



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

April 2005

This is the Spring 2005 issue of *Signals from TARSUS*, and accompanies *Signals* and *The Outlaw*, together with AGM papers and Literary Weekend notices. This copy of *Signals from TARSUS* marks a change from four newsletters per year to three per year, keeping with the shift in TARS mailings from four to three which was inaugurated over the last year. The February mailing, which mostly existed to get AGM information out, was discontinued, and the advance AGM information made available earlier. Since we mail *SfT* with the UK periodicals, had we stayed on a four-per-year schedule we would have had to mail one independently at additional cost. As it is, going to three issues per year (April, August and Nov/Dec) also lowers our production costs for *SfT* and hopefully means that we won't be running a deficit each year in the future.

I'm sorry to report that we will not be receiving any more installments of the Kenya series from Des Kelsall, but our sincere thanks for the four installments which he was able to send us. However, in this issue we have the next "namesake animals" essay from Molly McGinnis, the third installment of Claire Barnett's "Exploring in *Elbereth*," and articles by Debra Alderman and Jim Wessel Walker (Mary Wessel Walker's father). Mary herself returns with a Spring Reading Recommendation, and if there's room we'll continue with the Canadian TARS Quizzes.

Welcome

A warm welcome to Bonnie MacAlpine (NH), Alan Scease (ME), Glenn Shea (CT), Lesley Shirk (TX), and Abigail Struxness (OR), who have joined TARS and TARSUS since our last newsletter.

Special Thanks

While I always try to thank our contributors I seem to forget to thank David Bates and Anne LeVeque, the production folks who receive the U.K. publications (and *Signals from TARSUS*), and package and mail the publications to the U.S. membership. So, many many thanks to David and Anne and the others in the D.C. area who help when they can.

Membership Drops

If there's a big black spot on the envelope containing this mailing (and there are several of you!) **you have not renewed for 2005** and your membership will be terminated as of 1 May 2005 **without any further notification**. You may reinstate your membership at any time thereafter, but will not receive any publications which you missed in the interim.

Ransome Maps

Mike Field, of Wooden Boat Fittings in Australia, has made his wonderful maps of The Lake, Wild Cat Island, and Secret Water available as prints, which are now directly available from the U.S. Coordinator. We have a supply of all three maps in two sizes: A4 (8 ¼ x 12) and A3 (12 x 16½). The A4 size are \$5.70 each and the A3 size \$8.80 each; p&p is additional. You can see these maps on the AR web site at <http://www.arthur-ransome.org/ar/armaps.html>. If you are interested, please order them from the U.S. Coordinator as you would a TARS Stall order and don't send money until we know what the entire cost is including shipping.

Amazon Publications (Repeat)

The 2005 Amazon Publication will be *Ransome Broadside—A Miscellany* and subscribers will also receive a bonus *Swallows and Amazons Colouring Book* (which will also be available from the TAR Stall). *Ransome Broadside* will be available in paperback and in a limited edition hardback. U.S. TARS may subscribe through the TARSUS Coordinator at \$30 (for the paperback) or \$45 (for the hardback).

Namesake Animals from the Swallows & Amazon Books

Molly McGinnis



Buzzard (WH)

Common Buzzard (*Buteo Buteo*)

Family: **Accipitridae**

Order: **Falconiformes**

“Two birds, far-away brown specks, were floating round the summits of the crags.”

“Buzzards,” said Peggy. Just calling to each other. There are nearly always some of them up there round the crags.”

“Do you think they’ve got a nest up there? Let’s just try to see it...”

The “specks” (above) in these few pages of *Winter Holiday* are all we see of buzzards, but look what happens. “Do you think they’ve got a nest up there? ...” “Come on,” said Roger. “It’s our turn to explore. Lucky I thought of the rope.” And then, Dick’s “Just let me get my telescope on it ... It’s not a nest. It’s a sheep.” And then the rescue, scientifically planned and courageously carried out by Dick, with a little help from the buzzards at a bad moment: “Dick looked down... He felt suddenly a little sick. He looked up at the further crags, where the buzzards were still wheeling...” It was Mr. Dixon’s sheep, from the farm where the D’s are staying. Mr. Dixon says “It’s not many lads would go along that ledge” and to show his gratitude and admiration builds the D’s a sledge, and Dick and Dorothea’s sail to the North Pole brings the book to a smashing finish. You could say that the last section of *Winter Holiday*, the part where you can’t put the book down, is the plot the buzzards built.

But why is Dick so excited about seeing buzzards? They’re just vultures, aren’t they? Can’t anyone see vultures anywhere?

Not exactly. To Americans a “buzzard” is an American Vulture, but that name has drifted from its proper place. The buzzards we glimpse in Ransome’s books are the “Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*, and are one of a group of “Buzzard Hawks” or “Buteo Hawks,” broadwinged soaring hawks that take prey from the ground (as opposed to the Falcons, which snatch birds from the air as they fly). The “Common Buzzard” was not so very common when Ransome was writing, nesting and usually seen only around high rocky cliffs in a few areas of the North. Where they were found at all they were “common” enough: it is often hard to understand that a rare bird or plant may be quite common in the scattered patches where there are some left. Thus Peggy says “Just calling to each other. There are nearly always some of them up there,” but the buzzard that was a common sight to the Amazons was a rare species to Dick and in much of England, though *Buteo buteo* was then, and is still, resident and common over all of Eurasia, eastward into Asia and south into North Africa.

If we could magnify one of the tiny specks in the book in real life, we would see a bird with broad wings and tail, in shape very like our most common and widespread hawk, the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). But in England the Common Buzzard is colored a uniform dark-barred gray and our Red-tail has brick-red upper tail feathers and lots of contrast between its dark upper body and light (“countershaded”) breast and belly. In other parts of its range, the Common Buzzard is very variable in body color and the some look very much like a Red-tail without a red tail. Perhaps long ago a few common buzzards were blown from the bulge of Africa to the shores of America, to become –if it was enough millions of years ago-- ancestors of our Red-tail and perhaps of most of our 13 buteo hawks. Dick would be a happy raptor-watcher in North America. He might confuse our Turkey Vultures with buteo hawks at first, for the Turkey Vultures circle in small groups and so does the Common Buzzard. Everyone hopes to see a Golden Eagle –there are

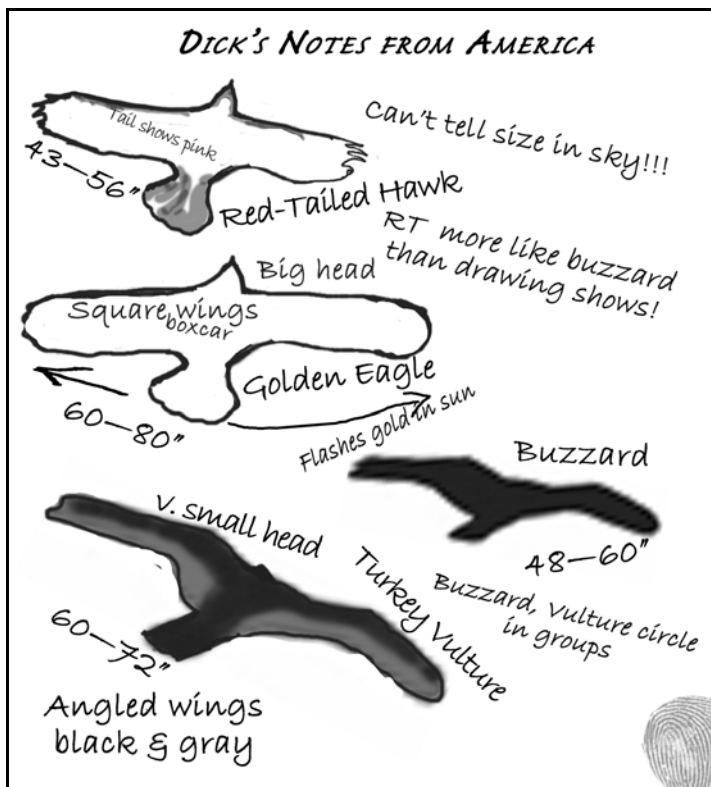
Goldens in Scotland but not in England-- and Red-tails, Turkey Vulture, and Common Buzzard are all wishfully mistaken for Golden Eagles. In Scotland this happens so much that Scots sometimes call the Common Buzzard the "Tourist Eagle!"

England's buzzard populations have had many ups and downs over the centuries. In the Middle Ages, falconry was the most important sport of the nobility and training a falcon to take a bustard (a turkey-sized crane relative, extinct in England since about 1830) was the pride of the sport. Buzzards aren't adapted by nature for this kind of hunting and were despised as "untrainable"—so much so that "buzzard" became a slang word for a useless person. They were regarded as competitors to sportsmen (and probably as menaces to domestic poultry) and persecuted. Buzzard persecution became more intense when guns replaced falcons and the pride of the rich sportsman was to have shot the largest possible "bag" of pheasant, grouse, or other game birds. Game birds were intensively managed—we would now call them "farmed," perhaps—on the great estates and buzzards were removed by the gamekeepers and as guns became common they could be killed as "vermin" by anyone with a gun. Buzzards do take an occasional unwary game bird, but their preferred prey animals are pest species, especially rabbits, rodents, snakes and lizards. Widespread guns were only one effect of the Industrial Age -- more and more plowing and building transformed meadows and marshes to towns and increasingly barren croplands. This habitat loss and fragmentation affected all raptors, including buzzards, and populations continued to drop.

The 20th century brought new tragedy and new hope to birds of prey. In England, many raptors became extinct on the island in the first two decades of the century, done in by the double impact of intensive agriculture and more and more guns in the hands of more and more people. At the time Ransome was writing, there were probably only about 10,000 buzzards in England, and things got much worse, and then better, within his lifetime. Even as the last of the Swallows and Amazons books were being written, soon after the end of the 2nd World War in Europe, a French scientist and landowner (Dr. Armand delille) introduced a South American rabbit virus, myxomatosis, onto his estates, and the wonderfully effective and seemingly safe new insecticide DDT began to blanket the world. In 1953 the egg-thinning effects began to create a worldwide disaster for raptors and in October of that year myxomatosis reached England. Eighteen months later, almost all the rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) in Britain were dead. The near-disappearance of its main food source was a worse disaster for the buzzard than for the rabbit. The buzzards were nearly starved out of existence before the last few hundred changed their food habits and began scavenging on carrion (dead animals), while the rabbits began to recover rather quickly as the few survivors began to do what rabbits do best --reproduce (like rabbits, Roger would surely say) and a more myxomatosis-resistant population developed.

Perhaps the triple-whammy "Silent Spring" that made several British raptors extinct in England and reduced others to a very few individuals won't prove to have been such a bad thing in the end. Today a much more wildlife-conscious and especially raptor-conscious public showers raptors with attention and support. They are protected from many human threats including shooting, land is conserved for them, and many species, including some that were wiped out long before the disaster years, are being reintroduced. There are thirty to sixty times as many buzzards now as there were in Winter Holiday times, at least 30,000 and maybe 60,00 of them, and they are moving into areas where they haven't nested for hundreds of years. Dick wouldn't have to go far to see a buzzard today, but they still haven't reached the eastern areas where Dick and Dorothea lived when not adventuring with Swallows or Amazons.

In the Americas, the Red-tailed Hawk was never endangered and almost any American, Mexican or Canadian can easily see a bird much like the Common Buzzards the Polar Expedition saw. The Red-tail was, and often still is, despite its protected status, shot without



thought, but its range is so great (and much of it still has few people compared to most of Britain) that its population has never been much affected. Egg-thinning affected Red-tail populations less than those of some other raptors, and it has adapted very well to living with humans. When dense housing and acres of paving for shopping centers take over agricultural and rangeland, more reclusive (“shy”) raptors disappear, but Redtails find a city high-rise roof or a large tree on a busy street a perfectly satisfactory nest spot and easily change their menus from meadow mice and gopher snakes to city pigeons and rats. Some of our large cities’ Redtails are famous (New York City’s Pale Male made headlines all over the country) and many can be watched on their WebCams. Perhaps in the future large English cities like York and Manchester will have their own resident buzzards. English buzzards nest in trees in their new lowland habitats, and recently a nest was discovered right on the ground. Moving into cities as cities take over their habitat seems a quite possible next step for British buzzards!



Sailing and GeoCaching in Puget Sound

Debra Alderman
Seattle, Washington



Akiva and *Semaphore*

Puget Sound is the big notch at the upper left hand corner of the United States. It’s a huge inlet of the Pacific Ocean which is dotted with islands, bays, harbors and lots of water! The Sound teems with life from resident pods of Orca whales to some of the largest octopus in the world. A typical day sailing on the Sound will give you glimpses of bald eagles, great blue herons, coots, cormorants, ducks, geese, grebes, and, if you’re lucky, a loon.

In August 2004 Captain Moti Krauthamer and 11-year old Able-seaman Akiva Krauthamer, set out for a week-long sail on the Sound in our 19.5 ft. MacGregor, *Semaphore*. (The writer, who is actually the Mate, had to stay at home and do native stuff like going to work!) It turned out that the week designated for the voyage was the rainiest of the season. Fortunately the crew and captain were good sports about the weather and enjoyed every minute of the trip.

They sailed to and camped out on Blake Island, and stopped for provisions and showers at harbors along the way such as Olalla and Gig Harbor. After reaching Penrose Point State Park on the Key Peninsula, they headed back north again. They ended their voyage by going from salt water to fresh water via the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks and eventually reached *Semaphore*’s home port on Portage Bay, between Lake Union and Lake Washington.

Very much in the spirit of Swallows and Amazons, the captain and crew of the *Semaphore* made friends on the trip with the captain and crew of another small boat and invited them to join in one of their favorite activities – geocaching.

Geocaching is a cool sport that’s kind of a cross between orienteering and a high-tech scavenger hunt. In order to participate, you need to have a hand-held GPS (global positioning system). Ordinary folks who get into this sport hide containers anywhere between the size of an Altoids mint box to a shoe-box sized Tupperware which are known as caches (pronounced ‘cashes’). Usually the caches are hidden in public parks and they can be either very easy or extremely challenging to find and get to. The coordinates



Akiva in *Semaphore*’s cabin

of the locations are posted on a web site (<http://www.geocaching.com>) along with some cryptic hints. Usually the caches have little treasures inside and the etiquette is to take something out and leave something else in its place for the next visitor. Most caches also have a visitor's log so you can sign it and show that you've been there (kind of like the messages in the cairn at the top of Kanchenjunga!)

The Semaphores and their new friends enjoyed working out the clues to several geocaches in their various ports-of-call during their trip. They didn't find all the caches, but they had a lot of fun slogging through wet woods and doing their best.

The *Semaphore's* crew is spending this winter and spring planning sailing adventures for summer 2005 as well as some backpacking and camping trips. If there are other TARS families or individuals in the Northwest who might like to join up for an adventure, please contact us! We can be reached by email at: dalderman@antiochsea.edu

Karabadangbaraka!



Exploring in *Elbereth* Claire Barnett

It is finally feeling like spring here in the Midwest USA. *Elbereth* is still under her tarp on my driveway, so I will write about a previous exploration along the Yahara River and into Lake Monona.



Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, has its downtown and much of its famous university on an isthmus between two big lakes. This journey takes place in its southern waters. There is a wonderful boat landing in a big park in town, in fact, my introductory article picture of *Elbereth* was taken there on an earlier lake trip. But I knew that a better place to start was about 5 miles to the south, putting in at Lake Farm Park on Lake Waubesa. This lake is smaller than the main ones, and is surrounded by nature instead of city. After going a short distance north on the lake, you pass under a narrow railroad bridge, and the real cruise begins!

Elbereth, with her flat dory bottom and twin engines, can plane quite easily, and goes fast enough to tow a water skier, (but I think that would look pretty silly). My preference is to chug along slowly, enjoying the scenery. So naturally, my favorite kind of cruising involves rivers and no wake channels, just like the Yahara River that connects all the lakes.

Past the railroad bridge, I found myself in Mud Lake, a big pond surrounded by marshlands. No channel buoys, so I felt my way cautiously, using my depth sounder. Past this more open water, the river narrows, and runs for about 2 miles. The pond and river are surrounded by tall marsh grass, with sandy islands and confusing branching channels making it feel like Secret Water without the tides. It came as a surprise to turn a corner and find the South Beltline divided highway, crossing the marsh on two very long bridges, even though I knew it would be there.

Past the highway, I was suddenly in town. There are houses and businesses along both sides of the river, and it has the look and feel of a canal. It also feels a little like the Norfolk Broads where I once rented a small cruiser. Both here on the



Yahara and there on the Bure and Thurne, I envied the people whose yards backed up to the river with their boats right there, ready to go at a minutes notice! I had an enjoyable time moving slowly up the river, looking at houses and boats.

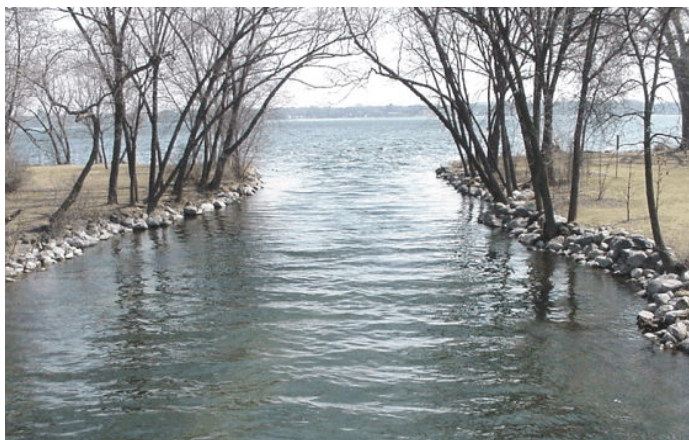


Finally, the river came out into a bay of Lake Monona, and I stopped for lunch. I had a picnic lunch, rocking gently in the middle of the bay. Then it was time to re-start my engines and to open up the throttles a bit. Around a headland to starboard, the lake opens up, and across the water can be seen the dome of the State Capitol building. Also in view, and more interesting to a Frank Lloyd Wright fan like myself, is Monona Terrace, finally built eight years ago after a long political struggle. The view from the rooftop terrace is wonderful, and I wish that someone I knew were there to get a picture of *Elbereth* and me as we passed the building.

The north side of the lake is all city with a couple of especially interesting places toward the northeast end of the lake. The furthest is Olbrich Gardens, a special horticultural exhibition area. I cautiously ventured into Starkweather Creek, and was rewarded for my efforts by the sight of a Chinese temple building in a new part of the Gardens, reached by a bridge too low to go under. Luckily there was room to turn *Elbereth* by a boat landing.

Going southwest along the north lakeshore, I came to the continuation of the Yahara River. Again with caution because the river is much narrower here, I went about 3 city blocks north, passing under a decorative bridge. Both sides of the river have narrow parks, and the neighborhood is an interesting older residential area. I had previously driven to each of the three or four bridges that cross the river, and measured to be sure that *Elbereth* would fit under them. I did not go all the way up the river, which ends at a lock that allows entry into lake Mendota, the largest of all the Madison lakes. The lock is shaped like a big curved quarter circle that moves up over one's boat to form the lock gate at whichever end needs to be closed. I hadn't found out yet if it would clear *Elbereth's* cabin, or if the lock is long enough so I cautiously turned back.

Turning a 23 foot boat with engines protruding almost 2 feet more in a river that is only about 35 feet wide is kind of tricky, especially since both shores are lined with rocks! I did some cautious back and forth movements and let the current turn *Elbereth* until I could safely start downstream again. There are range lights where the river comes out into Lake Monona again, and if *Elbereth* can fit through the locks, I would love to do an evening trip. The city lights must be beautiful at night from both lakes.



I started back, content with having finally been on the river that looked so interesting from the Beltline Highway. I also smiled at the thought of having seen settings reminiscent of 3 different Ransome locations.

Now I am home again, and it is almost time to check out *Elbereth's* trailer and wake her up to get ready for summer trips to the really big waters in the north! Perhaps you'll see us there!



Three Bridge Fiasco

Jim Wessel Walker

In January, when my favorite sailing lakes were dotted with the shacks of ice fisherman and I had to wear snowshoes just to reach the boathouse when I wanted to stroke the Wildcat, I got a chance to sail in sunny California. My brother-in-law, Bob, lives in Sacramento and keeps *Prelude*, his 24-foot Columbia Challenger, in Owl Harbor on the San Joaquin River. He told me about his plan to sail *Prelude* down the river to San Francisco for a day of racing organized by the Singlehanded Sailing Society on San Francisco Bay. It is 55 miles from Owl Harbor to San Francisco, two days of sailing for *Prelude*, given a fair wind and favorable currents. I suggested to Bob that he needed crew on a voyage of this length, and he very kindly invited me to join him.



Prelude in Owl Harbor

I flew to Sacramento on the last Tuesday in January. On Wednesday we made our lists, shopped for food, and moved our kit, our supplies, and ourselves to *Prelude*. We spent the night on board. There was plenty of room for the two of us. A larger crew would have to keep a tidier cabin.

We got off to an early start on Thursday morning, eating our breakfast as we motored out of Owl Harbor into the San Joaquin River. Like much of the California landscape, the Delta country, where the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers join before flowing into the northern end of San Francisco Bay, has to be seen to be believed. It is a landscape of flat islands, close to water level, intersected by a web of channels, ditches, sloughs, and rivers. On a map it looks like my idea of the Norfolk Broads, which I have never seen. But, the islands are surrounded by broad levees ranging in height from ten to thirty feet, and the land behind the

levees is heavily cultivated. The roads run along the tops of the levees, winding to and fro between the steep drop to the water on one side and to the fields and orchards on the other. The sailor's view across the countryside is limited by the levees on either side of the channel.

The weather was pleasant, sunny and warm. The wind, however, was light, and we had to get help from the outboard. We made good time. Bob's GPS receiver showed us moving downstream at four or five knots under the Antioch Bridge, past the confluence with the Sacramento River, across the wide open water of Suisun Bay, and under the Martinez Bridge to the marina at Benicia. We did not quite get to Benicia in time. Marina offices in these parts close at 5 o'clock in January. Although late arrivals can tie up over night at the fuel dock they can't get into the bathroom and they can't refuel until the office opens again at eight in the morning. We weren't more than fifteen minutes late and found the cleaners still at work in one of the bathrooms, but we had to make a late start on Friday morning because our fuel was low.

We were out of the Delta now. Below Benicia the river runs in a deep channel through the Carquinez Strait in one of the coastal ranges. We felt we were moving faster than bumper-to-bumper commuter traffic on the Carquinez Bridge. We were certainly having more fun than the drivers. Once again we had little wind and had to use the engine to cross San Pablo Bay. High-speed ferries between Vallejo and San Francisco came roaring past at regular intervals.



Jim at the tiller in San Pablo Bay

After two days of sailing generally westward, we turned south around Point San Pablo, past the islands called the Brothers, and into San Francisco Bay at last. We sailed under the Richmond Bridge, passed Red Rock, the island that is the northern turning point for the Three Bridge Fiasco, and into the marina at Richmond. We reached the marina in time to pick up a key to the bathroom, but had to catch a ride into town with our gas can because the Richmond marina does not sell fuel. Richmond used to be the terminus of the rail line from the east. Railway carriages would be rolled on to ferries in Richmond to be carried across the bay to San Francisco. Nowadays the train stops in Oakland, and the passengers ride buses over the Oakland Bay Bridge.

Although the Three Bridge Fiasco is organized by the Singlehanded Sailing Society, boats with crew are not excluded: they race in separate classes. The race covers about 27 miles as the crow flies, from the San Francisco waterfront to, in any order, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Richmond Bridge, the Oakland Bridge, and back to the starting point. Boats may cross the start and finish line in either direction and may go around the turning points in any order and direction. It is these delightful freedoms that give the race its name. There are large boats and small boats, fast boats and slow boats. They start at different times, according to their handicaps, but in principle, come together at the finish line. But it is not just a matter of the boat's speed or how well it is handled. San Francisco Bay is surrounded by mountains, so winds are variable. Tidal currents are strong, reaching 4 knots at the Golden Gate, and they are affected by the rivers that run into the Bay. So the winning skippers are the ones who go around the course in the order and direction that takes best advantage of the unpredictable conditions of race day.



San Francisco at dawn

Prelude was one of the slowest boats in the race so we had one of the earliest start times, 8:30 am. We therefore left Richmond by first light and were rewarded with a beautiful view of San Francisco across the bay in the clear light of dawn. There was a fair breeze so we made good time on the five-and-a-half mile sail past Alcatraz to the starting line. We arrived with time for a practice run past the end of the start line so that we would know how to pace our actual approach. The goal is to cross the start line right after your scheduled start time. An early start incurs a ten-minute penalty.

Boats were arriving in the starting area while we practised. We had the area pretty much to ourselves when we first arrived, but were soon surrounded by sails. There were more than 300 starters in the race and most of them were now loitering off the San Francisco waterfront waiting to start. To see a picture of this fleet,

visit the website of the Singlehanded Sailing Society at <http://www.sfbaysss.org/> and click on Photos under Three Bridge Fiasco. I am not used to sailing in crowded waters and had to clench my jaw and keep reminding myself of the rules of the road: "I am on the starboard tack. That boat coming at me is supposed to yield. The overtaking boat must avoid the boat being overtaken. Ignore the boats with their engines running."

To be continued —

Jim Wessel Walker, a retired Professor of Environmental Studies, is the father of Ten-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker. He sails the Wildcat on lakes great and small in and around Michigan.



From our 10-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker:

A Spring Reading Recommendation

Spring is springing in Philadelphia! Today, instead of writing this column I sat outside on the green in the sunshine and did my reading for my philosophy of music class. My friend Erin told me that the daffodils are blooming near the gym and everyone seems to be relaxing a bit as the weather warms up. Still, summer is a ways off yet and the sailing season is only just beginning. (My dad only just noticed that all the ice had melted off the lakes near our home in Michigan!) That makes this the perfect time of year for reading, whether outside in the sunshine or cozy inside on a rainy spring evening.

I have to confess that it's been a while since I read a Ransome book all the way through, which has made my ideas for this column a bit difficult to come up with. But lately I've been rereading some of my other childhood favorites and I thought I'd share with everyone my love of Madeleine L'Engle's work. Many people are familiar with *A Wrinkle in Time*. While a great book, I personally don't regard it as L'Engle's best. So many of her other books are just as good or better but unfortunately less well-known.

I particularly love L'Engle's books about the Austin family. Though L'Engle deals more directly with the challenges of moving from childhood to adulthood than Ransome does, the Austins are much like the Ransome characters. Each member of the family is an interesting and unique person. The children and parents treat one another with love and respect. Though the characters are nice, they never get too stickily sweet. Rather like C. S. Lewis' Narnia books, L'Engle's stories are just good tales, adventure stories that will keep you turning the pages; but she also has some really lovely underlying themes there for those who want to pick up on them. On each rereading I come across another piece of wisdom, often contained in a simple statement by one character or another that you barely notice when you're caught up in the story.

My very favorite L'Engle book (although almost all of hers are very good) is *The Young Unicorns*. It's not about unicorns, but instead follows the Austin family as they deal with challenges and adventures while living in New York City. Unlike *A Wrinkle in Time*, *The Young Unicorns* is not a fantasy novel. Like any adventure story it, of course, features things which are not real or true, but nothing in it is all that far from the realm of possibility (which is somewhat scary, actually!). To say much about the plot would be giving away the joy of this book, but let me say that it is a mystery full of suspense and danger and a plot to take over the city, and that it has a character with the simply fabulous name Canon Tallis.

On my front, plans are in development for a big family vacation of hiking and sailing in Michigan's Upper Peninsula in August. But that's still a long way off. For now, like Titty and Roger I have to make do with doodling islands and sailboats and trees in the margins of my notebooks during my classes and reading books in the sunshine whenever I get the chance. Have a good spring, and happy reading!

My personal second favorite (after *The Young Unicorns*) is *The Arm of the Starfish*.

L'Engle books about the Austins: *Meet the Austins*, *24 Days Before Christmas*, *The Anti-Muffins*, *Moon by Night*, *The Young Unicorns*, *A Ring of Endless Light*, and *Troubling a Star*

Mary Wessel Walker is finishing the second semester of her third year at Bryn Mawr College studying philosophy (when not doodling in the margins of her notebook).



From TARS Canada:

Here are the answers to the quiz on *We Didn't Mean To Go To Sea* from our December 2004 newsletter. Due to space limitations I've had to postpone the *Secret Water* quiz until our August newsletter. And three million more cheers for our Canadian fellow TARS for letting us crib their quizzes!

WE DIDN'T MEAN TO GO TO SEA - Answers to the Questions

ONE POINT

1.1 A bowline; 1.2 Imp; 1.3 Oxford; 1.4 A penny whistle; 1.5 Red; 1.6 Susan; 1.7 Cocoa; 1.8 Logs; 1.9 John; 1.10 Sinbad; 1.11 Flushing; 1.12 Windmills; 1.13 Nothing; 1.14 On hands and knees; 1.15 Titty's; 1.16 He had been hit by a bus.

TWO POINTS

2.1 Standing up, with his foot on the tiller; 2.2 Alma Cottage; 2.3 Miss Powell; 2.4 Porpoises; 2.5 Beach End; 2.6 The Sunk; 2.7 Three; 2.8 Blooming fishmongers; 2.9 Netherlands; 2.10 "We didn't mean to go to sea"; 2.11 That they had acquired a kitten; 2.12 Put him in a drawer under Titty's bunk; 2.13 Soup and steak [followed by pancakes and strawberry ices]; 2.14 Wooden shoes and a Dutch doll; 2.15 Quarantine; 2.16 Ted and Mary.

THREE POINTS

3.1 John; 3.2 Susan; 3.3 Dover; 3.4 The Butt and Oyster; 3.5 His Uncle Bob; 3.6 Goblin sailing, drawn by Titty; 3.7 La Plata (Argentina); 3.8 Twopence an hour extra; 3.9 North Shelf; 3.10 Knight on Sailing; 3.11 Emily; 3.12 Bread and butter with tinned tongue; 3.13 A drop of rum; 3.14 Germany [Hamburg]; 3.15 Shotley; 3.16 Gone ashore himself leaving no experienced sailor on board.



Last thoughts from the Editor:

Traditionally I ask for more contributions at this point, and encourage everyone to host TARS events (and write about them). I still do those things, but in addition, I really need to find a replacement editor for *Signals from TARSUS*. I have been editor for more than 10 years and frankly I'm exhausted. I'm happy to continue being Coordinator, but somebody else needs to take over editing this newsletter. The big things you need are willingness; enough experience being in TARS to be able to tackle the newsletter without being daunted; and access to the necessary tools (computer, word processor, graphics program, e-mail, and so forth). Please contact me if you are interested – I've asked before and had a few queries but we haven't found someone with the qualifications, experience, and willingness.

Dave Thewlis, TARS U.S. Coordinator
1550 Dena Drive
McKinleyville, CA 95519-4146
E-mail: dave@arthur-ransome.org

707-840-9391 (work, messages)
707-840-0472 (home)
415-946-3454 (fax)
Note the new e-mail address!

