

# Sports

## Sailing at Westwood: Wet, Wild and Wonderful!

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Sailing, sailing, over the ocean blue. Yo! Ho! Blow the man down.

OK. So those lines belong to two different songs, but that's the mood one has when attending Mankato State University's sailing class.

This is just one sailor's story.

### Day one

I report to class. The first day is like any other class. I get some general information.

All of a sudden they start telling me all these terms and technical stuff. Things like reaching and running and beating. I panic. I thought this was going to be a nice leisurely class.

Just as I'm about to choke on my gum, the instructor says the magic words: you won't be tested on this information.

Next comes the part I was really worried about: the dreaded swimming test!

I'm relieved to find out that all it consists of is your body in the deep end of the pool for ten minutes, without touching the sides.

As instructor Don Robinson put it, "We don't care what you do. You can swim, tread water, float, sit on the bottom, whatever. You just have to survive for ten minutes in the water."

So, I survived the terrible swimming test. Basically, I just kind of floated around. It's easy to do when you're as buoyant as I.

### Day two

I arrive at Westwood, bar/restaurant/marina. (Just an aside, they have great french fries and strong drinks.)

Well anyhow, once there I learn to rig the boats. Here's an amazing fact: the word sheet in sailing does not mean the sail. A sheet is a rope. Go figure.

### Day three

Finally the day comes when I get in the water. Hooray!

My first day on the water is gray and a bit breezy for my tastes. But, I swallow hard and jump on in.

My partner and I sail out of the

marina, out on to the wide open sea. Well, the lake isn't really that big, but it sure seems like it on your first time out.

So, my partner and I are moving along at a pretty good clip. It's like I'm transformed into Sinbad, the greatest of all sailors.

Well, not Sinbad; maybe Popeye. No, not Popeye either. Well, at least I'm one of those lily-livered land-lubbers.

Yes I am on my way. It is all so invigorating. And I'm so cool. Actually, I probably seem like Bill Murray's character in "What about Bob." Shouting things like, "I'm sailing! I'm sailing! Whee! Wow!"

Well, things are going so well old Murphy just has to put in his two cents. All of a sudden, the boom falls off.

The boom is a long pole that directs the sail. Needless to say: trouble.

Time has come to flag down Peggy and Mike (they are Don's assistants and helped keep an eye on all of us newly baptized sailors).

Peggy and Mike come over in the motor boat and tell us to go to shore and re-attach the boom.

Only problem is with the direction the wind is coming from we have to go to the opposite shore from where we took off. That means that we have to sail all the way back once we re-attach the boom.

Unfortunately after we re-attach the boom, we just can't seem to get going again.

It is at this point that I learn another important lesson: the difference between a jib and a jibe. A jib is a kind of sail. This is completely harmless and cannot get you wet.

A jibe on the other hand is a type of turn. This, if done improperly or when the skipper is unprepared, both of which are usually factors for a beginning sailor, will dump the boat.

I get wet. Very wet.

But, it's fun. We just turn the boat upside right and take another go at it.

Our second go doesn't go either. However, we don't tip over



this time. We just don't go.

So finally Mike and Peggy decide to pull out my partner and put in a ringer to get me back to shore.

### Day four

After a four day reprieve I'm back out to Westwood. This time the sun is out and there's a nice

gentle breeze. Today is good sailing.

Things go off without a hitch. I'm beginning to feel like a real pro. Yup, it's smooth sailing now.

### Day five

Again, a gorgeous sailing day. That is until I'm moved and put in

a Javilin.

A Javilin is a larger boat. It fits about six people.

I call it the floating cow. My two partners and I are afraid that if we put our hands in the water we might stop the boat.

### Day six

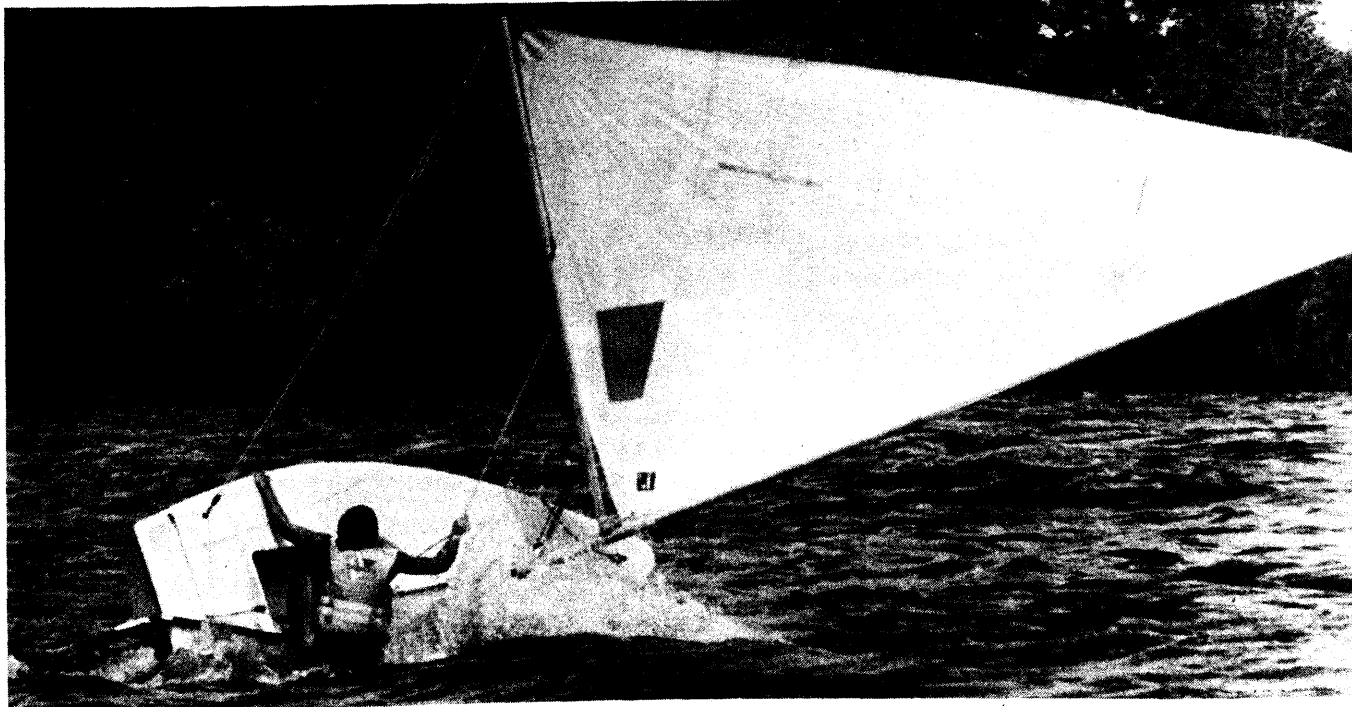
It's cloudy and there is no wind. Worse yet, I'm in a Javilin again.

### Day seven

This is the day I experience the other side of sailing. The side where one sits on the dock and drinks.

Due to rain and thunderstorms, we are allowed to choose whether or not we want to go out on the lake.

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**Top:** With sails billowed MSU students Susan and Jill skim across Lake Washington.

**Left:** One sailor performs a re-enactment of the Titanic's last moments.

Photos by  
**Mike Jamieson**