

EAGER FOR THE SURF, sailboats and crew are almost ready for launching. STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER



ROB WAPLES AND STEVE SCARBOROUGH adjust the riggings for their solo voyage as a crew.

# under the sun

## Outing Celebrated Sailors' 'Graduation'

BY SUSAN USHER

After a week of sporadic thundershowers and hovering gray clouds, morning broke fair and bright Sunday—a perfect day for sailing.

Sun rays tapdanced on the surf, adding a sparkle to glassy seas broken only occasionally by a low whitecap. Each time a teasing wave rolled gently to shore, the three beached Hobie catamarans or "cats" shivered in anticipation, thoroughbreds eager to run.

Eagerness was evident also in the light step and quick moves of the eight crew members—two instructors and six students from Camp United Methodist Church in Shallotte.

Two hours behind their informal schedule, the boats pushed off from the west end of Ocean Isle Beach at 11:30 a.m., bound for Battery Island, an Audubon Society sanctuary across from the Southport waterfront.

Rigging adjusted, a wind indicator added to one vessel and mainsheets to another and they were off.

First in the water were instructor Bobby Williamson and students Tonya Russ and Krissi Smith. In quick succession they were followed into the surf by students Steve Scarborough and Rob Waples and then a second instructor, Freddie Mintz, and students Karen Pittman and Mary Beth Russ.

Right behind them, in a "chase boat" were Mr. and Mrs. Price Thomas of Holden Beach, available for help if any problems arose.

It was a "graduation" day of sorts for the six students, who had completed a summer-long sailing class offered through their church community. The class was part of a activity-packed summer with programs for children and youths of all ages in the church, coordinated by a summer intern.

A sailing class was proposed by Mintz, and Williamson agreed to help out.

"I felt like the kids didn't have enough to do in the summer," said Mintz, a Shallotte native and avid sailor. "When I was a boy I would have given anything to learn to sail."

"I love it enough I wanted to share it." Williamson's mutual love of sailing may come naturally. His grandfather, Horton F. Milliken of

Shallotte, and great-grandfather, the late Captain A.A. Milliken, both sailed the commercial vessels that Shallotte merchants relied upon for merchandise. The boats, with names like the George Slover and the Chancey T., plied the rivers and also ventured "outside" to the Atlantic Ocean for the trip to Wilmington, N.C., or points south.

With the paving of the main roads, the necessity for the sailing boats vanished—and with it the boats themselves.

Williamson says he'd like to see a revival of local in-

terest in sailing—for leisure enjoyment this time around, not business.

With six new sailing buffs to their credit now, the class may prove to be that new beginning. Class membership was restricted to senior highs only.

"They're (sailboats) play, but not something you can just hop in and take off," said Mintz. "It takes a long time to learn to be a good sailor."

Four of the six students—two boys and two girls—want to continue mastering their skills and will sail with Mintz and Williamson on future trips until they're ready

to venture out on their own.

The hardest thing for the class, said Mintz, was remembering the specialized vocabulary—nautical jargon such as "mainsheets" for the ropes that control the "mainsail".

Several members of the class got off to a fast start, though the trip Sunday took a lot longer than expected.

Steve Scarborough of Holden Beach and Rob Waples of Shallotte soloed together—manning the only boat of the trio that didn't include an instructor on the crew.

"We did great! We had a ball!" Scarborough said upon their return. "I learned more in that one day than I had in all my sailing with Freddie."

"He had taught me a lot. The difference was doing it all by ourselves rather than with the instructor. This was the first time we'd done it all by ourselves, takeoff, landing—all of it."

Scarborough, who had a small amount of sailing experience prior to the class, sailed with Mintz in two recent regattas, finishing fourth in their division in one event.

Sunday's trip was beautiful—but long. Rather than the 2- to 2-1/2-hour journey one-way they had anticipated, the run to Southport was closer to a jog, taking about 5- to 5 1/2 hours.

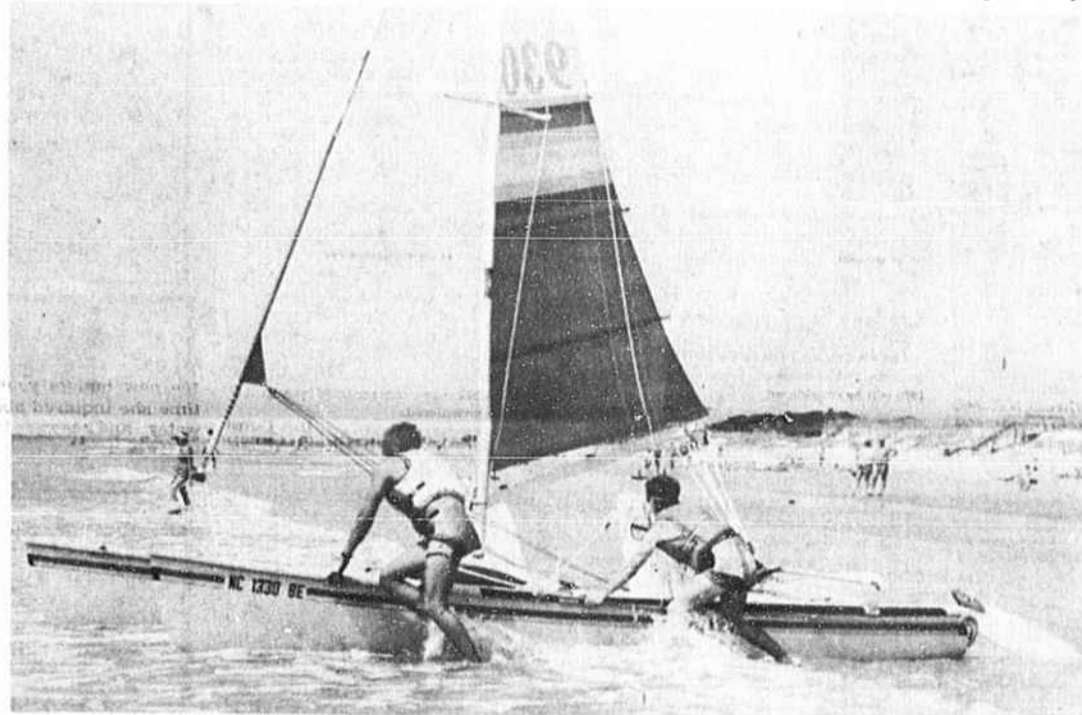
After a good start, the wind died down to what Scarborough called "pretty slack" before shifting from northeast to a more favorable south-southeast as they made their way up the coast and around Caswell Beach into the Cape Fear River.

"It was a good day to learn," Scarborough said. The winds were strong enough for he and his boatmate to try their skills, but not strong enough to create any handling problems.

After a picnic lunch—it was nearer suppertime—of chicken and other goodies, instead of sailing south, they called home.

"We couldn't have gotten back before dark," said Scarborough.

So William Waples and two other parents met the sailboats at the Southport Marina and the eight trailered home, one more sailor's lesson stored away for future reference.



TAKING HER OUT...and soon they're silhouetted against the sky, on open water.



TRAPEZING keeps Scarborough and other crew members attached to the catamaran in case of a slip-up.



MINTZ reviews crew assignments as Mary Beth Russ, Krissi Smith, Tonya Russ and Rob Waples stand by.



FALLING IN PLACE at the rear are Karen Pittman, Freddie Mintz and Mary Beth Russ.

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