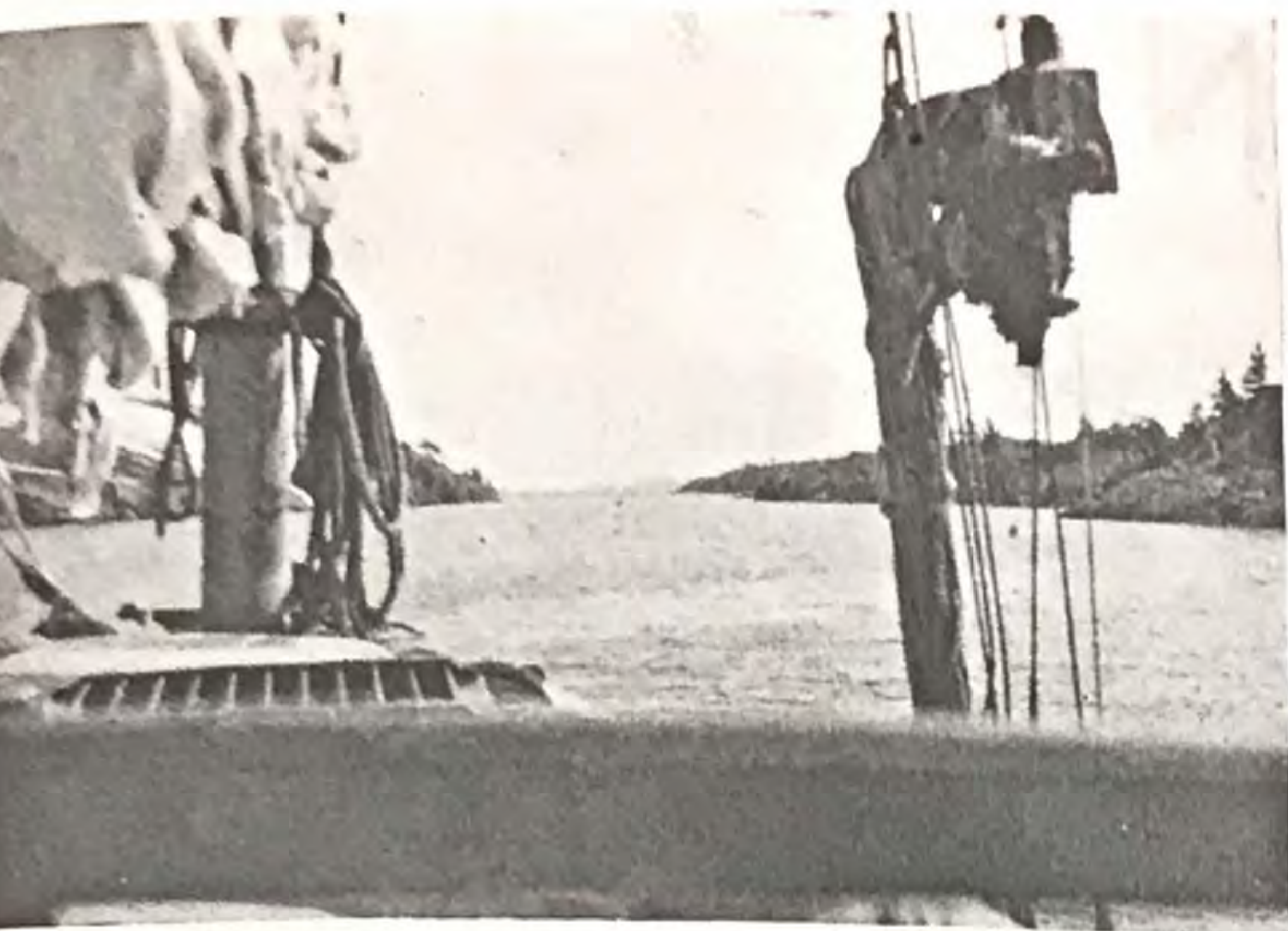
I jibed over. All of a sudden I knew why I let him go every week-end; why I was willing, even if I grouched a bit, to do his work around the yard.

"It's this way. We plan to spend two whole weeks together in Georgian Bay. I couldn't go if he didn't fit out the boat. We can't afford to have anyone else fit her out and this year no one seems to have time to help him (a dirty dig, I hope) so he has to do the job himself. That means I have to pinch-hit for him around here."

Like Aesop, right here and now let me point out the moral of this little tale. If only husbands shared the *fun* of the boat with their wives instead of giving them just the *grief* (gone every week-end, late for dinner, too tired Saturday night to have company in or go out), I bet the wives would back up their husbands 100 per cent — well — anyway 50 — in this business of sailing. Many men think women are born with a never-to-be-overcome aversion to the sea. This is not so. Women, I believe, would take to the water with the same avidity that they take to afternoon bridge, if given the opportunity. But, since they are usually excluded from ship doings, they determine to lure their sailormen back into the home.

There are several things wives — if invited — can do aboard and ashore that men can't or won't do. Even the most hard-bitten, woman-hating old salt must admit that it is quite a break in these war-busy days to find someone who is willing to take over the buying, especially when that someone understands the A, B, and C of ration points. Women know how to ferret out bargains to keep down the budget; to plan menus with vitamins as well as starch to keep up energy. Then, too,





Left, we went through Little Detroit Passage. The "equipment" on the starboard shrouds is partridge for supper. Right, Strawberry Island Light on Manitoulin Island. Bottom, Little Current has a nautical "Main Street"



women think of things that never occur to men. What sailor ever considered putting a clean dish towel aboard?

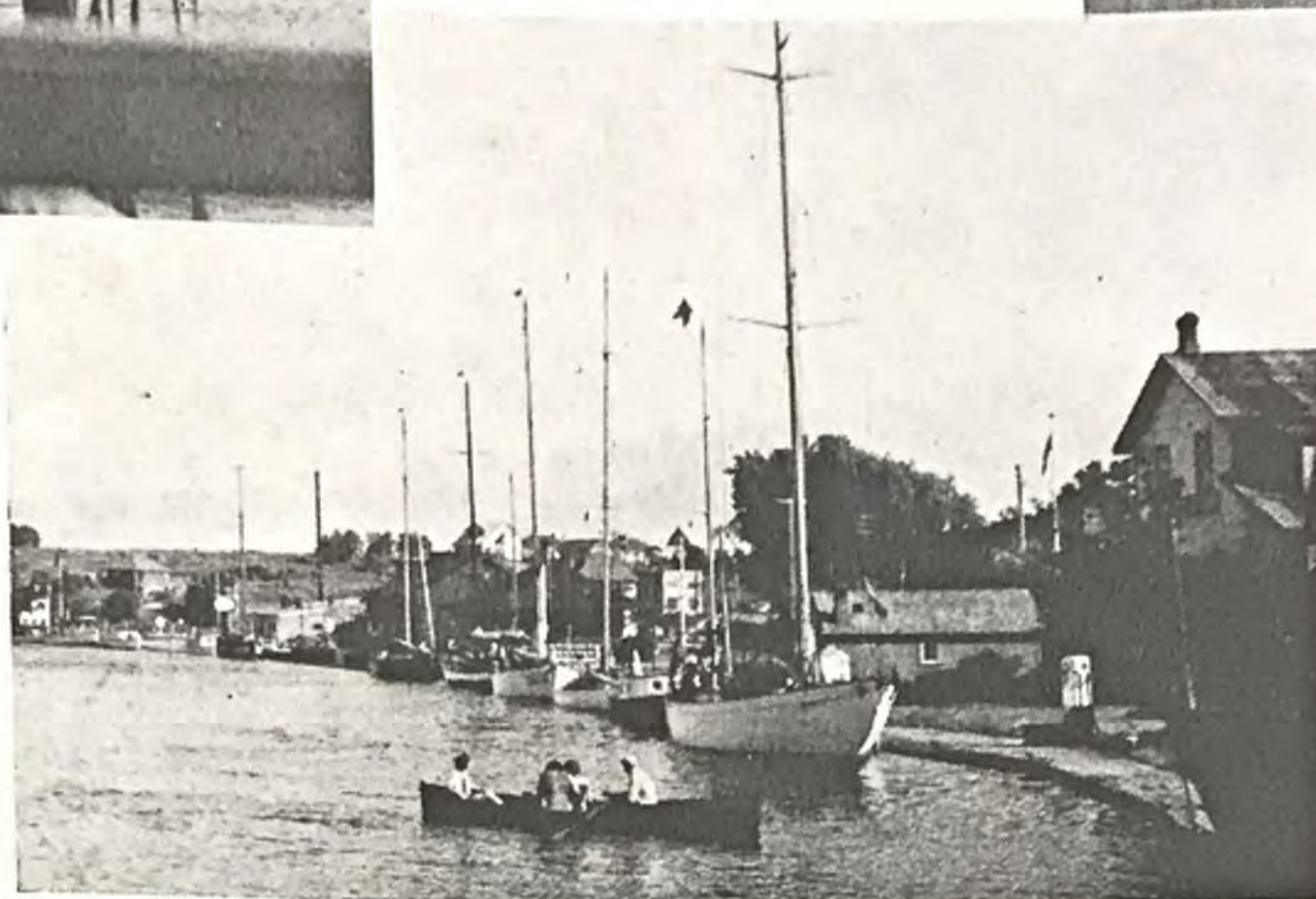
Once the *femmes* are included for even part of the trip, they will go enthusiastic over the whole show. They will plan, prepare, bake and fry, sacrifice their last jar of preserves, their last ration points for the crew. All this coöperation is in direct contrast to their former attitude of, "Take my husband if you must but leave me his ration book."

Another advantage of including the little woman is that she can travel heavy while the ship travels light, when on the race. She will tote duffles and suitcases, canoe paddles and coats on the train merely for the privilege of sharing in the fun of the ensuing cruise when the race is finished. It is the least she can do to help out and, of course, now that she is to witness the finish, it is suddenly important that *his* ship comes in, banners flying.

Naturally, women should be on hand to celebrate the end of the race. If the ship wins, that calls for rum, women and song. If the ship loses, it still calls for rum, women and song. Then there are practical reasons. The boats are far from shipshape when they pull into the dock after a Mackinac race with a three-day collection of wet clothes and unwashed dishes cluttering up the cabin. The housewife, properly shocked, takes over where the men left off three days before.

The question might then be asked why any girl is willing to spend a long hard workaday, workanight, workallthetime spring so she can go along on a trip that in many ways calls for more drubbing and certainly a fair amount of roughing it. Well, I had last summer's cruise to thank for a swell hangover of good health and energy, and a tan so deep that for months afterwards I did not have to wear stockings or leg make-up. "A good time" falls short of saying it. Perhaps it is the closeness to the people you meet en route (somehow you seem to get to know even your husband better), perhaps it is the nights that are incredibly beautiful with stars nearer to the horizon and brighter than city stars, perhaps it is the fact that time has lost its meaning and you live by the mood and not the hour, that makes those days in Georgian Bay so memorable.

There were a lot of high spots in last year's cruise. Here are a few that come back to me with clarity, and



often a laugh, as I go through the routine of cooking and dishwashing and shoving a bottle in the baby's mouth.

As far as we women were concerned, the cruise started the day last spring when the men hemmed and hawed and invited us in a most uncordial manner to go along. Well, anyway, it was an invitation. We accepted with

pleasure before they could change their minds. Betty Prendergast clinched the deal by volunteering to help with provisioning; it was agreed instantly to let her take entire charge of supplies. Stocking up for two weeks was a major undertaking (our Canadian ration books, as it turned out, were more liberal than anticipated) but at least the knotty problems of what to stow, what to ship, tentative menus, who could contribute what from her fruit room stores, made grand excuses for many hilarious get-togethers during the late spring months. Looking back on it, the week of the Mackinac Race was a mad merry-go-round of packing and cooking and *Minx* started out on the long haul to Mackinac with a full larder, including six fried chickens and a whole ham done by the girls.

It will be a long, long time before I forget the finish of that race. We were crossing from the mainland when the fleet came sliding around Round Island, spinnakers puffed out like giant white kites. The breeze was sharp. It actually felt good to shiver after the weeks we had spent in heat-baked, lifeless city air. Every time we recognized *The Boat* we hurraed and jumped up and down like a bunch of zoot-suited jivers. I say "every time" because we were wrong again . . . and again. When she finally did show up, there was a wonderful post mortem party aboard with the crew unanimously agreeing: "We would have won *if*."

The second day on the island was a far cry from such mundane things as dishes and dusting and doorbelling. The day dawned (about noon) with a Moose milk party aboard *Minx*. Moose milk is part milk, part rum, I guess. Everyone came. Everyone looked at everyone else and said: "Don't people have fun!" Our Army captain came back with, "You just don't know. I'd almost forgotten what fun is like."

We got off on our cruise to such a late start Wednesday that it was impossible to make Harbor Island. But, in the North Channel and Georgian Bay, if you fall short of your destination, a chart, a leadline and a pioneer spirit will introduce you to a new cove. We ducked into



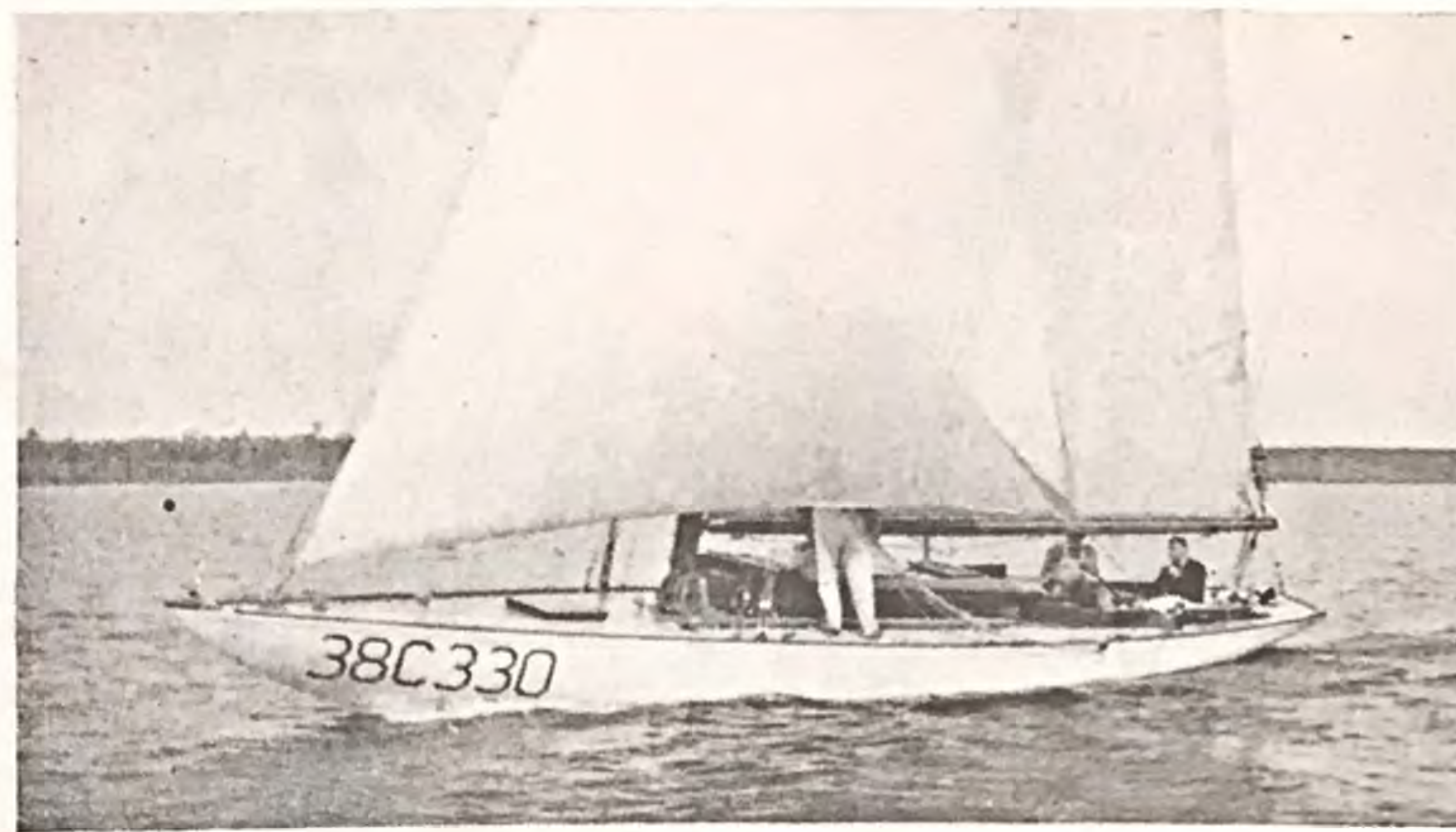
Coryell, a neat inlet at the east end of Les Cheneaux and after dinner sat on deck listening to the radio and watching shooting stars. Utter peace. I think we were all glad to be away from Mackinac. Oh, yes, life ashore had been fun but we were tired of whooping it up. We were tired of too many people and too much noise. We were ready, even anxious for this quiet and intimate life. We liked swinging gently at anchor. We liked the wind's lullaby in the rigging.

We never were early-to-bedders or early-get-uppers. If we were to have made that wonderfully protected fisherman's "Shangri-la" known as Turnbull Island on Thursday night as originally scheduled, we should have risen with the sun or pushed a bit harder. As things went, it was eight o'clock when we were opposite Mississagi Island with at least an hour to go before we hit Turnbull. So we entered into a quick huddle, or rather shouting bout, with "Stu" Rackham in *Sonata*. He had chartered her for the summer and had tagged along with us in friendly Georgian Bay fashion all afternoon. Mississagi won out. It was a pretty enough cove with a lighthouse on the Island, but hardly comparable to Turnbull. It proved only seven to eight feet deep (we draw almost seven) and open to the east, so that if the wind had shifted eastward we would have had to duck into Blind River, on the mainland, for the night. No shifting wind, however. No nothing. After a spaghetti dinner of prewar proportions we slept the deep sleep of the wilderness.

Friday was a wonderful day. In the first place, "Doc," who was always up before the rest of us, had started breakfast and insisted that I eat in bed or, should I say, "in bunk." The first time for such luxury since I've been married.

Friday we passed through the fascinating Whalesback Channel with its series of rocky islands that some glacier moulded into realistic shapes — as clean a job as a cooky cutter. Turtle Rock is complete even to the upraised flipper. The water through here is black, no

*Both North Channel and Georgian Bay are favorite cruising grounds for Lake Huron and Lake Michigan skippers*



*"Minx" is a New York "30," now Marconi rigged and still in excellent condition despite the fact that she is an old lady of forty*

doubt because of the rocky bottom. We bore off to the south at Passage Island and went through Little Detroit Passage — so difficult to see at a distance, so wild, so narrow, that it suddenly brought us close in spirit to those early explorers of the Great Lakes, Jean Nicolet, Etienne Brule and the others, who traveled the "big sea waters" in birch canoes.

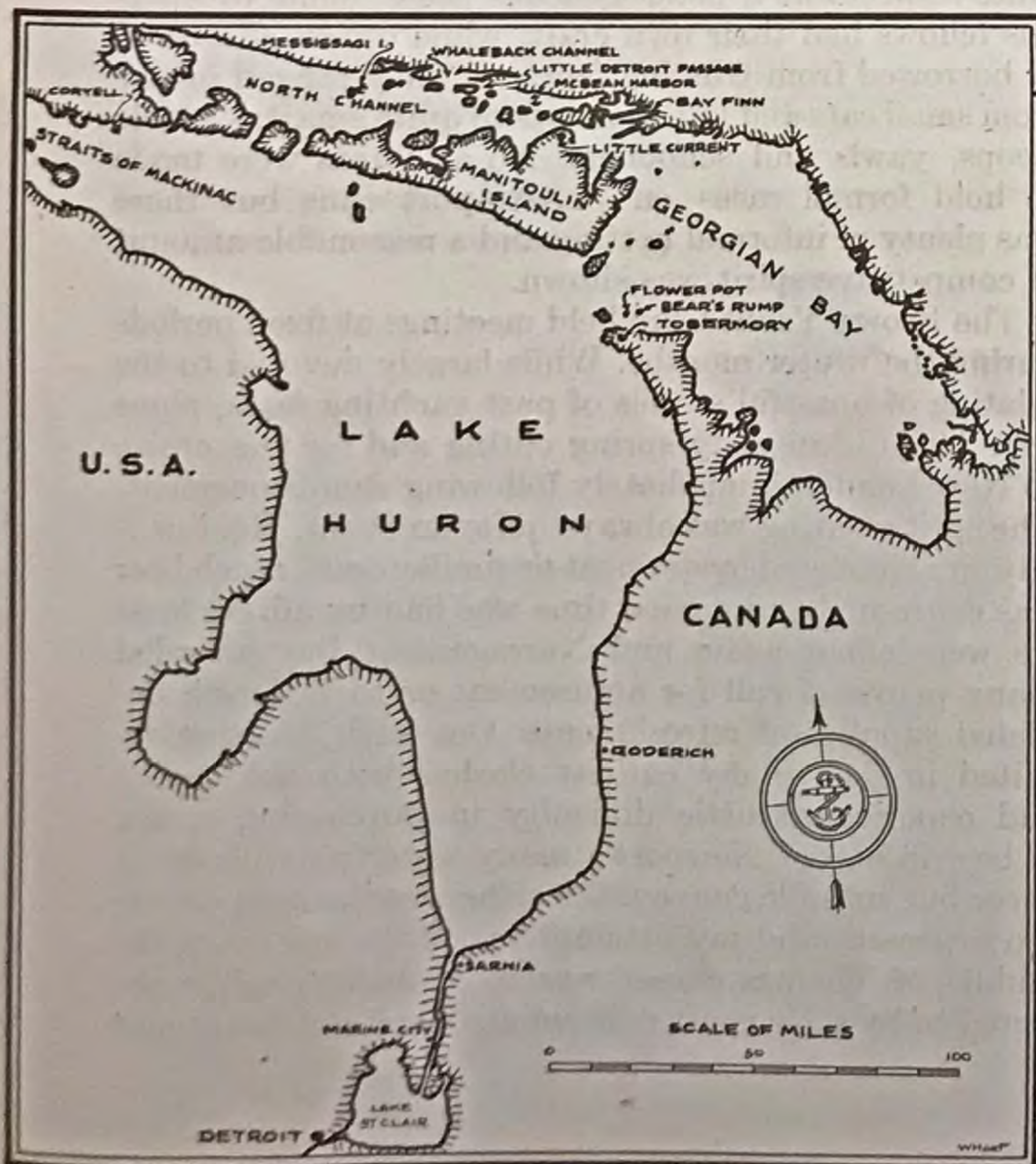
We slid down McBean Channel and turned north at Bald Rock into McBean Inlet, swinging west for an anchorage. This is a perfect harbor, deep, well protected and ruggedly beautiful. I can still see the smoke drifting out of the cabins on the mountainous shore, the year-round homes of the Southwinds tribe. The Indian boys brought us pails of blueberries and cleaned our fish (no one was able to teach them to fillet them, however).

That night we tied up to *Sonata*. Already we were feeling rested. A party was inevitable. Ted started it off when he hoisted a cocktail flag. François, who non-professionally is Frank Lemmer of the Coast Guard, responded by bringing over the fanciest hors d'oeuvres ever turned out in a galley. It was a great party with no neighbors to annoy, no babies to wake and, after all, if one did get a little high, he just jumped overboard into the cold clear water which had a remarkably cooling effect.

Saturday night all the boats, no matter what route they chose getting there, ended up in Little Current. We did our marketing, our icing up, our customs and other business first, which was the smartest thing ever because the sidewalks are rolled up and the stores are shut on Sunday. These days when I serve creamed eggs for dinner, Eddie and I sigh a little, remembering those steaks we got in Little Current. But there is more than beef in that Manitoulin town. Along with all the other crews we pawed over the marvelous woolen stocks at Grant Turner's and uncovered such bonanzas as all-wool baby blankets and Jaeger polo coats for a song, plus a bit of Mex. If you don't think any girl wouldn't mow the White House lawn in return for half an hour in Turner's — well, you just don't know women.

But Little Current is "city stuff." Best of all were the three days we spent in Marianna Bay, that cove behind St. James Island in Bay Finn. The mountains rose from deep blue water. The more ambitious of our crew actually climbed to the topmost peak where the wind blows incessantly and you can scan the whole of McGregor Bay and sleeve-shaped Bay Finn 'way down to the Turning Basin. Someone suggested going down to the

*(Continued on page 98)*







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Robert Kerr

"Minx," "Kathmar" and "Josephine II" alongside Turner's island

## NORTH CHANNEL NOSTALGIA

(Continued from page 37)

Basin where the pike really are "that big," but why move on? Why do anything, in fact?

To be sure, we fished a little; we swam any time of the day and night that the mood moved us; we played bridge aboard *Rambler*; and we filled a quart can with blueberries in such short order that after that I could never bring myself to pay the 55 cents a pint, city price.

Dinner those days with *Apache's* fish, our hamburger, and over-the-open-fire coffee, was cooked ashore with "Toot" at the accordion. What a shock it was when Doc turned on the radio and we heard that Mussolini had put the show on the road 24 hours before! I believe, for the moment, the war had actually slipped our minds.

In our dinghy we went visiting from boat to boat. *Apache* (wizard winner in this-race-and-that, including the *Mackinac*), *Vitesse*, *Rambler*, *Estrellita*, and *Minx* were all in the harbor at one time. We also put-putted over to the Island and said howdy to the holidayers who came over from Little Current in *Estrellita*. The howdy lasted most of one day and we all agreed that the men could not have been having a better time. But I knew, too, that no piece of land, however enchanting, could ever hold us for long. Our summer cottage would always be a ship. How about a change of scene? A change of friends? Anchors aweigh, and new adventures ahead.

The passage from Bay Finn to Tobermory, too, is memorable. We spotted a balloon falling ever so gently out of the blue. We wondered what it could be doing over McGregor Bay but forgot about it when it was blacked out by the mountains.

Eddie says there is always a wind coming into Tobermory. It was right on the snoz so we could not lay Bear's Rump and had to beat up between the Rump and Flower Pot, which is really as intriguing as the postcards would make you believe. We slid into the magnificent Big Tub with its sheer rock walls just as it was getting dark and moored along the floating raft walk for the night. Most of the names painted so lavishly across the rock were under water last year, but still readable.

The next morning we talked to the Grand Old Man of Tobermory, Orrie Vale, who makes you wonder if a small town and a fishing boat are not all that are needed for a full life. He certainly was young for sixty.

The cruise home was far from an anticlimax. The weather was made to order for a vacation; sunny, warm, with a light breeze. When the air did flatten out Eddie set the engine at idling speed which pulled the wind ahead enough to fill the sails — a sharp trick for cruising in gas rationing days. We hit Goderich on Saturday night and the whole town and the whole countryside and the whole RAF wandered around that center circle. We stocked up on steak, feeling that it was our last chance to get our teeth into beef. Our last overnight stop was the Sarnia Yacht Club, cleaner than Port Huron's Black River. We checked into the customs at Marine City (which is quicker than Detroit), crossed St. Clair in the only blow we had, then rolled down the river and home.