



## 15. Ad Astra Per Aspera

Offshore experiences with *Tara* in three winter gales on the North Atlantic, her ludicrous maiden race from St. Petersburg to Fort Lauderdale, and her ultimate victory in the Governor's Cup at Nassau.

One might think *Tara's* fortunes could only improve, once she arrived on this side of the Atlantic. That would be a mistake, and is my reason for choosing the famed motto of the Royal Air Force "Through Adversity to the Stars" for the title of this chapter. Because of Lisa's birth, our delivery crew was three hours late in getting to the Brooklyn docks and *Tara* missed the last of the fair tide at Hell Gate. This made for a foul passage all the way to Stamford and the Luders Yard. By the time she got there, all the workmen who had been waiting at Saturday overtime rates to load her spars and winches on deck had gone home. This put the loading over to a double-time Sunday and, further, cost a crucial twenty-four hours on her passage around to Marblehead. Our gear was lashed on deck. There was no sense in stepping spars, for our interior remained to be built. *Tara* got out of the Luders Yard late on Sunday and had just come abeam of New London when she was caught up in the icy grasp of a whole gale from the west. Because of the high deck cargo, Jay had no alternative but to run for New London and wait out the wind. Four days later, she got under way and another work-week was gone.

Once convinced of the builder's inability to complete the wooden interior of *Tara*, I made alternate arrangements with the Graves Yacht Yard of Marblehead. They had built me a solid "210" in times past, and I had been very much impressed with the speed and soundness with which they had built *Nefertiti*. However, by mid-December, I was unhappy with the joiner-work. I faced another menace in the Marblehead Tax Department. There is a three percent personal property tax on yachts located in the town on the first day of January. I was told that this might not apply to yachts under construction, but when I asked for such assurance in writing it was not forthcoming. *Tara* went back into the cold Atlantic just after sunset on a mild December 31st. Ann Louise smashed a bunting-covered bottle of champagne on her stem while I held a wide-eyed little Lisa off to the side in a bright red papoose bag.

The following morning, the wind gods again realized it was January and returned the weather to its normal frigidity. With David Smith, Jay Parker, several other hardy souls, and a bottle of brandy, *Tara* set forth under power for a trip out to Halfway Rock. It was a silly way to spend a New Year's Day, but I needed incontestable proof that she had been out of Marblehead during the first day of January. As soon as she was lashed again to the docks of the Graves upper yard, we repaired to the warmth and bar of the Boston Yacht Club.

The Graves workers carried on with their joiner-work until most of the rudiments for civilized living appeared on board. We took *Tara* sailing on several weekends to shake down rig and set. I was delighted with her handling and stiffness, and greatly impressed with the glued sails that Jerry Milgram had produced with the aid of the M.I.T. computer. By the 22nd of January we had gathered up all the endless bits and pieces that make up a new boat and set forth five-strong for a winter passage down the Eastern Seaboard. Our crew comprised Henry Clayman, Jerry Milgram, Jim Griffith, Jay Parker, and myself.

As *Tara* rounded Marblehead Neck in the purpling pink of a winter twilight, I am told, several weekend revelers, gazing casually through frosted panes in the gathering darkness and seeing a yawl setting forth under full sail, swore off on the instant.

The weather forecast for the next morning was a full gale out of the northeast with heavy snow warnings. I reasoned that, if we got to the west side of the Cape Cod Canal before this storm struck, we would have a fair wind albeit cold to the relatively sheltered waters of Rhode Island and Long Island Sound.

On a starry night, we made a five-hour passage to the Canal and cleared the western entrance into Buzzards Bay just after midnight. By four in the morning we had passed Newport and the sea flattened to a glassy calm. The barometer started to dive and in two hours dropped from an even 30 to below 29.50. Between Point Judith and Block



Island the northeast gale struck with a howl. In several moments, the wind was up into the 40's and icy flakes of snow struck with a sting. We had anticipated this arrival and had our heavy number three jib lashed in readiness. On went our spreader lights, to illuminate a wild Dantesque scene of sail-wrestling under lighted cones of heavy snow flakes in the middle of Block Island Sound. With all hands groping to muzzle the main and set the number three jib as a steadying sail, my mind toyed with the absurdity of our plight. The blizzard blotted out the last vestiges of shore lights and twinkling beacons. All the people with whom I had raced these waters in the windless summer were snug and warm in their beds, oblivious to our existence, as we groped about with heavy sails on a tossing, snow-laden deck.

Our visibility lowered to less than one hundred yards, and thank the Lord we had a high frequency Omni-directional system on the masthead. As *Tara* plunged on in the darkness, I went below to lay a running plot using Omni as a base and cross-checking with depth finder and mileage indicator. The Omni brought us to a perfect landfall on the lead buoy of Fishers Island Sound and we tore through that narrow strip with a fair tide in a howling gale. The snow accumulated on deck to a point where any sail change became unfeasible. As we came abeam of Sunflower Reef off New London, I decided that although the wind was fair the deck was unlivable. Fifteen hours out of Marblehead, we ran into New London and sought shelter in the partial lee of Burr's Dock. The waterside citizenry, rubbing sleep from their eyes in anticipation of breakfast and church, must have been startled to see a snow-encrusted yawl reaching up-harbor under storm canvas. Once secured to the dock, our crew slept out that Sunday in the semi-warmth of our charcoal-heated cabin, listening occasionally to radio reports of a great Eastern blizzard.

Before dawn on Monday, January 24th, the barometer started to rise and winds backed to a clearing northwest. This made for an uncomfortable slant up Long Island Sound, but gave us a fair beam reach for Norfolk on the outside passage. At 0643 hours, *Tara* set forth from New London with three reefs in the main and a storm jib. The passage out of the Race was its usual boiling self, with the added fillip of snowdust mixed with the wind-lashed spin-drift. We laced heavy Dacron weather cloths on the life-lines and all around the after pulpit to prevent breaking waves from adding to the discomfort of the cold. By 0900 we had cleared the Montauk Point Whistler and headed southwest out into the Atlantic at a steady 8 knots.

The day passed uneventfully, broken by the steady change of the watch. Because of the draining cold, we used a staggered system of two hours on and four hours off, with the helmsman lashed by his lifeline to the mizzen and his relief peering up through the heavy plexiglass barrier in the companionway to keep track of things on deck. We changed helmsmen every thirty minutes, so no one got too badly chilled.

We had anticipated cold as our greatest enemy and were

glad to have spent time in the ship chandleries around the Boston Fish Pier. There we acquired the fur-lined booties that are worn under heavy thermal seaboots. Combining these with neon-red rubber fishing gloves and thermal underwear under thermal, quilted work-suits, and foul-weather gear on top, plus ski helmets and ski masks, we managed to stay relatively warm.

As we got farther out to the south of Long Island, an occasional wave breaking over the bow brought forth several of the small details overlooked previously. After driving the supporting wedges at the mast partners, some workman had forgotten to add the canvas boot to seal off the gaps. Water came pouring below, making life quite sodden. We did our best to stem the torrent to an annoying trickle with stuffed towels.

Around sunset, after a beautiful reaching day of sailing, a large Coast Guard seaplane came out of the west and dropped very low to circle us. Coming across a yawl well offshore in late January must have been a novel experience.

At noon on Tuesday, January 25, we came abeam of the Delaware Light Vessel and held steadily on to the south'ard with a moderate westerly wind and occasional use of the engine. The weather forecast called for another westerly gale the next day, so I chose to close up under the land, in the event that we needed shelter.

By midnight of our second day at sea, we picked up a flasher off Cape Charles, Virginia, and were feeling pleased with a forty-four hour passage from New London. The wind had held quite steadily in the northwest. The problem of a winter passage is the suddenness and brutality of the weather changes. Because of the cold, there is a weight and density to the wind that you never have in summer, and 20 knots of winter wind is the equivalent of 30 in the summer.

Just as we picked up the entry buoys outside Hampton Roads, *Tara* was struck by another full blizzard. The wind veered in an instant to the northeast and we made an all-standing jibe before we got the main off her. The mainsheet, on whipping across the boat, wiped out the throttle and clutch levers mounted on the steering pedestal. Our diesel auxiliary gave us further problems, for air had worked into the new fuel lines, causing occasional stoppage.

By three in the morning, in a full northeast blizzard, *Tara* plowed up Hampton Roads under a number three jib and mizzen, prodded occasionally by a reluctant engine that had to be controlled from below. I again went below to con her in with Omni. We picked up the buoys with stop-watch regularity, despite the limited visibility. Several times, our bow lookout came forth with a booming shout of "lights ahead" in places where my charts showed no lights. I'd scramble on deck with orders for an instant luff, but after our eyes adjusted and we closed on the lights we could discern a destroyer or tanker waiting for conditions to improve, swinging to an anchor in the roadstead. Sensible procedure! Can you imagine the thoughts of their anchor watch, seeing a sail come on them out of the darkness of a blinding blizzard in late January? "Bow watch to the bridge, sail on the starboard bow." Young ensign

to the boatswain: "Replace that man! He's been drinking." And then to have *Tara* glide by, a whitened Dutchman. By seven in the morning, January 26, *Tara* was snugly tied to the fuel dock at Norfolk and we set out in search of a diner, leaning into a howling snowstorm.

After a hearty breakfast of ham and grits we located a mechanic to restore the various difficulties to working order and then sought out the splendor of the local Hilton Hotel to take hot showers and to sleep out the storm. The room clerk gave us a dubious glance as we trooped into the lobby, five-strong and smelly, in sea boots, quilted clothing, with a three-day growth of beard.

The blizzard was the worst to strike Virginia in a century. The Governor declared a state of emergency as we spent the cold clear morning on the 27th quietly shoveling twelve inches of snow off the decks. Snow shovels are hard to find in Virginia. We got under way by noon, passing under the towering sterns of several aircraft carriers on into the sheltered warmth of the Intra-Coastal Waterway.

As we entered the Army Engineers' locks at Norfolk, *Tara* encountered another problem: ice on the surface of the water. She plowed steadily on, presenting the novel sight of a new racing yacht trudging through a snow field. I peered anxiously over the prow to see if the ice was scarring the hard-earned smoothness. There didn't seem to be any harm, for the floe was more mush than crystal.

*Tara* plowing through ice in the Inland Waterway.



We pushed on, day and night, with only two groundings in the channel. This is remarkable when you consider that *Tara* draws eight feet of water, which is the controlling depth of the Waterway. The first time, we really went hard on and got nowhere with attempts to bend her off with sail and crew weight and the engine backing full astern. Along came a friendly tugboat, and in exchange for a bottle of Henry Clayman's scotch, we were free in a twinkling. The weather was so warm in the Waterway that we stripped down to light sweaters.

By mid-afternoon of Thursday, January 27, *Tara* was refueling at the Gulf dock in Beaufort, North Carolina, five days out of Marblehead and just over halfway to Florida. We had escaped the brunt of two blizzards and were on the sunny side of Hatteras with prospects for better weather in the home stretch.

At six in the afternoon *Tara* nosed out of Beaufort Inlet and headed due south for the east side of the Gulf Stream and a straight passage for Grand Bahama Island. This course not only offers the shortest distance, but I reasoned it would put the Gulf Stream on our westerly side to serve as a warming buffer against any chilling northwesterlies. Before clearing port, I called the local weather bureau and was assured of good weather with lovely, reaching westerlies for the next three days. There was a small disturbance in the Texas Panhandle, but in the opinion of the observer this would have little bearing, for it was expected to move up into the Plains States and then on an easterly path into New England. With a little over five hundred miles to go, it looked as if we had a downhill slide.

The sun went down in a magnificent halo of scarlet as we plugged on to the south'ard, mostly under power, for the west wind died with the sun and what little breeze there was came gently out of the south. The sea lay down into a plate of glass with only an occasional under-roll out of the east. It was a lovely tranquil night to power on.

The west wind came back with the dawn of the 29th. By eleven, it made up fresh out of the southwest. For comfort and progress on this rather close slant, we shortened sail to the storm jib and mizzen. I had missed the morning weather report, but was not overly concerned, remembering the optimistic forecast of the previous day. By noon the barometer, which had held at a steady 29.90, started to drop, and by three in the afternoon *Tara* was plunging into a full gale from the west. We knocked off the mizzen and ran off to the southeast. There was nowhere else to go, because, by then, we were a good 200 miles downwind to the east of Charleston, South Carolina. I was grateful that we had moved out close to the Stream, with its warmth, for if we had had to live with cold in the din of wind and breaking seas none of us would have come through.

The barometer continued to drop. By midnight it hovered at 29.35. The sea settled down from a frenzied cross-chop into an endless army of frothy white mountains, broken into surf on the crests but as precipitous on the flanks as the center fall-line of the Headwall at Tuckerman's Ravine. *Tara* fell off these cliffs, shuddering and tumbling



as hopelessly out of control as a skier in an avalanche. We set out a sea anchor off the starboard quarter, feeding it into the sea on the end of two hundred and fifty feet of new, one-inch Dacron line. Henry Clayman and Jay Parker crawled forward on their knees to muzzle and double-lash the jib to the port spinnaker pole and lower lifelines. Jerry Milgram and Jim Griffith tied the mizzen down to a half-reef, as I wrestled with the wheel in an attempt to keep her square to the bucking mountains. We all wore lifejackets and lifebelts, for we knew this was a fight for our lives.

When there was nothing further we could do on deck, I lashed the wheel hard to port in balance of the tiny mizzen and we all went below, casting ourselves into the bunks in a hopeless attempt to sleep. Sleep is impossible, for the imagination takes command and each shrill of the gale, as *Tara's* rugged hull lifts onto the crests in the brunt of wind, brings new sounds and new worry. Your knees and elbows brace to hold you in the bunk, every muscle tense for the unexpected. After several hours, the exhaustion is complete and the stomach slips into the despairing grasp of seasickness. It took us all, with the exception of Jay and Henry, as we lay and listened to the skirl of the gale in the misery of a long night.

By dawn of the 30th, I little cared what happened next. My last cogent decision had been how to lay to in this sea. I had chosen to place our sea anchor off the starboard quarter, rather than the bow, in hopes of working to the southeast quadrant and getting out sooner.

Around seven in the morning, Jay took note of a change in sound on the port bow. He and Henry manfully went on deck to find that breaking seas had washed the jib clear of its lashings and with relentless force had bent the hanks off the stay. Half of this brand new fourteen-ounce Dacron sail had been torn away. Just as Jay got a line around the remainder and back inside the lifelines, the stout line to the sea anchor chafed through and *Tara* fell into a shuddering beam-to-tumble down a wave. He made a dash for the helm and cut away the lashings to get her square off to the sea, when the crest broke on the transom in full fury.

Henry, who had come below for consultation, stated later that on the breaking of that wave he looked through the plexiglass of the companionway to see nothing but the solid deep green of the Atlantic. Jay Parker had the presence of mind and strength to drop down in the after cockpit, thrusting his legs beneath the rim of the wheel and wrapping them for his life around the base of the pedestal. Those of us below thought it was the end. Jay later estimated that he went under six feet of solid water. With a shuddering lurch, *Tara* somehow cast the Atlantic from her decks and brought us back into the daylight.

We wrapped the remains of the jib into a long tight sausage and fed it out on another stout piece of Dacron as our second sea anchor. This gave us a bit of time to think. The barometer continued to drop, not finding bottom until it touched 29.28. As I lay in the damp misery of my bunk, being tossed about endlessly and watching the frothy green of the sea through the port light by my head, I knew that

in any other hull we would not be alive. Bill Luders and the welders of Norderney had done their job. A centerboarder would have fallen off that wave — and become a mastless pulp. The board, if down, would have acted as a pry that no centerboard box in the world could have withstood. Manning the life raft in such a sea would have been hopeless, or a matter of sheer luck.

*Tara* ran off to the southeast for the entire day of the 30th. With the aid of some bouillon that Henry Clayman had miraculously produced from the soggy mess that was now our interior (and I say miraculous, for all our cupboard doors had worked loose and their contents spilled to produce a sodden *fondue* of salt, coffee, and sugar), I struggled to my feet through the companionway to watch the full majesty of a whole gale in the Atlantic. In the early light of the 31st, I think "majesty" is the word. "Awesome" and "terrifying" come to mind, but to watch these blue-green mountains building on the transom, perhaps two football fields apart and eighty feet from trough to crest, to watch them move up over the stern as a towering cliff that you know this little boat can never live under, although somehow she does . . . the transom rears and *Tara* lurches forward on the fall-line of the cliff till abruptly checked with a shudder by the sea anchor . . . somehow the crest marches on, lifting her into the banshee howl of the pinnacle then lowering into the stillness of the back-slope . . . only to face another towering mountain. Yes, I think the word is majesty.

The sky was a leaden overcast, with white cirrus blown about in a frenzied whirl. The sailing directions have no records for a January hurricane, but I wondered. I will never understand those who sail or row in the deep water of the Atlantic, taunting her awesome power in a cockleshell. They must have a death wish, or they simply do not know, for with the certainty of tomorrow's dawn the Atlantic can rise from her sleeping lair and seize the unprepared in her everlasting grasp.

By afternoon of the 31st, our third day in this gale, the western skies started to break from the flat gray of the previous two days into occasional patches of blue. The wind-whipped straws of low scud still came on, but things somehow looked a bit brighter. The barometer moved up to 29.35 and held. The wind and sea showed no sign of abating. Our tiny triangle of mizzen still stood as a banner of defiance to the wind. Her stitching was gone in the abrasive chafe of the shrouds, but the glue still held. Our decks were a shambles. Breaking seas had hammered the stern pulpit and stanchions, with their resisting weathercloths, into flatness. It was as if a great giant had stepped on the transom.

Jay Parker went on deck for a check around, and again just at the right moment. It was at that instant that the line to our wrapped-sail sea anchor let go. Under the urging of the tiny mizzen *Tara* started to round, when Jay got her off in time. He held her square off the wave and she fell forward into a shuddering, surfing plane down the slope. There was a stutter from the bilge and the diesel engine roared into life. We came down off that wave so fast that

a diesel which had lain stone cold dead for over 48 hours had been brought to life through the twisting thrust of the propeller. This was a three-bladed propeller, transmitting through a two-to-one reduction gear. A technician later calculated that we had to be moving at more than 14 knots.

We wrested a third and rather strange sea anchor out of the sodden forepeak. This was our fifty-pound Danforth sand anchor, with twenty feet of chain. We let this go over the quarter at the end of three hundred feet of stout nylon, and strangely enough it served very well. On hauling back the remnants of our second line, we found that it had been abruptly severed quite close to the rolled sausage of the former sail. I can only conjecture that a hungry shark mistook our sail for something more edible.

The Atlantic continued to pound us until mid-morning of February 1. We then took courage and strength from another Clayman meal and set about cleaning the decks. All the lifelines were gone. The wind-whipped halyards had stripped every semblance of paint from the spars. The sharp edges of the jib hanks had etched deep arcs into the surfacing-plastic of the hull. The hefty insulators for the radio-telephone on the port shrouds of the mizzen had all shattered under the impact of the waves. My beautiful new *Tara* was a floating wreck.

By noon we got back under sail. I shot several sunlines, to which I attributed a low degree of accuracy because of the horizon uncertainty in such a leftover sea. It appeared that we were in an area two hundred and fifty miles northeast of Grand Bahama and three hundred or more miles east of Jacksonville. The wind filled in from the southwest, making Fort Lauderdale dead to weather. We made a land-fall in the twilight of February 2 just south of Cape Kennedy and arrived in Fort Lauderdale on the afternoon of February 3, twelve battered days out of Marblehead and 1,400 miles as the crow flies. When we docked under sail, for we had just burned out a shaft bearing, we learned that the Coast Guard and Bahamas Air-Sea Rescue Service had launched a full-scale search four days earlier. Without radio-telephone insulators, we had no way of responding.

The interesting sequel to this storm was that when I returned to a snow-strewn Boston in mid-February my friend Harry McDonough, of "210" Class fame, took me over to South Boston for luncheon on the United States Navy's 40,000-ton carrier *Wasp*. She had encountered the same gale two hundred miles out to the northeast of us. During our long luncheon, her Executive Officer simply couldn't grasp how a small sailboat had lived in such a sea. *Wasp* had sustained two million dollars worth of damage to her flight deck — which towers 85 feet above the sea. Her anemometer registered winds of 87 knots. It took *Wasp* a full day, going full ahead on one bank of engines and full astern on the other, to turn away from that wind. Her destroyer escorts never could turn. Who said there can't be a hurricane in January?

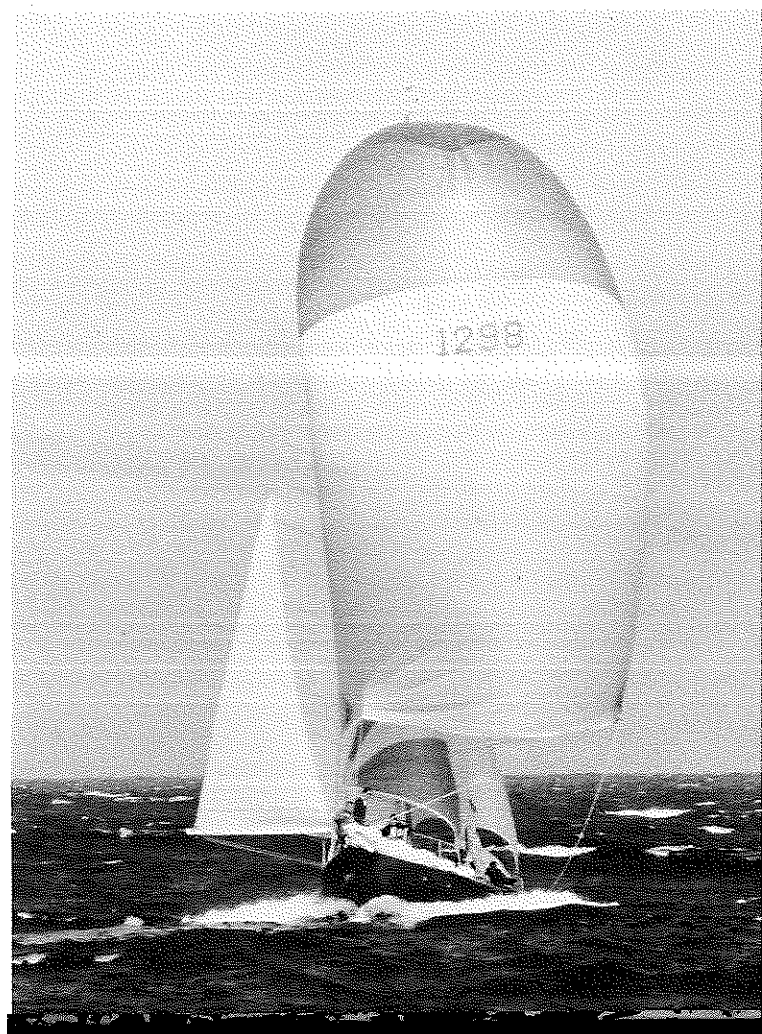
After a day of rest, and another with an insurance adjuster at Fort Lauderdale, we put into the Richard Bertram Yacht Yard at Miami for temporary repairs. "Red" Mooy,

their very capable foreman, put a swarm of men on the job and had us out of there in a miraculous day. Their riggers discovered something I am glad I hadn't been aware of. All the lower terminals of our brand new shrouds had developed hair-line fractures from the impact of the seas. The Bertram men completely re-rigged her in a day, and with a new recruit in Ann Louise, who had just flown down, we set forth for Saint Petersburg and our maiden race.

In my opinion, the Saint Petersburg-Fort Lauderdale Race is the most challenging on the Eastern Seaboard. It presents a variety of problems. There is a struggle to get free of the narrow confines of Tampa Bay. With a deep-draft boat, you are limited to the narrow channels. Once clear of the magnificent Sunset Bridge and out into the Gulf of Mexico, you have a long stretch of 180 miles up to Rebecca Shoals Buoy out to the west of Key West, and then the variable of the Gulf Stream becomes the determining factor as you turn east for the long stretch around the elbow of the Keys up to Fort Lauderdale. The Gulf Stream offers many choices, for the farther you play to the south of the Keys the more favorable current you have, but it makes for many more miles to sail. The riddle is to dip out into the Stream just far enough. When you add to this challenging course the unpredictability of winter weather, you have the makings of an "American Fastnet." This course was to be *Tara's* maiden race.

The race started at noon on February 12th and, as I think back on it with the perspective of over a year, it gave a perfect preview of *Tara's* first racing season. Jockeying

*Tara*



about in the starting area, I was indecisive as to jib selection. The wind under the land mass of Saint Petersburg was intermittent, ranging from 6 through 15 knots. We had a jib for either force — but not one for both. At the five-minute gun I decided on the light jib and, as we made our final run to the line, I was so concerned with the proper set of the jib that I put *Tara* in a barging position on top of Humphrey Simpson's *Kittiwake*. Rather than risk a foul, I took *Tara* over early. The gun went and then the recall numbers. I made a long slow circle to disentangle from the fleet and restarted properly. This cost the better part of five minutes, and *Tara* started her maiden race well back in the pack. As we worked out into the open channel of Tampa Bay, the southwesterly grew in stature and I was forced to change to the number two heavy genoa. By the time we came to the Sunset Bridge, we were riding fourth in Class A behind *Maredea*, *Escapade*, and *Big Toy*, all considerably larger than ourselves. On the reach from the bridge down to the Tampa Sea Buoy, we appeared to hold our own, somewhere between ten and fifteen minutes off the pace.

By four o'clock we had rounded the Tampa Sea Buoy and settled down into a long hard slug up to Rebecca Shoals. The southwesterly had freshened to a respectable 25 knots. *Escapade* was out in the lead, perhaps a mile and a half ahead. *Maredea* was on her quarter, slightly higher but astern, while *Big Toy* was out abeam to leeward of *Escapade*. *Tara* reveled in this heavy going, and by nine that night we had driven through *Escapade's* lee and put *Big Toy* out on our lee quarter. I was delighted with the way she behaved as she romped along, stiff as a church, at a very respectable 7.3 knots, hard on the wind. Just as we got through *Escapade's* lee, on came her spreader lights and she went into an abrupt circle back toward Tampa. For a moment I thought Peter Grimm, her owner, had forgotten something in Saint Pete, but was told later that they lost a man off the bow pulpit during a jib-change. She soon retrieved the man, but this was the last we saw of *Escapade*. The breeze freshened through the night, perhaps up to 30 knots. Off came our mizzen, and we slugged on into the darkness under number two genoa and a double-rolled main. The lights of our rivals faded astern. I went to bed quite happy.

Around dawn the next morning, a weak cold-front pushed in from the northwest and brought the strong southerly to an abrupt halt. The result was a vicious and nasty cross-chop, with a long roll left from the southerly vigorously protesting the intrusion of the new nor'wester. You might think me a liar, but the following did transpire in one two-hour watch that morning.

There is little sense in mentioning names, for my crew of that race are still my friends. Let it suffice to say that they were highly experienced. We had an excellent cross-section of Olympic Gold Medalists, America's Cup foredeck men, Trans-Pacific veterans, and a famous *Life* photographer.

When the southerly died, *Tara* was left in a snapping, rig-jarring cross-chop under a light nor'wester. She had sailed a great night; the horizon was clear of boats in all

directions. We eased the mainsail and mizzen for the new wind and ran a preventer forward, along with a vang, to cut the slatting. With amazing speed, our foredeck troops ran up the .75 oz. drifting-spinnaker and dropped the heavy genoa. As soon as the genoa came down, and before they could give a thought to the spinnaker net, the head of the spinnaker wrapped around the headstay and, after several vicious rolls, split itself neatly in two. Good-bye to our drifting-spinnaker. Down came the remnants and up went our spinnaker net, closely followed by our heavy 1½ oz. running-kite. This promptly snagged on a hank of the spinnaker net, and bid adieu. Down came the remnants, and in ten minutes we were flush out of spinnakers! Being an ingenious lot, we then set our drifting Dacron jib, wing-out on the pole end. Compared to the delicate nylon of spinnakers, this is a stout cloth, but our lads neglected one small detail. In order to adjust the fullness of this sail, the luff cloth slides free along the luff wire. It is a clever device when properly handled, but our foredeck captain was unaware of it, being new to the boat. He tacked the normal wire to the pole guy, as any sensible person would do, and up went the sail. The free luff cloth promptly slid up the wire into a great big bunch and, two rolls of the boat later, the sail parted from its wire. It was a neater job than if you had tried to do it with a knife. That cleaned us out of light sails and really made life quite simple.

Our lads dauntlessly rose to the challenge and set the number one genoa out to the pole as a triangular spinnaker, when the main-boom gooseneck, probably feeling neglected, sheared off clean at the roller-reefing joint. Down came the mainsail. We ran the number two genoa in its stead and set about effecting repairs, when, with a twang, the mizzen gooseneck joined the main.

By ten in the morning, the second day of this race, we had no light headsails, no main, and no mizzen. We ran off under double jibs toward Rebecca Shoals, with one watch repairing the goosenecks and others making like the Six Little Tailors. By four in the afternoon, *Maredea* overtook us from astern, so we knew we had had a good first day. They came close by to leeward, and on looking at our absurd rig simply shook their heads and moved on.

We passed around Rebecca Shoals Buoy at four in the morning, dead even with Ted Turner's Cal 40, *Vamp X*, and spent a long light day beating in the Gulf Stream, swapping tacks with *Vamp X*, Dennis Miller's red-hot *Firebrand*, and *Kittiwake*. It was most discouraging, for we owed them all time and simply couldn't get away from them without light sails. Our sewing factory continued on, and no slaves in an East Side garment factory were ever driven harder. By twilight of this third day, the breeze freshened on out of the east and *Tara* came back into her own.

We slowly left our small tormentors astern and by dawn on Tuesday, February 15, found ourselves close reaching up the Gulf Stream, off Miami. On the change of watch, at eight, I took the wheel from David Smith, to realize with a start that it was loose in my hands. The steering cables had snapped. *Tara* spun head-to-wind and fell away on the

port tack for Cuba. This held little attraction, so after a frantic fifteen minutes of wild pirouettes in the Gulf Stream, we managed to balance sail to get her hove-to on starboard, at least pointed in the right direction, if going nowhere. Along came *Vamp X* and *Firebrand*. Dennis Miller was polite enough to wave a white handkerchief. It reminded me of the closing moments of a Harvard-Yale game.

We eventually freed the bolts from the emergency steering plate, which had been painted over and oxidized, at the very moment that Jay Parker effected a temporary repair of the cable with shackles. The cable to the quadrant was stainless steel, attached without thimbles. Stainless steel has little of the resilience of galvanized and such a cable should be fastened with thimbles. *Tara* again set out in hot pursuit. We eventually caught back *Vamp X* and *Firebrand*. After two days of steady sewing, we produced a semblance of a spinnaker and got it back up for the last two miles of the race, and thus finished a close fourth behind *Kittiwake*. *Escapade* and *Maredea* were in first and second, several hours ahead. The ultimate absurdity of this maiden race was that we got fourth out of forty-four boats and won a silver cup for third in Class A. *Vamp X* won Class B and fleet.

My theory of the Little Black Cloud reached full maturity with the succeeding races of the Southern Circuit. On the next weekend, we raced over to Lucaya and were doing right well as we came up under Grand Bahama Island. Some of our bigger competitors, *Maredea* and *Onkahaya*, had sailed very high of rhumb line as we crossed the Gulf Stream. Coming up to the finish, we held them on a bearing abaft the beam and felt quite happy until a small gray squall line rolled out of the north to take up our wind. The big boats under the island held the wind, as the little boats piled up astern in the light going. *Tara* just nosed out *Touche* for fifth-to-finish and after the arithmetic was settled, got seventh in fleet, as *Maredea* picked up all the marbles.

The next weekend, I got off on the wrong foot in the Lipton Cup triangle outside Miami. My troubles really started two days before the race, when a federal sheriff attached the boat at the behest of Graves Yacht Yard. I had gone back to Marblehead right after the Fort Lauderdale Race and given Selman Graves a long list of construction details that I found fault with on the trip south. I proposed that they be either corrected in the spring or deducted from my bill. Their answer was the attachment, which was dissolved only through the good offices of Henry Clayman, who worked out an arbitration agreement between the two parties. As we sailed forth for the Lipton Cup, I wasn't in the best frame of mind. My troubles were soon forgotten, in a sparkling triangular race in a fresh sou'westerly. *Tara* had a good start to leeward of the fleet, and with excellent allowance for the Stream on the part of our navigator, Al Dahms, we turned the outer buoy second behind *Escapade*. On a long reach up for the Golden Beach turning-mark, *Maredea* caught us back by, again, sailing the high course. Going into the home stretch we were a close third, boat for boat, and appeared to have our class, if not the fleet, well

in hand on handicap, when we piled high and dry on an uncharted mud bank off the North Miami inlet. *Vamp X* won this race, too.

The race to Nassau was a memorable moonlit sail. It was a reach all the way, and the little boats cleaned up.

*Tara* finally came into her own on her fifth start, a thirty-mile windward-leeward course for the Nassau Cup along the reefs to the north of New Providence Island. The breeze was a hefty 25 knots at the start and came on a bit stronger as we worked up the wind. Remembering the sail combination that worked well out of Tampa, I settled for two reefs in the main, our hefty number two genoa, and a well-vented mizzen. In the first five minutes after the start, it became apparent that no boat of Class A was standing up with us. *Tara* launched a full cavalry charge to weather and there was no one to stay with her. I think the reasons were several. Many boats had gone to three-quarter jibs, which don't have the power for punching through head seas. We carried a full jib that retained its shape in the puffs because of the glued construction. Many stitched sails will have their draft walk aft in a hefty breeze. Happily, *Tara* finally found the day and race course for which she was born. We turned the windward mark a handsome first, and only the mighty *Escapade* caught us back in the homestretch to leeward. It was a surfing wild day, with many of the short-keeled boats spinning hopelessly out of control. Despite all her tribulations, *Tara* had found her element and went on to win the Nassau Cup, first in class, first in fleet. It almost made it all worthwhile.

Sir Roland Symonette, Premier of the Bahama's Federation, presents the Nassau Cup and the Class A prize to the author in March, 1966. Bobby Symonette, Speaker of the House of Parliament, and a crew member of *Tara*, is in the background.

