

THE SOLO FLIGHT OF "MASHNEE"

The Story of a 46-foot Sloop's "French Leave" — Which Has a Happy Ending

By HENRY LEE NORRIS

YACHTSMEN of discretion who subscribe to *YACHTING* may recall an article in the issue of February, 1944, entitled "Metamorphosis of *Mashnee*," which wound up with the following peroration:

"Many a dowager, 'fair, fat and forty,' with contours of a busted lounge, might well envy *Mashnee*, the old girl now in her forty-third year who, despite the pounding to which she has been subjected, is still as sound, as graceful, as streamlined and as fast as she was on her maiden voyage in 1902."

Whether or not thus breaking out into print turned the old girl's head is hard to say, but in the teeth of the September hurricane *Mashnee* took French leave, vanished from her accustomed place in Larchmont Harbor, and was on her own for 40 hours. Exactly what happened during this interval is a matter of conjecture but anything may happen when a lady stays away from home for two nights.

Ample hurricane warnings had been issued for several days prior to the storm but the Skipper had no apprehensions as to the safety of *Mashnee* as she was secured to a 400-pound mushroom anchor in 18 feet of water by a 68-foot heavy chain and a 26-foot 3" hawser attached to a steel wire pennant. Although moored far out in the harbor, she was protected from the east by the Larchmonth breakwater and from the north and northwest by the harbor shore line. To the southwest lay the dangerous Hen and Chickens reef and, directly south, partially submerged Umbrella Rock, the West Harbor blinker, and several can buoys.

Early Friday morning, September 15th, the indefatigable Joe (see February *YACHTING*) phoned to the Skipper the startling news that *Mashnee* had vanished during the storm and the inescapable inference was that she would prove to be a total loss. It was inconceivable that a boat of her size — 46' 6" over all, 5' 4" draft, 61' mast and 5-ton keel, — could, unattended, outride a hurricane with wind velocity reported in excess of 90 miles per hour and mountainous seas.

Had she gone adrift while the wind was out of the northeast, as it was during the beginning of the storm, she would have hung up on the rocks of the Westchester shore; but an anxious



"*Mashnee*" is a Buzzards Bay "30" which was designed by Nat Herreshoff and built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Co. in 1902. Her present jib-headed rig is set on a specially made solid mast

search revealed no signs of *Mashnee*. It was then surmised that she had gone out when the gale, attaining its greatest velocity, swung into the northwest, and that she was either at the bottom of the Sound or smashed up and strewn along the north shore of Long Island.

The disconsolate Skipper hung out the crepe, attached a mourning arm-band, communicated with the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, under which *Mashnee* is enrolled, notified the *Glen Cove News* and, last but not least, the insurance company; then anxiously awaited notice of the inquest and the funeral services.

At noon on Saturday, having secured the services of the power cruiser *Thelma*, the Skipper and a sailing companion set out from Throgg's Neck on an independent search. The Long Island shore was littered with wreckage: several large motor boats, two schooners, and a yawl were seen high up on the beach or smashed on the rocks. Off Gangway Rock, near the entrance to Port Washington Harbor, the Nassau County Police boat *Chief* was encountered.

With prompt efficiency, two-way radio communication was established with police headquarters and word came back that a yacht with a white dinghy on deck had been reported east of Sands Point and that apparently looters were aboard.

The *Chief*, followed by the plodding *Thelma*, departed at high speed, dispersed the intruders before loss of equipment, then stood by. Upon rounding Sands Point the Skipper with high-powered binoculars first picked out the mast, then the crosstrees, finally recognized the hull of *Mashnee*, and emitted a roar of astonishment and glee when he observed that the mast was slowly swaying with the ground swell.

Instead of being piled up on shore with hull stove in and mast gone, she was afloat 200 yards offshore and apparently sound, except for comparatively minor injuries to rails, decks and topsides, the loss of a hatch cover, and somewhat extensive water and oil damage to interior fittings, engine equipment, and paint work.

After her solo flight through one of the worst storms recorded on the eastern seaboard, there lay *Mashnee*, serenely riding to

(Continued on page 92)



THE SOLO FLIGHT OF "MASHNEE"

(Continued from page 48)

her own mooring and looking like the cat that had eaten the canary. It is little wonder that the Coast Guard had passed her by when expecting to find a derelict.

The boat was pumped out, and as it was impossible to raise the mushroom by the winch, a line was attached to the mooring chain and the powerful police boat towed the whole outfit back to Larchmont and deposited *Mashnee* close to the spot which she had left so unceremoniously two days before.

To have dragged a 400-pound mushroom anchor four miles across Long Island Sound and to have fetched up 200 yards off a sandy beach, avoiding rocks, reefs, blinkers and channel buoys, and dodging other boats *en route*, certainly proves that the cagey old craft knows her way about and that her Skipper must live right after all.