

A man in a red jacket and sunglasses is looking out at the ocean from a boat. The background shows a cloudy sky and the sea. The man is wearing a red jacket with a blue collar and a dark cap with yellow trim. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

THE LONGEST RIDE

Two *MB&S* editors drive a Tempest 38 with twin Evinrude V-8s from Miami to Maine in five days.

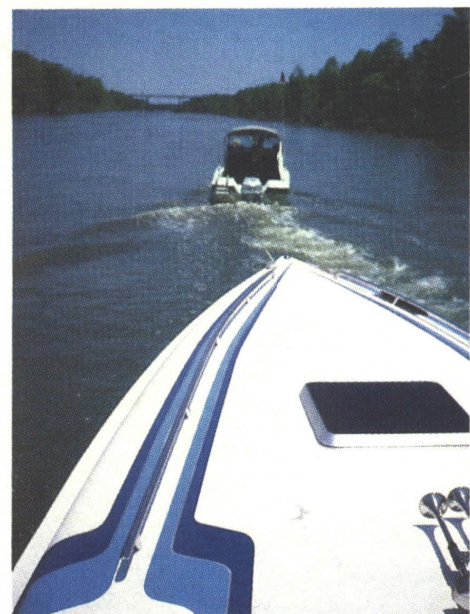
By PETER A. JANSSEN





Robert Holland

Opening spread by Bill Curtsinger



Peter Janssen

We were only a mile or so outside the bridge at Norfolk, Va. and, with the seas cresting at 10 to 12 feet and the wind working its way upward of 35 knots, we were getting pretty badly beaten up. The bow of our 38-foot Tempest speedboat would climb up one wave and then plunge into the trough on the other side. Up and down, up and down. The waves were too big and too uneven to power across them; it simply was a matter of up one and down the other, for as far as the eye could see.

Then, suddenly, an off-center, out-of-sequence wave caught the boat and hurled it sideways into the trough—like a

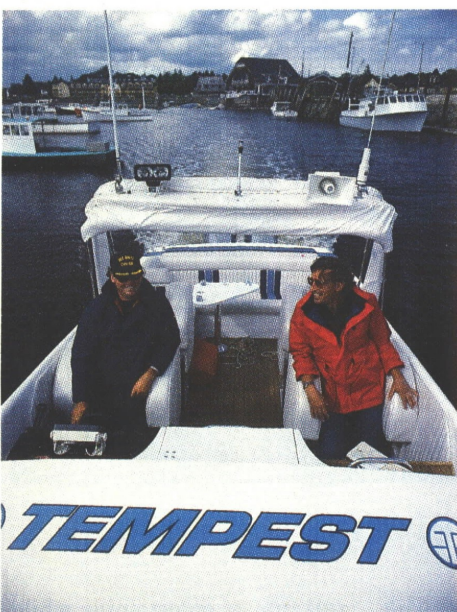
champion wrestler picking up his opponent and throwing him to the canvas. With a bone-crunching crash the Tempest landed flush on its starboard side, on the topsides, not on the hull. The entire boat shuddered and then slowly righted itself, in time to climb the next wave and bury the bow in the trough, sending tons of cold green water cascading back on top of us.

The two of us, *MB&S* Contributing Editor Jerry Berton and I, were more than halfway through an epic trip from Miami to Maine on the Tempest with twin Evinrude V-8, 275-hp outboards. At this point, however, about 5:30 on an early summer Sunday afternoon, we weren't

The start: Leaving Miami (top). Berton changes a torn prop (above left) at Shallotte Inlet, N.C., and the Sand Dollar, a Good Samaritan, tows us into Coinjock Marina the next day.

worried about getting to Maine; we were worried about getting to shore.

As we were bashing about, a Coast Guard helicopter hovered almost directly overhead, and a few seconds later a small Coast Guard cutter pulled up 20 or 30 yards away. On the VHF they said they were on a search and rescue mission for a boat that had capsized. Had we seen anything? We hadn't. But we were hoping to



Bill Cursinger



Peter Janssen

The finish: Arriving in Kennebunkport, Maine (top and above left). The Tempest 38 and the twin Evinrude V-8s performed perfectly—but needed an entire case of oil at every gas stop.

make it farther north that night so we asked about conditions up the coast. Turn back, they said, turn back.

Unfortunately, that was easier said than done. Turning back was precisely the problem. As long as we kept the bow into the waves, the boat was under control. Trying to turn around, turning sideways, left us susceptible to a broach. But we had no choice. Masterfully timing the

waves and working the throttles, Berton got us around and—pushed by a terrible following sea—we sped back under the bridge and swept toward the nearest shore.

At that moment, this trip didn't seem like one of my better ideas. Several months before, however, it had seemed pretty good. Then, I thought, why not take on the grand tradition of the magazine, of tackling long distances and unpredictable offshore weather to see what the best new boats and engines could do. Back in 1921, for example, legendary *MB&S* editor Charles F. Chapman sped off with Gar Wood and two others to set a record of 47 hours and 15 minutes

elapsed running time from Miami to New York in a 50-footer. We just wanted to go a little farther—to take on the entire east coast of the United States. It had a nice ring to it; it was an adventure worth doing.

So late in the spring I had lunch with Adam Erdberg, the energetic president of Tempest Marine, at Turnberry Isle in North Miami to lay out the idea. We needed a boat big enough, reliable enough, and fast enough to make it all the way—about 1,800 miles. The idea would be to run about 12 hours a day, to go inside on the Intracoastal Waterway if the weather was rough, or to stay outside in

Continued on page 112

MIAMI

Continued from page 41

the ocean if we could make time, and to come in at night, wherever we were. We figured that the entire trip would take about five days. We were right about that. (In fact, we did make it in 5½ days, setting a record of sorts.) A piece of cake. We were wrong about that.

At it turned out, almost everything—short of sinking the boat—happened to us.

Over the years, I've done parts of the trip, in various boats, with various companions. But never the entire Miami to Maine voyage. And Berton, who also is president of Global Yachts and Performance Boats Ltd. in Mamaroneck, N.Y., has done the Miami to New York run in a 32-foot speedboat—but also never all the way up to Maine in the same expedition. We didn't know anybody who had done it in one shot—particularly in an open speedboat. So off we went.

Standing Room Only

The Tempest is a pretty boat—slim, sleek, sensuous. It's also a serious offshore boat, with a 25-degree deadrise at the transom, ready to cut through rough water. And it's solid as a rock.

Because of the outboards, the boat, a San Remo model, has an enormous amount of space in the cockpit. The driver and navigator are enclosed in heavily-cushioned bolster seats that drop down; you can either stand or sit, depending on the sea conditions (standing is actually far more comfortable in anything more than flat water). Two identical bolster seats are behind the driver and navigator, and then the boat has a comfortable padded U-shaped seat all the way aft. Forward, the cabin has facing settees, a head under a center cushion, and V-berths all the way up.

On board, we had a new Furuno loran, which Erdberg had just put on for the trip. We also carried on an emergency inflatable raft, hurriedly hustling it below as if to deny its existence—or the possibility that we might need it.

As we loaded up the boat, we were a bit nervous. We were worried about the boat, the engines, ourselves. Had we spent enough time preparing everything? (Probably not.) Was there something we overlooked? Will the new loran, bolted on the night before, even work? We had the regular Coast Guard safety package, flares, extra first-aid kit, duct tape, tools. Were they the right ones? Did we have enough oil for the high performance outboards? (No.) Evinrude officials had told dealers along the way about our trip so they would have spare parts if we needed them quickly. We stored two extra props, screwed down in big new boxes, up in the V-berths.

We couldn't figure out our gas consumption or range; the engines had only been run for five hours to break them in. We also weren't sure if the fuel gauge was accurate, so we asked Erdberg about the tanks' capacity. About 195 gallons, he replied. Unfortunately, we were to test this on our own a few days later.

We meant to get underway early in the morning but, as those things go, we finally left the Tempest factory in North Miami just before noon. Loading up the boat, topping off the tanks, making all the last-minute adjustments for a long trip, always seem to take longer than you think.

In any event, we waved goodbye to Erdberg and sped south—the wrong way—down the ICW to Biscayne Bay and Miami with an accompanying photo boat for pictures, and then finally pulled out into the ocean at Haulover Inlet about 12:30 with a very wary eye on the weather. In Miami itself the day was beautiful, sunny and in the high 80s. But threatening, dark clouds were building up to the west, and the national forecast was showing storms farther north. Not ideal, but then you can't plan an 1,800-mile trip without expecting to get wet.

At Times, Airborne

Running in the ocean the Tempest quickly settled into an easy stride, warming to the task ahead. With the throttles from 5600 to 5800 rpm, we were running

find the fittings. This meant that, as soon as we tied up, our first question to the dockmaster has a certain predictability. Excuse me, but where's the head? At Ft. Pierce he not only pointed in the right direction but he also told us the combination for the lock on the door. Needless to say, we both forgot it in our rush to get there. How, we wondered, were we going to navigate to Maine if we couldn't remember four numbers to open the bathroom door?

After this first run, we also became aware of some other facts of life. First, the speedometer didn't work. Second, the compass seemed to swing through about 30 degrees without bothering to settle down anywhere. Third, we still weren't used to the loran, so our entire navigation was somewhat in doubt. Fourth, we weren't sure if the bilge pump worked. Fifth, the starboard engine had a habit of dying when shifted into reverse at idle—a habit that made docking lots of fun, particularly since you weren't exactly sure of when it would conk out. Finally, we figured the boat consumed slightly more than a gallon per mile—and it also took

an entire case of oil—12 quarts—at every fuel stop. This meant opening 12 quarts, pouring them into the two oil tanks in the transom, one by one, wiping up the spills, and hoping that things wouldn't get worse. At first, this process ate up some time, although later on we did get pretty efficient at it.

Staggering off to Bed

Since the weather was looking worse, we ran inside from Ft. Pierce to Daytona, pulling into the Daytona Boat Works at 7:45, well before dark. We definitely were taking it easy the first day. The sun went down about 8:30, so we could have gone a bit farther, but things were going well and we didn't want to press our luck. In addition, I like Daytona. A few years ago I tied up at the same spot with some friends and my son, then age 8. He made friends with a manatee who swam up to our Albin trawler and let my son rub his stomach with the boat mop—to everyone's delight. Even the manatee seemed to like it. Before we tied up for the night we filled the tanks—147 gallons of gas and our now customary 12 quarts of oil.

That night, we fell into another habit that was to last the duration of the trip. By the time we tied up, filled up the tanks, got

at an easy 45 to 46 miles an hour. The wind was off the starboard quarter and the seas kicked up at times so we were occasionally airborne, but it was the perfect opening for a speedboat journey—an easy, fast ride. Better yet, the engines were humming, not blasting away, so that we actually could talk to each other. We were definitely off to a good start.

After a few hours we pulled in at Ft. Pierce for gas. Unsure of our capacity and distrusting the gauge, we wanted to play it safe. After we tied up, we were reminded of what was to be an unpleasant fact of life for the next five days. Underway, it was totally impossible to use the head under the middle seat cushion in the front of the cabin. In fact, it was also impossible to use it when we were tied up, since we couldn't

the boat ready for the night and staggered to the nearest hotel, motel or rooming house (we eventually hit all three), it would be close to 9 o'clock. Most dining rooms or restaurants in the smaller places where we stayed stopped serving at 9. So we would hustle in to the restaurant, beg them to stay open while we had a fast shower and change of clothes, and then returned in another 20 or 30 minutes.

That first night, and every subsequent night, we were so tired from the sun, wind and day on the water that we simply passed out as soon as we lay down after dinner. Sleeping definitely was not a problem. Sunburn, however, was. When we started out the next day we were bright as lobsters from sun and wind burn, and we lathered up with No. 20 sunblock.

This, however, opened up another problem, which we realized later in the day. As we sweated in the boat, the sun screen would leak down into our eyes, and it would sting terribly as we sped along at 45 mph. The problem was that, whether you were driving or—on the inside passages—navigating, you really couldn't close an eye. And if you wiped it with your hand it made it worse, since your hand obviously had the stuff on it to begin with. Subsequently, we didn't put

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sunblock on above eye level—which made for incredible forehead burns later on. By the end of the trip we were as dark as Comanches.

The second day we were incredibly stiff, much the same feeling as the second day of a ski vacation. Everything ached. The good news was that the day started bright and hot and we headed out in the ocean to Jacksonville. After a few hours the seas picked up and we started pounding uncomfortably, so we headed in at Jacksonville.

As you come into the Jacksonville harbor you are confronted with two channels leading back to the ICW. The one on the left appears the larger, so we sped up it—only to realize that it lead directly into a restricted Navy base, complete with an aircraft carrier, a destroyer and several smaller ships. As we swept along—still at

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channel. Then we relaxed a bit.

The weather worsened as we approached Fernandina, and by the time we pulled in for gas, just after noon, we were getting a few sprinkles. Unfortunately, what is a light rain on land is a disaster when you're going 45 mph in an open speedboat without a windshield or any protection. The rain drops, hitting your forehead and face, sting like little blocks of ice. Unpleasant.

Charts of Confetti

Because of the weather, we stayed on the Waterway through beautiful marshlands, shallow sounds and bays, as it wound its way north like a snake. We traded off driving and navigating since the many turns and shallow water required constant vigilance and close attention to the chart.

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turn a page or fold—about every ten miles—meant you had to duck down to the deck, out of the wind. At one point I accidentally managed to open the entire book, and 20 pages or so ended up streaming around my head. If we lost a page we would be in big trouble, so I threw the entire book to the deck, and, kneeling on it, tried to piece it back together, a process that took 15 minutes. "Slow down," I yelled to Berton, who was greatly amused at this ridiculous scene. (His turn came later on.)

Worried about our gas—we still weren't sure about our consumption or our capacity—we pulled into Thunderbolt Marina, just south of Savannah, in the late afternoon. A large marina, Thunderbolt has the reputation as one of the best stops on the ICW. Unfortunately, this wasn't their day, because only after

MIAMI

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Charleston. This was indeed boating at its best—blue skies, warm weather, the seas flattening down as the evening wore on, the Tempest just loping along. We were almost totally by ourselves, seeing only a few commercial fishing boats along the way.

The sensation of aloneness, of just you and the boat on the ocean, is an incredible high. You just start to smile to yourself, to become enveloped in a tremendously good feeling. Dolphins leaping off the bow every ten minutes or so completed the picture.

The ocean, however, is the ocean, and a crackling announcement from the Coast Guard on Channel 16—saying that a sailboat about 15 miles offshore was taking on water and in trouble—was a sobering reminder of its dangers. A few minutes later the Coast Guard said it was going to the rescue.

Fighting the setting sun, we sped into Charleston harbor at 8:20. Ft. Sumter and American history on the left, the city spreading out ahead. We pulled into Ashley Marina, a wonderful spot close to downtown, just as the sun dropped, a yel-

lowish ball, looking like an onion, dissected by a few clouds. By the time we checked in to the Charleston Inn next to the marina, a perfect half moon was up in a cloudless sky.

never get it off. So, picking our way gently around the sandbars, I idled back and alternately working the gears into forward and neutral let the boat float into the bay. We hit bottom once, but then the next wave pushed us a few feet ahead into deeper water. It took half an hour for the 38-foot speedboat to idle silently into the inlet, and by then dozens of fishermen were lining the banks. Scenes from *Miami Vice*.

On the Waterway, we were bothered by a growing vibration; it seemed like we had a prop problem. We also had a bridge problem. In the early afternoon we came to a dead stop at a closed bridge—one that comes down to the waterline—south of the Charlotte River inlet. I blew the horn. I blew the horn several times again, a long and a short, the bridge-opening signal. Nothing happened. No signs of life on the bridge—or anywhere else, for that matter. We were in the middle of nowhere.

Finally, hoping to find some way of opening the bridge, I nosed the Tempest up to the bridge and Berton jumped off the bow. I should have backed out, but I waited there to pick him up. Before I real-

ized what was happening, the current swung the boat gently broadside to the bridge. This wasn't a problem, except that there were only about two feet of clearance on either side of the boat. By not paying attention, I had managed to get us wedged against a non-opening bridge with the current holding us tight.

Having awakened the bridge keeper from a sound sleep, Berton returned to the boat. After ten minutes of tugging and pulling, of backing and turning (both props were right-handed, so we really couldn't spin the boat), we were free again.

We got off to an early start the next morning, but the stiffness and the aches were getting worse. Sleeping was easy; getting up—usually not a problem—was difficult. I felt as if I were brain dead. But we were getting used to the boat. We wrote off the compass as totally useless, and the loran seemed spotty. But the Tempest and the twin Evinrudes were behaving perfectly, although, since the gauge didn't work, we were worried about gas. From the previous days' experience, we figured we had a three-hour, 150 gallon range, not enough for a long trip. As we found out later, it wasn't enough, period.

Sandbars to the Left . . .

It was another beautiful, sunny morning as we left Charleston, and I drove us out into the ocean, into the golden reflections on the water from the morning sun. We headed directly into the glow, cruising easily at 45 mph, settling into the good-feeling envelope again. But then the wind picked up to 15 knots or so on the nose and we were bouncing around.

Back on plane, the vibration was getting worse. Clearly the prop needed attention. The time seemed right at Shallotte Inlet, where we could run the bow up on a shallow sand beach and wade back to work on the props. Berton, who has done this many times before, managed to change both props quickly, using the two new ones we had stored in the bow. It turned out that one of the blades on the starboard prop had almost sheared itself in half—a clean cut with no dents. We hadn't hit anything, somehow the prop had suffered some kind of metal fatigue

Beaching the Boat

that would have spun the entire blade off fairly soon if we hadn't stopped. Once we changed one prop, of course, we had to change both since the new ones were shaped differently from the old ones. The beached speedboat drew something of a crowd—and many kind offers of help and tools.

A tip from experience: When you start a trip, make sure you have all the appropriate tools, including many cotter pins of many sizes (we almost couldn't change the second prop for lack of a cotter pin), ball peen hammers, vise-grips, pliers and almost anything else you can think of. In fact, if you can think of it, you probably need it.

The new props cured the vibration problem and, running offshore later in the day, they also took care of much of the pounding problem. The boat definitely took on a better running attitude with the new props.

With the stop for the props and our troubles at the bridge, we were now running behind schedule, and we finally sped into Beaufort, N.C. just after dark, using the searchlight on our radar arch to supplement the running lights. We arrived at low tide and Berton, once he pulled him-

Crouching down, Berton checked the charts, but there was no place to come in—although the Waterway was parallel to the coastline, only about half a mile away. We kept going, and the going kept getting worse. Finally, spotting what might be an opening in the beach through his high-power binoculars, Berton motioned to the coast. There was a small cut, about ten yards wide, leading into a small bay with some boats at anchor. If we could get into the bay, we could get back to the Waterway. But the water obviously was extremely shallow; waves were breaking over sandbars to the left, right and dead ahead.

At this point, the ocean was no longer an option, so we had to pick our way in. Unfortunately, no other boats were coming in or going out. At about 7:30 on a Saturday morning, the only signs of life were half a dozen fishermen surf casting off the beach. We had two choices. First, to come in on plane, trimming up the tabs and drives to reduce our underwater surface to a minimum, or, second, to try to float in with the tide. The downside to running in on plane at 30 mph or so was that if we did run aground the boat would get stuck like a spear in the sand; we'd

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self up on the dock, was so tired he couldn't move. After I handed up our bags we just stood there for a while before trudging down the street to a motel.

The next morning the weather was beautiful again, but we were beat. As we climbed in the boat we turned to our second offshore chart, this one from Cape Hatteras to Cape Sable, Nova Scotia, giving us a strong sense of progress. Until now our unspoken feeling was that anything could happen at any time and that would be that. Now, the trip was serious. We had already come too far; this was going to be a trip to the finish. We had come past Cape Fear and now were just inside Cape Hatteras—and we were heading for Maine.

Our driving had turned into a routine. A morning person, I usually started out, while Berton, definitely not a morning person, took over later in the day. This worked well not only because of our personal preferences; Berton is a better driver than I am, and if we needed to make time late in the day, he could handle it faster.

As we pulled out of the Beaufort dock, we were increasingly frustrated by not knowing the boat's gas capacity. The tank was full, but we had a long way to go before we could fill up again.

Running through the Carolinas, we were continually amazed at the number of people out using their boats—people and boats of all sizes and shapes. Clearly a boating and fishing paradise. We sped along up enormous bays and sounds, through huge, sprawling areas of shallow water, often aiming for markers way off on the far side of a large body of water. The weather was hot and hazy, and the white quality of the day made it hard to pick up the markers or a far shore.

Dropped like a Rock

As the hours went by, we also realized we were reaching the end of our gas. We had already been running for three hours, our mental limit, and the defective gauge, which has been hovering on half-full for almost all day, suddenly dropped like a rock to empty. We desperately checked our charts and Waterway Guides, but there was no place to stop. Running under 5000 rpm to conserve fuel, taking the turns gently, flat, to keep the boat level, hoping not to empty the tanks, I aimed us across one final sound and into a narrow channel. We could see a large bridge about a mile ahead; Coinjock Marina and gallons of gasoline were just on the other side.

Then it was all over. We ran out of gas. Not a sputter, not a cough, we simply died. I tried restarting a few times, but it was pointless to run down the batteries. So here we were in a beautiful, sleek ocean-conquering speedboat, on our way from Miami to Maine, floating along on dead empty. This was really ridiculous; I felt extremely stupid.

As luck would have it, a couple were out fishing nearby in their small cruiser *Sand Dollar* from Virginia Beach. When they realized our predicament, they offered to tow us the mile or so to the marina. It took a while to arrange the lines—to keep them out of *Sand Dollar's* prop—but eventually they pulled us in, casting us off quite professionally at the dock. As we shouted back and forth across the water, I could only hear that *Sand Dollar's* captain's name was Bill. A Good Samaritan if there ever was one.

At Coinjock, the *Tempest* took exactly 185 gallons, which settled the capacity question. After refueling, and now considerably behind schedule, we headed up the Waterway to Norfolk, hoping eventually to make it offshore to Ocean City that night. But the short stretch of Waterway from Coinjock to Norfolk is dissected by several bridges—and even a set of locks—that open only on set hourly or half-hourly schedules. By the time we hit

Norfolk it was almost 5, and then we had to crawl through the port off plane because it was the annual Harborfest celebration.

Not a good day. And, of course, it got much worse after we hit that bad weather outside the bridge. After our brush with the 12-foot seas, the 35-knot wind and the Coast Guard's warning, we headed back for the only opening we could find on the north side of the bay—an opening that, fortunately, gave us a protection while still offering an adventure of its own.

This was our introduction to the Virginia Inside Passage, the VIP. At the time we sped into it, we had little choice. We couldn't stay outside in the ocean, and going all the way back to Norfolk (a long way) and then heading up the Chesapeake didn't seem attractive. For openers, the Chesapeake goes the wrong way—too far west—and then you have to make a long circle back through the C&D Canal and down the Delaware Bay just to get to Cape May, N.J. Our plan was the direct route: offshore, pretty much on a straight line, from Norfolk to Cape May.

The little-traveled VIP made much more sense then getting bashed around offshore. It was tricky running, in narrow channels and shallow water with the markers often few and far between, but at least we didn't have to worry anymore about getting killed. The worst thing that could happen was that we'd run aground—and walk off the boat.

An Ill Omen

As it turned out, we maneuvered the S-turns and the slalom runs and the marshes and tiny inlets to arrive at Wachapreague, Va., a tiny fishing hamlet, just as the sun was going down. After we tied up the boat two men from the Coast Guard came by in a small Boston Whaler, obviously skeptical that we were who we said we were and that we had come from where we said we had come from. Not that many speedboats tie up at Wachapreague at night, with the drivers claiming innocently that they're on a little run from Miami. Finally, politely but quizzically shaking their heads, they left.

That night we slept in two rooms on the second floor of a house two blocks from the marina—and were kept up almost all night by a party of fishermen downstairs. An ill omen.

Although I have sailed to Bermuda and raced a *Cigarette*—with Berton—from San Francisco to Los Angeles—the next day seemed like the longest day I have ever spent on a boat. Mindful of the conditions we had hit outside Norfolk the

previous evening, I charged up our handheld radio and tucked my personal strobe light inside my shirt. I kicked myself for not bringing my float coat; Berton immediately donned his. On the boat at 6:30 we broke out the raft, placing it in easy reach in the cockpit, and put the life jackets on the deck behind us. I was very sorry we didn't have an EPIRB. Other tip: If you think you might need safety gear, you

need it. Take everything with you.

This was no longer a joy ride. We were out of the south and the 80-degree weather. It was cold. The wind was still blowing hard at 35 knots and small craft warnings were flying where we were and all the way up the coast. This was serious. It also was something we were going to do. And it was something we were going to do by ourselves—no other boats were out.

If you want to lose weight, forget about Jane Fonda's workouts. Drive a speedboat offshore from lower Virginia to Con-

necticut some day. Breakfast at the marina was two Twinkies and a Diet Pepsi; it's all there was. Lunch was nuts from a tin on the boat—and another Diet Pepsi. We now gave it our all—total concentration—as we sped up the coast. We needed to make time today to make up for all the down time the day before. And we did.

The Tempest settled into a steady rhythm of 45 miles an hour at 5800 rpm in three-foot seas that just kept us moving closer and closer to New York. The loran, which hadn't performed well when we were in the Waterway, now was right on target, and we simply fell into a groove a few miles off shore of watching the miles go by.

Spots of wildlife spruced things up. We saw wild horses on the beach off Chincoteague, exactly where they're supposed to be, and, as the day wore on, we even saw dolphins leaping gracefully off the Jersey coast.

After we crossed the mouth of the Delaware Bay and were opposite Cape May, N.J. my mind, almost a total blank, started reciting "Take me home, take me home" in rhythm with the sounds of the boat. We had a confused three-to-five foot heavy chop up to Atlantic City, where we pulled in just after noon for gas. By this time we had our case-of-oil, fill-the-tank act down pat, and we were in and out of the marina there in about 15 minutes.

Losing Control

The seas got worse coming into New York, but that, after all, was home. At the very worst, we had made it from Miami to New York in one piece. But, after a false stop for gas at the 23rd Street Marina (they only had diesel) we kept on, pushing up the East River and Long Island Sound to a fast refueling at Mamaroneck.

The weather was threatening, the seas were up, and we were late. We had to keep going if we were going to get to Maine the next day. So we left Mamaroneck before 5, still in small craft warnings, and headed up the Sound.

About two hours later, I lost it. Driving the Tempest in three-to-five-foot following seas, still at 45 mph, I totally lost control of the boat. It simply turned to the right as if pulled by some force off the bow, carving a fairly steep right turn that I had no power to stop. Trying not to panic, I simply cut the throttles as fast as I could, while the boat slowed to a stop—fortunately already past the broaching position and heading back the way we had come. Berton and I, more than a little worried, simply stared at each other. (Later that

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Continued

night, over dinner, Berton said he had wondered, as the boat had sped out of control, if a speedboat could turn over at 45 mph. We didn't want to find out.) We kept going for another hour, finally pulling in to Old Saybrook, Conn., at 7:30—after 13 hours on the boat.

The next morning, our last morning, was dark and gloomy with storms threatening all around us. For the first time, Berton beat me up. At 6:30 I couldn't move. At 7:15, as we pulled out of Old Saybrook, my eyes were so red and swollen from the wind and spray that I couldn't focus on the chart. Neither could Berton, although we both managed to focus after we took the first wave of cold green water over the bow. Something about being drenched at 45 miles an hour at 7:30 in the morning—knowing that you'll be doing this all day—tends to wake you up.

Like the day before, this too was a no-food performance. This time there was no breakfast at all, since the marina was still closed when we left and there wasn't anything left on the boat. Lunch, when we

stopped in the Cape Cod Canal, was a doughnut and another Diet Pepsi.

But first we were wading through yet another day of small craft warnings, of being the only boat out of the water, of worrying about the impending storm and the water cascading over the bow in three to five foot seas. We still didn't know if the bilge pump worked.

Flying into Kennebunkport

Little things like that, at this point, didn't matter. We were going to make it to Maine this day if we had to jump overboard and pull the boat through the water in our teeth. We set the throttles, navigated by the loran (now working perfectly), tried to keep the charts from disintegrating in all the water coming aboard, and sped off. The seas were so rough that the raft was sliding all over the cockpit.

Buzzards Bay lived up to every ounce of its lousy reputation. The sea conditions were bad, we were tired and cold and soaked, but we also knew the end was near. North of the Cape Cod Canal the seas flattened out a bit, down to three feet, although the wind was on the nose. Finally, north of Boston, the seas calmed down

as if the gods were rewarding us toward the end.

The weather, now fairly cold, turned frigid north of Boston, almost as if we had opened a refrigerator door. Maine must be near. Now the endurance contest was in its final stages; we didn't talk, we just counted the miles left.

We went inside at Gloucester, up the canal, and then out again for the final run to Kennebunkport, our final destination. For the last five miles, the white caps flattened out, and we simply flew into Kennebunkport with huge dark storm clouds building up behind us, chasing us all the way. It was hard to believe, but we had made it. Only at the end, as we made the turn into the harbor, did we start to get happy. Then we simply got ecstatic—ending with a warm glow that lasted for a couple of weeks. We actually had pulled this off.

Along the way, we had many adventures—some calm spots, some boring spots, some spine-chilling spots. We had enormous amounts of solitude—and heaps of self-reliance—and we had met a fairly heady challenge. All in all, a trip worth taking. †