Tinkerbelle: THE COST OF A DREAM When Robert Manry began his solo voyage across the Atlantic, he knew it would be a difficult journey. But he had no idea how it would affect those he loved most. Today, 40 years later, his children speak of the toll it took on the family.

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A skinny girl in a lime-green, two-piece bathing suit parks her bike in the stand at Manry Park in Willowick. She whips out a cell phone from her shoulder bag and hits a button with her thumb.

“Mom, I’m at Manry,” she says loudly into the phone.

Just behind her, sitting at a picnic table, Douglas Manry shudders.

“That freaks me out,” he says, listening to this stranger use his family name so casually. “I still can’t get used to that.”

The girl is 10, maybe 11, a time when life is fun and carefree. She’s about the same age as Douglas Manry was 40 years ago when his father’s famous voyage eclipsed his childhood and that of his older sister, Robin.

The park was named for their father, Robert Manry, after he sailed a 13 1/2-foot boat 3,200 miles alone across the Atlantic in 78 days. At the time, it was the smallest sailboat to cross the ocean. Wednesday marks the anniversary of that historic landing in Falmouth, England.

In 1965, Bob Manry, a Plain Dealer copy editor and modern-day Magellan, mesmerized two continents with his navigational prowess, courage and endurance. His feat was celebrated for months on both sides of the Atlantic with press conferences, parties and parades. There were television appearances, magazine spreads and two book contracts from Harper & Row. There hadn’t been an adventurer of his stature since Charles Lindbergh.

Bob Manry’s naive nautical achievement captured the imagination of a nation mired in political strife and social unrest. For almost three months, the tiny Tinkerbelle competed with the war in Vietnam, inner-city race riots and an emerging culture war called the Generation Gap for front-page headlines across the country.

While Manry helped people recall a simpler time and celebrate old-fashioned values, he could not shield his own children, who were swept away by the turbulent times. The skills that aided him in his triumph over the perilous North Atlantic were little help when human nature and fate combined to rain hell into his once-idyllic home life.

Douglas Manry and his 14-year-old sister rode the media tidal wave that came behind Tinkerbelle’s odyssey. The memories of those experiences and the way they played out are bittersweet for the siblings even today.

For the Manrys, the park in Willowick is doubly symbolic. The carved wood sign, with the image of Tinkerbelle and the words “Manry Park,” represents a period in their lives when the world seemed a place of endless possibility and promise, an experience that marked their lives and relationship forever. In retrospect, the park is also the place where few today even know who their father is or what he accomplished. It’s also where Douglas once spent the night while homeless.

When Bob Manry set his course June 1, 1965, he knew there would be trouble on the horizon. He just had no idea how much. Or how deep it would run for those he loved most.

Earlier . . . Robin and Douglas had broadcast the news to their friends that we were going to get a boat, so nearly all the children of the neighborhood were waiting for us on our return home.

– From the book Tinkerbelle, by Bob Manry

An ad for a 30-year-old, 13 1/2-foot Whitecap class sailboat, selling for $160, catches Bob Manry’s eye. In 1958 dollars, it isn’t inexpensive. It becomes the Plain Dealer copy editor’s obsession, like a third child in the family, after daughter Robin and son Douglas.

Manry first caught sailboat fever when a speaker from Germany, visiting his high school class, gave a talk about his adventures on the high seas. After that day, he read many of the great seafaring accounts, and especially enjoyed Joshua Slocum’s Sailing Alone Around the World.

At home in Willowick, he returns the boat to its former seaworthy state. The vessel becomes a center of family activity. The Manrys takes no vacation without hauling the little craft behind their station wagon. They enjoy camping and sailing Tinkerbelle on small lakes in and around Ohio and Pennsylvania, and in Canada. It's their golden time together, away from the bustle of suburban life.

Their summer vacations have all the warmth and humor of a 1950s family sitcom. Dad does know best when it comes to fixing anything. Mom lovingly cares for the kids. Robin and Douglas delight in the simple pleasures of popular culture. It's the dawn of rock 'n' roll, but their vacation photographs from the era look like a high school Home Economics film reel.

Although neighbors doubt Tinkerbelle's aquatic reliability, Manry confounds them in the summer of 1964 when he and Douglas sail the boat 200 miles across Lake Erie in heavy weather. The newspaperman – described by colleagues as quiet and socially awkward – dreams of greater glory for his little craft.

In the winter of 1964, Manry first mentions to others a plan to make a trans-Atlantic voyage with an attorney friend in a 26-foot boat. No one seems impressed. When the lawyer – who was never identified – backs out at the last minute, Manry decides to go it alone. In Tinkerbelle. He tells only his family.

He plans extensively for potential disaster. He stuffs the boat with buoyant foam. He prepares for lightning, for navigating by the stars, for loss of food and water, for hull damage, for torn sails, even for a bout of appendicitis. He packs antibiotics for illness, and Dexedrine to stay awake.

On May 23, 1965, Manry, his wife, Virginia, and brother-in-law, John Place, tow the boat to Falmouth, Massachusetts. Douglas and Robin stay home with their grandmother, Blanche Place. Manry spends three days alone putting the final touches on Tinkerbelle.

Harbormaster Bill Litzkow is kidding when he asks Manry if he's off to England.

Manry has never been more serious in his life.

On June 1, he sets sail for Falmouth, England. As he shoves off, Manry hands the harbormaster a letter for The Plain Dealer informing his employers that he is sailing the Atlantic alone in Tinkerbelle. A few days later, after reading the note, a Plain Dealer editor realizes that Manry is news.

Sailing also helps to keep a man aware of his lowly place in the universe, especially if that sailing involves celestial navigation and its concern with the sun and the stars.

– From Tinkerbelle

Manry's first night at sea, luminescent microorganisms wash over his bow, providing an electric vision that leaves him in ecstasy. The next night he finds his boat dead in the water, in a dense fog, in the middle of busy Atlantic shipping lanes. Manry sits, terrified, as potentially deadly cargo ships pass on either side.

Manry has good days and bad. He battles storms and enjoys the sun. Tinkerbelle sits still for hours at a time, "becalmed." On his best day, he sails 87 miles at his top speed of about 7 knots, or 8 miles an hour.

The Plain Dealer stories begin appearing just days after his departure. Reporters write about Virginia, the kids, neighbors and the family pets. The paper even publishes one of Manry's letters handed off to a passing ship. The Manry family articles are a hit with readers. It doesn't hurt that Manry is a newspaper copy editor. His colleagues at other papers around the country take an exceptional interest in his progress.

As Manry continues to sail east, he dips into his medicine bag to stay awake during storms or favorable winds. One Dexedrine tab keeps him alert for 20 hours. But then come full-blown hallucinations, both visual and auditory, that last for hours until he passes out from exhaustion.

During two of his three major hallucinations, Manry's mind conjures up peril for his family.

In the first, his daughter is kidnapped. In the second, assassins target his son.

By the time he is three-quarters across the ocean he has been swept overboard six times, saved only by a lifeline. He almost collides with a sleeping shark, he breaks two rudders and, during the first storm, he loses radar equipment. For a short time on the last leg of the journey, he is reported lost. Royal Air Force planes begin a search. After 24 hours there is still no word on Manry's location. His relatives in New England are angered when reports on their brother are cut short for news about Frank Sinatra and Mia Farrow's wedding.

Manry has no idea his trip is causing a stir on both sides of the Atlantic. He left U.S. shores with no fanfare. He expects nothing more when he arrives. He has $700 to transport himself and his boat back to the States.

The international media swarms when it becomes clear that Manry will eventually reach British shores. The Plain Dealer is not about to

miss out on a unique promotional opportunity. The paper offers to fly the Manry family to England to meet Tinkerbelle.

Robin protests. She says the kids in the neighborhood will consider that “stuck-up.” Besides, she will miss seeing her new boyfriend at the Willowick Community Day fair at Dudley Park.

On August 9, with Manry some 300 miles out, The Plain Dealer is scooped. Channel 5 reporter Bill Jorgensen hires a boat to take him out to Tinkerbelle for a three-hour interview with Manry while the family and Team PD waits in England for his arrival. The transcripts of the television interview run in the rival Cleveland Press.

The Plain Dealer counters a week later by rushing Virginia Manry out to Tinkerbelle for pictures of the couple smooching joyously. Manry reaches Falmouth Harbor on Tuesday, August 17, at 7:30 p.m. He agrees to be towed in because of the danger of sailing with 300-plus vessels in the water, along with 50,000 people waiting on shore to greet him.

Manry is 40 pounds underweight but in good spirits. His calculations were impressively accurate. He arrives two days after his August 15 prediction and with plenty of food and water to spare. The pandemonium that greets him is almost more of a challenge for the shy, self-deprecating Manry than 78 days alone at sea.

All I wanted to do basically was to achieve the dream of an ocean voyage I’d been harboring for nearly 30 years by crossing the Atlantic to England, and I wanted to do it with as little fuss as possible.

– From Tinkerbelle

When Bob Manry lands at Falmouth Harbor, he goes down on all fours to kiss the ground. Falmouth Mayor Samuel A. Hooper is there to greet him with the throng. Everybody wants a piece of Bob Manry and his storybook adventure.

The crowd surges forward, cheering on Manry and his family. As Bob, Virginia, Robin and Douglas are swept down the dock by the crowd, Manry takes a last, sad glance back at his faithful Tinkerbelle. She kept him and his family’s dreams alive on the water. Who will look after them now?

Every major news organization on both sides of the pond is represented in Falmouth. The Plain Dealer has a team of three. The British papers Daily Mirror and Daily Express, among others, are all over the Tinkerbelle landing. The BBC, AP and UPI are well represented. A young reporter named Dan Rather is there for CBS. Syndicated columnist William F. Buckley Jr. weighs in, calling Manry a hero. The New Yorker publishes a “Talk of the Town” item, saying Manry is a champion to copy editors everywhere.

It’s a good time to be Bob Manry’s kid. Your wish, their command. Plain Dealer publicist Russ Kane takes Douglas shopping for some cool Carnaby Street clothes. He buys hip-hugger pants, a leather wristband and pointy-toed Beatle boots known as “winkle-peckers.”

Daily Mirror photographer Eric Piper regales Robin with tales of his photograph sessions with the Beatles. She asks for a jar of mud from the Mersey River. “Beatle Mud.” She gets it.

The Manrys are given the entire top floor of the Green Bank Hotel, the fanciest digs in Falmouth. Douglas tells reporters he has a thing for Shirley Eaton, the “golden girl” from the James Bond movie Goldfinger. She shows up, gives the boy a peck on the cheek and wrings the occasion for all the publicity it’s worth.

The Manry circus rolls into London, where more press festivities await. The family stays at a much more upscale hotel than the Green Bank in Falmouth, eats at fancier restaurants and receives even more media attention. The Plain Dealer arranges for the family to take the Queen Mary ocean liner home, with Tinkerbelle on board.

To Douglas and Robin, it seems the dream will never end. Robin finds romance on the return trip. When the ship stops in France, another Bond girl, Claudine Auger from Thunderball, comes aboard to meet Bob Manry. The vaunted sailor is somewhere else on the ship. Douglas happens to be in the cabin and takes the introduction.

On the ship, Manry meets best-selling author Betty MacDonald (The Egg and I), who persuades him to write his own book about his voyage.

The Queen Mary docks in New York at Pier 90 after a five-day crossing. It’s another flashbulb-popping, reporter-shouting media orgy.

Manry appears on three television shows while in New York: The Today Show with Hugh Downs, What’s My Line? with John Daly and The Steve Allen Show. Allen asks Manry how he kept the little boat afloat. Manry tells his host he filled the ship with polyethylene. “I thought you sailed alone,” Allen quips to great laughs. Polly Ethylene, get it?

While in New York, Manry also visits the office of Life magazine, where he negotiates to sell his story and photographs.

When the Manrys land at Cleveland Hopkins Airport, there is yet another crowd waiting. They are cheering and holding “Welcome Home” signs. Only the Beatles earned a more exuberant reception there. Manry is a celebrity at the dawn of celebrity culture. And he’s not even

home yet.

Did I have the right to endanger my life, even slightly, and consequently jeopardize the future of my family? $ With much soul-searching I answered these questions in the affirmative, although I am willing to concede I may have been wrong in doing so.

– From Tinkerbelle

More than 10,000 people turn out for a parade and party in Manry's hometown of Willowick, followed by a luncheon at The Willo restaurant for more than 400 select admirers. Bob Manry is given a new Honda motorcycle, two portraits of himself, an engraved plaque, an honorary membership in the Kiwanis Club and an award from Governor Jim Rhodes for the advancement of the prestige of the state of Ohio.

The rock band The Twilighters plays its hit Be Faithful, Bob Manry gives a speech that day and his legend is secure.

All the while, Robin and Douglas keep each other's confidence. They are beginning to wither under the Tinkerbelle spotlight. The attention was fun, but now it's becoming frightening. The loss of personal control is unnerving. They feel like public property. Emotionally, they cling to each other. Although they never feared for their father's safety at sea, they now fear for their own at home.

Almost immediately after the family returns from England, people start to harass them.

It begins with prank phone calls. Hang-ups at first. Then people come on the line saying Bob Manry is nuts. Some neighbors said he was crazy before Tinkerbelle ever touched water. Now that Manry has accomplished the impossible, it's like a slap in the face to some in the blue-collar suburb.

Douglas first realizes it's going on while shopping with his mother in downtown Cleveland. He hears her, distraught, confiding to a salesperson that people are questioning her husband's sanity.

What's this about, he recalls wondering.

On almost every garbage collection day someone kicks over the trash cans on their tree lawn. Things are ugly for Douglas, now 12, at school. He's wearing his hair longer than other boys in the seventh grade. He has cool clothes from England. He's an artist, not an athlete. The greasers, the "tough" guys, target him. They trip him in the hall. They spill his books. When the teacher isn't looking, they bounce basketballs off the back of his head in gym.

Robin, 15, isn't having much fun, either. She is accused of bragging about having met the Beatles. She never met them, nor said she did. But the gossip flies. Former friends turn on her. She often comes home from school in tears.

In the summer of 1966, the local outdoor recreation center in Willowick is renamed Manry Park. Bob Manry is still enjoying fame and popularity. But things become worse for his kids. Socially, Douglas and Robin are under siege.

Douglas peers out his front door every morning to make sure all the other kids have already walked to school. It's his way of avoiding his tormentors. But every time Manry Park is mentioned over the school public-address system, which is often, the teasing, the shoves, the catcalls begin anew. Douglas comes to despise his last name.

Bob Manry busies himself with his book, Tinkerbelle, and giving speeches about the adventure. He can't really relate to his kids' problems. Tension in the home builds. Virginia Manry is concerned enough to arrange for both children to see a therapist. Robin finds comfort in the sessions. The doctor offers Douglas "primal scream" therapy. But Douglas isn't interested in subconscious motivations.

In 1967, Bob Manry signs a book deal and uses the advance to buy a 27-foot sailboat, which he names the Curlew after a British waterfowl. He's sold the idea of sailing around the Eastern Seaboard of the United States with his family for a different kind of nautical narrative. This one involves attempting to communicate with two increasingly disaffected teenagers who want nothing to do with their square parents, much less spend a year with them on a small sailboat.

But the Manrys, including their dog, Chris, and their cat, Fred, set sail. They are gone a full year. Douglas keeps up with his schoolwork through a correspondence course. Robin opts to repeat her junior year in high school.

The kids and their parents argue frequently aboard the Curlew. Bob doesn't care for the kids' music, clothes or hairstyles. Or the surly, noncommunicative attitudes that accompany them. During port stops, police in the South harass Douglas because of his long hair. Several times they pick him up for vagrancy, then release him into his parents' custody. This only adds to the generational bickering on the boat.

But in other ports, the Manry kids, now 13 and 16, encounter sailors, free spirits and nonconformists who are pursuing an alternative lifestyle. They are hippies, and some of them have read Bob Manry's book. They want to meet him. Manry will have no part of them. He sees them as a bad influence on his children. The kids think their dad is being at best uptight, and at worst, a hypocrite.

The Curlew trip ends in late 1968, and Bob Manry prepares to write his book. The Tinkerbelle story is three years old and the demand for his speeches is waning. Robin and Douglas return to school. The Curlew voyage is one more reason for other kids to feel they are oddballs and outsiders. But local hippies, and there are some in Willowick, befriend the kids.

On May 3, 1969, Robin and Douglas skip school, cruise around in a friend's car and smoke a little grass. Their dad is in New York giving one of his Tinkerbelle talks and their mother is in Pennsylvania visiting their ailing grandmother. Later in the afternoon the kids drive by their house to find a police car in the driveway. They wonder if they were reported missing from school.

Police are there because their mother was killed that afternoon in a freak one-car accident on the Ohio Turnpike near Youngstown. Virginia Manry's mother, Blanche Place, had died at home the same day. Neither knew of the other's death.

The family is stunned. The Manry kids dread the future without their mom. She was always the more understanding parent and the go-between during the ongoing arguments with their dad. Virginia's death also gives them one more reason to despise their Tinkerbelle fame. Thanks to the attendant publicity, the obituary in The Plain Dealer and the photo of the "Manry Death Car," the kids must now grieve publicly.

Some days later, Douglas is standing on a Willowick street corner when another kid drives by, slowing down only to shout, "Hey, Manry, your old lady died." Douglas simply shakes his head.

By 1970, Bob Manry is beset with woes he never imagined. The former sailing hero, best-selling adventure writer and famous family man is now a widower with two teenagers he hardly understands. He also is facing a book he cannot write because he is overcome with grief. His finances are shaky. He is lonely and in great personal pain. He begins to date, bringing more scorn from his kids.

The following year, Manry marries Jean Flaherty, a friend of his deceased wife. The enmity between the kids and their stepmother hangs in the air like poison. Two months after the marriage, Manry and his new wife are out with another couple. Manry suffers a massive heart attack.

The man who braved the Atlantic in a tiny wooden boat dies in the back seat of a car. He is 52.

"Only 12 miles to go," I told Tinkerbelle.

The thought brought on a faint stabbing of pain. The voyage was almost over. It was in its hoary old age, moving swiftly toward its end, its death.

– From Tinkerbelle

Manry's will determines that insurance and savings, $42,000, as well as proceeds from the later sale of the family's house, will be divided among his widow and his two children. Robin and Douglas' aunt, Louise Manry, a copy editor from New York City, comes to live with them. She stays for a year until Douglas is 18 and graduates from high school. Louise Manry's heart breaks for her niece and nephew. All three are uncomfortably numb. There isn't much talk about their father's death, but Aunt Louise remembers feeling that his spirit is with them. She regards them as normal teens in abnormal circumstances.

After Louise Manry moves back East, Robin Manry takes her money and enrolls at Kent State University. Douglas takes a trip to an artist colony in St. Ives, England, where he is still remembered as the son of Bob Manry. He makes a small splash as a celebrity painter there, garnering some favorable reviews, but he feels lost and moves back to Ohio after about eight months.

Douglas can't access the rest of his inheritance money until he turns 19 in a few months. He doesn't drive and has no home or job. He's been living off $25 a week disbursed by his father's estate. For a time, he stays with Robin and her volatile, unstable boyfriend in Kent. When that doesn't work out, he stays with friends and neighbors in Willowick until the weather warms.

Without money, or real plans for the future, alone in the world, Douglas Manry finds himself homeless, sleeping in Manry Park or at Cresthaven Beach. On his first night huddled on the Manry Park aluminum pool bleachers he can't help but notice that at least this park has provided him with something. All he thinks about is returning to England to study painting once he has his inheritance.

In 1973, with less than $14,000 to his name, Douglas Manry returns to England, where he stays for eight months. He travels around, trying to start a new life for himself in a place where he had once felt so welcome, so special.

He finally realizes the glory is gone when he enters the Green Bank Hotel in Falmouth. There is nothing in the lobby or anywhere else that marks that once-happy, historic occasion of his father's landing.

The world has moved on, and now Douglas Manry must, too. He finds work on the iron ore boats of Lake Erie for a short time, and then takes a job as a banquet chef at the Cleveland Athletic Club in downtown Cleveland.

Today, Douglas still works at the CAC. He continues to paint and show his work whenever possible. He has been with his partner, Justine, for 18 years. They live in West Park with their dog, Juliet, and several cats.

Robin is single and lives in New York, where she moved in 1978. She works as a waitress and shares an apartment with her cat, Chavo.

Both Robin and Douglas have made peace with their past. And they wish their parents could have lived to know them beyond their rebellious teen period. The passage of time has given them a deepened appreciation for all their parents sought to provide.

Each year it's financially feasible, the two siblings travel back to the U.K. for a vacation. The last trip was in 2004 to the Isle of Skye in Scotland. They sometimes fantasize about buying an island in Scotland when one of them hits the lottery. Robin recently described their Skye vacation:

A perfect place for Douglas and me. Mountains, moors, fog, sea. heather, ruins. Haunting beauty. We've been traveling together for over 10 years now and each [trip] is always the best. But Skye was something special. A wild, bleak countryside. $ It's great to explore a place together and reminisce, too. We understand each other very well, I think. We've always been close. What can I say? There is no one like a good brother.

We don't know when our next trip will be. But we know there will be one – someday – and we have lots of great memories.

Plain Dealer features reporter Michael Heaton remembers reading about Bob Manry's journey across the Atlantic when he was a child. Heaton may be reached at 216-999-4569 or through magmail@plaind.com.

The Plain Dealer published many stories about Bob Manry and his historic voyage across the Atlantic. Read some of them at www.cleveland. com/sundaymag.

To view Tinkerbelle photographs, editorial cartoons, magazine articles, video clips and the complete text of Manry's book,

go to the Cleveland Memory Project's home page, www.Cleveland Memory.org.

On Wednesday, August 17, at 5:30 p.m., the Western Reserve Historical Society will present "Tinkerbelle: 40th Anniversary Commemoration." Bob Manry's son, Douglas, and William Barrow and Cecilia Hartman of the Cleveland Memory Project will speak. Admission is free. For more information, call 216-721-5722. – M.H.

- Caption: PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS: Special Collections, Cleveland State University Library: PAGES 10, 11 Plain Dealer Files: PAGES 12, 13 PAGE 14: (left) HIROKO MASUIKE VIA AP, (right) BY PD/Joshua Gunter PHOTO CAPTIONS: PAGE 9: After Bob Manry remodels the boat, Virginia christens the Tinkerbelle with a bottle of Canada Dry ginger ale. Before Manry's journey across the Atlantic in it, the boat is the center of family vacations. MAP BY: PLAIN DEALER FILE PAGE 12: A crowd gathers at the Manry home on Royalview Drive in Willowick to welcome the family home from England. Less than a week later, the reception turns chilly. "The experience left me feeling at times as if I had no skin," Robin says. "I always related to Jane Fonda's line in the film They Shoot Horses, Don't They?: 'I get razzed by an expert. I get razzed by God.'" PAGE 13: After his parents' death, Douglas Manry returns to England in 1972 and tries to make a name for himself as a painter. "The reviews of my work invariably began with long retellings of my dad's voyage," he says. PAGE 14 "I've never read my father's book, Tinkerbelle," says Robin Manry, who now lives in New York City. "When it first came out, I figured, 'Why read it? I know it all.' Now I don't want to read it because I'm afraid [reading about my parents] will make me too sad." "What happened after my father's voyage left me distrustful of people for a long time," says Douglas Manry, at the Tinkerbelle exhibit at the Western Reserve Historical Society. "It also made me wary of people's conventional, close-minded way of thinking about the world."
