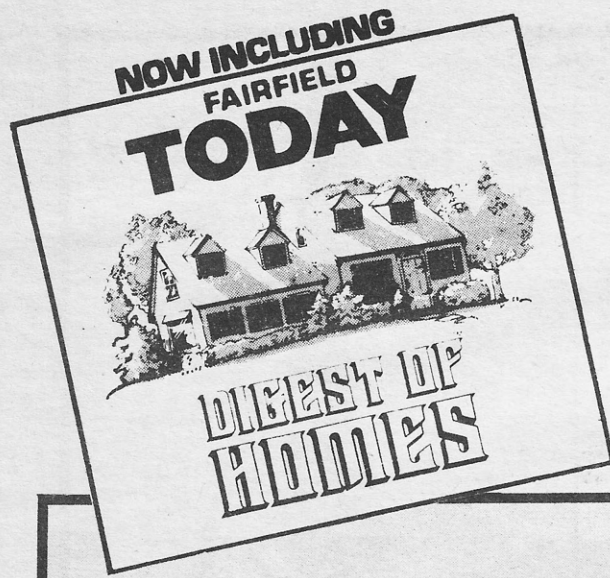


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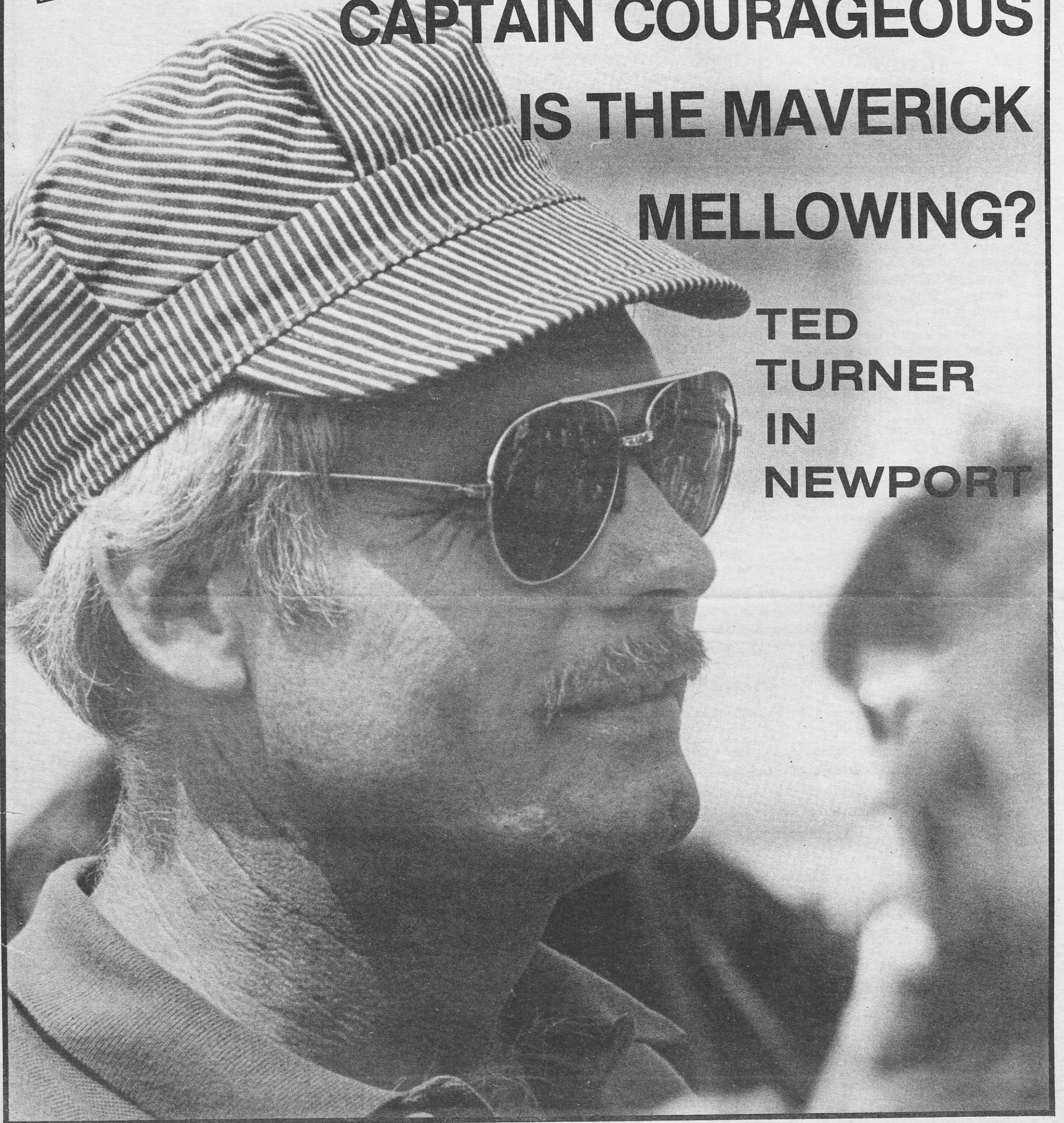
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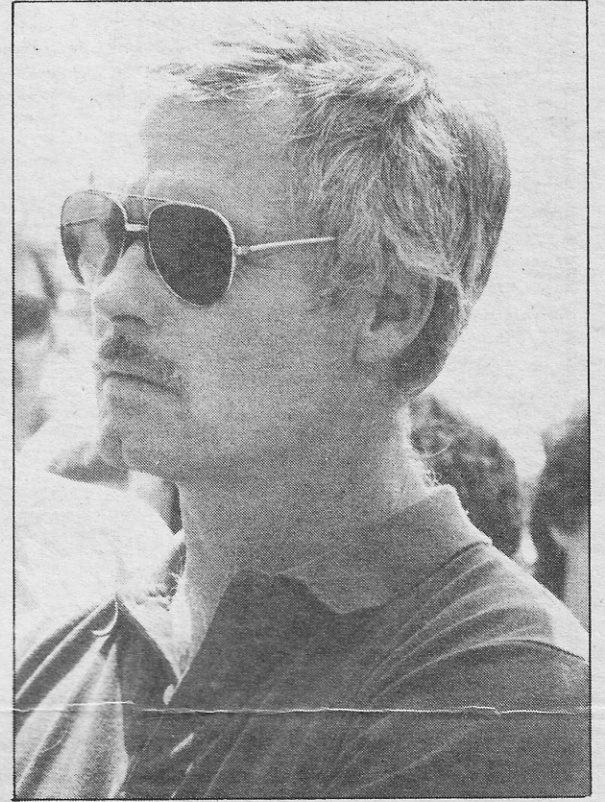
CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS IS THE MAVERICK MELLOWING?

TED
TURNER
IN
NEWPORT



IS THE MAVERICK MELLOWING?

CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS AT THE MOET MASTERS REGATTA



*"And then the men
and rigging,
and the why
ships move, running
or beating,
and the poise . . ."*

John Masefield

*(Above) The
COURAGEOUS on a
starboard tack.*

*(At right) DEFENDER
& COURAGEOUS
match their awesome
speed on a trial cruise.*



*"Foam trembled
at her bow
like wisps of wool."
Heave and paw! I
heard the captain call
encouraging his crew.*

*(Above Center) Ted
Turner at the helm of
COURAGEOUS.
(Above) Turner takes his
win with uncharacteristic
stoicism.*

*Story by
Anne Connelly
LeMieux*

*Photos by
Charles P.
LeMieux III*

Cool currents and breezes ruffled the flowering shrubbery. Vintage wooden trolleys deposited guests on the manicured lawn in front of one of Newport's most illustrious mansions, Belcourt Castle. After discharging their elegant cargo, the trolleys returned to the First Beach

COVER STORY

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parking lot to pick up another load. The early June Friday evening neared perfection: the men comfortable in their navy blue blazers, the women barely feeling the heat. The occasion? A reception benefitting the always needy coffers of the DEFENDER/COURAGEOUS group. It was called "Celebration."

The 60-room "summer cottage" where the affair was staged is owned by the Tinney family. Opulence rests easily here on Bellevue Avenue, where the facades remain intact, despite the conversion of several "cottages" into condominiums. Belcourt Castle was fashioned by designer Richard Morris Hunt in 1891, after King Louis III's French Palace. Each room duplicates the style of a different period of French, English or Italian design. Displaying one of the town's most important collection of antiques, the showcase home is open to the public, who are invited, for a small consideration, to "step over the threshold of time."

The consideration for this particular evening's festivities was \$75 a head. Bar receipts, the profits from a silent auction and a large donation (rumored to be \$50,000) from Moët champagne, one of the syndicate's corporate sponsors, were all destined to fund the DEFENDER/COURAGEOUS defense effort for the America's Cup.

Guests were greeted by chamber music performed by a string quartet in the Versailles dining room, the hub of the night's activities. A long wooden table ran down the center of the softly lit room, peaked to overflowing with a fabulous variety of fingerfood, from toasted Brie and pate en croute to pepperoni and fresh pineapple. Candle wax dripped onto sculpted loaves of bread as strains of Schubert's "Moments Musicaux" harmonized with the restrained murmurs of the early birds. Demure young waitresses in traditional black and white uniforms circulated with trays of hot hors d'oeuvres. Top-siders, and an abundance of richly tanned skins, were the ubiquitous chevrons of the yachting crowd.

The commercial elements of the evening were peripheral and tastefully incorporated. Promotional films of DEFENDER and COURAGEOUS ran non-stop in the Gothic ballroom, and DeBeers, another corporate sponsor, set up a small well-guarded display of diamonds. A short program of speakers finished quickly, followed by the nostalgic sounds of the Kingston Trio, under a huge blue and white canopy on the grounds. The star attraction (whose presence, was, reportedly, the enticement of Moët's sizable contribution) was four-time Yachtsman of the Year, winner of the Congressional Cup, the World Ocean Racing Championship, The SORC, the Sydney-Hobart Race and the Fastnet Race; founder of Atlanta's superstation Channel 17, and the Cable News Network; owner of the Atlanta Hawks and the Atlanta Braves; successful America's Cup defender for 1977—the Dixie Devil himself, Robert E. "Ted" Turner III.

"Celebration" was the prelude to the Second Annual Moët Masters Regatta. In 1982, the match racing event was sailed on classic yachts, with Gary Jobson beating DEFENDER's skipper Tom Blackaller. This year, Turner was invited to be

guest skipper against reigning Moët Master, Jobson. An added attraction in the America's Cup year: the vessels selected for the competition were the 12-meters DEFENDER, and Turner's old boat, a newly refitted and modified COURAGEOUS.

When the lights for the TV cameras flooded the room, the mood underwent a subtle change. A few cocktails into the evening found the decorous murmurs escalated to a refined clamor. Attention focused



Gary Jobson, former Moët Master.

on a podium set between two gold-leafed columns at the far end of the room. Both skippers were invited to join in a champagne toast. In keeping with the lavish set-up, a traditional champagne pyramid had been erected—a glittering cone of small rounded glasses atop a glass platform, rivaling the chandelier for incandescence. As Moët was poured to overflowing in the top glass, foaming topaz streams cascaded down, filling the glasses in the tiers below.

After an amicable toast, Turner was heard to comment, "This is good!" in a calculated semi-surprised tone. It's doubtful that this was a new experience for him, but he seems to have learned what's required in these situations. Looking a bit wary, almost sheepish, green blazer and grey slacks slightly wrinkled, Turner approached the microphone clutching a folded piece of paper. He glanced at it momentarily for reference, but looked up at the expectantly hushed gathering. As he began to speak, the familiar nasal twang rang out:

"Well, I am very, very glad to be back here and to see so many old friends and so many places that are permanently inscribed on my heart. It was really great to get out and sail on COURAGEOUS today for a couple' hours, and it was really nice of the DEFENDER/COURAGEOUS group to ask me to come back up here. It's going to be a lot of fun tomorrow. I'm very rusty and a guy asked me, he said, 'Who's going to win tomorrow?' and I said 'Jobson, probably,' cause I have, ah, it's been a long time. [pause] I tell you though, if I had a month [pause for laughter] to get back in shape . . . I don't know. Anyway, it really is fun and I know everybody, ah, wants to get back to drinkin' but I thank you from the bottom of my heart for bein' here, and for bein' quiet when I spoke." Nodding and grinning, he stepped down, his still angular features relaxing. None of the blue-blooded potential donors had been offended; and he wisely hedged his bet to salvage his ego

should he make a poor showing against Jobson the next day. (Jobson was also advising folks that if they were betting the ranch, they might be wise to consider Turner.)

With the press and guests who approached him, Turner was cordial but guarded, briefly answering questions put to him as he circulated, and looking relieved as he turned from each encounter. When queried, in the midst of hub-bub, which of his achievements meant the most to him, he replied with curt, executive frankness, "I don't know." He reconsidered for a second, then shook his head, flashed the famous Turner grin and bumptiously declared, "They're all good!"

The only son of Ed and Florence Turner (Ted's sister and only sibling, Mary Jane, died as a teenager of an agonizing degenerative disease called *lupus erythematosus*), the younger Turner was schooled in military fashion, subject to equally strict discipline at home by a father

Turner indicated (in a 1982 *Time* magazine profile) that this concern has recently been laid to rest. When Ted was 24, the elder Turner became despondent over the state of his billboard business' rapid expansion to the point of overextension—forcing the sale of the firm's large Atlanta division. One morning Ed Turner went up to his room and shot himself. While suffering through the trauma of his father's suicide, Ted tackled the task of persuading the buyers to sell the division back to him, gambling—on long odds—that he could turn it around. Using all his experience and wiles he successfully forced their hand and regained control of the business.

In his early thirties, Turner launched himself into the field of broadcasting and communications. He acquired Channel 17 in Atlanta by merging Turner Communications Corp. with Rice Broadcasting. Staking all on his conviction that independent television was an industry

pugnacious side. While locking legal horns with baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn in a countersuit stemming from his one year suspension, Turner threatened to serve Kuhn's lawyer with a "knuckle sandwich." The suspension resulted from a cocktail party remark about Gary Matthews, which Kuhn interpreted as tampering with a player under contract to another team. A recent *Playboy* interview, like so many others, was severed violently after Turner became enraged with the interviewer's persistent probing of the disparity between Ted's professed moral standards (he proselytizes a Moral Majority party line) and his less-than-saintly public behavior. He also objected to questions contrasting these standards and current American mores, as exemplified by commercial TV programming. Turner has had to make some compromises with his ideology to remain competitive with the three major networks, but he apparently doesn't like to think about it. An angry Turner exploded; and, in a tantrum, destroyed the interviewer's recording equipment in the first class cabin of a commercial jet at 35,000 feet, as well as hiding some recorded tapes.

A plaque on Turner's desk reads, "Either lead, follow or get out of the way!" The people who choose to follow Turner in his various campaigns tend to glorify their leader, while admitting to the difficulties involved in dealing with his Olympian temperament. If these people comprise his infantry, then Turner's often unpredictable methods for eliciting results are his spears, and his personality itself is the shield which



COURAGEOUS and DEFENDER battled boldly for the Moët Cup, only to lose the war for the America's Cup to LIBERTY.

who occasionally used a wire coat hanger to "get my attention." Although he wanted to go to the U.S. Naval Academy, at Annapolis, he submitted to his father's insistence on an Ivy League school and went to Brown. He intended to major in the Classics, but switched to economics, again according to Ed Turner's dictates. To this day he can spout off long passages from the exploits of the Greek heroes he admired as a boy. After his suspension from Brown for rule infractions involving women, he spent some time bumming around Florida, but ultimately returned to Georgia to work with his father in the billboard business.

Turner credits his father with instilling in him the drive to succeed in business. Under his parent's firm tutelage, he began to develop the shrewd acumen which is part of his arsenal today. There was also a negative legacy handed down from father to son: gnawing self-doubt.

with substantial capacity for growth, he subsequently bought Channel 36, operating out of Charlotte, N.C. For a while both stations hemorrhaged capital, but he applied a "Turner-quet." In December 1976, through a series of maneuverings which surmounted numerous logistical and regulatory obstacles, WTCG, Channel 17, went on the RCA satellite, effectively expanding his market to encompass the entire nation.

Turner's timing and foresight were impeccably correct. He cast his die when the commercial viability of cable TV was still nebulous. This demonstrates a quality which has led to the application of such adjectives as visionary and pioneering; although some, with a sniff, call it merely lucky. If Turner now sits with a silver spoon in his mouth, it is forged of his own mettle.

For all the charm and charisma Ted Turner radiates (like a chunk of unprocessed plutonium), he has his



The bubbly flowed!

protects his operation as it moves forward in phalanx formation on any given front.

The Atlanta Braves were, perhaps, the perfect sports vehicle for Turner to exercise his unorthodox yet often strikingly successful techniques. Illustrative was the 1980 demotion of Bob Horner (then a 22-year old potential all-star with a 3 year, no-cut, million dollar Braves contract) to the minors for a stint in Richmond, based on his less than spectacular performance. Turner initially purchased the team (and NBA's Hawks, as well) to add sports programming and avoid paying for the broadcast rights to the potentially lucrative games. For four seasons, Atlanta groaned (as did their tobacco-chewing number one fan) as

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the Braves lay in the league's basement. Then, last year, billboards began proclaiming that as "America's Team" they were "World Serious." The team made a good run for the western division title of the National league, but fell just short, finishing behind perennial champions, the Los Angeles Dodgers. This year, after leading their division all summer, they just may make good on their threat.

The stiff challenge and a formidable opponent are impetus enough for Ted to strut his stuff. Every loss should teach a lesson. In 1980, when Turner returned to Newport (with the identical crew and 12-meter which had won the 1977 Superbowl of yachting), COURAGEOUS was soundly trounced in the trials by Dennis Conner aboard FREEDOM. Speculation at the time suggested that Turner's attention was distracted somewhat by the labor pains which accompanied the June 1980 birth of the Cable News Network (CNN), and the demands involved in nurturing the fledgling 24-hour satellite all-news station. He maintained a low profile on the ocean racing circuits, preferring to race Hobie Cats with his son, Rhett.

Race morning sparkled like the rivers of Moet the night before—a sailing day straight from the catalog. The wind blew a steady 15 knots, gusting to 20 out on Narragansett Bay. Nary a cloud marred the horizon. Press, VIP guests and crew members began trickling into the fenced off DEFENDER/COURAGEOUS compound at Newport Offshore about 7:30 A.M.

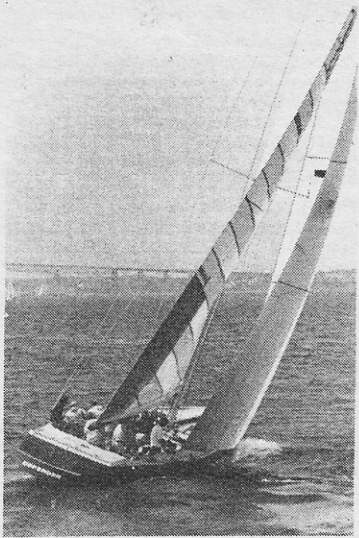
Turner's early arrival was announced by a chorus of clicking camera shutters. He walked briskly to the trailer office, shoulders back (paunch protruding very slightly), good-naturedly greeting people along the way: "Hi, how are you folks this morning?" Clad in worn topsiders, tan shorts, an off-white COURAGEOUS sweater over a green COURAGEOUS shirt, he wandered around the compound with a blue and white striped engineer's cap (his trademark six years earlier) set jauntily atop his salt-and-pepper hair. An uncanny sixth sense signalled Turner to pose at each photographer's focused attention. He was remarkably pleasant, although a shade of apprehension often colored his expression. His mood changed noticeably when Moet Master Jobson and Tom Blackaller pulled up in a maroon German sedan.

Gary Jobson, no lightweight himself in racing circles, was largely responsible for organizing the event. He and Turner go back a long way. Jobson credits Turner with exposing him to, and teaching him about the business aspects of yacht racing, in the days when he was Turner's tactician aboard COURAGEOUS.

The tactician and skipper on a 12-meter have a peculiarly symbiotic relationship: While the helmsman's attention is concentrated on steering and maneuvering the boat, the tactician evaluates the weather factors, wind shifts and the boat's position vis-a-vis the opposition and calls the turns. To do this competently, the tactician must be a highly qualified skipper in his own right. But 12-meter skippers have notoriously large egos—they're the best and they know it—and it requires a special

personality to be willing to set aside the personal glory surrounding the skipper. Though they function behind the scenes, the tactician is actually an integral partner of the duo. Jobson seems eminently suited to the role, which he took on again this year with Blackaller, aboard DEFENDER. In late August, DEFENDER was eliminated from the trials by the New York Yacht Club Selection Committee.

If anyone knows Ted Turner well, Gary Jobson may be one of the elite



Close-hauling across Narragansett Bay.

few. It's generally agreed that it's impossible to rivet Turner's attention without being alone with him. When people are around, he inevitably plays to the crowd. But, before the 1977 America's Cup trials, while the COURAGEOUS crew practiced off Marblehead, Turner and Jobson made it a habit to walk together to the harbor each morning, and home again at night, just talking.

On race morning, Jobson strolled leisurely into the compound; the portrait of a man at ease: hands in the pockets of his khaki pants, his friendly smile engagingly direct. With him, their roles reversed for the regatta, was Tom Blackaller, living up to his nickname of "The Movie Star," with mirrored shades, faded blue jeans and bushy silver hair blowing in the breeze. Turner immediately shifted into second gear. Blackaller reportedly a rival for Turner when it comes to hat size, surveyed the scenario and the successful Cup defender who was a visitor on his turf this time. He began throwing typical pre-race psych-out banter across the dust, jokingly, but with an edge, accusing Ted of being a camera hog. Bristling visibly, Captain Courageous strode toward the man who attempted to follow in his footsteps across the water, at which point Blackaller backed off a little, saying, "It's okay, it's your day." Not really mollified, Turner muttered "My day, my ass!" Having marked his turf, he asked Blackaller what he thought the weather was going to do. A relieved looking Blackaller regained his momentarily mislaid composure and ventured a prediction. The amicable spirit of the occasion was restored.

The regatta was to consist of three short-course races in Narragansett Bay, with the skippers switching boats after each race. The crew members were permanent, remaining on their assigned 12-meters. Jobson won the coin toss for first choice of boat, and there were chuckles all around as he instantly replied, "DEFENDER!"

Journalists, photographers and guests were directed to their assigned

tenders or spectators boats. The catered box lunches were late in arriving and people, many of them under the weather from the libations of the previous evening, were getting itchy. Turner stalked through the main salon of CHECKERED DEMON (DEFENDER's tender) looking pale and somewhat anxious. Gone was the small talk as he hustled below with a crew member, and returned, popping a white aspirin tablet into his mouth, swallowing it dry. From the decks of DEFENDER, Jobson, Blackaller and Co. could be heard discussing strategy for the day. The prevailing assumption was that DEFENDER would win all three races (the idea of letting Turner "have" the second race was laughingly tossed about).

Turner hadn't raced 12-meters since his unsuccessful bid for the 1980 Cup defense. These guys had been racing on the two boats nearly every day since June, 1980. Would the regatta turn out to be merely an exercise? Or worse, an embarrassment?

Lunch arrived about 9:45 and immediately the tenders started their engines and began towing the 12-meters out beyond the harbor area. Escorting DEFENDER and COURAGEOUS was a color guard of lasers and windsurfers, all sporting bright yellow sails. As the twelve plowed under the bridge into Narragansett Bay, towlines were dropped, mainsails raised and the thoroughbreds of yachting sprinted into action, tacking, organizing and swooping past the committee boat, a ritual of yachting etiquette. COURAGEOUS seemed to be taking a little longer than DEFENDER to pull things together.

The marks were set for the course: two enormous inflated orange buoys. As the warning gun was fired, ten minutes prior to the start, the boats began circling and covering each other. Any questions regarding Turner's lack of practice and its effect on his expertise were quickly resolved. Aggressively tailing DEFENDER, turning and retreating when he appeared to be losing the edge, forcing DEFENDER to chase him, then turning again and barreling full speed ahead, the contest resembled a jousting match, or a toe to toe duel. And this was merely the two boats testing each other during the countdown to the starting gun. When it cracked across the water, both yachts shot across the line. As the 12-meters moved gracefully up the first leg, feinting, retreating, with tacks as swift and tricky as a basketball player moving the ball down court, the fleet of spectator boats and tenders followed behind like the children of Hamelin entranced by the Pied Piper.

Two blue and white spinnakers ballooned from the bows as they rounded the first mark, and the sequence was repeated. Obviously, Captain Courageous requires no favors from the crew aboard DEFENDER. As the third and final leg neared completion, COURAGEOUS stayed between her rival and the mark, majestically sweeping across the finish line 11 seconds before DEFENDER. Turner let his crew take over and made a production of lying down spread-eagle on the afterdeck, proving to the world that old sailors need not necessarily get blown away!

The syndicate's Boston Whaler quickly made the skipper switch, fer-

rying the two men the short distance to their new boats before the second race, which was essentially a replay of the very close first race. COURAGEOUS blew out a shute rounding the windward mark and Turner and DEFENDER won by five seconds. The final race ended in the harbor itself, amidst congestion which bears remarkable testimony to the skill of both crews, unmarked as the finish was by mishap or collision. Jobson, back aboard DEFENDER, squeaked by Turner, finishing a fraction of a second earlier. Turner stood in the cockpit, scratching the seat of his shorts, annoyed at the loss, but undeniably pleased with the day's overall results.

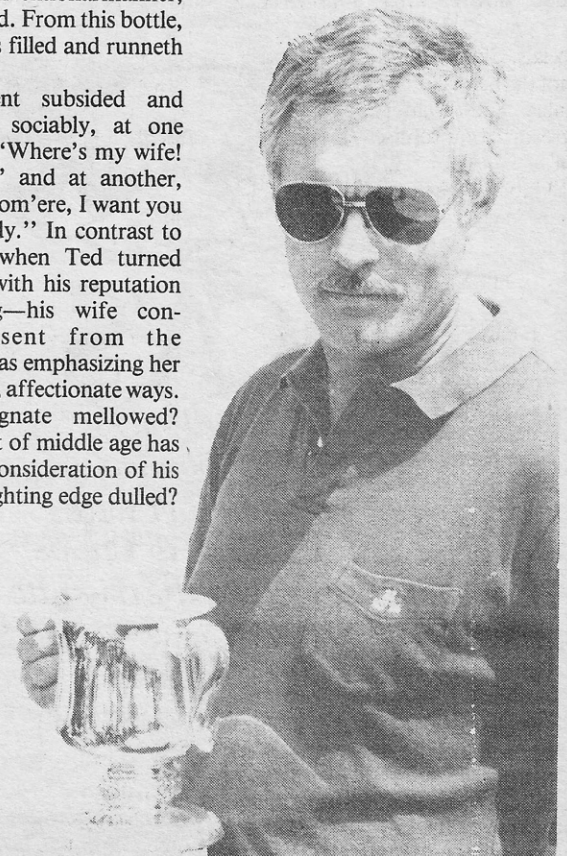
Once again, the tenders took their respective twelves in tow and docked at Newport Offshore for (naturally) a champagne toast. Jobson and Turner stood flaring like sunspots at the heart of the sunburnt crowd. Turner, the new Moet Master, spoke briefly for the benefit of the press: "I'd like to thank all the folks at DEFENDER/COURAGEOUS and Moet? Moet?" [stumbling on the pronunciation, which correctly rhymes with "poet," accent on the second syllable] "for the opportunity to tiptoe down memory lane." Spouting that cliché prompted a self-mocking smile. "I hope one of these two boats will be back to defend the Cup. Hopefully I'll be back to root for them." He was then presented with a silver mug trophy. What followed seemed specifically tailored to suit the man and the occasion. A small, mustachioed Frenchman, in white chef's garb, advanced on a linen-covered table, brandishing an antique saber. Turner eyed him suspiciously, then stepped back warily. In accordance with tradition—Napoleon and his soldiers included bottles of champagne in their field kits, when they achieved victory, they sliced the tops off their bottle with their swords and toasted their good fortune—Robert Gourdin, otherwise known as "Mr. Moet," proceeded to saber each bottle neck neatly, sending the cork, and a piece of the bottle out of sight as champagne bubbled onto the ground. Then he took a three liter bottle, shook it, and, popping the cork in a more conventional manner, sprayed the crowd. From this bottle, Turner's cup was filled and runneth over.

The excitement subsided and Turner mingled sociably, at one point shouting, "Where's my wife! Where's Janey!" and at another, "Janey, honey, com'ere, I want you to meet somebody." In contrast to Newport 1977, when Ted turned heads regularly with his reputation for womanizing—his wife conspicuously absent from the limelight—Ted was emphasizing her presence in gentle, affectionate ways.

Has the magnate mellowed? Perhaps the onset of middle age has precipitated a reconsideration of his image. Has his fighting edge dulled?

"... a man begins to value some of the things he's thrown away."

Ted Turner



Judging by all recent performances, probably not. Experience has apparently taught him to wield his considerable weapons with more subtlety. A few years ago, Turner purchased a 5,000 acre spread near Charleston, S.C., inviting comparison with the ante-bellum South as portrayed in the Turner family favorite, *Gone With The Wind*. The words of Rhett Butler are apt for this maturing rebel, who once declared that if the South had won the Civil War, he'd be heading the Confederate challenge for the America's Cup: "I'm 45, the age when a man begins to value some of the things he's thrown away so lightly in youth, the clannishness of families, honor, and security, roots that go deep—Oh no! I'm not recanting, I'm not regretting anything I've ever done. I've had a hell of a good time . . . I never intend to change more than my spots."

A 1978 biography describes Turner as a "folk hero." What constitutes a hero? The ability to perform on a larger-than-life scale? To beat unbeatable odds? To rise again after losing a battle and go on to win the war? Turner indeed regards life as one immense battlefield. The appeal of a hero must have a fairly broad base to qualify him as such.

Robert E. "Ted" Turner III has proven himself a formidable contender in several spheres. A question regarding his own heroes was put to the gutsy entrepreneur/intrepid mariner/visionary communications baron/tobacco-chewing sports club owner and all-around good-ole-boy. His immediate, and typically brash response was "I got a million of 'em!" Asked to narrow it down to the top three, he unblinkingly rattled off, "Abraham Lincoln, Jesus Christ and Alexander the Great!" To be sure, his answer was a guaranteed crowd pleaser. But there's no reason to assume it's insincere. Abraham Lincoln might have had someone like Ted Turner in mind when he spoke the words "Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored." Turner, no doubt, would grin and agree! ★