



SWIFTSURE

SWIFTSURE 2015

Articles and Anecdotes
Data current to 2014 Swiftsure Race

Royal Victoria Yacht Club
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada



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*This guidebook is dedicated to the memory of
Chris Caple
who was instrumental in its conception and launch.*



SWIFTSURE ARTICLES AND ANECDOTES OF INTEREST

The following articles and press releases from the previous year's races are from various authors and skippers who have raced in Swiftsure over the years, and provide perspective about the international yacht race.

A Banner year for RVYC's Flagship Race

By Gary Davis

Swiftsure Centre is graduating from tent and pegs to bricks and mortar. Swiftsure Centre 2015 will be in and below the fabulous Steamship Grill and Bar, located in the classic old Steamship Terminal on Victoria's Inner Harbour. On Thursday May 21st and Friday May 22nd enjoy good food, good drinks, great bands and a fabulous view of the racing fleet from our new venue. Back again this year are two great bands, The Midnights playing on Thursday evening and Younger Than Yesterday playing on Friday evening.

Don't forget our new challenge, the Hein Bank Race. 118.1 miles long, mid-length between the Swiftsure Lightship Classic and the Cape Flattery Race. Will you get bragging rights as first winner of this all-new course? Competitors in the Hein Bank Race will race out the Straits with the Cape Flattery fleet then continue on to the ODAS buoy (ODAS 46088) near Hein Bank before returning to Victoria.

What's new for Swiftsure 2015?

By Gary Davis

2015 is another big year for Swiftsure. For the first time in many years we are happy to introduce a new race. Designed for the folks who are looking for a longer race, but want to avoid the open ocean swells around the Swiftsure Bank, the new Hein Bank Race will be the first start at Clover Point, along with the Swiftsure Lightship Classic race yachts.

At 118.1 nm long, the Hein Bank Race falls smack in the middle between the race to the Bank (138.2 nm) and the Cape Flattery Race (101.9 nm). There will be both IRC and PHRF handicap races for monohulls.

The Hein Bank Race will offer new challenges to the seasoned Swiftsure veteran and it will offer an interesting course for new racers. The different currents and tactics presented by this new course are an unknown. Could this be your opportunity to win bragging rights. Why not try the Hein Bank Race this year?



Swiftsure 2014: May the Force be with You

By Dr. Frank Colistro for Freshwater News, July 2014 publication

The Launch

At least nine Portland boats stayed in Victoria, BC after Oregon Offshore this year to race in Swiftsure 2014. There was Kevin Flanigan aboard his Fox 44, Ocelot, racing against the other scary fast boats in the Cape Flattery Unlimited Race (IRC). Tom Kelly was there with his blue beauty, Anam Cara, Doug Schenk aboard the J/105 Free Bowl of Soup, Tom Kefler sailing his J/42, Velocity out of Portland Yacht Club, Jim Calmon's C & C 34 Katzenjammer (aka 'Captn. Jammer' as she was hailed by a commercial ship during Offshore), our Cascade 36, Wy'East, sailing for CYC Portland, and, of course, Admiral Gary von Brunner's Shamrock, a Yankee 33, also sailing for CYC Portland.

For all of us, after having sailed what had to be the fastest Oregon Offshore in history, our hopes for an equally exciting Swiftsure were running high. For those who have not yet had the pleasure of sailing in this event, a little background. The Swiftsure International Yacht Race is the premiere long distance sailing race in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia area. Beginning and ending in Victoria, BC (Canada) the Swiftsure is international because some of the rounding marks are in U.S. waters and because entrants hail from the U.S., Canada and many other countries.

The race is the child of Royal Victoria Yacht Club. The first Swiftsure race took place in 1930 when six RVYC vessels raced out the Strait of Juan de Fuca, rounded the Swiftsure bank light ship and returned to Victoria. With the exception of the World War II years, the race has continued ever since.

Having sailed over 20 Swiftsures, I know the weather conditions from year to year can vary enormously. In some years, light winds lead to what we call the "Driftsure;" on the other hand, during Swiftsure 2012 we saw winds gusting up to 35 knots.

There are two shorter courses and two long courses: The Swiftsure Light Ship Classic for PHRF and IRC handicapped yachts that race out to Swiftsure Bank and back for a total of 138 nautical miles, and the Cape Flattery races for PHRF handicapped monohull and multihull yachts spanning about 102 nautical miles, from Victoria to Neah Bay on the Washington side of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back.

Swiftsure is ably manned by a large crew of volunteers from the RVYC led by race chair, Vern Burkhardt. Vern succeeded Bill Conconi who was the face of the race from 1994 to 2010. As always, everything proceeded like clockwork thanks to Vern and company, including the pre-race weather briefing which was held Friday afternoon.

The weather weenies held out great hope for at least the first hours of the race, promising westerly winds in the 10 to 20 knot range. The current weenies, on the other hand, had bad news. We would be starting the race against a major incoming tide and finishing against equally strong ebb. Therefore, the words of wisdom from the science guys was to hug the shore, ideally on the Canadian side, all the way out to Neah Bay, cross the strait and round the mark, then hug the shore again, either shore, all the way back to the finish to avoid the ebb.



The Start

Saturday morning came bright and early, as if an army of angels had scrubbed the sky to a perfect blue just for us. The sun was out and the wind was blowing, as nearly 200 yachts scurried out of the Victoria Inner Harbour to congregate in the starting area. This is a big race. The race committee boat was HMCS Nanaimo, named for a flower-class corvette that served with the great distinction throughout the Second World War.

A warship using a signaling cannon for the racing sequence sounds is both appropriate and necessary, since seeing race pennants raised and lowered from a field of nearly 200 yachts, at least one of them well over 100 feet long, is a daunting challenge.

We all were off and running on schedule in a 10 to 15 knot breeze that, predictably, built into the 20+ knot range as we approached the ever-treacherous Race Passage. That place has a curse on it!

Race Passage

It is a small channel between a solid rock island and a solid rock shore. There is no such thing as a soft grounding in Race Passage. Anything you hit sinks you. Just as we entered the hole, the clevis attaching our main sheet to the boat broke, sending the main sail flying out of control. Imagine that. A \$12 piece of hardware that has been on the boat maybe 15 years picks that exact spot at that exact moment to kill us.

Fortunately, one of our crew, Pete “Casey Jones” Cozzi, regional manager for Amtrak and former train engineer, a true McGyver, dashes below deck, rummages through parts bins, and magically returns with replacement parts.

Meanwhile, our two newest crew members, Jim and Kate, are sweating profusely in their brand new foulies as they wrestle with the thrashing main sheet. It gets repaired and we punch through Race Passage.

“We’re too hot!” say Jim and Kate, scurrying below to remove layers of clothing after all of their exertions. Soon they are back on deck. A short time later, they are cold again. Back below they scuttle, once more layering up in order to face the 15 to 20 knot winds in relative comfort. By then, we have transitioned from the Eastern Strait microclimate to the microclimate of the Central Strait. It is almost always windier just outside Victoria than in the Central Strait, and that day followed the rule. Pretty much all of the boats short tacked up the Canadian shore to stay out of the current, but not us.

The idea of playing bumper boats with some 200 yachts as we throw in about 500 tacks to work our way up to Neah Bay is distinctly unappealing. We take our chances with the incoming current and go straight up the middle. Day turns to evening turns to night. Most of the other racers slowly but steadily pass us by. The only thing we have going is that we are somewhat closer to the turning mark, a power boat anchored just outside of Neah Bay on Washington.

We round it in light air in the wee hours of Sunday morning, behind about three quarters of the other racers, and head back for Race Passage. We now are in the third microclimate, the entrance area to the strait, and the wind is light. Once again, everybody heads for shore, this time fairly equally splitting the fleet between Washington and Canada.



Except us. Miraculously, we find our own little panel of wind blowing straight toward Race Passage. On the black water, it looks only about as wide as a four lane highway, but we are the lucky ones who find it. Once again, we are facing adverse current, but this time it is Wy'East doing the passing. As the blackness turns to the dull grey of dawn, we slowly but steadily pass one yacht after another on our own magical conveyor belt which is ferrying us exactly where we want to go. This works fine until we reach...

The Hole

A vast area of absolutely no wind had formed about 4 miles from Race Passage, reaching from shore to shore. In this vast hole, no one moved, not a single boat. How does the old poem go? "...as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean?" Hundreds of pairs of eyes helplessly watched the sun rise brightly in the eastern sky as we all sat. As the day progressed, the radio became increasingly active as one yacht after another dropped out of the race.

Truly, there is little more frustrating than being 80+ percent of the way to the finish of this magnificent event, only to have to quit with a mere 10 to 15 miles to go. About 60 yachts reluctantly called it quits. It is not exactly accurate to say that we were not moving. Since we once again failed to heed the advice to hug the shore and stay out of the current, we had been moving slowly backwards, while the shore-bound yachts appeared to be standing still.

The Force

We eventually stopped at slack tide. Then, a most amazing thing happened. The incoming current caught us first. The Force was with us once again, we were on our own private conveyor belt which was sucking us through Race Passage. Once again, we were proof positive of the truth in the old saying, "I'd rather be lucky than smart." The current carried us out of the hole, through Race Passage, and into the wind blowing in the east entrance microclimate.

The Finish

We had wind but not much. Anyone who has sailed Swiftsure knows that, once through Race Passage, it is tempting to head straight for Victoria, but one must sail the great circle route to avoid the ever present windless area northeast of Race Rock. Our spirits dropped with the wind speed as we pondered the possibility of being becalmed yet again, only this time within sight of Ogden Point and the Swiftsure finish line. Our helmsman, Oz, decided on a sail change.

We threw up "Black Death," our giant all black spinnaker. This is a very nervous flying sail, made of a light and strong material that has absolutely no stretch. Trim it for an hour and your arms will feel like you spent a day at the gym. In these light conditions, it worked like a charm. I was so intent on watching the finish line grow larger and larger that I failed to notice that Black Death was being trimmed expertly by our two newest crew, Jim and Kate. It would have been nice to come in first in division; we didn't. We came in second behind Mata Hari, a Catalina 36 from the Sloop Yacht Club in Seattle. Out of a dozen-odd boats in division, there was no third place; they all had dropped out.

Looking at the other Portland boats that finished, von Burner's Shamrock finished 5th in his race, while Kevin Flanigan's Ocelot finished 3rd in Cape Flattery Unlimited (IRC). Tom Kelly's Anam Cara finished 1st in division, 1st in class and 1st in race in the Cape Flattery Light Class. Doug Schenk's J/105, Free Bowl of Soup, and Tom Keffer's Velocity both miraculously made it



through the Great Hole and finished. Scott Campbell's J/46, Riva finished 1st in division and 3rd in class for the Cape Flattery Race - Heavy.

And Home We Go

It was great for Wy'East to finish in the money, actually great to finish at all. We spent only about 90 minutes in Victoria before shoving off for Portland. This proved to be a great move. The light wind conditions from Victoria to Race Rock and the Great Hole beyond it, made for smooth motoring down the strait. The trip was made even better by the sight of a procession of yachts, some from the Lightship Classic race, which finally caught the light but steady wind and were finishing in the dark.

By Tuesday morning, we were back at sea, looking forward to another bright and sunny day. Then, it suddenly got way better. A west northwest wind of 10 to 15 knots picked up early in the morning and blew all day long. We trimmed the sails for a broad reach, set the boat on auto pilot, and shot straight down the Washington coast. With Wy'East sailing herself, Casey Jones and I spent all day enjoying the rugged scenery with absolutely nothing else to do.

That wind carried us all the way to the Columbia River, where it built to 20 knots, enabling us to jibe and sail all the way to Astoria on the tail end of a flood tide. Like the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Oregon Bar has 3 microclimates, the Entrance, Mid- Bar, and Astoria Area. Having crossed that bar hundreds of times, I can count on the fingers of one hand how often a following wind has stayed strong and blown in the same direction in all three areas. On that day it did.

All in all, Offshore-Swiftsure was a great series of events for Wy'East; first in class in Offshore, second in division for Swiftsure, and a Cadillac trip home. As we sailed through the Vancouver Railroad Bridge, I realized that the only negative part of the series of events was rapidly approaching, its end. A day earlier, as we were approaching Buoy 2 and about to turn left and head for Astoria, we all shared a strong desire to simply keep going south and turn this brief spring vacation into an endless sailing summer. Maybe someday...

Swiftsure 2014 – Great winds, great stories, no big hurts

Times-Colonist article by Sandra McCulloch, May 26, 2014

Great winds and almost perfect conditions blessed the Swiftsure International Yacht Race over the weekend.

“Great stories, a bit of busted gear from pushing the boats and the crew hard, but no big hurts were reported beyond the usual ‘boat bites [minimal damage],’ ” said Charlotte Gann of the race committee on the Swiftsure web page.

The multi-hull Dragonfly was the first to cross the finish line shortly after 8 p.m. Saturday.

“Always a delight to watch under sail, this wild multihull is jaw-dropping when the breeze kicks up,” said Gann.



She spoke to the skipper who said the boat reached speeds 17 knots when the winds were clocked at 15 knots. "That displays the efficiency of this racer," said Gann.

There were 187 entrants across all the races. The fleet was split into heavy, light and double-handed classes and each class is grouped into divisions. Times are adjusted to account for different types of boats.

While Dragonfly of Royal Victoria Yacht Club finished first in the Cape Flattery Multihull Race, it was Bad Kitty of the B.C. Multihull Society edged it out of first place by 12 minutes, with a corrected time of 13 hours, 44 minutes, 33 seconds.

LawnDart, skippered by Bill Allan of Nanaimo, landed in first place in the Cape Flattery Unlimited Race, finishing with a corrected time of 15:54:39.

The Cape Flattery Race was won by Anam Cara of Portland, which had Tom Kelly at the helm, in a time of 16:20:02.

Koru of the Sidney/North Saanich Yacht Club won the Juan de Fuca Race with Paul Shaw as skipper in 10:11:44.

The Swiftsure Lightship Classic was won by Longboard, a West Vancouver Yacht Club sailboat skippered by Peter Salusbury in one day, eight hours, 13 minutes and nine seconds.

HMCS Oriole, a perennial favourite, had to withdraw from this race when it was becalmed off Neah Bay.

Glory, of Seattle Yacht Club, won the Swiftsure Lightship Classic (IRC) with Andrew Koch as skipper in one day, nine hours, 38 minutes.

HMCS Oriole Message

from Commander Jeff Kibble, posted on May 5, 2014

HMCS ORIOLE, the Royal Canadian Navy's 102 foot long sail training ketch, has officially entered the 2014 Swiftsure International Yacht Race.

"It will be especially exciting as ORIOLE will be racing against the classic schooner Martha", says ORIOLE's Captain, Lieutenant-Commander Jeff Kibble. "It is always great to see two large classic ships sailing together but better yet - we will be racing head to head!"

This will be a record setting 57th entry for ORIOLE in the Swiftsure Lightship Classic Race. No other ship has entered the Switsure Race as many times as ORIOLE. Along with ORIOLE's core crew, members of 39 Brigade will be on board ORIOLE for the race as well as several days of training before the race. The RCN will also support Swiftsure with an Orca Patrol Boat and a Maritime Coastal Defence Vessel that will act as start line and mark boats.



Victory 2013

Posted on May 29, 2013

by *Marg Green, S/V Sauterelle*

When John and I decided to race Swiftsure double handed we figured we would be questioned as to our sanity. When asked, we said that we have both been so busy in opposite directions that this would be the perfect opportunity to spend some quality time together. Little did we know just how much time (officially 1 day, 14 hours, 40 minutes, and 19 seconds).

Truth be told, we always enjoy sailing and racing together. We feel comfortable and work quite efficiently as a team. It's interesting that when cruising we choose to sail in all conditions. John especially works hard to sail in our light summer airs and sailing is his passion. It's these skills he's developed which saw us persevere and stay the course until we crossed the finish line. At no time did we consider quitting. After all it was a race and one has to deal with the conditions you have.

We set our sights on getting to Neah Bay to round the mark for home before dark but soon realized that wasn't likely to happen what with the light wind. Instead we concentrated on keeping the boat moving in the right direction. This was our mantra for the whole race and that's what we did.

We lost sight of our competition by Clallam Bay. This happens during a distance race which leaves you questioning: "Who's ahead? Are we ahead? What are we doing wrong? Where is everyone?" You start having doubts and really just need to concentrate on doing what you need to do. We were surprised to see Dragonfly motoring back to Victoria (hint: means they had withdrawn). Then we speculated why?

Equipment failure? Human problem? But, hey, now we knew we at least could get third finish which gave us renewed energy. We entertained each other with this thought until it was time for a hot supper. I took over the helm while John had his meal & a brief rest. Then it was my turn but I can't really sleep during the daylight so got up to watch the sunset. I stayed up to mostly consult with strategy, look for other boats and see what they were doing, and take over briefly for John to have a break. He keeps the boat always moving, tweaking sail trim and has a knack for sensing the wind. When I'm on the helm I really concentrate so as not to break the momentum. We rounded the mark just before midnight. Once we were onto a course across the straits I had a 2 hour sleep, waking once to tell him it sounded like kelp or something was stuck around the dagger board. He pulled it up to clear it and back down (but not all the way as we found out later). John woke me to take over. He slept for an hour or so, but can't sleep longer once he hears the sound of me tacking. Once he was up we looked at our track on the GPS and saw, although constantly moving, we kept covering the same ground. (Clued in to the fact the dagger board wasn't all the way down.) Once that was rectified we were able to make a little more headway. Little. It was 4 a.m and quite bright and there weren't many boats close by and certainly not any of our competition.

This was the last time either of us had sleep as we never really anticipated how much longer it would take. We kept looking for our competition and trying to gauge what other boats around us were doing, especially if they seemed to be moving better than us. We discussed many things: new sails (no!), more equipment (no!), summer cruising locally (yes!), when and where, and a trip to Australia to see our son. We had a hot breakfast and coffee, and then snacked throughout the day on muffins, nuts, and nutritional Edge bars. By the time we made it through Race Rocks with the tide we knew the finish was just around the corner. Each moment after that involved all our concentration to pick up and use every little puff of wind. Because we were only two we switched between using the jib and screecher. The spinnaker would



only mean a lot of work putting it up and down and doesn't give much of an advantage in such fickle light conditions.

Poor John...I wouldn't let him leave the helm. I was counting on him getting us across the finish line. I really wasn't sure how much longer we could keep it up since we kept having our hopes go up and down with the slight breezes and contrary tide. I kept giving him muffins, tea, chocolate, Edge bars, anything I could to keep him focused and on track while also constantly changing sails hoping for that magical combination. By this time we heard over the radio as one more in our division withdrew. This gave us a brief surge of hope that maybe we could place second, followed by disappointment for our friends. Fatigue wasn't an option as we were determined to get this done. It is so difficult to distinguish the confusing lights as you approach Victoria. You are also looking for other boats, trying to distinguish what and where they are in proximity to you.

We had the radio on channel 26 and could hear as boat after boat withdrew from the race. It was sad to hear knowing just how hard everyone, sailors and organizers alike, had worked to put on this amazing event. All did it with grace and often a big "Thanks. See you next year". One skipper called in to "Race Committee, Race Committee. This is Ridiculous, I mean this is"

This was such a nice touch of levity. I wish I could remember the boat's name to recognize him for his humour.

We did finally make an exciting finish at 2350, squeaking ahead of two other boats by mere seconds.

It was such a treat to be greeted at the dock by the Inspection crew, Chair Vern Burkhardt and a bowl of hot soup. It was then that we heard we were the first and only finishers of our division. We were happy to be first and proud of ourselves for persevering.

We arrived back with a little extra food and water which would have been sufficient had we needed to stay out until Monday morning finish time of 0600. Would we have stayed out there until then? Probably.

Will we do it again? Ask me later. It's like child birth....as time goes on you forget the really bad parts!

Alex Fox "The Art of Sailing Swiftsure" – May 2013 Boat Journal Article

This year's Swiftsure International Yacht Race (2013) was a test of endurance for sure. Following the race, I attended the volunteers' appreciation BBQ and was asked to put some perspective on why.... why do this race? What brings sailors back to compete in this iconic northwest event year after year?

If you were around the 2013 race or know any sailors who competed, you may possibly have heard "That's it, never doing that race again". Since I competed in my first Swiftsure some forty years ago, I know I've uttered those same words at some point, however like most others here I am, a lifetime fan of the race. Future Swiftsure races will no doubt continue to be boldly circled on the calendar of sailors and non sailors from Oregon to Alberta. Here's my top ten answers in no particular order as to, *why do this race?*



- 1) Every year presents a different challenge and I think that keeps the race fresh for racers. Looking at the currents and weather in the week leading up to the event is a sport all by itself. The prognosticators and the theorists have more than enough to keep themselves busy. It's a hot topic of discussion among sailors and spectators alike.
- 2) Four choices of race give racers lots of options. It's not unusual to see the same boat types competing in separate races during Swiftsure. Perhaps a new sailor might choose to put their toe in the water with the Inshore race the first year. Year two might be Juan de Fuca, or Flattery. Choose the race that's right for you and your crew.
- 3) Camaraderie is a big thing amongst the sailing community and I look forward to Swiftsure – it's a coming together of all sailors from the northwest and beyond. I'm sure to run into old friends and make some new acquaintances every year. "What boat are you on? Really, we're in the same race! What's it rate?"
- 4) Dock walking in the days leading up to the race is a mandatory activity. This once a year migration of the coolest racing machines is something I really look forward to. I'm a little reluctant to admit it, but, yes it's probably seeing the biggest boats, the carbon rigs and wheels that I look forward to most. This year it was the new Riptide 35 I stood next to, admiring the details and the quality of build, for probably a good half hour. I'm a sucker for the dock walk.
- 5) The Start of Swiftsure is a spectacle all by itself. The milling about of the boats, the challenges of picking the right approach to what is invariably a skewed start line, that more often than not has different current and wind conditions at each end. Getting away from the start cleanly can be a test all by itself and many a Swiftsure, believe it or not, has been won or lost at the start.
- 6) The myriad challenges that Swiftsure presents can make your head spin. Race planning starts long before the race begins, organizing crew and logistics. Making sure the boat and crew are fully compliant with safety requirements is a good opportunity to make sure your boat is sound and it's a good way to review and rethink safety procedures. Well worth the time and great peace of mind.
- 7) Yes Swiftsure is a sail boaters' race, but it's become much more than that, it's a community event. It's a showcase for our sport and it's a fantastic thing to have sailboat racing as the centre of attention for a week out of the year. It's in the news, on the front page of the newspaper, people are talking about the race at work. That's a great thing and as a sailor I'm happy to be part of it.
- 8) Racing against unfamiliar competition is a big draw for me. It's really fun to compete against the top boats from other clubs and Swiftsure makes that happen. Competing well is a validation for any crew and it's particularly satisfying to win your class, division or overall against the cream of the crop. A Swiftsure win is something to hang your hat on.
- 9) No one ever said it would be easy and that's why it means something to compete and finish this race. Most Swiftsures include at least a few head scratching moments that defy explanation. Random acts of nature that can be both cruel and kind. Getting things right or wrong is measured in degrees, not absolutes. Focus and keen observation are a sailor's best friends. Be sure to also bring along any lucky pennies you might have found.
- 10) Tradition is a part of everyone's lives and it's certainly part of Swiftsure. This is a feel good event, a celebration of the sea and boating and more. It's a party, a race, a pancake breakfast, a dock walk, a rendezvous and so much more. It's an occasion for the sailors, the race volunteers and spectators alike. It's a great slice of Northwest life.

Looking forward to Swiftsure 2014, see you there.

NEWS RELEASE

Victoria, B.C.

February 15, 2012 *for immediate release*



50th Anniversary of the Juan da Fuca Race: The “Little Swiftsure”

In 1962, the Swiftsure Committee created the Juan da Fuca race for yachts that were too small to comfortably complete the 137 mile Swiftsure Lightship Classic. With only four entries at its inception, the Juan da Fuca race grew quickly during the 1970's and had 36 boats in 2011.

Even at just over half the distance of the big race (79.5 nautical miles), the Juan da Fuca race requires similar boat preparation and crew training. It also allows sailors to compete within sight of the big boats on the long outward beat through Race Passage, then round the mark in Clallam Bay and finish within a reasonable time (often as the bigger boats roar home from Swiftsure Bank).

The race immediately developed its own brand of strategy and tactics and has always been closely contested. For example, deciding when to head across Juan da Fuca strait becomes more critical when there's less time to make up for an error in judgment. In addition, while the original “family cruiser/motley crew” flavour of the Juan da Fuca race still remains, technological and design advances have brought sport boats and multihulls into the fray with changes in tactics and impressive results. The Juan da Fuca race has evolved into a premiere overnight distance race that features many one-design and boat-to-boat battles. This makes for exciting starts, close finishes at the line and heartbreaking results on correction.

The Juan da Fuca race offers a variety of sailors the chance to enjoy all the festivities and social aspects of race weekend and participate in a sanctioned Swiftsure race with a manageable commitment in time and money. In addition to strengthening ties between clubs and across borders, many competitors look forward to the Juan da Fuca race as an opportunity to renew old friendships and rivalries. This year the Juan da Fuca race will offer singlehanded and double handed categories to recognize those particular challenges.

For more information on the history of the Swiftsure International Yacht Race; including photos, past results, trophies and records visit: www.swiftsure.org

NEWS RELEASE: What's New for Swiftsure 2012?

For those intrepid sailors who like single handed and double handed racing, check out the Notice of Race (online) for the revised Swiftsure Inshore Classic and the Three Long Courses (The Swiftsure Lightship Classic, The Cape Flattery Races and the Juan de Fuca Race).

For the first time, a single-handed division will be added to the Inshore Classic if there are enough registrants to create a division. For the Three Long Courses a double-handed division will be added for each of the races if there are at least five boats registered as double-handed for that race. This is an exciting opportunity to show off your sailing skills.



The Swiftsure Inshore Classic is also taking on a new look. This year a course will be selected on race day taking into account the winds and tide. The fun part is that the finish line will be in Cadboro Bay at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club. Sailors will be welcomed to celebrate the end of day racing by enjoying the club's facilities, including free moorage overnight.

The inner harbor festivities have changed as well. A dock party will be held in front of the Empress Hotel in the late afternoon on Thursday and Friday. We listened to those that answered our Swiftsure Survey and found there was a desire to host events that encouraged pre-race opportunities to meet and greet fellow racers. What a better place than the docks in front of the Empress and at your own boat!

This year the registration tent will be on Ship Point and the skippers meeting and the 2011 Trophy Presentations will be held at a downtown facility within walking distance from the downtown docks.

We look forward to meeting past participants and welcome those who will be experiencing Swiftsure for the first time. There are enough race venues to appeal to all racers and it is a great gathering for sailors of all stripes. See you in May 2012!

MEDIA RELEASE: 2010 The Cat came back

Bad Kitty (originally *Tardis*) has been racing in Swiftsure for 25 years. She is a *one-off Uthoff* 34-foot catamaran designed, and originally built, by Karl Uthoff in about 3 months. Fast, but not much to look at, we often joked she was "a hundred foot yacht"... she looked great from 100 feet away. Upon close inspection, people marveled that we could cross Georgia strait in "that thing", much less complete four Van Isle 360s, countless Swiftsures, Newport-Ensenada and many other races.

Not being one for creature comforts, Karl kept *Bad Kitty* pretty Spartan. *Bad Kitty* was often used by other Captains as a comparative example when countering complaints from their crews.

Bad Kitty was always a work in progress. Karl liked to change things just to see what would happen, so each year various pieces were added, changed or removed. Spring would find her back on the Swiftsure starting line, sometimes with the crew still hard at work finishing those 'improvements'.

The Cat always came back.

Karl liked the "swift" part of the Swiftsure race much better than the "Drift" part. He eagerly switched from the Swiftsure Bank Race to the Cape Flattery race for multihulls when the opportunity arose more than 20 years ago. No more flopping about all night on the Swiftsure bank for him!

Karl was an excellent sailor and just loved to be on the water. He helmed better while asleep than most can while awake. Over the years Karl won his share of races and, as suited his nature, allowed others to beat him from time to time.

Karl introduced many people to sailing. In the early days he was often short of crew and would shanghai just about anyone off the beach. Most would return to shore a few hours later, visibly



shaken and seeking the shade of an Oak tree, but occasionally one would come back with a smile and go on to become a good sailor. Sailing with Karl was always an adventure: things broke - we fixed them; sprung leaks – we bailed; overly exciting things happened – we had a quite moment and then moved on.

Karl missed the last three Swiftsure races due to declining health. Karl's crew kept up the tradition and raced *Bad Kitty* for him when he was unable to, capturing line-honours in 2008 and making Karl happy for our win, yet sad he was not onboard.

In the grand tradition, the *Bad Kitty* crew, with help from many multihull friends, once again rebuilt *Bad Kitty* this past winter. Karl never got to see the final results - he died in late February. If he could see her now, I think he would be pleased with the changes, but already planning next years' improvements.

Look for *Bad Kitty* on the inside dock once again this year. Under the bright new coat of yellow paint you will see the same old, yet once again 'new and improved', *Bad Kitty*.

The Cat is coming back.

For 2008, Swiftsure “slow” but “sure”

May 25, 2008
for immediate release

Victoria, BC – While the weather gods sent sunshine to Victoria during the 2008 Swiftsure weekend, light winds during the first ten hours of the race created interesting challenges to the skippers and crews. Despite the light winds, all starts were executed on time, and without postponements or recalls.

Those racers who persevered and did not withdraw during the early hours were rewarded by a building westerly breeze early on Saturday evening, which continued to build throughout the night culminating at 30-knots in Race Passage in the early morning hours of Sunday.

The new Andrews 77-footer from Seattle, John Buchan's *Glory*, was first boat home as well as a “triple crown” winner (first in race, class and division) in the Swiftsure Lightship Classic, completing the 140-mile course in just under 20 hours. Second-place *Mystic* finished 5 hours later, but after the handicap was applied, lost by only 11 minutes. Third place went to *Mayhem*, and all 3 finishers were from Seattle.

Boats representing BC yacht clubs fared much better in the other Swiftsure races, including *The Shadow* from West Vancouver (1st in the Unlimited Flattery race), *Mad Max* (Vancouver) and *Kairos* (Victoria) placing 2nd and 3rd respectively in the Cape Flattery Race, and Vancouver



Island entrants *My-Tai* (2nd) and *Light Scout* (3rd) in the Unlimited Juan de Fuca race. Flattery multihull winners included Vancouver's *Bad Kitty* (2nd) and *Redshift* (3rd) from Nanaimo.

"This was a most typical Swiftsure", said Race Chairman Bill Conconi, "with wind conditions ranging from non-existent to gale-force, mixed with strong currents. In addition, we heard many positive comments about both the venue and race, along with promises to return in 2009."

Monitoring Swiftsure 2008 – the 65th Annual Yacht Racing Classic

By Janet Renouf

What's in store for the Swiftsure suite of races this year? Will sailors and boats face skill-testing, gear-breaking winds and swells as they did during last year's thrilling and at times terrifyingly wild ride? And, how will those on land be able to follow the action?

For families, friends, and followers left ashore during that last two years of Swiftsure, the installation of transponders on boats in the longer races was to have eased the tension of not knowing what's happening out on the course, as well as provide the public and race organizers with frequently reported boat positions, which could be tracked on-line. However, for several reasons, general on-line access was intermittent, at best.

This year, race officials have selected Flagship Integration Services to supply transponders and support. Flash Tracker, their state-of-the-art, satellite-based tracking technology for yacht racing, features technology this company has been refining over more than 20 years. This technology has followed major international yacht racing events, including the North America to Hawaii TransPac and Vic-Maui races. Clear, easily followed directions enable monitoring by division or group for race updates, and the ability to zoom in and out, and add in a grid, along with distance, wind, barometric, and wave factors, create a real feel for the situation the competitor is facing.

Kim Flagstad, President of Flagship Integration Services, who will be speaking on the topic of Mapping Sailboat Races in Real Time, to the prestigious Chicago Map Society, just before she comes to Victoria for Swiftsure, notes that "while sailboat races are adrenaline-producing occasions for the crew, for interested parties ashore, those hours are about as exciting as watching paint dry. And now, through an exciting new application of GPS and web-based tracking displays, it is possible for folks on shore to view an entire race in real time." Pausing for a moment, Kim adds, "As sailors, our unique combination of our racing and technological expertise has resulted in us developing ideas for a better racing experience."

Janet Renouf is a veteran sailor who loves yacht racing. This will be her third year as part of the Swiftsure News Update Team, and she delights in the opportunity to help keep all interested parties abreast of the race progress at swiftsure.org, and, in the process, to interview enthusiastic race participants.

The Dragons Come Home ... to Fly Again

by Donna F. Randall

Mention *Dragonfly* to anyone involved in, or even remotely connected to, yacht racing in the Pacific Northwest and, in return, you'll see a pause, a gaze, and a smile, and will hear a story, delivered with gusto.

Dragonfly, a Formula 40 catamaran, is well traveled. Built in Australia in 1987 and christened *Simply the Best*, she raced extensively, setting a record for 67 consecutive “line honour” finishes. This means she was the first boat to finish, but not necessarily that she won the race, taking into account corrected time within the handicapping system. The year 1998 saw *Simply the Best* sold to a Hollywood-based movie production company for the purpose of shipping her to Thailand to film a television commercial, which featured “two Formula 40s flying hulls and playing 'chicken' in 15 knots of breeze”, explains Pat McGarry, the next owner of this yacht. It was for this commercial that the dragons were added to the hulls, thus inspiring her future name.

Many sailors read, in *Multihulls Magazine*, about the filming of this commercial and, in January 1999, Pat McGarry purchased *Simply the Best*, and moved her to Seattle. Commenting on the boat's speed during her maiden sail in Seattle, Carol, Pat's wife, exclaimed, “Wow, do these dragons fly!” And so, *Dragonfly* was born.

From 1999 to 2006, this beautiful, agile, and fast catamaran (a yacht with twin hulls) has competed in the multihull fleet in most major yacht racing events in the Pacific Northwest, winning many and setting records. She has graced six Swiftsures and has completed the Van Isle 360 race on three occasions, recording an elapsed time of 69.7 hours. Amongst the Swiftsure records set by *Dragonfly* is her earliest and fastest time in 2001, when she crossed the finish line at 20:30 hours (8:30 pm), just nine hours and three minutes after starting the race.

And then, in October 2006, it happened: having experienced the thrill of the flying dragons for seven years and having accomplished more with the boat than he had ever imagined, without any of her crew having sustained major injuries, Pat McGarry sold *Dragonfly* to a Florida couple, Grant and Jannie Killian, and thus she left the Pacific Northwest yachting community. While many of us were stunned and figured that our *Dragonfly* thrills were a thing of the past, her former owner and crew kept tabs on her, noting that she was being sailed only sporadically and worrying for her well-being.

As you can imagine, sailing a yacht such as *Dragonfly* takes a special crew, which Pat assembled from sailors in the Seattle area, along with two from the Royal Victoria Yacht Club. Having become involved with the *Dragonfly* campaign early on, Nick Banks introduced Richard Ackrill to Pat and, as “they” say, the rest is history. Within a year of their beloved ride moving to Florida, and having confirmed that the Pacific Northwest crew of *Dragonfly* wanted to become



involved again, Richard made an offer to purchase. With the offer accepted and the deal done, the planning began in earnest to bring her home.

Following a multitude of phone calls and email messages, three of the *Dragonfly* crewmembers flew to Miami on October 12, 2007. Between October 13 and 17 the boat and all extra equipment and paraphernalia was moved from Miami to Jacksonville – the “stuff” via truck and the boat via a wild ride in challenging winds and seas, which saw one crew member of three ill and another suffer a cracked rib. Then, between October 18 and 21, she was dismantled and sent via truck to Seattle, with her crew members returning to Seattle on October 22 in preparation to greet and unpack her, and begin the many labours of love to get her ready to race again.

Richard estimates that the dedicated crew of *Dragonfly* has spent between 1,500 and 1,800 person-hours repairing and refitting her, since her return to the Pacific Northwest. Explains Richard emphatically, “Without the selflessness of the crew members volunteering huge amounts of time, and without the use of a fantastic storage facility, campaigning *Dragonfly* here again would be impossible.” She's back living where she was when Pat owned her, and every time she races, she is lowered into the Dwamish River and interrupts traffic on Spokane Street as the swing bridge opens to allow her to pass. Asked why he decided to expend all the effort to bring *Dragonfly* back home, Richard thinks for a moment and then explains, “It's for the people I sail with ... and the rush!” Then he adds, “And, the next time Pat is at the helm and has been forced to slow the boat to round a mark, and then looks at the tactician and asks his infamous 'Can I go fast now?' question, I'll know for sure I've done the right thing.”

This writer will never forget her first encounter with *Dragonfly*, while attending her first yacht race. The year was 2002 and the race was the Cowichan Bay Regatta. Alone on our crew's mothership anchored in the bay, suddenly I caught a glimpse of one of her dragon-adorned hulls, which, along with her deep-red spinnaker, memorized me. I couldn't take my eyes off her as she maneuvered, with grace and agility, while jockeying for position on the start line. Then, during Swiftsure 2003, while having the pleasure of recording yacht positions from a floatplane, once again *Dragonfly* took my breath away. On the Saturday evening of the race, while many yachts were still on their way out to their rounding marks, we spotted white water coming off the hulls of a boat with a red spinnaker and asked the pilot to head in that direction. The yacht was *Dragonfly* and she was headed home at an incredible speed – most likely 30 knots! We couldn't help but follow her for a while, before peeling off to report that *Dragonfly* was coming home.

And now, having left us for the better part of two years, the dragons are home and ready to take flight during the 65th running of the Swiftsure International Yacht Race.

Donna F. Randall was part the Swiftsure Publicity & Promotion Committee from 2003 to 2005.

The Glory Years (and beyond) of the Buchans

by Donna F. Randall



It all started with a fisherman who liked to build small boats. While most were built in the back yard, that first one was built on the back porch of the house, using the dining room table for the transom. Unbeknownst to the boat builder's wife. From there, the Buchan Boat Company was born, and a family racing tradition launched.

As far back as John Buchan can remember, the family back yard contained at least one boat in the process of being built. His father would begin by carving a model of a boat design he had in mind, and then the model would, in fact, serve as a model for the full-sized boat. In the 1940s, his family would enter the various PIYA (Pacific International Yachting Association) races, as part of their summer vacations. He can remember their first one when his sister was 5 years old, and he had attained the ripe old age of 9. One year, while sailing to Victoria for a vacation, they almost sank their boat, and ended up having to sleep on her the first night here, with everything aboard soaking wet!

John's brother, Bill, started racing Star boats at the age of 13, and at 72 now, he still races Star boats. It is Bill's son, Carl, who carrying on the Buchan family tradition, started by his grandfather, of both building and racing boats.

The true launch of the Buchan Boat Company started with Thistle, a boat similar to the Lapworth designs. From there, the Buchans built 12 40s and raced them. In fact, it was in 1959 that John first raced Swiftsure, on one of these 40s. Then, one day when his father was going away, he asked John to take a look at making the 40 shorter and wider, and the Buchan 37s were born, in the form of a boat called Thunder. On this boat, John won Swiftsure. From there, they built 50 of these 37s. Although John decided to leave the boat building business and move into building houses, his love of boats and racing continued.

The majority of John's boats have been named Glory, after his wife, Gloria. But, there have also been a few Heather's after which their daughter was named. John has owned two boats jointly with Steve Travis (who currently owns Flash) --a Sovril 50 named Persuasion, and an Ideal 48 called Irene, who was named after John's mother.

For a long time, John has had a dream to race in Europe, so determined he needed a different type of boat; and so he purchased the new Glory, an Andrews 77. Swiftsure 2008 is her inaugural race with John and crew, and they have been anticipating a good time, and ideally, a good result. Speaking about the latest Glory, John Buchan notes that given her rating, "If I can even see another boat, I'm sunk!" However, sunk or not, in the true spirit of the Buchan family, John will endeavor to enjoy this year's trek to Swiftsure Bank, and will look forward to many more rides on the new Glory.

Donna F. Randall was part the Swiftsure Publicity & Promotion Committee from 2003 to 2005.



1984 CONVERSATION BETWEEN SEATTLE TRAFFIC and FREIGHTER NEWARK

In 1984, Swiftsure had some 385 participating yachts and the following transcript of a conversation between Seattle Vessel Traffic Control and the freighter Newark that year gives the view from the bridge of a big cargo ship. Channel 14 on May 27, 1984 at a half hour past midnight:

Seattle Traffic, Newark.

Newark, Seattle Traffic. How do you copy?

Loud and clear. Newark, Seattle Traffic. Just for our information, we would like to know your observations as you transited through the Swiftsure fleet out there. Over. This is Captain Dees on the Newark. Over.

Newark, Seattle Traffic roger. This is Lt. Schmied over at Seattle Traffic. How are you doing captain?

Well, I'm finally breathing a sigh of relief but I've never been in anything like that in forty years or since I've been going to sea and that's ..., I don't see why anybody could let anybody do something like that. They had this whole complete strait covered. Over.

Newark, Seattle Traffic roger. This is one of the reasons we are calling you is just to find out what the situation was aboard your vessel and if you would like to go ahead we've got this on tape. Over.

I was in that so thick that I had to maneuver back and forth around and finally went down to around 230 degrees to get out of them and still had to maneuver and finally I got outside of them. I'm back on my regular course of 306 now but I don't see how somebody hadn't been killed in that. Over.

Newark, Seattle Traffic. Roger Captain. Did you notice any rules of the road violations? Over.

Well they didn't pay any attention to the rules of the road. They cut across your bow either way, showing a green or red. Over.

Newark, Seattle Traffic roger. It was pretty dark out there. You didn't happen to get any sail numbers or vessel names? Over.

No. It was dark. All you could see were the lights, and that's all. You couldn't even see the sails, except once in a while one would shine his lights on the sails. I slowed my vessel down to 75 RPM so I could keep maneuverability but I was afraid I would run over somebody. Over.

The radio conversation continued.



The Swiftsure and those who sail it have earned distinction in the world of offshore ocean racing. The course, set against the rugged American Northwest, offers a rare blend of treachery and challenge, opportunity and ambiance, making Swiftsure a logical starting point for YACHTING's coverage of the blue-water classics.

By Phil Johnston - first appeared in the May 1982 edition of Yachting.

On a good day, the scenery is grand. You pass from Victoria's beckoning foreshore to the Strait, which passes between the 10, 000-foot backbone of Vancouver Island and the equally high Olympics to the south. Then you race into the ocean, with its backdrop of shrouded, rocky shores. Enough of this and you can easily imagine the silent passage of a Haida Indian war canoe, or the sailing ships of early traders.

The strong tides encountered in the area alternately smooth the water or set up hideously sharp breaking seas, under-run by a substantial swell in the outer part of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Westerly airflow, encouraged by a strong thermal gradient, produces afternoon winds to 25 or 30 knots, usually flowing in opposition to a strong ebbing tide.

The Swiftsure Bank, named after a British survey ship of the late 1880s, is the turning mark for the race, which has developed into a premier Northwest racing event - neither our longest nor always the most challenging tactically, but taken in sum a most ideal off-shore test.

The race began in 1930 and was contested only three times before the start of World War II. But that was enough to set a pattern. Racing began again in 1947, attracting from 10 to 25 boats. Until 1947, most of the competitors came from the Seattle-Tacoma area, joined by a few Canadians. William Buchan, Sr., sailed in the '47 Swiftsure. The Buchans have dominated the racing ever since.

After 1957, the Canadians began to take a serious interest again, particularly Ches Rickard, Pat Leslie and Bill Moore from Vancouver. During these years, two fine old boats came to stay and compete successfully. Olin Stephens's world-beater *Dorade*, owned and sailed by Franklin Eddy, and *Mary Bower* from England, possessing a similarly stellar history. In 1958, the entry list doubled, and doubled again, approaching 100 by 1967.

Through all these years, the Swiftsure has built upon itself, each race intertwining in an endless voyage. Friday evening before the race, Victoria's Inner Harbor is filled with the bulk of the racing fleet. Boats of all sizes form a solid raft. There is a pervasive, but slightly subdued, carnival air about it all - subdued, I think, because of the anticipation of the start the following morning. By 11 o'clock, the harbor is still.

Planning for a nine o'clock start, we are up at six to eat, probably at the Crest Motor Inn coffee shop, or the Empress Hotel's Garden Court, both of which open early this morning as an accommodation to the racers. The raft breaks quietly sometime after eight o'clock in order to motor and sail the three miles to the starting area, with skipper and crew waiting for the first true taste of the morning winds.

These mornings are typified by flat, protected seas and rippling breezes to 15 knots. While Race



Rocks is not a mark of the course, the passage inside it is closest to the rhumb line. Normally the timing of the start makes it possible to clear the Race with an ebbing tide. Toward the middle of the afternoon, or a bit later, the ebb will have turned to flatten the sea, and the winds become light and puffy. For the next three hours, there is hard work, with little progress against a two-knot flood.

Past the middle of the Strait, the roll from the Pacific becomes more evident. By sundown you hope to be off Cape Flattery, making a departure for the Swiftsure Bank. You begin to sense the northerly pull of the counter-current coming up the ocean beaches of the Washington Coast. Typical rounding time at the Swiftsure Bank is between midnight Saturday and four to five o'clock Sunday morning. Often, as the fleet waits in light air, widely scattered between the shores of the outer Strait, the race seems to start again.

Often after rounding, there is a good chance that a strong westerly will build slowly. The fleet picks up speed. It's more comfortable now. You settle into it. Soon, the boats are beginning to surf. The wind continues to rise, as does the excitement. The tender boats with tentative helmsmen experience knockdowns.

For the few hours it takes, the sailing receives your full attention. Now the boats pass into an area of cross-rips as they approach Beachey Head, three miles west of the Race. Knockdowns are more common in the confused breaking seas. As the current picks up and the boats get farther into the race, the water smoothes and you brace for the next event - a wild reach and run to the Victoria breakwater and the finish. There have been many classic duels here. In 1966, John Long's *Mary Bower* picked off Henry Kotkins's *Diamond Head* by less than a second at the breakwater, capturing the prized "City of Victoria" trophy. Several hundred spectators cheered him on, and seemed to duck the spinnaker of the *Mary Bower* as she drove across.

Impressions are built up over the years and trigger recollections. I retain a strong, very physical impression of the power of the sea, gathered in 1964 while driving Bill Baillargeon's 31-foot *Mistral* through the ten-foot breaking waves off the mouth of the Strait at night. And one night aboard my 39-foot sloop *Sqaip*, in moderate conditions with much phosphorescence on the water, I spent two hours lying on the bow, fascinated with the star streaks of the hundreds of dogfish darting at random across the bow as they raced the boat through the water.

And I remember the crew. Larry Clein saw me through two of my boats and into the third before retiring. He was a provisioner, general supervisor, ship's morale officer and sometimes cook if he was treated well. He was a man who could nap all day and stay awake all night; an indispensable man. Jack Cahill sailed with me for several years before he knew that it was time to do it himself. Jack now sails his Cal 40 *Spectre*, and with each rising dawn who's there? *Spectre* and Jack. The youngsters from the Seattle YC, Rick Martin and Ro Pearsall, started sailing with me in their teens, lending me their well-honed dinghy skills. All of them are individuals, but they share one characteristic - to give themselves wholly to the ship, asking nothing in return except the opportunity.

Despite the common strain that has characterized Swiftsure, there have been some changes. The



Juan de Fuca Race for smaller boats was inaugurated in '62, and is now almost as large as Swiftsure. And a broad sweep of varying yachts - in size and design - sail through the memory. In 1976 Jim Kilroy brought *Kialoa*. In 1978, it was Mark Johnson's *Windward Passage*. Throughout the seventies, the 12-Meter *Weatherly* has sailed out of Tacoma with Alan Buchan at the helm. Also in '78, we were treated to a match race between *Drifter* and *Merlin*, the ultralights. Each year, new boats like the 101s, the Olson 30s, and this year's expected crop of Santa Cruz 50s can make their mark in the race.

It is all a kaleidoscopic image of competition, people, boats, sea conditions, dinners, parties and imaginings. It's a few sails home to Seattle the day after the race under an easy-riding spinnaker, across the Straits and down through the inlets forming our inland sea, with rum, funny stories and a relaxed crew. I keep coming back. We all keep coming back.

The 1982 Swiftsure Lightship Classic marks Johnston's 20th.

Local Knowledge: A consistent prize winner describes the intricacies of racing Swiftsure *By Bruce Hedrick*

This article first appeared in the May 1982 edition of Yachting. The author also wrote an updated article in the May 1984 edition of 48 ° North.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the Swiftsure is so popular in the Northwest is that no two Swiftsures are even the same. It's said, in fact, that NOAA sends its weather forecasters to the Pacific Northwest to teach them humility.

If it can be summarized, there are two weather situations that generally occur in Swiftsure. The most common is the westerly wind down the Straits. This is usually caused by a semi-stable weather system off the coast producing an onshore flow. It doesn't seem to matter whether you have a high pressure or a low pressure system off the coast because the mountains that form the geographic boundaries of the Straits seem to be the dominant factor.

The uncommon and certainly the least predictable situation is the easterly. This is caused by a changing weather pattern. The first of the easterlies is very temporary and the result of a fast-moving front coming off a deep low-pressure cell sitting off the coast. The other easterly that occurs is the result of a high-pressure system that moves off the ocean and positions itself to the east and slightly to the north of the Straits.

The other aspect of Swiftsure that can't be ignored is tide and tidal currents. In the Pacific Northwest, we are under the influence of what is known as a semi-diurnal inequality. This means that there are two highs and two lows in a 24-hour period, with a high high and a low high, a low low and a high low. This makes for a particularly interesting situation this year with the high low and the low high tides being so close in height that there never is a second flood. Instead, there is only a decrease in the velocity of the ebb current. The rotary current at the Swiftsure Bank is another interesting phenomenon, which completes its cycle twice every 24 hours.



The race is probably best analyzed when divided into six sections: starting line to Race Passage, Race Passage to the Straits entrance, entrance of the Straits to Swiftsure Bank, Swiftsure Bank back to the entrance of the Straits, entrance of the Straits to Race Passage, and Race Rocks to the Finish.

Starting line to Race Passage:

The starting line is positioned between Brotchie Ledge and a large Canadian Naval vessel anchored off the entrance to Victoria Harbor. The line is normally square to Race Passage, thus making it very rarely square to the wind direction. This year the start will be during an ebb tide that will get progressively stronger as the starting sequence wears on. In the starting area the westerly wind will appear as a south southwesterly. The best start is on starboard a third of the way down the line from Brotchie Ledge in a position to tack to port and head toward the beach between Albert Head and Rodd Point. There is usually a small lift just before Albert Head. At Albert Head expect a small knock. Tack, and then tack back into the beach on port. At the beach, tack back to starboard when you can just lay North Race Rock.

With an easterly wind at the start, be prepared for a lot of confused air. Again, because of the size of the fleet, the favored end (in this case, the boat end) is not the place to be. Starting a third to two-thirds down the line in some kind of semi-clean air is more important.

Race Passage to the Straits entrance:

The typical westerly has you sailing through Race Passage on starboard tack with a projected landfall somewhere between Low Point and Twin on the U.S. side. As you proceed across the Straits, you'll be lifted to somewhere between Twin and Pillar Point. As you get within a mile or two of the beach, you should get knocked. As the tide will still be ebbing, you can take the knock and tack, or if it looks like the wind is holding into the beach, go in until the wind drops, then tack and ride the lift out.

If you find yourself through Race Passage on starboard tack and headed towards Freshwater Bay on the U.S. side in a southwesterly, port tack will take you toward Sheringham Point. If that is the case, tack to port and head out. The wind will almost certainly clock around to the traditional westerly and then northwesterly as you head out of the Straits. You should be headed as you approach the beach between Otter Point and Sheringham Point. Carry the knock right into the beach, tack back to starboard and then head across to the U.S. side. This puts you on the inside of a nice lift all the way across the Straits.

In the case of the easterly wind and resultant spinnaker run out the Straits, hold a course that's slightly high of the rhumb line once you clear Race Passage under spinnaker. The breeze can be spotty. Remember, the tide turns at 1750 and begins at a relatively small flood of .9 knots.

Entrance of the Straits to Swiftsure Bank:

Knowing exactly where you are is the key to rounding in good shape. The tidal current situation at the bank is unique. As mentioned earlier, the current turns clockwise twice each day. As you can see from the plot, the velocity of this current can range anywhere from .3 knots to .9 knots. Remember also, that if the wind has been blowing all day long at 20 knots, it can add another .5



knots of wind-generated current to the tidal current.

In the westerly, as you leave Waadah Island and head out, you'll be close to VTS buoy J. This is again another solid reference point for your navigator. Generally when you are knocked, the wind speed will drop. If it doesn't come back, tack and work back towards the south layline. In an easterly, by the time you have reached the mouth of the Straits, a rhumb course out to the mark is the safest. Again, knowing what sort of current will be at the mark can help you plan your spinnaker drop and subsequent rounding.

Swiftsure Bank back to the entrance of the Straits:

With a westerly wind and a port rounding at the mark, a bear-away spinnaker set with the pole to starboard is in order. While a jibe set may be more comfortable because you will be running down the face of the southwest swell, it will also take you into the calm encountered at Carmanah Point. Therefore, reach (if the air is light) and try to work down in the puffs. , sailing a course as close to the rhumb line to Race Rocks as possible. If it is blowing real hard, chances are the wind will be out of the south southwest and a chute set will be difficult. You will be better off to shake out the reefs, change up to a larger headsail, and reach back down the Straits.

After your great easterly spinnaker run to the mark, with a daylight rounding, hold a port tack back in toward Tatoosh until you get about half way between J buoy and Tatoosh. At this point, tack back toward the Canadian shore.

Entrance of the Straits to Race Passage:

Once you have made it back to the entrance under spinnaker on starboard tack, two things will happen - the seas won't be quite so confused and the wind will continue to back. At this point, jibe to port and reach up toward the Canadian shore. You should make a landfall between Cowper Bay and Sombrio Point. As you get closer to the Canadian shore, you may be headed to the point where you have to go back to a genoa. Be sure to avoid the calm patch that extends from 100 yards to two miles off the beach. In spite of the ebb tide, you are better to stay out in the wind regardless. The westerly would build, providing one of the reasons why everyone goes to Swiftsure - a great spinnaker ride home. Since there is a constant ebb, staying next to the beach will be important. Jibes in Race Passage are more fun to watch than to had to do. And is the wind is light, staying next to the rocks is important, as well as having confidence in your foredeck crew.

In the easterly, where you've rounded in daylight and tacked back toward the Canadian shore, you should be headed on starboard as you approach the beach. Sail well into the knock and tack back to port. This tack should hold all the way back to Sheringham Point; in this area, that means tacking the beach. Be careful not to get caught in the calms that can develop next to the beach as you approach Race Passage. In a south southeasterly, approach Tatoosh on port and carry it right into Waadah Point, then tack to starboard. This should put you on a constant lift all the way to Donaldson Island off Possession Point on the Canadian side of the Straits. From there to Race Passage, a short tack to the beach again is appropriate, watching for holes that can develop.

Race Rocks to the Finish:



For the final spinnaker run to the finish, in the typical westerly, if it is very light the wind will back as you get closer to the finish. Don't hesitate to jibe on the lift and keep your speed up. In a medium-strength westerly, the wind will normally provide you with a nice broad run on the rhumbline into the finish.

If it is blowing real hard in Race Passage, don't feel that you have to sail a course straight to the finish line. You are better off to keep the boat on its feet and sail off towards the Pilot and Quarantine Buoy. Usually the wind will back and drop. If you've sailed off in this direction you can usually reach up and maintain speed to the finish line

In an easterly, you end up reaching through Race Passage towards the finish line. This wind can either head you, necessitating a short tack to get to the finish, or lift you, allowing a starboard spinnaker reach into the finish. Being prepared for almost anything is the key.

What I have outlined here are generalizations. The actual race can be a combination of all of these with a dash of the unexpected thrown in for good measure. If I had to make a prediction about who will do the best, it will almost certainly be the crew that works the hardest Saturday night and gets the nod from Mother Nature.

SWIFTSURE WEEKEND: THE TRADITION CONTINUES

By Donna F. Randall, 2005 (part of Swiftsure Publicity & Promotion Committee from 2003 to 2005)

Yes, it's that time of year again. In Victoria, you can set your calendar by it. Once the Victoria Day weekend is behind us, the United States' Memorial Day weekend is upon us. And, that means it's time for hundreds of yachts and sailors to descend upon Victoria for the Swiftsure International Yacht Race!

If you grew up in Victoria, you probably remember many years of Swiftsure and assume it has been around forever. If you are new to the nautical city, perhaps you are wondering what all the fuss it about. In either case, read on to spark childhood memories or to learn about what you've missed. Either way, the voyage into local racing history will serve you well as you check out the racing action and accompanying events this coming weekend.

Starting with the first recorded yacht race in Victoria and right on up through the decades to the present day, recreational and professional sailors have been keen competitors, sharing their love of both the sea and of sea-going vessels powered by the wind. The first recorded sailboat racing in the Victoria area took place in the late 1850s between boats of the Royal Navy and the early colonists.

Interest in the sport grew in the following decades and, by 1930, six boats competed in a long distance race from Cadboro Bay around the lightship on Swiftsure Bank, at the entrance to the Juan de Fuca Strait. Conducted under the rules of the Royal Ocean Racing Club, the race saw *Claribel*, a "skimming dish schooner", win by 7 hours. And so, the Swiftsure Lightship Classic



Race was born.

While the Swiftsure yacht race was so named because its furthest most point is Swiftsure Bank, the bank itself got its name from the 19th century Royal Navy battleship that served as the Pacific flagship stationed at Esquimalt. The H.M.S. Swiftsure, 1870 to 1908, was the seventh ship in the Royal Navy to carry that name. The earliest ship of that name was launched in 1543 and was involved in action against the Spanish Armada in 1588. Now that's history!

In turn, the Swiftsure lightship station, which became the midway turning point of the Swiftsure yacht race, was established by the United States government in 1909 to mark the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The first vessel assigned to this station was painted yellow, with "Swiftsure" in large black letters on her sides. However, her relief ship, which filled in while the Swiftsure lightship was sent for her annual overhaul, carried the name "Relief" on her hull. So, should you have happened to notice rounding marks carrying both these name in photos from the Swiftsure Lightship Classic Race, you are very observant and now know the reason for what might have seemed a discrepancy.

Over the years the Swiftsure lightship endured much rough weather on this exposed station, and on July 1st, 1961, with almost no protest, the Swiftsure lightship was considered unnecessary and recalled, causing a dilemma for the organizers of the Swiftsure International Yacht Race –what to do without a rounding mark? Since that time, the Navy has provided ships equipped to anchor in such deep and unpredictable waters for just this purpose.

Whether you've followed Swiftsure over the years or have come to know of the race more recently, you might have noticed that no longer do all participating yachts race to Swiftsure Bank and back. While the long course, the Swiftsure Lightship Classic, still exists and still is considered by many to be "the" Swiftsure race, three other courses now exist.

In 1962, after considerable grumbling by skippers of boats too small to go to "the Bank", the Royal Victoria Yacht Club introduced a shorter course to Clallam Bay, some fifteen miles west of Port Angeles, and called it the Juan de Fuca Race. With increased participation in the Swiftsure International Yacht Race, and with only two courses from which to choose –one of 137 miles and one of only 76 miles –the Cape Flattery Race was born in 1988. At 100 miles, this new course length fell almost exactly half way between the longer and the shorter courses and proved very popular, attracting some of the very largest yachts.

Then, in 2004, taking into consideration the older yachts (not to mention the older skippers and crew members!), an inshore course of approximately 20 miles was added to the mix, for yachts designed prior to January 1975. This race has the attraction of returning the yachts to the inner harbour in time for a Saturday evening celebration, while all but the fastest multi-hulls remain in the straits, either on their way out to their rounding mark or back in to the finish line.

Now why, you might ask, is Swiftsure called an "international" yacht race? Well, first of all, as you might have noticed above, the Swiftsure lightship –the original rounding mark for the race – arrived on the scene courtesy of the United States Government. But further, Swiftsure has attracted yachts and sailors from Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii, from New



Zealand, and even from Russia. In addition, from 1948 to 1950 the race started in Port Townsend and finished in Victoria. And, based on its reputation amongst racers, it truly is a race of international scope and stature –and we’re lucky enough it have it in our own back yard, so to speak.

Speaking of our own back yard, over the years the Swiftsure organizing committee and the City of Victoria officials have explored various methods of combining land and sea during the Swiftsure “weekend”. Starting in 1955, the Eaton’s display window at the corner of Douglas and View streets was set up as “Swiftsure headquarters”, where a large map of the racecourse was installed and the progress of the race shown by moving miniature boats across the map. As the race grew, this became a daunting task. But the event, and this way of graphically displaying its progress, was very much appreciated by Victorians. People used to line the sidewalks and sit at the curbs, and a strong feeling of excitement about the race occurred right there, in the middle of town.

In 1958, at a time when Swiftsure involved a roll call of all entering yachts and a sunset ceremony courtesy of the Sea Cadets in the inner harbour, the Friday night crowd for these opening ceremonies was estimated at 5,000. The 1983 version of Swiftsure marked the start of the “race week” concept, with inshore races held on Wednesday and Thursday and with Harbour Fest combining both Victoria Days and Swiftsure. This arrangement lasted until 1991. With a canned music rock concert offered, a crowd of 30,000 to 40,000 people were attracted to downtown Victoria, and perhaps the arrests for disorderly and drunken behaviour helped bring to an end to this once good idea!

Returning back to the Eaton’s window as a “low tech” way of tracking the race invites an investigation into the technological advances employed by the Swiftsure International Yacht Race to determine and publish race results. The year 1973 marks the entry of Swiftsure into the “computer age”, but results were slow to appear as information had to be delivered by hand to the University of Victoria and then laboriously key punched. Since Swiftsure’s 1995 foray into the Internet, significant technological progress has been made, with race results electronically tabulated to the point of accurately predicting the winners even before all yachts have crossed the finish line. And, should Swiftsure obtain an interested sponsor and follow a growing but expensive trend, we just might see the use of transponders on all yachts entered into the race, thus allowing for continuous tracking and immediate production of statistics and calculation of race results.

Of course, no look at technological advances would be complete without reviewing the valuable role played by technology in keeping people informed about the progress of the race as it unfolds, and in bringing the “human side” of the race to the public.

It was way back in 1931, during the second Swiftsure yacht race, that the first known communications report was successfully transmitted, in this case from the Swiftsure lightship to the Gonzales Wireless Station. Swiftsure 1952 saw the first use of radio reports to apprise people of yacht positions and progress, as Humphrey Golby went on the air to become “the voice of Swiftsure”. In 1956 CKDA’s news director, Andy Stephen, conducted a 32-hour marathon radio broadcast with reports every hour. Over the years, C-FAX radio has conducted live



broadcasts of the race start and hourly race updates throughout the weekend, while CH TV and Shaw Cable have shot footage from boats at the start line and from float planes throughout the race to embellish their news broadcasts, thereby keeping the public informed in a timely fashion. And, the Times Colonist has used technological advances to get photos and stories from the water to the newspaper within a highly condensed period of time.

Added to official media efforts, starting in 2004 at the Swiftsure Information Centre at ship point, a group of volunteers has made use of a VHF listen-only radio, cell phone calls to skippers on the water, and computers for immediate input to report the race progress to the public, via www.swiftsure.org and Shaw Cable TV. This team also interviews skippers and crewmembers to write stories about their Swiftsure race experience –all in an attempt to bring home the human side of the race while the yachts and crews are still on the water and upon their return to the inner harbour.

As for the race itself, the lure of it remains the unpredictability of the winds and waters and, as is so often the case, a rewarding spinnaker run home that inspires racers to plan their return the following year before they even cross the finish line.

Make no mistake about the unpredictability of Swiftsure! While we often hear about the years virtually void of wind, known as “Driftsure” years, Swiftsure has offered its share of big weather and seas. In 1971, for example, six yachts were dismasted just after the start in 35-knot winds, with 44 yachts retiring during the course of the race. In 1979 some 130 yachts were knocked out of the race within two hours of the start, with two yachts colliding just off the start line and one of them coming very close to sinking. But through it all, Swiftsure has suffered just one fatality during its many years –a testament to the team of dedicated volunteers running a tight ship, the safety standards employed, and the skill level of the racers.

From May 28th to 30th, 2005, the Royal Victoria Yacht Club will host the 62nd running of the Swiftsure International Yacht Race, to continue the proud tradition of providing challenging racing that includes the return of many strong competitors, including some formerly retired classic yachts. Among these classics look for *Circe*, winner of the 1934 Swiftsure race. In 1969 she raced her last Swiftsure until she returned for the 60th Swiftsure in 2003, and again for the first Swiftsure Classics Race in 2004 to win the Wooden Boat Division trophy. And, of course, keep an eye on the *Oriole*, as she continues the tradition of recreational versus military sailing competition. The *Oriole* first entered Swiftsure in 1955 when she was 34 years young!

Asked why they return year after year to compete in the Swiftsure International Yacht Race, skippers and crewmembers always speak about the challenges of the race, the camaraderie, and the beauty and hospitality of Victoria and Victorians. We in Victoria carry a proud tradition of hosting this challenging and enjoyable race and related events. While no one can predict the race conditions, tradition would have it that we can expect a well planned event both on and off the water as Victoria welcomes yachts and racers from near and far to continue to make Swiftsure history.



SWIFTSURE BON MOTS AND ONE-LINERS

- “Most long-time sailors maintain it is never the same twice. But one thing is certain - every participant had better be ready for the race of his or her life.”
- “A challenge of hull and soul.”
- “Swiftsure is a classic race which has equal amounts of terror, boredom, and racing thrills.”
- On Royal Vancouver’s Stu Watts (Pendragon; Sly’d Away) marrying one of his crewmembers in 1992, the new bride said “he’s gaining both a wife and a good jib trimmer.” At that point she had already competed in 10 Swiftsures.
- On organizing Swiftsure: “Royal Vic has a logistics problem similar to the Normandy invasion.”
- *Rage* skipper Steve Rander, 2005: “Victoria is Disney Land for adults.”
- *Rage* skipper Steve Rander, 2005: “[Swiftsure involves] a mixture of adventure, a chance to challenge yourself, and a way to see if you still have what it takes –and you get to share these experiences with the others of your crew and see them grow over the years.”
- Nick Banks, crewmember on *Dragonfly*, 2005: “Although we’re looking forward to the good competition at Swiftsure again next year, and for years to come, we do like to win! That’s what Swiftsure’s all about –good companionship and competition.”
- Jeremy Smith, skipper *Yummy*: “The best ride any of us have ever had and probably ever will have” about the 2005 race when *Yummy* completed the Juan de Fuca course in a record-breaking 9:18:53.
- Bob Bentham, 2006: “The more competition, the merrier.”
- As of 2006, Ed Life, skipper of *Surt*, has participated in “33 consecutive races.” He says, “It’s such a great race ... Although everyone has an opportunity to win, those who win and place consistently are sailors to be admired – it brings out the champions.”
- Ed Life, skipper of *Surt*, 2006: “[Swiftsure is] part of the beginning of summer in Victoria.”
- Michael Pack, skipper of *Caelestis*, 2007: “[Swiftsure] is the pre-eminent event in the Pacific Northwest. Ideally, we would also have a fall Swiftsure Race.”



- “Everyone feels like Kings and Queens. It is nice to feel special” Roger Aubin skipper of *Annie*, 2007: on what he enjoys the most about racing in the Swiftsure International Yacht Race.
- “When it comes to Swiftsure, our crew works all year round for the Triple Crown (Patos, Saltspring, and Swiftsure). Swiftsure to us is not Swiftsure weekend, or even the week after the May Long Weekend. It is just called "The Weekend!" It is the one race I dream about winning one year... or even this!” Roger Aubin Skipper of *Annie*, 2008
- “If I do it often enough, I might win.” - Doug Fryer, Night Runner, Swiftsure Lightship Classic Overall Winner 2013
- “I wouldn’t want to arm wrestle Doug Fryer.” - Vern Burkhardt, Swiftsure Chair
- “I keep telling myself that all’s well that ends well but at the same time kicking myself for ending up in the situation in the first place. Losing someone overboard in 30+ knots of breeze with the kite up is a nightmare scenario. Huge thanks to the stellar crew for responding admirably.” - Greg Slynstad, Skipper of Wasabi
- “Thanks all of you for staging the 2015 safety and technical evening. The " Freewind " crew from Schooner Cove Yacht Club agreed this was a very valuable experience and we are looking forward to our participation in Swiftsure again.” - Richard Hudson