

Ch 4 The Start

Hussey thanked the gods he had worn serious sailing gloves. He always attributed his strong hands to his violin playing from childhood. He'd only pinched the palm of his right hand when he jammed it against the halyard opening in the mast as he held on to the faulty halyard. He wiggled his fingers – nothing broken and no more blood. He looked at Charles with a questioning, nodding smile.

Ransom sat in the cockpit and laughed. He looked at the digital display on the cabin at the hatchway at the front of the large cockpit, smiled and looked at Kari steering. Then said, “we've got 45 minutes. Everybody's on for the start. Frank will you be port watch captain....” He went on, “so Dudley and Devin with Mr. Hussey are the Port Watch. Dougie and the ladies Starboard Watch”. And he said, “Frank you're on, we'll start port watch now. I'll float between both watches as Captain/navigator. Kari usually does the clock for starts. Doug organizes the bow.”

Frank understood – Charles had discussed watch captain at the winter crew recruitment dinner.

He walked back to the wheel. Kari sat next to Charles who was pulling his head together and showing his British spirit. He continued, “Doug comes on when Frank wants to quit tonight. It's only a 2 day race so the first watch can go into the evening – as long as Frank holds on - and then we'll start 4 hour shifts. I'll stay on watch as long as you need me after the start. Then I'll float.”

“Frank, you got the start. I'm going down to the nav table”, Ransom had organized the crew. Kari started to help Ransom but he waved her off saying, “I'm OK.”. Clearly he had been banged around.

He moved to the cabin steps. Kari turned away and started some warm-ups in the cockpit.

Hussey watched her and smiled: she was younger than Ransom; almost looked like Dawn's sister; not quite a college aged athlete; a bit softer. Hussey looked forward to the next month - knew he could fall into being her escort – with Ransom's dispensation. He laughed to himself.

He enjoyed that it was all very complex when you throw Kim into the “Kari” equation. Frank enjoyed the situation – especially after Kari's friendly welcome onto Moveable Feast – this summer certainly won't be boring.

Hussey stired the stew, “Kari, I thought after Antigua Race Week, Kim Linde would be coming up north with you?” Hussey thought he could throw some fat onto the fire of life. He guessed that the Ransom's assumed Kim – introduced to the crew by Frank to be on their Antigua crew – that Kim was more than his ex-grad student.

Like Charles and Frank, Kari was dressed in “Moveable Feast” one-piece suits. She tied the sleeves of her one-piece around her waist. And did arm circles. “Trying to relax,” she smiled at Frank adding, “not an easy morning”.

He looked: past her sweating armpits – then at the digital clock - part of the large display on the cabin bulkhead ten feet in front of the open hatch. Hussey nodded to Kari. "OK...." He paused, not yet able to actuate himself after the drama up the mast. He slowly inched the throttle forward. MF slowly gained steerage.

Hussey engaged the crew, "Dougie, would you get the sails and spin lines ready. Kari, your our timekeeper.”

Kari would manage the countdown. She had studied the race instructions. She knew where their division fit into the starting sequence of almost a dozen divisions: maxies (three of them); one design Farr 58s (also only 3 in that division); then the IOR 50s (the group which Moveable Feast raced with); and smaller boat divisions starting after them (some just cruisers - non-spinnaker).

Her job - to periodically interrupt the rest of the crews' thoughts and remind them how much time before their start.

She finished her stretching, Kari gathered up the Racing Instructions, scrah sheet and charts; sat near the mainsail traveler; slid the announcements and charts under her thigh.

Forward, at the mast, the "kids" were unfastening the red canvas mainsail cover. Dev gathered it up and handed it to Mrs. Ransom. She shoved it down the hatch. The kids took the main lazy-jacks forward to the mast; and, as they started unfastening the sail ties, the flaked main fell onto the cabin top and into the cockpit.

"Thirty minutes to start," Kari started the countdown. "I'll tail the main halyard when you're ready," she added looking back at Hussey for the next obvious order.

They had motored a hundred yards past the starting line out towards the middle of the Bay. There was room away from the crowd of boats near the starting line. "OK," Hussey yelled, "up the main."

MF was motoring at a slow walk as he turned her towards the Academy into the wind. The rest of the ties were taken from around the boom and the sail cascaded onto the cabin roof and down into the companionway - about eight hundred square feet of translucent tan and white synthetic. Dougie and Dudley jumped the halyard raising the sail as Charles emerged from the cabin. He stood on the hatch steps pushing away the sail, watching the rising sail take shape.

"Twenty-five minutes," Kari shouted.

The six story high triangular main filled with a loud crack. Hussey put the gear lever into neutral then moved it back to lock the prop.

"We - are - sailing," Hussey's call to spirits from the vast deep. They bore off the wind towards the Academy fields. "How are you doing, Charles?" Hussey asked knowing Ransom must be hurting.

"I had all halyards checked in Fort Lauderdale; You know I did. Kari, you know how we go down the maintenance list. "They" almost killed me." Charles was plainly shaken. "Frank, we'll talk about this later." Charles sat.

"Frank, you take the helm for the start," Ransom repeated himself. "I'll be ok at a winch for the start."

Hussey thought "doing the start" over. "I'm watch captain." He thought. "And Doug is certainly better at starts than anyone else - certainly better than me."

He knew Professor Ransom from Port Washington Yacht Club but this was his first time on his crew. There were 10 serious racing boats at Port YC and Ransom was one of the more serious. He was in the major leagues – Ransom campaigned MF – even got his picture on sailing magazine covers. MF was away from the club 8 month a year. She always went south for the winter, to Newport for big races in the summer – and his son raced full-time – often as paid crew on maxis. He knew some of MF's crew from hanging out at the bar at the club but would get to know them better as they got ready for the race to the Azores.

Hussey asked himself what his roll was on MF. He had tried to explain this to his wife Ann - why Ransom wanted him and also why he'd give Ransom a month crewing. He had lots of Atlantic Ocean sailing experience – most of it on the Bermuda races. He had only crossed the Atlantic once, not racing but on a delivery team. He was strong, captained his own racing boats – all of them smaller though – usually an old J24.

Hussey knew his incentive to race for Ransom – Hussey was opening up a new chapter in his life story – perhaps an entire book.

The invite had come when the Ransoms had invited his family to a New York Yacht Club event. Ransom was a NYYC member – Hussey and Ann weren't members - didn't have that kind of cash. And at that dinner Ransom said he would pick up airfare and hotels for Ann if she had time to attend the after race events in the Azores. A grand gesture – Ann wasn't sure if she would go. And he told Frank he wasn't expected to be involved in returning MF from the Azores – very nice.

Ransom was a fancy Princeton researcher with his own international consulting firm while Hussey was a retired cop, now an adjunct prof at NYU.

As the clock ticked down Hussey decided Ransom had his own reason for wanting him to be a “Watch Captain” so he made a decision, perhaps contradicting Ransom about the start of the race.

So he shouted up to Dougie, “take the helm for the start” – fuck Charles he thought and smiled as he pondered Ransom. He didn't understand Ransom - his son had been “almost” in the Olympics. I'll let him helm at the start.

Frank stayed back with Doug at the wheel. He would do the running backstays. MF was a fractional rig. The mast was radically attenuated, got very thin at top. There were 3 backstays holding up the mast from the back of the boat. The center one, very thin, went to the top of the mast. The ones on both sides of the stern only went $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to the top – they really held the mast up - they were trimmed with a small winch on each side at the stern. Frank would serve as crew at the start just tending these winches – moving from side to side behind Dougie at the wheel each time they tacked. A really helter-skelter job – loosen one as the boom swung over and tighten the other when the sail filled on the opposite tack... and if you're not quick, sailing without a tightened backstay could damage the mast.

The large cockpit area opened from the cabin companionway about fourteen feet back to the open stern. On both sides ran long cockpit seats with, of course, no cushions; Moveable Feast was a serious racer. Outboard of the seats, on the two foot wide deck were the cockpit winches; three large black drums on each side - the largest perhaps a foot in diameter. With handles to turn them, These winches were used to trim back the head sails - some combination of: jib, large genoa jib, spinnaker sheet and spin pole – the guy – and the blooper.

Overhead, the main boom swept back from the mast, across the cabin roof; then, at shoulder height, it ended just in front of the wheel. The helmsman could, reassuringly, rest a hand on the end of the boom and frequently did. It was good to know at all times, using every sense, just where the boom was.

If you're teaching sailing, with every lesson you repeat, “Get to know the boom – where it is – it's the most dangerous moving part of

a sailboat.” On a boat like MF the boom is 20 feet weighing over 100 pounds and can move like a baseball bat when you jibe.

Up from the cabin, Charles had taken up duties as a head sail trimmer in the cockpit. Kari was there also. In addition to her tactical duties - chart in hand, eye on the timer - she would trim the main. Dawn and Dev would perform up in front of the mast raising sails and tending the spinnaker pole – but during the start they were planning only to use a jib – no spin pole activity – until they crossed the starting line.

"Twenty minutes! Twenty minutes!" They paused to listen. "Bang!" The preparatory gun for their division sounded. "I got it," Kari assured them. With the bang she had reset the timer to agree to the Race Committee's - a correction of a couple seconds.

Dawn walked back to the cockpit. "Mr. Hussey, what head sails should... do you want brought up?" Dawn was a big girl, bigger than Doug but they had different mothers. Hussey would guess her age around 20 – could she handle the bow when it was just half the crew awake? – not easy to do. “Are you gonna pack the spinnakers during the race, Dawn?”

Hussey rattled off the agreed upon sails, "the medium genoa, the light spin and get the blooper ready near the forward hatch."

Dawn said, “Dougie has me in the pit – to help with the spins when we drop them.”

“Does that work for you?”, Hussey asked – he really didn't know the Ransom crew. He told her about a bad accident on another 50 footer where the pit man got banged-up in the pit – tangled in a half-dropped spinnaker which re-filled The guy was pulled thru the hatch as half the spinnaker refilled – bang – pulled out thru the hatch. “Don't use your feet to gather the spin below you during a take-down,” he cautioned.

She disappeared down the companionway and moments later the forward hatch opened. Dev waited there as she handed up bags of sails.

Kari broadcasted, "Fifteen Minutes! Fifteen minutes!"

They approached the starting line from below. The starting line was tucked behind the Academy – the stiff breeze not having enough fetch to form waves. Dougie kept MF almost stalled into the wind like a dingy. The left side of the line was an inflated orange cone the size of a Volkswagen Bug. Lively bright wakes slapped against it and sparkled off across the course. The Committee Boat – "Aphrodite", black polished wood curves, ebony stern – reflecting the sunlight. Another orange cone was positioned near Aphrodite to ward off rude intrepid starters. The wind was from the north, a bit west, blowing down the Bay. At the start, boats would have the wind slightly from the right - a starboard run after the start!

"Boom!" And flags went up and down on Aphrodite.

"Ten - minute - warning...! Ten minutes," Kari chimed – now their division's dozen or so boats were in control of the starting area.

"Get the genoa up," Dougie said and signaled towards the bow to raise sail, Dougie kept the boat heading into the wind.

The starting area was now busy. The boats in Moveable Feasts' division were timing their final approaches and positioning themselves for the madness of the start. Winches were grinding "click, click, click, click, click." Golden bodies on heeling decks now flashed past on the right, on the left, crossing their stern. Sails full and pulling, masts almost crossing high in sky. Choreographed chaos. Fresh wind, six-inch shimmering chop; all the engines were off by now - a stillness contradicting the splashing, foaming activity; tableau's of sailing boats – bright sun making it more like a slide show with white light.

Dev was out on the bow pulpit in front of the full genoa, one hand on the genoa for balance. Hand signals instantly obeyed by Dougie at the helm directed the boat. Devin could see all the activity hidden by the large deck sweeping jib – completely blocking a quarter of the activity around MF.

"Happy Daze" glided by off to their left. "Hello. .. Woody!" Hussey shouted across. Everyone waved, Charles excepted. Woody's three daughters beamed. Hussey watched as Dougie and his dad's eyes met. Then all looked forward to Devin for his bowman's

cautioning.

Kari detailed the competition referring to the scratch sheet list of starters. "A dozen boats are in our division. "Gotta Move," she pointed to the east away down the line from "Aphrodite"; she turned a bit and pointed to "Wave's" spectacular multi-colored hull - horizontal spectral bands of grey fading to white paint at the water line. Hussey smiled with the thought that he would teach a year to earn what their new paint job cost.

Doug told them to prepare to power-up. Dev signaled "ok" and they went over on the starboard tack upwind past the committee boat. They were now heading up the bay – above the starting line towards the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Most of the racers were in front of them off on their left. They would all have starboard final approaches.

"Five minutes," Kari announced to the cockpit crew. "Five minutes," she repeated through cupped hands for Dawn, now at the mast. Two boats with spinnakers flying were coming down from Ferry Point. "Too soon," Charles said to no one, "half mile to the line for them. They must be going eight knots over the bottom. Maybe you want to come in right behind them?"

The boats starting with a spinnaker were a bit mad. A downwind start was only used in distance races. Upwind starts were much safer – they spread out the starters as they beat upwind to the first mark. But this race was a distance race; starting at Annapolis then out of the Chesapeake past Norfolk then turn north to NYC. So the start was downwind. This race was really part of the seasonal migration north – most boats in this race weren't returning to the South.

Looking up from the instrument panel, Kari said, "we're still early to start the final approach. Doug nodded, he said, "We'll come in along the shore line, along Worthiness Basin and have rights over the fleet. Some late boats will come out of the club basin. Port tackers. We'll see what happens."

"Four minutes."

"Let's tack again. Ready to come about. Helm's alee" The

genoa came across, slap-cracking in front of the mast – Dawn positioned there handed it across over to the left side of the boat; it was tightened quickly – without comment. Dudley at a winch worked hard. Each tack was a five second, all-out maneuver: Moveable Feast on the starboard tack - dawdled, waiting, luffing sails; the helm thrown over - frenetic slapping, hesitation as the sails come across, momentum carries the bow around; finally, the new tack - slow to fast, as sheet lines tighten, mylar/kevlar five story high wings form. Dougie concentrating – looking around at the competition.

Moveable Feast was beating up wind still going away from the start. "Dawdle a bit, Dougie said. The genoa was allowed to luff loosely. Their speed slackened. "Three minutes." He put them about again. They were on port tack with no rights sailing east across the bay away from the Academy.

Kari looked up from the instruments. "At six knots we should head right for the line now." Doug waited, prepared to attack. It became clear to Hussey: he understood Dougie was using the "Vanderbilt Start" - time to the line equal to the time it took to get away from the line - so he shouted up to the mast for Dawn to prepare for a jibe. She smiled and gave a thumbs-up; she was tuned into Dougie and working with Devin.

Doug's call, "Quick jibe, jibe-ho." The boat turned towards the starting line about two-tenths of a mile down the Bay. "Happy Daze" and "Avalanche", they had both popped spinnakers - set early - they flew by. Moveable feast gathered speed behind them

"Two minutes," Kari cupped her hands and shouted for her daughter to hear. Dawn up at the mast passed the time up to Devin. They were about four hundred yards from the starting line across from the Navy Engineering Lab.

"We're going two hundred and forty yards a minute," Kari said.

"Luff the genoa now," Doug said to Dudley. MF slowed a bit.

Impressive crew, all tuned in to Doug, Hussey thought – I made the right move giving him the helm.

There was slightly more current favoring MF as she crossed the center of the Bay - wind more western off the land – less wind in the shadow of the Western Shore. Hussey pointed at the competition in back of them. "Looks like "Wave"..., some one else with him. Moving right."

"That makes it easy," Ransom said, "we cover them." Dudley played the genoa sheet and Kari, the main. Charles tailed for Dudley who was one palm on the large winch drum, pressing the coils of half-inch thick sheet line to control the speed of the line being eased. Ten feet eased, the head sail flogged, whipped to port, depowered in the stiff breeze. The banging, cracking of a thousand square feet of sails. Moveable Feast slowed. And Kari played the mainsail depowering it just a tad.

"One-thirty," Kari announced, "time, one-thirty. Three-hundred and twenty yards to the start." Their position was developing nicely. The fleet was all on their left with "rights" as MF headed towards the pin. Many boats were too early. "Full speed?" Dougie talked over the noise of the luffing genoa. Hussey excited, "Bend your backs into it, me Hardys." They were in their element. All smiles, Dougie looking at the genoa and Devin standing in the bow pulpit.

"Looks clear behind us", Hussey added.

"Sixty seconds!" The knot meter jumped to seven.

"Thirty seconds!"

They were more than one hundred yards to the right side of the approaching line. "Twenty!"

To avoid being early, "Avalanche", too far towards beautiful Aphrodite, spinnaker out of control, rounded up to slow down. Her gold and red spinnaker was pressed into the cross-trees.

"Don't look at them," Ransom yelled; Hussey chuckled – what an asshole. Devin signaled with both hands, index fingers pointing at traffic perhaps hidden under the jib from view. Hussey waved. They now knew they were clear ahead. "Resolve" and several other boats were mixing it up in the Naval anchorage. "Ten, nine, eight!"

They were in great shape. On their left - shouts from a tangle of fifty foot boats. "Avalanche" frantically trying to avoid running into "Aphrodite", her spinnaker in colorful shreds.

"Bang!! "

"Good start crew", Ransom yelled. "Confusion to the enemy. And now the spinnaker and blooper". Dougie, needed up front, handed the wheel over to Frank and went forward,

On his way forward Dougie put a rope vang from the boom to the rail. The boom was way out, almost perpendicular. The extra vang prevented the boom from accidentally - flying from the one side of the boat to the other in an accidental jibe.

As Hussey watched Doug tame the main boom, he thought of the only time he had heard "Amazing Grace" played on bagpipes.

It was after a Bermuda Race at the Royal Hamilton YC. A young racer had been killed from an accidental jibe – a young doctor on a 36' boat during a Bermuda race - god bless him.

Forward Dougie snapped spin lines thru the outboard end of the carbon fiber pole mounted to the mast about 10 feet up. They had not yet raised the pole. Hussey had marveled over the shiny carbon fiber pole - it weighed nothing - he knew it was worth more than his not-so-new J24 racer.

They raised the pole – Kari tailed the pole topping lift as her daughter jumped it. Using the guy, Dudley pulled the poll back to the same line as the main boom – almost perpendicular. Dougie jumped the spinnaker halyard raising the spin out of its bag. POP and they dropped the jib – flaked it on the deck.

A moment later they had the blooper up – basically a second

spinnaker on the same side as the main. Bright nylon ballooning. They were certainly the only boat they could see using one – these old fashioned sails added nothing to their IOR rating. In a force five breeze Moveable Feast accelerated. She jumped from 8 knots to twelve. She went swooping down the Chesapeake over white caps at almost 14 miles per hour. What could possibly go wrong?

Ch4 EOC...

Ch 5 The Feeder Race

Moveable Feast speeding, jumping along with the small chop raised a misty curtain of water around the front deck.

It took two people tending the sails plus the man at the wheel to keep the boat on her feet. Kari, Doug, Dawn - were below resting.

After two hours, "Gotta Move", a Frers 50, and a big navy blue Swan, "Cushat" - both mast head rigs with enormous spinnakers were out front by three hundred yards. MF's strategy was to stay near the front of the pack for the downwind leg in the Chesapeake. She would come to the fore during the ocean leg of the race. If the wind kept its northern component, a two hundred and fifty mile upwind beat from Norfolk north to New York would be to her advantage.

The three maxis in the race were now out of sight – but they were in their own division – 70 to 80 foot boats – in a league of their own - not competing with Moveable Feast. One maxi, Spank Me, was owned by Thompson, out of Port Washington. Thompson had a history with Hussey.

Hussey drove for the first hour – dead down wind - hectic. In time as the wind slowly backed to the west Dudley took a turn at the wheel. When they dropped the blooper, Hussey let Devin steer. MF was easier to control in a very broad reach.

The tide turned against them near the confluence of the Potomac and the Chesapeake: but the wind held – not bad – 60 or so miles in 4 hours. MF was a frigate bird swooping. In gusts they still reached thirteen knots - sometimes fourteen. Passed Treasure Island

at the mouth of the Potomac at six p.m. Her deep keel and big main still made her tricky to sail downwind.

As they passed Treasure Island Charles Ransom chatted Hussey up as Dev steered. Charles talked about Maxi, “Spank Me”. Her owner was a member of Manhasset Bay YC down the block from Port Washington YC. MBYC was the waspier club in their harbor. Knickerbocker was the Jewish club. PWYC was considered the “integrated” club – it had many Catholic members and a 10% Jewish quota.

Charles talked about Spank Me's owner, Girard Thompson. Charles asked Hussey about Hussey crewing Spank Me back from Lisbon. “What's the whole story of Girard and the Lisbon boatyard owner”, he asked.

Now Hussey knew: it was the cop side of him that Charles valued – not his skill as crew – interesting. “My rate just went up,” he decided.

Thompson had been very up front with him – more than Ransom was. When he hired Hussey for the delivery of Spank Me after her race to Portugal, he was clear that he wanted a cop at his side when he flew over to pick her up. He was having problems with the yard in Lisbon where she had been hauled after her race from Newport. The yard owner was talking about VAT taxes – Thompson's lawyers only saw it as a delaying tactic. He paid Hussey well to be “at his side” - was how he put it.

Discussing that relationship with Girard Thompson had no bearing yet – but Hussey knew he didn't have the whole story. Both he and Charles were happy to let the discussion move on to other subjects.

This was the first real distance race for Devin. For months he had looked forward to this long weekend on Moveable Feast: so often in his short life he had watched his dad sail away; him on shore with

his mom after starting guns.

Then for weeks after his dad's return - from Bermuda, from Antigua Race Week, Block Island Race Week, Halifax; once the Transpac - San Francisco to Hawaii - he would listen to Dad's sea adventure stories. Dev was totally immersed into sailing. He "owned" his first boat, a child's sailing dingy, "Burp", at age six. The junior program at PWYC had 100 children all summer – ½ day on the water and ½ day playing tennis. And wonderful Grandpa Tom took him every summer morning – no sleep-away camp for Devin.

Retired grandpa loved hanging out at the Club watching his grandson banging about in his 6 foot long "Optimist" dingy – Tom hanging out with the Gold Coast moms. Dev got his stature from Tom's side of the family.

Mom was a busy Wall Street Trusts and Estates lawyer. He was a poor boy waiting alone for his seafaring dad. Not really. Devin was never alone. He lived in Queens in a three house complex, matrixed by the Amrhine ladies: his grandma and her three sisters. Grandma's cottage's backyard opened onto Hussey and Ann's cottage – down a few steps. Across the street lived Dev's three great aunts – grandma's sisters.

Dev, an only child, was never an "only child". Often sons with older fathers become their father's brother – Hussey was athletic but loved hanging out with Devin.

Happy to hear his dad lecture, Devin started a discussion about watches by asking, "why use such a complicated system?". His dad, being a math person could talk for hours about watch rotations.

Dev said he didn't understand the watch rotation so Hussey explained. "Swedish" watches are used on long races. I remember in the Transpac...." Hussey watched Dev steering – on the broad reach they had little sail trimming to do. He had free hands for talking. "A five watch a day rotation: noon to six, six to midnight, twelve to four,

four to eight (very hard), eight to noon. The longer day time watches seem easier and with an odd number of watches per day, a person shouldn't have to stand the same "bad" watch two days in a row. Each of them got the good with the bad. The irregularity is one disadvantage of the system. For races from twenty-four to forty-eight hours in duration, the "Vanderbilt Lag" is allowed and in fact encouraged." Hussey winked at napping Ransom as he moved from fact to fiction. "Yes queing theory ..," he paused to checked himself out of a broad W.C. Fields accent which had been kindled by his unlit cigar. "The Vanderbilt Lag" is similar to the "Texas Transfer." A single member of the off watch, who can't sleep, may relieve a sleepy on-watch crew member. This shift, once started, would continue with these two crew. These two would now be out of phase with the change of watch. One of them would stay on watch when the change occurred, a bridge between the two watches."

Ransom knew this man was talking complete bullshit but it didn't bother him, he didn't mind. He liked this guy – just spinning words – good for the long watches.

Summing up, Frank posited, "we now believe this interleaving to foster a shared focus, a continuity of tactics. It also allows sleepy crew to sleep." Devin liked his dad's voice. It had put him to sleep half the nights of his short life.

During distance races endless conversations are the rule.

Professor Frank Hussey had an active roll parenting his only child, Devin. Frank retired on disability at 45 as a NYPD captain after loosing an eye – Dev knew all about it but not the Ransoms.

The difference in the intensity of his career when compared to his wife's, a senior/non-partner Wall Street attorney, allowed opportunity to spend parts of each day watching Devin grow. Frank often said, especially after a ½ bottle of wine, "Time spent with Devin has always been gold – but Ann does homework." Mornings before school and evenings before bed were Devin's time with his dad –

except for homework.

Frank enjoyed and encouraged his younger wife's success. He had met Ann in 1970. She was twenty, he almost thirty; a cop having just started his part-time Columbia graduate math/education program; as a “free-ride” grad student he assisted one undergrad math course across the street at Barnard. For Hussey, the flowers of early seventies were the young ladies across Broadway from Columbia. But a half-Irish, half-Italian Catholic was easily felled by a determined, hungry, beautiful Barnard senior. His pub crawling days were over. His dart buddies accused the couple of spending years licking each other. During their intimate decade after her undergrad graduation, she had her first job. His career on the NYPD blossomed, she worked some and then returned to school, Columbia Law. They were finally awakened from their wet decade, he approaching forty, she just past thirty on their "Graduation Day". With long neglected friends and greatly relieved families, they were finally married in the Columbia University chapel. On the same day he got his MS in math/ed and she, her law degree - on May 13, 1974.

From Treasure Island at the mouth of the Potomac to Norfolk and the Atlantic, MF had 60 more miles in the Chesapeake. From the Potomac until 9pm Dudley, Devin and James drove. Doug and the ladies rested below – they would be on watch from 9pm till after midnight.

Kari was asleep in the aft cabin; Dudley went down to prepare food taking with him the small Igloo cooler kept in the cockpit. MF was spacious. The aft hatch didn't open directly into the main cabin. Down the steps was the wet room closed off from the main cabin by a black drape – to keep cabin lights at night from blinding the crew on deck; below they also were using dim red courtesy lights. Doug sat at the nav table. Dawn got out of a bunk and welcomed and hugged Dudley as he tried to prepare food.

“Mr. Hussey said there was a large brie. Where did you put

it?" Dudley asked – Dawn's hand's distracted him. Dougie joined them in a tight group – MF bounced along. "I can't see a damn thing." They leaned against the stove and groped into the lockers around the stove. "Tell me what happened with your dad's halyard."

"Too weird," Dawn whispered into both their ears – they bounced knees bent. "I'll make cocoa," Dawn said. Dudley put drinks into the Igloo along with Hussey's sandwiches – he went back up.

Moveable Feast fairly bounced down the Chesapeake. No more discussions of watch theory: but eating falafel and bavaganoosh pita sandwiches – which Hussey had brought - continuously adjusting the spinnaker filled the rest of their watch. Tactics and navigation took up little thought; they were dogging the leaders down the Eastern Shore, trying not to loose too much ground. In the slackening, early evening tide, they approached Davis Wharf. Closer to the marshy shore, oystermen - yellow and white in bibbed foul weather gear – sailed/motored in flat bottomed, working skipjacks, scudding home.

Using binoculars, Hussey searched through the gathering dark for the rising moon. After a time, he could make out the lighthouse and water tank at Point Lookout. Except for these few details, the low landscape of the Eastern Shore quietly announced the wide black mouth of the Occohannock River and Virginia. A chill darkened the end of their long watch. Charles looked tired. He had been at the wheel for a half hour.

Dawn and Kari came up the companionway with a thermos of sweet tea. "Finally... !" Charles said to his wife,...my muscles ache." Kari could only smile.

Dougie joined them. Tea was served up in large cups all around. Hussey briefed the new watch. "We've favored the Eastern Shore. Seems to be a bit more wind here than over to the west. "Gotta Move" and "Cushat" have stayed with us, covering us. They're just ahead. Barometer steady. Wind, slightly moderating."

Hussey paused and they waited for him. After a six hour watch, he would have some ideas.

“Dev, go below and nap – I'll need you in four hours.” Devin made his way below. “Charles, what say you.”

"Here's a thought to play with." Charles had been looking at tidal charts. He said, “Comfort Lighthouse is off to the right. That light tower,” he gestured off towards the darkening south-west, “marks the York River. We could move right. The evening wind will moderate. Slightly more current. So, perhaps we make a move on the leaders and catch more wind across the Bay coming down the coast.”

Dougie nodded. “We change course maybe twenty degrees to the right. We bring the apparent wind forward. Perhaps speed up a knot as we cross to the West.”

Charles added, “when we get over towards Virginia, say in 20 feet of water we've got to go back on course towards Thimble Island. The race course takes us between the islands marking where the tunnel bridge goes underwater – at the Thimble Shoal – it's a waypoint in the GPS....”

Doug, having taken over the wheel said, “Let's do the course change while we're all here.”

MF settled in. The two leaders wouldn't be able to detect their move for a bit. Off the Eastern Shore. Cape Charles in a couple hours and then the Chesapeake Bridge and around Adams Island and the Ocean.

Then the upwind slog to NYC. About two hundred and fifty

miles up the coast to New York. The best they could hope for would be a late Saturday finish. With just seven people, you had to sleep when you were off watch for the boat to have any chance of success.

Dougie, Kari and Dawn took over. Clearly the move to the right was paying off.

And they talked. As they sailed towards Norfolk, the moon projected weird shadows from the anchored fleet - destroyers and cruisers. Over VHF Kari announced who they were and their position - several times. Near them and off in the distance the fleet didn't seem awake. Their speed dropped a bit – they skated over moon shadows.

Kari and Dawn talked about Dawn. Dawn was a senior at Dartmouth. Mom loved to talk about Dawn's boy friends. Some sailors, some not. Kari knew Dawn was only interested in fellow senior Dudley Brakeman. They were both so young – not to hurry was a mom's opinion. Kari knew him from his crewing the Antigua Race and the delivery up from Antigua. Was he going to crew on the Columbus Race – he had said yes.

"Sail change!" Dougie announced after midnight. Kari said she'd get Charles to help. She whispered down the hatch steps. Ransom was asleep at the nav table. Dev and Hussey were both in the tiered bunks on the port side – considerate of their weight distribution. There were two bunks on each side of MF amidships – the most stable part of a sailboat. The aft cabin was the "Captains" cabin.

Charles stuck his head up the hatchway. Kari said Dougie wanted the lighter spinnaker. Charles said, "I'll get everyone up." And turned down into the cabin. Kari stopped him before he'd left the "wet room" which opened into the main cabin.

"Let them sleep, Charles." Kari, the Mom shushed Charles. He stood there, "Right is right," he sputtered groggily. He focused hard on the darkness framed by the companionway hatch. His brain started chanting a litany of rules which had in the past led him into conflict with his crew. "If they would just come up," he said to no one – he was mumbling. His hand went to the side of his head. The wet wind from astern had blown his thin hair, matting it out of place. He looked like a beachcomber pressing a conch to his ear, concentrating on voices only he could hear.

Hussey was behind him. "I'll help Charles." On deck he watched the social bonds unravel: between Charles and his wife, and his son; and his stepdaughter.

Hussey had heard a troubling story about Ransom from one of his steady crew Bob Lynn, the junior to Robert Lynn a fellow member of PWYC. A story hard to forget. It made him smile; real life taken right out of "The Caine Mutiny". What impressed him at the time was the realization that he could trust Charles Ransom with his life but could never love this man. Bob's story- told at PWYC's upstairs bar – by a drunk young Bob - who just learned that Hussey was going to join the Azores crew. Bob told a slightly drunk Hussey.

"A few years ago. It was the day after Thanksgiving. Too long after the summer season for Ransom to start South. Captain Ransom had waited too long. Think of it - we had to shovel snow off the deck before getting underway. The boat was being kept out near Sandy Hook.

Captain Ransom, two others - faces now without names - and I made four. Thanksgiving Day spent with their families. The next day, Friday, they all gathered at a snow covered marina near Coney Island to take MF south for the winter.

Out past Ambrose Light, the big wind flung them from the NY Harbor down the coast of New Jersey to Virginia. Ocean waves built

in the wintery thirty knot nor'easter. A glorious day and a howling night later... off the coast, a clear cold Saturday morning after a long windy night. Reefed main and small jenny. MF was solid but a hard ride down the coast.

Bob's description resonated with his trust in Ransom as a sailor. And that Moveable Feast under Ransom's command was equal to the winter ocean.

Bob went on, "at dawn the wind was finally subsiding, As they approached Cape Henry. In sight of the new Chesapeake bridge, they took down the genoa, rolled and bagged it on the heaving foredeck."

Bob had told Captain Ransom that the large stainless steel shackle from the bow fitting was missing.

Hussey had injected his philosophy about boat gear. "If you don't want to loose it, don't use it."

He tried to interrupt with the story about Fischera's lost tapered sheets – rolled off the doghouse during a tack – the tapered sheets were placed there by new crew – never again invited.

But Bob wanted to continue his Ransom story and did. Sailors have lots of one liners. In this vein, one might add - everything on deck eventually ends up in the drink. Hussey had ordered another round of drinks.

Being allowed to finish, Bob Lynn said that that morning they were yelled at. After unbagging the genoa, again on the heaving foredeck, they searched through the folds for the hundred dollar shackle. No luck.

Then Ransom had them line up on the heaving foredeck and he questioned them about their moves, their positions on deck as the sail was handed. They stood there, tired, unshaven, pissed - liked school boys but too old for that. Bob remembered realizing that Ransom was fixing the blame. Well, he never saw the other two again on a Ransom

boat. He knew they weren't responsible 'cause he was. He had heard the shackle slide along the deck and go in after he had released the tack of the genoa. He guessed he was too tired and too wet. He had never been so cold.

Recalling that story, Hussey was reminded he could never love Ransom, but now Devin was involved; were they on the wrong crew?

Peeling a spinnaker wasn't a trivial matter. MF was moving along at a good clip. Ransom took the helm. Charles was bristling at the wheel, visibly stiffening. Hussey could feel the building momentum of Ransom's logic echo. "Are they crew? All crew get involved in sail changes."

Hussey didn't know what else to say. "Pas important." So he yelled down to Dev to get up for a sail change. It was past midnight – but he was babying Dev - Dev was eager and ready – alert.

They were now going dead downwind. As they raced along into the cool night, Ransom's son did most of the foredeck work for the sail change: they raised the new bigger spin inside the smaller sail; they peeled the heavier spin down into the fore hatch; and they jibed; then Dawn went down to pack the dowsed spinnaker; and a change of watch.

Around 3 a.m., with Hussey at the helm they passed North Thimble Island, keeping it on their port – it was the only mark they had to honor for the race. They roused Dougie and Dawn who: raised the big deck sweeping jib; dowsed the spin; then went back down for a couple more hours sleep.

The dark water seemed more serious as MF turned towards home, as they went out onto the Atlantic leaving the Chesapeake behind them.

