



CNAV PICKLE:

All night we hissed along under the storm spinnaker
rushing down each sea into the hollow,
the exhilaration of the lift,
the glance over the shoulder as the crest curls and breaks at your stern
and then the hiss and headlong rush down again.

When the watch hands, newly graduated sub-lieutenants from the Royal Military College, joined the *Pickle* on 19 June she was in a rather confused state having just finished a refit. Everyone wondered whether she would be ready for departure on 21 June. She was, barely.

At 1100 on Friday, 21 June we slipped and set course for Bermuda where the race was. Once outside the harbour we came up against eight to 10 foot waves. That night almost everyone was seasick and most of the 'subs', I am sure, wanted to turn back. The fact that the lee rail was under and everyone was wet only added to the misery.

After a couple of days our stomachs settled down and we started to practise our sail handling, putting up almost every sail combination possible, with the exception of spinnakers. We practised our spinnaker drill in Bermuda when the winds were more favourable.

En route we learned from one of our weather forecasts that we were heading directly for the centre of Hurricane Brenda. We lashed everything down and altered course to avoid it. Luckily we missed the storm centre and profited from the NE winds created by it to send us speedily to Bermuda.

Finally, after what seemed weeks, but in fact was only five days, we arrived in Bermuda. On Wednesday night, June 26, we anchored in St. George's Harbour. The following day while motoring around to N.O.B. (the US Navy base in Bermuda) we took in tow the American yacht *Baccarat*, which, after completing the Newport to Bermuda race, had developed engine trouble and was drifting dangerously near the reefs. We towed her into Hamilton and proceeded to N.O.B. The next day we shifted to Hamilton and secured alongside the First Canadian Minesweeping Squadron which had carried some supplies for us. When they left, we moved to the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club for the rest of our stay in Bermuda. We were exceptionally well looked after.

By Wednesday we were all ready to start the race. We slipped at 1100 and proceeded under power to the start line. Once again we helped a yacht with engine trouble, this time the *Germania VI* from Germany. *Pickle* towed her through the channel until she was able to sail to the start line. One end of the start line was marked by the German navy's *Westerwald*, the ship which escorted us across the Atlantic.

The race started at 1600. The A class boats were first to start and we, being in the B class, started 15 minutes later. Of the five A class yachts the two favourites, *Ondine* (USA) and *Stormvogel* (Netherlands) had to restart. The B class start was perfect with most vessels, like ourselves, making a "5 sail" start, with the spinnaker, main, mizzen, spinnaker staysail and mizzen staysails set. By sunset of this, the first day, we could see 32 of the 33 boats in the race.

For the first few days we had from very light to light winds. The weather was perfect for cruising but not for racing. The finish, at least three weeks away, seemed distant enough without having only light airs. Luckily the wind picked up by Saturday when we at last got the lee rail under. This was the first really good sailing that we had experienced.

Up until then we had been using our lighter spinnakers; now we broke out our storm spinnaker and left it up for two days. It was a great thrill surfing down the long Atlantic swells at speeds greater than our hull speed. At the bottom of the swell, one had the impression of having stopped although we were still doing seven knots. Then once again we were lifted by a wave and were off again at high speed.

During the next few days, when the weather eased, most of the watch hands had a chance to practise their celestial navigation. All our previous sun sights had been taken from the flat or gently rolling deck of a destroyer or frigate. It is a completely different experience on a yacht. Care must be taken against getting salt water spray on the sextant, it must be secured on a lanyard around your neck, and you must brace against something. Above all, you must choose exactly the right moment to take the sun; if you are not on the crest of a wave your horizon may vary between twelve feet and three miles.

The hands were split into the port and starboard watches. The watch system consisted of two daytime watches (from 0600 to 1200 and from 1200 to 1800) and three night-time watches (1800 to 2200, 2200 to 0200 and 0200 to 0600). Taking into consideration the time required for meals, the maximum amount of sleep during the daytime was 4½ hours and 3¼ hours at night.

The port watch had the prospect of a dismal day when we were shaken at 0500 on Tuesday, 9 July. All hands were required to gybe the spinnaker. Shortly after gybing we hit a rain squall. This was met with a great deal of joy since the weather was warm and the water was fresh. We carried only the minimum requirement of fresh water, one gallon per day per man. This meant that water was strictly rationed and could not be used for pleasures such as washing or brushing one's teeth. We turned the dinghy up to catch water and before long all hands were on deck taking showers and washing their clothes. This rain shower — though it does not sound important — turned out to be one of the most enjoyable events of the crossing.

Later that day a *Shepherd*, the German navy's equivalent to our *Neptune*, flew over. They did this periodically throughout the trip which was most comforting.

The next day we caught a Portuguese man-o'-war, a type of jelly fish, and nicknamed him Hernandez. After having a close look at him and after studying how he "sailed", we let him go. The following day we sighted a school of about twenty dolphins. They accompanied us for about an hour and we all got a kick out of watching them play around the bow.

All the yachts in the race were asked to keep a record of any sea life sighted for British Oceanographic Research committee. During the trip we saw a large number of porpoises, dolphins and whales, all fairly close to the yacht. These animals are not scared away by yachts because a sailing ship has no engine noise to frighten them. In fact, some of the whales, we believed, thought we were another whale.

The big event for the next day was the changing of the



Four of the RMC grads had no previous experience, and four had only sailed inland waters in small craft, but were quick to learn.



"Up spirits," and crew members hoist a mug of grog at the end of the race which took them 3,668 miles through North Atlantic weather.

West Atlantic chart for the East Atlantic one. The end was now in sight.

The weather for the rest of the week was dismal, with little wind, lots of rain and poor visibility. Sunday night, 11 July, the wind picked up and blew at 25 knots for the next few days. During this period the boat had a heavy heel to port and the lee rail was under for at least fifty per cent of the time. At first it seemed funny living on a 40-degree angle, eating out of bowls and wondering whether or not you would fall out of your bunk. This fun rapidly wore off!

Monday, 15 July, was a happy day for Tim Blythe. It was his 21st birthday. Few people nowadays celebrate their 21st birthday under sail! The next day Rick Lalonde was 23.

The best remembered event of the trip came on Wednesday, 17 July. The port watch was shaken at 0430 to lend a hand in reefing the main. This had to be done or the heavy winds would have accelerated our speed so much that we would have lost control of the vessel. Not until we had finished reefing did we get a chance to look at the size of the heavy seas bearing down on us. Some of the waves were 20 feet high. It was frightening at first not knowing whether these waves would break on top of the boat or underneath it. Some of them broke on us and filled the cockpit.

The skipper decided the wind was too heavy for even a reefed main so we smashed through the waves at about seven knots under just a jib and the mizzen. By 0730 the wind had eased enough for us to set the double reefed main. By this time everyone was soaked to the skin. Unfortunately, due to heavy heel to port all the lockers on the port side were full of water and oil. Almost everything in them was drenched. It was a dismal thought knowing that half of us had no dry clothes at all. During the afternoon the storm began to abate, but we still had a heavy swell to contend with for a couple of days.

Then the weather turned wet and foggy. During this time we passed the north of Scotland. Everyone's spirits were raised when we heard the fog horn at the Butt of Lewis. This was the first landfall that we had made since Bermuda. Even though we could not see the land it was good to hear

that it was near. From the climate in this area, rain and fog, we concluded that the north of Scotland would be very similar to our own Newfoundland.

Once we were out in the North Sea the fog cleared. It did not appear to be the same North Sea that we had heard about; it was dead calm. The next day we saw it change and we encountered the short choppy waves for which the North Sea is famous. The yacht dipped into one swell, scooped up a large amount of water in the spinnaker and tore it from top to bottom. This weather lasted only a couple of days however and at 1805 on Wednesday, 24 July, we passed the Skagen Light Vessel. This marked the end of the first part of the race.

The remainder of the race consisted of a 190-mile run to the Fehmarn-Belt Light Vessel. We had anticipated light winds for this part of the race since we were in the lee of Denmark and had expected to sail to the Kattegat on a broad reach. We were wrong on both counts. We had to beat through the narrow channels between the Danish islands in heavy winds. Everyone spent a very uncomfortable night including the skipper who was drenched while wearing his last pair of dry trousers.

We finally passed the Fehmarn-Belt Light Vessel, which meant the end of the race at 0151:30 on Friday, 26 July.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the race was the amount of time spent running under spinnakers. Of the 22 days at sea, one of our four spinnakers was set for 17 days. One always dreams of surfing down the big Atlantic swells with the storm spinnaker set; we did this on several days. The thrill of surging down these swells at high speeds of eleven or more knots in strong winds was an exhilarating experience.

We had a few days runs in excess of 200 miles! The best was 224 miles. Our average speed for the 3,668 miles was a fraction under seven knots.

The race was a navigator's delight. With the exception of a few days, the heavens could be seen almost all the time. The navigator did have a few trying moments, however, as fog persisted for the entire passage north of Scotland en-



Pickle running under spinnaker and mizzen staysail in Gulf Stream, with skipper Bill Walker at helm, and navigator Lt-Cdr Hal Davies.



Lt-Cdr Ron Coell, and Sub-Lts Rick Lalonde and Tom Badenock tend the skipper, Lt-Cdr Bill Walker, while he checks the rigging.

abling us to catch a glimpse of only two offshore islets.

When we sailed into Travemünde we were greeted by crowds of holidayers strolling along the mole. The harbour was alive with boats of every size and shape. We saw everything from the four-masted ship *Passat* to fishing boats to '420' dinghies. None of us is ever likely to see as many boats in one place again. The reason for the fleet was that 1968 was the centennial of the NRV (Norddeutscher Regatta Verein). To celebrate this they held a number of small boat regattas as well as several races in European waters and our own trans-Atlantic race.

It is hard to describe how wonderful the first day ashore was to us. It meant walking on solid ground, something we had not done for 23 days. It also meant having a hot shower, wearing clean clothes and sleeping in a comfortable bed for at least twelve hours, pleasures usually taken for granted by the landsman.

In the week following our arrival in Germany there were many social events for the crews of the trans-Atlantic boats. The first, on Monday, was an informal gathering for all yachtsmen at the beer-and-restaurant tent, Passathafen, Travemünde. The next day representatives of the offshore yachtsmen were welcomed by the Hanseatic City of Lübeck aboard the *Passat* training ship. This was followed later by a Jubilee Banquet given by NRV for skippers of the offshore yachts at the Terrassen-Restaurant, Kurhaus Hotel, Travemünde.

The biggest event of the week was the Jubilee Ball for off-shore yachtsmen at the Kurhaus, Travemünde. This was especially enjoyed by the sub-lieutenants from the *Pickle* since our dates all spoke English.

The following day all the yachtsmen who participated in the trans-Atlantic race were taken to Hamburg for prize giving and further receptions. These started at 11 a.m. with a reception by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg at the Town Hall. Buses then took the yachtsmen to a luncheon at the Atlantic Hotel. We were taken by Alster Riverboat to the NRV Clubhouse for prize giving and an informal social gathering.

A word must be said here for the wonderful job done by the members of the NRV. They arranged facilities including a post office, laundry service, money exchange, press office and engine repair service in their clubhouse. The success of the 1968 Trans-Atlantic Race was the result of six years of hard work by the NRV members.

Where did *Pickle* stand? Out of the 33 yachts she came 22nd in the Bermuda to Skagen race, 23rd in the Bermuda to Travemünde race. She came in 2nd amongst the "Old-timers" (boats built before 1948) and 2nd of the navy yachts, being beaten by *Taifun* of the German navy and beating *Stella Polare* of the Italian navy. Of the eleven nations participating in the race, Canada came in 2nd in team racing. The corrected times of *Spirit* (of Vancouver) and *Pickle* were not far behind those of *Rendezvous* and *Carina III* of Sweden.

All in all the race was a tremendous success and will live as an outstanding memory for those of us who were lucky enough to be selected for the crew. ❀

THE CREW OF CNAV PICKLE for the 1968 Trans-Atlantic Race

Skipper:	Lt-Cdr W. D. Walker
Navigator:	Lt-Cdr H. L. Davies
Watch Mates:	Lt-Cdr R. H. Coell PO G. Shippan
Cook:	Ldg-Sea A. D. Johnson
Watch Hands:	Sub-Lts E. J. Ruff C. K. Haines J. D. Jamieson I. D. Sanderson J. R. Lalonde J. M. Olivier T. A. Badenock T. J. W. Blythe