

## **MNAC 2004: One Man's Story**

### **By Gordon Brookfield**

I'll give you my report, probably in more detail than you want, and due to my rose-colored glasses and my failing memory, the accuracy of this report is probably better than 50% and less than 80%. Since it is my story, I'll start back in March when I decided to go to Fort Walton Beach, and put out a feeler looking for someone to sail with me. Bob DeRoeck replied which both excited and terrified me. What was I going to do with someone who actually knew what he was doing sailing with me? I instantly decided that he would be master and I would be the deck hand...GOOD DECISION. Bob and I exchanged e-mails and photos, and I began to make some of the changes he suggested, the biggest was making a new rudder head and tiller using his plans. The results are a thing of beauty. I also made up a really fine spinnaker/whisker pole using his ordering information.

Bob volunteered to fly into Charlotte on Saturday, June 19th and help complete the rigging of my boat for using his wonderful above-deck spinnaker snout. He worked adding ratchet blocks, spinnaker halyard block, moving main sheet blocks on the boom, adding an outhaul arrangement, and more. Sunday we were on the road for almost 11 hours but we arrived safely, with no road incidents. (I had replaced my wheel bearings, added new bearing buddies, and we checked the wheels frequently while enroute).

#### **Monday**

Monday was the measuring session. Bob did it all, virtually single-handedly. Sails that had been checked last year were not rechecked. Of the boats that I know were weighed, all of the Mutts were at least 40# heavy and on up to 65# overweight. Bob found that the rudders had a whole lot of variation in length, and in fact, mine was the only one of the mutts that matched the spec. Bob is creating a log of non-conformities as well as a log of failures experienced by both classes of boats. There were plenty of these. After the measuring, Bob and I snuck out between violent thunderstorms and tried out "G's Whiz". We cycled the spinnaker up and down, tested the hiking straps, and in general, checked out the functioning of everything. All was A-OK. Bob and I, and Rey and Maria went out to a Thai restaurant for dinner that night.

#### **Tuesday**

We went out for race #1 amid white capes and 20' seas, OK, small waves. Bob was unbelievable with his starts. We crossed the line as leaders in 5 out of the 6 races we ran. The winds were howling and we were screaming along. There was no thought of flying the spinnaker on our boat. All was going well and we were in the hunt when it became necessary to gibe. I, of course, leapt from the low side to the high side...NOT. leaping was something we quickly discovered was not in my arsenal. Anyway, my 220 lbs located on the wrong side of the boat gave the expected results, my first training lesson in capsizing. (It also won us the award that I display proudly on my mantle, the first Garza Award). Well, while floundering around (I should probably say whaling around), Bob had me swim to the bow and hold it. Guess what, the boat headed into the wind, Bob scampered over the top from the inside of the boat and popped it right up. He commented what a great sea anchor I was! The next task, after he just climbed effortlessly aboard was to get me back in the boat. I still wanted to be a sea anchor, since I had found something I could do well.

The rescue boat came over but we shoo'd it away, and Bob reached over, grabbed my belt, and landed me like a large Tuna. The boat had about 6" of water in the cockpit. About 10 minutes before the capsize, I tripped for the 70-11th time on the bailing bucket rope, so Bob had me untie it and he put the bucket in the stern, saying, "If we capsize, we may lose it". Prophetic. Anyhow, we continued racing, and when we were the last ones on the course, and the winds were getting worse, and the rain was going sideways, the committee boat came out and told us that we had officially finished in 3rd. We later discovered that we got third because John Allison had failed to cross the finish line. He actually sailed to a second place finish.

We came about and headed in on a very fast reach, and in a short time on this heading, the rudder snapped off right across the blade right where it met the rudder head. Bob was able to grab the broken blade and steer a little, and we got the attention of one of the safety boats who towed us in. When we got ashore, Uncle Jim offered us a rudder blade that he had brought for the auction. Bob got it installed, and we went back out for the second and third races. Instead, we bobbed on perfectly flat water in a dead calm for 2-1/2 hours. Bob and I got towed out to the start. We were a little late, and the breeze died when we were about half way there. We all got towed in. Again, Bob and I won, with 3 tows in one day.

The annual meetings were held, first with the BCA and then by ourselves. The BCA announced that their regatta would be held in Burlington Vermont in 2005. When the MCA got together, the subject of location, which we had been discussing previously, came up. Both Gib and Rey doubted that they would drive over 2000 miles, after driving about 1500 for each of the last three years. I guessed that Vince and Mary would attend, and thought that I might also. Bob DeRoeck would attend but he would race his Buccaneer. It seemed obvious that the Mutineer class would not be well served at this venue at this time. Ernie offered up his facility in Nebraska, and that is being investigated. Gib and Rey felt that they could get more boats there out of their two areas than we had in Fort Walton. The other subject that came up was to have the event be the annual gathering of the MCA with the NMAC as a featured event, but with either a 'B' fleet or a cruising class for the social sailors with the old sails and no spinnakers.

### Wednesday

Wednesday was a great sailing day. We sailed three races, and Bob and I finished 4th behind Gib, Ernie and Rey in the first race and third behind Gib and Ernie in the other two races. Again, Bob was stellar on starts. We had no major problems, except Bob was beginning to wonder about me when I slipped and sat in his lap for the third time. I was totally beat at the end of the third race, and had discovered that I was not real happy about holding the jib sheet without benefit of cleating for the whole time. What a fine set of blisters I had on both hands. At least they were symmetrical. The standings at the end of day two were Gib, Ernie, and Rey and us tied for third. Rey announced that he had wrenched his knee and was not going to race again. If John Allison hadn't had the worst possible luck, he would have had no luck at all. He was unable to finish any of the three races. The day ended with the "Cheeseburgers in Paradise" cookout with Gib and Rey doing yeoman duty on the grill. The keg of dark beer did not have a chance to get warm. The silent auction for the Leukemia Assoc and the raffle were also a big success, followed by music provided by some of the group. I missed that so someone else will have to comment on it.

## Thursday

When I arrived, Bob and Rey had decided that we should take a cruising day (Thank you, guys!) and skip racing. Dan Jones joined us, while Michael Boley and his son went off to hunt for treasure in a computer sponsored scavenger hunt using GPS information from the web. We had a wonderful sail, (I put the jib cam cleats back on the boat). We went down the length of the bay, put up on a beautiful beach where I dove in for a couple of minutes, and then we ate lunch in a pretty little park, right by Dan Jones' hotel. This left Gib, Ernie and John racing. John was able to prove that he belonged out there with a 1st, a 2nd, and a 3rd place finish. Gib got the other two firsts. At the end of the day, with one throw out race, Gib was perfect with 6 wins, Ernie was second, Rey and we were still tied for third, and John was one point behind us. John decided that if he raced on Friday, all he could accomplish was to knock us out of third, (remember, Rey was not going to race) and John's boat hat broken again. He decided to take his family out for a cruise instead. All of us except Dan and family went out to a nice seafood restaurant where we had a good meal, a few pitchers of beer, and some great conversation.

## Friday

John was willing to loan us his new mainsail, and neither Gib or Ernie objected, so we got to try the boat with good sails. What a difference it made. In the first race we challenged Gib several times, (to no avail-but it was fun), and we outdistanced Ernie by a fair amount, so we finished 2nd to Gib. The last race of the regatta started out like the previous one, and would have ended the same except that when we pulled out the jib after dousing the spinnaker, I neglected to put tension on the furling line, so instead of winding around the furling drum, it wound around beneath it, on the inner tube. The jib jammed about half way towards being furled, and wouldn't move either way. Bob went forward and cleared it, but by the time we were sailing again, Ernie and Adam were back in front of us. Bob and I almost came home with another trophy, Adam's boat impaled on my bow. It was as close to a T-Bone as you can come without colliding, thanks to Bob's quick reactions. We did manage to pass them again, but cagey Ernie discovered that every time he tacked, Bob tacked to cover his air, and on each of these maneuvers, Ernie was able to pick up 5 or 6 yards. He beat us to the finish line by about a boat length.

We all went to a cozy seafood restaurant for the awards banquet. It was a wonderful party with lots of laughs and great stories. Vinc's awards were unbelievable. As I said above, I will always treasure the first Garza.

## Prologue

So, Bob and I finished 3rd. You might say by default, but I prefer to believe that we would have finished third or fourth even if John and Rey decided to race on Friday. My boat stayed together well, Bob sailed very well, and was able to devise strategies that minimized the disadvantage he had with a very unlimber crew. His spinnaker worked wonderfully, and we gained on everyone when flying it. It was an exciting week of intense action. The congeniality of the entire group and the intense desire to see that everyone got back on the water after a breakdown was something that is probably unique in the sailing world.

Thanks everybody. It was a real adventure.

Gordon Brookfield