

**THE SPEEDBOAT  
SISTERS  
IN A RACE**

**or**

**SURPRISE IN THE CAVERN OF JEWELS**

**BY  
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## PREFACE:

Hello Young Ladies and Girls;

Like my great grandfather before me, I have taken up pen and paper to write intriguing and uplifting stories for any real girl who not only craves adventure in their own lives, but also enjoys reading about the exploits of plucky girls engaged in what they love most.

May I present to you, then, the Speedboat Sisters—Dee, Winnie and Meg—the identical triplets of Schroon Lake, New York. With a speedboat left to their care by an older sibling, the girls ply the waters of many of the large lakes in their district, often finding themselves involved in intrigue and excitement.

These girls have a true knack for finding dangerous situations, and then happily extricating themselves from them all the while solving whatever mysteries they encounter.

My great grandfather, Clarence Young, loved to write books for boys that showed off the inner and outer strengths of the young men. In them I believe he tried to show that young girls have just as much moxie and personal fortitude it is just that they were expected to “act like ladies.” It is possible to do both.

Enjoy this first adventure while I jot away on story number two. For now I am calling that one *The Speedboat Sisters on Lake Champlain*.

Yours sincerely,

*Clarence Young IV*

## CHAPTER NINE—A Gun Sounds, A Flag Drops

**THE** girls, realizing they had only a few hours left, paddled the final six hundred feet back to their property, pulled the boat back into the boathouse, hoisted it up, and went furiously to work.

On first inspection the hull showed only minor scraping of the keel board. All of the varnish was missing and there were many places where the wood had chunks of bark and splinters of wood stuck into the surface.

Meg set to work with a scraping tool and a rasp calling out to the others five minutes later with a report.

“Nothing is broken, but I’m going to have to sand the keel down for about eight feet and try to get one thin coat of varnish onto it before we get her back into the water. If I don’t we’ll be in for a lot more problems with soaked wood. How about you two?”

Winnie’s head appeared, upside down, over the edge of the boat’s port side.

“Dee is removing the prop and I’ve been checking the drive shaft. We lost one of the four blades on the prop, it snapped right off, but the shaft seems to be true and solid. It is a very good thing that we have an extra prop.”

Meg agreed that it was very fortuitous indeed, but she was seething with anger. She knew, she *just knew*, that Billy Wingate was behind that log. That it had been felled by someone rather than by weather, rot or age was obvious from the freshly hewn marks on the

thicker end.

She spotted that as they came to a halt, but had said nothing when they all begun paddling for home. Curiously, the log had been closer to the shore by at least ten yards just moments after the collision.

“Dee and I will help you if you need it. Give us about fifteen minutes to put the new prop into place.”

“No hurry. However, now that I think on the matter, it might be nice to do this production line style. I will continue rasping and dislodging anything stuck into our wood if one of you can come behind with the small wood plane and the sanding block, with the other following her with the varnish pot.”

It was a good plan, and in only twelve minutes the prop work was concluded successfully, and Dee and Winnie joined Meg.

One hour after they had drawn the boat up into the boathouse, their repair work was finished.

The electrical fan they used on hotter summer days to move air around the boathouse was placed in a position such that it would blow air across the newly varnished keel. This would dry the varnish in about one more hour. It wasn't going to be the best work they had ever performed on the beautiful wood boat, but it would be sufficient to protect it from water damage during the race.

Of course, once they had won,—which all three considered to be a certain bet—they would come home and do a better and more permanent job of it.

They locked the boathouse and headed up to the house where they had a light snack of bread, butter and sugar with cinnamon powder mixed into it. After that, it was up the stairs and into their racing suits.

Mrs. DeChancy had sewn three identical white coveralls from some light sail cloth she located at the mercantile the previous spring. After embellishing each one with the girl's names she hand-stitched a few embellishments on the collars and across the back of their shoulders.

The sisters were very proud of these matching suits and considered them both good luck as well as necessary for any official racing they might engage in.

About one hour later, and just about half an hour before the race was due to begin, they lowered the boat into the water and backed out of the boathouse.

A touch test had been made and it assured them that the varnish had completely dried.

"Cross fingers, toes and eyes, girls," Dee called out. "Here is where we find out if that drive shaft has any wobble in it." So saying she pressed the starter button and the motor roared into life.

A fast test in both forward and reverse told the tale as well as anything. Absolutely no vibrations could be felt, and by lifting the engine cover and shining a light onto the shaft precisely in the middle of the exposed portion showed them it was turning without any side-to-side movement that would indicate the shaft had some sort of bend.

"We truly lucked out," commented Dee.

"Irish luck!" declared Winnie slapping her sister on the shoulder.

"Let's go win that race!" ordered Meg as the three girls lowered themselves into their seats.

They made a wide sweep out to the middle of the lake before heading to where a veritable flotilla

awaited the race start.

All of the boats were lined up abreast of one another and Dee manoeuvred them into an empty area five boats out from the shore.

“Look over there,” Winnie said pointing down the shoreline and into the distance.

“Oh, my goodness!” exclaimed Meg.

Dee looked up, noted the object of intrigue and then went casually back to her work preparing the boat for the race.

“That’s just the old *Red Dragon*, or something like that,” she told them. “Remember how we used to see it floating all around when we were young? It’s the airship of that old inventor man and his son. I haven’t seen it for years, but I guess that’s because they keep it in a big garage.”

Meg’s jaw dropped. “That? That huge thing? They just shove it into a little garage and it fits? It’s so big. It would never go in!”

Winnie suddenly remembered the airship. “Oh, that’s right. I recall now. Silly Meg, that big bulge on top is a gasbag of some sort. I would imagine that it folds down into a quite small package when they are not intending on flying.”

Meg still could not remember ever having seen it, but that wasn’t something unique. For one, even as a young girl she spent more time indoors reading than she did out of doors. Then, too, her eyesight was such that object in the distance had been a bit blurry until she was outfitted with glasses.

“I would think that those two men want a bird’s eye view of the race,” Dee told them.

The large, red airship had both a gas bag as well as stubby wings and an enclosed cabin slung underneath. As they watched it, a propeller extended from the front of the machine and began spinning. Seconds later the sound of the gasoline motor turning that propeller could be heard, and the air ship made a turn to the right and began a lazy flight out over the lake.

All seventeen of the speed boats that would take their places in the race were lined up along the shore near to where the town of Schroon Lake was in the process of building a marina to accommodate the ever-glowing number of motor and sail boats owned by both townspeople as well as folks who vacationed at the lake each year. For now, however, the girls were touching the beach lined up between Brian Wingate's boat and a small but speedy-looking boat being worked on by a negro man and a negro boy, probably his son.

In years gone by, people might have wondered who they labored for, but starting with the Great Depression, people of several colors and origins had come to the quieter and less expensive areas in upstate New York. And, while the girls did not know the negroes by name, she recognized the younger one as the same child who delivered the daily newspaper each afternoon.

The man looked over in time to see Dee staring his way, gave her a big, toothy smile and nodded to her.

"Is your boat going to give us a run for our money?" she called over to him.

"Yes'm, miss DeChancy," he answered. "She shore iz. Fine little boat. Mighty fine little boat. Not so shiny as your'n, but still a fine little boat. Say a proper hello

to the ladies, William,” he directed his son.

“Missy DeChancy, Missy DeChancy, Missy DeChancy,” the boy called over looking at each girl in turn. He also had a large smile that shone brightly in the middle of his dark face.

“Well, good luck to you both,” Dee called over and then returned to the final bit of work on her list, inspecting the patched area from their encounter with the chunk of ice.

From under the front deck, and now using the fully charged battery torch, she could see that the seal looked good and tight, and the half-inch thick piece of oak her father had suggested be screwed down over the end of the hull board that had bent inward was still solidly in position.

It would probably still be there years from now.

“May we have all entries push their boats into the water,” a man with a megaphone was calling as he swung the cone-shaped voice amplifier from side to side. “All boats into the water in three minutes!” It turned out to be the dock manager, Mr. Twisham, making the announcements.

“This is it,” Winnie said and the girls climbed onto the shore and pushed at the bow. She grabbed the free end of the bow line and held on. As the boat began to ride on the water, Meg picked up the canvas tarpaulin they had laid down before beaching the boat. It protected the wood and varnished finish from the small rocks. Their father stood up and walked over to take it from her.

“Good luck my little ladies,” he said giving each of them a hug.

“Please be safe,” their mother called from her spot

on a blanket just up on the grassy area above the lake's narrow beach.

"We will!" they chorused, and then shared a giggle.

"Please do *not* start you motors!" a man from the organizing committee called out, having taken the megaphone from Mr. Whisham. "I have some extra news for you. First, the lake has been marked out with red buoys every quarter mile. These are placed in safe locations and you must travel between them and the shore. You are guaranteed at least thirty feet of water deep enough for all of your boats inside those markers."

He dropped the megaphone and cleared his throat.

"Secondly, certain buoys have oilskin envelopes attached to them. These water tight pouches contain the various clues the winners will need to go on the second part of this race, a treasure hunt! It is up to the boat crews to spot these in time to slow down and take them.

"Thirdly, you will see that the route does not go behind the island this year. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the DeChancy girls for finding out that there is still considerable ice back there. The safe path is around the front of the island.

"And finally, there are three boats stationed on the east side a little ways up from the southern turn. Some submerged debris was shifted during the winter and it is a navigation hazard. Respect it!

"Now, you may start your motors and get into the starting position. Do not venture any farther forward than the line between the judges' boat over there," he pointed to a larger pleasure boat that had a bright orange flag hoisted above its cabin, "and the flag you

see here on shore.”

There was the sound of many motors being cranked over at once. The motor on the *Sisters Three* coughed into life on the first try, while others took up to two minutes to get running.

“It’s a darned good thing we got everything ship shaped and in apple pie order last week,” Winnie stated.

All three girls were in the front cockpit now, but it had been decided that Winnie, with the surest hands of the three, would take a position in the back cockpit for the actual race. This would afford her free movement to pluck each of the clue bags up as they sped past the buoys.

It required a full five minutes to get all of the entrants to the line. The pilots of each boat watched with keen eyes to the shore where the starter was preparing to raise a second flag,—the start flag—on the pole.

Then, without warning there came a booming sound of a gunshot and the flag went up.

They were off!

As the girls sped away from the line, Winnie called out, “Three didn’t get going! Two are pretty slow and we’re only about half a boat length in front.”

“Who’s back there? Closest?” Dee shouted over her shoulder as the wind whipped her hair around.

“Brian Wingate!”

“Rats. Let’s see if I can get a little more out of her.”

Located just behind the fuel lever was a small round knob. Under normal conditions it was left in the current position. It controlled the spark timing for

the engine. It was possible to bring it slightly forward or retard it slightly to get the most from the engine if run at different altitudes.

Dee gave it a minute turn to the forward position. They all heard the engine give a split-second stutter and then settle down into what they believed would be a slightly faster run.

It was, and the *Sisters Three* began inching ahead.

With Dee at the controls and Winnie ready to pick up the clues, it was left to Meg and the binocular glasses they carried to search for each buoy, and to shout if it was a clue buoy.

“First buoy one point off the starboard bow! No clue!”

Dee adjusted their course and they soon flashed past the buoy with it just missing the left side of their boat by a few feet.

The next buoy proved to hold the first clue bag and Dee calculated just the right spot to throw the boat’s propeller into reverse so that they slowed quickly and would pass by at a safe speed.

Brian Wingate was piloting his boat alone and did not see that the buoy held a clue until he almost ran into the back of the girls’ boat. He flashed past them and only then saw he was about to miss getting to the clue. He tried to correct his course but ended up passing to the outside of the buoy. The rules stated that any such foul could be erased by making a complete circle around the buoy before continuing on.

He did this, but found himself now in fifth place with the DeChancy girls still in first *plus* they had the first clue.