

the Acton Action

Hueston Sailing Association

Who Was Who in 2022?

Now that we can put the cap on the 2022 racing season, we need to turn around and immediately doff that same cap in tribute to those who ended the season on a high note.

Let's start with what is arguably the toughest series in our club – the Sunfish. There you have three competitors who may constitute the fiercest fleet lineup we have. All season long, whether in a Sunfish event or in the Sunday series, Bill Molleran, Laura Peters, and Brian Callahan have taken turns beating one another. Callahan, largely on the strength of a dominant performance in the season Sunfish finale, put the question to rest by winning that event and the season long series in both the Sunfish and the Handicap fleets.

Long a competitive force in the Sunfish, Callahan seems to have solved the lateen rig's speed formula as well as showing marked improvement in starting and sailing to windward, as this has been his best year in competition on Acton Lake to date.

Knocking on the door? The Brewsters in their Capri and fellow Sunfishers Dom Everaet, Ken Wright, and Stephen Cook. Bold prediction for 2023? Diane Pierok and Ken Wright will be a new threat, but look out for the Laura.

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Banquet This Saturday!

HSA's annual awards banquet is coming up this Saturday evening at the Barn n Bunk in Trenton.

Wine tasting begins at 6:00 pm as sommelier and Y Flyer guy Charlie DeArmon pours forth on the subject as he, uh, pours forth from each bottle.

Social Chair Darrilynn Brewster is on duty for her first banquet as Vice Commodore and tells us the menu is looking good.

There will be a bit of entertainment fun going on with games and a special appearance by the Acton Lake Singers, who have taken time off from their tour to treat the home crowd to their latest hit single.

In This Issue

Brian Hitzeman

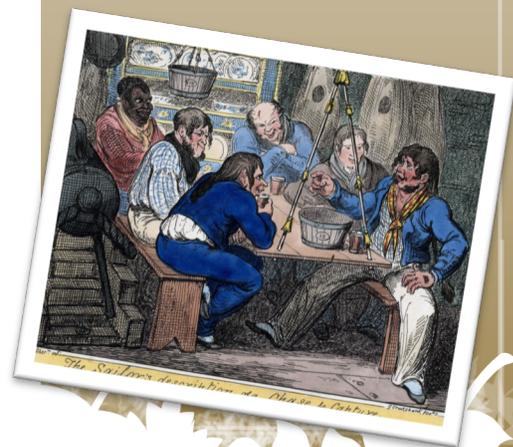
The story of two men against the sea. Surviving a knockdown. Pg. 2

Bill Jackson

Ever been off your boat while it sails away from you? Bet it wasn't like this.

Todd Rovito

Capsize surprise. Who hasn't experienced it. But what if you are alone on the lake?



Tales of Daring Do and Daring Don't

The following stories are about three sailors from Hueston Woods who each have a tale to tell about something that happened to them this past sailing season. We are telling these stories not only because they are good ones about confrontation with Mother Nature, but also because they illustrate a defining characteristic of adventurous sailors everywhere: the ability to respond to a difficult situation on a sailboat and problem solve in the moment.

Brian Hitzeman, Todd Rovito, and Bill Jackson each experienced an event that could have ended quite badly, but, because of coolness under pressure, each was able to come out on the other side even if a little worse for the wear. Brian's friend Cus ("Life Support") was on board for Brian's Lake Erie trip. We'll start with Brian.)

Lake Eerie

(Editor's note: Brian Hitzeman is a newly minted sailor and veteran Cincinnati firefighter. His firefighting friend "Cus" bought a small cruiser a few years ago and Brian got the bug from him. He bought his own boat this year and dreamed about the places he might go and the adventures that lay in store. Three months later, the first adventure happened. This is his story)

The distance from Marblehead to Kelly's Island is just five miles. In a sailboat, in a good wind, it will only take you about an hour. But for Brian Hitzeman and his friend Cus, the trip would seem much longer. (Cus has his boat, *Life Support*, on A dock at Hueston Woods.) In fact, they had planned to make it longer by sailing around the island first, an 18 mile distance, before ducking in at Seaway Marina on the island's south shore.

It was the September weekend of the "Around the Lake Race" for us at Hueston Woods. And if you remember that Sunday, the wind was so strong on Acton Lake that only cruisers went out and even then it was a bit harrowing.

On Lake Erie that weekend, it was a blowin' hard. The wind was 15-25 mph with a chance of waterspouts on Sunday. Yes, waterspouts. The waves were 3-5 feet. But the two friends were determined to sail Lake Erie and around Kelly's the next day and make their way eventually to Put-in-Bay by midweek.

They took Brian's boat, a Catalina 22 (recently and ironically christened *Smooth Sailing*) that he had just purchased in June after taking HSA's Learn to Sail class. Brian, a quick study, took to the water at Acton Lake in his new boat and often in challenging wind. He was getting himself ready for whatever adventure might be coming.



Brian is in foreground with Cus on the helm of "Smooth Sailing".

"(We) wanted to get some experience on bigger water... (and) then sail a bigger boat from Long Beach to Catalina Island in the near future," he told us later.

He had spoken to others at Hueston Woods who had sailed the Great Lakes and soaked up their knowledge as he outfitted his boat with what they would need. For what was about to happen, they were not prepared. Few would be. The adventure that might be coming... was here.

They left on the trip that September 25 and put in at the Mazurik access on Marblehead. The weather forecast for Monday was for wind at 20-25 mph, more chances of waterspouts as well as thunderstorms and waves 5-8 feet with some occasionally at 10 feet.

Despite the wind already in a fury on Sunday evening, they decided that they had better do a little practice sailing just to see what it was like. It would be a little harrowing.

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Who Was Who in 2022? (continued from page one)

The Y-Flyer fleet has a similar tripartite who seem to dominate the standings, although it is often skippers Roger Henthorn and Pete Peters who end up on the podium. Yours Truly has learned that third place, no matter what fleet, seems to be his destiny.

Henthorn and crew Bobbie Bode really confounded observers in 2022 as we witnessed them sometimes finishing out of the money. Still, when all the points were tallied, it was clear that the Y season belonged to them, winning both Fall and Spring Series as well as the July Fourth Series.

Bold prediction for 2023? Charlie DeArmon will be able to put a difficult 2022 behind him and become Henthorn's and Peters' main challenger. A lot depends on the availability of crew Amy Marks who was forced out of much of the season due to injury.

The second tier of relatively new Y Flyers is beginning to show signs that their

apprenticeship period may be over, and we could see any of them among the fleet leaders. That includes Eric Anderson, Brett Hart, and Scott Eversole, all of whom had significant and shiny moments this past year. Newcomer Curt Donahue is the wild card.

In the Hobie Fleet, they are still waiting for stability and sustainability. Few of their fleet starts have been competitive due to inconsistent participation. What they need is new blood, and that may depend on how active young skipper Kevin DeArmon becomes and whether or not high schooler Ryan Sernoffsky decides to buy Mike Wier's Hobie and compete with it at Hueston Woods.

Bold prediction for 2023? The crystal ball is hazy. Best hope is that Don Fecher, Charlie Buchert and Mark Costandi will be able to somehow communicate and show up on the same race dates. If they did, that would be fun to watch.

Scott Eversole: Rising Star

(Scott is a Y Flyer racer but also has a Sunfish and an O'Day 25.)

The last few years have been very busy. In October of 2021, my dad (who used to crew for me) married a woman he met in Florida where he now lives. In December of 2021 my wife retired. In January of this year I tore my pectoral tendon and had to have it surgically repaired and re-anchored to the bone.

In June 2022 our son Dalton was married and in September of this year our daughter McKenna also got married. (continued on page 8)



Daring Do and Daring Don't

("Lake Eerie" continued from page 2)

With the sun setting, they left Mazurik and, even though the wind was challenging, the boat was handling well. "The wind was not overwhelming," he said. In the dark, using their depth finder and their GPS tracking app, they somehow made it back to Marblehead.

It wasn't without a moment of panic, however. Motoring in the wind and headed toward the Mazurik access, the outboard, a brand new 9.8 Tohatsu, stopped running. After a few anxious moments, Brian realized what had happened. He had stood up suddenly to see where he was going with the kill switch attached to himself and had yanked it off the motor.

"The boat went totally on its side with the sails on the water," he said. "I could feel the swing keel grinding hard in its trunk..."

Despite the dire forecast for the next day, the two headed out Monday at noon for the Kelly's Island circumnavigation in a strong breeze with a full jib and a one reef main. They saw the dark clouds and rain coming out of the west but figured the worst would be that they would get wet. "The waves were rolling good at around 2:00 and kept increasing," Brian told us. "Cus went forward to lower the jib because the wind had picked up so much that it seemed like it was going to rip the sail off. When he got to the bow, all hell broke loose." His vision of the sails was prophetic.

They were in a squall. Winds in a squall on Lake Erie can exceed forty miles an hour or more. A supercell.

"The boat went totally on its side with the sails on the water," he said. "I could feel the swing keel grinding hard in its trunk. I was standing straight up on the vertical side of the opposing cockpit bench seat. The wind was sandblasting my face... I did look forward during the peak of it and made eye contact with

Cus. He was hanging on the shrouds, but we couldn't verbally communicate because of the howling and whistling of the wind. We just shrugged our shoulders at one another and rode it out."

With Brian's marine radio tied to his life jacket in the event they ended up in the water, the two held on until the wind eventually ripped both the main and the jib off the boat, which allowed the boat to right itself. Shortly after that, the wind abated somewhat. It was over. With a still powerful wind blowing from the west on their stern, they motored toward the Seaway marina on Kelly's, likely feeling fortunate. "I guess a few concerned island citizens called 911 for us as there were police and fire rescue watching from the marina wall," he said. "I found out from one of the officers later that they had the Coast Guard on standby." The marina entrance is narrow and in wind and waves, it can be challenging. "The new motor came in handy," Brian said.

Once in the safety of the marina, the two friends changed from their wet clothes and headed into town for a few beers. At the Village Pump bar, they met a lot of the people who had witnessed their battle from shore. "They were all very friendly and even bought drinks for us to celebrate our making it through."

That the two of them were able to remain calm during such a critical moment is no doubt testimony to their training as firefighters. "At our job we have to do what may seem like the opposite of what is the sensible thing to do, and I think that carried over in our adventure," he said. "There was no panic or even time to be scared."

As sailors have often found out, when you are on a sailboat in open water, things are going to sometimes go wrong. You can be prepared materially, but, more importantly, you have to be prepared both physically and mentally to handle the situation.

Lake Eerie (continued from page 5)

“I would never have had my family out there in that, but for just Cus and me, the risk was worth taking. We were set on going out no matter what. The next time we may need to be a little more cautious.”

Such a next time, he admitted, might involve heading for shore at the first indication of a storm instead of trying ride it out. “It came up so quick on us though. I don’t know if we could have beat it to the marina. The really negative part was that we weren’t able to sail to Put-in-Bay as planned.”

Brian is in the process of buying new sails. And a CDI furler for the jib. As for the future, the two are already planning that Pacific coast trip where, on the fourth day of a five day experience, they sail to Catalina Island with an instructor. On day five, they sail back on their own.

“Looking back,” Brian said, “we have no regrets. I’m glad it happened because it was, I hope, a once in a lifetime experience. We learned a lot.”



Bill Jackson at the helm of his MacGregor 25

Dock Line or Tow Rope? Bill Jackson’s Story

Editor’s note: Bill Jackson, who is retired from teaching at Miami, has been sailing Acton Lake for decades. His son Tim is a graduate of HSA’s junior camp and now a lawyer. Tim plans to buy his own sailboat soon to use on Grand Traverse Bay. Bill and Jane’s younger son is a professor at Loyola Marymount in L.A. and has sailed Acton Lake many times with his family. Bill has sailed Acton Lake for thirty years and continues to sail it on his MacGregor 25, sometimes with his wife Jane but often solo. In May of this year, sailing alone, he was doing what he usually does to get away from the dock. In the blink of an eye, nothing after that was as usual. Here is his story.)

“You have my permission to tell the story, if it keeps another sailor from getting cocky.” – Bill Jackson.

The wind this day was in the 10-15 range, just right for another solo sail for Bill Jackson. He did what he always does. He leaves the motor alone and simply takes his boat from its berth at the end of C Dock and pulls it around to the outside. Once there, he ties up and hoists the sails with the bow into the wind. Then it is just a matter of pushing off, jumping on, and sheeting in.

No noisy gasoline motor, no need to fight the wind out on the lake to hoist sails there, no hassle. He had done this a thousand times, no problem. This day? Problem.

With the sails hoisted, the wind out of the north, and the dock lines firmly in hand, he was preparing to shove off when the infamous Acton Lake wind did a 90 degree turn to the west. The MacGregor did what boats sometimes will do – it rotated with the wind away from the dock instead of toward it. The boat, for some reason, wanted to sail away. Without him.

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Dock Line or Tow Rope? Bill Jackson's Story

(continued from page 5)

There was no time to think about it much. Bill did what he instinctively would do: he held onto the dock lines with all his strength. He didn't want the boat to get away. The result was that his boat took him along. He was yanked off the dock, line still in hand, and found himself being towed behind his own boat.

“I spent a few minutes being pissed off for allowing myself to be caught by a sudden wind shift at just the wrong moment,” ...

Bill had actually experienced a similar situation years before. In 1988 he was working for a non-governmental group on disarmament problems when his Russian hosts invited him on a sailboat. The ride was to take on a trip from Naxhodka to Vladivostok. He was to be the first foreigner to visit Vladivostok since Mikhail Gorbachov's initiative to open Russia to the West. Glasnost. You remember.

When they were six miles off the Siberian coast, he was challenged to jump overboard from the Polish built 34 ft. wooden sailboat (with no engine) with a 100 foot line, get towed in a six mile per hour current, somehow pull yourself back up to the stern, and then climb several feet straight up to get back on board. He did it, and thus earned the admiration of the Russian crew. It was their challenge. He had accepted. Glasnost, right?

This time it was a little different. No one was around. No one was on the boat. And the water was 65 degrees. Still, he held on. He imagined his MacGregor crashing into the marina docks or another boat and causing some real damage. Pulled at about three knots, he surfed behind the boat as it happily sailed away, though he tried vainly to pull himself up to the stern and into his boat.

“Why my boat didn't head up into the wind as it should have I'm still not quite sure,” he said. “I think it had something to do with my horizontal body blocking the rudder, and therein is another lesson: in order to use a stern ladder you have to be mostly ‘vertical’, whereas I was entirely horizontal and planing.”

This effort - pulling himself up to the stern, grabbing at the rope stern ladder (homemade), and attempting to get his foot in the stirrup to hoist himself up - went on for another 20 minutes. Tired and weakening a bit in the cold water, he finally decided that if the boat wasn't going to head up into the wind and stop, maybe he could make it happen from the water. If he could get the boat's head into the wind, he could put his foot in the rope ladder and get back on board.

“My strategy for getting out of my situation was to use my free hand and then my shoulder to gradually steer the boat into the mud flats across from the docks,” he told us. “It took time. The wind had shifted back to the North, and the boat wanted to head for the dam.” It worked. The boat drove into the mud on the east side of the lake.

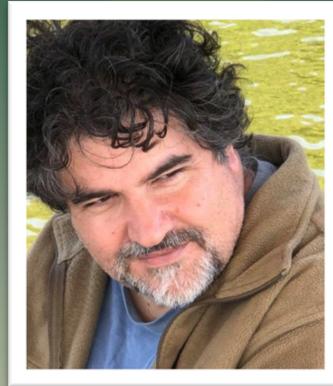
After getting back in the boat, he washed the mud off, dried himself, and thought about what had just happened. “I spent a few minutes being pissed off for allowing myself to be caught by a sudden wind shift at just the wrong moment,” he said.

After years of sailing the lake and starting out in the same way each time, something bad happened. “Mother Nature caught me with a 90 degree wind shift. Just to teach me a lesson.”

After a brief rest, Bill started the engine he doesn't like to start. He backed out of the mud and headed up the lake for a sail.

“It was a shorter one than I had planned.”

Daring Do and Daring Don't Todd Rovito's Story



(Editor's Note: Todd Rovito started out his sailing life in an older Flying Dutchman in 2015 after taking an HSA sailing class. A few years later in 2019 he found a brand new Precision 185 and put an electric outboard on it. You will often see Todd sailing the lake alone in his new boat during the week. This is the story, in his own words, of one day in September when things went sideways.)

I got out on the lake and was sailing away just fine for about two and half hours. I was putting along with just my main sail having a very nice time. It might have been the best weather we had all year.

I was approaching the end of the lake and decided to turn back. Just like I was taught, I had one hand on my mainsheet the other hand on my tiller. I had positioned myself in the middle of the boat ready to switch sides as I tacked from starboard to port.

Next thing I knew the boat lurched, and I was face down on the seat on the starboard side, which was now the low side of the boat.

As the boat crossed through the eye of the wind, the boat slowed down considerably. That's when I felt a gust of wind like I had never felt before. Maybe it was bad timing on my part. Next thing I knew the boat lurched, and I was face down on the seat on the starboard side, which was now the low side of the boat. I felt the water come in as the boat rolled over.

I was not hurt. The boat had rolled onto its starboard side. (The motor is on the port side of the stern but didn't submerge.) I had my life jacket on, so I moved to recover my lunchbox and paddle. My dry bag with my cellphone, my wallet, and my car keys were floating nearby, but I didn't bother grabbing it, thinking I could get it later.

While in the water, I double checked to see if the main sheet was still cleated. It was not. (See, I do listen to my instructors.) I reached for and grabbed the centerboard, and I pulled with all my might, but I was not able to do much.

Luckily a pontoon boat came along and we were able to right the boat. It took some instruction. It was an older lady and her father. They had a 50hp Mercury on the back of the pontoon but the older lady was hesitant to let all the horses out.

So my boat and I were drug away from the original crash site. After a few tries she finally applied what I estimated to be about half full power, and the Precision came right over. That's when my boat started sailing away from me. Another sailor who happened to be out that day tried to rescue me from the water, but I asked him to sail to my boat and lower the main sail.

After the main sail was down, they came back and got me. Then they towed me and the P185 back to the dock. The boat seemed fine, but it did have a lot of water in it. I promptly drained it when my wife Linda brought me her keys. All in all it could have been worse. I am fine, the boat is fine. I did lose my phone, wallet, and Linda's spare key, all things that can be replaced. I will just have to be more cautious, but I am not deterred. I have been thinking about the incident a lot. I'm not sure if I could have done anything to prevent it or if it was just a fluke? Lesson learned: leave the wallet, the phone, the keys on shore.

Scott Eversole: Rising Star (continued from page 3)

The good news is we purchased my dad's place in Florida, since he moved into his wife's house. This is "our retirement plan" only 2 years, 11 months and 26 days until I retire.

During the off season, I have been a student of YouTube University. I watch everything sailing related on there. I usually have a notebook with me and take many notes. Makenna and I will practice what I learned before races. I usually have one or two items on the list each race to work on. I also purchased several books this winter regarding sailing, tactics, strategies, and sail trim. I took many notes as well.

I think the best thing that I have done to become a little better is tiller time. I try to sail every opportunity that I get. I watch members that are better than me and try to learn from them. According to Makenna, "You did a Mike move on Mike". I thought that was funny.

I raced the Sunfish twice this year and really enjoyed it. So much in fact, I bought HSA 5. I plan on racing it as much as possible. I even plan on taking it to Florida in November for the three weeks we are there. Not sure about the sharks (I did watch *Jaws*).

Sailing is my passion and has been for nearly 30 years. I did not realize how little I knew about it until I started racing.

HSA has taught me so much and the members have been so kind and helpful. HSA has given me the opportunity to share my sport with others

That is why I volunteer for the Learn to Sail classes. I am not the best teacher, but I enjoy watching the faces of new people when they start to understand it. I think I am more excited than they are when they can control the boat all on their own, without any assistance from me.

This year was my first year helping with junior camp. I wish I could have dedicated more time, but we had scheduling conflicts at work. I really enjoyed watching the kids progress in the three days. Again, sharing my passion with others.

Sadly, I may lose my crew next year due to Makenna getting married. They are talking about moving after the wedding. The world is wide open to them with exciting opportunities. I am happy for them, but I will miss them if they move far away.

If you ask about my motivation, it is not motivation; I am extremely competitive. I always have been. I just want beat Roger and Bobbie. (LOL) I really enjoy our group. This is the best group that I have ever been a part of.



Scott at a clinic at the lake in the spring