

1978
CEBA
SWIM

Follow LYNGE IN

Boat -
Captain
Account

Bendt Lyngø, 4541 NW 6th St., plantation, 584-3832:
I was down at the Village Inn. I was just having a couple of beers. The people there are friends of mine. I was getting ready to leave about 8 or 9 p.m. and go home. He (Poensch) needed a captain. She (Faye) was trying to call one. The woman who owns the motel told me about it. She took me up to Walter's room. He was very surprised. He had just lost his captain. I am a charter captain. I was between charters. (He is a 6-4 Dane). He had a 58-foot Thompson ~~motor~~, very light, rolls very much in the waer. Glenn Drummond--he doesn't know anything about the current. But it really isn't that big a deal. When you get close to the coast, there is a counter-current south. You have to know how to cross a current. The winds helped. At first, there was a southeasterly wind, it changed to easterly, then northeasterly. When we got close, it started to worry us. The wind was coming straight at us. It was rough. Had to make a decision. We spent three days in Cuba, left the fourth day. We had to put together the shark cage. It was disassembled. Large rolls of chicken wire had to be cut and trimmed. We built it from scratch. I was seasick a couple times, but was able to handle it. The diver (Mims) was okay. The cage would rock violently and make you very sick. I watched the cage a lot to keep the direction right on course--hand-steered all the way. At night we kept our lights off except when traffic was near. But we could see all right with the help of the moon. Castro is a seaman. He likes the sea. He told Walter he could not make the swim without a pair of fins, goggles, a snorkel and a good captain. I didn't know what he meant then, but he turned out to be right. It was a little more work than I expected. Walter got into the boat three times for about 10 or 15 minutes. No, he was not a fraud, he was not sleeping. I think he was too mad to sleep. He couldn't have slept if he wanted to. He was very angry about the situation with Diana Nyad. When I first saw Walter I said he would never make it. Then I said I want to see you swim. (After got into the atmosphere). He got a lot of attention in Cuba. Every day there was more and more interest. The Cubans were very nice to us, picked up some tabs. We met Castro, dignitaries, the press. Meeting dignitaries was not new to me. I had served in the Danish navy aboard the royal yacht. But this was a very nice experience. My job was simply to get him from here to there. I had to watch the current and waves. Most of the swim the current helped

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Notes from Heeren Interviews

him, but the last 12 hours it was changing. As soon as I saw Sombrero Light (Marathon), we were 14 to 16 miles out. Started thinking about the counter-current. The Gulfstream shifts, close to shore is actually a southward flow. We had 10 or 15 knots wind steady the whole time. I think the wind compensated some for the current so Walter was able to make the swim. It made sort of a trough. The Current was at his back and the wind from the right side (Pushing toward the U.S.). The shark cage only weighed 400 pounds. The waves went right through the chicken wire. We had 4 to 6 foot seas. Diana Nyad said she had seas up to 8 feet, but they were really 2 to 4 feet. I was out on another boat during her swim. They were higher, one or two got up to 8 feet, on Walter's swim. When you see a big one, you have to manipulate the cage a little bit. The worst part was at night, we could see a little from the moon. I just needed to see the silhouette of the cage. He was in the water. Walter is a determined man. If he really wants something, he do it. He say, "I gotta do it," and he do it. Heading for Sombrero light (wound up nine miles south of it). The cage started braking up, Walter hollers. The waves were coming in his snorkel, he was spitting. He was sick once or twice. I said to myself, we have to go this way. Glenn Drummond was ~~sitting~~ sitting with me, was not sick at that time. Sombrero Light is an easy light to identify. It is like a sun in the sky. Drummond said we have to go for the light. I said, no, we can't. I had to make the decision. I knew it was impossible to go straight into the wind. Drummond said we had to because all the reporters were there. I said they aren't going to believe it anyway. I said, look, we have to go in. I didn't want ~~to~~^{US} to come in with a corpse. We had an argument. I said I will get him to land, then you call your reporters. We had a radio down below. I want down once, but didn't want to keep going down. Nobody else could handle the boat. Drummond and I were arguing. Mime agreed with me. He saw what could happen, pipes in cage were coming loose. Walter could be speared. I knew how important it was for him to make it. But it wasn't worth it to have him dead. Later, when it was all over, everybody agreed we did the right thing.

on boat

2nd NIGHT

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