

THOUGHTS ON CRUISING AFTER TEN YEARS EXPERIENCE

by Susan Peterson

While the Lightning is widely acknowledged as a fine all around day sailor and racer, relatively few people seem to be enjoying their boat as a cruiser, though in these inflationary times it seems logical to do so (see Buckman's article in the Small Boat Journal, 1979 nos. 4 and 5). The Lightning is a fast and able little cruiser which can penetrate shoal waters and harbors forever denied to larger boats. With a little imagination, a few precautions, and some relatively inexpensive equipment, the Lightning can be a reasonably safe and comfortable overnighter.

I cruised my boat, 4879, for two summers on the Chesapeake and travelled hundreds of miles without mishap. There are many other areas equally as well suited to Lightning cruisers and I hope this article will encourage a few individuals to venture forth with the family Lightning who, contrary to popular belief, is a surprisingly capable and versatile cruiser.

I found conventional camping gear adequate for my needs, but all of my cruising was done solo, and it may be that with more than two people more extensive use of lightweight backpacking gear would be necessary. An inexpensive tarp served me as a boom tent and was carefully folded and stowed forward under the foredeck each morning ready for easy deployment at the next evening's anchorage. I anchored out each night preferring not to risk landowner hassels by camping ashore. I slept under the foredeck of my boat and used a foam pad and piece of plywood under my sleeping bag. On a fiberglass boat with a forward buoyancy tank it might be necessary to devise a way of converting the cockpit seats to bunks perhaps by using a piece of plywood or canvas between the seats and centerboard trunk.

For cooking I employed a Coleman stove and used mainly canned goods and fresh produce. I did not carry ice as I found it too bulky and expensive. Bread and some fresh vegetables and fruits will keep for at least three or four days even in Maryland's warm summer climate, provided the produce is carefully selected. Fruits and vegetables must be unblemished and not too ripe to begin with. Sweet potatoes, carrots, apples and pears all keep fairly well. I usually cooked breakfast and supper on shore, and for lunch relied on a quick sandwich and a cup of coffee from a thermos while under way. When it rained I used a solid fuel 'Sterno' stove on board the boat to heat a can of stew as I felt the gas fueled Coleman stove shouldn't be used on the boat. Breakfast was usually hot cereal, pancakes, or occasionally granola type cereal.

Supper often centered around some convenience type food such as flavored instant rice with canned meat added, or it consisted of a one pot creation like spaghetti or tunafish and noodles mixed with mushroom soup. One should take the precaution if carrying canned goods to be sure they are well water proofed. Labels wash off and cans will rust through in a surprisingly short time if wetted by brackish or salt water. I carried about a week's supply of food and preferred to buy fresh produce every few days. (Make sure, in the South at least, that you unpack the groceries before you go aboard. I spent half an hour hunting down a stowa-

way cockroach one day after I brought a bag aboard in Solomans, Maryland. Because of its weight I carried only three or four gallons of water in individual one gallon containers. I then frequently visited either a marina or an anchored cruiser to replenish my supply every few days. While perhaps not the ideal approach, I never ran out in the relatively populous waters I sailed in.

Stowage of food and equipment was not difficult for a solo cruiser but might call for more attention as to optimum trim of the boat if several people are aboard. Most of my gear went forward under the foredeck near the mast step with the space under the seats, side decks and after deck reserved for a few easy to reach items such as a thermos or a package of "munchies". A net hammock under the side deck near the helmsman and forward under the foredeck along one side of the boat were handy for small items. Some older Lightnings have a handy drawer under the after deck for "fragiles" and dry storage. All gear must be stored in large plastic bags or otherwise water proofed to protect it from spray and bilgewater. I kept my matches in several different areas of the boat.

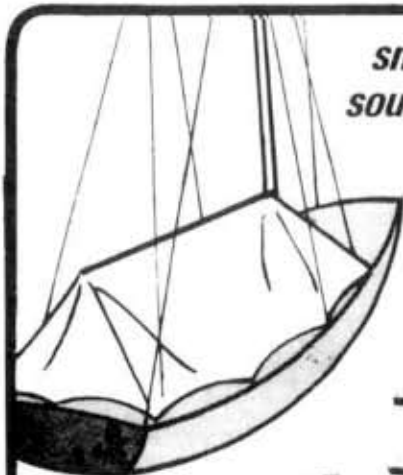
My day of cruising would begin with breakfast on shore after which I would stow sleeping bag, the "gallery" and tarp, and get underway with at least a vague idea of my day's destination in mind. The distance of each day's run depended in part on wind and weather as initially evaluated each morning.

While cruising, getting there is most of the fun, but occasionally the winds can strengthen or die while you still have several miles to go. When becalmed an outboard of two or three horsepower is an ample auxiliary but don't expect it to push your boat against strong headwinds or four foot seas. Motors have drawbacks such as the need for a bracket and carrying flammable fuel, but in some situations such as negotiating narrow channels against tidal currents little else will suffice. Most small motors will get ten miles to the gallon and a two gallon fuel supply was adequate for my weekend cruises. Carry a shearpin, spare plugs, a fuel filter, and the motor should keep running. Paddles are fine for short distances with flat water and no wind but Lightnings make poor canoes. I have never tried oars but suspect the boat's beam would require sweeps of at least eight feet with attendant stowage problems. A single scull off the stern would probably work better.

If the winds freshen it is imperative to reef when the boat becomes overpowered (about fifteen knots for a light weight single hander). When cruising a small capsizable boat one must never hesitate to reduce sail. It is far more difficult to take in sail after the wind gets so strong. When in doubt, reef. It is always easy to take a reef out again. Tied in reef points are easier and quicker to use than threading a single long lace through the grommets. I recently installed a small cheek block on the end of the boom and a cleat several feet inboard for jiffy reefing which has worked very well allowing me to reduce sail area in a few seconds.

If the wind gets too strong for reefed main and jib the Lightning will sail under main alone, though she is slow and

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will not go to weather as well. If it is blowing that hard it is probably best to forget any windward progress for that day anyway. The Lightning will reach under jib alone, but will not make much progress to weather even in smooth water. I never had to try using the jib as a storm trysail though with some line for lacing it to the spars it would probably be fairly easy to rig.

Always when cruising in a Lightning plans must be flexible. If the winds shift or lighten or if a squall threatens, you must have an alternative to your original goal in mind. With an open boat such willingness to change plans is essential for cruising in comfort and safety.

It goes without saying one should have acquired some heavy weather sailing experience before starting off on a cruise.

Although most cruisers usually reach their anchorages by sunset occasionally you may have to sail at night. Running lights are an absolute necessity (*ed. note: legally required*) in the populous waters of the Chesapeake as is a big flashlight to shine on your sails should an oncoming power boat overlook your running lights. A small bow mounted light should be placed all the way forward or it may be obscured by a deck sweeper jib or by the deck itself if the boat is heeled much. At anchor a light is also required. I used a cheap kerosene lamp which was secured to the forestay with my wire spinnaker topping lift.

The type and size of anchor to carry depends on your area, and the bottom types in your anchorages. The advice of local cruisers is best sought on this. On the Chesapeake with its usual soft mud or sand anchorages a light six pound Danforth was adequate for my needs. I also carried a larger anchor for peace of mind on windy nights. I carried only 100 feet of $\frac{3}{8}$ nylon line, minimal even for the shallow Chesapeake Bay. In an emergency one could use extra dock lines or the mainsheet to lengthen the scope. Always set the anchor well and take bearings before retiring as wind shifts or tidal currents can trip the anchor. Lightnings seem to be especially active at anchor compared to larger heavier boats and will swing about in wide arcs in a strong wind, (always have the board up all the way or the boat will sail about her anchor even more actively.

Aside from a good anchor some other safety gear I found useful included a compass, a large bucket for bailing, a spare paddle, a sail mending kit, and an assortment of screws, bolts, pins and extra line. I also take along a few hand tools and on long cruises, some glass cloth and resin, epoxy putty, and caulk for emergency repairs. One should also have a good bilge pump on board. I take binoculars to identify bouy numbers and a portable radio to receive weather reports.

Common sense and anticipation go far in making a Lightning cruise safe. Conditions can change radically in an hour or so, and a wise cruiser is always looking aloft for clues in the clouds. My elderly Lightning is equipped with side floatation (Sept. '72 *Flashes*). Obviously it is best to avoid situations where capsizing is likely, but if one occurs it is usually best to stay with the boat. Probably the most common hazard for open boat cruisers is the summer thunder squall. These can be very dangerous with their short lived but strong winds and may give only a half hour's notice of their approach. In some areas you may sail near shipping channels and if you decide to cross a narrow channel look both ways first! It is very easy to underestimate an oncoming freighter's speed. They are often traveling twelve knots or more and even a tug may be steaming at a good speed. At night look for the two white masthead lights and be sure they are never paired vertically. Generally the best route to go in open boat cruising is the most conservative route. Given reasonable care, however, and sailed sensibly, the Lightning will also take care of you.

Once tried, Lightning cruising may prove addictive. I have made cruises up to four hundred miles in length without major difficulty, and most of the time when I have gotten into a tight spot it was due to poor judgement rather than to any deficiency on the boat's part. Indeed, she has gotten me out of several situations that a less able craft might not have. The Lightning is a fine little cruiser. After ten years of sailing my Lightning I am still impressed. I would not have missed the pleasures of thirty mile spinnaker runs, snug tree lined coves, and social exchanges with fellow cruisers at a popular anchorage for anything during our years on the Chesapeake.

Bare Bones Cruising — The Simplest Way to Go

by David Buckman

Editor's Note: Reprinted from May, 1979 "Cruising World"

It's a bit of a disappointment for the owner of a small sailboat to find that the book he just bought on cruising considers the *small* boat to fall in the 24' to 35' range. Further leafing through the pages reveals cabin arrangements, sleeping accommodations, winch placement, tankage figures, engine options, wheel steering and flush-mounted instruments.

There are thousands of small sailboat owners who consider their 15' to 20' craft to have some cruising potential but find that almost all the books written on the subject have little bearing on their circumstances.

As the owner of a 19' Lightning class sailboat that has been customized slightly for cruising, I have begun to explore our coasts and lakes. This bare bones approach allows me to cruise while still within the limits of current economic realities. Also it presents an intensive learning experience and provides background for a longer cruise in a larger boat.

Extensive offshore cruising has been done in craft within these dimensions but it is not my intention to deal with that. Instead, I'll relate some of my bare bones experience which might be helpful to the sailor ready to expand his or her horizons.

There are hundreds of boats in the 15' to 20' range. Of this group, most are open cockpit centerboarders. A few feature small cuddy cabins. Some of the notable and tested designs include A. R. True's Rocket, the Rhodes 19, the Comet, Lightning, Drascombes, Flying Scott, Mariner and many other local favorites.

The Lightning is a Sparkman & Stephens design that



RIGGING..It takes about 45 minutes to launch and rig the Bare Bones Cruiser. This scene was captured at Muncongus, Maine.



SAILPLAN ADDITION..Gillford, N.H. Lightning Sailor, David Buckman has added a 100 sq. ft. genoa to the sail inventory in his "Bare Bones Cruiser" which he uses for coastal cruising and inland lake sailing. With the boom tent up and bunk boards installed it also provides sleeping accommodations.

came off the board in 1938. It was billed as a family daysailer/class racer and is one of the most popular class boats in the world with almost 14,000 of them active in 1979.

This hard chine boat features a hefty 6'6" beam and a draft of 5' with the board down. With the board up you can glide along in a mere 16" of water and it beaches easily.

In stock form the boat carries 177 sq. ft. of sail in the main and jib and flies one of the largest spinnakers in this size group, an impressive 300 sq. ft. In racing trim the boat weighs close to 700 lbs. Fitted out for cruising my boat tips the scales between 780 to 820 lbs. This figure includes food and gear for two crew on a two or three-day jaunt. The large cockpit offers enough space for two adults, and there is plenty of storage space forward and under the seats.

The interior of the boat has been slightly modified to improve its cruising capability. Two drawers and a stowage area were built into the lazarette area. These hold tools, spare parts, cameras, batteries (C-D types), wet gear, cushions, navigation gear, lights, horn and other small items. Thin pine slats attached to the frames next to the mast step accommodate the 2½ gal. fuel tank, sails, anchor, blanket, pad, food and clothing. Several small shelves built into the topside frames hold tonic cans and other gear that always seems to clutter the seats. A water container is strapped beneath the thwart seat and life jackets are wedged neatly between the topside frames and seats.



The Lightning cannot be classified as a "tippy" centerboard boat. Its design makes it a surprisingly upright machine. During the 1967 Pan American Games a sudden storm, packing winds of up to 45 kts., almost leveled the entire fleet of Finns and Snipes but all but one of the large Lightning class completed the race!

Certainly the kind of cruising I'm talking about has little to do with these feats. It does, however, point out the stability and safety of the boat. In eight years of racing and four years of cruising, I have yet to capsize ... in spite of getting caught in winds of up to 65 mph.

To enhance the already good light air performance of the boat I have added a 100-sq. ft. genoa to the sail inventory. It adds spirited performance on all tacks. With a main and genoa of similar size (125 to 100 sq. ft.), this arrangement makes a stable downwind rig when running wing and wing. The sail can be trimmed without a winch and uses the same car and block as the jib.

The genoa was hanked on about 70% of the time during last summer's sailing season. On a recent trip from Perkins Cove, Maine, to Rye, New Hampshire, the big jib helped us ghost 25 miles in seven hours despite the fact the occasional zephyrs barely rippled the water. In a moderate breeze you can make five to eight knots comfortably and when the



winds get rolling the miles will tick off at up to 10 kts. or perhaps even a bit more.

When the winds get up into the 20-kt. range, this 227-sq. ft. combination has to be reduced. A 50-sq. ft. working jib with a high clew makes for an easier motion in a breeze and provides excellent windward performance.

Reducing sail requires some planning and solid footing, particularly in sloppy going. I usually wear a safety harness. With practice, you can reduce the time of a sail change to as little as five minutes, doing it alone in a fair chop. Planning ahead by moving cars and blocks to the appropriate track, leading the lines and knotting the ends adds efficiency.

A concession to technology is a 3-hp outboard engine mounted on the transom. It's a convenience and has performed well for us. Though I have seen none, the Lightning could be outfitted with oarlocks and 8' to 10' oars. This combination would probably move the boat quite well.

A Lightning or similar craft may offer sailors looking for performance and economy an attractive buy. With the switch to fiberglass construction, wood Lightnings can be found in many parts of the country. The class newspaper, *Lightning Flashes*, issued monthly, lists dozens of boats for sale. Prices for an older boat range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 and most of them include a trailer, cockpit cover and sail inventories. Write to the Lightning Class Association, 808 High St., Worthington, Ohio 43085.

A properly-designed centerboard boat may be able to deal better with a number of conditions than its fixed keel counter-part. Lying ahull or running under bare poles, the motion is easy and broaching is unlikely as the tripping force is absent.

In heavy winds or when singlehanded the skipper needs only to raise the board a foot or so to lower the tripping force. This does not always create as much leeway as you might suspect, though the helmsman should be aware of the possibility. The ability to raise the centerboard opens up miles of gunkhole cruising that excludes deeper drafts. Encounter an occasional ledge or sandbar and the board simply rides up and over the offending object with no damage other than a bit of chipped paint.

For coastal cruising we carry some basic navigation equipment such as a compass, charts, watch, dividers, plotter and a speed measuring device. The Davis Knotmeter, which is held over the side in the water, is accurate enough



BREAKFAST..Scrambled eggs for breakfast is a good way to start the day and just about the limit of the authors cooking skills. Part of the sleeping arrangements can be seen under the boom.

for short hops. The two radios I bring along are a multiband receiver with AM, FM, shortwave and weather frequencies and an inexpensive, handheld CB. Navigation is done on a 18" by 24" charboard which I hold on my lap. The charts are held in place with shock cord that also keeps pencils, plotter and dividers in place.

My cruises, up to this point, have been within sight of land, with several exceptions. I have wandered no farther than 10 miles offshore and most of the time stay within five miles of land.

Night sailing, we've discovered, is a wonderful new realm of moonlight and stars and often light winds that make sailing a joy. Once night vision develops it is relatively easy to identify buoys and landmarks. Illumination for my bare bones cruiser consists simply of Coast Guard approved, battery-operated stern and bow lights, but since changes in lighting requirements are apparently in the works an inquiry should be made to insure compliance. Early evening boat traffic calls for a sharp watch but after 10 pm you may have the waters to yourself.

My passages have not been of awe-inspiring length but have been plenty for us so far. I have sailed among the islands of Maine and have made a run from Portland to Cape Small and back. Another trip from Rye, New Hampshire, took me off the Maine coast on my way to Kennebunkport and Perkins Cove in Maine and back to Rye the next day. From Portsmouth, New Hampshire, I have explored the Isle of Shoals and York, Maine. A cruise on Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, was cut short by a broken mast. I have sailed the waters of Lake Ontario as well as the 280-mile shoreline of my home waters, Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire.

Where you make your cruises depends, of course, on your location and situation. Unless you've had considerable offshore experience most sailors would not attempt a blue water excursion. Due care must be used to insure you don't overextend your knowledge, skills and the ability of your equipment. As skills and experience accumulate, your horizons will expand.

Since small boats provide varying amounts of protection from the elements, it is important to keep abreast of the weather. The acquisition of local knowledge is an interesting part of any cruise. I try to inquire of fishermen and boatyard personnel about local peculiarities and notes of interest. I have always been treated courteously and have found that most people appreciate having their opinion valued. As a guest at any dock or mooring, you have a responsibility to conduct yourself and boat in a proper manner.

Launching ramps are found in almost all ports and they range from good to really poor. Check it out before you use it. Find out if you can retrieve at or near low water and look for a paved or concrete ramp. Launching fees run around \$2 with daily car parking about that same figure. I have paid as little as \$6 for weekend dock space. You cannot count on guest moorings or dock space during the high season.

During several of my overnights, I have slept on the cockpit floor upon a pad. This spartan system is adequate but I am devising a new arrangement for next season's cruising that will consist of $\frac{3}{4}$ " mahogany slats that can be slid into brackets and supports so that they are flush with the seats and create a sleeping surface over 30" wide. The lightweight slats can be quickly taken out in the morning and stored beneath the deck. A foam pad will serve as a mattress

with a blanket which I prefer over a sleeping bag because of its ability to dry quickly.

Carrying an adequate supply of food poses no problem in the Lightning. My experience has been that food requirements for a three-day cruise with two crew can be stored in a cooler and a small box. Whether you plan to cook aboard or to eat prepared foods is up to the crew. I have found that a mixture of both works out well for us. You can cook ashore over a campfire or aboard at anchor by using a compact, single-burner stove. Restaurant meals offer another alternative, but keep in mind that prices increase with the popularity of the port.

Planning is the most important aspect of cruising in a boat this size. This means selecting carefully the gear, supplies, spares, navigation tools and many other items you take along. Essential planning is necessary because without it situations can arise where injury and aggravation are a real possibility. I have found through experience that there are many small but logical procedures that can be used to increase the efficiency of living in tight quarters and promote safety. Singlehanded is probably the best learning situation there is. A poorly executed move can often set off a chain of events that can occasionally make for moments of anxiety.

The economics of bare bones cruising are attractive when compared to other vacation trips, short of hiking. Your major expenses will be for food, parking and launching fees as well as mooring or docking charges, if any. I have found that after Labor Day several Maine yacht clubs made no charge for launching, parking, mooring and launch service. The expenses for my recent trip from Rye, New Hampshire, to Perkins Cove, Maine, totaled just \$25.

I suppose that many sailors who have graduated up through the ranks from daysailers to weekenders and offshore cruisers still have fond memories of the simple class and production boats in which they began. Certainly, in the case of the Lightning you have a high performance boat that handles well on all tacks. Enhancing this is the skipper's ability to cope with a minimum amount of time and cost with a very human-sized package.



CAMDEN, ME..An important part of the cruising experience in the Lightning is the discovery of new worlds and the constant learning experience that it presents. We spent several days in this port and tied up among 5 schooners.

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FOUR HEAVY WIND EXPERIENCES

Jim Crane

Our editor has bridled me with the Machiavellian task of recounting to you my worst sailing disaster under the guise that it will enliven the Year Book. Edgar Allen Poe's tales of doom and destruction ironically made for popular reading, so why not the sufferings of some poor soul riding the hull of his turtled Lightning. Upon musing on this problem, I surmised that it would at least teach me humility, always a worthy quality. The problem, however, is not whether I have a tale to recount, but rather which one. Reliving my brief career on the water, I've found that the disasters are not only numerous but abundant.

I have turned a Lightning over 7 or 8 times and lost at least three masts. On a more grand scale, I have dismantled a ½ Tonner 65 miles off Montauk, Long Island, with only a half gallon of diesel in the tank. Here is my favorite.

It was the coldest early June morning on record as my crew and I prepared to push off from the Buffalo Canoe Club for the first race of the Frontier Regatta. Frost lay heavily on the Canadian countryside and it was rumored that ice had been floating in Lake Erie only ten days before. It was blowing a very stiff 20-25 knots out of the north as my crew and I lumbered about the boat in ski jackets and heavy foul weather gear. Fingers were not working very well and, while never uttered, we wondered why we were going sailing. Probably only because everyone else was.

We went out early to practice a bit as it was our first time sailing that year. On practicing a tack the jib sheets jammed and the boat instantly went in. Everyone realized that the water must be unbearable as we all scrambled for the high side. The boat being a sinker, however, slowly settled in and the frigid water inched up our bodies. The crew looked to me with the message: It's your boat, you get to go swimming. A power boat eventually arrived on the scene, but its owner had absolutely no concept of what to do. After much scrambling, yelling and suffering, we were dragged to shore. After a hot shower, we rationalized that it was only a capsize, it wasn't that bad, and we were going to tear them apart in the afternoon race.

For the afternoon's race we had a mediocre start and arrived at the weather mark in fair shape. We quickly set the chute and planed into third spot at the jibe. Victory was within our grasp. The two lead boats dropped their chutes but we made the decision to go for it. We executed the jibe successfully and were now in second. However, a huge puff had descended upon us out of the north and we found ourselves on an absolutely flat-out plane heading 40° below the mark. We knew this wouldn't do and while we were discussing our options I informed my crew that the rudder had just sheared off. They looked at me with total disbelief as we all realized what this meant. We did a total cartwheel as the boat turtled. It was spectacular! Even the water felt colder than the first time.

Once again we were dragged to shore to the cheers of our friends. Besides the wounding of our pride and the loss of two spinnakers, I found that I had taken the car keys out sailing and they now resided at the bottom of Lake Erie. Have you ever tried to find a locksmith on a Sunday in Canada?

"Count" Zettler

Let us talk of jaws that bite — and claws that catch — and vorpal blades that turn you over. Back in the days of my youth when I battled the "Frumious Bandersnatch" way down in Louisiana on Lake Pontchartrain, we Cajuns capsized with reckless abandon. We did it on the start line, on the finish line and at the gybe mark. We did it winning the race, losing the race and some of the foregoing simultaneously. No problem. A Lightning doesn't pitch-pole like a multi-hull or become a catapult to oblivion like an iceboat. Rather, it offers a somewhat benign baptism for violators of the laws of physics. However, in retrospect there was a time which makes me shudder to think how the hand of fate might have been played.

Having somehow forgotten to show up for work, I gimbled on the waters of the lake quite alone about two miles offshore. Then a thunderhead darkened the sky in the northwest, and I could see the beast scuttling across the water burbling as it came. I remember sailing to a mark close by, tying on and taking the sails down. I do not recall the logic of this at the time, but the next thing that comes to mind was ... snicker-snack ... being in the burbling water holding on to the uffish boat. The vorpal blast had knocked old 9176 flat with bare spars.

For a long minute I agonized over whether or not to swim for the rudder which was rapidly whiffing away in a 2 or 3 foot frothy sea. What would you do — swim for it, or untie the boat and drift for it? I did neither ... which was nothing ... which is the easiest thing to do. I don't think I saved the paddle, bailing bucket, or my life jacket either because three hours later when some shrimpers came by, I was still tied on that slithy mark with the uffish boat floating on its side.

This episode has little moral or educational value except that if you want to sail without a paddle or bucket, you might take up racing as I did. (I never said I was playing with a full deck, did I?) Stay well out in front as I do so if the Jabberwock strikes, you will be noticed floating directly in the path of those on-coming boats which will be galumphing in your wake (loaded down with all them paddles and stuff).

Jack Mueller

One time we were caught in an 85 mph squall on the way to the finish and I wasn't going to give up. We were moving up and we figured that if we capsized we probably needed to capsize. Also, if we did we would hold the boat down until the wind settled down. Well, we went over and huddled on the board. The wind then turned us around until we were pointed into the wind. I had to walk out to the spreaders to make sure wind didn't get under the sail and right the boat because that would have been an even bigger mess. Something we really didn't need. Another way to prevent the boat from turning around into the wind is to have someone sit on the hull at the stern to hold it down into the water to reduce the windage aft. After what seemed like years we righted the boat, a decision aided by the fact that our fellow competitors were getting back up and going too. I believe the whole

fleet went over, temporarily delaying the finish of the race.

While now heading for the finish we looked around to see how our mighty sea fairing friends survived. We took particular delight in viewing one of the better known old salts of the class climbing mast and headed for the finish with mainsail head in hand. It seems that in the true tradition of sea they had slashed their halyards in these survival seas.

Bill & Bonnie Shore

Having very little experience sailing in 50 - 60 mph thunderstorm-type winds, I'll try to describe some of the things we do in very, very heavy air — 25 to 35 mph. To start with, we assess our ability as this will determine how aggressively we will sail around the Lightning course.

After the start, it is most important to sail the boat as flat as possible, pinching to keep the boat on its feet. The backstay should be pulled quite hard to flatten the main. However do not pull the backstay to the extent that the main turns inside out. The main must have some fullness. Depowering must be accomplished by easing the mainsheet, letting the upper portion of the mainsail twist open. This is extremely fast in heavy wind, big sea conditions.

At times, the boat will balance better with the centerboard

slightly aft of its "all the way down" position. However, expect some difficulty tacking with the board aft of its normal location. We sail with the board all the way down all the time while beating.

In some conditions, when the wind exceeds 35-40 mph, a Lightning can be faster with the mainsail only. However, in taking the jib down it is extremely important to be sure it is fastened securely under the shock cord.

As you reach the end of the weather leg, you must decide whether or not you will fly your spinnaker. If you decide to do it (most people won't) have it ready as soon as you round the windward mark. Hoist it immediately and sail low of the course if need be. Do not be caught in the predicament of rounding up continuously while you are trying to point high enough to reach the next mark. You will find your over-all performance will be much faster if you bear away sail the boat on its feet as low as you have to, until you reach a point where you can set the jib, take down the spinnaker and readily plane to the next mark. When you do set the spinnaker after rounding the mark, leave the jib up. It will not hamper your performance and will be ready to go when you decide to take the spinnaker down. Concentrate full time on keeping the boat planing fast.

In very heavy wind conditions, be careful in assessing the ability of your crew. It will be a long race — wait for the other guy to make a mistake. He almost always will!

lightnings - ecuador

lightnings - mexico

lightnings - switzerland

lightnings - usa

The terrific Lightning posters designed as one of the gifts for participants in the International Lightning Class Association North American Championships and also for use by the Class are now available to all sailors.

Described as "real eye catchers superbly portraying our favorite sloop" by one who wrote for a set, the posters are full of color and action. Taken from color slides of shots during actual races they are eye catching. Each is 20 by 28.

The set of four costs \$5.00.

Available from I.L.C.A. Headquarters, 808 High Street, Worthington, Ohio 43085.