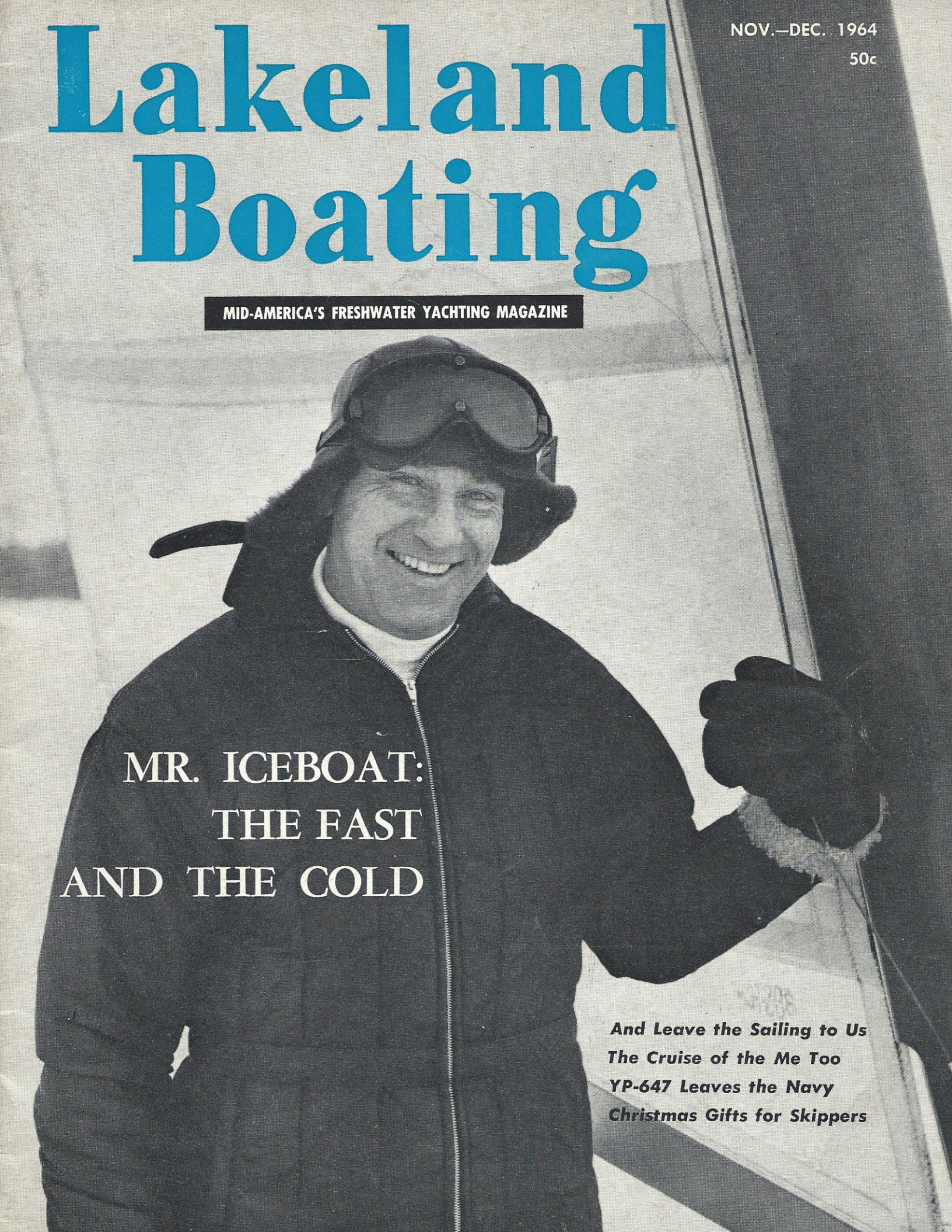


Lakeland Boating

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MID-AMERICA'S FRESHWATER YACHTING MAGAZINE



MR. ICEBOAT:
THE FAST
AND THE COLD

*And Leave the Sailing to Us
The Cruise of the Me Too
YP-647 Leaves the Navy
Christmas Gifts for Skippers*

Today's iceboaters ride on design ideas created by one of the world's great hard-water sailors.

They All Play Elmer's Tune

by DAN KINGSLEY

THIS year, as in every year, when the outside temperatures start dropping and the north wind ices up the enthusiasm of most responsible boaters, an excited gleam comes into the eyes of those hardy souls called hard-water sailors. Zippering into their cocoons of thermal underwear and surplus Air Force boots, they waddle out to their fleets of Skeeters, Renegades, Arrows, DN's, and other species of ice boats. Then, after competing with each other at impressive speeds, they jam into a nearby pub (conveniently located at the water's edge), where they enjoy a hamburger, a hot toddy, an informal presentation of trophies, and a few very informal postmortems. Almost any winter weekend, huge armadas of iceboats assemble for regattas all over mid-America, and a more dedicated group would be hard to find.

For making iceboating a better sport, a safer sport, most of these hard-water sailors, whether they know it or not, are indebted to one man, Elmer Millenbach. Often called "Mr. Iceboat" in racing circles, Millenbach is famous not only for having won

every major trophy in iceboat competition, but also for his many innovations and design improvements in the hardware, rigging, and steering of the modern iceboat. His V-groove ratchet block, single-stay mast bridle, floating gooseneck block, halyard hook, and steering and runner innovations are just a few of his many ideas now in common use.

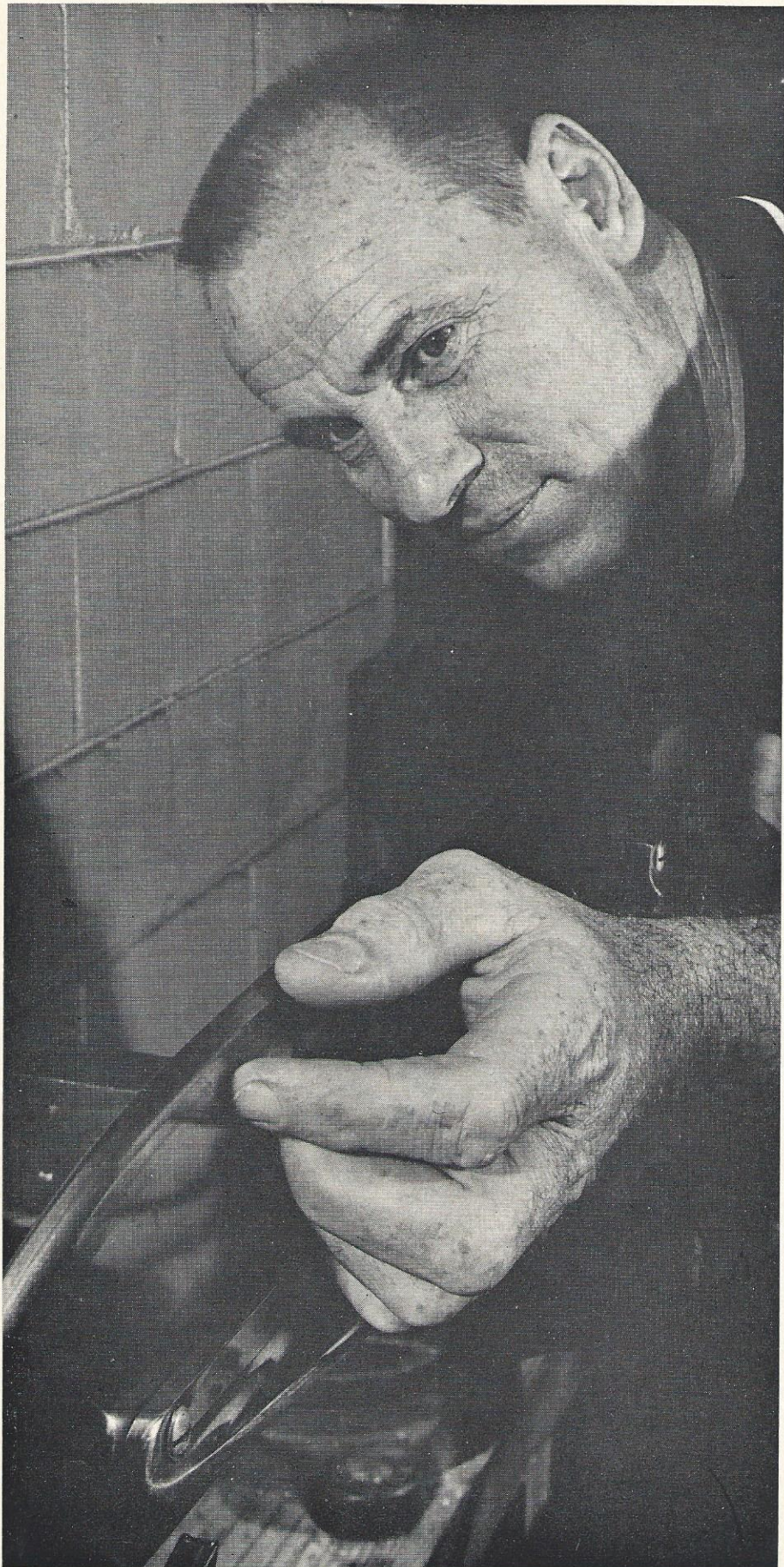
Millenbach races the same way he makes his designs—with precision accuracy. He was the first two-time winner of the international Skeeter world championship trophy, 10-time winner of the international Renegade trophy, the only winner of nine annual regattas of the Canadian Open classic. He has been a consistent winner in the E Class, Renegade Class, and free-for-all championships of the Northwestern regattas. Maury Declercq, one of the country's finest sailors, puts it this way: "Elmer is very methodical. I think that long before the first day he ever went out to race, he must have gone over in his mind everything that could possibly happen to him. Millenbach never makes a mistake. He's uncanny."

Millenbach went for his first iceboat ride before he started to walk. A young friend of his father, who kept

his stern-steerer iceboat at the Millenbach home, took him out for a ride when Elmer was only 10 months old. The young iceboater turned out to be the late Russ Poulliot, famous boat designer.

Elmer Millenbach was born and raised on the Detroit River, and learned all phases of sailing and seamanship in homemade boats. Although his father died when Elmer was still a boy, an understanding mother allowed him to pursue his interest in sailing almost unhindered, that is, to the extent that their limited income would allow. This meant improvising—not buying—the tools and equipment that were required for each new project. The credo that Elmer learned to live by early in life was "When something is needed and there is no money—make it!" His early experience at improvisation prepared Elmer well for later in life. Over the years, a stream of construction ideas for iceboats flowed from his simple home workshop. Also, this background as a craftsman does him no harm when, as a sales representative for Center Electric Supply Company of Detroit, he calls at job sites to talk to contractors.

Perhaps taking after his father, who



Millenbach checks a runner in his home workshop. The cagey iceboater is a perfectionist and a stickler for detail.

was an extremely capable carpenter and cabinetmaker, Elmer Millenbach is a superb craftsman. However, because of this, he approaches everything that he does with a perfectionist attitude, and he is somewhat intolerant of others who may not share his enthusiasm for the meticulous. This is very often a source of irritation for those who are less endowed, but his friends usually forgive him for this trait.

A would-be sailor buying his first set of plans from the Renegade Association asked Millenbach, "How accurate are these plans?"

"Accurate."

"Well, just how accurate?" the tyro demanded.

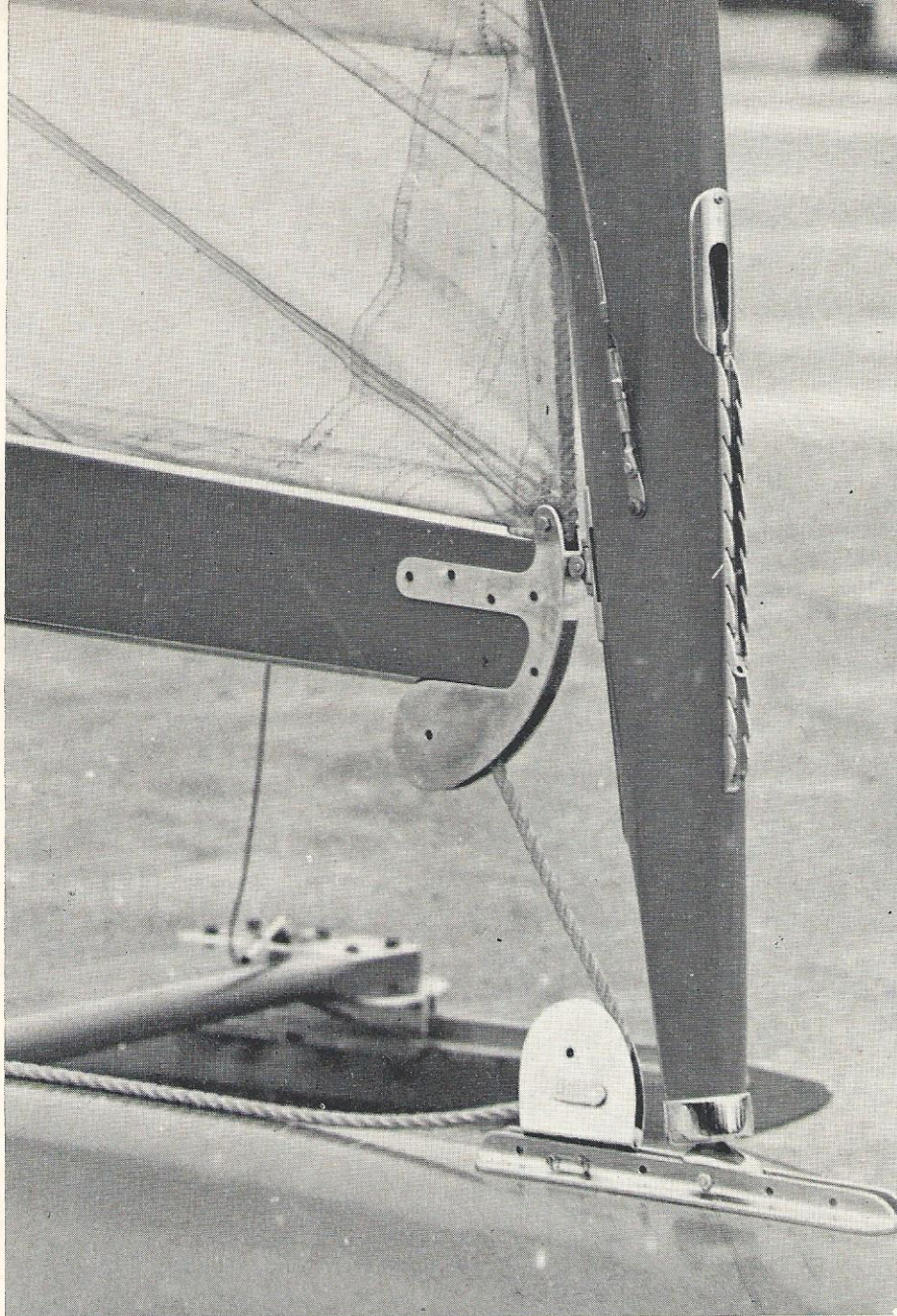
When Millenbach answered that the Renegade plans were accurate to half a scribed line, the new iceboater said, "You're kidding."

Millenbach wasn't kidding.

Elmer Millenbach has served as president of the International Skeeter Association, commodore of the Northwestern Ice Yachting Association, commodore of the Detroit Ice Yacht Club, and secretary of the International Renegade Association, and is now one of the five life members on the board of the National Iceboat Authority.

Iceboating has undergone great changes in the past half century, most of which occurred during the past 20 years. As a racing sport, it was formerly confined almost entirely to the rich because of the tremendous cost of the huge stern-steering racing iceboats. Today, with smaller racing boats, it is a sport that can be enjoyed by almost anyone of average means who has a little ability with tools. Even the faster boats being raced today can be built in a home workshop, and most of them are. Millenbach, designer and builder of the original Renegade prototype, was the one who proved this point.

"I can remember the feeling I had after building my first iceboat," Millenbach once told a friend. "I had no power tools, and all the work was done by hand. Many of the holes had to be drilled through $\frac{1}{4}$ " steel and hard aluminum with a breast drill. The project took all my spare time from October 1 to the middle of February, but at last came the great day. The boat performed beautifully, and after only about five minutes of sailing, I said to myself, 'Now let any-



View shows halyard hooks, also sheet running through vee-groove ratchet block, up through floating gooseneck and then aft inside the boom. These are all Millenbach inventions. Formerly, as many as four blocks had been used for trimming the sheet; this helped the trimming but made it difficult to ease off.

thing happen! The boat can break up, fall apart, or go through the ice.' That first five minutes was worth all the months of hard labor. It was a sensation I had never experienced before, doing anything else."

In designing the Renegade boat, Millenbach kept in mind that it was absolutely necessary that the plans be suitable for use in the home workshop. Shortly thereafter the boat was selected as the prototype for the first E Class one-design. However, because of Millenbach's fantastic record, several of the top skippers of that period felt that in order to maintain interest in the class Millenbach should sell the Renegade and build another one

from the same plans. These were the plans being distributed to members of the International Renegade Association. The plans had been laid out full-scale by Millenbach, and the drawings were made from his work by Nelson Zimmer, a naval architect.

The self-confident Millenbach, who could see no reason for anyone to doubt the results, agreed to this, and at the close of the season Renegade II was sold, complete with its one set of runners and its single sail. Immediate preparations were made for the building of Renegade III, and by the time the next season rolled around, Millenbach was raring to go. The new boat proved to be even better than

Renegade II, winning 17 out of 19 races the first season, and in it Millenbach won his second ISA world's championship. Millenbach had proved that his previous record was not a fluke, but rather the result of intelligent and workmanlike design.

When asked to describe ice boating, Millenbach said, "Sailing an iceboat is much like sailing a boat on water when your course is approximately 90° or less to the wind. Beyond 90° it is quite different. You will always sail close-hauled. You sail an iceboat strictly by the seat of your pants. I learned this when I tried to teach my wife to sail. I realized that you can talk on and on, but there are no set rules. Wind and ice conditions are changing constantly, and each situation must be handled on its own.

"It is these fast-changing conditions of ice and wind that make finesse—not force—the vital factor in iceboat racing. Conditions change by the second and the craft and the skipper must have the ability—the finesse—to adapt quickly over an extreme range of conditions.

"The cold doesn't make the fast. Extreme cold and high winds are not conditions for fast iceboating. Contrary to popular belief, hard, blue glare ice is far from ideal. Racing is best when the ice is a bit moist and the air is light. The worst possible conditions, of course, would be snow, sticky or drifting, in light air.

"Iceboats are at their fastest when sailing close-hauled, whether sailing on the wind or running. A common error for most beginners is to sail a broad reach. You can go back and forth all day sailing on a beam wind, and you won't learn a thing. You will go twice as fast sailing close-hauled. You should sail as close to the wind as possible when sailing on the wind and then lay off as far as possible when going downwind. In either case, you are still sailing close-hauled.

"If your speed is falling off when you're on the wind, then, of course, you would fall off just a little, but then head up as soon as you can. Going downwind you remain close-hauled. You will find that the apparent wind won't change directions; it will follow right along with you.

"Round the windward mark in a wide turn to let the boat build up speed. If you round the mark too abruptly you will change the apparent wind direction, getting an inefficient angle.

This will not permit the sail to do its job.

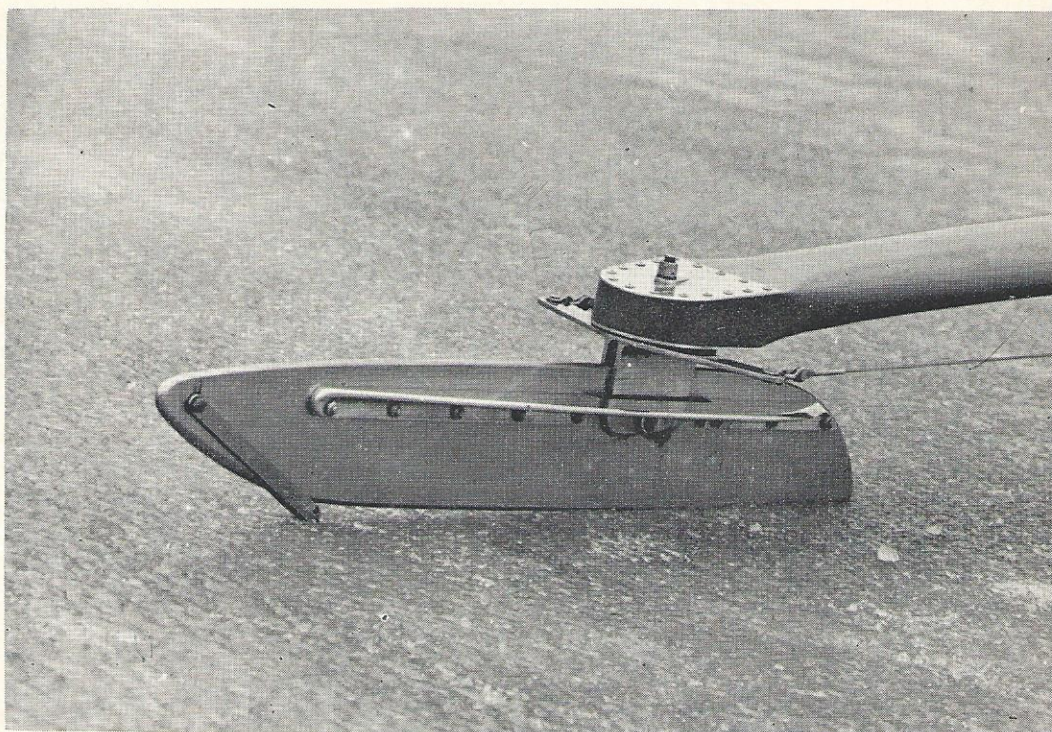
"All my life I can remember people quoting so-called 'authorities' on boats and what makes them go. Things they said were often repeated as statements of fact, and their word was not to be challenged. I found, however, that very often after doing a little investigative work on my own, I would come up with some answers that were quite different. So don't accept the obvious; do a little checking and come up with your own conclusions.

"There is too much emphasis on the last race. The winner all too often becomes an expert. Being in the right place at the right time can sometimes make the difference between winning and losing, but it doesn't make an expert. A competitor who wins consistently can take a little credit.

"What makes a fast iceboat fast is still a matter of controversy," Millenbach explained. "One thing is certain, both the keen competition and the way skippers have helped each other in every way possible have definitely been major forces in the development of the modern iceboat."

Another major force is Millenbach. Without his perfectionist attitude, his precision workmanship, and his refusal to accept anything that is less than expert, the modern iceboat would be something less than it is today.

● END



View of front runner shows rugged construction of longitudinal stiffeners which are mounted on either side of runner. Although extremely simple in design, the parking brake at the front end of runner was first introduced by Millenbach.

MILLENBACH CONSTRUCTION TIPS

Runners should be straight and stiff, and sharpened to a 90° angle. For years, I have used a 70° included angle, but I can't say that I note any difference.

Runners should be fairly flat forward of the pin, with the heels rocked up to about 3/16". Side surfaces should be smooth to assure a minimum amount of friction going through the slush or snow.

In setting up my boat I make certain to align the runner planks at perfect right angles to the fuselage. This assures equal performance on either tack.

The whisker or framing stays are kept *very* tight to assure proper alignment of the runners under all conditions. I prefer to keep the runners snug in the chocks with absolutely no side-play.

In my opinion there is nothing on

an iceboat more important than perfect runner alignment. This importance increases as the velocity of the wind decreases or the ice softens.

The amount of crown in a runner plank is not too important so long as it straightens out when sailing.

Chocks should be mounted so that the runners set vertical when the boat is sailing in a light wind.

I rake my mast so that the boom is about parallel to the ice when sailing. The halyard is adjusted so that the boom is carried low, but so that I can see under it at all times.

All parts showing wear must be replaced, and a frequent check on counterpins, safety wires, etc., is of utmost importance.

In locating the mast position for proper balance, we need to have a good breeze and hard smooth ice, with the runners preferably a little on the dull side, but uniformly dull. Simulate a condition of rounding a leeward course mark. If the boat slides its rear runners and the front one holds, then the mast is too far aft. Move it forward until the boat rounds the mark and comes back on the wind with some, but not too much, difficulty. This is the proper mast location, and moving the mast forward or aft from this position will not alter the speed, only the handling—and for the worse.



The Renegade specifications are 21' 8" over-all, with a 16' runnerplank and a rig measuring 18' 3". The boat weighs approximately 350 lbs. and carries 68 square feet of sail area. Plans for the Renegade are available free of charge after payment of a \$10 membership fee to the Renegade Association. Inquiries should be addressed to Cora Lee Millenbach, 3068 Lamphere, Detroit, Mich. 48239.