Visit www.OysterYachting.com
"SETTING YOUR COURSE TO SAILING ADVENTURES"

Note: Please read pages 2+3, 4+5, 6+7 together in columnar format

Magnum 44

FUN AND GAMES OUTSIDE THE GATE

C. Beauchamp

After two weeks of fantastic July weather, fog descended with a vengeance on the Bay, seeking, we were sure, to discourage our upcoming adventure.

We were preparing to sail *Magnum 44*, a sleek 44 foot Nordic cruiser/racer, to Southern California. The last thing we needed was bad weather.

This was the first time that I had been presented the total responsibility for preparing, provisioning, crewing and delivering a yacht over a blue water route. Since the vessel had been used principally on the Bay and just outside the gate, there were many things to consider which had never before been of any concern.

Perhaps my background as a professional pilot led me into more what-if scenarios than usual, but it was for the protection of mirrors and lights, extra fuel and water, radar reflectors, etc., etc.

The list was seemingly endless. The one week of planned preparation stretched into almost three, but when it all came together we seemed to be accomplished before departure. By 2200 all the rushing about had stopped, but I was still working feverishly on the autopilot, hampered somwhat by a finger mangled earlier that day by a falling lazerette hatch. The gory mess that had been left was quickly cleaned up to preclude any second thoughts by the crew.

A new autopilot with all the bells and whistles had been obtained for the voyage, but installing it was a much larger project than anticipated. Proposed departure deadlines came and went. With the pilot newly installed, a

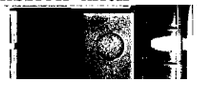
...the last thing we needed was bad weather.

An operative autopilot and two experienced crew members were considered minimum for departure. With a lot of last minute hustling, I was able to

At 0400, with everyone still awake, the last wire for the autopilot was hooked up. It was switched on with great expectations of purely magical happenings, but it didn't work. Not a beep, nor a twitch. Damn!

I looked at them. They looked at me. If we left in the fog with a beat crew, it wasn't safe — and the autopilot would not be functional for the entire trip. If I delayed until morning, my shanghied crew might jump ship.

I enjoyed the prerogative of the skipper and decided to abort the mission until



their fate to me as crew members at least as much as for the preservation of my own hide (which remains reasonably precious to me).

The required equipment list read like this: plenty of PFDs (personal flotation devices — we carried 18 for a crew of five stashed in various parts of the vessel), a six person emergency raft with provisioning, a man overboard pole with strobe, heaps of extra flares and smoke and dye markers, personal emergency strobes, safety harnesses, two EPIRBs (emergency position indicator radio beacons), patching kits for hull, sail and rigging, extra cable and clamps for jury rigging (provisional emergency rigging used to repair or replace broken equipment such as a mast or boom), cable cutters for getting free of a smashed rig, first aid kits, medical books, powerful pain killers for serious injuries, anti sea-sickness patches, survival books, signaling anything. Our safety net had a few soft spots, but nothing that couldn't be dealt with if the need arose.

and a serious effort made to find crew members started. With less than two days warning, that proved to be a challenge. Most of of varying degrees of experience. Fine!

We all assembled late Friday afternoon and each person was assigned tasks most experienced crew member jumped ship the next morning, but his friend Eileen asked to stay. What the hell!

Looking relaxed as S.F. Bay disappears into the fog astern

We put our heads to work trying to find the problem with the autopilot. Steve, a computer expert from Santa Cruz, saved the day by locating a bad connection. Shazam! The beast came to life. Scramble, scramble. Let's go for it! Food, ice, last minute calls, life insurance, beneficiaries.

Finally at 1500 on Saturday we cast off from our berth at the St. Francis YC and waved goodbye to a few friends and a couple of doubting Thomases. The harbormaster probably thought we would be back in a couple of hours. Wrong!

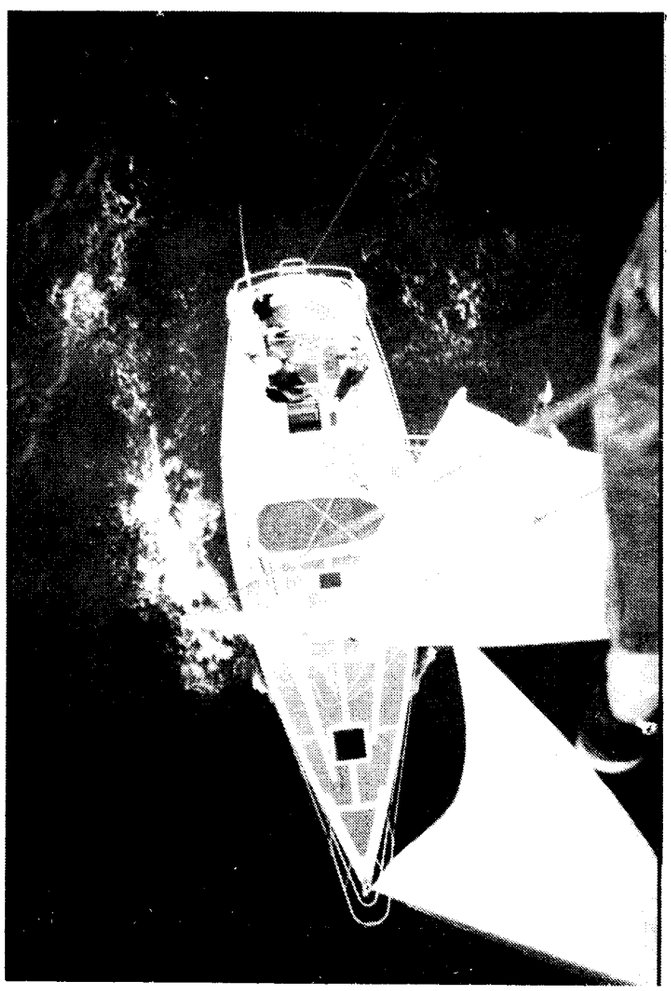
Through the Gate at 1530 and into the fog. Mile Rock slipped to port at 1545 and we were sailing southwest in about 15 knots of breeze and making about seven knots close hauled.

MAGNUM 44

As civilization disappeared, the wind began to drop. The fog broke for about two hours and we enjoyed the only sun and warmth we would see until we reached Santa Barbara. At sunset the fog again surrounded us with its cold dankness. We managed a sun shot just before the skies zipped up for the duration.

There was a lot of hustle needed to get the big tri radial spinnaker up before dark. Just when we were ready to fly it, the wind dropped to six knots. Rats! The genoa was winged out to starboard using the spinnaker pole, with the main to port. Since only two of us knew how to handle a spinnaker and night was upon us, I decided to let it go at that. Besides, we were all exhausted and suffering mildly from the first-day-out-blues, otherwise known as mal de mer.

We sailed through the pitch black night. Old



until it disappeared from sight. When it went over, I thought for an instant of retrieval, then decided the odds favored continuing.

The seas all around us were phosphorescent. There was so much light from the white caps and the bow wave that it was like having a full moon, in spite of the dense fog. The wave streamed away from the stern like the trail of a sky rocket. A mysterious glow formed about 50 feet away. It took the exact shape of the hull all along both sides and met in front of us. It was a mind-blowing experience.

We were flying. As we sliced a trough down the hide of the ocean, the sea emitted a searing sound, then curled away with a dull roar and an eerie glow. Few people on earth are lucky enough to experience being immersed in such an exhibition of nature's beauty. It looked like the northern lights come to roost in the ocean.

obtained from the oil rig, I considered that position suspect. It was decided to trust dead reckoning and the Loran-C. For safety's sake we would try to locate the entrance buoy for the Santa Barbara Channel. If we could find it, we would know our exact position and be able to navigate accordingly.

About 0400, we saw a bobbing light which looked like a buoy. As we headed toward it in the fog it panicked and started shining back at us. It was another sailboat, not a buoy.

At 0530, just as dawn was breaking, we almost hit the channel entrance buoy. Not too shabby for 36 hours at sea in an opaque cocoon which prevented any celestial navigation as a backup. I decided then and there that I loved Loran C. It would have been nice, in this situation, to have a RDF (radio direction finder) to help us locate

George, as we had named the autopilot, was doing a yeoman's job. Absolutely worth the effort and the delay.

By midnight the wind was still about to eight knots. Our average speed had dropped from seven knots to four, and the visibility was down to about a mile. By now we were about 35 miles WSW of Pescadero Point. By 0400 we were 35 miles west of Moss Landing, having passed abeam Santa Cruz and Ano Nuevo about an hour earlier than we had estimated.

We stood two hour watches in teams. Steve and I were one team, and Ernie — alter ego — and Tom were the other team. To keep us all alert, there was a very pretty lady, Eileen. For her first time at sea, she really hung in there well.

By 0800 Sunday morning we had a wriggle on. The wind had piped up and we were planing at 9 to 12 knots with 10 to 12 foot following seas and occasional upsetting bash

Tom's deck shoes were not of much use in this view of *Magnum*.

from the starboard quarter by the secondary waves. The downhill toboggan ride was finally on. As we knifed through the fog, I was aware that sudden obstacle dodging might become difficult.

At noon Sunday, 20½ hours out of San Francisco, we were in dense fog with increasing following seas. The temperature was in the low 40's. We had altered course to 150° and the boat was really moving well, so we estimated reaching Point Conception at 0400 Monday morning.

By 1400 Sunday we were screaming southward like a homesick dolphin. The perceived speed is a turn-on, really exhilarating. The boat speed was 10 to 14 knots on the front of the waves. Abeam San Simeon we were making up for our slow starting speed. Everything was working well. The entire crew was on an ecstatic upper, feeling high though still a bit weary.

At 1600 the fog was still everywhere. We had not seen anything except fog and our magic carpet for over 24 hours. Suddenly we spotted a sign of life. A Morgan 41 crossed our bow headed SSE enroute to San Diego. They cross-checked positions with us, then disappeared rapidly astern as the sun went to sleep again.

At 2200 the two hour watches started again. We found that in the fog and cold the two hour watches worked best. Twilight — and dinner was on. Joy! Luckily we had plenty of food and a good chef.

At 0200 Steve and I were on watch. Steve was making some adjustments and set the flashlight down — a no no. In a literal flash over the side it went. It slid down the waves, swinging its beam to and fro in an eerie fashion

Sometimes at sea you question your own sanity for being there. Then you witness something like this, and you realize that if you had stayed securely at home and not pushed yourself to tolerate discomfort and accept certain risks, you would never have had such a beautiful experience.

0300 - fog and confusion. An oil rig was spotted and a call made on Channel 16. The response indicated that we were 20 nm north of our estimated position. Great! We will be rounding Point Conception soon, known to some as Cape Horn West. To reach Santa Barbara we must turn east soon. A 20 mile error could put us on the bricks in the dark and fog at Point Conception. Conversely, if we extend incorrectly 20 miles further south, then turn east, we may hit San Miguel Island. The Santa Barbara Channel shipping lanes throw in another interesting wild card.

Since positive identification was not

Point Conception, but I had no complaints.

After dawn the wind and sea subsided. We passed *Topez*, a C & C 38, and spoke to her skipper, Robert Peterson. Again our positions cross checked. Later we confirmed our position as we crossed the shipping channel with the Evergreen freighter *Ever Linking*.

The long low swells in the Santa Barbara Channel produced what must have been the world champions of flying fish. They would glide over the waves for 150 feet, drag their vibrating tails in the water for a relaunch, and go another 100 feet. Some of their flights lasted almost half a minute.

Later we also sailed through a huge westbound school of playful dolphins which must have numbered in the thousands. Yes, it was worth the risk.

About noon we broke out of the fog and came upon some local fishermen whom we apparently

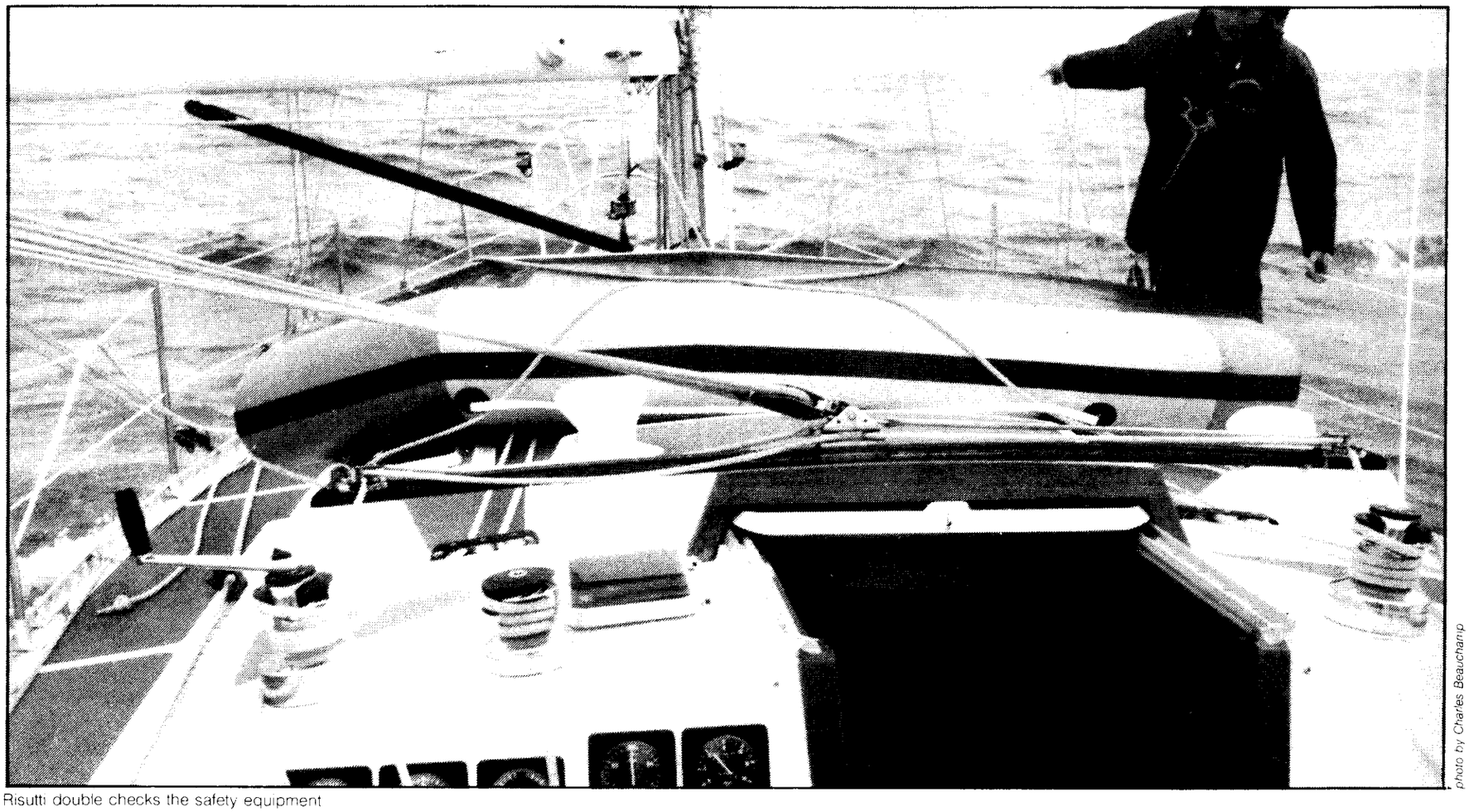


photo by Charles Beauchamp

Risutti double checks the safety equipment

intimidated. They pointed us toward Santa Barbara and then sped away before we could ask, "How far?"

At 1300 we entered Santa Barbara harbor

dock the boat, littered with all sorts of clothes, looked more like a Chinese laundry than a greyhound of the sea.

turn under the hose. That really interested the crowd of local commercial fishermen who had gathered, and when she

them something to talk about for a few days.

The short trip over to Channel Islands Harbor was made without foulies

60 feet above the water.

The red and green welcoming lights outlining the sea wall winked at us as we entered Channel

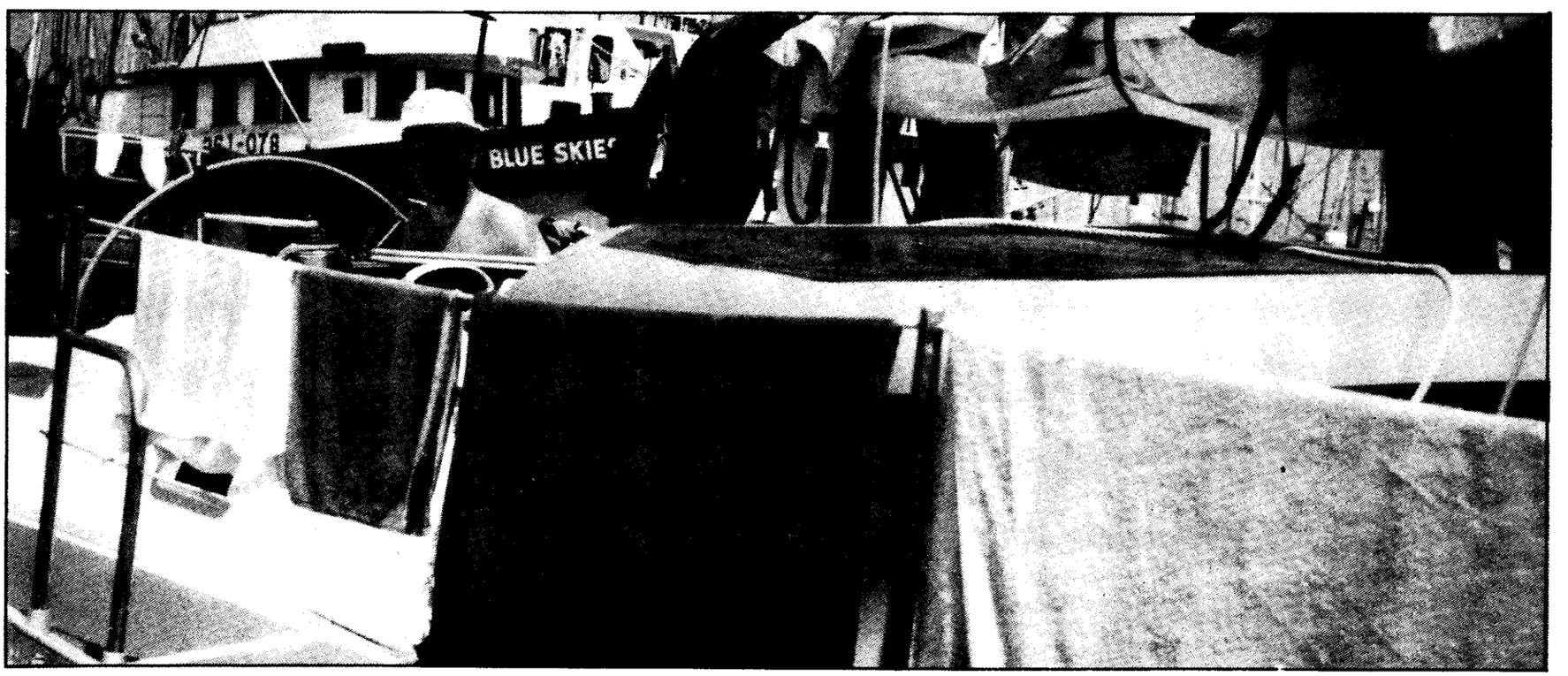
Santa Barbara harbor bedecked with foul weather gear, stocking hats and safety harnesses. We wondered why people were looking at us so curiously until the 88 degree heat soaked through our layers of insulation. Then the clothes began to fly. At the

We all emerged in bathing suits, or what passed for suits, and sprayed each other down with a hose. Eileen, sporting a Jane Fonda figure and a teeny weeny string bikini, did ballet-like exercises at the other end of the dock, stalling her

came down for her turn under the hose, their eyes nearly bugged out of their heads.

We vanished just as rapidly as we had appeared. I'll bet those guys are still pinching themselves to see if it was all for real. I guess it gave

— on the good life — this was the promised water. We hoisted Tom up the mast enroute for a few photos. We threatened not to bring him down unless he bought dinner, but he didn't go for it. (See if we'll crank him up there again.) It's quite a view from over

Islands Harbor, as if to say — OK, you passed this test, but don't let it go to your head.

We dined that night at Port Royal and toasted a very successful voyage with only one casualty, a flashlight — Next, Mexico?