

Knocking Lightly at Death's Door

Nick Wood

After sailing around race buoys all summer in the near-shore safety of lower Green Bay, it was time for an adventure. Our plan for Labor Day Weekend was to sail our 19-foot Lightning sailboat out to the harbor entrance light - some 16 miles off the mouth of the Fox River - and keep going. Fair winds would carry us 80-or-so miles to the northern tip of Door County, where we'd turn around and sail home on a northwesterly breeze scheduled to fill in sometime Sunday. We had three days, a favorable forecast...and no motor. Our only hedge against fate was a cell phone wrapped in a plastic sandwich bag...

"That has to be Riley's Point," I said, peering into the darkness toward shore. A campfire burned orange near a cottage on the dark point of land. The night wind carried the sound of voices and the smell of wood smoke across the water. Our sailboat slipped quietly through deep water 50 yards from shore.

"Snake Island should be straight across," Bill pointed ahead into the darkness across Riley's Bay. Jim turned the flashlight off the chart. Our eyes adjusted to the darkness again.

A quarter moon was rising in the Northeast sky, behind red lights from a group of radio towers on a hill beyond Sturgeon Bay. Closer in, a little over a mile away, a dark point of land jutted into the shining water, then a small gap of more water, then another dark spot that had to be Snake Island, where we planned to camp.

We had taken off at dusk from Windjammer's Sailing Club in Suamico. When we passed the harbor entrance light six miles out, it was already dark. Channel buoys flashed red and green in a double line back to the mouth of the Fox River and Green Bay, some 16 miles distant.

Our navigation system consisted of a nautical chart of the bay and a good compass. We had plotted a course at about 60 degrees, then turned the light off the compass and chose a triangle of stars to keep the boat on course through the night. If we held the speed we had made to the entrance light, roughly seven miles per hour, we figured we'd cross open water and hit land somewhere near Snake Island around midnight. It was now 11:30 p.m.

Rounding the dark island to a deserted sand beach we were told lay on the north side, the stainless steel centerboard dinged hard against one rock, then another, as the fiberglass hull passed just three feet above.

"Drop the sails," I said, turning the boat into the wind. The sails flapped lightly in the lee of the island, and the boat slowed. Jim threw the anchor onto the rocky bottom and lowered the sails. Bill waded to shore. A lengthy reconnaissance revealed rocks everywhere. And "No Trespassing" signs, too.

"Now what?" someone asked. It was nearing 1 a.m., and we were all tired. We had a number of options - including backtracking to a friend's cottage at Little Sturgeon and sailing downtown to the

yacht club in Sturgeon Bay - but both were contrary to our goal of making way up the coast of Door County.

Option three was to continue north to Horseshoe Bay, just south of Egg Harbor. There was a county park there, so we could at least anchor the boat offshore and sneak up on the grass to sleep.

"Do you know how to find it?"

"Sure," I said. "It's a county park. All county parks have big yellow lights. You can see them a mile away."

Bill hoisted the sails. He and Jim paddled the boat out of the lee of Snake Island and then sat back. Clear of land the wind loaded a deep curve into the main sail and pushed the boat north toward Sturgeon Bay.

After more than an hour the rotating beam from the Sherwood Point Light at Sturgeon Bay was receding behind the boat. Ahead, each little point of land with a light had potential.

"I think that's a county park light," I said, two hours and three false sightings later.

"Yeah, sure."

"I'm telling you guys, county parks have those orange-yellow lights. You can see them a mile away."

The wind was gusty and we approached the "county park" light on shore at a good clip.

"Is it the park?" I asked, a little frantically as we approached.

"I can't tell." Jim shined the little beam of light toward shore.

"Well?"

"I don't know. It looks like....it could be rocks."

The boat was fast running out of water.

"Yes or no?" I said.

"I don't know! Wait...No, it's a cottage."

"A cottage? Abort! Tack!"

We all ducked as the boom swung across the cockpit. The boat curved hard away from the light and glided along parallel to the dark, rocky shoreline.

"Well, I guess we can keep going up to...hey, what the...LOOK OUT!"

Bill popped the main sheet loose and I turned the boat hard, away from shore again. Not more than 30 yards away was a huge, unlit, concrete pier jutting more than 100 feet into the darkness.

It was our county park. Dark, deserted, and not a yellow-orange light within a quarter mile. Now, because there are likely ordi-

nances prohibiting overnight camping at this county park, it is necessary to deny that we next pulled the boat up to shore, pitched the anchor 30 feet up on the soft sand, and rolled our sleeping bags out on the beach next to a picnic table where we stretched out, said a quick thank-you to the powers that brought us safely here, and fell asleep under a sky full of stars.

Day Two

Dozens of buzzing flies woke us from our sleeping bags early Saturday morning. The sky was light. Three fishermen were sitting on pails out at the end of the wide concrete pier. They obviously weren't too concerned about three sleeping bags and a sailboat on the beach behind them.

"How about breakfast in Egg Harbor?" I asked.

"Sounds good."

We stuffed our sleeping bags and stowed our gear, then pushed the boat off the sand and paddled out beyond the pier where the wind filled in from the southeast again.

We hoisted the spinnaker. The big blue and orange sail billowed full and tight in the morning breeze and began pulling. The bow dipped and cleaved through the light chop. Drops of spray splashed out from either side of the hull, and the water gurgled as it left in a rolling path of bubbles behind the rudder.

Bill reached for the weather radio. The automated voice promised sunshine and southeast winds at 10 to 15 knots all day and into Sunday, then a cold front would push across the state Sunday afternoon bringing northwest winds and a chance of isolated thunderstorms. It was a motorless sailor's dream: The wind switch was our ticket home; without it the three-day round trip would be impossible. The storm chance was a concern, but we had to write that off as the cost of doing business with Mother Nature. Besides, it was more than 24 hours from now and the storm chance was only 30 percent. We'd watch the weather closely and cross that bridge later.

We made good time with the spinnaker, and decided to push past Egg Harbor to Fish Creek for lunch. In the meantime, Bill cut slices of sausage and cheese, and Jim mixed three bloody Mary's. We were like Tom, Huck and Jim floating down the river. We made Fish Creek by 11 a.m. and tied up at the municipal dock. We walked up to town and found a deli counter in the back of a little grocery store. Waiting for our sandwiches, we bought chips, refreshments, and a block of ice for the cooler. On the way back to the dock we stopped at a pay phone to check in with family, then cast off again.

Rounding Peninsula State Park, the rest of Door County unfolded before us: Horseshoe Island stood dark green just ahead. Farther ahead and slightly faded in the distance was Eagle Bluff, its observation tower poking up through the treetops. Then there was Eagle Harbor and Ephraim, then another bluff before the water tower at Sister Bay, and so on up the county. Each successive bluff was a little hazier in the distance until off at the end rose Death's Door Bluff some 20 miles away.

"Let's check the weather," Bill said four hours later as we round-

ed Death's Door Bluff. The signal on the weather band was now coming from a Michigan station. Washington Island was off to our left, and the car ferry was crossing ahead, returning to Gill's Rock.

It was time for a decision. We hadn't expected to get here so fast. In fact, variations on our plan had us turning around at Sturgeon Bay, getting picked up at Fish Creek, or getting a tow from some friends who would be fishing in the area and carrying a cell phone.

But here we were at 3:30 Saturday afternoon, contemplating a slam dunk - actually sailing through Death's Door Passage and down the Lake Michigan side back to Sturgeon Bay.

We continued to sail as we talked about our options. The chart showed that the passage narrowed quite a bit more before it entered Lake Michigan, and there was at least one reef we had to worry about on the south side. The wind as it funneled through would be blowing right at us, and we'd have to tack back and forth to get through....and then the waves on the other side would have been building all the way up the lake...

For perhaps the first time, as we contemplated sailing through the passage, the gravity of what we were doing began to set in. Dozens of 100-year-old shipwrecks litter the depths of this passage, victims of unpredictable bluff winds, hidden reefs and strange currents. I noticed that Death's Door was labeled on the nautical chart as Port Des Mortes - French for "passage of death." Ever since the fur traders of the 1600s, and probably long before that, this narrow passage between Green Bay and Lake Michigan, has been claiming lives - some, no doubt, on days as nice as today, totally unsuspecting. And come to think of it, most were sailors with no motors.

It sounded good when we told people we were going to sail through Death's Door with no motor. And it feels good looking back on a trip like that, knowing you can handle whatever fate throws at you. But a lot can go wrong. One bad gust, one tangled line, and in the blink of an eye a boat this size can go over. We've capsized that Lightning four or five times in the lower bay, and know all too well how quickly it can happen. It builds character, but more importantly it builds respect for the wind and the water, and it instills in you an appreciation for the fact that it's really not you who is in charge.

So, after some discussion, the decision was made. Instead of pounding irreverently at Death's Door, we'd knock lightly, raise a toast, then turn around and head for home.

It was dusk when we sailed back through the maze of moored boats in the Fish Creek harbor to the municipal dock. After securing the boat on the outside wall and making arrangements with the dockmaster, we walked, a little wobbly from being on the water all day, up to the Bayside Tavern. Over three beers and a large pizza we decided our best option was to sail back to the sand beach where we stayed the night before. It was a tough decision: All three of us were tired of sailing, but the prospect of sleeping on that little fiberglass boat at the end of the dock was even less appealing. It was a good call. The wind was warm, the night sky

was filled with stars, and the sand was soft as we zipped up in our sleeping bags two hours later and slept like three logs on the beach.

Racing with the wind

Instead of flies, we were awakened the next morning by a dozen Canada geese honking and waddling around our sleeping bags. I fell back asleep. When I woke up two hours later - around 7:30 - the wind had subsided, the sky was clear and the water was blue in the morning light.

Again, we were underway. The wind was still out of the southeast at about 8 to 10 knots, but getting steadily lighter. We were running out of gas. Our supplies had dwindled to a bag of sunflower seeds, cheese and crackers, a handful of cold beers, and a box of strawberry toaster pastries. It would be a long day, but we were all more interested in getting home than in stopping who-knows-where for breakfast.

Four hours later, we were becalmed. Across the water off our left quarter, Door County was still visible as a hazy line of land; the Peshtigo lighthouse was barely in view to our right.

We had been sailing west/southwest - a little farther off the wind than our shortest course home - in order to make time across this wide open stretch of water. The front we were waiting for had moved through Minnesota overnight and, according to the latest report, had pushed halfway across Wisconsin by noon. We wanted to be on the lee side of the bay - in flat water - when it hit. It would be a race home.

But now all we could do was wait. The sun was hot. Jim was the first one to jump in with a splash. The boat drifted slowly away and a few minutes later he swam to catch up, then climbed back in dripping wet. I went next with a bar of soap. The water was cool and the soap suds smelled good after two days without a shower.

Shortly after Bill jumped in, a patch of ripples ahead signaled a new wind building from the southwest. He climbed back on the boat, the sails filled and the boat pushed away. That wind - some sort of localized land effect - lasted more than an hour and got us within a couple miles of shore south of Oconto before it, too, died out. Our front was still 60 miles away, moving toward us at 30 mph. Again, we sat windless and waited.

I took a snooze on the front deck; Bill and Jim were talking in the back, playing cribbage. Nearly two hours later, a patch of ripples appeared behind the boat to the right. This was our wind switch. We hoisted the spinnaker. It dangled empty behind the main, then slowly filled with the gentle breeze when it hit us. The boat was moving again. Farther back the water and sky grew darker as ripples, then wavelets, began to form. Within 10 minutes the sails were fully pressurized and the hull was slapping fast over the water. Visibility had dropped to a couple of miles, but there were no black clouds and no lightning.

The wind picked up steadily over the next 15 minutes until it was blowing 15 mph with gusts over 20. It was amazing how quickly this water turned violent. Our angle toward home was loading too much force in the spinnaker, and the boat heeled wildly in a

gust. After making it this far, I began worry our luck was running out.

We broadened our angle to run more downwind. The boat flattened but all three of us still hiked out over the windward rail to counter the force of the wind in the sails. We were flying. The bow was riding high with spray flying out where the hull met the water a quarter of the way back. Bill, in front, was drenched. We were heading due south - not exactly straight home - but making good time.

After 45 minutes we were out near the middle of the bay again, but a lot closer to home. The waves had built to three feet. From the chart and compass, Bill figured we could drop the spinnaker and turn up to a beam reach - 90 degrees to the wind - and just about hit home.

We sailed for two hours, all three of us hiked off the windward rail as we pounded our way back across the bay, eagerly waiting for the first glimpse of the channel entrance light off Suamico. Unlike the last two days when we could see 20 miles or more into the distance, visibility now was down to about two miles. Finally, the white tower of the entrance light seemed to appear, then disappear, like a ghost off in the fog.

"Is that it?"

"I don't see anything."

"There, about 10 o'clock."

"I still don't...oh, I don't know...I think you're right."

We were almost home, and just in time. The wind faded steadily over the next hour, finally giving out completely as we entered the race buoys inside Little Tail Point. There we sat, in full view of the club, with no wind, no motor no intention of getting towed in by a powerboat. We paddled the last 500 yards home.

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ON THE ROAD IN ECUADOR

by Craig Thayer – Fleet 10

At about the time when most Lightning sailors have put their boats to bed for the winter, my wife, Susan, and I were preparing for our trip to Ecuador where I would be participating as a crew for Dick Hallagan in the Lightning World Masters Championship, hosted by the Salinas Yacht Club. The arrival of our departure date of November 12, 1999 was eagerly awaited, as this was another opportunity to renew friendships with several of my South American friends. Prior to our departure, I had been in contact with Paco Sola, the regatta organizer regarding accommodations and places to see during our short stay. I had first met Paco several years ago when he was attending Syracuse University, and stopped by to see me. I was also in "c" contact with Carlos Le Caro, Roberto Laignelet, and Juan Meira, as all were expected to be in attendance.

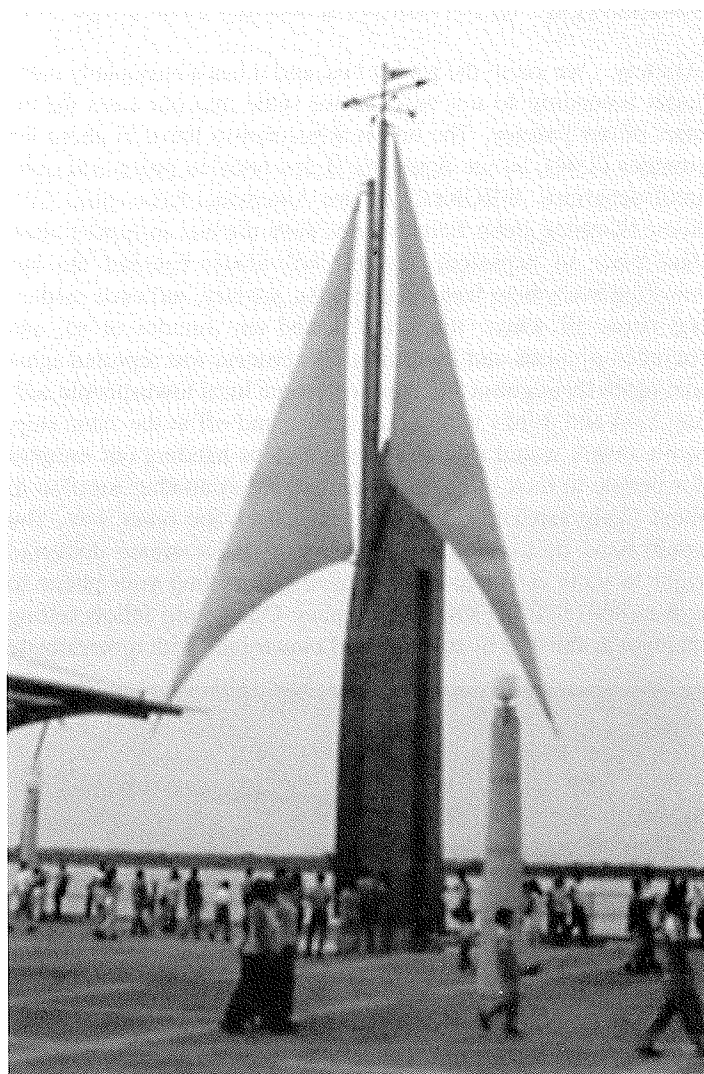
Our flight arrangements were to take Continental from Syracuse, NY to Newark, NJ, then on to Guayaquil, with a short stop in Panama City. We would be arriving several days before the regatta, during which time we planned to take a trip to the southern highlands and the city of Cuenca, the third largest in Ecuador, known for its colonial architecture, and as the center of the panama hat industry. Originally we had also entertained the idea of a day or so in Quito, the capital, but as luck would have it, the volcanic eruptions of nearby Pichincha that intermittently covered the city in ash and cancelled air travel caused us to opt for any extra time to be spent elsewhere. While this route offered the best connections and price, it also meant we would be arriving at 1AM- oh well! At Newark we discovered that Karen and Colin Park would be on the same flight, as Colin was going to Salinas a few days in advance to get the measuring process organized.

Our travel went without a hitch, and we were whisked through customs without having to go through a search of our bags because we were Americanos. I soon recouped most of the money I had "lost" on the lousy exchange rate when I purchased some sucres in Newark, by paying for the taxi in local currency. At 1AM the equatorial heat and humidity were down to an almost comfortable level, so the 15 or so minute ride to our hotel in the heart of the city was rather pleasant. Our driver handed over our bags to the bellman and left us with a hearty "Welcome" in English. Thanks to the efforts of Paco and Carlos, our accommodations had been made at the Hotel Ramada, at a special rate for the competitors.

My wife and I were also very pleasantly surprised to find that we had been given a very nice suite for our first night, complete with a beautifully arranged complimentary fruit salad and a bottle of wine, as my earlier comments to Paco that this trip was somewhat of a delayed honeymoon had apparently been passed on to the hotel management. It wasn't too many hours later that we awoke to bright equatorial sunlight trying to get past the draperies in our room which when pulled, afforded us a bird's eye view of the Rio Guayas, and a long park-like strip of statues and monuments to Ecuador's past leaders called the Malecon, located just across the street in front of the hotel on a portion of the west bank. The river had been named for a Puna Indian chief who had

fought the Incas and later the Spanish. The capital of the province, Guayaquil, was established in the early 1500's, and was named for the chief and his wife, "Quill". With a population of 3.5 – 4 million, it is the largest city in the country. Heavily industrialized, it is also by far the most important port.

As we entered the dining room for breakfast, we ran into Paco and his son, and the Parks, who had just finished and were preparing to leave for Salinas. After a nice complimentary meal, we took a quick stroll down the Malecon, then over to exchange some money before we inquired at the desk about the various options to get to Cuenca. We learned that we can take a taxi to the Terminal Terrestre (bus terminal) near the airport for 30,000 sucres, and then take a bus which will cost another 55,000 sucres each for the 5 1/2 hour trip. At the then current exchange rate of 15,000 S/\$1, this equates to a total cost of 140,000S, or a little over \$9 for the both of us. We leave sailing gear and extra baggage with the hotel, and grab a taxi for the bus terminal.



Sailors Monument-Located on the banks of the Rio Guayas across from our hotel on the parklike strip called the Malecon.

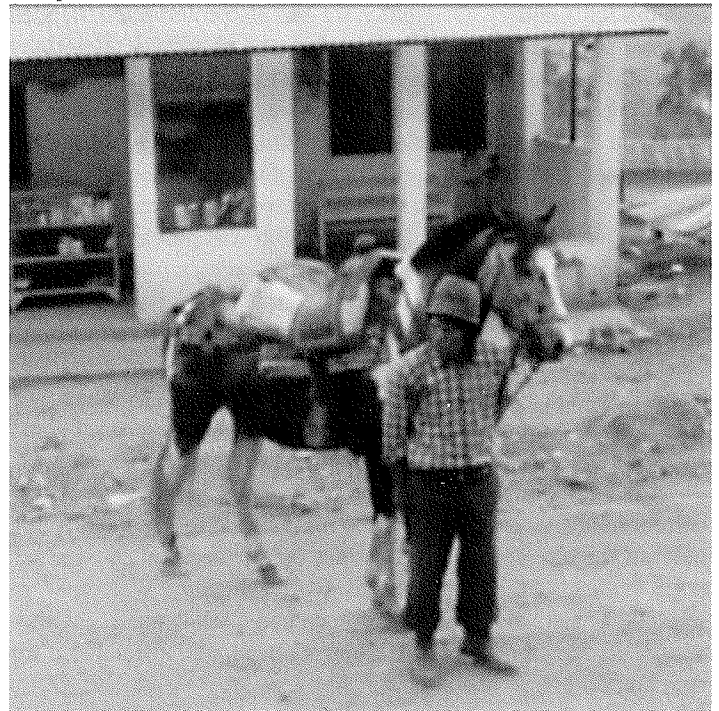
Before continuing, I must mention that in my previous trip to Antofagosta, Chile two years earlier, I had no knowledge of Spanish, and was determined that on this trip I would attempt to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language in order to convey and comprehend the basic issues that travelers

face. To accomplish this, I had purchased a set of cassette tapes which I had listened to repeatedly during the previous 3-4 weeks. While still unable to carry on a dialogue of any length or substance, I at least felt I could make my wishes known and be able to understand enough of what others were saying to get by. I soon discovered that I needed tape #5 in the four tape set (that would be the one that explains the "system" of luggage handling and buying bus tickets at the terminal). In this particular instance, young boys hang out at the curb wanting to carry your bags- if you refuse, they follow you because you will shortly realize that you have to carry them quite a distance upstairs to a specific ticket window in a place that appears to have as many different bus companies as Grand Central Station has train tracks and then back downstairs to another window where you buy another ticket for who knows what for less than a dollar, and then to a departure area - not an easily understood routine. By being able to speak a few words to the taxi driver in Spanish, he attempts to tell you where to go and what to do, but most of this is not understood, leaving you learn the system the "dumb gringo" way.

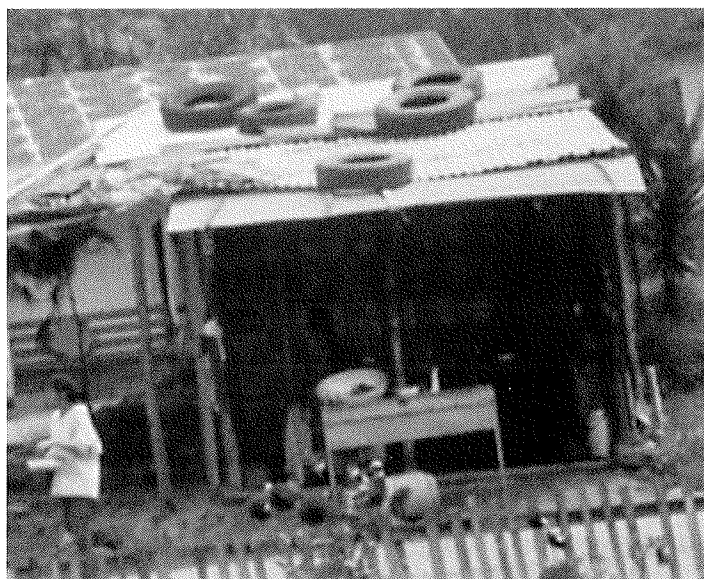
Anyway...we get to the proper bus, and it has a reasonably clean toilet according to my wife, so we settle into our seats for the start of our journey. The bus is scheduled to leave in about ten minutes (1:00), so we figure we'll just relax in peace and quiet until departure. WRONG! Where Americans have cable TV's home shopping clubs, Ecuadorians have the bus shopping club! Just prior to departure several individuals boarded the bus hawking everything from food, drinks, jewelry, and even medicinal cures all where the spiels lasted ten minutes or so, and included pictures and literature. This process was repeated again and again throughout the trip, with some local townspeople selling food and drinks who would get on and off at the same stop, while others would ride one or more stops handing out samples for people to look at before disembarking at another location to most likely catch the next bus going back the other way. You could have fruit, chicken, corn, drinks, or ice cream delivered right to your very seat without having to pickup your phone to call an 800- SPEND MONEY number. One young fellow selling candy was dressed in costume and clown face with a marionette

puppet. In another instance on our return, we were serenaded by two reasonably good guitarists who "passed the hat" after singing nice melodies for about 15 -20 minutes.

A temperature in the 80's combined with high humidity caused the first part of the trip to best be described as hot and muggy. Windows were pretty much wide open to let a breeze in despite the rather loud accompaniment of the diesel exhaust stack running vertically up the side rather near our window. We were now across the river Guayas where the topography changed to a flat wetland, with most of the small houses built up on stilts (reportedly to escape the snakes, bugs, and other critters indigenous to the area). This was followed by mile after mile of banana plantations. At one of the stops a Canari Indian family of a mother and three girls gets on and takes the seats across from us. All are dressed in their native costume of brightly colored woolen clothes, wearing felt hats and shawls. At this point the road is no longer flat as the bus starts its climb into the Andean foothills that will eventually take us over 10,000 feet. For approximately the next two and one-half hours, we will be climbing through the clouds, with water droplets streaming horizontally on the windows and visibility near zero. Fortunately our bus had an excellent synchro in its manual transmission, as our driver was constantly shifting gears going up the mountainous road and around sharp corners.



As we got higher up the mountains, the people started dressing warmer and warmer.



Food was cooked in a large wok type pot over an open fire. She would walk across the road to sell her food to bus passengers.

While the road to Cuenca is paved (the first paved roads were completed in the 1960's), there are many areas where the pavement has been replaced with packed stone. The two lanes serpentine through lush green vegetation, continuously climbing with steep peaks on one side, and similar drop offs on the other - and of course- no guard rails. In many locations the roads were now crossed by mini rivers of mud from runoff from the nearby hillside. At one point everyone lurched forward as the bus came to a sudden stop and then backed up to let a truck pass coming the other way. A hundred feet or so ahead we discovered that

a portion of the opposite lane had slid down the hillside. My wife and I decided then and there that daylight travel was the only way to go. The fact that the roads were wet and covered with slippery mud didn't appear to lessen our driver's enthusiasm to get to Cuenca. From my aisle seat, I could watch his cross which was hanging from a silver chain on the bus's mirror carve an arc like a clock pendulum as we went from left to right hand curve and back again. We were constantly passing slower moving trucks on dangerous curves with several honks of the horn as their warning (and I guess for anyone coming the other way!). People on the bus began to look at each other as it was obvious that our driver's rate of speed was not appropriate for the conditions. At about the time I had decided that this was going to be either the most memorable ride of my life, or the last, one of the passengers sprang from his seat, yanked open the driver's door and delivered what must have been one of the better ass chewing speeches of the decade, as for the remainder of the trip our driver proceeded like a little old lady going to church on Sunday.



A view from the bus window of the rugged yet beautiful terrain.

Shortly after this episode we emerged from the clouds and could see the beauty of the countryside. We were now at an elevation where the woolen dress of the Canari became appropriate. The landscape was populated with more Canari villages where they survived by raising pigs and cattle, and cultivating crops on amazingly steep hillsides. At one of these small villages my little 9-year-old Indian girl Angelita and her family got off the bus to go home. The bus winds its way through Biblian and Azogues with darkness now setting in. We arrive in Cuenca after dark where we stop at the information booth to ask about hotel reservations (since we had none). I had seen two hotels on the internet which looked ok, so asked if the attendant could call for us. The Hotel Inca Real was in reality an old two-story house in the heart of the city which had recently been renovated into a charming hotel. The pictures on the internet web page looked very appealing. They had a habitacion matrimonial (room with one double bed) so we took a cab for 10,000 S and off we went.

In about five minutes we stop in front of about a two-foot high mound of dirt. The street has been torn up and closed, as are the shops. With no lighted sign in sight (not to mention that there are no lights anywhere on the street), our driver assures us that the hotel is very close, but we must walk there carrying our bags.

Over the dirt mound we go, and sure enough about fifty feet down this very dark street is the entrance, announced by a small wooden sign over the heavy wooden door. Once through a narrow hallway we are separated from a combination courtyard and dining area by a wrought iron gate. We are shown to a small, spartan, but clean room, where we will spend the next two nights. We are directed by the young man at the desk to try "Las Capulies" for dinner. It is located only a few short blocks away, which was welcome exercise after our bus ride. Along the way we pass several beautiful churches illuminated with floodlights. As we are now at an altitude of approximately 8200 ft. the night air is crisp and dry. The restaurant is very nice with excellent food, complete with a group of college age lads who do a good job playing Peruvian pipe music. The bill for a multi course dinner with drinks and desert for two comes to around \$10. We are beat from our previous two days of traveling and hit the sack early.



One of the beautiful churches of Cuenca

Morning arrives with plenty of sunshine, and we decide to go out and get a few photos in the golden morning light before breakfast. It is now Sunday and people are going to church or one of the many markets that take place on Sundays. Cuenca is the third largest city with between 200,000-300,000 inhabitants, and dates from the mid 1500's. It boasts numerous beautiful churches with many built in the sixteenth century. With no paved roads until

the twentieth century, it makes them even more impressive when you realize the effort it must have taken to get all the stone (much of it imported marble) to this location. Across the street from one of the cathedrals is the flower market, where beautiful fresh cut flowers can be purchased for next to nothing. I bought Sue a long stemmed rose for 1,000S (about 6.7cents). We continue our walk through the stone paved streets viewing more beautiful churches, and people in native costumes going to or from church. We notice that the native women now for the most part have switched from the felt hats, to those made of straw- all of the identical shape with a black ribbon hat band. A handful of women wear a different style, also of straw, but round, more like a derby. I can only guess that this signifies their belonging to a different group, as I didn't encounter any mention of this in my reading.

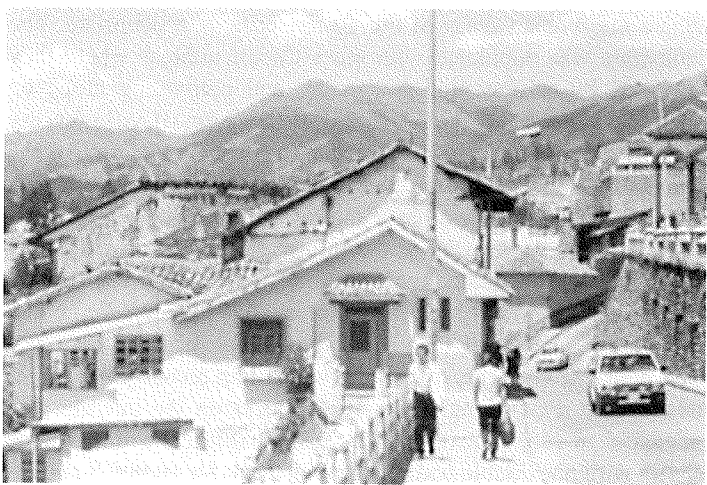


Handmade, vibrantly colored woven goods for sale.



A woman dressed in traditional costume selling her wares outside one of Cuenca's churches.

Back at the hotel for breakfast, we feast on fresh fruits and breads, and again get a taste of the fresh fruit drinks that are available nearly everywhere. Pineapple, orange, melon, guava, naranjilla – they were all outstanding. The rest of the day is spent exploring the local markets and shops in the city. There is a huge outdoor market for fruits and vegetables where I try to take several pictures. It is apparent that many of these women do not want to be photographed as they look away or hide behind something if they spot my camera. Another market offered primarily woven goods- colorful shirts, sweaters, handbags. All items are very inexpensive by US standards. Slightly off the beaten path, we stumble on an open doorway where several people are working on Panama hats. During the time the markets are open after church, the city is bustling. Diminutive Canari Indian women, some less than five feet tall, tote large sacks of vegetables on their backs. People are in the streets, buses and taxis are running- it seems like a workday. Sometime within an hour or so of noon, the markets close, and at that point it appears that the city goes to sleep. Nothing is open and streets are once again deserted as they are after dark. Very few restaurants are open on Sundays, and we delay eating until a fairly late hour where we pick an outdoor place where the food and service was terrible, but we had a most interesting conversation with a couple from Ireland who had been traveling in other areas of Ecuador. Once again another perfect day weather wise- a sunny, low humidity day in the low 80's followed by cool air perfect for sleeping- it's amazing what a little altitude will do- even on the equator.



Typical city view of tile roofs, mountains and blue sky

It's Monday and our last full day in the Cuenca area. In our previous day's walking about we decided to upscale our accommodations slightly by transferring to the Hotel Crespo on the banks of the Tomebamba River for our last night's stay. We

check out after breakfast and hail a cab to transfer our bags to our new hotel before more shopping. We have decided to check out a few more places which were closed, and then look into going to the town of Chordeleg, a small village less than an hour's bus ride away that is known for its filigree silver and gold jewelry, and ceramics. We take a cab to the bus terminal and very shortly are winding our way along a small river where I notice a couple of ferries which are for the most part small rafts hooked to a cable from which they can be pulled manually back and forth across the river. We arrive in Chordeleg (pronounced "shordalay") in mid afternoon, and appear to be the only people on the street. Several shops are closed and we are told that Sunday is the big market day. Nevertheless, we do find some nice items at unbelievable prices, both jewelry and ceramics and within two hours are on the return bus. Back in Cuenca we encounter a short rain shower- the only one on the trip. We end our day with a fabulous meal at our hotel's dining room before cashing in our chips.



Tires holding down the metal roofs, an example of the typical storefronts in the smaller villages along our route



Children in their uniforms on their way to school

The next morning we went back to an artisan's shop we had scoped out the day before for some last minute gift buying. Just as we were within about fifty feet from its entrance, several cars

filled with uniformed men with high-powered rifles showed up blocking the street. As we quickly ducked inside, the storekeeper let us know that this was nothing to be alarmed about. This was how they transferred money from the nearby bank. Our shopping now concluded, we checked out of the hotel and headed to the bus terminal so we would arrive back at the Ramada in Guayaquil in time to meet Juan Meira and his wife Janet for dinner. Our trip back was fortunately less thrilling, and treated us to more of the spectacular views we had witnessed on our prior trip. We also saw many groups of children dressed in their school uniforms of the various colors of their respective schools walking in groups along the side of the road on another beautiful, sunny day. This was also our last evening before leaving for Salinas in the morning, and we were looking forward to a relaxing evening.



Craig and Sue Thayer with Janet and Juan Meira.

Juan Meira is the brother of Federico Meira - my friend and fellow Lightning sailor here in Syracuse, NY. He and Janet picked us up at our hotel and took us to a very nice Italian restaurant where we had a truly enjoyable evening. We returned not too long before my skipper and fellow crew, Rick TenEyck appeared in the lobby. A quick beer and we all headed for the rack.

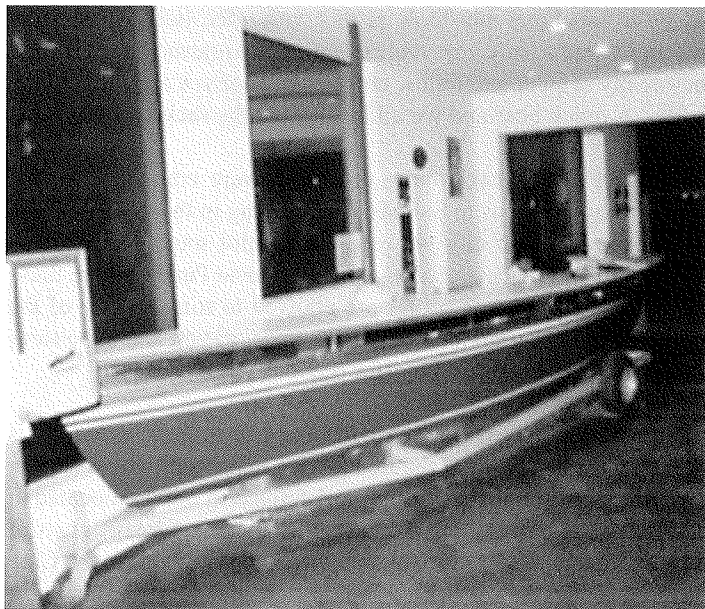
Pedro and David, two young men who were employees of the hotel, would drive us to Salinas this morning in the hotel van. On the way out of the city we received a mini tour of downtown Guayaquil and made a special stop at "Iguana Park", where these large lizards and some turtles are allowed to roam. Many of the iguanas could be seen lounging in the trees, so you had to be careful where you were standing (for obvious reasons).

The approximately two and a half hour trip to Salinas (which is the westernmost point of the Ecuadorian mainland) would see the landscape change from lush tropical foliage to desert. Located at the tip of the Santa Elena Peninsula, Salinas is a resort town of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, with the Salinas Yacht Club situated on the Bay of Santa Elena. It is a popular place for sport fishermen, with many beautiful boats tied up at the club's docks. The club itself is comprised of several buildings, with the beauti-



Cathedral Park was one of our stops on our way out of Guayaquil.

ful two-story clubhouse proper being the main structure with several dining rooms and bars. We would be staying at the Hotel El Carruaje (the carriage), which was a spotless three story structure located on the beach amongst the numerous high rises. It was convenient (less than a ten minute walk to the club) and was staffed by a very friendly crew.



One of the club bars, it is an actual Lightning hull. Every year it gets renamed after the fleet champions boat.



The clubhouse with outdoor dining and the vibrant red Bouganvillea trimmed to hedges surrounding the grounds.

I have no intention of discussing the racing during the Masters as I'm sure that will be more than adequately covered elsewhere. I will just say that we were treated to excellent committee work and generally light, but fantastic sailing conditions. The fact that it was cloudy for most of the time I was in Salinas is perhaps why this fair skinned boy from upstate New York survived without the hint of a sunburn.

Our hosts are to be thanked again for their organization for the event, and assisting us with our questions and needs. I only hope that I am able to return the favor should any of them ever come to "my neck of the woods". I would like to mention also the excellent meals and service that our group received at the yacht club. The attitude of the staff was excellent, and would especially like to say hi and thanks to Kent, for his excellent service and helpfulness to myself and my wife when I was out sailing. The cocktail parties, the barbeques with the musical accompaniment, and the friendliness of the competitors, all served to make this a truly enjoyable experience- one which I hope I can repeat at some time in the future.

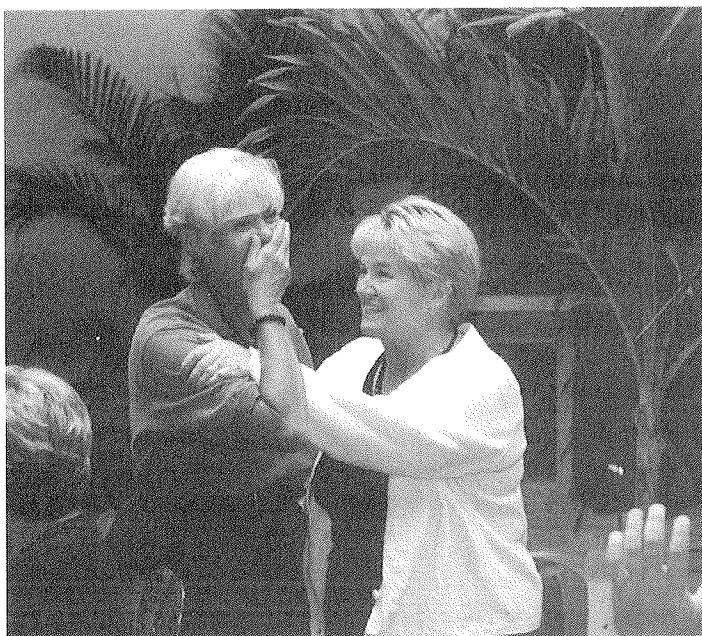
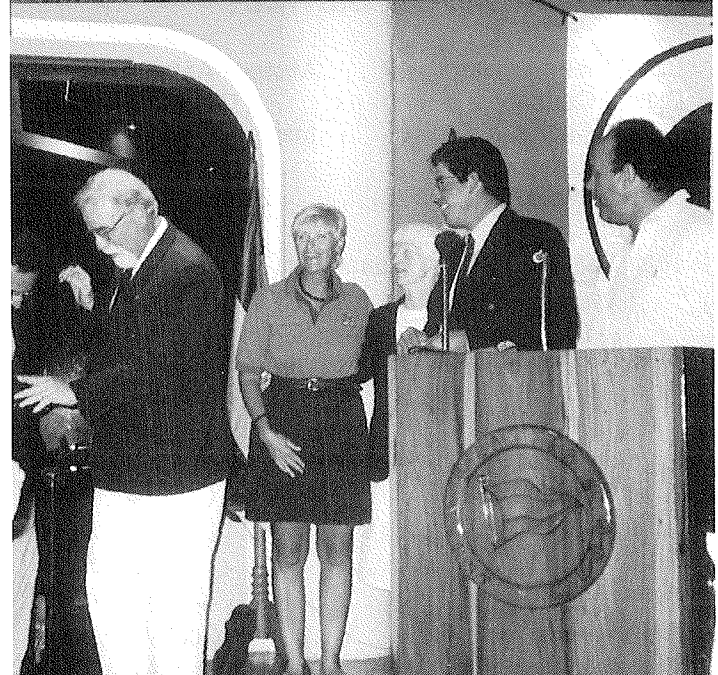
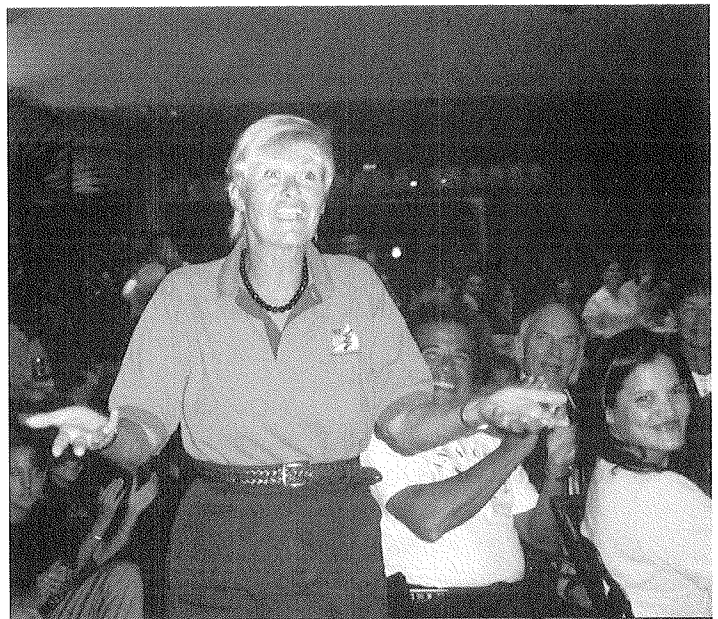
Kudos also go to the staff at the Ramada who did their best to see that our needs were met. As the organizer of a small regatta at my own sailing club, I know the amount of work that went into coordinating an event of this size. All I can say to all who contributed in this effort- Well Done, and Muchas Gracias mis amigos! Finally, I hope that I may have the opportunity to continue to report my travels in other lands where Lightnings are sailed. For those of you who have never ventured off your native shore to participate in something like this, please give it a try- you'll be glad you did!

An Idea, A Raffle, A Winner

On a chilly Michigan day a fellow lightning owner/sailor/racer, Matt Princing, was contemplating the spring to come. He realized the boat he wanted to order was going to have a number over 14900. He had probably just heard another plea for funds from the Class Organization. "Why not a raffle for hull #15000?" This quiet timid man from Saginaw began to wonder. A quick call to then President Cal Schmiede got the ball rolling and the idea became a Raffle.

Cal place the project in the extremely capable, talented hands of Laura Jeffers (Vice President of Development) and off we go. After some details were decided; \$50 tickets or \$100, one central sales office or a network of ticket hawkers- Laura had everything set. She designed and printed the tickets and had them in the hands of different sales people in time for summer District Regattas and Championships. It had been decided that it would be a climactic capper to both the year and the Worlds and so the ticket would be pulled in Ecuador.

There was a better chance that the winner would not be present than would be but it was a chance the Class decided to take. The tickets were flown to Ecuador and were counted by two Class officers, all 400 were there. The Commodore of Salinas Yacht Club, and Lightning sailor, Santiago Romero Barst was asked to pull the winning ticket and he was honored to do so. The following pictures give you an idea of how shocked and happy Cindy Lister was for having won! The Lightning Class earned \$8000 from this raffle.



*Cindy being congratulated by Jonette Werley
Cindy still in disbelief of her fortune
Cindy being presented with proof by President
Mary Huntsman
A happy Cindy and Smiling Jack!*