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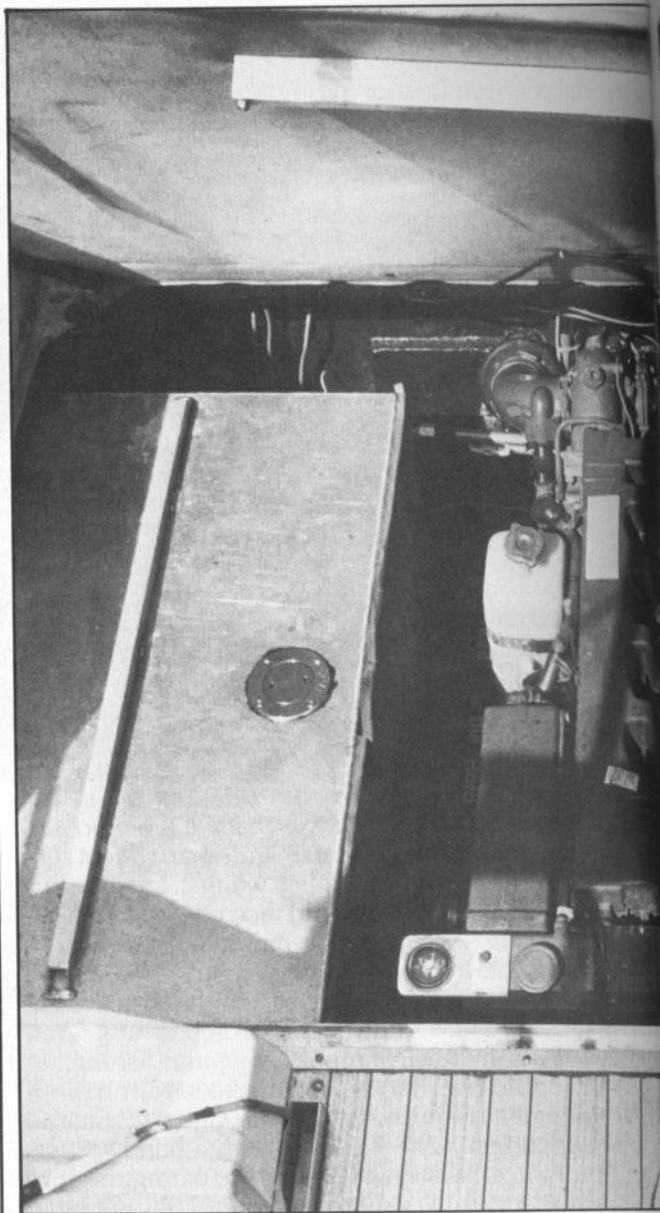
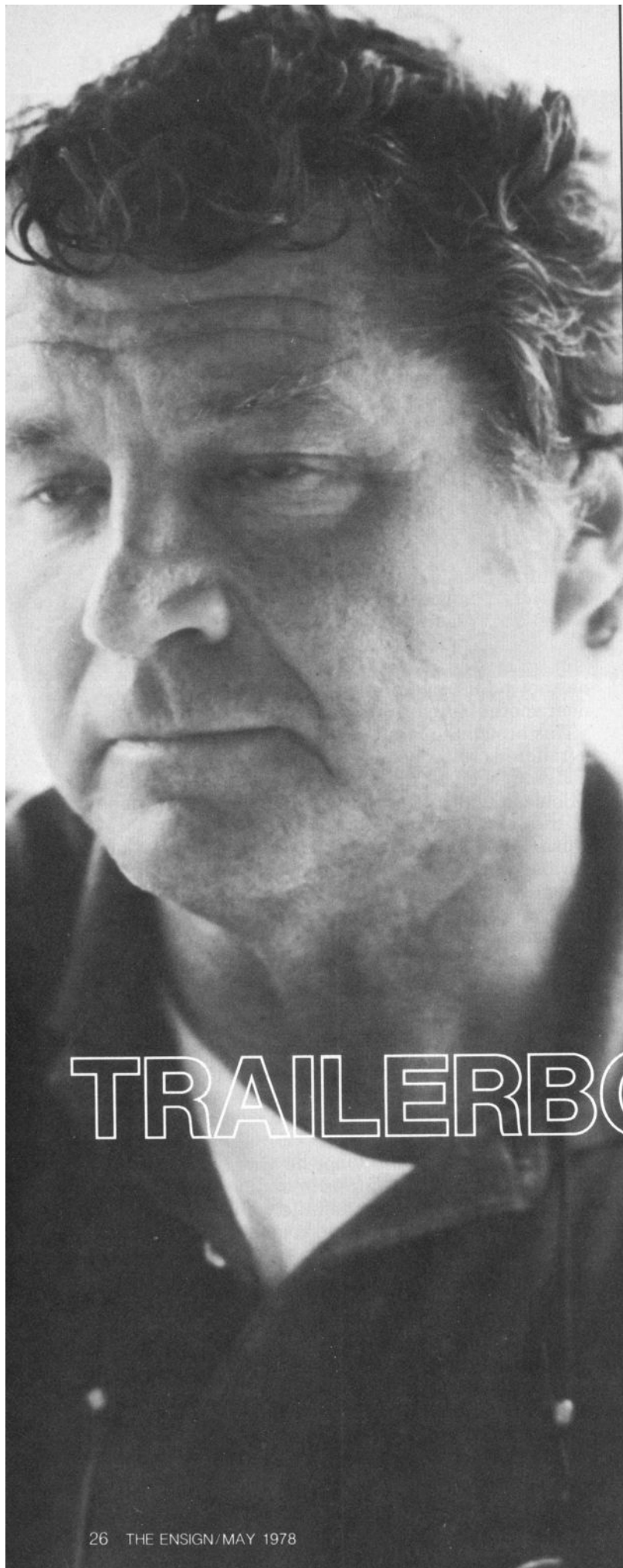
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Special

TRAILERBOAT

Features





TRAILERBOATING TO PARIS

*The amazing story
of Allen Cargile's
pioneer journey*



Although the diesel engine was never shut down, Cargile carefully checked fuel filters and oil level daily

by Jim Quint

It had to be the ultimate trailerboat cruise—New York to Paris in a 30-footer. But it proved that skipper Allen Cargile knew what he was doing, after all, when he set out with a crew of three in an eight-foot-wide planing-hull Cutter family cruiser right off his own production line in Nashville, Tennessee.

The voyage took 31 days and, as could be expected, all the unexpected things happened. The confidently predicted beautiful weather turned into a horrendous storm which taxed the capabilities of boat and crew—and taught Cargile something new about handling stern drives in rough seas. With four radios they lost all contact with the world for days. And a crewman became so seasick Cargile had to interrupt his

The voyage, in a 30-footer, took 31 exciting days

planned non-stop passage to put the unhappy man ashore in Newfoundland.

But Cargile and his remaining two crewmen made it to Paris, and showed what Cargile had said all along—his boat could take it. And the name of the game, he insists, is *preparation*.

Who but Cargile would have demanded that Standard Oil steamclean the insides of their tanker trucks before delivering 1200 gallons of diesel fuel for the Cutter?

And where do you put 1200 gallons of fuel in a 30-foot trailerable?

Cargile had cleaned out the lockers and installed extra fuel tanks, deep in the hull for stability. An additional tank sat in the middle of the cabin, to be used first and then jettisoned.

"We designed the fuel loading so that with most tanks full the boat was basically self-righting. If we were caught nearly empty and needed ballast, they could be filled with sea water."

Why diesel? "I didn't really want to carry around 1200 gallons of gasoline. So I asked the Volvo Penta people for suggestions, and they came up with their new 130-horsepower AQD 40 diesel, coupled with their 280 outdrive which I already liked, and I said let's go."

He added some other equipment: radar, Loran, autopilot, RDF, compass, sextant, and four radio systems—200-watt SSB, 100-watt back-up SSB, VHF, and a hand-held aircraft frequency transceiver for the life raft. And all kinds of safety and rescue gear.

Then began days of planning what to do if all systems failed, one after another.

"Preparation is the most important part. If a person will remember to keep it simple, and think ahead what to do if everything quits—you've got to have an answer.

"I had already decided that if we ran into storms a couple hundred miles out of New York and the engine and compass were working right we'd go ahead and DR all the way."

And that, it turned out, was what they did.

Cargile, an ex-Navy fighter pilot and long-time admirer of Charles Lindbergh, named his boat *The Spirit of Nashville*. For his crew he enlisted another ex-Navy fighter pilot, Ed Gillespie, now test pilot for North American Rockwell; a Nashville friend, Bill Flanagan; and Jerry Shake of WNGE-TV in Nashville who was to do a documentary of the cruise. It was Shake who had to be put ashore, sadly, in Newfoundland.

Loading *Spirit* up with twice her own 6500-pound weight put her waterline a foot below the surface as she pulled out of New York Harbor on 16 July. But for five days everything went as planned and the weather was perfect—"the rosiest forecast I've heard in 30 years of boating and flying."

On the sixth day the seas began to build, and by

continued

"It was unbelievable the way the boat just sort of twisted its way through those waves"

0100 EST on the seventh day winds had started to hit 55 knots, blowing sheets of solid water from the crests of 40-to-50-foot waves. "We were being tossed around like a cork even though we were still heavily loaded, with about three-fourths of our fuel remaining." They were about a thousand miles due east of New York and about one-third of the way across the Atlantic.

They had to forget trying to make any further headway. "It was obvious there was no way of running off in front of the waves, lying ahull, or whatever. Very clearly we had to head her up and get a sea anchor out over the bow." The wind continued to build and they strung a second sea anchor about half-way out to the first one.

It was then Cargile learned something new about sterndrive capability in heavy seas.

"By maneuvering the outdrive I tried both sides, port and starboard, to see which way the boat would ride most smoothly through the crest. It turned out that not only did it feel better on the starboard side, the helm was on the starboard side of the bridge and I could still see the seas coming even if we were heeling 30 or possibly 40 degrees to port.

"But in this maneuvering, instead of just sitting there taking the seas I put the drive in reverse, just idling straight back, and found that by pulling the boat backward the sea anchors had the effect of trying to pull the boat forward. This brought the bow higher up into the wind, maybe about five degrees.

"Then I put the outdrive into a hard port turn, still in reverse, and we picked up another five degrees. So then I realized I could control the bow angle by the amount of power I put on in reverse, because the outdrive is pulling in one direction way below the center of gravity of the boat, and the sea anchors, mounted high on our bow, are pulling in the other direction.

"So as we were riding up the face of a wave, we could roll the boat from, say, 10 degrees to port and kick it into the crest at maybe a 10-to-15 degree angle to starboard with a burst of power just a second or so before the breaker hit.

"It was unbelievable the way the boat just sort of twisted its way through those crests.

"A couple hours after daybreak I looked up and saw, without exaggeration, a 10-to-15 foot wall of

vertical water getting ready to break right over the top of us.

"It did, of course, and I gave the engine full power in reverse and the boat lunged into it. I thought we were rolling over. But the engine kept running and the sea anchors kept tugging and we came out on the other side of that wave. We just went right through it. After that we felt like, man, we can take anything."

But one who couldn't take it was the ill cameraman, and Cargile made the unscheduled detour to Newfoundland. From there they set a shivering course eastward through the cold Labrador Current.

Meanwhile there was another storm casualty—the larger SSB radio. "I went down at 5 in the morning on August 2nd to call my son; it was his birthday, and we'd been battling the gale all night long. But when I turned on the 200-watt single-sideband I got the electrical smell and heard it crackle, and I immediately turned it off. One of our hatches was not completely dogged down and a little trickle of salt water had knocked out our big one.

"We started trying to make some contact with the smaller SSB, just rotating the frequencies around calling on 10 different channels, for almost two days. Finally we picked up Miami Ocean Radio, something like 2500 miles away, which was beyond the range of a 100-watt transmitter."

Cargile got a message through to his family that all was well and warned them that there might not be further contact by radio. He estimated arrival in Paris on 16 August, "just a wild guess."

What about VHF? "We got no response from anybody. I'm under the impression that people don't maintain a conscientious listening watch on the emergency channel. We almost had a collision with a ship in mid-ocean, and from the way it happened I'm sure no one was standing by on guard channel. They didn't take corrective action until they were almost upon us. We had already put it hard over to starboard, full bore which would only give us about 12 knots, to get from right in front of the bow and suddenly he makes a port turn and we damn near hit right there."

With their Loran out of range, and skies continually overcast so that celestial sight-taking was out of the question, all navigation was by dead reckoning.

"We were locked on autopilot virtually all the way



Months of planning and preparation culminated in a final test run before the Spirit of Nashville departed New York Harbor

across except when we were fighting the storm. It did a beautiful job. We would make a heading change every day and a half, estimating the abnormal drift and set from the sea conditions we'd been going through, just common sense."

When they finally got a fix from a ship out off the English Channel, they found they were only 12 miles off course.

At 1600 on 16 August they had tied up in Paris and Cargile shut down the engine for the first time since Newfoundland. They were greeted by Cargile's wife Phyllis, his mother Mrs. Neil Cargile, French officials and the French press and, of course, champagne.

They had traveled 4500 nautical miles, consumed 1480 gallons of fuel at an average of a little over 6 knots at the rate of 1.9 gallons per hour.

Why did he do it? "Well, we started out with a clean

new design, the Cutter. It had to be seaworthy, but with an 8-foot beam for trailering, we came up with an unusual looking boat, and so we've been fighting an invisible barrier ever since the boat was introduced in New York in 1969. And I've known all these years that it was very capable. Remembering Lindbergh, who was laughed at too, we made some calculations and came up with positive answers.

"Another way of expressing it would be that we had an unusual product like the Volkswagen bug but we didn't have the Volkswagen company's marketing capability to put it over, so this was a poor man's way, so to speak, of doing it."

Would you do it again? "Yes, except for the time involved. Yes, I'd use the same basic rig, but with better communications. And I'd spend just as much time in preparation."