

LOFT LINES

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Ensign Sinks in 100' Water – by Alex Crerand

“So I got up at the crack of dawn. I rode in a car all day. When I went into the house my grandpa’s dog bit me, and now I just scraped my knee jumping into the sailboat.” Addison was filling me in on how his Saturday July 2nd had gone so far as we sailed away from the dock. “Wow” I responded, “what else could go wrong?” Famous last words, little did I know that about 10 minutes into the future I would be watching Big Blue disappear into the abyss.

July 4th weekend was going to be a goodtime, nothing had to be done, and the only plan was to sit in the sun and sail Big Blue. Big Blue is my family’s Ensign Class sailboat that we bought in 1990. Terrified my first few times on the boat as a 6 year old, I have come to love it. Winds that Saturday were blowing in the mid to high 20s I would estimate, which means this solo outing I would be flying the small working jib. Just after I dropped the painter, I heard a familiar voice from the dock, it was Addison and he wanted in on my current sailing session. Addison is our 15 year old East Lake Road neighbor. Addison hails from south of the Mason-Dixon Line in Atlanta, Georgia and summers with his family on Keuka. After telling me about his day so far we hit water that was a little rough, and being the rock star, young up and coming sailor/sail maker that I am, I wanted to adjust my sails for optimal performance in the current wind situation. On any normal day if I wanted to make an adjustment I would have just let the boat go into the wind and made the necessary adjustments and been on my merry way, but today I said, “Hey Addison, take the tiller for a second.” Addison is a good sailor on paper, and I assumed he knew what he was doing; he had taken lessons for a year or two at an unnamed local yacht club. After applying a little vang and cunningham, a giant gust blew through and Addison didn’t want to dump any power off the sails. This is what I get for assuming he even knew to do that, which he didn’t and I should have known from the start not to put him in such a situation. He fought the boat wanting to round up into the wind. Water poured over the leeward rail. The boat did eventually come into the wind, but then it was too late. The stern was now below the water and I felt a strange numbness in the roof of my mouth and was short of breath. What is

happening? Why is the boat sinking? A lack of adequate floatation is ultimately what did her in. Now my beloved boat was lying under 100 feet of water and her condition was unknown.

Back at work they laughed at me, asking me how I could swamp such a big tub of a boat like an Ensign, but I could tell they were genuinely sad for me and felt my pain. Chants of, "let it lie" echoed in the loft as I frantically searched for a rescue team of some kind, no luck. All I heard was, "that boat would be too heavy," or "that's too deep for us." Talk of buying a scow or catamaran made me cringe, hope was fading fast - it was looking like I would have to give up on the classiest boat ever to sail on Keuka Lake . Then one glorious afternoon just before leaving my boss Tony found the business card of a customer, a New York State Trooper Diving Squad customer. The card was for Terry Stewart, who was the head of the group just mentioned and Tony called him and explained the situation. A positive response followed and I got on the phone with him, it seems that they could recover my boat and use this experience as a training exercise. They could practice using their special inflatable bags that are blown up under water and can lift boats/planes etc. off the bottom. This was the perfect solution. After the schedule was ironed out, and the boat located (deemed to be in good condition and worth the rescue) , the date was set: November 16th.

I was told that the uprising process would be very anti- climactic and it was to say the least. Waiting in my little row boat near the Sheriff's boat turned out to be very boring, so I waited with Terry, the ring leader of this whole operation, on the porch. We looked on with a number of family and friends; some had traveled from as far away as Deposit, New York , as they started off by dragging the boat along the muddy bottom to get it closer to shore. After an eternity of waiting, the air bags had done their job and the very top of the mast broke the surface, and the porch erupted in cheer. After that she was moved inch by inch closer to shore, with each painstaking movement towards shore more and more of her was revealed and she was just as we left her on that fateful afternoon. The weather was much nicer when she went down, sunny and in the mid to high 70s, than the uprising- which was cloudy, in the mid 40s with torrential downpourings scattered throughout the day. Once the rails were above water, a fire hose pump was brought in to pump out the rest of the water, which had the viscosity of a Wendy's Frosty at this point, after that I heroically rowed her back to her mooring through the high wind and rain. And just like that, after months of agony and anxiety it was over, Big Blue was finally back where she belonged. I did an inventory of everything onboard and set all the small "sucker" fish free. The wind calmed and the clouds began to clear along the western horizon I felt an enormous weight being lifted from my shoulders. With the now setting sun in my face I looked over the glassy water, everything was right again in my fantasy sailboat world. Since my great-grandfather bought the cottage in the late 1940s, a lot of crazy stuff has gone on there, but I think this tops them all.

I would like to conclude this story by thanking a number of people who made this all possible. First I would like to thank Terry Stewart and the SCUBA division of the New York State Troopers. Jonathan and Anna Gorbald for lending us their newly purchased Ensign trailer. Steve Haarstick for letting me store the boat in the back building here at work, which is heated- letting the boat freeze outside would have made all these efforts pointless. My mother for her financial and not to mention emotional support. Neal Burtner for letting us use his big van to tow the boat. Last but not least Doug Burtner, who helped me keep my head straight when I

continually panicked throughout this whole ordeal. Doug is very experienced with Ensigns and his great knowledge of the boat helped out immensely.

Click on the following link to view pictures of the sinking and raising of "Big Blue"

[The Sinking of "Big Blue" - Pictures](#)

SAILS FOR 2007? Don't wait any longer.

The winter production schedule is fast approaching maximum capacity. If you are thinking that you want a sail for the start of the season (4 months away) don't delay.

This winter is off to a great start for us and may be the start of another record year for Haarstick. We are easily packed through March right now. With 45 new Ensign sails being built for customers around the country, 36 Pram Sails going to Duxbury Bay Maritime School , 25 Ideal 18 Sails and our regular backlog of dinghy to 45 footers, we are keeping busy. So busy that if you are thinking about sails for 2007 you shouldn't wait any longer to get a quote.

For those of you down south that are still sailing, we can still squeeze you in for completion in the next 4-6 weeks with out disturbing our Northern production schedule.

Give us a call or e-mail if you would like a quote or have any questions.

Thanks to all of our customers for your continued support of Haarstick Sailmakers.

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