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The David Agency Gazette

January 2, 1991

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Agency Doings...

Article Courtesy of *The Elmhurst Independent* / November 3, 2010 - Page 15

Elmhurst insurance agent wins division in Mackinac race

By Jean Lawrence

For The Elmhurst Independent

For 102 years, sailors have competed in the 330-mile race from Chicago to Mackinac Island. And for the past 33 years, Elmhurst resident Glenn McCarthy has joined his father in the race. This summer, the McCarthy family and their crewmates won first place in their division which was comprised of 68-foot "Grande Dame" ships.

"The race started on July 24 at 2 p.m. in downtown Chicago," said Glenn. "That happened to be the day after the big storm in Elmhurst, so I was bailing water from my house from 2 a.m. until 9 a.m., then headed down to the boat to start bailing there."

Fortunately, the weather improved for the race.

"We had medium windspeeds," said Glenn. "The conditions have a big effect on the race every year because you never know what you're going to get."

Glenn's daughter Christina, a senior at York, raced with her dad for the third time this year.

"It was so clear at night, away from the light pollution of Chicago," she said. "It was the first time I'd seen shooting stars and satellites. I love

the bunks. Glenn served as watch captain and was in charge of the safety of the crew and decisions made during watch. "There is always something to be thinking about or doing," he said. "There are many sails to choose from and I'm always thinking about the course we're following and when we want to trade off distance to get stronger winds. Even when you're doing nothing, you still need to be strategic about where the weight is dispersed or fine tuning the sails."

"The four-hour watch can be brutal," Christina added.

"During my first race it was really hard to wake up, but this time it got easier."

The McCarthys raced in a Nelson Marek-made boat that they named "Pororoca," which is a Brazilian word meaning "very loud sound." It comes from where the Amazon River flows into the ocean and the tide rises over the river, forming a 20-foot crashing wall of water. Glenn's father and his partner own the boat. There are bunks for 10 and a galley kitchen with a stove, oven, two refrigerators,

the wind God gives us."

The McCarthys have been sailing for decades. Glenn took lessons at the Chicago Yacht Club as a kid and started competing in adult leagues with his dad when he was 13 years old.

"I'm constantly reading and relearning," he said. "I like to rerun races on computer screens. In addition to the physical strength that's required to hoist a 120-pound sail up six or seven feet on deck and then 70 feet in the air, there's a lot of mental work with sailing. It's a combination of strategy – like a chess game – and weather study." The Pororoca crew went under the famous Mackinac Bridge seven miles before the finish line and began their celebration.

"We held our breath coming into the finish line and then the navigator announced we won," said Glenn. "The crew erupted in big cheers." The highlight of the race for Glenn was doing it with his family.

"One of the neat things about the sport is that it is family-oriented," he said.

When he isn't sailing, Glenn works for The David Agency, a full-service insurance agency located at 385 North York in Elmhurst.

sailing because it's very calming and tranquil."

Glenn and Christina were joined by 13 crewmates, including Glenn's father and sister. The crew raced day and night for about 42 hours northeast across Lake Michigan. They each took four-hour "watch" shifts on deck followed by four hours of rest in

and a sink. There are 10 sails, two of which are up at a time. "Life is pretty simple on board," said Glenn. "We prepare our meals and every detail in advance of the race so that we can focus on one thing: going as fast as possible with

"We do the comparison shopping for our clients to deliver the best bids," he explained. "We do anywhere from \$300 to \$1 million premium policies and we say we can do anything for anyone.

"And of course, you gravitate to what you love, so a lot of my clients are sailors!"



Pororoa Crew Receiving Their "Brag Flag" At The Grand Hotel Lawn on Mackinac Island, MI. Glenn with Christina On His Shoulders.

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