

"It was unbelievable the way the boat just sort of twisted its way through those waves"

0100 EST on the seventh day winds had started to hit 55 knots, blowing sheets of solid water from the crests of 40-to-50-foot waves. "We were being tossed around like a cork even though we were still heavily loaded, with about three-fourths of our fuel remaining." They were about a thousand miles due east of New York and about one-third of the way across the Atlantic.

They had to forget trying to make any further headway. "It was obvious there was no way of running off in front of the waves, lying ahull, or whatever. Very clearly we had to head her up and get a sea anchor out over the bow." The wind continued to build and they strung a second sea anchor about half-way out to the first one.

It was then Cargile learned something new about sterndrive capability in heavy seas.

"By maneuvering the outdrive I tried both sides, port and starboard, to see which way the boat would ride most smoothly through the crest. It turned out that not only did it feel better on the starboard side, the helm was on the starboard side of the bridge and I could still see the seas coming even if we were heeling 30 or possibly 40 degrees to port.

"But in this maneuvering, instead of just sitting there taking the seas I put the drive in reverse, just idling straight back, and found that by pulling the boat backward the sea anchors had the effect of trying to pull the boat forward. This brought the bow higher up into the wind, maybe about five degrees.

"Then I put the outdrive into a hard port turn, still in reverse, and we picked up another five degrees. So then I realized I could control the bow angle by the amount of power I put on in reverse, because the outdrive is pulling in one direction way below the center of gravity of the boat, and the sea anchors, mounted high on our bow, are pulling in the other direction.

"So as we were riding up the face of a wave, we could roll the boat from, say, 10 degrees to port and kick it into the crest at maybe a 10-to-15 degree angle to starboard with a burst of power just a second or so before the breaker hit.

"It was unbelievable the way the boat just sort of twisted its way through those crests.

"A couple hours after daybreak I looked up and saw, without exaggeration, a 10-to-15 foot wall of

vertical water getting ready to break right over the top of us.

"It did, of course, and I gave the engine full power in reverse and the boat lunged into it. I thought we were rolling over. But the engine kept running and the sea anchors kept tugging and we came out on the other side of that wave. We just went right through it. After that we felt like, man, we can take anything."

But one who couldn't take it was the ill cameraman, and Cargile made the unscheduled detour to Newfoundland. From there they set a shivering course eastward through the cold Labrador Current.

Meanwhile there was another storm casualty—the larger SSB radio. "I went down at 5 in the morning on August 2nd to call my son; it was his birthday, and we'd been battling the gale all night long. But when I turned on the 200-watt single-sideband I got the electrical smell and heard it crackle, and I immediately turned it off. One of our hatches was not completely dogged down and a little trickle of salt water had knocked out our big one.

"We started trying to make some contact with the smaller SSB, just rotating the frequencies around calling on 10 different channels, for almost two days. Finally we picked up Miami Ocean Radio, something like 2500 miles away, which was beyond the range of a 100-watt transmitter."

Cargile got a message through to his family that all was well and warned them that there might not be further contact by radio. He estimated arrival in Paris on 16 August, "just a wild guess."

What about VHF? "We got no response from anybody. I'm under the impression that people don't maintain a conscientious listening watch on the emergency channel. We almost had a collision with a ship in mid-ocean, and from the way it happened I'm sure no one was standing by on guard channel. They didn't take corrective action until they were almost upon us. We had already put it hard over to starboard, full bore which would only give us about 12 knots, to get from right in front of the bow and suddenly he makes a port turn and we damn near hit right there."

With their Loran out of range, and skies continually overcast so that celestial sight-taking was out of the question, all navigation was by dead reckoning.

"We were locked on autopilot virtually all the way