



## Chapter Five

On day three, Sunday, September 6, I got up early and walked to the nearby St. Joseph Hotel to wash up and get a little breakfast. As I walked along the pier, I noticed the wind was blowing out of the southwest. At dinner, the night before I had been discussing sailing strategy with George Gaw, who is a sailboat broker who sold me my Cal 31. He, too, was crewing on one of the T-10s participating in the race. According to George, if the wind is blowing out of the southwest, a racer could maybe gain an advantage by sailing to Michigan City close to shore because of the offshore wind. The only problem with that suggestion was that, unlike the Chicago side of the lake, the eastern side of Lake Michigan gets extremely shallow at points. Airwaves draws seven and a half feet, shallow waters could present a big problem for us.

As expected the start of the second leg of the race was hectic. We had to sternway maneuver from between a wall of boats that had us pinned against the harbor wall. Our engine didn't start. The bridge across the harbor entrance was scheduled to close in 5 minutes and if we didn't get out, we would miss the start of the race. Dale pressed the ignition button again. Miraculously, the engine started. We were faced with this question: Do we stay close to the shore or do we sail out and tack back to shore. Our boat speed was 5.5 -6 knots on a 270 degree southwest tack. We decided to sail out. The point of sail to Michigan City from St. Joseph is 212 degrees. We would tack back after we went as far as we could on this course. The decision to sail out and tack back was also the initial strategy of several other boats in our class.

The race started at 09:00 hours, and by 10:28 hours, we'd gone 6.5 miles and had 25 miles to go. Wind speed was 9 to 10 knots, and the boat speed was 5.1 -5.5 knots. The waves were two feet high. We were four miles from shore, at latitude 42.4 and longitude of 86.36. Our nearest competition, Time Out was one and a half behind. Snowdrop was two miles behind.

At about 10:58 hours, a green and white Finch flew onto Airwaves. Was the bird there to show us the way? Barb tried to feed the little bird pretzels, but it preferred the spiders it caught on the port beam of the boat. Paul, who is superstitious about birds on boats, wanted the bird off the boat. Barb said, "Leave it alone." At about 11:25 hours, the wind began to veer, which made it hard to keep our tack. We decided we would tack and go closer to shore to pick up speed. We came about perfectly this time. Our strategy was this: Stay as close to shore as we can without running aground. Bill commented the bird that had now flown and perched on Dale's right shoulder was helping Dale skipper the boat.

(cont. on pg. 16)

