

Web posted Wednesday, July 24, 2002

## Record-time sailboat slips into marina

*Boat that finished first in Chicago-to-Mackinac race returns to Eldean*



**By JASON MILLER**

*Staff writer*

The thing that made the Pyewacket stand out most among the other sailing vessels docked at Eldean Shipyards on Lake Macatawa Tuesday was its 100-foot mast.

For those who knew the specifics of the 75-foot racing sailboat, though, they may have been looking for mouse ears instead.

The boat, owned by Walt Disney Co. Vice Chairman Roy Disney, made a stop in Holland Tuesday after winning the annual Chicago-to-Mackinac race this past weekend.

The record-setter -- which finished the 333-mile race in 23 hours, 30 minutes, almost two hours ahead of the previous record set in 1987 -- sailed into Eldean Tuesday to be torn down and shipped back to its home in California.

It was shipped last week to Eldean where it was assembled and the crew prepped before it was sailed to Chicago to begin the race.

Skipper Gregg Hedrick said he chose Eldean mainly because its Lake Macatawa residence is the only spot around that's still deep enough to accommodate the large boat.

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WINNING BOAT: (L-R) Hogan Beatie, 32, of Sausalito California and Willie Peavis, 25, of Lymington, U.K, unload equipment, Tuesday from the sailboat

Pyewacket. The Pyewacket won the Chicago to Mackinac sailboat race with the record time of 23 hours and thirty minutes. The boat was at Eldean marina being readied for the trip back to California by truck. 7.23.02 digital

*Sentinel/Brian Forde*

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Eldean's reputation among sailors, though, was also a drawing card.

"It's a fantastic yard and Holland is a great place," said Hedrick, who has sailed for Disney for 16 years. "I asked around to some of my friends and they all said this was the best yard on Lake Michigan."

Hedrick and his crew sailed into Lake Macatawa Tuesday morning and expect to head back to California "as soon as possible." Sailing the Pyewacket is a full-time job for Hedrick, but he's looking forward to some time off.

"We've been sailing all year and it's time to relax," said the native of Washington state. "We've got a race Oct. 5, then I'm done for a while."

Such large and varied boats sailing into Eldean is common, as witnessed by the marina full of vessels with hometowns ranging from Chicago to New Orleans painted on their hulls.

The hulking Sayonara, a racer similar to Pyewacket which survived a much publicized 1998 race in Australia in which five boats sank and many sailors died during fierce storms, has sat in drydock at Eldean for nearly a year as well.

Herb Eldean, who owns the massive operation with his brother, said his people cater to the sailor who use his facilities, whether they sail a 70-foot racer or a family pleasure vessel.

"That's how you get to be the best, you do everything you can to make it a good experience for people," Eldean said. "Then, through word of mouth, people find out this is a good spot to come to and that's how it happens."

Eldean said one reason his yard is so popular is the depth of the water. But he also touted his staff, which is well-versed in sailboat rigging.

While Roy Disney is a contributor to the sailing success of his boat -- the Pyewacket recently set records in winning a race from Rhode Island to Bermuda and won three recent regattas in the Caribbean -- he wasn't available to talk on Tuesday.

His work on the vessel, though, is not overlooked by Hedrick.

'What's important to him is the enjoyment. Winning is

second on that list," he said. "He goes on every race. He steers, he cooks, he cleans. He's just one of the crew."